CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY

CHRISTINE DE LARGY

EXPLORATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES THAT FOSTER EXPERIENCES OF INCLUSION

SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT
PhD Leadership and Management

PhD
Academic Year: 2020 - 2023

Supervisor: Prof. Sue Vinnicombe
Associate Supervisor: Dr. Deirdre Anderson
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ABSTRACT

The literature on inclusion is growing, yet there remains a lack of clarity about how to foster an inclusive organization, with little attention paid to organizational inclusion practices or how inclusion is experienced. This thesis addresses these shortcomings through three studies. First, a systematic literature review reveals the inclusive organization tends to be studied through leadership, climate, workgroups, perceptions and practices; these elements may act generatively and interact to foster inclusion. Inclusion, conceptualised as treatment that satisfies needs for belongingness and uniqueness, but with less exploration of individual experiences of inclusion. Also, inclusion practices, although recognised as important in fostering an inclusive organization, lack empirical exploration. The second paper addresses this shortcoming; an empirical study with 15 Diversity and Inclusion Directors/Leads, using semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis. Findings indicate that practices may facilitate belonging *and* value uniqueness but organizations tend to prioritise practices which promote belonging. Practices that promote well-being and career development foster inclusion but are dependent upon the leaders involved. The third study is an empirical investigation of individual experiences of inclusion, with semi-structured interviews with 36 junior women. The study finds that employees prioritise being valued for their professional expertise and when treated as an individual, through well-being and career development practices. Interactions with line managers are the primary context for inclusion, although experiences of inclusion are complex and changeable. Overall theoretical contributions are that inclusion practices are inexact, practices may promote *either* belonging, *or* being valued, *or* both. Well-being and career development practices are re-positioned in the inclusive workplace model as inputs of inclusion. The study provides empirical evidence that employees prioritise task-related inclusion, with line managers as the primary context for inclusion, within day-to-day interactions.

Keywords:

Diversity and inclusion; inclusion practices; workgroup inclusion; workplace inclusion; organizational inclusion; inclusive leadership; inclusion climate; experiences of inclusion

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIT	Critical Incident Technique
D&I	Diversity and Inclusion
EDI	Equality Diversity and Inclusion
HR	Human Resources
ODT	Optimal Distinctiveness Theory
RQ	Research Question
RTA	Reflexive Thematic Analysis
SDT	Self-determination Theory
SIT	Social Identity Theory
SLR	Systematic Literature Review
TA	Thematic Analysis
VR	Virtual Reality

1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will provide an overview of this research which aims to explore organizational practices that foster inclusion. I will explain how my personal experiences and my early exposure to some of the literature focused the enquiry into practices that provide the experience of inclusion, and the resulting research aims. I will then explore my research methodology, the philosophical framework which informed the research question (RQ) and qualitative research design. The chapter concludes with a summary of contributions to the inclusion literature and detailed roadmap on the thesis structure.

- Chapter 2 will explore the literature on inclusion, the inclusive organization and inclusion practices to reveal a lack of clarity on the role of inclusion practices in fostering the inclusive organization and the experiences of inclusion.
- Chapter 3, the first qualitative empirical study, with data from interviews with 15 Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Leads, aims to deepen understanding of inclusion practices used within organizations and how they satisfy inclusion needs.
- Chapter 4, the second empirical study, with data from semi-structured interviews from 36 junior level women aims to explore how employees experience inclusion at work.
- Chapter 5 links the chapters and draws together the findings from the three studies to address the thesis aim to explore organizational practices that foster inclusion. I then discus the contribution to the inclusion literature, implications for policy and practice, limitations of the study with possible future directions for research. Chapter 5 concludes with a personal reflection on my PhD learnings and my aims for how I may take this research forward.

1.1 Reflections on Choice of Research

There is increasing interest in creating inclusive organizations both from academics and practitioners, where fostering a sense of inclusion, enables the organization to attract, promote and retain diverse talent (Shore, Cleveland and Sanchez, 2018), where minority groups might otherwise feel excluded. Yet representation of many minority groups, such as women and ethnic diversity, remains elusive. This is despite a diverse workforce being seen as a way for business to improve performance, prevent the dangers of groupthink and as morally right (Ferdman & Deane, 2014; McKinsey 2018; Mor Barak et al., 2016; Sabharwal, 2014). Improving diversity has been legislated by government equality and anti-discrimination acts since the 1970's, with organizations investing in interventions to promote diversity. Yet, if we take promotion of diverse talent as a measure of the effectiveness of these interventions, there is little progress on diversity in executive teams (McKinsey, 2020). Although, scholars appear to agree that fostering an inclusive organization is important and have provided an abundance of ideas on what contributes to an inclusive experience, constructs are yet to be well-defined, with little agreement about how they are related, or how organizations should proceed (Shore et al., 2018). The problem seems to be that 'Despite widespread interest in inclusion, empirical research remains scarce' and progress slow (Kossek & Lee, 2020, p16). This presents many interesting research opportunities to contribute to how organizations may foster inclusion to retain and promote diverse talent. Next, I outline how the topic of inclusion arose for this thesis.

My choice of topic of inclusion was influenced by my personal and professional history and my strong conviction regarding fairness and equality. As a white, middle-class, heterosexual woman, I experienced both the privilege of my background and discrimination as part of an under-represented group. In my professional career, at times I felt unfairly treated, discriminated against and excluded, at other times respected as an equal and included. This led me to question why I experienced more inclusion in some organizations than others. My values around fairness and equality are deeply embedded from 12 years of

Catholic schooling which influences my world view that ‘all men are created equal’ (Psalms 19:1). Within my professional career I experienced my privilege when, during my appointment to the management training scheme of a large blue-chip organization, the Human Resources (HR) Director referred to me in terms of ‘who you know’ and ‘the way you speak’. Later, I benefitted from positive discrimination, appointed to senior board roles in fashion because first they wanted to be seen to have a woman on the board and as a woman I was deemed better able to manage volatile male creatives. Although I acknowledge and appreciate the benefits my privilege afforded, I also experienced discrimination. Sometimes my voice was not heard until a male colleague proffered the same solution, I was the director asked to arrange coffees, to fit in I felt expected to behave as the men and advancement proved elusive, compelling me to move organizations to gain promotion. Over time I came to see the historic power structures embedded in the organization, seeing the ideal leader as male which was continually reproduced and reinforced, preventing any meaningful change. Yet, this was not true of all the organizations in which I worked; in some I felt truly valued and included. I experienced some organizations as more inclusive than others, fuelling my desire to find out how inclusion can be fostered.

My cultural and social reality not only inform my choice of topic of inclusion but may trigger responses, or potential biases, through the research process. I acknowledge this “authorial identity” (Alvesson, Hardy & Harley, 2008, p.483) frames the research and may produce particular interpretations, for example, with reference to the experiences above my research might be influenced by perceived unfairness. In my early career I believed change, equality and greater diverse representation was only a matter of time. But diversity in many organizations still appears a goal more than a reality, with little change in representation, access to social capital or career advancement for under-represented groups. Given my values and personal history this does trigger a sense of injustice and interest in exclusion and anti-discrimination. Of course, anti-discrimination is important, but in my professional career I also developed a solution orientation, thus my interest goes beyond the unfairness of exclusion to focus on the positive power of inclusion.

Having considered the problem and how the topic arose, I will now discuss the theories and literature that came into view before the research commenced. In the first instance I completed a psychology degree in 2017 and found social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), a powerful tool to help senior male stakeholders, in the large executive search organization in which I worked, to understand in-group and out-group dynamics. SIT helped these stakeholders understand that for under-represented groups to gain membership and acceptance within the in-group they must adopt group norms and assimilate into the group but this comes at a cost. They must play down their differences, which may be a valued identity or skill, potentially losing the benefits of diversity. I led the Board Services practice of this executive search firm and saw many senior women adopt male behaviours and language, possibly assimilating into the male in-group. Throughout my scoping study for this research, I felt SIT was a compelling lens through which to view organizations, however, as I completed the positioning study for the systematic literature review (SLR), I appreciated that SIT could explain exclusion but was inadequate to understand inclusion. As I uncovered more literature, I found Shore et al.'s framework for inclusion (2011) compelling. It is based upon social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel &Turner, 1979) and optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT) (Brewer, 1991), where individuals seek a balance to belong and have their uniqueness valued, enabling individuals of difference to bring their most valued identities and skills to the workplace and experience it as inclusive. This conceptualisation of inclusion became the base from which I started the research, although, there were many theories and concepts I considered before settling on the final three domains for the SLR that I explore next.

Before embarking on the SLR, detailed in Chapter 2, I spent a long time debating the diversity and inclusion (D&I) literature that was most relevant to understand the inclusive organization. This was a long and protracted process and at the time frustrating, although, I now see this as the most important foundations of the research. I liken this part of the PhD journey to forming an iceberg. I may only include the 'tip of the iceberg' in the final thesis but I have a large, complex base from which to make and defend the choices made throughout the research. For

example, at the beginning of my studies, I viewed the literature on inclusive organizations through an SIT lens, as discussed above. Although this is a robust and tested theory, it is focused on exclusion and ODT provides a more useful lens through which to view inclusion. I also considered the importance of leadership in promoting inclusion in organizations but it became clear that leadership was too broad a concept, even inclusive leadership was too broad. At the same time, I reflected on my corporate career; it was the everyday interactions with colleagues that had provided the experience of inclusion. This revealed a new avenue for exploration, the organizational practices that foster inclusion. Thus, the literature on leadership only became relevant when concerned with inclusive leadership and inclusion practices. Next, I will explain the choices I made to refine the domains of literature to inclusion, the inclusive organization and inclusion practices.

One of the debates about which literatures to include in the review was whether it was more appropriate to look at D&I, or just focus on inclusion. It became apparent that to understand inclusion I had to first differentiate inclusion from diversity. D&I are often treated as 'interchangeable' (Shore et al., 2018, p.177), but are distinct concepts (Roberson, 2006). Shore et al. (2011) provide a useful definition of diversity as a numerical representation of diverse categorisations, such as gender and ethnicity. But diversity representation alone is insufficient to create an inclusive workplace (Sabharwal, 2014), inclusion is the organizational effort, respecting individual differences, to engage everyone in operational delivery.

A second debate was concerned with the organizational research which tended to focus on diversity management, although, there was increasing interest in inclusion efforts. Clarifying the difference between organizational diversity management and inclusion effort became an important conceptual frame for the research. Organizational diversity management aims to reduce bias in decision-making and improve the outcomes for disadvantaged groups (Nishii, 2013) by averting exclusion and attracting marginalised groups into the work place. But diversity representation alone is insufficient (Sabharwal, 2014), "diversity can be

mandated and legislated, while inclusion is achieved largely through voluntary actions" (Shore et al., 2018; Winters, 2014, p206). I then discovered the Shore et al. (2018) model of the inclusive workplace which indicates that both streams of work are necessary; diversity management for exclusion prevention *and* inclusion promotion. Thus, I was able to clarify the focus of this research on organizational inclusion, without losing sight of the importance of exclusion prevention.

A third debate in the literature concerned the mechanisms, or means by which inclusion is fostered in organizations. In considering everyday interactions as a context for inclusion, the literature revealed inclusive practices as an under-researched but important area. For example, Shore and colleagues (2018) literature review and model of the inclusive workplace, states there is an abundance of literature on inclusive leadership, climate and workgroups. Many studies noted the importance of inclusion practices but with less clarity or empirical evidence on their role or purpose (Shore et al., 2018). Roberson's (2019) literature review, notes that the inclusion concept itself is relatively coherent, it is the identification of practices, to facilitate inclusion within organizations that is less distinct. This seemed an important area of study to help build an understanding of inclusion practices and how they foster inclusion within the organization.

1.2 Mapping the Field

In this section I provide a summary of the SLR conducted in 2021 (Chapter 2) and supplement this with more recent literature to provide greater context for the research aims (Section 1.3) and over view of the research (Section 1.5). I will argue that despite the growing body of literature on inclusion there is as yet no comprehensive or coherent theory of the inclusive organization, although, there is a compelling need for more understanding of inclusion where everyone is able to thrive and advance in the organization. First, I will map the practical implications and summarise the SLR with updated literature on the inclusive organization.

From the practitioner perspective, organizations declare their commitment to D&I through a broad range of policies, programmes and initiatives to increase

diversity representation but progress remains slow. Organizations are committed to diversity through legislation since the 1970's. In a broader context, of the 17 UN Sustainability Goals (2015), three represent social issues concerning equality and inclusion. Inclusion is becoming an urgent issue as companies struggle to address the problem of workers quitting their jobs since the COVID-19 pandemic. The shift to remote working has the potential to deepen the experience of exclusion for groups who are already marginalized (Byrd, 2022). This is compounded in many organizations where there is little understanding of why their employees are leaving. 'Yes, they want pay, benefits, and perks, but more than that they want to feel valued by their organizations and managers. They want meaningful—though not necessarily in-person—interactions, not just transactions' (McKinsey, 2021, p1). Feeling valued and having meaningful interactions are deeply embedded as they are fundamental human needs; developing the inclusive organization was never more important.

For decades scholars have worked to understand and improve D&I in organizations (Ortlieb & Sieben 2014; Roberson, 2019; Shore et al., 2018). The literature has yet to provide a comprehensive and coherent model of the inclusive organization, although 'The next frontier of research has to do with how to facilitate employees' inclusion experiences and cultivate inclusive climates.' (Nishii & Leroy, 2022, p.683). The SLR was designed to reveal what is known about organizational practices used to foster inclusion, the findings are detailed in Chapter 2, and what follows is a map of the field.

1.2.1 The literature review

Extant literature was reviewed systematically at the start of the research in 2020. Inevitably research has evolved and this map includes the more current literature and the literature, relevant to answering the RQ's in the two empirical studies, is included in Chapters 3 and 4. As mentioned above, the SLR was framed as three relevant literature domains; inclusion, the inclusive organization and inclusion practices, to answer the review question:

What is known about organizational practices used to foster experiences of inclusion?

Additional questions were:

How is inclusion different from diversity?

How do people experience inclusion?

What is an inclusive organization?

What are inclusion practices?

The literature has tended to focus at workgroup (Shore et al., 2011; Nishii, 2013) and organizational level (Shore et al., 2018) and through a leadership lens (Randel et al., 2018). Figure 1-1 shows each of the three literature domains with the influential studies for each area of the review. Each domain is summarised below to answer the review questions.

Figure 1-1 Domains of literature on inclusion and review questions

1.2.2 Defining inclusion and the experience of inclusion?

1.2.2.1 Diversity and inclusion as different

Before exploring the experience of inclusion, it is important to differentiate between diversity and inclusion, to clarify the conceptualisation of inclusion for this research. I will start by defining diversity as a distinct concept from inclusion and consider exclusion as interrelated to inclusion. I will then explore the role of the intersectional approach and consider the critical turn in the inclusion literature. The definition of inclusion remains contested and the term inclusion seems to have "augmented" the term diversity, resulting in the use of 'diversity and inclusion' as a standing term (Adamson et al., 2021) but they are conceptually different. Diversity is conceptualised by (Roberson, 2019, p70) as 'any compositional differences among people within a workgroup'. It is interesting that Roberson says *any* differences, an important consideration when much of the literature is focused on addressing particular groups, for example, women and ethnic diversity. Indeed, certain groups are protected in law, for example, the UK Equality Act (2010) identifies nine protected characteristics as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The British Psychological Society in 2022 propose social class should be added, whilst accepting it is difficult to define. The society suggests it is a category into which people are socialised, providing life experiences and economic, cultural and social capital, rather than the more standard use of social economic status which does not reflect power or lack of power in certain contexts (Rickett, Evans & Sheehy-Skeffington, 2022). Adding another protected characteristic may be desirable, even necessary, but there are potentially an infinite number of compositional differences. I will address this complexity further in section 1.2.2.4 through the intersectional approach.

1.2.2.2 Conceptualising the experience of inclusion

A paradox of diversity is that diverse teams are most likely to fail but world class teams are diverse (Waldman & Sparr, 2023); inclusion provides a potential solution but as an experience is open to differing interpretations. To clarify the

definition of inclusion it is helpful to distinguish between inclusion as a noun, and "to include" as a verb. Inclusion as a noun is the action or state of including, or of being included within a group or structure. To include, the verb, is to contain a part within the whole, more concerned with the process of inclusion, rather than the experience of being included. As mentioned above the literature offers differing interpretations. Roberson (2006) defines the verb to include, to propose that inclusion focuses on diversity as a resource, promoted through employee involvement and integration into organizational systems and processes. Inclusion enables everyone to bring their "whole selves" to work (Nishii, 2013). In contrast, Shore et al. (2011) in their seminal paper, conceptualise inclusion as the noun. They describe the individual experience of inclusion in the workgroup as employees perceiving that they are esteemed members of the group, through treatment that satisfies the social need to belong and individual identity need to be valued for distinctiveness. Shore and colleagues explain through their inclusion framework (Figure 1-2), that inclusion is being treated as an insider (high belonging) and having uniqueness encouraged (high uniqueness).

Figure 1-2 Workgroup inclusion framework (adapted from Shore et al., 2011)

Roberson concludes that while diversity and inclusion are separate constructs, they overlap; both diversity and inclusion are necessary and inherently linked. Ferdman (2017) supports the proposition that diversity and inclusion are separate constructs, stating that to have diversity without inclusion is to recognise differences without individuals being able to behave congruently with their valued

identities. To provide additional clarity on the experience of inclusion I will now explore the concepts of belongingness and uniqueness.

Belongingness and uniqueness are separate and distinct constructs brought together in optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT). Belonging, according to Brewer (1991) and ODT, is feeling part of the group. Shore et al. (2011) expands this to define belonging as the need to develop and maintain robust and stable interpersonal relationships, to maintain a social identity. Belonging may have two constitute parts (Jansen et al., 2014): group membership and group affection. Group membership is determined by the perceived strength of the bond between the individual and the group. Group affection is the degree to which the bond is perceived as positive. Belonginess is operationalised through building strong relationships within teams (Veli Korkmaz et al., 2022), where individuals are supported as group members and share in decision-making (Randel et a., 2018).

Brewer (1991) refers to uniqueness as individuals being able to retain a sense of their uniqueness. This developed from uniqueness theory which explains the concept as the need to have a distinctive self-concept, “one of the most important dimensions of personal identity” that can be sustained as distinctive and differentiated (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). This provides a sense of self and feeling valued as unique. Uniqueness is operationalised through empowering employees (Veli Korkmaz et al., 2022), encouraging diverse contributions, helping group members fully contribute (Randel et al., 2018) and collaborative work arrangements, to involve marginalised employees in decision-making processes (Roberson, 2006).

Belongingness and uniqueness are conceptualised as separate concepts that may operate in tension and be polarised. The need for uniqueness is likely to be activated if the individual becomes assimilated into the group to the extent they no longer feel unique. Individuals will then define themselves in terms of distinctive categories that are unique personal identifiers (e.g. race/ethnicity, gender, age), by comparing themselves with others (Brewer 1991). Snyder and Fromkin (1980) suggest that if members of a group are perceived as too similar and individuals become interchangeable, then the need for uniqueness is

necessary, explained as a tension between belongingness and uniqueness. That too much of one necessitates seeking more of the other. Snyder and Fromkin (1980) also theorise that most people have a need to be moderately unique, although people differ in this motivation and the attributes can vary between people. They also consider that the needs for belongingness and uniqueness are universal, although the way both needs are met varies. Brewer (1991) extends this potential tension to propose that belongingness and uniqueness are separate and potentially polarised forces. She theorises that people avoid self-constructs that are either too different, or too similar, to the group. Individuals need a certain level of both similarity and differentiation from others, that social identities buffer the individual from personal identity threat. Brewer represents the need for belonging and differentiation as "opposing forces… where equilibrium is achieved …and are exactly equal….The optimal level is a function of the relative strength of the opposing drives for assimilation and differentiation." (Brewer, 1919, p478).

Nishii and Leory (2022) in their concept paper discuss this assumed tension in the Shore et al. framework (2011) between maintaining belongingness and uniqueness to suggest they are reinforcing. The tension is assumed where more of one, comes at a cost to the other. Interestingly, Shore et al. describe uniqueness as valued when it provides an opportunity for improved group performance, where the group values a unique characteristic and the unique individual is accepted. Perhaps the tension is more around the contingent factors; that uniqueness must potentially improve group performance, the group member must be accepted and the unique characteristic be of value. Nonetheless, Nishii and Leroy conclude there is no tension between these needs, rather to feel belonging one needs others to support uniqueness, that they are reinforcing.

In more recent literature the definitions of inclusion and how to foster experiences of inclusion remains varied. Some conceptualise inclusion, at an individual level, as employee perceptions that their unique contribution to the organization is appreciated, that their full participation is encouraged (Mor Barak, 2015), to involve individuals in the pursuit of organizational goals (Sabharwal, 2014; Mor

Barak et al., 2016). Thus, the experience of inclusion may be fostered through practices such as facilitation of employee participation, collaborative work arrangements and involving under-represented groups in decision-making processes (Roberson, 2007). This requires supportive leadership. Leaders would need to share information and resources with employees to empower them to participate (Sabharwal, 2014). But this effort is likely to benefit the organization as inclusion is linked to positive outcomes. Inclusion is said to release the potential advantages of diversity, such as innovation and outcomes such as career advancement for under-represented groups. Other gains include organizational and role performance (Sabharwal, 2014; Mor Barak et al, 2016) but without inclusion such benefits are unlikely (Shore et al., 2018).

More recently Nishii and Leroy (2022) emphasise that employees are more likely to experience inclusion as goal-directed, or task-related inclusion. They argue that junior employees are more likely to experience inclusion through their everyday work and task-directed behaviours, whilst acknowledging social-inclusion is also important. However, they view inclusion through a leadership lens, in that inclusion is a result of leaders implementing strategy and creating an inclusive climate, which impacts on interpersonal and intrapersonal processes, and the experience of inclusion (Figure 1-3). Further, they theorise that when individuals are empowered to be autonomous, and know that colleagues value their competence, they experience relatedness and inclusion, as subsets of Shore et al.'s (2011) belonging and uniqueness. Nevertheless, to conceptualise inclusion one must also consider exclusion; inclusion and exclusion are complex and constitutively related.

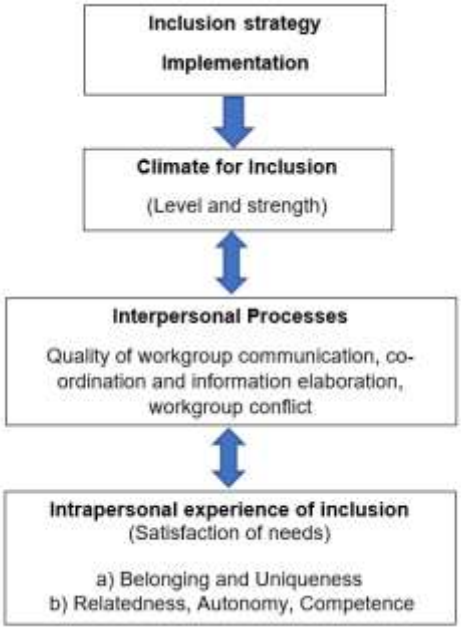

Figure 1-3 "Multi-level framework of inclusive leadership" (Nishii & Leroy, 2022, p684)

1.2.2.3 Inclusion and exclusion

Inclusion may be described as a "process fraught with ambivalence and ambiguity and one that goes hand in hand with exclusionary dynamics" (Dobusch, 2014, p220). To understand exclusion, SIT from a social psychological perspective, offers a useful starting point, arguing that exclusion and inequality originate in the negative in-group/out-group dynamics from individuals' biased cognitive processes (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). SIT suggests that for individuals to become a member of the in-group they must lose their distinctiveness and adopt the norms, values and behaviours of the group, or assimilate into the group. Shore et al. (2011), build on the SIT explanation of exclusion to conceptualise workgroup exclusion as treatment by the group that demonstrates the individual is not an insider able to offer unique value to the group; this is in contrast to others who are treated as insiders. Employees who are members of under-represented groups, that have a history of discrimination (for example women and race/ethnicity), may experience exclusion from opportunities for advancement including jobs, promotions, access to resources, decision making, and human

resource investments. This can also have negative effects on psychological and physical health (Shore et al., 2018).

Scholars have suggested that to facilitate inclusion multiple types of exclusionary dynamics must be overcome, suggesting inclusion and exclusion are interrelated. The exclusionary dynamics include self-segregation, communication apprehension, stereotyping and stigmatizing (Bernstein et al., 2019). Self-segregation refers to diverse individuals differentiating and distancing themselves socially, even when in physical proximity. Communication apprehension occurs when individuals are apprehensive communicating with diverse others. Finally, stereotyping and stigmatizing is when a persistent prejudice held by labelling of others is acted upon. These exclusionary forces must be overcome before a fully inclusive workplace can be fostered. These forces may be overcome through engagement in positive interactions that develop inclusionary interpersonal skills, that are created and sustained by organizational practices (Bernstein et al., 2020). For an organization to be inclusive leaders must implement practices to address the issues faced by employees who are members of social groups that have a history of discrimination and exclusion. To engender an inclusive workplace, these structural inequalities must be minimised, along with exclusionary decision-making practices, and norms for accepting new employees that emphasize assimilation (Nishii, 2013).

However, practices aimed to reduce exclusion may have unintended consequences and reinforce or overlook exclusion in organisations. Leslie (2019) found that organizational diversity management programmes, designed to reduce exclusion for underrepresented groups, may induce and reinforce stereotyping and stigmatizing. Specific organisational practices may both silence voices as well as actively seek voice (Ortlieb et al., 2021). Despite these challenges, organizations seeking to foster inclusion must address the exclusionary forces outlined above and consider a more critical perspective on inclusion, below in section 1.2.2.5. Understanding the ambiguity of inclusion that is interrelated with exclusion will enable a more nuanced understanding of inclusion and help uncover what works.

1.2.2.4 The intersectional approach

Although I have explored diversity and inclusion as distinct concepts (Section 1.2.2.1), the experience of individuals with diverse characteristics cannot be ignored. However, the “single-axis” approach to discrimination is insufficient to understand the multiple marginalisation’s that shape inequalities in people’s lives (Rice, Harrison & Friedman, 2019). The multidimensional nature of social identity makes it difficult to determine one specific social category that might be more salient than others in determining an individual’s identity. Intersectionality theory addresses this deficiency to highlight the multidimensional nature of diversity and its connection to detrimental societal consequences such as inequality and discrimination (Acker, 2006). Intersectionality describes the interplay between strands of difference, such as gender, ethnicity and class and draws attention to the systemic power dynamics that arise as multiple dimensions of social difference interact across individual, organizational and societal levels (Rodriguez et al., 2016). Intersectionality has its roots in Black feminist thought, in her seminal paper Crenshaw (1989) considers the increased negative consequences experienced by African American women who belong to more than one under-represented group. Rice et al. (2019, p418) state “scholars must respect its foundations”. One approach to intersectionality focuses on subjectivities and explores intersections to highlight the experiences and consequences of inequalities experienced by individuals given their social membership. The second approach embeds subjectivities within systemic dynamics of power and explores intersections to highlight these dynamics and make them visible and available for analysis (Rodriguez et al., 2016). Critical scholars tend to agree that an essential quality of intersectional research is that it orients to social justice in its processes and knowledge production (Rice et al, 2019).

These scholars argue that without an intersectional approach research suffers from fixed categories of diversity, where oppression and discrimination are hidden behind the invisibility of privilege, ignoring the necessary structural change (Tatli & Ozbilgin, 2012). The aim of this thesis is to explore the organizational practices that foster experiences of inclusion, and I maintain an

awareness of the structural and power inequalities that operate within the workplace, which must be dismantled for the workplace to be more inclusive. Individuals of all backgrounds, not just members of historically powerful identity groups, must be treated fairly, valued for who they are and included in core decision making, which I addressed earlier through the role of exclusion in fostering inclusion (Section 1.2.2.3) and next reviewing a more critical turn.

1.2.2.5 A critical turn

There has been an explosion of literature addressing inclusion necessitating a need for "construct cleanup" (Nishii & Leroy, 2022, p.683) and the definitions of inclusion remain contested in the literature (Adamson et al., 2021). The literature typically sees inclusion linked to positive outcomes (Shore et al., 2018), denoting good practice related to ensuring improvement of diversity and equality in organizations (Sherbin & Rashid, 2017). Since conducting the SLR in 2020-21 inclusion literature has taken a more critical turn. For example, Dobusch (2021) posits that there is sometimes a core assumption that "full" inclusion means the absence of exclusion, and that the dominant perspective is of the inclusion/exclusion duality (Nguyen et al., 2023). Others see inclusion and exclusion as a continuum of the degree to which individuals feel a part of critical organizational processes (Shore, et al., 2011). However, as discussed above (section 1.2.2.3) inclusion and exclusion are complex and potentially interrelated, people may feel simultaneously included and excluded (Cassell et al., 2020). Further, Adamson et al. (2021) challenges researchers to consider the concept of inclusion not as positive action, nor a state of "being", but as a state of "becoming", dynamically forming, rather than static in time and place. Others agree that it is important to move beyond a static inclusion/exclusion model that "an organisation needs a multi-faceted approach that enables interventions aimed at both the majority and the minority. A company should strive to create an inclusive culture by paying attention to what can be seen as majority issues such as staff development and progression, whilst also taking account of the experience of minority groups" (Cassell et al., 2020, p18).

To add more specificity, some conceptualise inclusion as a process "where people gain access to areas from which they were formerly un/intentionally

excluded" (Dobusch, 2014, p220). Yet, inclusion practices may produce ambivalent effects; practices intended to foster inclusion, may preserve exclusion. For example, organisations can present themselves as inclusive, but their inclusion efforts may still be insufficient to address the hierarchies between groups of employees. The processes of inclusion and exclusion within the organization tend to reproduce the hierarchical social order in its environment (Ortlieb & Sieben, 2014). Inclusion practices may even preserve existing power asymmetries because the terms of inclusion are defined by those in power (Dobusch, Holke & Muhr, 2021).

Thus, inclusion is interrelated with exclusion, which is maintained through "inequality regimes". Inequality regimes are theorised by Acker (2006) to explain the power inequalities that underpin exclusion, where interlocked organizational processes produce, reproduce and maintain patterns of complex inequalities. Her exploration of the structural dimensions of gender inequality resulted in the concept of the 'gendered organization'. This has been "enormously influential and is credited with having created a paradigm shift in the study of gender, work and organizations" (Rodriguez et al., 2016, p202). She later moved from a single focus on gender to the complex and fluid processes that produce and reproduce multiple and intersecting dimensions of difference; class, gender and race (Acker, 2006). These inequality regimes maintain systematic disparities between those in power who control goals, processes, resources, and outcomes (Rodriguez et al., 2016). Those in power determine how the organization works; the opportunities for promotion, security in employment, pay and benefits, developmental work allocation and work relations. The varying characteristics of inequality regimes shape the degree that inequality is created and recreated, it is important to consider "the invisibility of inequalities, the legitimacy of inequalities, and the controls and compliance that prevent protest against inequalities" (Acker, 2006, p144).

Looking at organizations as inequality regimes may be useful to help understand why some organizational inclusion projects fail where others may succeed. For example, initiatives are likely to fail if they do not address underlying processes of inequality, such as the persistent male model of leadership and success

archetype, which limits access to underrepresented groups. Changing these regimes is difficult and efforts are liable to fail as the power and interests of the majority usually outweigh the interests of those who experience inequality, '"advantage is hard to give up". Yet, inequality regimes can be challenged and changed (Acker, 2006, p455).

To effect change these historical structural power dynamics must be considered. This critical perspective, helps enrich the conceptualization of inclusion and highlights the lack of research around what works and the experiences of inclusion (Cassell et al., 2020). Thus, this study although based on the conceptualisation of inclusion from Shore et al. (2011) of treatment that satisfies needs for belongingness and uniqueness, takes into consideration this more critical perspective. This perspective offers new insights into the complexity of inclusion and the interrelatedness of inclusion/exclusion, to overlay a more nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of inclusion for employees fostered through organizational practices.

1.2.3 What is an inclusive organization?

Whilst so far there is no common understanding of organizational inclusion, there is increasing interest in creating inclusive organizations, for example, the topic for the Academy of Management conference in 2019 was 'Understanding the Inclusive Organization'. Many studies have focused on various aspects of inclusion with few studying the whole organizational system, although Sabharwal (2014) proposes an inclusive organization requires not just anti-discrimination practices but also those aimed at inclusion, which is supported by many other studies (e.g. Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Mor Barak, 2015). But, as far as I am aware, only Shore et al. (2018) have developed a model of the inclusive workplace (Figure 1-4) taking-into-account the whole system of leadership, workgroups, practices, climate and perceptions of inclusion. The model recognises the role of management commitment to two streams of work, exclusion prevention and inclusion promotion. Exclusion prevention involves compliance practices and management of discrimination, working in parallel with inclusion efforts such as inclusion practices and inclusive leadership.

The model sees the outcome of the inclusive workplace as perceptions of inclusion and a climate of inclusion, which promote retention and career advancement (Shore et al., 2018). Others see different outputs of inclusion, for example, well-being and positive health outcomes. Shore et al. in their concept paper (2011) and the literature reviews from Veli Korkmaz et al. (2022) and Nguyen et al (2023) refer to the state of well-being as an output to inclusion. Well-being is referred to as both physical and psychological, including happiness, meaning and vitality (Warren et al., 2019), stress health (Shore et al., 2011) and reduction of burnout (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016). Although the state of well-being as an output to inclusion has yet to be empirically tested. In contrast, only Shore et al. (2018) conceptualise career advancement as an output of inclusion although there is support for staff retention as an output (Mor Barak et al., 2016), both require empirical testing. In addition, although Shore et al. (2018) see inclusion climate as an output of inclusion climate, others see inclusive climate as an input to the inclusive organization (Nishii, 2013). Thus, the Shore et al. (2019) model of the inclusive workplace may not be fully coherent or comprehensive, nevertheless, it attempts to present an organization-wide model of the inclusive workplace and provides a useful frame for this research.

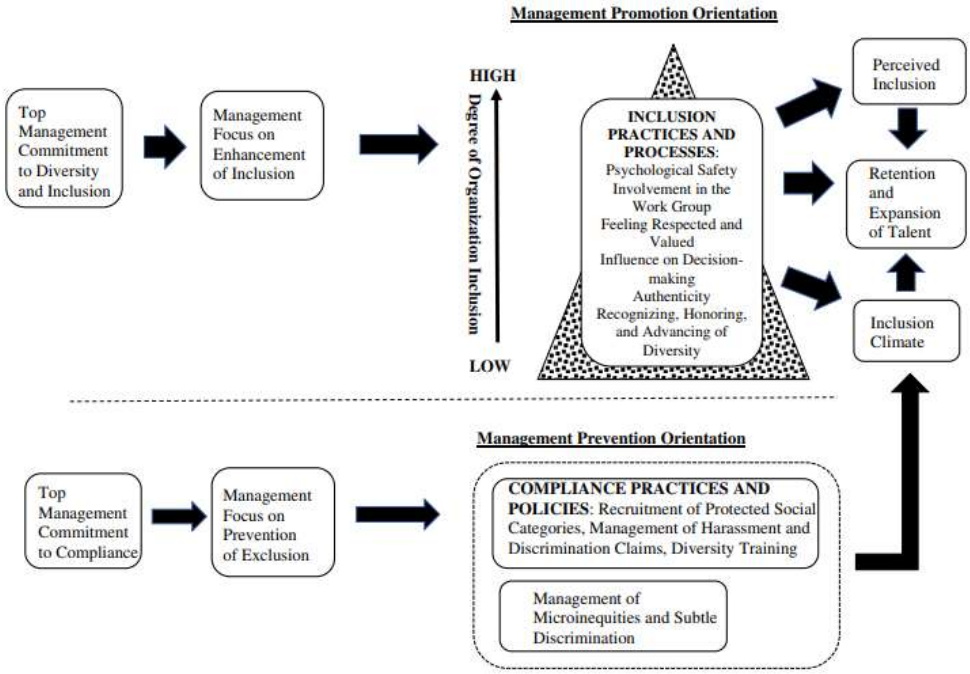

Figure 1-4 "A model of inclusive organizations" (Shore et al., 2018, p185)

1.2.4 What are inclusion practices?

The literature on inclusive leadership, workgroups and climate proliferates with less attention paid to the role of inclusion practices. Current research has moved beyond the promotion of increasing diversity to that of creating inclusivity, though greater clarity is necessary, particularly around the practices that foster inclusion (Shore et al., 2018; Janssens & Steyaert, 2019). The literature tends to cite inclusion practices as fostering workgroup involvement (Nishii, 2013; Roberson & Perry, 2021), building quality relations (Bernstein et al., 2020), access to resources and influence organizational decisions (Mor Barak et al., 2016; Brimhall & Palinkas, 2020). The literature identifies a plethora of practices said to promote inclusion and in the SLR (Chapter 2) I propose a typology for practices based on those that promote belonging and others that demonstrate distinctiveness is valued. Nevertheless, the exact purpose and rationale for using one practice over another remains unclear. Studies have yet, to clarify the precise features and purpose of inclusion practices.

1.3 Research Aims and Objectives

In sum, the experience of inclusion is a dynamic, unfolding phenomenon and the overall aim of the thesis is to explore organizational practices that foster inclusion through three papers. The first paper (Chapter 2) aims to investigate the literature on organizational practices that foster inclusion. The second paper (Chapter 3) is an empirical exploration of the organizational approach to inclusion, to deepen understanding of practices used within organizations to foster inclusion and how they satisfy inclusion needs. This led to the third paper (Chapter 4) to understand what is accomplished by the organization, at the individual level. The aim is to explore individual experiences of inclusion at work, making visible the contexts and revealing their lived experience. Finally, (Chapter 5) I draw together the findings of the studies to explore organizational practices that foster the experience of inclusion.

The overarching thesis RQ is:

How do organizational practices foster experiences of inclusion?

With sub-questions:

Chapter 3: Which practices can be used by organizations to foster inclusion?

How do these practices satisfy inclusion needs?

Chapter 4: How do employees experience inclusion at work?

There are four objectives:

1) Review the extant literature on the inclusive organization.
   Complete a SLR of the extant literature to uncover what is known about the inclusive workplace (Chapter 2).

2) Uncover the practices that organizations use to foster inclusion, as described by the internal experts, the D&I Directors/Leads, as a proxy for the organizational view. Data are collected using semi-structured interviews with 15 D&I Directors/Leads, and analysed using a thematic approach (Chapter 3).

3) Explore junior employees' experiences of inclusion at work, using semi-structured interviews with 36 junior women, and data analysed using thematic analysis (Chapter 4).

4) Draw together the findings of the studies to respond to the thesis aim to explore organizational practices that foster experiences of inclusion and discuss findings within the context of the literature to contribute to theorising how inclusion is fostered in the workplace (Chapter 5).

1.4 Research Methodology

In this section I present my methodology, including my overarching research philosophy, its impact on the RQ, design and qualitative methods used for the

research. I provide detailed explanations of methods used for each study, relevant to answer each RQ, in Chapters 2 - 4. Here, I use the term methodology to describe the whole process of knowledge construction, the contextual framework and approach based on my beliefs about the nature and study of reality (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). Partington (2002) states that a general principle of research design is clarity on the coherence and alignment of methodology, with the theoretical perspective, research question, purpose, and research design (Figure 1-5). To clarify my approach, I will first address my interpretivist theoretical perspective and philosophical framework, then explore how the RQ and purpose inform the qualitative approach and discuss the choices for the research design. I conclude this section by considering the quality and rigour of the research.

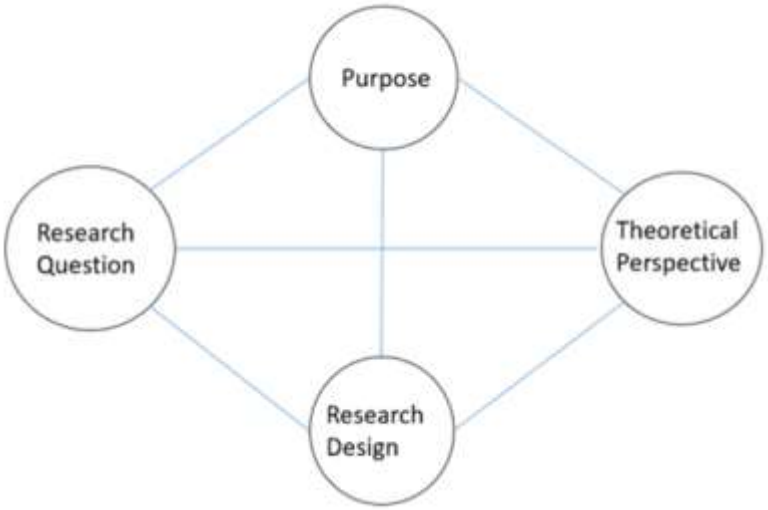

Figure 1-5 The research process: four elements in alignment (Partington, 2002, p139)

1.4.1 Theoretical and philosophical framework

My research philosophy leads to a series of research choices “shaping perceptions of knowledge and knowledge creation” (Partington, 2002, p1). This is important, there is a fundamental difference between subjects of the natural world examined by positivists and exploration of the social world. For this

research into the social world of the organization I have adopted an interpretivist philosophy to explain the assumptions about the way I think about how the social world operates. As an interpretivist I am critical of the positivist attempts to discover definite, universal 'laws' that apply to everybody (Blaikie, 2009). Yet, positivism became the "gold standard" for clinical trials and the most trusted research method (Bryman, 2012). This arose from the US Government in 1962, through the Food and Drug Administration, who mandated that before drug approval, evidence was required from well-controlled studies, or random control trials. This was reinforced during the 1960's in the UK, when Cochrane advocated the same. This research aims to reveal new understandings of the complex world of organizations and I believe the rich insights into humanity and the world are lost if such complexity is reduced entirely to a series of "law-like" generalisations (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019*).* Hence, throughout this section I have compared and contrasted the positivist perspective with my interpretivist approach; Table 1-1 summarises this comparison. Interpretivism acts as a thread running through my thesis, to frame the RQ, to align the collection of data, analysis and reporting the research. I will now explore my philosophical approach through the interpretivist ontology, epistemology and axiology.

Table 1-1 Comparison of research philosophical positions in management research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019, p145)

Ontology (nature of reality or being)	**Epistemology** (what constitutes acceptable knowledge)	**Axiology** (role of values)	**Typical methods**
	Positivism		
Real, external, independent One true reality (universalism) Granular (things) Ordered	Scientific method Observable and measurable facts Law-like generalisations Numbers Causal explanation and prediction as contribution	Value-free research Researcher is detached, neutral and independent of what is researched Researcher maintains objective stance	Typically deductive, highly structured, large samples, measurement, typically quantitative methods of analysis, but a range of data can be analysed

Interpretivism			
Complex, rich Socially constructed through culture and language Multiple meanings, interpretations, realities Flux of processes, experiences, practices	Theories and concepts too simplistic Focus on narratives, stories, perceptions and interpretations New understandings and worldviews as contribution	Value-bound research Researchers are part of what is researched, subjective Researcher interpretations key to contribution Researcher reflexive	Typically inductive. Small samples, in-depth investigations, qualitative methods of analysis, but a range of data can be interpreted

1.4.1.1 Ontology

Ontology refers to theories about the nature of reality, or what we can know because all facts come from people's point of view and will depend on their perspective. A positivist ontology views reality as existing independent of the observer's perceptions and operates according to natural laws, assuming that reality is objective and can be independently measured to uncover causal mechanisms. For social sciences a problem with the positive approach is that it assumes that 'truth' can be objectively measured and be generalised across the population from selected samples (Saunders et al., 2019). However, organizations are complex social structures, so settling on a definitive version of any absolute or objective reality is difficult. To study a social phenomenon attention must be paid to this complexity, that organizations are in constant flux through processes, practices and individual experiences.

The role of individual experiences is a vital component in the production of knowledge concerning social phenomena. The meanings and interpretations people give to their actions and situations are the distinguishing features of social phenomena. Accordingly, interpretivism seeks to understand the social world that people are constructing and reproducing through their continuing activities (Saunders et al., 2019). Additionally, we can only understand someone's reality through their experience of that reality. This may be different from another person's which is shaped by their historical or social perspective. Thus, there are multiple realities and interpretations. In sum, interpretivism sees the organization as a social entity, that practices and individual experiences are in constant flux. It assumes that reality is subjective, with multiple meanings which are socially constructed. This research, does not aim to uncover causal mechanisms of

inclusion/exclusion but instead aims to explore the complex social world of the organization and practices that are in constant flux, to uncover individual experiences of inclusion through the multiple realities to deepen understanding of how inclusion is fostered.

1.4.1.2 Epistemology

Epistemology refers to theories about how we can know about that reality (Bell et al., 2019) and what is acceptable knowledge (Saunders et al., 2019), which for this research must account for the social world of organizations and its changing realities. Where positivism aims to provide objective and valid explanations of the world through observation, where knowledge is quantifiable facts. This research, to deepen understanding of inclusion practices and explore employees' experiences of inclusion recognises that inclusion is a perception, an internal psychological process which is not observable. To understand peoples' inner world, one must focus on the individual, accepting that their perceptions and interpretations are socially constructed and will be perceived differently by different people, hence, there are many different views of reality.

To explore individual experiences of inclusion the subjective, interpretivist epistemology assumes there are multiple views of the world. This may be understood from peoples' rich descriptions and interactions as they arise (Bell et al., 2019). A limitation is that individuals' meaning-making is always specific to their experiences and context, formed at an individual level, meaning actions are unpredictable and not generalisable. Yet scholars argue that the interpretivist perspective is highly appropriate in management research, where situations are complex and contexts unique (Saunders et al., 2019). Interpretivist research may reflect a particular set of circumstances and interactions involving individuals at a specific time, but it is able to provide new understandings of complex social phenomena (Saunders et al., 2019). To address the issue of generalisability, I have adopted rigorous research processes, where the research decisions are consistent and coherent with this philosophy. I am transparent in reporting these decisions (in both empirical papers Chapter 3 and 4, and in section 1.4.3 and

1.4.4) to provide additional rigour so that findings may be transferable and have relevance in other contexts (Blaikie, 2009).

Critics of interpretivism, for example Giddens (1984), challenge the failure of the interpretivist's approach to acknowledge the role of institutional structures, power relations and structures of conflict (Blaikie, 2009). Hence, they ignore the possible barriers and sources of social change. But "the production and reproduction of the social world requires actors to draw upon resources and depend on conditions of which they may be completely or partially aware" (Blaikie, 2009, p188). Thus, interpretivists are interested in and can report on their understanding or interpretation of historical power structures and relations. Whilst accepting that some areas, such as providing an account of historical change, cannot be dealt with by interpretivism (Blaikie, 2009). In this thesis I acknowledge the important role of power relations and structures whilst I remain focused on understanding organizational practices that foster the experience of inclusion.

1.4.1.3 Axiology

This research seeks rich descriptions from individuals but I must consider who is able to speak, who has a voice, who is excluded, who is setting the agenda, who has the power to decide? As a researcher my values and beliefs inform the research design (Saunders et al., 2019), I have power over the interpretation of experiences in this research. Although this research seeks to uncover participants' own interpretations of their experiences, I am involved with the participant in the construction of knowledge and active in the production of knowledge. This makes the research value-laden, rather than value-neutral (the positivist perspective). My values, experiences, background and position in relation to the topic, my axiology (Bell et al., 2019), are involved in the interpretation of knowledge. I am open and transparent about experiences of which I am aware will shape my research (Section 1.1.) and through each study I remained reflexive, to consider and be transparent about how my biases and preferences may influence the research.

Accepting that knowledge is a social construction (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), between participants and the researcher, I also considered the extent that

participants may influence me as the researcher, and how I as the researcher may influence the participants. Thus, I reflected on my relationship with interviewees. Although I conducted the research from outside the organizations and only met participants on one occasion, I aimed to prioritise the participants' accounts and whilst I had a theoretical foundation around which the research was organised, my focus was on eliciting their experiences as fully as possible. I used open questions and prompts to allow participants to manage the direction of the interview, remaining open to participants' perspectives, to answer the RQ's. In addition, rather than assume I understood and was able to interpretate interviewees' accounts, I sought clarification and re-phrased their account as a question to elicit more detailed responses. I aimed to build rapport with participants so that they felt able to share their personal experiences, follow their own narratives and know that I valued and wanted to capture their unique perspective. Interestingly, Wilhelmy and Kohler (2022), suggest that participants are more willing to share thoughts and experiences if they know their unique perspective will be captured, represented and communicated.

1.4.2 Purpose and research question

The purpose of this research is to explore organizational practices that foster experiences of inclusion, to contribute to new understandings of the inclusive organization. The desired outcome is more concerned with developing understandings, rather than seek explanations and causality, the aim of positivist research (Saunders et al., 2019). The interpretivist approach aims to create new, richer understandings of organisational realities and interpretations of social worlds and contexts and enable the world to be seen in new ways (Saunders et al., 2019). For management research this means looking at organisations from the perspectives of different groups of people, who may experience different workplace realities. Hence, for the empirical studies I interview a range of D&I Leads and junior employees from different organizations. This research aims to find verifiable knowledge of the meanings that constitute the social world in organizations, that may be transferable and have relevance in other contexts (Blaikie, 2009). I discuss how this research is verifiable and potentially

transferable later in section 1.4.4 *Quality, rigour and ethics.* I will now discuss the research strategy and design choices as coherent and consistent with interpretivism.

1.4.3 Research strategy and design

The research design for both empirical studies, to be coherent with the interpretivist tradition, adopts a qualitative design. The positivist, quantitative survey-based research dominates the extant inclusion literature (Section 2.4) yet, despite the strengths of quantitative methods to explain phenomena, these methods constrain the RQs and findings. Quantitative studies must hypothesise and test predetermined outcomes by isolating concepts to indicate cause and effect. Qualitative research, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2018), aims to identify, describe, or understand phenomena from participants with the data interpreted by researchers. Core strengths of qualitative research are being able to explore individual experiences, discover unknown aspects of a phenomenon and explore developments related to emerging topics, according to Wilhelmy and Kohler's (2022) systematic review of qualitative studies. Qualitative research constitutes excellence through robust research design, method and analysis (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015) which I will explore in sections 1.4.3.1 to 1.4.3.3.

Before exploring the detailed research design, I will discuss the research strategy, or type of reasoning involved between theory and research, may involve an inductive, deductive, or abductive approach, shown in Table 1-2 (Saunders et al., 2019). A positivist perspective adopts a deductive approach of theory-testing; a hypothesis is deduced from the theory and tested. In an induction-driven research strategy, data are collected and used to identify patterns of meaning to generate theory about novel phenomena. It's emphasis is on the importance of subjective interpretations. At the beginning of the research, I assumed I would adopt inductive reasoning, typical within the interpretivist perspective (Saunders et al., 2019) and a feature of qualitative research, i.e. a data-driven approach (Bell et al., 2019). However, over the course of the research I chose to adopt a hybrid, abductive approach; initially a deductive theory-testing approach and then an inductive data-driven strategy, working iteratively between both.

Table 1-2 Deduction, induction and abduction: From reason to research (Saunders et al., 2019 p153)

	Deduction	Induction	Abduction
Logic	In a deductive inference, when the premises are true, the conclusion must also be true	In an inductive inference, known premises are used to generate untested conclusions	In an abductive inference, known premises are used to generate testable conclusions
Generalisability	Generalising from the general to the specific	Generalising from the specific to the general	Generalising from the interactions between the specific and the general
Use of data	Data collection is used to evaluate propositions or hypotheses related to an existing theory	Data collection is used to explore a phenomenon, identify themes and patterns and create a conceptual framework	Data collection is used to explore a phenomenon, identify themes and patterns, locate these in a conceptual framework and test this through subsequent data collection and so forth
Theory	Theory falsification or verification	Theory generation and building	Theory generation or modification; incorporating existing theory where appropriate, to build new theory or modify existing theory

The literature review drove the deductive approach where the Shore et al. (2018) model of the inclusive workplace provided a useful frame for the first empirical study; to deepen understanding of the practices used by organizations to foster inclusion. For the second study, to explore the employee experiences of inclusion, the Shore et al. (2011) inclusion framework presented a helpful structure. Thus, initially I developed a priori codes from the theoretical papers, a deductive approach and then an inductive data-driven approach, through “open” coding (Boyatzis, 1998), to capture new ideas to enhance further analysis. I engaged in several inductive and deductive coding rounds, using NVivo software to facilitate creating new codes and collapsing others. This abductive approach allowed a more comprehensive analysis of the data and response to the RQ’s, to reflect the theoretical framework using deductive reasoning, whilst allowing themes to be identified from the data using inductive reasoning, to enable me to modify existing (Saunders et al., 2019) inclusion theory.

Next, I discuss my research choices which I addressed prior to determining the final design for each empirical study. As management science addresses dynamic and changing social systems, as an interpretivist researcher, I tried to

take account of this complexity by collecting what is meaningful to the participants. To collect in-depth data of participants understandings and descriptions has given rise to a wide variation of methods (Blaikie, 2009). I now discuss the rationale for the choices I made from purposeful sampling, data collection through semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis. I discuss research design, relevant to answer the RQ's in both empirical studies, in Chapters 3 and 4.

1.4.3.1 Purposive sampling

To explore organizational practices that foster inclusion and deepen understanding of organizational practices used to foster inclusion and explore employee experiences of inclusion, I needed participants with particular knowledge to act as informants. This necessitated purposive or non-probability sampling, rather than random sampling, but it was not a convenience sample, available by chance. Purposive sampling enabled collection of the broadest range and depth of information-rich data. In both empirical studies the criteria for sampling were determined a priori, to identify participants relevant to the RQ (Bryman, 2012). A broad range of organizations were selected on the basis they have invested in D&I, through the appointment an executive to lead the D&I agenda and commitment demonstrated through publicly acknowledged awards such as the National Equality Standard.

The sampling criteria for the first empirical study, were participants accountable for the D&I strategy, with expert knowledge of D&I practices in which their organizations are engaged, providing an informed perspective. These D&I experts, acted as a proxy for the organizational view. Invitations to contribute to the research were made through my own and my supervisors' networks. The D&I Directors, Leads or Managers (referred to as D&I Leads), included some who were operating at board level with a strategic perspective and others with operational perspectives, providing the rich data for the study. Participants for the second study, to explore employees' experiences of inclusion, were invited from three organizations from the first study. All three were service and knowledge-based businesses with similar professional standards and problem-solving

approach. Women were selected as organizations have a longer history of D&I interventions aimed at this group so were able to draw on the broadest range of experiences. Junior employees were selected, rather than senior employees who may be responsible for implementing practices and fostering inclusion. Also, when employees start in organizations they are likely to be provided with induction and additional training, so to reduce this potential bias, participants had one year or more tenure in the organization. Invitations to contribute to the research were made through leaders of the gender networks, where women identify with and self-select into the under-represented group. These purposive sampling strategies provided multiple perspectives to help uncover variances, contrasts, similarities and tensions in the data to reveal the phenomenon.

Sample sizes for these studies was determined by the collection of rich data from in-depth interviews, rather than seeking the largest sample size (Wilhelmy & Kohler, 2022). The aim with interpretivist research is to pursue in-depth investigation, through small sample sizes to explore a phenomena where large sample sizes are not usually feasible (Saunders et al., 2019). Nevertheless, aware that qualitative research sample size is debated, I explored the literature to discover from a review of 244 articles, in organization journals using qualitative interviews, an epistemic norm of 15-60 (Saunders & Townsend, 2016). Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) recommend 5-25 for interview-based studies, although they provide less empirical evidence. Wilhelmy and Kohler (2022) analysed that within qualitative only studies, samples range from 14 to 63, with a median of 28. Given there is no strict test for sample size and synthesising the above findings, I was guided by the saturation approach as coherent with the studies' qualitative methods (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). Data saturation, involved continued sampling until no new findings were identified (Bell et al., 2019), until codes were populated with well-developed properties and data suggested no new insights, dimensions for codes or themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I managed saturation in each study by recording new codes created from each transcript, when no new meaningful codes were created, I added another three participants to the first study totalling 15 D&I Leads, and five more participants of junior employees, making 36. These sample sizes were large

enough to demonstrate patterns, but small enough to retain a focus on individual experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

1.4.3.2 Data collection through semi-structured interviews

I collected data through semi-structured interviews as my primary concern was to gather information-rich data that provided both the breadth of the different aspects of inclusion but also the depth to provide insight of organizational practices that foster inclusion. I conducted semi-structured interviews in preference to unstructured interviews, observation or focus groups. I eliminated focus-groups as they may have provided rich data but those data would be created through group interactions and collective ideas and I was concerned with the individual understandings. Observations were also inappropriate as inclusion is an internal psychological construct, therefore, not observable. Unstructured interviews are more relevant where the researcher has only a general notion of what is to be investigated (Bell et al., 2019) but I had some clarity on the topic to be explored and needed to maintain that focus in the interview. Thus, I chose semi-structured interviews as the most appropriate method of data collection that would help uncover the nuances of understandings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Semi-structured interviews enabled me to invite participants to recall and reconstruct the detail of which practices are used by organizations to foster inclusion (Chapter 3) and employee experiences of inclusion (Chapter 4). Most importantly, semi-structured interviews allowed me to pose fixed questions to keep the interview on track, yet allowed interviewees to follow their own train of thought, to focus on what they saw as important (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). I used open-ended questions to reduce bias from my leading or guiding responses, enabling interviewees to pursue experiences relevant to them (Bell et al., 2019). Follow-up and probing questions in each area allowed me seek clarification and probe more deeply, to capture the participants detailed accounts, providing rich and in-depth data.

As data collection from an interpretivist perspective is an active process, intersubjective and social (Saunders et al., 2019) this prompted me to consider interviewing skills necessary for good research. Qualitative interviewing requires

skilled and detailed enquiry (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) to elicit the insightful and rich data. Despite many years of experience interviewing executives as an HR professional, I recognised research interviewing as a skill I had to learn. To that end and in preparation for the interviews, I debated the fixed questions with the supervisory team to ensure coherence with the RQs. Notwithstanding these refinements, questions are open to multiple interpretations and I debated the wording of the questions with my supervisors and tested them in pilot interviews to overcome possible distortions. Pilot interviews were conducted with interviewees not involved in the research, and these data were not retained, or used in analysis. This process helped develop questions that were clear, free of jargon and comprehensible to interviewees. As a result of the pilot interviews, I settled on three main questions in each study and identified follow-up questions to probe responses, to dig beyond the surface, and to reach deeper layers of understanding and experiences (Bell et al., 2019). I produced an interview guide for each study (Appendices E2 and F2) to provide a consistent framework for each interview.

Nevertheless, there are drawbacks to interviewing as a data collection method, despite the provisions outlined above to develop a robust process. Incidents may go unreported, or only the most recent incidents reported, which may not be representative of everyday life in the organization. Memories are weaker than the experience itself and taken-for-granted events and behaviours may not surface (Bell et al., 2019). In the first empirical study with D&I Leads (Chapter 3), the risk of fading memories was less problematic. These senior executives were immersed in the D&I agenda, delivering inclusion in their day-to-day role and likely to present a comprehensive account of the practices used to foster inclusion in their businesses. It is possible their own preferences and experiences may bias the data. I aimed to ameliorate this bias, first by building rapport and trust, and then with sufficient probes and follow-up questions to obtain depth and breadth in their accounts. In the second empirical study with junior employees (Chapter 4), I asked participants to record their experiences of inclusion for two weeks prior to the interview to help minimise memory distortions and capture incidents whilst they remained fresh in people's minds. Diaries are a useful method within

organizational research to capture everyday experiences (Doldor & Atewologun, 2021), to capture thoughts, feelings, behaviours and events within the dynamic, natural work context (Ohly et al., 2010). This record served as the starting point for the interviews providing instant access to some experiences of inclusion, enabling more experiences to be explored in the time available.

Interviews were conducted on Zoom as the research was undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic. Building rapport and assessing body language requires more effort on Zoom but is enhanced through active listening such as validating interviewees comments and asking follow-up questions. Additional physical cues included head-nodding and maintaining eye contact by looking directly into the camera rather than being distracted by one's own image on screen. The advantage was that participants found Zoom convenient.

The interview is the production site of knowledge, where knowledge is "not merely found, mined, or given but is actively created through questions and answers and the product is co-authored by the interviewee and interviewer." (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p63) and this production process continues through transcription, analysis and reporting. To establish good practice, I spent time cleansing and becoming familiar with the data. After each recorded interview I cleansed the verbatim transcripts using notes made during the interviews, listened to the recordings and coded each interview within 24 hours. I also recorded my impressions of each interview to help inform later analysis and noted in a reflexive journal my involvement in the production of knowledge, how I conducted the interview and any potential biases.

This led me to reflect on the asymmetrical power relation of the interview, my conduct, control and interpretations (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). This enabled me to refine my interview style to be more "learner" oriented, especially with the junior employees. I also noted that I particularly empathised with experiences that I judged as unfair or discriminatory. For example, Sian from organization C focused on exclusion because of the actions of her new line manager, who committed her to work and to deadlines that were impossible, excluded her from meetings and mis-represented her work. She arranged meetings to resolve the issues, but felt

invisible and treated as a commodity. I had to bracket my feelings and hold my judgement and used these discriminatory experiences to probe when she had experienced the opposite. She was then able to recall inclusive managers who adapted their style to meet her individual needs and described inclusion as not only being involved in work but being recognised and appreciated. These were possibly forgotten but important experiences, which added to the richness of the data.

1.4.3.3 Approach to analysis

My approach to analysis is based on interpretations of the data, not statistical manipulation used in positivist research. Within the interpretivist paradigm there are no absolutes; this subjective perspective means multiple interpretations are possible and there are multiple ways to arrive at interpretations (Partington, 2002). A thematic approach facilitated analysis of the complexity and richness of the data, leading to interpretations and development of themes. Although I used thematic analysis (TA) in both empirical studies, I considered critical incident techniques (CIT) for the second study to uncover employees' experiences of inclusion (Chapter 4). But in CIT the units of analysis are the number of defined incidents, based on a positivist paradigm (Woolsey, 1986; Butterfield et al., 2005). This research was to explore the subjective understandings and experiences of inclusion, not just record the events. TA is a more functional technique to capture multiple understandings and develop themes to capture their meanings.

Thematic analysis (TA) is a family of approaches, conducted in different ways (Braun & Clarke, 2021). TA enables the researcher to make sense of the data through coding and interpretation to answer the RQ, with consideration of the literature and theoretical concepts (Bell et al., 2019). Initially, I investigated reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) which views themes as interpretative stories or patterns of shared meaning organized around a central concept (Braun & Clarke, 2021). However, as described in Section 1.4.3, I adopted an abductive research strategy and chose to synthesise two other TA approaches consistent with this strategy. I used the deductive template approach (Crabtree & Miller,1999), where a priori coding is informed by the theoretical framework, and the inductive

approach of Boyatzis (1998) to develop themes from “raw” data, whilst still acknowledging my active role in the production of knowledge identified in RTA and my interpretivist philosophy.

Encoding data from both a theoretical and data-driven approach enabled me to identify and develop themes in an iterative process, to create insights and themes from patterns that emerged from the data. Coding commenced with the deductive template approach (Crabtree & Miller, 1999), based on the RQ’s and existing theory to make sense of the data. For the first empirical study a priori, coding was based on the Shore et al. (2018) model of the inclusive workplace to capture elements of organizational inclusion efforts. In the second empirical study, to explore the individual experiences of inclusion a priori coding was based on the Shore et al. (2011) inclusion framework of belongingness and valuing uniqueness. Throughout the coding process, I used “open” coding to capture the richness of the data and phenomenon on the basis that a “good code” is one that captures the qualitative richness of the phenomenon, prior to the process of interpretation (Boyatzis, 1998). Data collection and analysis for both studies were undertaken concurrently, codes were constantly refined, merged and re-grouped. Analysis proceeded through cycles of deductive and inductive reasoning and themes developed through iterative, reflexive and messy processes requiring constant reference to the RQ. The development of themes, relevant to the RQ, are described in Chapters 3 and 4.

1.4.4 Quality, rigour and ethics

Qualitative research is a powerful method to provide insights to better understand lived experiences and build theory, *provided* assumptions and choices are explicit (Wilhelmy & Kohler, 2022). This is because rigour in qualitative methods is not achieved through following a rigid protocol but is achieved through the coherence and consistency of choices made, referred to as transparency (Rheinhardt et al., 2018). The previous sections (Sections 1.4.1 to 1.4.3) and detail in Chapters 3 and 4 relevant to each empirical study, aim to explain the choices made in this research design, to provide that transparency. Despite there being no homogeneous markers of quality due to the varied nature of qualitative research

and methods, Guba and Lincoln (1994) propose that it is necessary to specify ways of establishing and assessing the quality of qualitative research through trustworthiness. Trustworthiness comprises four criteria; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, which I explore below for this research.

Credibility and transferability, relate to validity used in positivist research, and the extent to which the study is examining what it purports to examine (Bell et al., 2019). Specifically, credibility considers the research process and good practice that lead to the match between findings and theoretical ideas. This is established through the many perspectives elicited through the in-depth semi-structured interviews which allowed a high level of congruence between concepts and interviews. Credibility is further enhanced through producing verbatim transcripts which allowed repeated and thorough examination of the data, available for public scrutiny (Bell et al., 2019) within the data management rules of the university. Transferability is the degree to which findings can be transferred across social settings despite contextual uniqueness. I aimed to achieve this through the depth and breadth of data, providing thick descriptions, also, through prolonged engagement with the data, multiple types of analysis from using NVivo tools, mind-mapping to manual manipulation of the data and discussion with supervisors and colleagues. The thick description, detailed analysis and remaining open to surprises potentially enables transferability to other settings and contexts.

Dependability and confirmability, relate to positivist reliability, and the extent to which the studies can be replicated and confirmed (Bell et al., 2019). Dependability and replicability are enabled through my auditing approach. I maintained comprehensive records throughout data collection and analysis, retrievable through my research journal and NVivo Memos to record data analysis decisions. For example, in the first study I used the transcript facility on Zoom but as I cleansed the data discovered important discrepancies. A participant said “you may be a young *white* guy but that doesn't mean to say that he doesn't feel excluded on some level” which was transcribed as “you may be a young *black* guy”. I was able to cleanse transcripts with a relatively high degree of accuracy

as I could replay recordings and refer to my interview notes. Hence, for the second study I used Otter.ai which was more accurate, although, I used the same robust cleansing process. Dependability is also supported through the availability of interview guides (Appendices E2 and F2), records of the coding process and theme development. Confirmability, or the degree to which findings can be corroborated by others, is enabled through Zoom recordings and verbatim transcripts which reveal the detail and context of each interview. This is supplemented by my reflexive journal to record how the research was conducted. For example, I recorded my potential bias particularly the value I place on equality and my knowledge of SIT (Section 1.1), which may have focused my attention on experiences of assimilation and exclusion. In acknowledging this potential bias, I re-examined the data but found no evidence that I had influenced the interviewees to bias the data.

Rigour is further enhanced with a robust ethical stance which I adopted from the outline provided by Miles and Huberman (1994) and the Cranfield University code concerning the collection, analysis and storage of data. Prior to commencement of the research, I completed a risk assessment and obtained ethical approval from Cranfield University. Prior to the interview all participants had full knowledge of what was involved in the research (Appendix F1 and G1) and provided informed consent. Informed consent included information on ensuring their privacy, confidentiality of data and anonymity, i.e. that no individual or organization would be identifiable and that they could withdraw at any time during the interview or up to seven days after. The consent form also confirmed that all data are held securely, according to GDPR (2018) principles and will be destroyed on completion of the reports and journal articles. Whilst conducting the interviews I was concerned to maintain an ethical stance. I did this by dedicating time to build rapport with interviewees to provide a psychologically safe place for them to be open about their experiences. This was especially important for interviewees in the second empirical study (Chapter 4) who were junior employees recalling their lived experiences which may be both positive and negative experiences. I was sensitive to experiences of exclusion. I explored and validated these revelations to ensure interviewees felt heard. I was then able to

ask follow-up questions to ask when the opposite might have been experienced, this provided rich data that might not otherwise have surfaced.

1.5 The Research

Having discussed the rationale for choice of methods and coherence with my research philosophy, RQ and research strategy, this section outlines the research process of the three papers and draws the findings together to answer the RQ. The first paper is the SLR (Chapter 2) to identify the lack of knowledge about inclusion practices and the individual experiences of inclusion. The second, the first empirical study (Chapter 3), is to deepen understanding of organizational practices used to foster inclusion. The third paper is the second empirical study (Chapter 4), to explore employee experiences of inclusion. Finally the findings of all three papers are drawn together to contribute to inclusion literature (Chapter 5), by broadening the explanatory lens that theorises how inclusion is fostered in the workplace, by talking to both D&I Directors/Leads and junior diverse employees about their experiences of inclusion.

1.5.1 Paper 1: An exploration of how organizations foster inclusion

The first step in the research process was conducting the SLR (Chapter 2) to answer the review question: What is known about organizational practices used to foster experiences of inclusion? The three domains of literature captured the relevant literature; inclusion, the inclusive organization and inclusion practices. Of the 49 papers reviewed, published between 2006 and 2021, 22 use quantitative survey-based methods and 13 are conceptual papers. These approaches help explain or describe the phenomenon of inclusion, but cannot explore the how organizations foster inclusion, or what is accomplished. Only ten empirical studies used a qualitative approach (four were mixed methods) to provide this rich insight, to deepen understanding of the inclusive organization. Findings indicate that fostering the inclusive organization necessitates two work-streams; exclusion prevention and inclusion promotion (Shore et al., 2018), yet there remains less agreement about what constitutes inclusion promotion. Despite scholars recognising the importance of inclusion practices there remains a lack of clarity about which organizational practices foster inclusion and how

individuals experience inclusion. These shortcomings led to the overall aim of the thesis: to explore organizational practices that foster experiences of inclusion and using a qualitative approach. To address the first shortcoming, a lack of knowledge about the role of organizational inclusion practices the first empirical paper (Chapter 3) addresses the RQ: Which practices are used by organizations to foster inclusion and how do they satisfy inclusion needs? The second shortcoming in the literature is the lack of clarity about the individual experiences of inclusion. Hence, the second empirical study (Chapter 4) was designed, to answer the RQ: How do employees experience inclusion? Next, I provide an overview of both empirical studies (Chapter 3 and 4) and finally draw together the findings of the studies to explore organizational practices that foster inclusion (Chapter 5).

1.5.2 Paper 2: Understanding which practices foster inclusion: a view from the top

The first empirical paper (Chapter 3) responds to the call in the SLR to explore and clarify the role of inclusion practices. The aim is to deepen understanding of practices used within organizations to foster inclusion and how they satisfy inclusion needs. A qualitative study collected data from semi-structured interviews with 15 D&I Directors and Leads. Organizations were selected on the basis they were deemed to be committed to D&I, for example, they had appointed a full-time D&I executive and were recognised for their D&I efforts using external acknowledgement or award as a proxy indicator, for example, having been awarded the National Equality Standard or similar. The D&I Leads were the experts within the organization, tasked to drive the D&I agenda and included a broad range of seniority from main board directors providing a strategic view, to managers with operational perspectives. This study responds to the call for clarification of the role of practices and expands understanding of inclusion practices. Findings show that practices are not uniformly implemented and that practices may satisfy both needs to belong and differences valued, with interviewees prioritising the social need to belong. Additionally, but contrary to the literature, there is a lack of evidence for decision-making as an inclusion

practice, although, well-being and career development are seen as important inclusion practices that demonstrate support and appreciation of difference. Well-being and career development practices are potent inclusion practices, re-positioning them in the Shore et al. (2018) inclusive workplace model as both inputs and outputs of inclusion. Inclusion practices are also malleable and the extent to which they foster inclusion depends critically on the leaders involved and their commitment to D&I.

1.5.3 Paper 3: Experiential and contextual understandings of inclusion

The SLR indicates a lack of clarity about the experience of inclusion and the first empirical study indicated that organizations use multiple approaches to foster inclusion with less understanding of employee experiences of inclusion. Thus, this second empirical study (Chapter 4) aims to explore how individuals experience inclusion, that may or may not be due to organizational practices. Data were collected from semi-structured interviews with 36 junior women and thematic analysis. Junior employees were selected rather than senior, as the later may be responsible for implementing D&I policies and providing the experience of inclusion. Women were selected as organizations have a legacy of D&I policies and interventions directed at this group, therefore, women employees are more likely than other under-represented groups to have experienced inclusion initiatives. Three organizations were selected from the first empirical study, all were knowledge-based, service-led businesses that demand similar types of work and professional standards, providing similar contexts that allow a focus on the different experiences. Findings indicate that junior employees prioritise the need to be valued for their unique professional expertise, validated when involved in decision-making, providing empirical support for the task-related elements of inclusion. Being valued is also experienced as being treated as whole person, managing work and home priorities, experienced through well-being and career development practices. Further, findings show that inclusion is complex, dependent on context and the type of inclusion may vary from person to person. Complexity is compounded

because inclusion and exclusion may be experienced simultaneously. Inclusion may also change over time as competence develops. Findings also show the primary context for inclusion is within day-to-day interactions with the line manager and junior women respond to inclusion and proactively manage their own and others inclusion.

1.5.4 Drawing together the findings

Chapter 5 draws together the findings from the D&I Leads perspective on practices used by organizations to foster inclusion (Chapter 3) and the individual experiences of inclusion (Chapter 4). Findings indicate that organizations may prioritise practices to promote belonging, in contrast to employees who prioritise the need to be valued for their differences, regarded as their expertise. This is consistent with studies that indicate inclusion for junior employees is likely to be experienced through their work, supporting the importance of decision-making as an important experience of inclusion. The studies also show that the experience of inclusion is complex, may change over time, and that organizational inclusion practices may satisfy both needs for belonging and uniqueness. This challenges the view that inclusion practices and experiences can be definitively categorised. Nevertheless, and importantly findings indicate both D&I Leads and employees see well-being and career development practices as inputs to inclusion, to demonstrate that the whole person is valued. The studies also indicate the D&I Leads are concerned with organizational initiatives that foster inclusion, in contrast to junior employees who experience inclusion within day-to-day interactions and within the context of the relationship with their line manager.

Over the four years of this research the literature on inclusion has expanded and proved an exciting and exhilarating field of study. Despite the proliferation of new studies, I am proud of the contribution this research makes to the field. When people told me that the most important part of a successful PhD was being passionate about the subject because you are living it for four years, nothing could have prepared me for how true that was going to be. Despite the frustrations and vicissitudes of my PhD expedition, I still feel passionately about building inclusive organizations, where everyone thrives. Although I am pleased

that I now have a better understanding of fostering inclusion, I am keenly aware of how much I do not know. There is still much to do to develop a coherent and comprehensive theory of inclusion but this research makes several contributions to broadening the explanatory lens that theorises how inclusion is fostered in the workplace, by talking to both D&I Directors/Leads and junior diverse employees about their experiences of inclusion. I look forward to contributing to the ongoing challenge.

1.6 Contributions

This study identifies initiatives that go beyond anti-discrimination and diversity management practices, to address specific aspects of the subjective experience of inclusion. The literature review identifies many inclusion practices with less understanding about how they are experienced as inclusive, or how different individuals experience inclusion, both are important in developing an inclusive organization. This study contributes to the inclusion literature by broadening the explanatory lens that theorises how inclusion is fostered in the workplace, by talking to both D&I Directors/Leads and junior diverse employees about their experiences of inclusion. This study uses a novel research design, and makes two theoretical contributions that inclusion practices are inexact and that well-being and career development practices foster inclusion. The study makes three empirical contributions, to provide empirical evidence that employees are more likely to experience inclusion through task-related activities, that line managers are the primary context for inclusion and employees respond to inclusion and proactively manage their own and others' inclusion. The study also has implications for policy and practice to refocus inclusion practices to value individual differences and develop line managers people skills. Details are outlined in Table 1- 3 and discussed in detail in Chapter 5, Section 5.3.

Table 1-3 Summary of research design, contributions and implications

Type	Literature	Contribution: Supports / extends / challenges
Research design		

	Research should be explicit about the aspects of inclusion and levels of inclusion to be explored (Nishii & Leroy, 2022)	Supports: Two different data sources, from D&I Leads and junior employees, are drawn together to identify which practices provide the experience of inclusion to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon
Theoretical		
	Leaders' behaviours/practices either facilitate belonging or value uniqueness (Randel et al., 2018)	Challenges: Inclusion practices are inexact; they may satisfy both needs to belong and have differences valued
	The state of well-being (Shore et al., 2011) and career advancement are outputs of inclusion (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Shore et al., 2011; Shore et al., 2018)	Extends: This work shows well-being practices and career development practices are inputs to inclusion
Empirical		
	Employees are more likely to experience inclusion through their work; task-related inclusion (Nishii & Leroy, 2022).	Supports: Employees prioritise task-related inclusion; being valued for their expertise
	Lower-level leaders promote everyday experiences of inclusion (Nishii & Leroy, 2022)	Extends: The primary context for inclusion is within day-to-day interactions with the line manager.
	Leaders' role model inclusion, reinforcing inclusive behaviours in others (Shore & Chung, 2022; Mor Barak, Luria & Brimhall, 2021). Treatment that satisfies belonging and uniqueness (Shore et al., 2011)	Extends: Employees proactively manage their own and others inclusion
Practice	Evidence	Implications
	Inclusion is experienced within day-to-day interactions, rather than formal interventions	Establish inclusive working practices such as processes to develop shared-goals and regular employee/line manager meetings to include career development
	Employees prioritise being valued for their expertise	Develop processes to engage more employees in decision-making, for example, by using video conferencing and survey tools

	Line managers provide the context for inclusion	Train junior managers in good people skills
	Well-being and career development practices provide the experience of inclusion	Recognise that well-being and career development practices enhance inclusion and ensure under-represented groups have access to these resources
Policy		
	Promote inclusion as both valuing differences and facilitating belonging	At a policy level re-message inclusion to focus more on valuing differences as a resource, alongside belonging

1.7 Thesis Structure

A map of the thesis structure (Figure 1-6) shows how the papers link together to answer the thesis RQ. The research starts by positioning the problem and research in the literature (Chapter 1) to inform the SLR in Chapter 2. The findings from the SLR developed the RQ for the two empirical studies in Chapter 3 and 4. The findings of the studies are drawn together in Chapter 5 to answer the RQ: How do organizational practices foster experiences of inclusion?

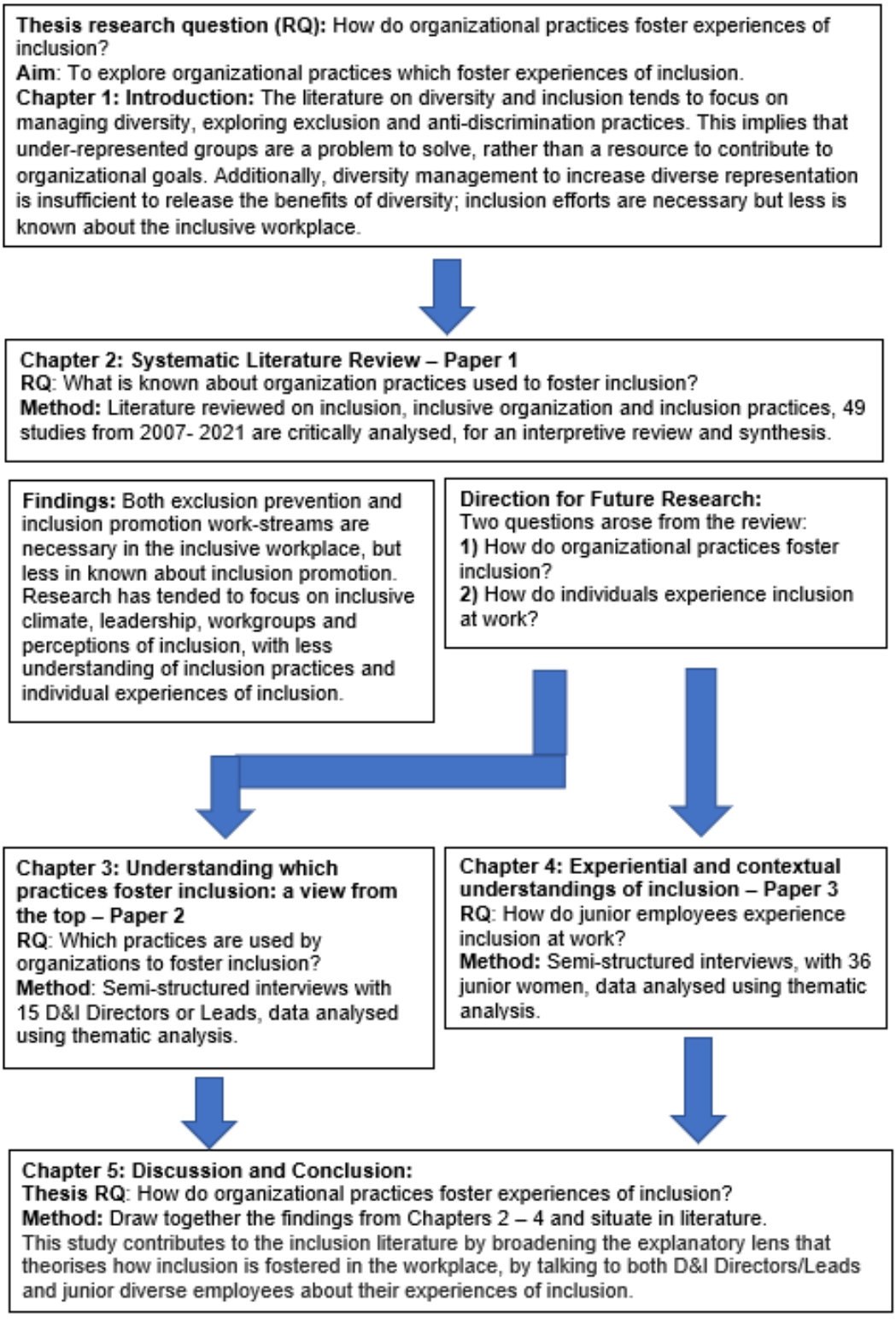

Figure 1-6 Overall research structure

2 AN EXPLORATION OF HOW ORGANIZATIONS FOSTER INCLUSION

2.1 Abstract

The aim of this literature review was to understand what is known about organizational practices used to foster experiences of inclusion. A systematic review of the literature was conducted on three domains of literature; inclusion, inclusive organizations and inclusion practices. Articles were identified from 2006 to 2021, and 49 were assessed for critical analysis and interpretive review and synthesis. Workgroup inclusion is conceptualised as treatment that satisfies the psychological needs of belongingness and uniqueness (Shore et al., 2011). Findings indicate that fostering the inclusive organization necessitates two work streams; exclusion prevention and inclusion promotion (Shore et al., 2018), yet there remains less agreement about what constitutes inclusion promotion. Analysis revealed that studies tend to investigate the inclusive organization through the lenses of inclusive leadership, climate, workgroups, perceptions and practices with less understanding of how they relate. Findings indicate these elements may interact and be generative, i.e. a dynamic self-fulling model. Notwithstanding these findings and despite scholars recognising the importance of inclusion practices, there remains a lack of clarity about inclusion practices their role and purpose and how individuals experience inclusion.

2.2 Positioning the Review within the Literature

There is increasing pressure for organizations to create an inclusive workplace, where fostering a sense of inclusion enables the organization to attract, promote and retain diverse talent but diversity across many dimensions remains elusive. Research has largely focused on managing diversity, exploring anti-discrimination and exclusion practices, to improve representation of diverse groups. Whilst the focus on preventing exclusion of minority groups to increase diverse representation is important, diversity alone is also insufficient to create inclusion (Mor Barak et al., 2016; Shore, Cleveland & Sanchez, 2018). Minority

groups need to feel included in the organization; inclusion promotes an intention to remain and therefore contributes to increased diversity representation. However, retention of minority groups is often the biggest challenge, it requires that minority groups are included and are part of the organizational system (Shore et al., 2018). Yet there is no coherent, comprehensive, or tested theory of the inclusive organization. This paper aims to analyse and synthesise the accumulated research on organizational practices used to foster experiences of inclusion to generate new insights and contribute to the inclusive workplace.

2.2.1 The diversity and inclusion literature

The theoretical focus in diversity and inclusion (D&I) literature on exclusion and anti-discrimination diversity practices is problematic, treating minority groups as a problem to solve (Jansen et al., 2015). Exclusion and anti-discrimination are important areas of study to help break down barriers to entry, to bring diverse groups into the workplace. It is not that inclusion replaces diversity management but that organizations need to commit to include diverse groups. Without inclusion they may lose valued employees from under-represented groups (Shore et al., 2018). Scholarship on inclusion, despite being a growing area of study, has yet to agree a comprehensive, tested theory of inclusion (Sabharwal, 2014; Randel et al., 2016) with little agreement on inclusion concepts (Mor Barak et al., 2016; Shore et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011). More recently, Roberson, (2019) in her literature review, notes that the inclusion concept is relatively coherent, it is the identification of practices to facilitate inclusion and their outcomes that are less distinct. In sum, there is agreement that the literature on inclusion lacks clarity, particularly in the way organizations need to proceed through inclusion practices (Shore et al., 2018; Janssens & Steyaert, 2019). This review aims to address these shortcomings, with a focus on the positive steps to foster inclusion rather than focus on the problem of discrimination. Below is an overview of the literature to position the systematic review.

2.2.2 The inclusive organization

Possibly the most comprehensive model of the inclusive workplace, is presented by Shore et al. (2018). They specify two distinct management orientations (Figure 2-1); one commits to D&I through the enhancement and promotion of inclusion, the second, demonstrates commitment to compliance practices and policies with a focus on preventing exclusion. This is a useful conceptualisation of the inclusive organization; it demonstrates that it is not a question of organizations being focused on *either* preventing exclusion *or* promoting inclusion, both are equally important.

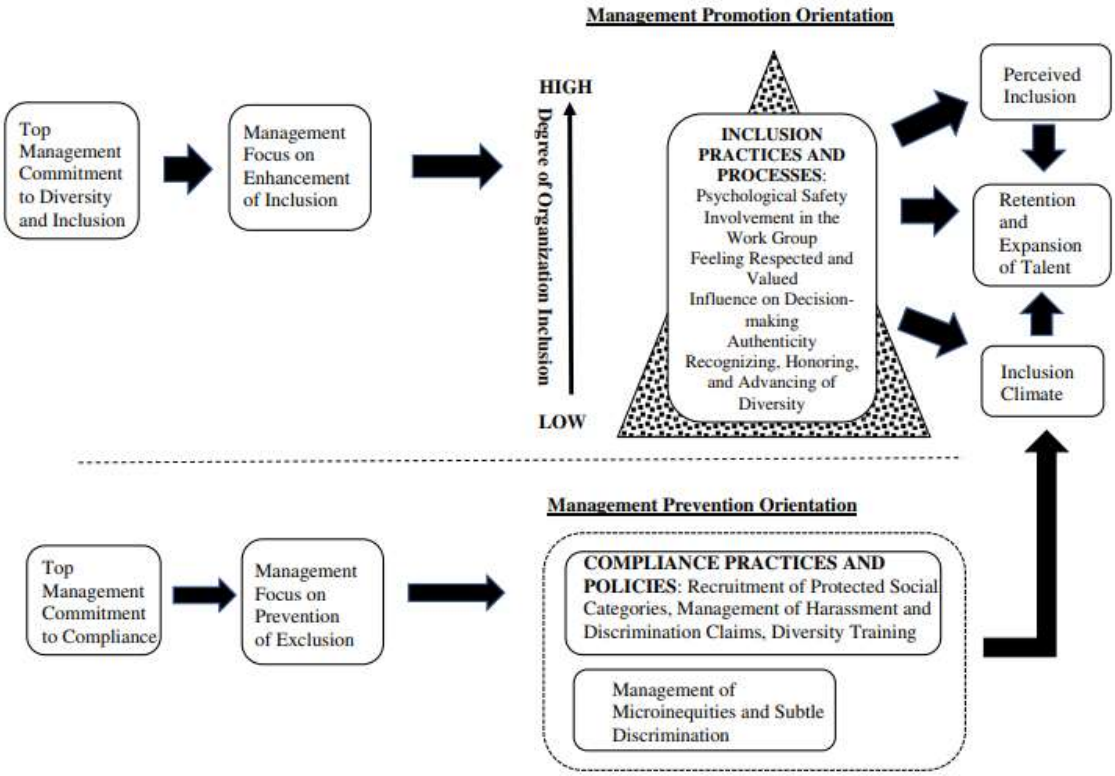

Figure 2-1 "A model of inclusive organizations" (Shore et al., 2018, p185)

Shore and colleagues also discuss the importance of the consistent enactment of inclusion practices and processes at all organizational levels and describe how inclusive leadership, climate, perceptions, workgroups and practices might relate. They suggest enactment of inclusion practices contributes to the degree the organization is inclusive, on a continuum from low to high inclusion. The model indicates that such practices lead to outputs of perceived inclusion, and an

inclusive climate. In contrast, others think differently about the outputs of inclusion. At an individual level some cite outputs of inclusion as employee commitment (Nishii, 2013; Mor Barak et al., 2016), others creativity and increased role performance (Chung, Dean & Ehrhart, 2020; Brown et al., 2020). At an organizational level the literature cites firm performance, such as productivity and innovation (Mor Barak, 2015; Stoermer, Bader & Froese, 2016), which is not included in the Shore et al. (2018) model. In addition, others discus inclusion "practices and processes" differently; where Shore et al. include psychological safety and authenticity, others discuss these as psychological processes and outcomes of inclusion (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Bernstein et al., 2020; Jansen et al., 2014; Shore et al., 2018; Nishii, 2013). Nevertheless, the Shore et al. model, if not fully coherent or comprehensive, is the only attempt to the authors' knowledge, to propose an organization-wide model of inclusion, which provides a useful frame for this study.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the literature on organizational practices used to foster experiences of inclusion, to review existing models and seek to clarify concepts that foster the inclusive organization. Understanding more about the inclusive organization may help organizations proceed to help increase retention, promotion and increase representation of diverse talent. Diverse representation in organizations is important, it helps businesses improve performance, prevent the dangers of groupthink and is morally right (Sabharwal, 2014; Mor Barak et al., 2016; Vinnicombe, Atewologun & Battista, 2019). Yet, despite equality legislation since the 1970's and investment to recruit, promote and retain diverse talent, the majority of firms tracked, over five years, by McKinsey (2020), have made little progress on gender and ethnic diversity in executive teams. This review will focus on inclusion as a solution-oriented approach, to help organizations understand what works and how to proceed.

2.2.3 Aims of this study

This study aims to contribute to understanding how organizations foster experiences of inclusion. We assume that inclusion matters to everyone and

provides desirable outcomes for all (Shore et al., 2011; Li et al., 2019) but especially for under-represented groups (Randel et al., 2016). Therefore, we did not restrict the literature search to specific defined characteristics, such as gender or ethnicity. Positioning inclusion as a meta-construct, we bring together principles from different disciplines, a cross – disciplinary review, including management science, social psychology, organizational behaviour and sociology, taking an integrated consilience approach. Figure 2-2 identifies the three domains of literature for review; inclusion, the inclusive organization and inclusion practices with the review questions and key articles. The questions addressed for this systematic literature review (SLR) are:

> What is known about organizational practices that foster experiences of inclusion?

Additional questions are:

> How is inclusion different from diversity?
>
> How do people experience inclusion?
>
> What is an inclusive organization?
>
> What are inclusion practices?

Whilst the focus of this review is on inclusive organizations, inclusion and inclusion practices, we have included literature on inclusive leadership and inclusive culture when they relate to inclusion practices.

Figure 2-2 The domains of literature and review questions

This paper continues with four sections. First, we outline the systematic method to search and analyse the literature. Second, through integrating and synthesising the literature the findings clarify the concepts of diversity management and inclusion efforts, to identify shortcomings in understanding the role of inclusion practices and individual experiences of inclusion. The findings are considered in relation to the literature. We conclude with recommendations for future research to examine the role of inclusion practices and individual experiences of inclusion, to help theorise how inclusion is fostered in the workplace.

2.3 Method

There is no definitive evidence-based-approach in management sciences to map and assess existing research in an SLR. Most SLR methods are based on health-related frameworks (Rojon Okupe & McDowall, 2021), with a positivist orientation, seeking cause and effect. But management science is fragmented, context and practitioner-sensitive (Tranfield, Denyer & Smart, 2003) and often qualitative so

less suited to these methods. Tranfield and colleagues argue for a robust and replicable method and adapt the medical model for management science. Rojon et al. (2021), in their review of systematic reviews, build on Tranfield and colleagues work to describe best practice. This review adopts their recommendations and refinements. Table 2-1 shows the review plan, from developing the need for a review, to conducting the review and reporting.

Table 2-1 Systematic review plan (Adapted from Tranfield, Denyer & Smart, 2003; Rojon, Okupe & McDowall, 2020)

Systematic Review Plan	
Stage 1 Planning the review	Phase 0 – Identify the need for review Phase 1 – Proposal for review Phase 2 – Develop review protocol
Stage 2 Conducting the review	Phase 3 – Identify research Phase 4 – Select studies Phase 5 – Quality assessment of studies Phase 6 – Data extraction and monitoring Phase 7 – Data synthesis
Stage 3 Reporting, dissemination	Phase 8 – Report and recommendations Phase 9 – Putting evidence into practice

2.3.1 Selection of studies

This review seeks to include the broadest range of studies, drawing on rich research from a broad range of nations and scholars, to capture diverse views. Therefore, prior to conducting the review, we designed a protocol, to ensure a robust and transparent process. During this process we defined key words, search strings, inclusion and exclusion criteria. As the review question includes: inclusion, organization, and practices these became key words, with variants and synonyms (Table 2-2) added to form the search strings.

Table 2-2 Key words, variants and synonyms

Construct		Key words (add plurals, past tense)
Inclusion	1.0	Inclusive, inclusionary, inclusiveness
	2.0	"Optimal distinctive", belongingness, belonging, belong
		"Uniqueness valued/respected/recognised", "value/respect/recognise uniqueness", "differences valued/respected", "leverage unique perspectives/expertise"
Organization	0.1	Organi?ation, organi?ational, work place, workplace, work group, workgroup
		Business, company, firm, institution, environment
Practices	0.0.1	Practice, practices, processes, process, procedure, action, behaviour, behavior

A panel of scholars and experts contributed their technical and practitioner expertise to add to the robustness of the process and search strings (Appendix A). We tested different search strings in a series of pilot searches and final strings (Table 2-3) were validated when all five key articles, shown in Appendix B, were retrieved. The search was conducted on electronic databases using standard Boolean search strings. The strings did not include 'NOT' as a search operator as it may have excluded relevant papers. For example, although the study excluded articles about "inclusive environmental practices", the words "work environment" are relevant to the workplace and thus important in the review. Searches were conducted, on three management science electronic databases, EBSCO, Psych INFO, and ABI. To maintain an up-to-date and relevant review we set up alerts on Zetoc, Google Scholar and on each electronic database for citations of the key scholars and continuous updates for the search strings.

Table 2-3 Validated search strings

Search 1	Inclusi*	N5 (organi* OR work* OR business* OR compan* OR firm* OR institution* OR environment*)	AND (practice* OR process* OR behavi* OR Action*)
Search 2	((optimal distinct*) OR belong*) AND (Unique* OR respect* OR value*))	N5 (organi* OR work* OR business* OR compan* OR firm* OR institution* OR environment*)	AND (practice* OR process* OR behavi* OR Action*)

Note: Search string 2.1 on ABI ("optimal distinct*" OR belong*) AND (Unique* OR respect* OR value) N/5 (organi* OR work* OR business* OR compan* OR firm* OR institution* OR environment*)

Electronic database and hand-searches were conducted, bounded by inclusion and exclusion criteria (Appendix C). We included articles in English, as most high-quality studies are published in these journals. The date range covered 2006 to 2121, as Roberson in 2006 was the first to differentiate and define diversity and inclusion as separate concepts (Shore et al., 2011; Cottrill, Lopez & Hoffman, 2014; Stoemer, Bader & Froese, 2016; Brimhall et al., 2017; Shore et al., 2018). Articles included peer-reviewed quantitative, qualitative and conceptual papers. Practitioner reports were included as the topic is highly relevant to practitioners. Electronic searches cannot account for all relevant literature (Denyer & Tranfield, 2009) and hand-searches revealed an additional 18 relevant papers. The lead researcher contacted Lynn Shore, a key scholar in the field, who confirmed we had captured the main papers from her perspective.

2.3.2 Screening and assessment

A staged review was conducted, shown in Figure 2-3, starting with de-duping and title-searches of the 4,003 articles retrieved, leaving 238 articles. The hand-search uncovered another 18 articles, resulting in 256. These were full-text screened for relevance, using the inclusion/exclusion criteria, leaving 111 articles for quality assessment. Rather than use journal-ranking as a proxy for quality, to add rigour, we identified criteria for each type of paper to enable a comparison of quantitative, qualitative, conceptual and practitioner articles (Appendix D). The lead researcher assigned a score, 0-3, for comprehensiveness of theory, concepts, methods, and implication for practice. We assessed generalisability for quantitative results (Pittaway et al., 2004), contribution for qualitative studies (Tracy, 2010) and usefulness of framework and models for conceptual review papers using IJMR guidelines. As far as the researchers are aware there is not a standard authority for reviewing practitioner papers. These papers may be important but may lack academic rigour (Adams, Smart & Huff, 2017) leading to possible exclusion. Therefore, we assigned the qualitative criteria, with double weighting given to contribution and practitioner implications. This quality assessment excluded 68 articles. For example, a respected qualitative study by Janssens and Zanoni (2008), entitled 'What makes an organization inclusive' investigated anti-discrimination practices, so lacks the theoretical and conceptual underpinning of inclusion for this study. Another paper (Dobusch, 2014) examines inclusive organizations by looking at discourses on exclusion, so again out of scope. After quality assessment of the 111 articles, 45 articles remained, and a further four articles were added from alerts after the original search. Thus 49 papers were reviewed and analysed.

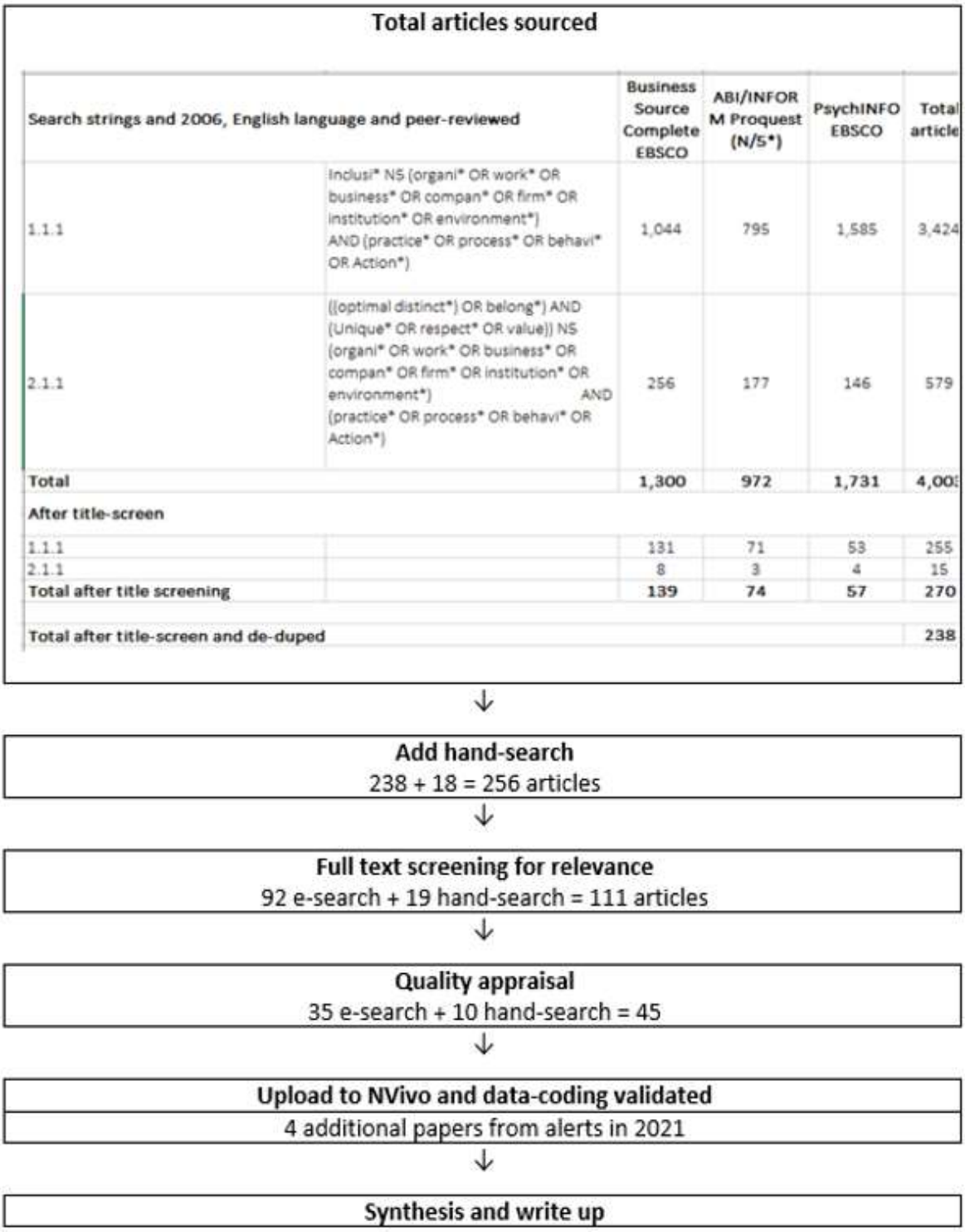

Figure 2-3 Conducting the search and screening articles

2.3.3 Data extraction and analysis

The final 49 articles were critically appraised for interpretive review and synthesis, rather than a narrative review, frequently used in social sciences (Tranfield et al., 2003). Narrative reviews identify what is known about the topic with less emphasis on integrating or evaluating the literature. This interpretive synthesis investigated and compared the data across studies, to develop categories and higher-level themes (Briner & Denyer, 2012), to draw insight and identify issues.

The papers were uploaded to NVivo software for data-extraction which provided a robust system for coding and analysis (Pittaway et al., 2004), potentially guarding against bias, and selective presentation of results (Denyer & Tranfield, 2009). We established an a priori coding framework, based on Wallace and Wray's (2017) data extraction criteria to include journal data, researcher perspective, theory, methodology, participant, and study characteristics. Additional codes were added from the Shore et al. (2018) model of the inclusive workplace to provide a framework for analysis. A co-researcher checked the coding framework for credibility. This was supplemented by "open" coding to capture new ideas (Boyatzis, 1998) and themes developed as analysis progressed. NVivo software enabled the data to be grouped and regrouped to answer the review questions. Tentative findings were discussed with other scholars through the Cranfield, Gender Leadership and Inclusion Centre and Dr. Colloquium presentations, to enhance analysis and provide additional insight.

The organizational inclusion literature is nascent, diverse, and growing, this interpretivist approach enabled creation of patterns of social construction and new categories (Rousseau, Manning & Denyer, 2008). For example, as analysis progressed the literature was synthesised and new codes identified that extended the Shore et al. (2018) model of the inclusive workplace. For example, 'work allocation' and 'access to resources', identified in the literature as inclusion practices are not included in the Shore et al. model (2018). They were integrated into the category "Access to information and resources". This paper continues to reveal the findings of the review and analysis which are synthesised to suggest new categorisations of practices and outcomes. The findings are then situated in

the literature to suggest potential interactions between the different elements of the inclusive workplace. We start by answering the review questions.

2.4 Findings

This review is organized around the Shore et al. (2018) model of the inclusive workplace (Figure 2-1) to address the question: How are the inclusive organization and practices investigated in organizational studies? This is answered in three sections that represent the sub-questions of the review.

How is inclusion different from diversity?

How is inclusion experienced?

What is an inclusive organization?

What are inclusion practices?

I found only nine articles pre-2015, but 40 post-2015, demonstrating the growth in inclusion literature. Features of the articles are shown in Appendix E. The social psychological approach dominates, adopted in 25 articles, possibly because the well tested social identity theory (SIT) explains exclusion (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), leading some researchers to refocus on inclusion. As SIT tends to be investigated through quantitative studies, it is not surprising, that of the 49 studies under review, 22 use quantitative methods and surveys for data collection. Other papers are conceptual (13), qualitative interviews using case studies or ethnographic studies (10) and four mixed methods. Articles appear in 25 different publications, revealing the broad range of perspectives concerned with inclusion, from psychology, management, organizational behaviour, sociology, human resources, to ethics. Nine studies investigate employees as the unit of analysis, four look at managers and 15 are mixed populations. Exploring different levels is important as the experience of inclusion is likely to vary according to seniority, whether developing the policy and practices or being impacted by them. Most of the studies are US-based (19), with others from Australia (5), Europe (8), China/India (4) and the remaining 13 papers were conceptual drawing on a broad range of literature, although mostly through a Western lens. Nevertheless, the range of countries signifies an international interest in inclusion.

The next sections aim to answer the review questions noted above (2.2.3); first clarifying the experience of inclusion and second to uncover the constituents of the inclusive organization; the two-stream approach, how leadership and culture impact inclusion practices and the outcomes of inclusion. Next inclusion practices are investigated and categorized, concluding with an exploration of how inclusion practices vary dependent on leaders' beliefs and cognitive capability.

2.4.1 Inclusion is different from diversity, the experience of inclusion

The literature indicates that D&I are sometimes assumed to be the same and used jointly (Sherbin & Rashid, 2017), but they are separate and distinct concepts (Roberson, 2006; Mor Barak, 2015). Many acknowledge that Roberson (2006) was the first to identify D&I as conceptually different (Shore et al., 2011; Cottrill et al., 2014; Brimhall et al., 2017; Shore et al., 2018), where diversity is the demographic make-up of groups and inclusion is employee involvement and integration. Optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT), (Brewer, 1991), defines inclusion as the satisfaction of needs for belonging and uniqueness. Shore et al. (2011, p1265) use this to define workgroup inclusion as "the degree to which an employee perceives they are an esteemed member of the group through experiencing treatment that satisfies his or her needs for belongingness and uniqueness". These scholars present an inclusion framework (Figure 2-4), and describe inclusion as the individual treated as an insider and their uniqueness encouraged by the group.

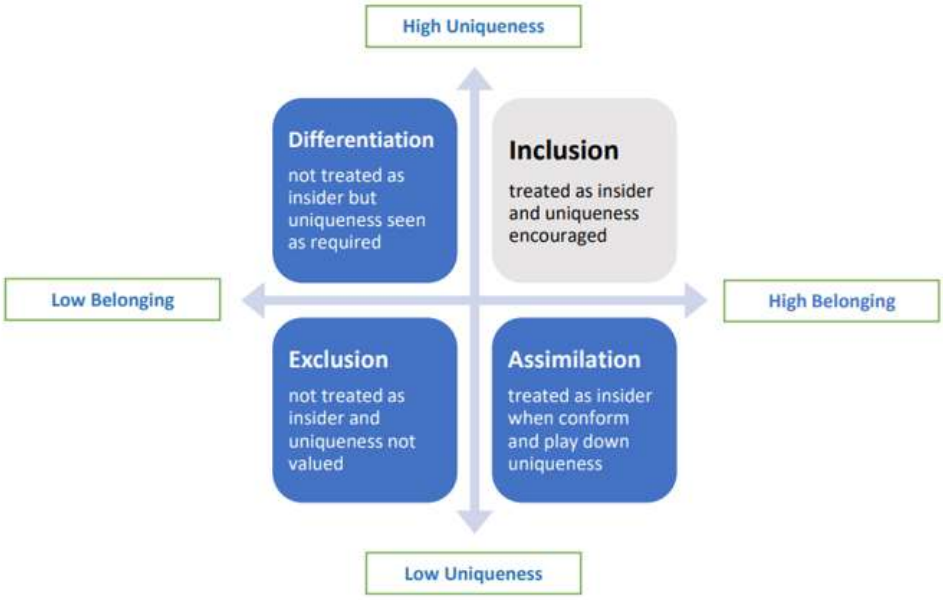

Figure 2-4 Workgroup inclusion framework (adapted from Shore et al., 2011)

Belonging and uniqueness were key words in the article search, nevertheless, this conceptualisation is adopted in 31 of the 49 studies, suggesting it is broadly accepted. Others have conceptualised inclusion as belonging and authenticity, where authenticity enables individuals to be different from each other but also the same (Jansen et al., 2014). However, this distinction may be unnecessary, as "uniqueness encouraged" implies one is valued as different from the group. This is supported by the notion that inclusion may be seen as managing the dichotomy of affirming individual identity and integrating group identity (Kulkarni et al., 2018), leading to perceived inclusion. Despite the broad consensus on the Shore et al. (2011) conceptualisation of inclusion in the context of workgroups, inclusion it is a psychological state and is likely to be experienced by individuals differently (Shore et al., 2011), but less is known about how inclusion is experienced at an individual level, or in the organization. Nevertheless, the individual experiences of inclusion are likely to be influenced by the organizational system, which is explored next.

2.4.2 The inclusive organization

Research has tended to focus on *either* increasing diversity representation through exclusion prevention, *or* inclusion efforts for all to reach their potential (Sabharwal, 2014; Mor Barak et al., 2016). Sometimes, these terms are conflated, for example, diversity management is described by Mor Barak et al. (2016, p4) as “policies and programs to enhance recruitment, inclusion, promotion, and retention of employees who are different from the majority of an organization’s workforce”. In contrast, Roberson (2006) provides empirical evidence for the conceptual distinction between conventional diversity management and inclusion management. She indicates that diversity management relates to identity-conscious practices such as fair treatment initiatives but inclusion practices facilitate collaborative work environments and shared commitment. Synthesising the literature on the inclusive organization suggests both are necessary.

2.4.2.1 The two-stream approach

Shore et al. in their model of the inclusion workplace (2018) (Figure 2-1) determine that both exclusion prevention and inclusion promotion are necessary, similar to diversity management and inclusion effort used elsewhere (Sabharwal, 2014). Shore and colleagues describe management commitment to both inclusion promotion and to prevention of exclusion. Exclusion prevention is described as recruitment compliance practices and anti-discrimination practices, with less clarity on inclusion promotion practices described as broader concepts such as “authenticity”, “psychological safety” and “recognising and honouring advancement of diversity”. Nevertheless, these scholars include elements of the whole organizational system at work-group and organizational level. As far as the researchers are aware, there are no other organizational system-wide models that are as comprehensive for comparison. Other studies tend to consider some, rather than all elements of the organization, which nevertheless support this two-stream approach.

The inclusive workplace is described as a two-stage “circular” process by Mor Barak (2015). Stage-one, is reacting to remove the barriers of exclusion to achieve demographic representation in the workplace. Stage two, is proactive, focused on both managing diverse representation and inclusion efforts, to help minority groups feel included. Each stage affects the other, in a “circular” way (Figure 2-5). This appears a coherent model but provides little explanation of the mechanisms at work, their relationships, or the outcomes.

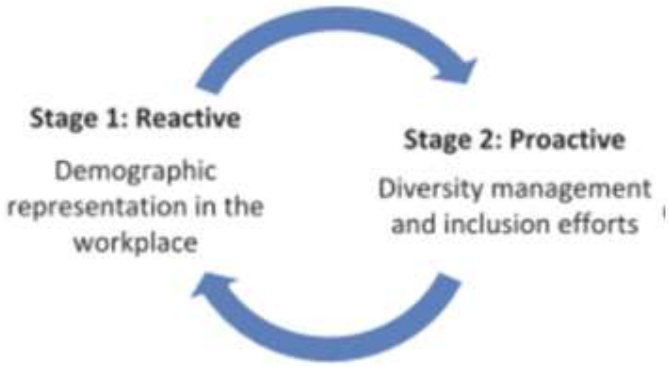

Figure 2-5 A circular two-stage process of diversity and inclusion (Mor Barak, 2015, p86)

Others suggest a two-stream model and identify contributing elements but depicted as linear, rather than circular. Young & Jones (2020), for the Australian government, describe the transition from diversity to inclusion, as stages that develop over time. They suggest organizations start by introducing diversity representation, then learn and integrate new inclusion practices, these practices become the norm and inclusion the new status quo. They claim this process is dynamic but only if the context requires, when the previous phase may be reinstated. Notwithstanding their support of two-streams, the presentation as a linear process seems inadequate. Others suggest that diversity alone is insufficient to foster inclusion, at the same time inclusion effort is necessary (Sabharwal, 2014). Mor Barak’s (2015) model appears more coherent, i.e. that diversity representation impacts diversity management and inclusion efforts, which leads to more diversity representation.

This two-stream process, may also be generative where more diverse representation, leads to more learnt inclusion relational behaviours and so more diversity representation. Bernstein et al. (2020) extend the inclusive workplace with the theory of generative interactions between two paths, those of representational diversity and inclusion. They see the operationalisation of practices, mediated by an individual's willingness and ability to engage, as creating more positive interaction. In turn more positive interactions lead to inclusive behaviour development and more adaptive contact and relations. They describe a generative process which leads to high group and organizational performance. Bernstein and colleagues, also propose that inclusion is likely to manifest differently, at different organizational levels. They suggest that individual beliefs and skills, with group interactions and performance, supported by organizational culture and practices, are all activated within the inclusive organization. This not only offers support for the two-stream inclusion model, but extends it to suggest inclusion may develop as generative processes, at all levels of the organization. Nevertheless, they pay less attention to the impact of inclusive leadership, perceptions of inclusion and how they relate in the inclusive workplace.

2.4.2.2 Inclusive leadership and climate related to inclusion practices

Other studies have examined inclusive leadership and also support the two-streams of work practices. Servant leadership is theorised as inclusive, delivering both diversity management and inclusion efforts (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016). These scholars identify that leader authenticity provides direction and stewardship, particularly equality and conflict resolution practices, similarly to exclusion prevention in the Shore et al. (2018) model. Gotsis and Grimani identify humility and interpersonal acceptance, as valuing and accepting others, which may be interpreted as inclusion promotion. Transformational leadership is also associated with inclusive leaders, both implementers of diversity management and agents for creating inclusiveness (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). Another qualitative study concluded that the most inclusive leaders both counter prejudicial behaviours and demonstrate valuing minority differences; these are

joint prevention, and promotion orientations (Kulkarni et al., 2018). All these studies support the two-stream, exclusion prevention and inclusion promotion orientation.

Further support for this two-stream model is shown in studies on inclusive climate. Stoermer et al. (2016) in their literature review, although focused on how geographic culture mediates inclusion climates, identify the two-streams of work: one, fostering a culture of integration of difference and equality practices, and two, inclusion from involving all groups in decision-making. In an Indian study of 492 participants, organizations with a conducive inclusion climate, were found to have well-formulated practices for diversity management from conflict resolution and anti-discrimination, as well as inclusion practices of access to information and participation in decision-making (Panicker, Agrawal & Khandelwal, 2018). These studies provide further support for the two-stream approach for an inclusive climate, of inclusion promotion practices and exclusion prevention diversity management practices.

Although scholars tend to examine the inclusive organization through inclusive practices, climate, leadership and perceptions, there is less agreement on their potential relationship. In the Shore et al. (2018) model, inclusion climate and perceptions are outcomes of inclusion, supported by many (Stoemer et al., 2016; Warren et al., 2019; Li et al., 2019). In contrast, others claim that inclusive climate is an antecedent to practices (Shore et al., 2011; Nishii, 2013; Ortlieb & Sieben, 2014; Panicker et al., 2018). Notwithstanding this lack of agreement, many theorise that leadership and practices are antecedents to inclusion (Sabharwal, 2014; Mor Barak et al., 2016; Shore et al., 2018). Beyond this there is little consistency in the relationship and direction of relationships of inclusive leadership, culture, practices, and perceptions or the outcomes of inclusion. The next section explores how the literature treats the outcomes of inclusion.

2.4.2.3 The outcomes of inclusion

Scholars use many different measures of inclusion, with less discussion or rationale provided for selecting which output or measure. Shore and colleagues

(2018) suggest outputs of inclusion are talent expansion opportunities and retention, where retention is turnover intention, and organizational commitment. It appears talent expansion is at the organizational level and retention at the individual level. A more comprehensive categorisation of the outputs of inclusion at an individual level, is suggested by Shore et al. (2011), as cognitive, emotional, behavioural, and positive health outcomes. Nishii (2013) has a similar categorisation as attitudinal (satisfaction, commitment, perceived organizational support) and behavioural (citizenship behaviours, turnover intentions). Others detail single or multiple outputs or experiences such as organizational citizenship behaviour and self-esteem (Cottrill et al., 2014), job satisfaction, affective commitment, and retention (Mor Barak et al., 2016) and organization-based self-esteem and job performance (Sabharwal, 2014). It is difficult to synthesise the multiple individual level output measures in the literature into distinct categories but we tentatively suggest three; behavioural, cognitive, and affective (Table 2-4). Behavioural outcomes would include job performance, citizenship behaviour, and retention. Cognitive are learning processes, innovation, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intention to leave. Affective are the state of well-being, self-esteem, authenticity, and psychological safety.

Table 2-4 Summary of outcomes of inclusion at an individual level

Behavioural		
Citizenship	Org. citizenship behaviours	Chen & Tang, 2018; Cottrill et al., 2014; Ellemers et al., 2013; Nishii, 2013; Panicker et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011; Shore et al., 2018
	Pro-social behaviour/conflict resolution	Randel et al., 2016; Randel et al., 2018; Warren et al., 2021
Performance	Job / role performance	Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Boekhorst, 2015; Chen & Tang, 2018; Randel et al., 2018; Roberson, 2006; Sabharwal, 2014; Shore et al., 2011
Retention	Role tenure	Mor Barak et al., 2016; Randel et al., 2018
	Intention to stay	Armstrong-Stassen & Schlosser, 2011; Sabharwal et al., 2019; Shore et al., 2011
Promotion	Learning, skills development	Bernstein et al., 2020; Gotsis & Grimani, 2016
	Expansion of diverse talent	Sherbin & Rashid, 2017; Shore et al., 2018

Cognitive		
Organisational commitment	Organisational identification, employees' attachment to the organization.	Brimhall et al., 2017; Cottrill et al., 2014; Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Meacham et al., 2017; Mor Barak et al., 2016; Paniker et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2018
	Affective commitment	Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Hur, 2020; Li et al., 2019; Mor Barak et al., 2016;
Job satisfaction	The way they feel about their job.	Brimhall et al.,2017; Hur, 2020; Jansen et al., 2014; Meacham et al., 2017; Mor Barak, 2015; Mor Barak et al., 2016; Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011
Creativity	Innovation role performance, potential unlocked	Chen & Tang, 2018
	Share creative ideas/insights	Randel et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011

Affective		
Well-being	Health, well-being, work-life-balance	Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Shore et al., 2011; Warren et al., 2019
Self-esteem	Internal, subjective monitor of social belongingness	Cottrill et al., 2014; Sabharwal, 2014
Psychological safety	Interpersonal comfort, full acceptance	Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Meacham et al., 2017; Randel et al., 2018
Authenticity	Encouraged to bring whole self to work	Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Jansen et al., 2014; Le et al., 2020; Sherbin & Rashid, 2017; Shore et al., 2018

Although Shore et al. (2018), describe psychological safety and authenticity as practices and inputs to inclusion, the literature tends to evidence them as outputs. For example, within the inclusive leadership literature authenticity allows individuals to be their true selves, an inclusion outcome (Cottrill et al., 2014). Inclusive managers, enable employees to bring their whole selves to work and be 42% less likely to express intentions to leave the organization (Sherbin & Rashid, 2017). Additionally, in a study of inclusive culture with over 1,300 employees, across 100 divisions of a company, individuals experience inclusion when able to enact core aspects of their self-concept, or multiple identities, without fear of retribution (Nishii, 2013). Authenticity is where one is valued for one's unique, true self, a psychological experience, i.e. an outcome of inclusion rather than a practice.

Equally, the literature shows psychological safety, the belief that others will not reject someone for speaking up (Jansen et al., 2014), as a benefit of inclusive leadership and perceived inclusion, rather than a practice (Shore et al, 2018). Psychological safety allows individuals to be able to deviate from each other,

rather than assimilate into the group (Jansen et al., 2014; Nishii, 2013). Psychological safety is seen as an outcome of leader inclusiveness (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; (Randel et al., 2016), or an outcome of perception of inclusion (Jansen et al., 2015). Studies also suggest psychological safety as an outcome, is positively related to a sense of belonging (Jansen et al., 2014). Although others claim the reverse, belonging may foster psychological safety (Rogers & Ashforth, 2017). It is possible that the positive experience of psychological safety enables people to be authentic; they may interact and be generative, thus informing the individual experience.

Researchers also suggest that positive experiences of inclusion at an individual level are correlated with organizational performance improvement (Sabharwal, 2014; Boehm, Kunze & Bruch, 2014). This often implies financial performance (Mor Barak et al., 2016). While other researchers challenge the need to make a business case for D&I, there is no scrutiny of men as business leaders, or correlation with financial performance. These researchers recommend "expanding the myopic focus on financial performance" (Warren et al., 2019, p.503) to include, for example, ethical performance that may predict improved financial sustainability in the long term. Other organizational outcomes include innovation (Stoemer et al., 2016), productivity, quality of client services (Mor Barak, 2015), reputation and implementation of change (Young & Jones, 2020). Importantly, studies consistently correlate positive experiences of inclusion with organizational diversity goals, improving retention of minority groups (Mor Barak, 2013; Nishii, 2013; Brimhall et al., 2017; Shore et al., 2018; Roberson & Perry, 2021). Career advancement as an outcome of inclusion is only cited by Sherbin and Rashid (2017) and Shore et al. (2018), although, it seems logical that activities that promote inclusion and intention to stay may also provide the context for advancement. The next section investigates how the literature addresses practices that foster inclusion.

2.4.3 Inclusion practices

Inclusion is experienced in everyday interactions between employees (Joyce & Roberson, 2021), fulfilling social needs; those interactions may be task-related or relational. The literature broadly agrees that workgroup involvement and participation in decision-making are core inclusive work-related practices (Shore et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011; Randel et al., 2018; Bernstein et al., 2020). For example, in her seminal paper, using qualitative and quantitative methods Roberson (2006) developed scales for D&I. She conceptualised inclusion as collaborative work arrangements and involvement in decision-making, task-related practices that show one's uniqueness is valued. However, without access to information, contribution may be restricted and prevent full participation in decisions (Tang et al., 2015). Inclusion practices are also relational, fulfilling the need to belong which also mediates the operationalisation of practices (Roberson, 2006; Janssens & Zanoni, 2008; Bernstein et al., 2020). A comprehensive inclusion workplace model should consider both task and relational elements of inclusion practices.

Interestingly, although inclusion practices may be mediated by many factors, there appear to be few national cultural differences. Tang et al. (2015), validate Shore et al.'s (2011) conceptualisation of inclusion, and conclude there is only one cultural difference in China. They conducted interviews with 54 individuals at various levels, in 15 Chinese companies, and identified seven inclusion management practices; information sharing, encouraging diverse thinking, providing a mechanism for voice, workgroup sharing, participation in decision-making, fairness systems and tolerating mistakes. They conclude there is little cultural difference in inclusion practices, with only leaders' tolerance of mistakes, rather than accusing, as unique to China. However, tolerance may be a psychological process, related to inclusion beliefs which mediates how practices are enacted and experienced as inclusive, and discussed later (2.4.4).

As discussed above the literature tends to discuss inclusion practices as workgroup involvement, building quality relations, participation in decision-making and access to information. We discuss each in turn and in synthesising

the literature we provide a categorisation of practices into those that facilitate belonging and those that value uniqueness (Table 2-5).

2.4.3.1 Workgroup involvement

Inclusion is experienced dependent on the extent to which members sense the group is involving them and that they belong. In the process of inclusion, the group has primary agency over the individual, experienced as a function of the groups willingness to include the individual (Jansen et al., 2014; Shore et al., 2018) and the extent to which the individual perceives him/her self as belonging (Roberson, 2006; Shore et al., 2011; Nishii, 2013). This develops a positive team identity (Ellemers et al., 2013), leading to pro-social behaviour (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016). The literature that examines workgroup involvement as a leadership behaviour is extensive (Shore et al., 2018, Tang et al., 2015, Cottrill et al., 2014), with leaders providing the norms and opportunities (Nishii, 2013) and the extent to which the leader involves everyone. These leader behaviours are positively related to workgroup helping behaviours (Randel et al., 2016), facilitating inclusion. Other practices promoting workgroup involvement are integration of differences within the workgroup (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016), team building activities (Tang et al., 2015), job involvement programmes and learning programmes (Roberson, 2006). All promote a sense of belonging and inclusion.

2.4.3.2 Quality relations

The literature above is focused on involvement and acceptance of the individual by the group, this is supported by relational elements of inclusion from leader and group interactions (Janssens & Zanoni, 2008), essential of belonging. Quality relationships between leaders and individuals are critical. At an individual level, when leaders develop high quality relations with some, not all followers, turnover is high (Warren et al., 2019), indicating a lack of inclusion. High quality relations are characterised as mutual trust and respect (Brimhall et al., 2017) and fair interpersonal treatment which inform perceived inclusion (Shore et al 2011, Armstong-Stassen & Schlosser, 2011; Brimhall et al., 2017). Inclusion is fostered from the leaders' relationship with the individual, but also how the individual sees the treatment of all team members (Randel et al., 2018). Janssens and Zanoni

(2008) found inclusive organizations exhibit four indicators of relational inclusion; humour, majority interest in the minority, acknowledging distinct cultural practices and mixed groups with a common goal. Others say, it is more than a common goal but goal interdependence that is a core inclusion practice (Jansen et al., 2014;Boekhorst, 2015). In addition, high quality relations reduce conflict by creating opportunities to build personal relationships and integrate differences, where people reframe conflict as an important source of interpersonal insight and learning (Nishii, 2013).

The inclusion literature tends to target the quality of leader-follower relations to enhance perceptions of belonging but to fulfil social needs of belonging, intergroup relations are also critical. Bryer's anthropological study (2020) explains that organizations are not inherently exclusionary or inclusionary but the difference is the interpersonal social skills of empathy and reflexivity in relationship building. The concept of promoting positive relationships between leaders-followers and between group members is an important extension to inclusion practices in the model of the inclusive workplace.

2.4.3.3 Participation in decision-making

The literature discusses participation in decision-making as a mechanism for delivering inclusion, providing a sense that one's uniqueness is valued (Panicker et al., 2018; Randel et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2018). People experience participation in decision-making through the practices of open communication and demonstrating that differences are valued. More specifically participation involves leveraging unique knowledge (Brown et al., 2020), appreciation of every person for their uniqueness (Brimhall & Palinkas, 2020), seeking out different viewpoints, and facilitating full, participative decision-making processes (Sabharwal, 2014; Shore et al., 2018). However, control over decisions is rank-sensitive (Janssens & Zanoni, 2008), with higher ranks exerting more influence (Shore et al., 2011); thus, encouraging participation is challenging. Also, decisions may be complex, influenced by systemic norms and require skills development (Young & Jones, 2020). In addition, to sense inclusion, diverse

voices must be sought but also heard (Sherbin & Rashid, 2017; Armstong-Stassen & Schlosser, 2011; Le, Palmer Johnson & Fujimoto, 2020).

This is a critical distinction, that voices are not just sought but heard, especially from those historically not heard. The literature emphasises participation in decisions (Roberson, 2006; Randel et al., 2018; Sabharwal, 2014) that enables individuals to become part of the circle of influence (Shore et al., 2018). Literature commonly refers to participation in decision-making, although, some refer to the importance of influencing decisions (Nishii, 2013), especially those that impact on individual and organizational performance (Sabharwal, 2014). This reinforces insider status (Shore et al., 2011), and being part of the organizational system, reflecting peoples standing in the organization (Armstrong-Stassen & Schlosser, 2011). This seems an important distinction, which we will come to again later. However, to influence decisions individuals must have access to the necessary information that informs those decisions, which is reviewed next.

2.4.3.4 Access to information

Shore et al.'s (2018) inclusive workplace model asserts that access to information is a component of inclusive workgroups, but the literature understands them as closely related, but different and symbiotic. Without access to information, the influencing of decisions is disabled. Further, being part of the organizational system and formal decision processes requires access to information (Mor Barak et al., 2016), indeed equal access (Panicker et al., 2018). This access to information may be informal, such as water-cooler moments where people exchange information and make-decisions (Mor Barak et al., 2016), or formal where information is shared and democratised (Tang et al., 2015). Democratising information, providing equal access, enables individuals to participate and more effectively influence decisions, and enables people to feel they are part of the organizational system. Other researchers expand access to information to include access to resources (Le et al., 2020; Nishii, 2013; Sabharwal, 2014); within organizations there may be competition for resources (Nishii, 2013), but this access is critical for the inclusive organization. Resources may include access to networks and mentoring to help individuals' make important decisions

about their role (Sabharwal, 2014). In sum, there is agreement in the literature that access to information and resources that demonstrates the individual is valued (Shore et al., 2011, Bernstein et al., 2020, Brown et al., 2020), therefore, it may be useful to identify access to information and resources as a distinct inclusion practice.

This synthesis of the literature on inclusion practices suggests a clear categorisation that is coherent with the Shore et al. (2011) framework of inclusion, to satisfy needs for belongingness and uniqueness. Randel et al. (2018), use the same categorisation for inclusive leadership behaviours and practices, although, the practices are less distinct. They theorise that belonging is facilitated by supporting groups' members, and valuing uniqueness by helping group members contribute. We argue that workgroup involvement, facilitated by quality relations, promotes belongingness, also that influencing decision-making, predicated by equal access to information and resources, demonstrates that uniqueness is valued. Table 2-5, shows this categorisation and details the practices that appear to fulfil distinct inclusion needs with the relevant studies.

Table 2-5 Inclusion practices that provide a sense of belonging and uniqueness valued

Belonging – Workgroup (intergroup) involvement		
Leadership	Leader involves/encourages everyone, empowering	Panicker et al., 2018; Hur, 2020; Meacham et al., 2017; Sabharwal, 2014; Shore et al., 2011; Shore et al., 2018
	Authentic	Boekhorst, 2015; Cottrill et al., 2014; Warren et al., 2019
	Transformation	Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015Brimhall et al., 2017, Merlini et al., 2019;
	Servant	Gotsis & Grimani, 2016
	Supportive, caring, tolerant of mistakes	Randel et al, 2018; Tang et al., 2015
Helping behaviours	Workgroup helping/supportive behaviours, collaborative interdependence	Hur, 2020; Randel et al., 2016; Roberson, 2006 Bernstein et al., 2017; Cottrill et al., 2014; Meacham et al., 2017; Sabharwal et al., 2019; Stoemer et al., 2016;
	Adaptive interactions	O'Leary & Sandberg, 2017
	Reward systems for inclusive behaviours	Boekhorst, 2015
Integration	Integration of differences	Brown et al., 2020; Le et al., 2020; ; Li et al., 2019; Meacham et al., 2017; Mor Barak et al., 2016; Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2018; Stoemer et al., 2016; Warren et al., 2019
	Job involvement	Roberson, 2006; Shore et al., 2018
	Tolerance of differences	Roberson, 2006; Tang et al., 2015
	Majority explicitly part of org. D&I initiatives	Jansen et al., 2015
Team building	Team building activities	Brimhall & Palinkas, 2020; Meacham et al., 2017; Roberson, 2006; Tang et al., 2015
	Participation in informal activities, social mixing (meals/parties)	Brown et al., 2020; Janssens & Steyaert, 2019; Ortlieb & Sieben, 2014
	Mixed groups with opportunities for positive interaction/feedback/collective learning	Andrews & Ashworth, 2015; Boekhorst, 2015; Bernstein et al., 2020; Mor Barak et al., 2016; Roberson, 2006

Belonging – Quality relations		
Leadership	Leader seeks diverse views, provides mechanism for voice	Panicker et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011; Randel et al., 2018; Warren et al., 2019
	Quality leader/follower interactions	Brimhall et al., 2017
Social cohesion	Respect, trust, empathy, reflexivity, sensitivity	Brimhall et al., 2016; Brown et al., 2020; Bryer, 2020; Meacham et al., 2017; Sabharwal et al., 2019; Young & Jones, 2020
	See conflict as interpersonal insight/learning	Nishii, 2013
	Equal standing, fair treatment for all	Bernstein et al., 2020; Randel et al., 2018; Warren et al., 2019
	Positive team identity	Ellemers et al., 2013
Common goals	Goal interdependence, integrated and shared vision/strategy/purpose/ meaning	Boekhorst, 2015; Bernstein et al., 2020; Jansen et al., 2014; Kulkarni et al., 2021; Panicker et al., 2018; Roberson, 2006
	Shared accountability	Cottrill et al., 2014

Valued - Influence decision-making		
Differences	Group & individual identity acknowledged/valued	Jansen et al., 2014; Li et al., 2019; Sabharwal et al., 2019; Young & Jones, 2020
	Treat, show appreciation that all members are unique	Brimhall & Palinkas, 2020; Mor Barak et al., 2016
	Value others contribution	Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Warren et al., 2019
Participation	Opportunity to be involved/included/input/share in decisions	Brimhall & Palinkas, 2020; Bryer, 2020; Cottrill et al., 2014; Le et al., 2020; Li et al., 2019; Mor Barak et al., 2016; Nishii, 2013; Panicker et al., 2018; Randel et al., 2018; Roberson, 2006; Stoemer et al., 2016; Tang et al., 2015
	Influence decisions affecting individual/organisation	Bernstein et al., 2019; Sabharwal, 2014
	Work assignment, delegation	Armstrong-Stassen & Schlosser, 2011; Brimhall et al., 2017; O'Leary & Sandberg, 2017; Shore et al., 2018
Communi-cation	Encourage group discussion	Shore et al., 2018
	Ensure voices are heard	Boekhorst, 2015; Le et al., 2020; Sabharwal et al., 2019; Sherbin & Rashid, 2017
	Seek out diverse views, full contribution	Sabharwal, 2014; Shore et al., 2018
	Understand process may take longer	Tang et al., 2015

Valued – Access to information/resources		
Equal access	Provide equal access to information/resources.	Brimhall & Palinkas, 2020; Brown et al., 2020; Cottrill et al., 2014; Hur, 2020; Kulkarni et al., 2021; Panicker et al., 2018; Mor Barak et al., 2016; Roberson, 2006; Sabharwal, 2014; Tang et al., 2015; Young & Jones, 2020
Formal/informal processes	Formal & informal access (lunches/water-cooler)	Mor Barak et al., 2016
	Networking, visibility, sponsorship	Sherbin & Rashid, 2017
	Flex work arrangements	Kulkarni et al., 2021; Sabharwal, 2014
Development	Develop strengths/unique talents	Brimhall & Palinkas, 2020; Cottrill et al., 2014
	Access learning, career development	O'Leary & Sandberg, 2017; Roberson, 2006; Ortlieb & Sieben, 2014
	Objective measures for performance reviews	Le et al., 2020

Despite this categorization and identification of multiple inclusion practices there remains less understanding about how they are experienced, "A key issue in the diversity and inclusion literature is to increase understanding of the role of various HR practices in creating experiences of inclusion for employees" (Shore et al., 2018, p187). In addition, less is known about how the implementation of practices may vary and the extent to which they foster the experience of inclusion. Although the review criteria did not include investigating how individuals may influence inclusion practices it became clear through the review that leaders' individual beliefs and cognitive differences have an effect. Individuals operationalise practices differently and thus the extent to which they foster inclusion which we discuss now.

2.4.4 Influences of beliefs and cognitive capability on inclusion

The Shore et al. (2018) model of the inclusive workplace acknowledges the role of leaders' commitment to D&I as an antecedent to inclusion with less consideration of how the degree of commitment may vary by individual and influence inclusion. These scholars list "recognising, honouring, and advancing diversity" as an inclusion practice but this seems to describe the commitment to D&I rather than be a discreet practice. In contrast, the literature explores this commitment as beliefs about D&I (Jansen et al., 2014; Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Tang et al., 2015; Randel et al., 2016) and cognitive capability to flex practices to fit individual needs (O'Leary & Sandberg, 2017) which impact inclusive practices and potentially the extent to which they are experienced as inclusive. Thus, a comprehensive model of the inclusive organization needs to account for the impact of variable cognitions and beliefs, explored in detail below.

Leaders' values and beliefs determine their decisions and strategies (Shore et al 2011), which impact the team and individual perceived inclusion. The literature explores values and beliefs about D&I as psychological processes that impact behaviours (Jansen et al., 2014; Kulkarni et al. 2017), embodied through their verbal and non-verbal behaviour (Boekhorst, 2015). Randel et al. (2018) in their inclusive leadership framework suggest pro-diversity beliefs contribute to leadership behaviours and inclusion. Elsewhere, beliefs are understood as collective commitment and a mindset that values differences (Brown et al., 2020; Le et al., 2020; Brimhall et al., 2017), expressed in words and actions (Sabharwal, 2014; Shore et al., 2018). These leadership beliefs moderate the relationship between the leader and implementation of practices (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016). A quantitative survey of 492 people, in an Indian organization, finds organizations with strong leader commitment and well informed inclusive practices have higher levels of inclusive climate and citizenship behaviour (Panicker et al., 2018). Pro-diversity beliefs mediate behaviours and how inclusion practices are operationalised.

Leaders who value differences and engage in more inclusive behaviours, potentially act as role models for groups, reinforcing inclusive behaviours in

others (Roberson, 2006; Shore et al., 2011; Mor Barak, et al., 2016; Randel et al., 2018). Moreover, leaders act as an interpretive filter of practices and policies and those that value differences encourage followers to behave inclusively, consistent with Bandura's social learning theory (Boekhorst, 2015). Valuing differences and encouraging others to behave inclusively will manifest as perceived respect from the group and lead to valuing-self within the team, positive team identity and willingness to invest in the team (Ellemers et al., 2013). This internalised moral perspective guides behaviour and the experience of inclusion (Cottrill et al., 2014). Thus, as individual values and beliefs differ, they may also influence practices and the experience of inclusion and should be explicitly defined and included in a comprehensive inclusive workplace model.

Less attention is paid to the mediating effect of cognitive capability but this is an interesting line of investigation. Tang et al.'s (2015) qualitative study, explored different understandings of inclusion practices from HR practitioners, leaders and followers, which revealed variability in the way practices were actioned, leading to different inclusion outcomes. Randel et al.'s (2018) inclusive leadership framework identifies pro-diversity beliefs, humility, and cognitive complexity, as contributors to inclusion outcomes. They describe cognitive complexity as the ability to hold a multi-dimensional view of individuals' strengths and weaknesses, rather than employing stereotypes, enabling leaders to balance fostering belongingness and valuing uniqueness. In an effort to categorise leadership styles from least to most inclusive (O'Leary & Sandberg, 2017) conducted a phenomenographic study. They argue more inclusive leaders possess a more comprehensive understanding of diversity as they see the issues and navigate a different path using more sophisticated cognitive processing. The least inclusive leaders, operationalised corporate identity-blind approaches to recruitment, delivering the standard approach, to include all candidates regardless of demographic differences. The most inclusive flexed and adapted recruitment practices for different individuals within groups, recognising demographic differences matter. They recognised one cannot compare the experience of a 27-year-old man, with a 37-year-old mother of two. These leaders use the same recruitment activity but deliver it differently. Cognitive differences between

leaders are also examined through authentic leadership as being inclusive, where it is suggested higher levels of self-awareness and balanced processing, promote inclusion and foster organizational commitment. Thus, cognitive differences translate into norms at unit level and the employee experience of inclusion (Nishii, 2013; Li et al., 2019). Differences in cognitive function, along with values and beliefs, act as mediators for the operationalisation of inclusion practices, an important extension to any model of the inclusive organization.

2.5 Discussion

This review sought to understand what is known about organizational practices used to foster experiences of inclusion, to contribute to understanding of the inclusive organization. We draw attention to the lack of evidence and consistency in the theory of the inclusion across the whole organizational system and specifically the role of inclusion practices and the experiences of inclusion at an individual level. This discussion first addresses the lack of empirical evidence on the individual experiences of inclusion. Second, we consider the organizational system, differentiating and establishing the importance of two distinct processes to prevent exclusion and promote inclusion, and categorize the outcomes of inclusion. Third, we identify the lack of clarity on the role of inclusion practices despite our attempt to categorise them. Finally, we propose a potential interactive relationship between leadership, climate, practices and perceptions of inclusion to foster the inclusive organization. We conclude with possible directions for future research.

2.5.1 The experience of inclusion

There is a danger that privileging inclusion ignores the historic power structures at work, that have historically excluded minority groups, however, there is extensive literature focused on exclusion and anti-discrimination. The aim of this review was to focus on the literature that explores how organizations foster inclusion, for everyone. Nevertheless, studies on inclusion tend to focus on the organizational and workgroup level (Shore et al., 2018) or through a leadership lens (Randel et al., 2018) with less attention paid to understanding individual

experiences of inclusion. Although a common conceptualisation of inclusion involves treatment that satisfies the need for belongingness and uniqueness (Shore et al., 2011), this definition is concerned with inclusion in workgroups, the extent to which the employee perceives they are an esteemed member of the workgroup. There is less consideration of the overall context of the organization, the leader relationship, or empirical evidence of how inclusion is experienced at an individual level. The experience of inclusion is likely to be variable, person-to-person and context-to-context, as organizations are complex social systems that are navigated at an individual level. This is yet to be fully explored.

2.5.2 The inclusive organization

Some scholars use the terms diversity management and inclusion efforts interchangeably (Mor Barak et al. 2016) but this review aims to differentiate and clarify those processes. If diversity is the demographic differences between individuals (Nishii, 2013; Roberson, 2006), typically diversity management is focused on exclusion prevention and anti-discrimination employment policies and practices, to meet diversity representation goals (Mor Barak et al., 2016). Diversity management may prevent exclusion, and deliver diversity representation, but the challenge is to capture the value from diverse perspectives. Representation alone is insufficient to generate inclusion and workplace performance (Sabharwal, 2014; Shore et al., 2018). For all employees to participate and feel part of the organizational system (Roberson, 2006; Shore et al., 2011; Mor Barak 2015), inclusion effort and choices have to made (Sabharwal, 2014), it is the voluntary action (Shore et al., 2018) that is beneficial to include everyone (Nishii, 2013; Sabharwal, 2014; Randel et al., 2016; Warren et al., 2019). Thus, diversity management aims to prevent exclusion and inclusion effort promotes inclusion, both are necessary in the inclusive organization.

Many studies support this two-stream approach of exclusion prevention and inclusion promotion described in the Shore et al. (2018) inclusive workplace model, which is possibly generative and dynamically self-fulfilling. The two-stream process is demonstrated within organizations (Roberson, 2006; Mor

Barak, 2015), leadership (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015) and climate (Panicker et al., 2018; Stoemer et al., 2016). These streams may also be generative (Bernstein et al., 2020); although explored in only one study it makes sense that diversity management brings under-represented into the organization and inclusion efforts facilitate minority groups to feel included and potentially decide to remain. An increase in diverse representation may then dynamically introduce new norms of inclusive behaviour (Nishii, 2013; Young & Jones, 2020), which facilitates the appointment of more under-represented groups; a self-fulfilling process. Thus, two streams, i.e. exclusion prevention and inclusion promotion may be generative and also dynamically be self-fulfilling to foster the inclusive organization.

In the literature many different output measures of inclusion are used with little discussion or rationale provided for selecting one measure over another. Here we clarify and organize the outcome measures of inclusion at an individual level, as multi-factorial and recognise possible correlations with organizational outputs. In our synthesis of the literature, we categorise individual measures of inclusion as behavioural, cognitive, and affective (Figure 2-6). We have further sorted each outcome into their influence on role performance, organizational relationship, inter-group relations, personal and retention. We also propose a correlation with organizational outputs given the individual experience of inclusion correlates with improved organizational financial performance (Sabharwal, 2014), productivity (Mor Barak, 2015), ethics (Warren et al., 2019), reputation, change implementation (Young & Jones, 2020) and diversity goals (Shore et al., 2018). This new classification may provide a useful framework for future study. We now explore how inclusion practices may influence these outcomes and the experiences of inclusion.

Figure 2-6 Summary of individual and organizational outcomes of inclusion

2.5.3 Inclusion practices

The literature on inclusion identifies numerous practices that foster inclusion but when synthesising and integrating the literature there remains less clarity about their role and purpose. We propose that inclusion practices fulfil different inclusion needs and differentiate them into two categories: those promoting belonging and others valuing uniqueness. Practices that promote belongingness are focused on involvement in the workgroup and building quality relationships. Practices that demonstrate uniqueness is valued, are influencing decision-making, with access to information or resources. Scholars refer to 'participation' or 'involvement' in decision-making, but 'influencing' decision-making (Roberson, 2006; Nishii, 2013; Sabharwal, 2014) may be a more accurate and useful conceptualisation. Participation without influence is only an illusion of inclusion. To feel included, we argue individuals need to participate but also affect decisions that influence core role and organizational objectives. Nevertheless, there remains a lack of clarity about how inclusion practices foster the experience of inclusion within the broader organizational system. As far as we are aware there is no comprehensive analysis of the literature on inclusion practices, with little understanding of their role or purpose. Although we categorise inclusion practices based on their potential role and purpose, this is yet to be empirically tested.

2.5.4 The inclusive organization as interactive

There is broad agreement within the inclusive organization literature that inclusive leadership, culture, workgroups, practices, and perceptions of inclusion, are related, with less understanding of how they might relate or perhaps interact. Consistently leadership is shown as an antecedent to perceptions of inclusion (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Panicker et al., 2018; Randel et al., 2016; Randel et al., 2018, Shore et al., 2011). Inclusion practices are also described as antecedents to inclusion (Armstrong-Stassen & Schlosser, 2011; Boehm et al., 2014); Mor Barak et al., 2016; Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). Beyond this there is little consistency in the direction of relations although some explore potential interactions. Bernstein et al. (2020) describe a generative process, where inclusion practices provide the conditions for generative interpersonal interactions, such as collaboration and interpersonal comfort, that may challenge and change the organizational norms. The scholars describe this as a generative interactive process but without exploring how leadership and climate may interact, so a comprehensive model of the inclusion organization remains elusive. Warren et al. (2019), propose that inclusive climate interacts with practices, but ignore the mediating effect of leadership. Plus, Boekhorst (2015) theorises that inclusive leadership and practices, may be reinforcing and interact, to create an inclusive climate where individuals are able to apply their differences to work goals. However, this ignores potential interactions with the inclusive climate, which may impact the enactment of leadership and practices.

Given the complexity of the organization as a social phenomenon, it is not surprising that there is little consensus on an inclusion model, or how elements may interact. The review finds support for a generative inclusive workplace (Bernstein et al., 2020) which may dynamically produces new norms of inclusive behaviour, as diverse representation increases (Nishii, 2013). Improvement in diverse representation is a visible demonstration of the organization's commitment to under-represented groups, which promotes individuals' intention to stay (Mor Barak, 2013; Nishii, 2013; Brimhall et al., 2017; Sherbin & Rashid, 2017; Shore et al., 2018), hence shows the inclusive organization as dynamically

self-fulling. Building on this we argue it is likely that the elements of the organization interact. Studies show leaders interact with climate (Jansen et al., 2014), leaders interact with practices (Boekhorst, 2015) and practices interact with climate (Warren et al., 2019) to foster inclusion. Thus, we argue the inclusive workplace is likely to be not only generative, and dynamically self-fulling but also interactive, that inclusive leadership, climate, practices and perceptions of inclusion interact. Also that all levels of the organization that experience inclusion, continuously learn and improve the experiences of inclusion, which fosters a more inclusive organization (Boekhorst, 2015; Ellemers et al., 2013).

2.6 Limitations and Future Research

We draw from multiple sources of evidence to synthesise and integrate findings in consilience, to contribute to understanding the organizational practices used to foster experiences of inclusion. However, the study has limitations in how the literature is reviewed. The review searched only English language journals; different search strings and languages may elicit other papers. Evidence was drawn from qualitative, quantitative, conceptual, and practitioner papers and quality assessed using bespoke criteria. Strengths of this quality assessment are that criteria are based on previous studies and replace using journal ranking as a proxy for quality, but this bespoke assessment is not validated elsewhere. Additionally, although I aimed to manage bias and error with regular discussion between the researchers and external colleagues, and used NVivo as a robust analytical tool with flexible coding, any interpretive synthesis is open to bias. I, as researcher, offer judgements and personal interpretation; this becomes more than data, exposing potential bias (Rousseau et al., 2008).

A further limitation is that many of the studies used quantitative methods or were conceptual papers. However, organizations, are highly complex, dynamic social structures, with diverse groups and individuals. Experiences of inclusion are likely to manifest differently across groups and individuals, subject to different contexts such as leadership, climate and practices. This complexity is difficult to examine in quantitative studies that must isolate and measure discrete variables. Although these studies help explain the phenomenon of inclusion, there remains a lack of

knowledge about how inclusion is experienced, or which practices are used by organizations to foster inclusion, or what is accomplished. Qualitative research would provide that rich insight.

2.6.1 Conclusion

This review provides some insight into organizational practices that foster experiences of inclusion, the aim of this thesis. The review indicates inclusion research is advancing but is still seeking a theory of inclusion (Shore et al., 2018; Warren et al., 2019; Bernstein et al., 2020) to provide organizations with reliable knowledge of what works. We identify that the inclusive organization comprises two workstreams, differentiating between diversity management as *exclusion prevention,* and inclusion effort as *inclusion promotion*. Exclusion prevention is well researched but with less understanding of inclusion promotion, an important avenue for future research. Findings also show that less is known about practices and how they foster inclusion, an important aspect in fostering the inclusive organization and worthy of more exploration. There is a tendency to study inclusion at the individual level, either within the workgroup through the workgroup's treatment of differences, or through leadership behaviours that foster inclusion. There is less exploration of the individual experiences of inclusion in the organization. Yet it is important to understand what is accomplished by inclusion practices and the inclusive organization. Inclusion is likely to be experienced differently, by different people, at different levels of the organization. Thus, future research might examine different levels, but particularly junior employees' individual experiences of inclusion, as practices may be designed and implemented by senior leaders but experienced by junior employees. Thus, to explore organizational practices that foster experiences of inclusion, two questions arise. First, Which practices are used by organizations to foster inclusion and how do such practices satisfy inclusion needs? This would deepen understanding of practices aimed at fostering inclusion within organizations (Chapter 3). Second, How do employees experience inclusion at work? We explore individual experiences of inclusion and make visible the contexts and revealing their lived experience (Chapter 4). This thesis continues by addressing these questions and then draws together the findings of these

studies (Chapter 5), to respond to the overall thesis aim to explore organizational practices that foster the experiences of inclusion.

3 UNDERSTANDING PRACTICES WHICH FOSTER INCLUSION: VIEWS FROM THE TOP

3.1 Abstract

Purpose - This study aims to deepen understanding of inclusion practices used within organizations, and how they satisfy specific inclusion needs.

Design/methodology/approach – We adopt a qualitative research design, reporting on data from semi-structured interviews conducted with 15 Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Directors/Leads and using a thematic approach to analysis.

Findings – Our study expands understanding of inclusion practices, showing that they are not uniformly implemented and that practices may satisfy both needs to belong and differences valued, with interviewees prioritising belonging. Contrary to the literature we find a lack of evidence for decision-making as an inclusion practice. Well-being and career development are seen as important inclusion practices demonstrating support and appreciation of difference, thus as inputs not outputs of inclusion challenging existing assumptions. Inclusion practices are malleable and the extent to which they foster inclusion depends critically on the leaders involved and their commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

Originality – Our study shows ***how*** practices satisfy inclusion needs and that the implementation of practices varies, depending on the leaders involved.

Key words – Inclusive organization, Inclusion practices, Leadership, Belonging, Valuing uniqueness

Paper type – Research paper

3.2 The Inclusive Workplace

Organizations are increasingly focusing on initiatives to foster equality, diversity and inclusion, going beyond diversity to create a workplace where people from many backgrounds are valued. Organizations accrue benefits from improving diverse representation through improved performance (Sabharwal, 2014) and see it as morally right (Ferdman & Deane, 2014), yet diversity across many dimensions remains elusive. Literature has tended to focus on diversity management and exclusion prevention (van Eck, Dobusch & van den Brink, 2023), but this approach assumes that anti-discrimination practices will lead to recruitment and retention of under-represented groups, such as women, ethnic minority and neurodiverse groups. In recent years it has become widely recognised that diverse representation alone is insufficient; without inclusion the benefits of diversity will not be realised (Sabharwal, 2014; Nishii, 2013). It is through inclusion that retention (Nishii, 2013) and career advancement of under-represented groups improves (Shore et al., 2018), leading to longer term increase in diverse representation. The literature on the inclusive workplace is expanding but understanding how inclusion is fostered is less distinct (Roberson, 2019). Providing a more comprehensive understanding of inclusion, will help organizations determine how to foster a more inclusive organization.

This research aims to contribute to the literature through building a greater understanding of organizational practices which foster inclusion. Using a qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) leads, senior professionals responsible for the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) agenda within a range of organizations. We begin with a review of the extant literature on the inclusive organization and inclusion practices. We then describe how the interview data were collected and analysed, and reveal the findings. Finally, we discuss the findings within the context of the literature and indicate implications for theory and practice.

3.2.1 Model of the inclusive workplace

Workplace inclusion is a nascent field of research (Chen & Tang, 2018) with the words diversity and inclusion sometimes used interchangeably. It is more helpful

to consider diversity and inclusion as distinct, yet interrelated concepts (Roberson, 2006). Diversity recognises differences and inclusion focuses on diversity as a resource, where everyone can bring their “whole selves” to work (Nishii, 2013). In their seminal paper Shore and colleagues (2011) conceptualise inclusion as the degree to which an employee perceives they are an esteemed member of the group, through treatment that satisfies both their social need for belongingness and individual need for having uniqueness valued. This implies that everyone in the workgroup experiences inclusion as a balance between satisfaction of belongingness and uniqueness needs, but some may seek more of one than the other, which may also vary over context. Other studies have sought to broaden the conceptualisation of inclusion as more complex, where people may feel included and excluded at the same time through different organizational practices, and which can shift over time (Cassell et al., 2020). In the research reported here, we assume that inclusion is a positive concept (Shore et al., 2018), enabling organizations to leverage the advantages of a more diverse workforce, through greater creativity, improved role performance (Shore et al., 2011; Mor Barak et al., 2016) and organizational performance (Sabharwal, 2014).

In contrast, viewed through a critical lens the concept of inclusion is contested and remains elusive. Van Eck et al. (2023) suggest it is probably impossible for inclusion to be free of contradictions and conflicts. Organizations may present themselves as inclusive but inclusion efforts may be insufficient to address historically embedded hierarchies between groups (Ortlieb & Sieben, 2014). Inclusion efforts may even “preserve existing power asymmetries because the terms of one's inclusion are still defined by members of the power-wielding elite” (Dobusch et al., 2021, p380). Some argue that inclusion is superior to, and replaces diversity (Adamson et al., 2021). These scholars call to move beyond a linear, or static model of inclusion or exclusion (van Eck et al., 2023) and move to a multi-layered approach (Adamson et al., 2021; Cassell et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, there is common ground between mainstream and critical scholars, who see exclusion prevention and inclusion as interdependent in the inclusive organization. Van Eck et al. (2023) from a critical perspective, conclude that inclusion and exclusion-prevention practices are complementary, not

oppositional. Fostering an inclusive organization requires both anti-discrimination practices, to remove barriers faced by under-represented groups, and practices aimed at inclusion (Sabharwal, 2014), to retain diversity (Shore et al., 2018). Shore et al. (2018), describe a two-stream model of the inclusive workplace where management orient to both exclusion prevention and inclusion promotion practices as interdependent. It is important to take-into-account that organizations are not *either* exclusive, *or* inclusive, inclusion is 'ongoing' (Byrd, 2022). But less is known about the transition to greater inclusion, or the effects of the maturity of the organization with regard to fostering EDI. In a Deloitte report (Bourke & Dillon, 2018) recognised this transition towards inclusivity and propose an interesting maturity model; a useful frame to view organizations' different levels of attainment. The model describes organizational maturity moving from legal compliance, to HR and programme led, to leader led and ultimately integration of EDI throughout the organizational system. It makes sense that the maturity of the organization may determine the characteristics related to different types of inclusion practices. Given the centrality of inclusion practices within the inclusive organization we now explore the treatment of inclusion practices in the literature.

3.2.2 Identifying inclusion practices

Many inclusion practices are referred to in the literature, although their exact characteristics, purpose, or rationale for using one over another remains unclear. For example, D&I training, mentoring, networking (Janssens & Steyaert, 2019) and continuous learning (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016) are cited, however, the impact of D&I training is contested and potentially incurs unintended consequences (Leslie, 2019). Bias-reduction training is one such initiative which may reinforce stereotypes, increase bias, and incite perceptions of undeserved preference and injustice (Noon, 2018;Caleo & Heilman, 2019). Others refer to inclusion practices related to employee engagement, job involvement programmes, information sharing and participation in organizational decisions (Tang et al., 2015) without necessarily specifying how they satisfy inclusion needs. Ortlieb and Sieben, (2014) reveal three areas of organizational practices – fair recruitment and selection, training and development, and social practices, such as meals and

parties to provide access to the organization's social world, although, their exact purpose is less clear. In contrast, Brown et al. (2020) use the Shore et al. (2011) inclusion framework of belongingness and uniqueness to identify seven "practices", which might be described in other literatures as broader concepts. Notwithstanding the differences in definition, the practices to which they refer are equitable employment, integration of differences, inclusion in decision-making, information sharing, involvement in informal activities, relational elements of unconditional respect for dignity, and conditional respect for rank and experience. The focus on unconditional and conditional respect may be because the research was conducted in the US military, a power-structured organization, and possibly less relevant to others sectors.

In a review of the literature the most frequently quoted inclusion practices are fostering workgroup involvement (Nishii, 2013), building quality relations (Bernstein et al., 2020), and access to resources and influencing organizational decisions (Nishii, 2013). Nevertheless, there remains a lack of clarity about their exact characteristics, how they may promote inclusion and the expected outcomes, so it remains unclear how they might contribute to the inclusive organization. Equally, the rationale for choosing between different inclusion practices is unclear, with little understanding of what might constitute appropriate practices. Greater clarity of the aims and outcomes of specific inclusion practices might help organizations create a more inclusive work environment. (Shore et al., 2018; Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Janssens & Steyaert, 2019).

3.2.3 Influences on inclusion practices

Studies may not have determined or clarified the precise features and purpose of practices, but researchers have investigated the role of leaders' behaviours and beliefs in delivering inclusion practices (Shore et al., 2018: Mor Barak, Luria & Brimhall, 2021). Studies have empirically tested existing leadership frameworks as inclusive, for example, Gotsis and Grimani (2016) indicate that servant leadership offers competencies that enhance the enactment of practices to foster inclusion. Other studies prioritise leader/follower relationships with Brimhall et al. (2017) suggesting practices that improve interactions between leaders and

followers provide lasting benefits in promoting inclusion. Randel et al. (2018) introduce a theoretically grounded framework of inclusive leader behaviours; strengthening belongingness through, for example, sharing-decisions and fostering uniqueness by encouraging diverse contributions from individual employees. Both are experienced at the individual level, yet leaders operate at multiple levels within the organization. Veli Korkmaz et al.'s (2022) literature review looks beyond the individual level by advancing Randel et al.'s (2018) framework with two additional dimensions; firstly, showing appreciation by recognising contributions, which operates at individual and team level, and secondly, leaders supporting organizational efforts through alignment of their behaviours and organizational goals.

Nevertheless, a gap persists between articulating and practising the behaviours which facilitate inclusivity (Sherbin & Rashid, 2017). It may be the gap is determined by the extent to which leaders have positive beliefs about D&I, which enable more responsive and varied approaches to promote inclusion (O'Leary & Sandberg, 2017; Gotsis & Grimani, 2016). Varied approaches may also depend upon more complex cognitive capability, where leaders are able to see all individuals with strengths and weaknesses, not identity stereotypes (Randel et al., 2018). This cognitive capability enables leaders to adapt practices for the target group (O'Leary & Sandberg, 2017), indicating practices are malleable.

Despite extensive studies on the inclusive workplace there is a tendency to focus on inclusive leadership, climate, workgroups and perceptions of inclusion, (Shore et al., 2018). Less attention is paid to inclusion practices, which require further study (Sabharwal et al., 2019; Shore et al, 2018). The aim of this qualitative study is to deepen understanding of practices aimed at fostering inclusion within an organization, and answer the RQ: Which practices are used by organizations to foster inclusion from the D&I Leads perspective and how do such practices satisfy specific inclusion needs?

3.3 Methodology

This paper reports findings drawn from a wider study designed to deepen understanding of practices aimed at fostering inclusion. Here we are focused on the perspective of D&I Leads of major organizations, revealing their strategic organizational views of inclusion. We adopted qualitative methods, using semi-structured interviews for data collection and taking a thematic approach to analysis. This enabled us to obtain rich descriptions of the approaches taken and to explore the D&I Leads' understanding and experiences of the aims and implications of existing activities and practices involved in attempts to create and maintain an inclusive organization.

3.3.1 Participants

We were interested in finding examples of good practice in relation to inclusion and therefore wanted to obtain data from D&I Leads from a range of organizations which had a clear commitment to EDI, evidenced by accreditation of the National Equality Standard[1] or similar. A purposive sampling strategy allowed us to target specific organizations who met this criterion (Saunders & Townsend, 2018). We sought access from individuals with responsibility for leading the EDI agenda at a senior level within their organizations and experience of actively developing and using practices designed to foster inclusion. Of the 15 Leads interviewed, nine were Directors and six were Leads or Managers; in reporting our data, all are referred to as D&I Leads. Table 3-1 shows the profile of participants by sector, company size and tenure in their current role. As they held senior EDI positions these interviewees, were able to provide insight-rich individual perspectives, enabling greater in-depth exploration of minor differences to enrich key themes (Saunders and Townsend, 2018). The strength of this detailed analysis is that it enhances quality and rigour, to optimize the opportunity for transferability of results (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

[1] The National Equality Standard is the UK's leading diversity assessment framework. See http://www.nationalequalitystandard.com/national-equality-standard/

Table 3-1 Participant profiles by sector, company size and tenure in current role

	Sector	*Organization Size			Tenure in current D&I role		
D&I Lead		FTSE 350, or equiv.	Division of FTSE, or Large Business	SME	1-5	6-10	11+
1	Professional services			X		X	
2	Property services		X		X		
3	Utilities		X			X	
4	Financial Services	X				X	
5	Professional services		X		X		
6	Property services		X		X		
7	Media	X			X		
8	Professional services	X				X	
9	Education		X				X
10	Education		X			X	
11	Retail/Leisure	X			X		
12	Financial Services		X			X	
13	Retail/Leisure		X			X	
14	Health		X		X		
15	Health		X		X		
Total		**4**	**10**	**1**	**7**	**7**	**1**

Key: *Organization size
FTSE 350 or equiv.: An organization listed in the UK FTSE 350, or of an equivalent size
Division of FTSE 350, or Large Business: An organization that is a division of a FTSE 350, or a large business, with 250 or more employees (Gov.uk., 2022)
SME: a small or medium sized entity, up to 249 employees (Gov.uk., 2022)

3.3.2 Data collection

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews which complied with university ethical guidelines, with approval granted prior to data collection. Informed consent was obtained from each participant including details on data security, anonymity and the right to withdraw. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, with prompts to elicit clarity and depth, were designed by the research team, and allowed us to elicit concrete descriptions and examples (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Interviews were conducted between June and December, 2021 by the first author. In-person interviews were not possible due to COVID-19 restrictions, so they were conducted on Zoom. While some nuanced body language more readily observable in-person may have been missed, it may

also be that senior participants were more accessible, finding Zoom calls to be convenient. Participants were asked three main questions. The first question asked for specific examples of practices that fostered inclusion in their organization. This allowed participants the freedom to report initiatives deemed important to them. A second line of questioning explored whether any initiatives had been dropped, which provided the opportunity to reflect on whether they had been replaced with something else. A third topic of questioning focused on the launch of any new inclusion initiatives, facilitating discussion about the status quo and provided revelations about where initiatives were currently focused and why. Follow-up and probing questions in each area allowed the interviewer to capture the participants accounts in some detail and included exploring outcomes, either intended or unanticipated. Notes were taken during the interviews and recorded on Zoom. Interviews were transcribed verbatim using the Zoom transcription softward and checked against the interview notes within 24 hours to ensure data accuracy. Saturation was managed by recording new codes as each transcript was coded. At interview 12, saturation of the codes relevant to answer the RQ, was achieved with no fresh codes established (Guest et al., 2006). In order to strengthen and verify saturation, three more interviews were conducted and analysed, bringing the total to 15 participants.

3.3.3 Data analysis

We adopted a thematic approach to analysis, supported by NVivo, to reveal patterns and develop themes about inclusion practices. Cleansing the transcripts enabled detailed familiarization with the data and provisional coding of each inclusion practice. The first and second authors individually reviewed three interviews and provisional coding and discussed provisional intermediate themes. The first author coded further interviews, with regular discussions amongst the research team to discuss and agree intermediate themes based on the purpose of practices. Regular discussion about the data included comparing in-depth interpretations, resolving disagreements and conflicts and examining our biases to minimise the effect of researcher bias. We organized the intermediate themes into three final themes to capture the overarching patterns from the data,

encompassing the salient and important elements (Braun & Clarke, 2021) of inclusion practices.

For example, to deepen our understanding of practices aimed at fostering inclusion within organizations two intermediate themes: *Practices to build awareness of under-represented group experiences* and *Developing inclusive behaviours,* were combined and extended as a final theme to include the challenges of the majority group *Inclusion as belonging*. Three further intermediate themes: *Practices provide access to resources, skills and social capital for career advancement*, *Support individuals, through well-being practices* and *Networks as a resource, offering support and to influence EDI policy and processes* all demonstrated support and appreciation of differences rather than differences being valued as a resource. These were combined in a final theme as 'Inclusion as valuing differences'. A sixth intermediate theme *Leader mindset influences behaviours, practices and inclusion*, on further analysis led to *Leaders as enablers or blockers to inclusion* to capture the positive and negative influences on inclusion of different leaders' beliefs and behaviours. Two intermediate themes were dropped: *The choice of methods used to deliver inclusion varies* and *External events as catalysts of change*. These themes offered interesting insights into the challenges interviewees confronted in fostering inclusion rather than provide additional insight to deepening our understanding of practices which foster inclusion. They were, therefore, deemed to be out of the scope of this paper.

3.4 Findings

Table 3-2 summarises the three themes and sub-themes with relevant quotes. We discuss each in turn but first acknowledge that interestingly only three organizations positioned EDI as a board role. One of these directors spoke of being an "architect" designing the EDI agenda with the leadership team. Other interviewees were more involved in the detailed operationalisation of initiatives.

Table 3-2 Summary of the final themes, sub-themes with relevant quotes

Theme	Subtheme	Quotes
Inclusion as Belonging	Belonging in action	It's not really about inclusion purely, it's more like 'I feel a sense of belonging'. For instance, 'I feel free to challenge the way things are done here', 'I feel supported to look after my health and well-being', 'I feel empowered to make decisions regarding my work', 'I have good opportunities to learn and grow'. (Healthcare, large organization, Lead 14)
	Raising awareness amongst the majority	We're taking a diverse group and looking at how can we as individuals and leaders be inclusive to these different groups with a focus on practical advice. For example, we've had two directors talking about racism they've experienced. It's the age old thing what gets talked about gets done. But it's really raising people's awareness. (Energy, large company, Lead 3)
	Keeping the majority engaged and accountable	Those groups that are under-represented may be supported but if the majority doesn't change its view, they're always going to be under-represented because they're always coming up against the privilege of the majority. I think it's about not being afraid to continue to have the conversation, even if you only had it last week. People in the majority group are getting bored because it doesn't impact their daily lives. How do we make it so that they are engaged? Because that's the only way the change comes, it's not the minority group. (D&I Manager, FTSE 350 equivalent, Lead 6)
Inclusion as valuing difference	Social capital	It's giving skills around social capital, about how you get out there and be visible, the skills that are not taught. We know and research tells us, that those from under-represented groups don't have the same visibility. or aren't able to create the visibility. It's that kind of advantage we are trying to put in place, to create equity for those groups. (Media, FTSE 350 equivalent, Lead 7)
	Well-being.	People are at their best when they feel psychologically safe, linked strongly to mental well-being and feeling included. Hopefully people have psychological safety at home and we can replicate that at work. When people are psychologically safe, you see it in people's performance, it impacts their confidence, collaboration, creativity and productivity. It's not only the morally right thing to do, it's also highly commercial and impactful. (Professional services, FTSE 350 equivalent, Lead 8)
	Role of employee networks	Once a gender network Lead cornered me and said, *The head of this business unit wants us to write a strategy on how to recruit more women*. And I said *Well he's wrong, that's not your job and actually it's unfair to ask you to do that. Now asking you as a network to work with our resourcing team to figure out how we bring more women into the pipeline, how we leverage your network because your network as a woman is different from theirs; that's different*. As soon as you realize where the responsibility sits, that's how you drive the change. (Financial services, FTSE 350 equivalent, Lead 4)

Theme	Subtheme	Quotes
Leaders as enablers or blockers	Structural barriers: formal and informal	A previous researcher told us, *Your processes are gendered, your language is gendered. The way your leadership speak about the attributes wanted from new executives is generally gendered. You're forgetting that an awful lot of an individual's progression happens outside of a formal process, it's the informal access to networks to sponsors, to the right sorts of work.* We've been swimming against this tide for a long time without knowing what tied us to these invisible barriers. This lack of awareness, these unhelpful and limiting beliefs about success, that's the barrier, that's slowed us down. (Professional services, FTSE 350 equivalent, Lead 8)
	Leaders acting on data	It's having the data to get the picture of what your workforce looks like from a diversity and inclusive perspective. If the picture is not diverse you have to ask questions and start to glean at the strategic level meaningful targets. It injects a particular focus and drives conversations and it starts to affect a change. It takes time but because the data is there, you're able to not only just see, *Wow progress has been made*, but also be able to challenge an area to say, *Well we've had this conversation, for the last two years and I'm not seeing anything different. Well what are you doing about it, actually that's your objective, this year, you need to do X, Y, and Z*. (Education, Large organization, Lead 10)

3.4.1 Inclusion as belonging

'Belonging' was often used interchangeably with 'inclusion', and was used as a broad term to characterise inclusive behaviours.

> When you say to a leader, you need to make sure that all your team feel like they belong, there was much more connection with how to be inclusive. I know what it feels like to belong and not to belong and I know what I need to do to be able to deliver that. (Professional services, large organization, Lead 5)

Interviewees prioritised practices that promoted belonging with a primary focus on investment in communications to raise awareness of the challenges under-represented groups must overcome. Most described the use of webinars and newsletters as simple but effective tools to share the stories of under-represented groups, often incorporated into a calendar of events, such as celebrating Pride. Webinars were deemed a powerful way to build empathy and convey the inspirational and compelling stories of under-represented groups.

> Listening to the lived experience of our people, particularly those from diverse backgrounds is highly effective because you can't help but be moved. You can't help but want to make a difference and if you don't, then I kind of question whether you should be here or not. (Professional services, FTSE 350 equivalent, Lead 8)

Although interviewees spoke of the effect of these communications in terms of the impact on the majority, interestingly, they did not comment on the fact they may also have an impact on under-represented groups. Seeing others like themselves may help under-represented groups feel part of a group, and promote psychological safety to enable fuller participation and belonging in the workplace.

Developing inclusive behaviours in the majority group was often addressed through skills-based learning where experiential learning workshops were deemed most effective. Some involved teams openly discussing experiences of discrimination and learning from each other. Others hosted workshops aiming to promote awareness and change through discussion and learning activities which encouraged delegates to recognise the power of their privilege and the impact of their language and micro-aggressions. One interviewee expressed his ongoing frustration at the apparent lack of shifting mindsets, and talked of wishing he could “do something radical”. He gave an example of wanting to take senior leaders from his organization into an under-represented community to experience being in a minority so that they might have some small sense of what it might be like to be part of an under-represented group. Of course, virtual reality (VR) training provides this experience although none of the interviewees mentioned VR.

> Take them through an experience that is uncomfortable and then ask about what biases they encountered because we know when people feel it, see it, taste it, they are more likely to change their perceptions. But that’s a journey not a one-off training session. (Media, FTSE 350 equivalent, Lead 7)

Experiential learning also provided opportunities for different groups to interact, which helped to build understanding and develop more inclusive behaviours. For example, one organization employing few young black men, partnered with an

organization that recruits interns from black backgrounds. Leaders met with interns, in a reverse mentoring partnership, enabling leaders to gain an understanding of the under-represented group. A secondary gain was that the organization both developed a commitment to build representation of under-represented groups and created a pipeline of new talent.

Importantly D&I Leads focused, not on “fixing the individual” but on changing the organization notably through robust recruitment processes to introduce diversity into the business. Nonetheless, few spoke of how to build diversity into existing teams, although, one noted the benefits of such a practice.

> We have invited different people to present papers to the executive, and I think that the senior management benefit by having those different people there. We haven't got as much diversity at the top so they need to be exposed to different types of people. (Education, large organization, Lead 9)

In summary, organizations focused on initiatives to build belonging through awareness and understanding of inclusion. Organizations developed understanding through sharing experiences and views of under-represented groups, team development events and reverse mentoring. Few spoke of orchestrating interactions to help develop interpersonal skills to build quality relationships with diverse individuals.

3.4.2 Inclusion as valuing differences

D&I Leads spoke far less about inclusion as valuing differences. In most cases differential investment was made in under-represented groups to provide skills development to help further their careers. Additionally, a few interviewees spoke compellingly about providing career planning tools.

> We're equipping [the under-represented group] to make informed decisions for themselves and set out realistically a five-year career plan, with goals and milestones, so that they're in the driving seat and empowered. (Education, large organization, D&I Lead 10)

Another interviewee spoke equally passionately about the insights gained by under-represented groups:

> It's almost like a light bulb moment […], 'I'm here, I can do it, somebody's believing in me', giving people that skill, so they can empower themselves to pursue their dream. (Healthcare, large company, D&I Lead 15)

Both these might inspire under-represented groups to scale barriers to promotion. Although interviewees spoke in terms of career development practices offering support for under-represented groups, these may also stimulate commitment to the organization and a sense of belonging.

Interviewees also referred to supporting the career advancement of diverse employees through providing access to influential social networks which is more difficult for under-represented groups typically excluded from power networks. Sponsorship schemes may appear an obvious solution but one board-level lead, with perhaps more social capital to invest and protect, noted that formal sponsorship is problematic.

> People started saying we're going to put a sponsorship programme in place but you cannot assign sponsorship, no one's going to sponsor me until I prove myself that I'm worthy of you expanding that political capital for me. (Financial Services, FTSE 350 equivalent, D&I Lead 4)

This reinforces the need to create more formal and informal opportunities for interactions between groups, to build trusted relationships.

Others offered career development for diverse groups through secondments to provide new experiences and understandings. One D&I Lead described a formal one-year career exploration programme aimed at ethnic minority groups, to open the possibility of new career paths. A few interviewees outlined comprehensive onboarding programmes designed to integrate new diverse employees into the organization and help build social capital. This individual spoke of a formal induction programme for all new employees.

> [The onboarding programme] you spend six months getting access to all the leaders, now that might happen naturally [if you are] senior but it ensures equity for people who perhaps don't play golf. (Media, FTSE 350 equivalent, D&I Lead 7)

A recent development, reported by three interviewees, was offering support for well-being as contributing to inclusion. Well-being practices, typically aimed at the whole population, supported physical, mental and in one case, before the current UK cost of living crisis, financial health.

> A well-being point of view is very interlinked with an inclusion, for example, promoting breast checks as well as prostate checks. We have well-being champions who talk about physical, mental, and financial health, we provide support to employees in each of those three areas. (Property services, FTSE equivalent, D&I Lead 6)

One D&I Lead spoke of education on mental health where executive committee members shared their experiences of mental ill-health, with the ambition of creating a culture where 'it's got to be okay, to not be okay'. This organization promoted resources as 'here's how you can invest in you, to reach your goals', bringing together health and career goals. Another interviewee talked of the introduction of four well-being days per year, in addition to annual leave. No explanation was required for these days, which might reduce any stigmatization. These interviewees positioned the case for well-being as a vehicle for inclusion but some cautioned against fashionable signalling. Another experienced D&I Lead was emphatic that well-being for inclusion was only valid when supported by genuine intent and not performative care.

> A well-being ethos is a lever, by which we drive inclusion, because if you truly are looking after my well-being, I will feel more included. Our metrics won't be how many Fitbits we've sold. (Financial services, FTSE 350 equivalent, D&I Lead 4)

The pandemic and national awareness campaigns may have amplified the concern for mental health and potentially accelerated the interviewees seeing well-being as an inclusion practice. Overall, it was clear these interviewees

believe that supporting well-being demonstrates that the organization cares about employees, but not just for the role they perform, enhancing a sense of being valued and included.

All interviewees spoke of internal networks as a resource, supporting under-represented groups and instilling appreciation of their differences. Networks may have started as safe spaces to share experiences but had evolved into ‘action groups’, centres of influence on policy and practice but with little power to make structural changes. They are most often used to contribute to HR practices, rather than other strategic goals.

> They [members of the network] will review the shortlisting with the hiring manager, sit on interview panels, collecting the feedback and forcing the inclusive objectives and practices. (Healthcare, large organization, D&I Lead 15)

Interestingly, a few organizations shared diversity representation data with networks and empowered them to challenge progress on diversity, to hold leaders to account and help drive action. Nevertheless, few harnessed diversity as a competitive advantage to contribute to organizational decision-making. Of those that did, a D&I Lead in a large financial services organization described a young people’s forum briefed to identify organizational performance issues and devise solutions. The interviewee was proud to report the group had exerted significant impact in devising new technology solutions. Another interviewee, used pulse surveys to involve the entire population, to influence decisions and empower people, for example, in devising new flexible working patterns post lockdowns. This organization was entirely UK-based with two sites which may make introducing structured processes to harness views of the entire population easier.

> We're running more pulse surveys and people can really influence decisions. Before it felt a bit like we were asking you, but not really influencing decision. But now we're not just asking, decisions are

> influenced. I think people feel more empowered and they know that it's worth sharing their views. (Education, large organization, D&I Lead 9)

Despite organizations prioritising practices that promoted inclusion through belonging, differences were valued and demonstrated appreciation and support for under-represented groups through networks, well-being and career planning interventions.

Yet, inclusion practices are inexact. They may provide multiple and different experiences of inclusion. Practices may be designed to provide support and appreciation of differences whilst at the same time promoting a sense of belonging.

3.4.3 Leaders as enablers or blockers

The issue of leaders as either enablers or blockers of inclusion has very pertinent implications for practitioners. Interviewees acknowledged the necessity to dismantle structural barriers to change but noted that the leader mindset and commitment to EDI determined success.

> It's getting [leaders] to understand they can be enablers or blockers. It's getting them to understand that in every single thing that they do, throughout the employee lifecycle. (Energy, large organization, D&I Lead 3)

'Blockers' were described as showcasing issues such as raising the Pride flag, whilst accepting sponsorship from countries that criminalise lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. Other blockers included seeing inclusion as a passing trend, for example, one D&I Lead in frustration reported an executive's response to Black Lives Matter and increasing black representation as 'When is this all going to be over?'. This displays a stubborn indifference. Another device used to resist change was commercial success.

> Maybe their area of the business is so successful, they may feel if I change then it's not going to be positive for me. I'm doing really well, so why would I need to change. (Professional services, large organization, D&I Lead 5)

Most interviewees described ‘enablers’ in terms of relational inclusive leadership behaviours, such as acting collaboratively, and ensuring everyone was encouraged to share their views. Enablers had honed their affective and cognitive skills: being authentic, empathic and actively promoting inclusion. Interestingly, one discussed power-sharing, although, as sharing-privilege rather than in relation to sharing information and decision-making. Nevertheless, the evolution of the EDI agenda was presented as moving from regulatory frameworks and compliance, to focus on the mindset of the leaders, to create a ‘movement’ for inclusive change.

> Fundamentally it’s working because senior leaders choose to make it so. There is a very, very clear difference between a leader genuinely believing this, so that every single day he or she shows up in every meeting, every opportunity to make an impact, they have a D&I lens on them. (Professional services, FTSE 350 equivalent, D&I Lead 8)

Unsurprisingly, most interviewees spoke of the challenge involved in changing leadership behaviours which necessitated mindset change. One interviewee from a large retail organization, spoke of the value of Dr Carol Dweck’s motivation theory to help leaders become more self-aware. Dweck’s theory proposes that mindset has an impact on how challenges are approached, described as fixed or growth mindset. One self-aware D&I Lead recalled that in-spite of his 16 years leading EDI he still challenged himself.

> I still hear a lot of ‘this person has a cultural fit, they would fit in perfectly’. But I was interviewing someone the other day and they were so disruptive and I left and thought no. But then I realised that they would keep me on my feet. And it’s that kind of thing, how do you change that culture or mindset? (Media, FTSE 350 equivalent, D&I Lead 7)

This D&I Lead challenged himself to move beyond a ‘culture fit, to culture add’ mindset and changed his behaviour. Others might have maintained the ‘culture fit’ stance fearing the disruption, and possible loss of control or power.

Naturally, challenging senior leaders may cause tension, yet injecting this tension, confronting ‘uncomfortable truths’ was deemed necessary to build

awareness and change. Most spoke both of the importance of using the data and the CEO sponsoring the agenda but only the board level D&I Leads described challenging senior leaders.

> We treat our diversity goals as seriously as our growth goals [….] but this can lead to uncomfortable conversations. This gets into fascinating debates about How far do you push goals of D&I and growth? Do we consider that we should slow growth down to ensure that our diversity goals are reached? And those are good, constructive healthy conflicts and debates. (Professional services, FTSE 350 equivalent, D&I Lead 8)

This demonstrates how the best organizations position their D&I goals alongside their growth goals at a strategic level. Reassuringly, interviewees also spoke of deep structural barriers to change. One interviewee reported their organization had felt it had a strong 'meritocratic' culture, but an external consultant identified it as gendered, from the organizational processes, to the leadership attributes; that external consultant was able to:

> Take them on that journey so that their eyes are opened and they can start to understand what being truly inclusive means. (Professional services, FTSE 350 equivalent, D&I Lead 8)

A strong commitment to inclusion requires a fundamental reshaping of the structure, processes and practices in an organization. This can only happen if the top leaders embrace the challenge and treat D&I as being as important as growth and sustainability goals. Our data indicate that the pursuit of the inclusive organization was driven by the opportunity to enhance the organization's reputation, to attract and retain staff and clients, to improve organizational performance and future-proof the business.

3.5 Discussion

Our study advances knowledge of practices that foster inclusion, beyond the current focus on identifying practices, to understand how they work and explore how they satisfy specific inclusion needs. The literature explores inclusion as

treatment that balances individuals' social need for belongingness and individual need to have one's uniqueness valued (Shore et al., 2011) with less emphasis on which practices may foster inclusion (Shore et al., 2018; Bernstein et al., 2020).

We make three contributions. Our first contribution is theoretical and clarifies our understanding of inclusion practices and how they satisfy inclusion needs. We extend the literature to link practices to belonging, or to valuing difference but acknowledge that a practice may satisfy both needs. The role of inclusion practices is nuanced and inexact. The D&I Leads also identify that organizations prioritise satisfying belonging needs over valuing difference, where the literature suggests inclusion necessitates a balance between belongingness and uniqueness needs (Shore et al., 2011; Randel et al., 2018). We found that D&I Leads were more comfortable talking about 'belonging' rather than valuing differences. We suggest it may be that people find it easier to connect with the concept of belonging rather than that of valuing difference.

A further, theoretical contribution is that our findings reveal well-being and career development as inclusion practices, unlike the extant literature that sees them as outputs of inclusion (Veli Korkmaz et al., 2022; Shore et al. 2018). The literature sees the state of well-being (Shore et al., 2011) as an output of workgroup involvement, as work conflict is reduced. Similarly, Gotsis and Grimani (2016) propose that servant leadership behaviours, promote an inclusive workgroup climate, leading to psychological well-being. It seems logical that a conducive working environment promotes well-being. We find that well-being practices are used to promote inclusion, indicating that well-being is an input of inclusion. Literature also suggests that organizations committed to inclusion will create development and promotion opportunities for diverse talent, or the 'expansion of talent' (Shore et al., 2018, p.186), positioning this as an output of inclusion. Although, we agree that inclusive organizations are more likely to create career opportunities for under-represented groups, we find career development practices are used to demonstrate support of under-represented groups, as a means of valuing their different contributions. Thus, we propose that well-being

and career development practices are potent inclusion practices, re-positioning them in the Shore et al. (2018) inclusive workplace model as both inputs and outputs of inclusion.

Our second contribution is empirical. We find that organizations invest in well-being practices to support individuals through challenging times, recognising and valuing people as human beings, not just as a resource, valuing their difference and fostering inclusion. We accept well-being practices may have accelerated as an inclusion practice due to amplified concerns for mental health during lockdowns. Although, in recognising that well-being practices meet the need for valuing difference, we argue they fulfil an important role in fostering inclusion and should be an enduring practice. We also find a lack of empirical support for involvement in decision-making as an inclusion practice. The literature indicates that participation in decision-making enables the individual to feel part of the organizational system (Mor Barak, 2015; Shore et al., 2018; Bernstein et al., 2020). We find little evidence of these practices, but recognise the practical problems, from developing decision-making skills, to decisions taking longer (Young & Jones, 2020). Access to information and resources are also indicated as inclusion practices (Mor Barak et al., 2016) in the literature. We find that it is specifically access to career development and well-being practices that provide support and appreciation of differences. Although the support and appreciation is linked to valuing differences, they might also promote belongingness. Similarly, although our findings indicate communication tools, such as newsletters, events and training courses are designed to build awareness of under-represented groups to promote inclusive behaviours and belonging, they may also foster a sense of being recognised and valued from under-represented groups.

Our third contribution, at a practical level, is that practices are not uniformly implemented, but depend on the leaders involved and their commitment to EDI. We find inclusion practices are not fixed, but are malleable, delivering more, or less inclusion. Leaders are responsible for operationalising inclusion practices (Shore et al., 2018; Mor Barak et al., 2021), with several studies arguing that the leaders' cognitive ability and beliefs about the value of EDI, impact upon how

inclusion practices are adapted by leaders to meet individual needs (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; O'Leary & Sandberg, 2017; Veli Korkmaz et al., 2022), through their voluntary effort (Shore et al., 2018). The D&I Leads demonstrated this, as they discussed practices to build leaders' diversity awareness and shift mindsets to help develop inclusive behaviours. Importantly for practitioners we find that leaders act as 'enablers' or 'blockers', with enablers typified as collaborative. Further we find that the seniority of the D&I Leads is symbolic of organizational commitment to EDI and facilitates transition to greater inclusion. Deloitte describe this transition evolving through leadership to integration with the business strategy. We found that the three board level D&I Leads were better able than the other Leads to hold leadership to account, challenge progress and inject tension into discussions to facilitate change.

3.5.1 Limitations and conclusion.

This qualitative study expands our understanding of inclusion practices and how they are not uniformly implemented, with some limitations. Participants were senior executives, responsible for designing EDI strategy and practice and may well have been biased towards their own individual preferences and practices they had designed and implemented within their organizations. Despite these possible biases we were able to explore a broad range of practices to understand how they meet inclusion needs. For practitioners, we help identify actionable inclusion practices, to aid retention and help advancement of under-represented groups. Specifically, we note that more attention might to given to practices that demonstrate that diversity is not only appreciated, but valued and harnessed to enhance organizational outcomes. A pertinent implication for practitioners is that leaders may act as either enablers or blockers of inclusion practices. Thus, any study of inclusion practices should consider how practices are not uniformly implemented but are malleable, through the actions of leaders within the organization. Although we find satisfying belonging needs are prioritised over valuing difference, future research could usefully investigate whether employees prioritise inclusion practices in the same way. We would also recommend that research should explore specific practices that employees experience as

inclusive. This would deepen understanding of how practices satisfy inclusion needs and how they are not uniformly implemented to foster organizational inclusion.

4 EXPERIENTIAL AND CONTEXTUAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF INCLUSION

4.1 Abstract

This study aims to advance research and deepen understanding of the individual experiences of inclusion, through thematic analysis of data from semi-structured interviews with 36 junior women. We find that inclusion is complex and changes over time; inclusion is dependent on context, inclusion and exclusion may be experienced simultaneously, and change as competence develops. We theorise from our findings that employees prioritise the need to be valued for their professional expertise, which is validated when included in decision-making providing empirical support for task-related elements of inclusion. We also find well-being and career development practices as inputs to inclusion and that the primary context for inclusion is within everyday interactions with line managers. Also, junior women respond to inclusion and proactively manage their own and others inclusion. The study suggests that organizations may benefit from developing junior managers' people skills and refocus organizational efforts to demonstrate that individuals are valued through broader inclusion in decision-making processes. The study captures the experiences of inclusion, to show *how* inclusion is experienced as complex and changeable providing a more nuanced understanding and that the primary context for inclusion is within interactions with line managers.

Key words – Inclusive organizations, Inclusion practices, Inclusive leaders, Inclusive line managers, Belonging, Valuing uniqueness

4.2 Introduction

Organizations continue to invest in diversity and inclusion (D&I) policies and practices, yet progress remains slow in achieving diverse representation within senior teams. D&I are often used interchangeably and referred to as a single concept but are distinct and separate, although inextricably linked (Roberson, 2006). Diversity refers to the demographic representation of different groups and inclusion to the involvement and integration of those groups into organizational

systems and processes (Roberson, 2006). Inclusion in the workgroup is conceptualised as treatment from the group that balances the social identity need to belong and individual need to have one's uniqueness valued (Shore et al., 2011). Until recently research tended to focus on managing diversity in the workplace to prevent discrimination and exclusion through HR processes (Dobbin & Kalev, 2022), to increase representation of under-represented groups such as women and different ethnicities. This approach is problematic as it presents diversity as a problem to solve, rather than viewing diversity as a resource to be leveraged (Nishii, 2013), and associated with positive outcomes and organizational performance (Mor Barak et al., 2016).

Furthermore, diversity management alone is insufficient to foster an organization where everyone feels part of the system and able to contribute, this requires inclusionary effort (Shore et al, 2018). Workplace inclusion is a growing field of research gaining increasing interest, signalling a shift in focus from how and why discrimination and inequalities persist, to how organizations can become more inclusive (van Eck et al., 2023). This is an important development; fostering inclusion improves retention and promotion of under-represented groups (Shore et al., 2018), whilst diverse workgroups can enrich the organization, and unlock innovation, creativity and role performance (Chen & Tang, 2018).

Nevertheless, research on the inclusive workplace has tended to study the group and organizational level, examined through inclusive leadership, culture, perceptions and practices, attempting to show how they relate (Shore et al., 2018). Little empirical research has explored how inclusion is experienced by individuals in the workplace. An exception is a McKinsey report (De Smet et al., 2021) suggesting there is a mismatch between the organizational and individual perspectives. The report examines why people leave organizations, where employee retention is a proxy measure of inclusion. Employers cited compensation, work–life balance, and poor physical and emotional health. Yet, for employees the top three factors were that they didn't feel valued by their organizations (54%), or by their managers (52%), and because they didn't feel a sense of belonging at work (51%). Exploring individual experiences of inclusion

is important to understand the inclusive workplace but it is also important to differentiate between people at different levels of the organization. The experience of inclusion is likely to vary by seniority; for example, senior managers develop policy and practices but junior employees experience them. Understanding employees' individual experiences of inclusion is the focus of this study.

This study aims to uncover the experiences of inclusion by junior women employees at work. We conducted semi-structured interviews, with junior women, to explore how, when and where inclusion was experienced. Findings indicate that the experience of inclusion was complex, contradictory and changes over time. Employees prioritised being valued for their differences both through their professional expertise and being treated as a whole person, balancing work and home priorities. The primary context in which inclusion was experienced was through the potentially taken-for-granted, everyday interactions with the line manager. Interestingly, employees respond to inclusion and can manage and drive their own and others inclusion. This study contributes to understanding the experiences and contexts of inclusion for junior women in the workplace. The practical implications for organizations are that they might re-direct interventions to validate individuals' expertise and harness that expertise to contribute to organizational goals. Secondly, organizations might refocus training and development of junior managers to develop their people skills, to adapt and respond to individual needs. As organizations foster greater inclusion, they may better leverage the benefits of diversity to improve the performance, retention and promotion of under-represented groups.

In the next section we review the literature on workplace inclusion and the experience of inclusion. This is followed by details of the qualitative study and the findings, leading to the discussion with reference to the literature on the experience and context of inclusion. We then consider some limitations and areas for future study.

4.2.1 Workplace inclusion: the experience of inclusion

In Shore et al.'s (2011) seminal paper, inclusion within the workgroup is conceptualised at an individual level, drawing on optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT) (Brewer, 1991). Inclusion is understood as treatment from the group that balances the social identity need, to be treated as an insider, with the individual identity need to have one's uniqueness valued (Figure 4-1).

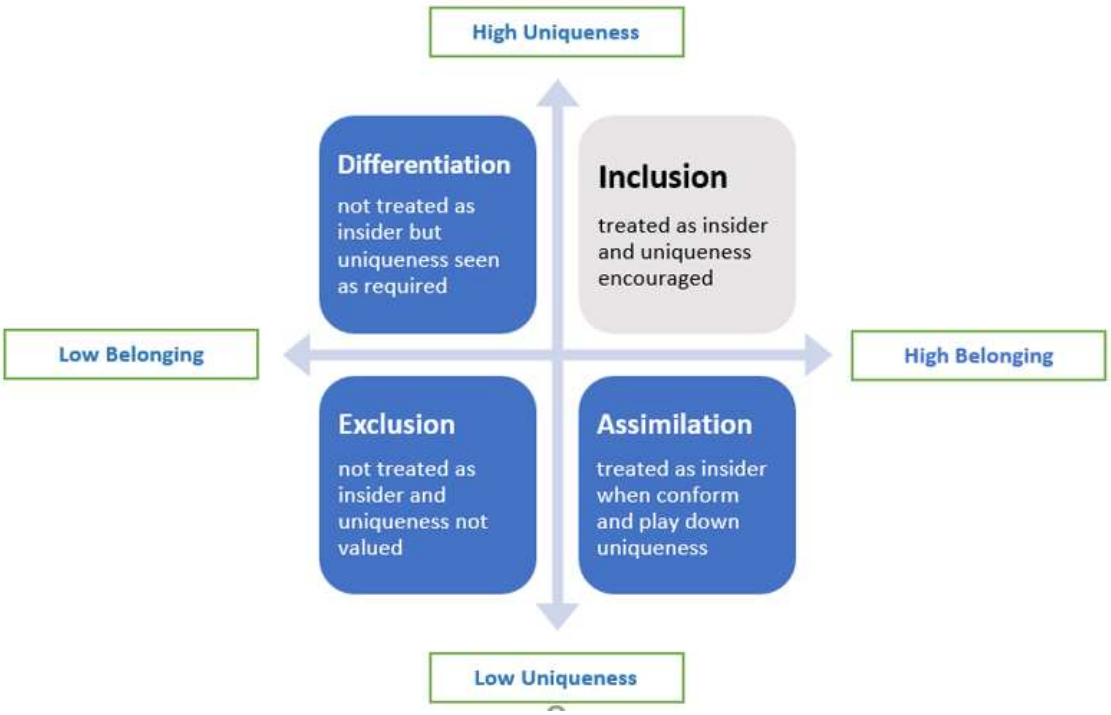

Figure 4-1 Workgroup inclusion framework (adapted from Shore et al., 2011)

Based on this conceptualisation, the literature review of Shore et al. (2018) proposes a workplace inclusion model describing relationships between inclusive leadership, workgroups, practices, climate and perceptions of inclusion. The model proposes a range of factors as core to creating a sense of inclusion, including the role of psychological safety, feeling respected and valued, and influencing decision-making. This model is focused at an organizational level, prioritising the role of top management and HR practices.

More recently Nishii and Leroy (2022), in their theoretical paper, investigate inclusion at an individual level but from a leadership and organizational perspective. They theorise that the inclusive organization unfolds at individual,

group and organizational levels (Figure 4-2) and that leadership is a dynamic and relational process, where leaders moderate interpersonal and intrapersonal processes. At an intrapersonal level, relatedness, autonomy and competence are experienced along with belonging and uniqueness. They argue junior employees are more likely to experience inclusion through their work and task-directed behaviours, experienced as interpersonal and intrapersonal processes. Further, they argue there is an assumed tension in the Shore et al. (2011) framework between maintaining belongingness and uniqueness, that more of one, comes at a cost to the other. In contrast, Nishii and Leroy through self-determination theory (SDT) and intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000) suggest there is no tension between these needs, rather, to feel belonging one needs others to support one's uniqueness, suggesting they are reinforcing. Secondly, they draw on the personal engagement model and literature on authenticity, that being able to bring one's whole self to work contributes to the experience of inclusion (Nishii & Leroy, 2022).

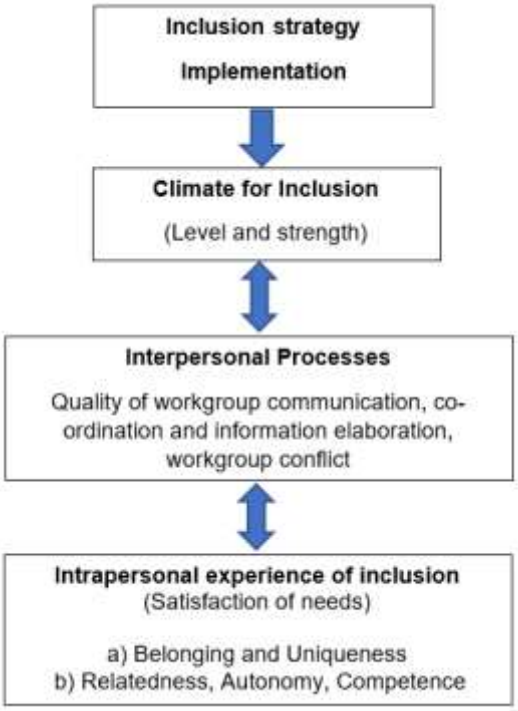

Figure 4-2 From "Multi-level framework of inclusive leadership" (Nishii & Leroy, 2022, p.684)

These two lenses, intrinsic motivation and bringing one's whole self to work, combine to enable employees to perform at their best and feel included. To feel intrinsically motivated, SDT assumes three needs must be satisfied: the needs for relatedness (or belonging), autonomy (have control over one's thoughts and behaviours) and competence (proficiency to deliver goals). Fulfilment of the need for competence is important; it creates positive visibility which replaces potential negative stereotyping and othering of under-represented groups, where competence is heavily scrutinised. Also, under-represented groups may not feel psychologically safe, or unable to speak out and contribute fully at work. Nishii and Leroy (2022) draw on personal engagement and authenticity, to describe how psychological safety (to engage fully in work) and psychological meaningfulness (to contribute meaningfully and feel worthwhile), empower individuals to contribute fully. In turn, when individuals are empowered to contribute and know that colleagues value their competence, they experience both inclusion and engagement, a subset of Shore et al.'s (2011) belonging and uniqueness. However, others see inclusion as more complex, rather than experiencing either inclusion or exclusion, they may be experienced simultaneously, and change over time (Cassell et al., 2020). Given that organizations are complex social systems and people engage at many different levels, this seems probable, if a less well explored conceptualisation.

In considering the design of this study we acknowledge Nishii and Leroy's (2022) call to researchers to be clear about the level of analysis and aspects of inclusion to be investigated. We provide that clarity; with this study we focus on an individual level of analysis, i.e. on the experiences and contexts of inclusion for junior employees.

4.2.2 Organizational inclusion practices

Given that there is a tendency to investigate inclusion at an organizational level where inclusive practices inform perceptions of inclusion (Shore et al., 2018), it is important to understand the role of inclusion practices on the experiences of inclusion. Studies refer to a plethora of inclusion practices without necessarily exploring how or why they foster inclusion. A review of the literature uncovers

task-related practices such as workgroup involvement (Nishii, 2013) and job involvement (Shore et al., 2018), and relational practices from building quality relations (Janssens & Steyaert, 2019). Other practices such as access to information, resources and networks (Sherbin & Rashid, 2017), influencing decisions (Shore et al., 2018) and valuing each individual's contribution (Sabharwal et al., 2019), signify being part of the organizational system (Shore et al., 2018). The organizational literature suggests that inclusion may be fostered through this multiplicity of practices, with less understanding of *how* they foster inclusion, or *how* the individual experiences them. Further complexity arises as organizational practices are delivered through layers of management and multiple managers, who may each implement practices differently. Thus, the same practice may provide a different experience of inclusion, to different people, which is yet to be fully understood. We now consider the literature on the influence leaders have on inclusion practices and the experience of inclusion.

4.2.3 Inclusive leadership on the experience of inclusion

What leaders say and do matters; they can directly reinforce behaviours that support inclusion experiences (Randel et al., 2018). Inclusive leadership research proliferates, explored as a mediating factor in fostering inclusion, often studied as leader/follower relations. Randel et al., through the ODT lens, suggest inclusive leaders facilitate belonging through supporting individuals, ensuring equity and sharing decision-making, also by valuing uniqueness through encouraging diverse contributions and helping members contribute fully. Other researchers use different lenses, for example, Gotsis and Grimani (2016) suggest servant leadership relates to inclusion, focused on empowering, developing people and fostering interpersonal acceptance.

This growing body of research on inclusive leadership extends to consider the role of leaders' mindsets, the values and beliefs that influence their actions and implementation of practices to foster inclusion. Beliefs include valuing individual differences, contributions and collaboration (Roberson & Perry, 2021), which creates psychological safety, enabling experimentation, without fear of judgement or punishment (Shore & Chung, 2022). However, different levels of

leaders perform different roles in fostering inclusion. The senior leaders establish the vision and policy but it is junior managers who translate policies into action, influencing the employees experience of inclusion, thus a multi-level approach is necessary (Nishii & Leroy, 2022). Also, all leaders and managers have some positional power but Roberson and Perry's (2021) study emphasises the importance of status reduction to create inclusion through open dialogue and two-way influence between leaders and followers. These interpersonal relationships enhance trust, confer insider status and subsequently the experience of inclusion. This 'informal' style will involve multiple micro-interactions between managers and employees. Although there is some literature addressing exclusion as micro-aggressions (Brimhall & Saastamoinen, 2020), there is scant literature examining how micro-interactions may influence inclusion at an individual level. However, the inclusive leadership scholars view inclusion through the leadership lens rather than exploring how inclusive leadership is experienced by junior employees at an individual level.

4.2.4 Study aims and research question

This paper aims to refocus research from the organizational and group level, to the individual level of enquiry, to uncover the experiences of inclusion of junior women employees. The study explores the employee experiences of inclusion, making visible the contexts and revealing their lived experience. This knowledge will help surface the individual experiences of inclusion for under-represented groups, to help improve organizational inclusion. This research aims to answer the question: How do junior employees experience inclusion at work?

4.3 Methods

We interviewed 36 participants from three large UK organizations using purposive sampling to provide the broadest range of in-depth and information-rich data (Bell et al., 2019). Organizations were selected on the basis of their commitment to D&I, demonstrated through their appointment of a full-time executive to lead the D&I agenda, implementation of D&I interventions and recognised public awards such as the National Equality Standard. They had all contributed to previous research into organizational inclusion and were

committed to the research. The organizations were all knowledge and service-based businesses requiring similar professional standards and skill-sets, treated as one data-set. Participant criteria were that they were junior women, with more than one year's tenure. We selected junior rather than senior employees who may be responsible for implementing D&I policies and providing the experience of inclusion. Women were selected as organizations have a legacy of D&I policies and interventions directed at this group, therefore, women employees are more likely than other under-represented groups to have experienced inclusion initiatives. To reduce bias from training and attention received during induction programmes, all participants had worked in the organization for one year or more. Participants covered a broad range of ages and tenure across all three organizations shown in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1. Participant demographic details by organization

Name	**Age**					**Tenure**				
	20-29	**30-39**	**40-49**	**50-59**	**60+**	**1-5**	**6-10**	**11-15**	**16-20**	**21+**
Organization A										
Ninja		X				X				
Jessica					X	X				
Debbie		X				X				
Rachel			X				X			
Kirsty			X			X				
Alison				X						X
Jane	X					X				
Susan	X					X				
Joules				X						X
Martha	X					X				
Helen				X						X
Cynthia		X					X			
Carmine		X				X				
Christina		X					X			
Organization B										
Juliet				X		X				X
Maya	X					X				
Ester		X				X				
Edy			X							X

Name	Age					Tenure				
	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Harriet		X					X			
Lilly				X		X				
Lazina			X					X		
Mecky		X					X			
Elaine	X					X				
Radha	X					X				
Organization C										
Andrea			X			X				
Cindy		X				X				
Loretta		X					X			
Kemi			X				X			
Dede		X						X		
Annie			X					X		
Sian		X				X				
Jaz			X			X				
Fatima				X						X
Anthea			X			X				
Kristen		X				X				
Agatha				X						X
Total	**6**	**13**	**9**	**7**	**1**	**19**	**7**	**3**	**x**	**7**

4.3.1 Data collection

Invitations were sent to members of the organizations' gender networks with information about the study (Appendix G.1). The initial response was slow and network leads suggested individuals were managing heavy workloads post-COVID and adapting to hybrid working, so snowball sampling was used to seek further participants in all three organizations (Bell et al., 2019). We were mindful that memories are weaker than the experience itself and some events and behaviours may not surface. To aid recall of detailed accounts the invitation and confirmation asked participants to record experiences whilst the memory remained fresh (Ohly et al., 2010). For two weeks prior to the interview participants were asked to record both inclusive and exclusive experiences. This

allowed participants to reflect more broadly and contrast their experiences, contributing to richer more insightful data. An interview guide kept interviews on track with prompts and sequence of questions (Appendix G.2). Participants were asked four questions: 'Would you describe, in as much detail as possible, a situation at work in which you felt particularly included?' followed by 'What example can you think of when you felt that you fitted-in, belonged or felt you were particularly valued?' to prompt and uncover more and potentially different experiences. The last questions were 'Can you give me an example of something the organization does that gives you the experience of inclusion?' and 'If you were advising the organization to be more inclusive, what is the main change you would recommend?'. These proved less informative as interviewees tended to focus on the broader community rather than personal experiences. Interviews were conducted on Zoom, between June and October 2022, lasting 50-60 minutes. One participant was at her workplace but with no co-workers present. All others interviews took place when participants were home-working which may have facilitated more open and honest reflections.

4.3.2 Data analysis

Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to allow repeated, thorough examination and familiarisation. Transcripts were coded after each interview, using NVivo12. Coding and themes developed throughout the data collection and analysis phases using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Coding was carried out at three levels to provide thick data and deeper insight. Firstly, a priori theoretical codes were developed from the literature and framework in Shore et al. (2011). Secondly, open-coding captured additional data. At the third level, a summary written after each interview captured preliminary themes, identifying common and different experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2021). At transcript 13, codes were re-organized, from the deductive theoretical coding structure, to an inductive approach to explore how concepts might relate or contradict each other (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019). For example, codes assigned to the theoretical code, *Belonging,* such as *formal, informal interactions* and *quality relations* were re-assigned to a new code, *One-off interactions.* Coding continued until, between

interview 27 and 31, only one new meaningful code was created. Five more interviews were conducted and coded to satisfy data saturation(Francis et al., 2010), making 36 interviews in total. The sample size was large enough to demonstrate patterns but small enough to retain a focus on individual experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Themes were developed iteratively using multiple methods from NVivo tools, manual re-grouping to mind-mapping. This entailed grouping and re-grouping codes into topic summaries, then searching for the meaning that united the topic to create themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Seven intermediate themes emerged, and through continuous analysis and interpretation these were organised into three final themes. Intermediate themes a) to be valued is to be included, b) valued as a whole person, c) complexities arising from the experience of inclusion and d) the role of structural and contractual arrangements all described different experiences of inclusion and were consolidated to final theme *1) Individual experiences of inclusion.* Next, intermediate themes e) good and poor people managers, f) inclusion within and between teams, and g) micro-interactions with big impact, all concentrated on interactions with the line manager and combined to become the second final theme *2) The primary context for inclusion with the line manager*. The third final theme *3) Individual responses to inclusion* developed from intermediate theme c) structural and contractual arrangements, where participants discussed their response to inclusion through their working practices providing interesting new insights into inclusion.

This research, viewed through an interpretive lens, recognises that the researcher is involved in the production of knowledge (Bell et al., 2019); thus, after every interview, the impressions and interpretations of the interviews were recorded for reflection and refinements to the process. The lead researcher, was White British, and participants came from different backgrounds, some with English as a second language. We were keen to ensure that participants felt safe in sharing detailed accounts of their experiences, and so the interviewer consciously spent time building rapport with the participants through questions and validating their experiences. Some participants, started the interviews focused on inclusion and then raised experiences of exclusion. The researcher

was sensitive to, explored and validated these exclusionary experiences. The researcher through establishing rapport, aimed to not only provided a psychologically safe environment for interviewees to be open about their experiences but also to be able to exert their right to withdraw should they wish, although none made this choice. Through exploring experiences of exclusion, the researcher was able to ask follow-up questions about opposite experiences. These interviewees recalled rich and memorable experiences of inclusion, which were important to them and may not have surfaced without the exploration of exclusion. These details were logged in the research journal and debated for any bias and ethical issues, such as whether the interviewer had led the interviewees. Following this discussion experiences of both inclusion and exclusion were retained in the data-set for analysis.

4.4 Findings

To answer the research question: *How do employees experience inclusion at work?* we begin by presenting the first theme, *Individual experiences of inclusion*. Through analysis it became apparent that context was an important factor in the experience of inclusion explored in the second theme, *The primary context for inclusion with the line manager*. Finally, we present theme three, *Individual responses to inclusion* which arose as participants reflected on how they delivered their roles with inclusion in mind. Table 4-2 shows a summary of themes and sub-themes with quotes as evidence.

Table 4-2 Summary of themes and sub-themes with quotes

Sub-Theme		**Quotes**
Level 2	**Level 3**	
Level 1 Theme 1: Experiences of inclusion		
		It's quite a contradictory example of inclusion because I had very contradictory feelings during this time. I felt really appreciated but at the same time I didn't feel included. I've got loads of experience in this area so my experience was quickly appreciated, they were really complimentary on my work. But then, because of the level I was, I wasn't

Sub-Theme		Quotes
Level 2	**Level 3**	
Inclusion was complex, contradictory and changed over time	Being included and not included	included in key meetings, which I found really frustrating because for me to do the work properly, I need to see the bigger picture, I need to know what's going on. But it's like you're not important enough to join these meetings. Anthea, Organization C
	Inclusion changed as competence developed	As I progressed I managed to create really good relationships and was better able to support my colleagues and showing new staff the ropes. And I think that performance led to recognition from managers and I was selected to look after the newer programmes. This meant I got to speak with more senior staff and those sorts of things. So, I felt included and had a feeling that I was doing a good job and that job was recognised. Cynthia, Organization A
Being valued	Expertise valued and validated when influencing decisions	You would be included in meetings where usually it would just be senior leadership. You'd be invited to do presentations and feedback on things that you were working on. I was actively encouraged to share my insights and use that insight to make recommendations and feedback to all parts of the business and make changes. Kristen, Organization C
	Treated as a whole person through well-being	Feeling included goes back to when my manager refers to things that we've discussed previously. If there's something going on at home, like an illness or something, it feels like it's more than a courtesy when she says, 'Are you okay, is there anything else I can do?' I think that's the main time when you feel like more like a person, instead of just an employee, or a wheel in the cog. Ester, Organization B
	Treated as a whole person through career development	In terms of being offered the stretch roles, I had never officially done that type of work but I felt I was seen as an individual, not just for my role title. And it's definitely been the biggest stepping stone for my career. That support was invaluable, and made me feel that I was included and valued as part of the organization. Harriet, Organization B

Sub-Theme		Quotes
Level 2	**Level 3**	
Level 1 Theme 2: The primary context for inclusion with the line manager		
Everyday interactions with the line manager	Good people skills included 'shedding leadership armour'	I do feel the sense of inclusion was very much down to the line manager who was so open and really helpful. There was never a stress about helping each other out and chatting, even if it wasn't your area. It was fostering the creativity, she was always very keen to hear what we wanted to do. You felt like you could go to her with any problem and she'd listen. But if she could see that I was struggling, she would not leave me she'd say, 'Right, what can I do to help? How can I ease some of this workload? Don't worry, about that today, I'll go deal with it'. And it was that sense of community, that helpfulness and friendliness that made it really special. Everyone felt really included. Susan, Organization A
Level 1 Theme 3: Individual responses to inclusion		
Employees seek their own inclusion		It's also recognising where you can make yourself feel included, it's not just feeling included. It's taking those opportunities to say, 'I can provide value in this, I can provide suggestions that will enable us to improve'. Ninja, Organization A

4.4.1 Individual experiences of inclusion

Our findings indicate there are many different experiences of inclusion, labelled *Individual experiences of inclusion* which includes that *Inclusion is complex and changed over time,* explored through experiences of *Being included and not included* and *Inclusion changed as competence developed.* What stands out in our findings is that junior women prioritised *Being valued,* labelled as a second subtheme. For example, the first interview question asked participants to describe an experience of inclusion, to which nearly all, responded with an experience of being valued for their expertise. The second interview question asked participants to describe when they felt they "belonged", "fitted-in" or were "valued". Despite this prompt, surprisingly few participants spoke of belonging,

most remained focused on experiences of being valued. Interviewees specifically referred to *Expertise valued and validated when influencing decisions* and *Treated as a whole person through well-being and career development*. These themes are explored in turn, commencing with the *Experiences of inclusion were complex and changed over time*.

4.4.1.1 Experiences of inclusion were complex and changed over time

When participants described inclusion, the experience was complex and interviewees described how it changed over time. The complexity of the experience was dependent on context, relationships and how their work was recognised. Some people gave examples of feeling included in the work but isolated from colleagues and so talked of feeling excluded at the time. Similarly, some felt included in work goals but not appreciated and described this as a sense of exclusion. Many participants used the term “being valued” interchangeably with “inclusion”, others made subtle distinctions in their experiences of inclusion.

> I'm sort of drawing the line between valued and included as a bit narrow but I see them as overlapping. You can be delegated work, therefore, you're included but are you really valued? Is there that appreciation? So, the small things like, having consultative conversations, public recognition, things like that. Sian, Organization C

This demonstrates the complexity: people can experience inclusion because they are included in work tasks but if people are not valued, they do not experience inclusion.

In a few cases interviewees described feeling conflicted, when they felt both included and excluded at the same time, dependant on interactions with different groups. For example, the woman below, in her 30’s, made a proposal to change her working arrangements to enable her to better manage work and home priorities but received two opposing responses.

> My manager was fully supportive of it [changing working hours] and his manager was fully supportive, HR weren't. That's an example where I felt included and not included. Mecky, Organization B

She felt the HR team were ticking company policy boxes, not considering her as a person. She had worked at the company for over ten years with a good track-record and felt her manager knew that she would make her proposal work. He championed her, was persistent and made the change happen. She remarked that others with a less supportive manager would have had a different result, indicating that organizational inclusion is fragile.

Another woman, Susan, in her 20's, felt she was contradicting herself, when she experienced inclusion and exclusion simultaneously. She felt included because she was trusted to deliver a new initiative but felt isolated from colleagues and so excluded.

> I worked for a year in a different centre, where I was very much by myself. I still felt included because I felt like I was being trusted to do everything but it didn't feel like the kind of inclusivity I wanted. I wanted someone there to bounce ideas off. Susan, Organization A

Susan described herself as contradicting herself, perhaps because earlier she had prioritised inclusion as being recognised as an expert and trusted to deliver. But in the above context, although she felt valued to deliver an important project and therefore included, because she was working alone, she felt excluded and wanted a different type of inclusion. This suggests she expected to experience *either* inclusion *or* exclusion at any one time, yet she was experiencing both simultaneously. This demonstrates the complexity of the experience of inclusion and that inclusion and exclusion are interrelated.

Interestingly, in the quote above Susan's need for having her uniqueness recognised was met, yet she also wanted to work collaboratively, indicating an unmet social need to belong. Yet, it was not that she considered them in tension; she did not feel too different from the group and thus sought to balance that with belongingness. Recognition of her unique talents provided inclusion and the need

for belongingness seems to reinforce her overall experience of inclusion. It may be that the context of the working environment and working in isolation prompted a desire to be in contact with others. This may indicate she has a personal preference to work collaboratively, which may be related to belongingness but may be less about forming a protective social identity and more about a task-related preference. This suggests belongingness and uniqueness are not only potentially reinforcing but also that experiences of inclusion, may vary by context and by the individual personal need.

The experience of inclusion also changed over time. For example, one woman described how as a new team member she was welcomed and supported, leading to feelings of inclusion because she felt she belonged. Yet over time her experience of inclusion developed as she was recognised for her professional expertise. This would suggest that belongingness and uniqueness are not in tension rather that they are complimentary and reinforcing. Others described their sense of inclusion increased as their competence developed, one explained as she reached a level of expertise that gave her more influence and inclusion. Cynthia, in her 30's, with over six years' tenure, described increased feelings of inclusion because of her good performance.

> So, because of my good performance, I was let into more conversations and was asked my opinion on how I think things should go and sort of brought into some confidences. So, in some respects, it was my performance that moved me into inclusion. Cynthia, Organization A

Here Cynthia described a restructure, where the team were close and supported each other. As Cynthia's competence developed the manager solicited her views on how to professionalise the team. She saw this as a double-edged sword; she felt included because her performance was recognised and opinions solicited but did not feel as included within the team. In contrast, Maya felt included for her ability to deliver the job from day one.

> When I started as a graduate, I wrongly assumed that I would get the lesser jobs, that didn't really matter if it went well or not. Instead, I was told exactly how the jobs linked to the bigger picture. Others had been

> there for 25 years, but what I did mattered. It gave me a sense of pride in my work, in my team because we were all able to collaboratively bring our solution and deliverables to the table. I felt very included and it didn't matter that I was young, it didn't matter that I'd just come out of university, my age, my race, nothing mattered, just the fact that I had contributed to that team, that mattered. Maya, Organization B

Maya, in her 20's, was tasked to roll-out a company-wide technical product, a business-critical and essential project in a larger organization-wide communication upgrade programme. Maya felt especially valued because even as a new team member, her skills were recognised and she was trusted to deliver. These feelings of being valued also elicited feelings that she belonged in the team and had earned her place, indicating again that belongingness and uniqueness are potentially reinforcing. This project was delivered four years prior to this interview, demonstrating how memorable and important the experience was to her.

Nevertheless a few people, who initially spoke positively about feeling valued within their day-to-day work and recognised the organizational commitment to D&I, were conflicted, they still felt excluded. For example, Kristen started the interview speaking about feeling included when trusted to deliver important work but concluded that the organizational D&I initiatives had no relevance for her. When asked to elaborate she said:

> There's a lot they do generally that focuses on inclusion and diversity and gender equality. They're doing the obligatory actions but I don't see the changes at the top. So much as they promote this stuff, I don't think it really makes me feel any more included because I don't see role models throughout the organization. Kristen, Organization C

Despite describing many experiences of inclusion through her work, Kristen was disillusioned. The lack of senior role models signalled that progression was not possible, she felt excluded. Junior women may experience inclusion in the day-to-day but are excluded from promotion and power.

4.4.1.2 Being valued: expertise valued and validated when influencing decisions

Most women referred to the experience of inclusion through being valued for the role they perform, being trusted and empowered to work autonomously and influence decision-making. Interviewees referred to their expertise being recognised but also valued to contribute to organizational goals.

> It's very inclusive, because he's aware that it's not his expertise. So, he pulls in all the people from within his team. It's just like 'I know you two have got the experience, off you go, get it sorted'. So, he's not hierarchical, he sees what skills we need to get this job done. Cindy, Organization C

Cindy felt included when her professional expertise was recognised and differentiated from others. Others noted the importance of feeling trusted to work autonomously and self-generate work. Ester in her 30's described inclusion as having control, being trusted and empowered to work autonomously.

> Working autonomously provides that sense of inclusion, just knowing that you can inflict, not inflict but make changes to the progression of the process. It was valued that I'd done the research, had a meeting with the right people, that I'd sorted it all out. And the fact they're taking my thinking seriously and accepting my recommendations. Ester, Organization B

It might be that the experience of having control might be related to maturity, either in age, tenure, or competence, but it was experienced as inclusive across all groups. It is possible women, such as Cindy and Ester, who referred to having autonomy and self-generation of work as experiences of inclusion have more agency, competence, or confidence in their expertise and therefore seek control.

Other interviewees felt their expertise was valued and validated when involved in decision-making. For some it was sufficient to be kept informed of the process, others spoke of their opinions being sought, and for others it was influencing decisions. Rachel experienced inclusion when her manager, as part of the senior

team, was developing a new organizational strategy. Her manager consulted with her on the departmental contribution, rather than work exclusively in the senior peer group.

> [Line manager] has kept me up-to-date with where the thinking is, where the strategy is going. She's been consulting with us 'Does this sound right, what should we say here, is this the right priority for us?'. She's bringing us into that conversation that she then feeds into the executive and influences the strategy, rather than it just being top down. She brought us along and that made me feel included. Rachel, Organization A

Rachel felt that her contribution influenced the strategy, this made her feel valued and validated her expertise. Although Rachel was in her 40's, with over six years tenure, this experience of inclusion crossed all age groups. More cited the experience of *influencing* decisions rather than simple *involvement* as fostering inclusion, differentiated by contributing to organizational goals. It is not possible to involve everyone, in every decision; nevertheless, one organization had involved as many people as possible in consultation about strategy and values. Several women in this organization talked about this; they had access to information, joined in consultation meetings and were updated on progress. We recognise these as one-off events which did not mean involvement in decision-making translated to the day-to-day, yet, they were memorable experiences of inclusion. In sum, most women described inclusion as being valued for their expertise, few specifically referred to belonging. Nevertheless, when employees feel valued and are influencing decisions that contribute to organizational goals, this may at the same time provide a sense of belonging to the organization. This suggests belonging and uniqueness are intertwined.

4.4.1.3 Being valued: treated as a whole person through well-being and career development

Most participants felt valued and included when they felt *seen (*recognised as an individual)*,* that their views were *heard* but importantly were *treated*, as a whole person, balancing work and home priorities. This treatment was experienced

through career development and well-being initiatives. Many interviewees described flexible working as a well-being practice. This was in the context of individual circumstances being recognised and flexible working developed to help them balance home and work priorities. For example, Jaz had a child who had been in hospital six times in three months.

> I feel included as it is a family friendly company and it makes me feel included. It takes a lot of pressure off me and my family. When I asked about flexible-working they were so good about it. It's family first.
> Jaz, Organization C

Jaz explained that she had been embarrassed to continually ask for time off. With less than five years tenure perhaps she was less secure in her position. But the organization treated her as an individual and valued person, they recognised her unique situation, wrestling with a distressing family situation, whilst balancing work priorities. The organization worked with her to find a way that enabled her to manage her unique circumstances which led to a reduction in her stress levels. Interestingly, participants described flexible working as a bridge to inclusion, none saw it as potentially problematic, constructing a barrier to promotion or future opportunities. Most participants broadened non-work priorities beyond family and caring responsibilities to include mental and physical well-being; being treated as a whole person.

> I think the well-being resources give you that feeling of inclusion because it's more of a holistic view of a person. It's seeing you as a person, instead of just a number. It's not just the fact that they're run but that we're encouraged to go on them. Instead of 'Oh, we've just ticked the box, we've offered it. But actually you're too busy, you can't go on it', that's when it kind of feels a bit bad. But if you're encouraged to go and reminded 'Oh, there's a course on Wednesday at 12? Do you want to go on it?', then you feel seen as a person. Ester, Organization B

For Ester it was not just the provision of, or support from well-being initiatives that was important, the reminder from her manager meant she felt valued. It gave her permission to attend, regardless of workload, indicating she was treated '"as a

real person not just a cog in a wheel". Well-being initiatives did not receive universal approval, some saw them as only signalling care, they were used to combat work-induced stress, where workload was ignored. Some noted that regardless of the organization's investment in D&I, work-induced stress *always* prevented the experience of inclusion. This does not negate the value of well-being practices in fostering inclusion but demonstrates the importance of genuine intent, not performance management.

Participants also reported career development as inclusive. Surprisingly, only one participant referred to formal organizational development programmes, most spoke of developmental conversations in routine meetings. Just having the discussion provided a sense of inclusion for some. Routine meetings with managers became developmental when the discussion evolved to *how* to deliver, not just *what* was delivered. These future focused discussions helped develop soft skills, interpersonal and influencing skills, not just functional competence. For example, one interviewee referred to discussions with her manager about engaging senior leaders in her project. He explained what different members of the senior team would be looking for and that when she met them, to start at a high level and then "trickle down into the detail". Many mentioned work allocation, secondments and project work as skills and career development opportunities. This participant described how her manager provided "stretch" roles: opening a new office and a target operating model review. Although, she felt these roles were outside her remit, her manager recognised her talent and encouraged her development.

> I was seen as an individual, not just for my role title. That was key because there were other people that had the same job title that he could have pulled upon but he chose me to take on that work. It's definitely been the biggest stepping stone for me in terms of moving my career. That support was invaluable, and made me feel that I was included and valued as part of the organization. Harriet, Organization B

These developmental conversations and work experiences facilitated access to senior networks and social capital. With genuine intent and support for individual

well-being and career development, interviewees felt treated as whole person, recognised for more than their work persona, this in turn led to a sense of inclusion.

4.4.2 The primary context for inclusion is with line manager

As mentioned above only one participant referred to inclusion through organizational development programmes, similarly, few participants referred to organizational inclusion initiatives as the context for inclusion. In contrast, nearly all referred to interactions with their line manager as inclusive, although this varied according to the individual manager's level of interpersonal skills. Before considering the line manager role, we reveal participants' views on organizational inclusion initiatives.

> People feel included when they're included in projects, they see the results. They know what the goal is, they know why they're doing it, they see the output, they're a part of the successful results, that makes them feel engaged in their jobs. Not all this constant badgering [to be involved in social drinks, workshops etc.]. Jaz, Organization C

This highlights how employees experienced inclusion within the context of delivering their work rather than through generic organizational initiatives. Three participants referred to the plethora of inclusion initiatives, one said "loads, hundreds", that were "overlapping and duplicating" which may confuse the inclusion message and reduce their intended impact. Much as interviewees appreciated organizational inclusion interventions, most prioritised inclusionary experiences within the context of everyday interactions with their line manager. Relationships with line managers were most frequently described in terms of micro-interactions prompting memorable experiences of inclusion, or indeed exclusion.

> A lot of inclusion is to do with those micro-interactions and behaviours, they're tiny but they can make a really big difference, in a negative, or a positive way. For example, the senior manager not giving his opinion first, but inviting others to give theirs. But then someone makes a point,

> and it's kind of ignored and then somebody else makes it and suddenly, 'Oh, that's a great idea'. The organization does all this great stuff but it's those tiny things when people interact with managers that's inclusion. Juliet, Organization B

Micro-interactions took many forms: here the interaction was memorable through language.

> The other day my Teams was playing up, it was duplicating my face and I had to leave the call and come back. My line manager was joking and saying 'It was trying to clone you' and then 'Oh, it'd be brilliant if we actually could clone you'. And that's stuck in my mind because he's not always very good at direct feedback. But when he said that, I thought, 'Oh, wow that's very good'. Jane, Organization A

Jane had not previously felt included by this manager but this exchange was powerful and memorable. Language is powerful; one interviewee suggested a common inclusive language helped bridge differences. Language may convey a message, but language can also be an *act* providing the experience of inclusion.

4.4.2.1 Shedding leadership armour

Most participants described the context of inclusion when their line manager connected on a personal level, rather than relying on their position. Connection was established when managers shared their vulnerabilities, experiences, strengths and weaknesses, setting the context for inclusion. Many others spoke of empowering managers who made themselves available to support individuals, summarised here:

> My boss is quite analytical and leads by facts and numbers. So, it was very nice to see him humanise himself and take off his leadership armour, and tell me where he used to struggle [….] I felt so included, he is very much an empowering, servant leader, 'I'm here to serve your needs, but I'm going to empower you to make the decision, so you don't need me all the time. But when you do need me, I'm right here, I will make time for you'. Maya, Organization B

Interestingly, Maya spoke of her manager as a “servant leader”, indicating he privileged her, not his positional power. Others described managers fostering inclusion when they operated non-hierarchically.

> I don't see that hierarchical set-up in terms of work allocation, or respect, everyone is just seen as a human being. And I think that makes me particularly feel included. It just makes you feel valued as a member of staff. Joules, Organization A

Joules experienced inclusion when treated as an equal, although she acknowledged the organization had a distinct hierarchy when it came to roles and responsibilities. Rachel described her manager creating inclusion by ignoring status. Rather than referring to her as “a member of my team” her manager:

> …will refer to me, as a ‘colleague’ and give me that recognition for the role that I'm playing, rather than my relative status in the organization. I think that feels included. Rachel, Organization A

Interviewees provided numerous examples of where managers demonstrated that they placed value on everyone’s contribution, regardless of status. This ranged from always inviting everyone to contribute in meetings, to not deferring to the most senior, or preferencing the most vocal, to inviting the most junior person to contribute first. This provided the context for the experience of inclusion described here:

> Although you have people at different levels, everyone's opinion is of the same value. And the way we worked, we lived and breathed that kind of ideology. Kristen, Organization C.

Many women referred to inclusive managers demonstrating a belief that, regardless of status, everyone’s opinion was of value to contribute to goals. This belief or value seemed to provide a foundation for creating the context of inclusion.

In addition to treating people as equals most interviewees spoke of inclusion in terms of and dependent on the manager’s people skills.

> It's very much reliant on managers to understand individual needs and being flexible to those needs. That's really challenging, because if you've got a bad manager, you're pretty stuck. If you've got a good manager, then fine. Mecky, Organization B

Participants described good people skills as supportive, empathic and compassionate, towards individual differences. The participant below articulated a common view that good people managers not only recognised individual differences but adapted their style accordingly.

> Managers need to manage people's individual ways, reflecting their unique quirks or ways of working, making it about the person, because it's quite easy in a lot of companies for people to be treated as a bit of a commodity. I mean, it sounds a bit strong but it's due to the lack of adaptive management styles, and lack of making it about the individual and their own path. That overlaps with inclusion. Sian, Organization C

Sian and others experienced inclusion when line managers adapted their style, or working practices, to meet individual needs. This demonstrated that they were treated, not as a collective or a resource, but valued as individuals.

4.4.3 Individual responses to inclusion

Although most participants spoke about inclusion within the context of their line manager, some sought their own experience of inclusion. This included joining external professional or personal networks for support and career development. Others were motivated to seek inclusion to improve their role performance.

> It's happening less [being excluded], because I've infiltrated myself within that team a lot more. As soon as I hear the whispers of anything I'm like, 'Oh, can we have a chat about that?' But I'm the driver of all of that coming to me and being included. Cindy, Organization C

Nevertheless, driving the experience of inclusion necessitates a level of competence, confidence and inter-personal skills, described by one woman as being more able to manage her experience of inclusion as she gets "older and

wiser". Some spoke of helping others experience inclusion and Kristen developed this to say inclusion can be learned.

> You will always get some people who will speak up because they feel passionately about something. But equally you will have other people who feel their opinion is not going to be paid attention to. They're not going to bother to speak up. You have to give that positive reinforcement, that you spoke up and something was done. That will encourage you to keep doing that in future and encourage others to do the same. Kristen, Organization C

We would argue that inclusion as a psychological experience is determined by perceptions and how the person interprets the outside world. But people will interpret the same situation differently, leading to different emotions and experiences of inclusion. Therefore inclusion, rather than fixed, or stable, is variable and individual. Also, although people respond to others actions, they can manage their emotions and adapt their behaviours to satisfy their inclusion needs. Thus, inclusion is an individual matter as much as an organizational or management issue.

4.5 Discussion

Our study explores junior women's experiences of inclusion, making visible the contexts and revealing their lived experience, in contrast to the many studies that examine inclusion at the organizational (Shore et al., 2018), or workgroup (Nishii, 2013) level. We selected women participants, rather than other under-represented groups, as organizations have a legacy of interventions directed at women. We selected junior, rather than senior employees who may be responsible for implementing inclusion practices and fostering inclusion. The findings provide support for Shore et al's (2011) conceptualisation of inclusion as treatment that satisfies both the social need for belonging and the individual identity need to be valued for one's expertise; in addition inclusion is portrayed in the findings as complex, interrelated with exclusion and changing over time. Nevertheless, we find junior women prioritise the need to be valued for their distinctiveness with the primary context for the experience of inclusion within

interactions with the line manager. Further we find that junior women will respond to inclusion and proactively manage their own and others' inclusion. In this section we situate our findings within the organizational literature in three sections: *Experiences of inclusion*, *Contexts for inclusion* and *Responses to inclusion*.

4.5.1 Experiences of inclusion

Our analysis suggests that inclusion is more complex and nuanced than satisfying needs for belongingness balanced with the need to be valued for one's uniqueness (Shore et al., 2011). Firstly, people may experience both inclusion and exclusion simultaneously indicating they are interrelated and secondly belongingness and uniqueness may be reinforcing, although, the experience may vary from person to person, dependent on context and may change over time. The junior women shared a huge array of experiences when asked to describe their lived experiences of inclusion from one-to-one and group interactions, to work processes and organizational initiatives. None referred to specific experiences related to their race/ethnicity, or age, however, participants were invited through their membership of the gender network so they may have consciously focused on their gendered experiences, thus, the data does not support intersectional analysis.

However, our analysis does indicate that inclusion is complex and interrelated with exclusion. This supports the critical perspective (Adamson et al., 2021) that rejects the notion of inclusion/exclusion as binary, where *either* exclusion *or* inclusion is experienced (Shore et al., 2011), or as a continuum from exclusion to inclusion (Sabharwal, 2014). Findings indicate that inclusion/exclusion may be experienced simultaneously (Cassell et al., 2020) and are interrelated (Dobusch et al., 2021). More specifically, individuals may experience inclusion with one group in the organization but with another feel excluded, such as the interviewee feeling included by her line managers but excluded by HR, or the interviewee who felt included as she was trusted to deliver a new product but working in isolation left her feeling excluded. The study responds to the call to move beyond a linear, or static model of inclusion *or* exclusion (van Eck et al., 2023) and move to a more

complex approach (Adamson et al., 2021; Cassell et al., 2020). This study provides empirical support for the notion that the experience of inclusion is both complex and variable and that inclusion and exclusion are interrelated.

Findings also suggest inclusion may vary dependent on context and by individual providing a more nuanced understanding of inclusion. The above critical inclusion literature not only suggests that inclusion is complex but one study indicated it may be dependent on context. This study by Cassell et al. (2020) suggests that sector specific commercial factors will influence inclusion. Our findings extend this conceptualisation to suggest that the experience of inclusion varies by a range of contexts. Contexts include relationships and interactions with different individuals, for example, with different line managers and with different groups who may be more, or less inclusive. We also find that the context of different working environments, working alone or collaboratively, may also vary the experience of inclusion.

Complexity is further compounded when different people seek different types of inclusion. The literature suggests that individuals who perceive themselves as too unique and different from the group will seek belongingness, to balance social and individual identity needs, which operate in tension (Shore et al, 2011). However, people with a personal preference to work collaboratively, may seek more belonging than others who like to work alone. One interviewee seeking belonging did not feel she was too unique and different from the group, she simply preferred to deliver her role by bouncing ideas off other people, so sought belongingness. Others with a preference to work alone may not display this need to the same extent. Our findings suggest that rather than seeking belongingness to redress the balance of too much uniqueness, or feeling too different in some way, it can be driven from a personal preference to work in a certain way. Also, inclusion, is a psychological experience determined by perceptions of how the person interprets the outside world, leading to different emotions and needs for different types of inclusion. It may be that different types of inclusion needs are driven by individual differences in perceptions and psychological profile.

Findings also suggest a more nuanced understanding of the experience of inclusion as it may change over time. Cassell et al. (2020) propose that inclusion may shift over time depending on contextual influences such as industry sectors, we find inclusion may change over time as competency develops. For example, on joining a new team belonging may be the primary experience, which changes over time to being valued, as competency develops and contributions are recognised. Nishii and Leroy (2022) theorise, that being recognised for ones' competence is a feature of inclusion, we extend this literature and find that the experience of inclusion changes over time because competency develops over time.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that junior women are conflicted. They may experience inclusion in the day-to-day when their expertise is recognised but when they cannot see senior role models, they question their inclusion. They feel included at the task level, but are excluded from power and promotion. If the organization is reassured of their inclusivity through their investment in inclusion efforts this may lead them to ignore the structural inequalities. Inclusion practices may in fact obscure, even reinforce this systemic exclusion (Dobusch et al., 2021). Our results provide empirical support for the critical literature that proposes organizational efforts to foster the experience of inclusion will fail if the structural inequalities and barriers to jobs and promotion are not dismantled.

Notwithstanding this complexity, we find employees prioritise the experience of being valued for one's uniqueness, over belonging needs. The majority described the same task-related experience (Nishii & Leory, 2022), feeling valued for one's uniqueness was being recognised and appreciated for role performance. This extended for some to having autonomy over work (Nishii & Leroy, 2022), which provided a sense of inclusion through having control and being trusted to work independently. This challenges the Shore et al. (2011) conceptualisation that individuals seek to *balance* needs to belong and have one's uniqueness valued. Interestingly, the McKinsey (2021) report (De Smet et al., 2021) identifies the top reasons for employees leaving organizations are that they did not feel valued by the organization or their manager. We provide empirical evidence that junior

women prioritise being valued but more specifically for their professional expertise as a unique difference. Thus, we provide empirical support for Nishii and Leroy's theorising that employees experience inclusion through everyday work experiences; "informational or task-related inclusion" (Nishii & Nishii, 2022, p688).

Junior women also described the experience of inclusion when they were able to influence decisions, clarifying different aspects of inclusion. Researchers suggest participating in decision-making (Veli Korkmaz et al., 2022; Tang et al, 2015; Shore et al., 2011) and leaders sharing decision-making (Randel et al., 2018), provide the experience of inclusion. There is less exploration about how influencing decisions provides the experience, although, some suggest that being involved in decision-making enables individuals to feel part of the organizational system (Mor Barak et al. 2016; Sabharwal, 2014). Reflecting on the aspects of inclusion that may be activated through influencing decisions, it may be that contributing to organization goals, promotes belongingness, whilst at the same time also provides the feeling that uniqueness is valued. Thus, rather than uniqueness and belongingness be seen as opposing forces, acting in tension (Brewer,1991), they appear to be complimentary and reinforcing. Thus, we provide further empirical evidence in support of the theorisation by Nishii & Leroy (2022) that belongingness and uniqueness are not only interrelated as mentioned above, but also that they are potentially reinforcing. Importantly, our findings also suggest that involvement and influencing decisions demonstrates that individual expertise is valued but also provides validation of expertise. This enables us to suggest a more nuanced understanding of inclusion, that junior women prioritise being valued with their professional expertise as a unique difference, which is validated when they influence decisions.

We also show how employees feel valued and included when they are recognised and treated as a whole person, balancing home and work priorities, through well-being and career development practices. The literature sees the state of well-being as an output of inclusion, described as enhanced physical and mental health, and reduced burnout (Shore et al., 2011; Gotsis & Grimani, 2016).

However, junior women described experiences of inclusion when their well-being was supported by organizational practices and their manager. When junior women felt that managers demonstrated that their well-being was important, where work practices were adapted to meet individual needs to balance work and home priorities, junior employees experienced inclusion. Employees then experienced stress reduction as they were able to balance work and home priorities. This study repositions well-being in the Shore et al. (2018) inclusive workplace model, such that well-being practices are inputs to inclusion and the experience of inclusion promotes the state of well-being as an output.

Our study also indicates that career development practices operate as inputs to inclusion. The role of career development is less well explored in the literature, although Shore et al. (2018), suggest an inclusive organization is more likely to invest in people development and describe career advancement as an output of inclusion. We find that employees described experiences of inclusion through practices such as coaching from line managers, secondments and work allocation, aimed at furthering their career goals. Thus, we make a theoretical contribution that career development practices are inputs to inclusion and that this personal development may in turn facilitate career advancement, an output.

4.5.2 Contexts for inclusion

Despite junior women's appreciation of organizational inclusion initiatives, we find the line manager provides the primary context for inclusion. This contrasts with the literature, which tends to examine inclusion within the organizational (Shore et al., 2018) or workgroup (Nishii, 2013) context. Cassell et al. (2020) consider context as sector specific factors, finding that within a retail organization the behaviour of customers adds a dimension to inclusion and that other sectors or industries may add other distinctive contextual factors. We find junior women describe everyday interactions with their line manager as the primary context for inclusion, which extends the context of inclusion to line manager relationships. Although, inclusive leadership is a growing area of research there is less understanding about how inclusion is experienced by the employee within the relationship. It is theorised that people's more local and interpersonal

experiences provide the experience of inclusion and that “lower-level leaders.….promote everyday experiences of inclusion for employees” (Nishii & Leroy, 2022, p.683), through their enactment of strategies, policies and practices developed by senior leaders. We provide empirical support for inclusion experienced through everyday experiences and extend that to specify, rather than “lower-level leaders”, it is specifically the immediate line manager who provides the *primary context* for inclusion.

We also find that the experience of inclusion within the context of the line manager is subject to line managers’ differing people skills and management styles. Junior women describe line managers as being *either* good *or* bad people managers. Inclusive leadership is a growing area of research with a tendency to focus on inclusive leadership behaviours and competencies, for example, helping members contribute fully (Randel et al., 2018). Others have examined leaders’ understandings about the benefits of D&I, valuing and utilising differences to adapt their style (O’Leary & Sandberg, 2017), all from a leadership perspective. Our study provides support from an individual employee perspective, that individuals experience inclusion when they feel their individual needs are met and they are treated as an individual. This study also clarifies that employees experience inclusion when the line manager’s behaviours signify beliefs that every person, regardless of status, has a valuable contribution to make to organizational goals.

4.5.3 Individual responses to inclusion

We also show how junior women respond to inclusion and proactively manage their own and others inclusion. Individual responses to inclusion are given scant attention in the literature, although we may draw on two different bodies of literature. First, leaders are role models for inclusion and reinforce inclusive behaviours in others (Mor Barak et al., 2021; Shore & Chung, 2022), although, we find employees may learn from other members of the organization, not just the leader. Second, inclusion is conceptualised as treatment that satisfies the psychological social identity need for belongingness, the individual identity need for uniqueness (Shore et al., 2011) and task-related intrinsic motivational needs

(Nishii & Leroy, 2022). Our study indicates that employees may be proactive and manage their own and others inclusion. One interviewee described “infiltrating” herself into a team to ensure she was included, another described reinforcing inclusive behaviours from colleagues so they developed more inclusive behaviours. This extends the theory that leaders act as role models (Mor Barak et al., 2021; Shore & Chung, 2022) to suggest that employees will also learn from peers and manage their own inclusion. Figure 4.3 summarises the findings and contributions to literature by theme, *Experiences of inclusion, Contexts for inclusion and Individual responses to inclusion.*

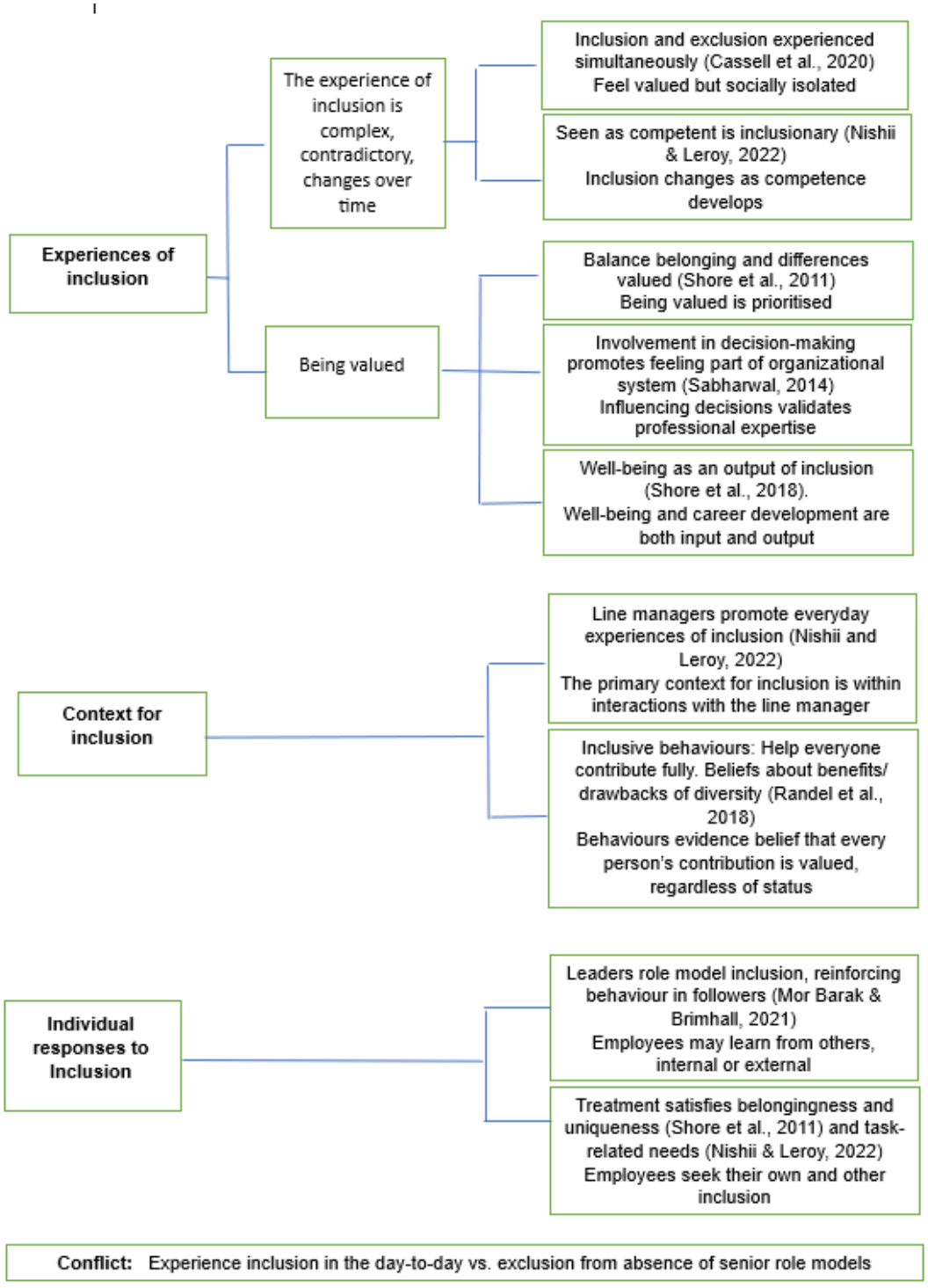

Figure 4-3. Summary of contributions to the inclusion literature

4.5.4 Practical implications

The practical implications for organizations are two-fold. First, organizations with diverse employees have an unparalleled, potentially untapped resource, to scale

some of our social, economic and environmental challenges. They might usefully re-direct inclusion interventions to recognise and value diverse expertise by involving as many people as possible in decision-making processes. Harnessing this expertise would not only foster inclusion but also contribute to organizational performance. Advances in video conferencing and survey tools make involving more employees easier than ever before, either to keep employees up-to-date with progress or soliciting views and expertise to inform decisions. Second, organizations might pay more attention to developing junior line managers' people skills which may provide more relatable and relevant inclusion experiences for employees. Junior managers may be a cynical group, squeezed between their teams and layers of management. They must respond to changing top-down priorities, whilst pressured to deliver business-as-usual tasks. Nevertheless, junior managers perhaps newer to the organization, or less advanced in their leadership careers, may be more open to developing good people skills. This does not negate the need for organizations to remove barriers to inclusion and driving accountability of the senior team. One cannot hold junior managers to account if leaders are not.

4.5.5 Limitations and future research

This study extends our understanding of the experience and context of inclusion for employees but there are limitations. The study was conducted after three lockdowns when organizations and individuals were embracing new hybrid working, with more flexible practices. This might have fostered more positive experiences of inclusion, as employees were more able to balance work and home priorities, a feature of inclusion. Also, during lockdowns organizations may have focused on fostering belonging, potentially taken-for-granted during this study. Nonetheless, we find clear evidence that line managers create distinct contexts for inclusion. Future studies might examine the contexts of different levels of management to understand similarities and differences. Also, as many employees now work remotely, future studies might clarify how inclusion is experienced differently in the context of working from home and in the office, research might also need to pivot from the *inclusive workplace,* to *inclusion at*

work. We conducted this study with participants from knowledge and service-based organizations but the experience of inclusion may vary across different sectors. For example, manufacturing and construction organizations may be more process-oriented, with less opportunity for autonomous working. Another potentially interesting avenue for research is to consider the factors that enable employees to respond to inclusion, to seek and help others to feel inclusion. A further limitation is that the data does not support intersectional analysis. Therefore, it would be important for future studies to view inclusion through an intersectional lens to explore how organizational practices foster inclusion. Notwithstanding these limitations and avenues for future research, this study captures diverse junior employees' understandings of inclusion in the workplace. This knowledge contributes to theory on how inclusion is fostered in the workplace and might enable organizations to invest in relevant interventions to foster inclusion and release the benefits of diversity to retain and promote diverse talent, in order to improve organizational performance.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter aims to draw together the findings of the three papers Chapters 2-4 to address the aim of the thesis which is to explore organizational practices that foster inclusion. This chapter is organized to:

- Summarise each paper and how they link together, Chapters 2 - 4
- Draw together the findings of the empirical studies, Chapters 3 and 4
- Discuss the contributions of the thesis and implications for policy and practice
- Outline limitations of the study and future research
- Describe my personal learnings as a researcher
- Outline publications and future-plans

Chapter 1 of this thesis provides an overview of the problem; that fostering organizational inclusion is less well understood than exclusion and anti-discrimination, and positions the study within the literature on the inclusive organization. Chapters 2-4 consist of three standalone papers to explore organizational practices that foster inclusion. Chapter 2, systematically reviews the literature on organizational practices and the inclusive organization, Chapter 3 is an empirical exploration, from the D&I Director/Lead's perspective, of practices used by organizations to foster inclusion and Chapter 4 is the empirical study to explore junior women's experiences of inclusion. The objective of this final Chapter 5 is to summarise and draw together the findings of the studies and broaden the explanatory lens that theorises how inclusion is fostered in the workplace. Limitations of the study and future research are discussed, concluding with my personal learnings and future directions as a researcher. First, I summarise the three studies (Chapters 2-4) and link them to explore organizational practices that foster inclusion.

5.1 Summary of Research

5.1.1 Exploration of how organizations foster inclusion

The objective of the first paper (Chapter 2), the systematic literature review (SLR), was to answer the review question: How are the inclusive organization and practices investigated in organizational studies? Follow-up questions were designed to provide boundaries to the review and seek clarification of concepts. For example, diversity and inclusion are often used interchangeably so it was important to define inclusion by differentiating inclusion from diversity. Thus, additional questions were:

How is inclusion different from diversity?

How do people experience inclusion?

What is an inclusive organization?

What are inclusion practices?

The literature review adopted a systematic approach, adapted for management science from a robust and replicable medical model (Tranfield et al., 2003). The search identified 49 papers, from 2007 to 2021, for critical appraisal and synthesis. Of the 49 studies, 25 adopted a social psychological perspective, possibly because many studies on inclusion were developed from the extensive literature on anti-discrimination, exclusion and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Analysis revealed that 21 studies conceptualise inclusion as treatment that satisfies the psychological social need to belong with the individual identity need to be valued for distinctiveness, from the Shore et al. (2011) workgroup inclusion framework. However, there is less empirical examination of how inclusion is experienced at the individual level, within the organization. Findings also indicate that fostering the inclusive organization necessitate two work streams; exclusion prevention and inclusion promotion (Shore et al., 2018), yet there remains less agreement about what constitutes inclusion promotion.

The inclusive organization tends to be investigated through inclusive leadership, climate, workgroups and perceptions of inclusion with less understanding of how they may relate (Shore et al., 2018). Findings of the review indicate that these elements may act generatively and interact to foster the inclusive organization. The studies under review identified multiple inclusion practices, although their exact role or purpose was less distinct. The review categorises these practices into those that may facilitate belonging, through workgroup involvement and building quality relations and those that value differences, through involvement in decision-making and access to information and resources. The literature also suggests different leaders operationalise practices differently to promote more, or less inclusion but these studies tend to view inclusion through the leadership lens, rather than how leader behaviours are experienced at an individual level.

This thesis responds to the call in the literature to gain a more comprehensive understanding of inclusion practices (Bernstein et al., 2020; Janssens and Steyaert, 2019), to understand the role of various practices in creating experiences of inclusion (Shore et al., 2018). This thesis addresses these shortcomings to explore organizational practices that foster experiences of inclusion. The research aims to identify which organizational practices are used to foster inclusion and what is accomplished, by exploring employees' experiences of inclusion, to identify potential positive steps towards inclusion in the workplace. Although this review was conducted in 2021 subsequent reviews of the inclusion literature have been published; "Inclusive leadership research" (Veli Korkmaz et al., 2022) "Inclusion in the workplace" (Nguyen et al., 2023; Randel, 2023), but to my knowledge this study remains the only review focused on exploring organizational practices used to foster experiences of inclusion.

5.1.2 Understanding practices which foster inclusion

The first empirical study (Chapter 3) responds to the findings in the SLR that studies identify multiple inclusion practices with less understanding of their role and how they foster inclusion. The aim of this qualitative study is to deepen understanding of practices aimed at fostering inclusion within an organization, and answer the RQ: Which practices are used by organizations to foster inclusion

and how do such practices satisfy specific inclusion needs? This qualitative study used semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis with data from 15 D&I Directors and Leads responsible for the D&I agenda in their organizations, as a proxy for the organizational view. The study finds that organizations use a plethora of different practices but that they are inexact in how they foster inclusion; a practice may satisfy both needs to belong and differences valued. Nevertheless, D&I Leads prioritise practices aimed at fostering belonging. Interviewees also described well-being and career development practices as fostering inclusion, to demonstrate appreciation of differences and to offer support. Importantly D&I Leads identified that practices are subject to variable implementation, depending upon the leaders involved, to provide more, or less inclusion.

The study expands understanding of inclusion practices, showing that they are not uniformly implemented but are malleable and the extent to which they foster inclusion depends on the leaders involved. This supports the literature, that the extent to which practices foster inclusion is dependent upon the leader, their adaptive cognitive capability (O'Leary & Sandberg, 2017; Bernstein et al., 2020) and beliefs about the benefits or draw backs of D&I (Randel et al., 2018). The literature suggests that inclusion practices may either promote belonging or value differences but findings indicate practices may meet both needs, with organizations prioritising practices to promote belonging. Contrary to the literature the study shows a lack of evidence for decision-making as an inclusion practice.

However, well-being and career development practices are used to foster inclusion. This extends existing conceptualisations that physical and mental states of well-being, are outcomes of inclusion (Shore et al., 2011) and that well-being practices, that raise awareness of well-being issues, act as inputs to inclusion. Findings also show career development practices are inputs to inclusion, these practices may lead to promotion and career advancement as an outcome, described in the Shore et al. (2018) inclusive workplace model.

The study shows how practices satisfy inclusion needs and that the implementation of practices varies, depending on the leaders involved. However, findings indicate organizations prioritise satisfying belonging needs over valuing difference; but do employees prioritise inclusion practices in the same way? Also, the study identifies a plethora of organizational practices used to foster inclusion without understanding how employees experience inclusion. The second empirical paper, Chapter 4, addresses these shortcomings to explore employees' experiences of inclusion.

5.1.3 Experiential and contextual understandings of inclusion

The SLR finds less clarity and empirical examination of how inclusion is experienced at the individual level which is also raised from the first empirical study, summarised above and in Chapter 3. Hence, the second empirical study explores how individuals experience inclusion, making visible the contexts and revealing their lived experience (Chapter 4). The RQ is: How do junior employees experience inclusion at work? The study analysed data from semi-structured interviews with 36 junior women. Junior employees were selected, rather than senior employees, who may be responsible for implementing D&I policies and providing the experience of inclusion. Women employees were selected as organizations have a longer legacy of aiming interventions at this group, compared to other under-represented groups.

The study finds that inclusion is complex and changes over time. The experience of inclusion is complex; it may be dependent on different contexts and relationships and inclusion/exclusion may be experienced simultaneously. Inclusion may also change over time as competence develops, as employees are able to be more supportive of colleagues and gain more influence. Employees experience inclusion in different ways but prioritise the need to be valued for their professional expertise, which is validated when they are able to influence decision-making. This demonstrates how employees focus on work-related inclusion. Employees also feel valued when treated as a whole person, balancing home and work priorities, demonstrated through well-being and career development practices, which foster experiences of inclusion. The primary

context for inclusion is within everyday interactions with line managers, although junior women will respond to inclusion and proactively manage their own and others inclusion.

The study makes a theoretical contribution that well-being and career development practices are inputs to inclusion. The literature indicates that the state of well-being, through reduced burnout, physical and mental health is an output of inclusion (Shore et al., 2011). This study extends that conceptualisation to show well-being practices that help individuals balance work and home priorities foster the experience of inclusion. The practices are inputs to inclusion which result in stress reduction as an output of inclusion. The literature pays less attention to the role of career development practices in fostering inclusion. Shore et al. (2018) describe career advancement as an output of inclusion and that inclusive organizations are more likely to invest in training and development. The findings in this study provide empirical evidence that career development practices are inputs to inclusion. This investment in under-represented groups may then lead to career advancement, thus we extend the inclusive workplace model.

This study also provides empirical support for recent theoretical literature that indicates employees are more likely to experience inclusion through everyday task-related experiences (Nishii & Leroy, 2022). Also, Nishii and Leroy (2022) propose that junior managers "promote inclusion" for employees through their daily interactions, these findings indicate line managers are the primary context for inclusion, which extends this literature. Literature also theorises that it is not a case of experiencing *either* inclusion *or* exclusion, inclusion and exclusion may be experienced simultaneously and change over time depending on sector context (Cassell et al., 2020). This study supports this literature to suggest the experience of inclusion is complex and a more nuanced understanding is necessary. The study also extends this literature to suggest that inclusion changes over time as competence develops. Leaders may role model inclusion reinforcing inclusive behaviours in others (Mor Barak et al., 2021; Shore & Chung, 2022) and inclusion is conceptualised as treatment that satisfies the

psychological social identity need for belongingness and uniqueness (Shore et al., 2011). This study extends these conceptualisations to suggest that employees will proactively manage their own and others inclusion.

From a practitioner perspective the study shows that junior employees prioritise being valued for their uniqueness and task-related inclusion. Organizations might refocus inclusion efforts to demonstrate that individuals are valued, through broader inclusion in decision-making processes. Organizations might also benefit from developing junior line-managers' people skills, as they are the primary context for experiences of inclusion through everyday work interactions.

5.2 Drawing Together the Findings of the Two Empirical Papers

This section draws together the two different data sources, the D&I Leads perspective on organizational practices used to foster inclusion (Chapter 3) and junior women's experiences of inclusion (Chapter 4), to address the thesis aim to explore organizational practices that foster inclusion. This section investigates where organizational inclusion practices and employee experiences of inclusion intersect, are similar or different, summarised in Figure 5-1 below. This section is organized around the themes of *Experiences of inclusion, Inclusion practices* and *Influences of the leaders*, to provide additional insight into organizational inclusion.

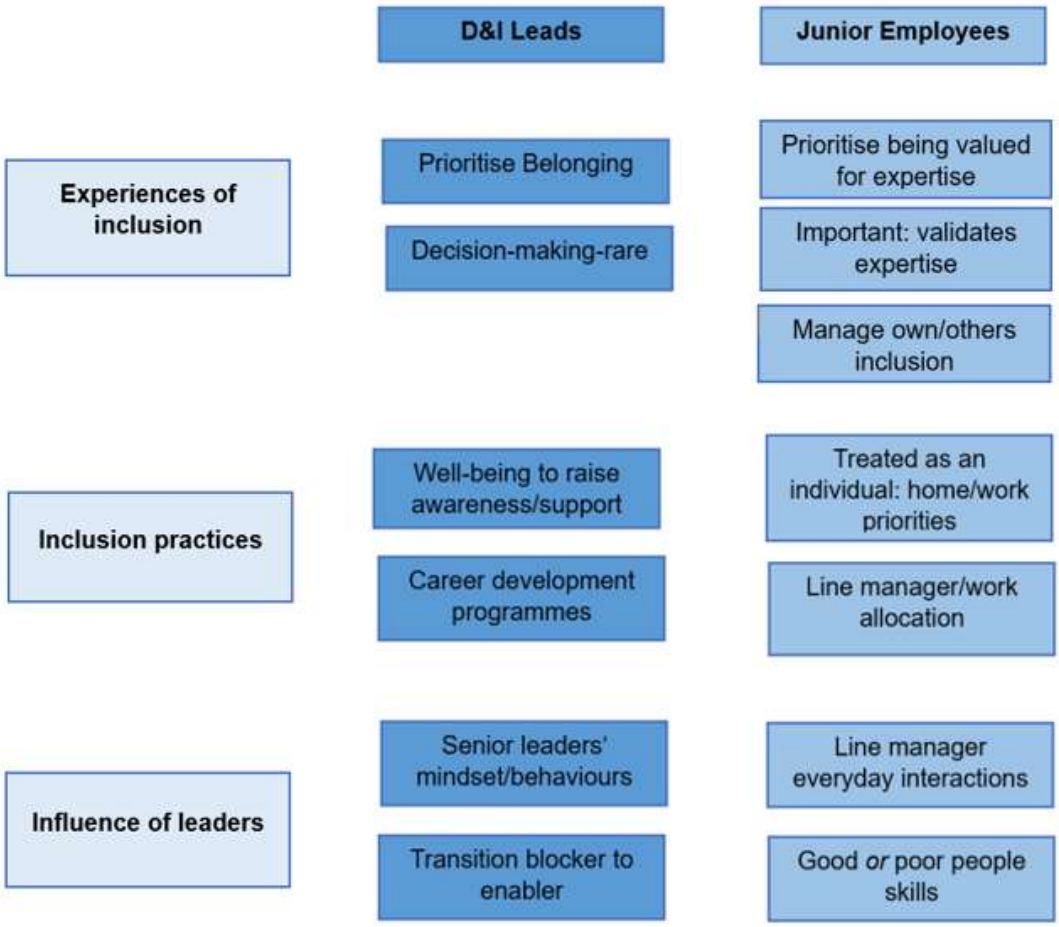

Figure 5-1 Drawing together the findings of the two empirical studies

5.2.1 Experiences of inclusion

What stands out in the findings is the different focus on the experiences of inclusion between D&I Leads who prioritise practices to satisfying needs for belonging, in contrast to junior women who prioritise needs to be valued for uniqueness. It might be that organizations focused on belonging because the study with D&I Leads was conducted during a COVID-19 lockdown when everyone worked from home, isolated from colleagues and managers. Seeking to increase connectedness with employees became a priority for organizations. Nevertheless, the interviews with junior women were conducted immediately after the last lockdown when people were re-integrating into the workplace, which might have promoted the need for social connections. Yet nearly all the junior women prioritised being valued, particularly for their professional expertise.

Junior women also described experiences of inclusion as being valued when their expertise was validated when able to influence decisions. This was important to junior women but rarely referred to by D&I Leads. It is perhaps not too surprising that junior women experience inclusion through their role, as people want to do a good job and feel included when their contribution is recognised.

However, the study with junior employees shows that experiences of inclusion are complex; they may vary by individual, inclusion/exclusion are interrelated and can be experienced simultaneously. Interestingly, this somewhat contradictory experience was not referred to in the interviews with D&I Leads, indicating a potential lack of understanding of an important facet of inclusion. For example, junior women described feeling included as they were involved in work projects but felt excluded at the same time when their work was not valued. Junior women also described the experience of inclusion as complex, dependent on the context, whether that be with different individuals, groups, or environments. Complexity, is further compounded when different people need different types of inclusion. Although all interviewees described being valued as contributing to their sense of inclusion some had a greater need for belongingness; for example, they preferred to work collaboratively and displayed a need for more belongingness. In one instance inclusion was described when joining the organization through being welcomed and feel belonging in the new team, which developed over time to being recognised and valued for their expertise. These individual types of inclusion were not referred to by D&I Leads.

5.2.2 Inclusion practices

Apart from decision-making being viewed differently by the two groups, so too were well-being and career development practices. Although both groups identified that well-being practices foster inclusion, D&I Leads focused on learning workshops and resources. They described the purpose of well-being interventions to raise awareness of others' situations and provide support to individuals who were in crisis or stress. In contrast, junior women spoke in terms of an organizational and leader mindset being focused on well-being. To employees this demonstrated they were valued and treated as an individual,

rather than a collective group. Junior women, although appreciative of well-being interventions, focused on the extent to which the organization was committed to well-being, offering support and adapting working practices to balance home and work priorities. Employees were more concerned with the genuine intent and care behind well-being practices, than the organizational initiatives intended to raise awareness of health differences.

Career development was also described differently by the two groups. D&I Leads spoke of formal developmental programmes to offer support to under-represented groups, to help build skills and open opportunities for advancement. In comparison, junior women described career development through routine catch-up meetings with line managers, where the meetings were future-focused and developmental. They discussed *how* to deliver projects, not simply report on *what* had been delivered. Junior women also referred to work allocation and secondments as developmental practices that fostered inclusion, again demonstrating the focus on role and task-related inclusion.

Addressing inclusion practices from the D&I Lead organizational perspective it became clear that practices are inexact. Practices may satisfy needs for both belongingness and uniqueness, for example, awareness campaigns not only educated the majority to understand the experiences of under-represented groups but also enabled these under-represented groups to feel valued. Nevertheless, although employees spoke of inclusion through the everyday performance of their role, some still felt excluded from power and promotion. This suggests that inclusion practices may overlook exclusion when structural inequalities and barriers are not demolished. If the organization believes they are inclusive because of the investment in inclusion practices, if their inclusion efforts are insufficient to address the hierarchies between the groups of employees, this presents insurmountable inequalities and barriers to jobs and promotion (Ortlieb & Sieben, 2014). Further, inclusion practices may even reinforce exclusion. As Noon (2018) suggests well-intentioned investment in practices may have unintended consequences and reinforce stereotypes and induce a sense of unfairness in those who are not targeted to benefit from the investment.

5.2.3 Influences of the leaders

Both groups talked of leaders providing more, or less inclusion but D&I Leads focused on senior leaders and junior women spoke of line managers. D&I Leads tended to talk about interventions to raise awareness in leaders of the experiences of under-represented groups, to change mindsets and develop more inclusive behaviours. Conversely, junior women prioritised everyday interactions with line managers as the primary context for experiences of inclusion. Interestingly both groups described the leaders' or managers' influence, but in different terms. D&I Leads referred to leaders as "blockers" or "enablers" to inclusion, and focused on leadership development, to grow new mindsets and inclusive behaviours, to transition from blocker, to enabler. Yet junior women talked of their line managers as *either* good people managers, who valued their differences and treated them as individuals, *or* bad people managers who treated employees as a collective resource. Of course, the objective of the D&I Lead role is to drive the inclusion agenda which involves facilitating behaviour change in leaders; D&I Leads might be expected to focus on leadership development. The junior employees were asked to recall their experiences of inclusion, they were not asked to consider if or how managers developed from bad to good people managers. Both groups also talked differently about the role of leaders and managers. D&I Leads rarely differentiated between the leaders' and managers' roles in fostering inclusion, compared to junior women who recognised the importance of senior leaders' role modelling and championing inclusion, whilst line managers provided direct experiences of inclusion. Junior women reveal the primary context of inclusion as everyday interactions with the line managers, who are either good or bad people managers, again this emphasises the importance of task-related inclusion for junior women.

5.3 Study Design, Contributions and Implications

This study identifies initiatives that go beyond anti-discrimination, diversity management practices to those that address specific aspects of the subjective experience of inclusion. Literature identifies many inclusion practices with less understanding about how they are experienced as inclusive, an important

consideration in developing an inclusive organization. This study contributes to the inclusion literature by broadening the explanatory lens that theorises how inclusion is fostered in the workplace, by talking to both D&I Directors/Leads and junior diverse employees about their experiences of inclusion. This section outlines contributions to the inclusion literature with a novel research design, theoretical and empirical contributions to literature and implications for policy and practice. Each is summarised in Table 5-1 and explored in detail below.

Table 5-1 Summary of research design, contributions and implications

Research design	**Literature**	**Contribution: Supports/extends/challenges**
	Research should be explicit about the aspects of inclusion and levels of inclusion to be explored (Nishii & Leroy, 2022)	Supports: Two different data sources, from D&I Leads and junior employees, are drawn together to identify which practices provide the experience of inclusion to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon
Theoretical	**Literature**	**Contribution:** Supports/extends/challenges
	Leaders' behaviours/practices either facilitate belonging or value uniqueness (Randel et al., 2018)	Challenges: Inclusion practices are inexact; they may satisfy both needs to belong and have differences valued
	The state of physical/psychological well-being (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Shore et al., 2011) and career advancement (Shore et al., 2018) are outputs to inclusion	Extends: Career development and well-being practices, that offer support and demonstrate individuals are treated as a whole person, are inputs to inclusion
Empirical	**Literature**	**Contribution** Supports / extends / challenges
	Employees are more likely to experience inclusion through their work; task-related inclusion (Nishii & Leroy, 2022).	Supports: Employees prioritise task-related inclusion; being valued for their expertise
	"Lower-level leaders" promote everyday experiences of inclusion (Nishii & Leroy, 2022)	Extends: The primary context for inclusion is within day-to-day interactions with the line manager.
	Leaders role model inclusion, reinforcing inclusive behaviours	

	in others (Shore & Chung, 2022; Mor Barak et al., 2021). Treatment that satisfies belonging and uniqueness (Shore et al., 2011)	Extends: Employees proactively manage their own and others inclusion
Practice	**Evidence**	**Implications**
	Inclusion is experienced within day-to-day interactions, rather than formal interventions	Establish inclusive working practices such as processes to develop shared-goals and regular employee/line manager meetings to include career development
	Employees prioritise being valued for their expertise	Develop processes to engage more employees in decision-making, for example, by using video conferencing and survey tools
	Line managers provide the context for inclusion	Train junior managers in good people skills
	Well-being and career development practices provide the experience of inclusion	Recognise that well-being and career development practices enhance inclusion and ensure under-represented groups have access to these resources
Policy	**Evidence**	**Implications**
	Promote inclusion as both valuing differences and facilitating belonging	At a policy level re-message inclusion to focus more on valuing differences as a resource, alongside belonging

5.3.1 Research design

To my knowledge few studies are conducted with more than a single sample group to study the same phenomenon where this study broadens the explanatory lens. For this study, data were collected from two different sources, D&I Leads and junior diverse employees, to analyse differences in perspectives, to explore organizational practices that foster inclusion. This design responds to Nishii and Leroy's (2022) call for organizational inclusion studies to clarify the aspects of inclusion to be studied and the perspectives that are adopted. The D&I Leads, with expertise in leading the D&I agenda, provide an organizational perspective to reveal the practices organizations use to foster inclusion. The junior women

employees' perspective is founded upon a legacy of organizational D&I goals, policies and practices aimed at this group; they are most likely to have experienced practices aimed at fostering inclusion. In drawing the findings together, the study identifies what organizations do to foster inclusion and what is accomplished through individual experiences of inclusion at work. As far as I am aware this research design is novel and contributes to the inclusion literature by broadening the explanatory lens that theorises how inclusion is fostered in the workplace by talking to both D&I Leads about the organizational perspective and junior diverse employees about their experiences of inclusion.

5.3.2 Inclusion practices are inexact

This study makes two theoretical contributions to the literature and responds to Nishii and Leroy's (2022) call for a "construct clean-up", necessary for almost every fast-growing literature, and to the need to clarify the concept of inclusion practices (Shore et al., 2018). The SLR revealed multiple inclusion practices, with less clarity on their intended purpose, although, it is possible to categorise them into those facilitating belonging, through workgroup inclusion and quality relations, and those that valued uniqueness, as access to resources and involvement in decision-making. Randel et al. (2018), use the same categorisation for inclusive leadership behaviours and practices; facilitating belonging through supporting groups members, and value uniqueness by helping group members contribute. The study challenges this literature to suggest a more nuanced understanding of the role of inclusion practices. Practices, such as communication programmes, may satisfy belonging and valuing differences. For example, communication programmes may be designed to raise awareness within the majority group of the experiences of under-represented groups with the intention that this increased awareness will lead to appreciation and valuing differences. At the same time these communication programmes show case under-represented groups, seeing themselves as an insider rather than outsider and provide the experience of belonging. Thus, I extend understanding of inclusion practices and theorise that practices are inexact, any one practice may satisfy needs for both belongingness and uniqueness.

5.3.3 Well-being and career development as inputs to inclusion

The second theoretical contribution concerns well-being and career advancement, portrayed in the literature as outputs of inclusion (Gotsis and Grimani, 2016; Shore et al., 2011; Shore et al, 2018). Both empirical studies extend this theorisation to find that career development and well-being practices are inputs to inclusion. From the leads perspective well-being practices included raising awareness of differences, such as mental health issues, to induce more compassionate inclusive behaviours. However, employees were more concerned about well-being practices that provided a deep connection to the person. They described as inclusive, treatment that recognised and supported the individual, adapting work practices to balance home/work priorities. This led to feelings of inclusion, with stress reduction as an output. Interestingly, a report by McKinsey (2022) noted that 78% of HR respondents expected managers to support employee well-being but only 38% of employees said managers worked with them to make sure their workload is manageable. In the study employees noted that if work-induced stress is not addressed, employees will never experience inclusion. Findings indicate well-being practices as inputs to inclusion are more nuanced than simply providing resources and education on health issues. Employees were more concerned with the genuine intent behind well-being strategies and behaviours, to care for the individual as a whole person, rather than as a resource to be managed. These findings extend the conceptualisation of well-being as a state demonstrating improved physical/mental health and reduced burnout as an output of inclusion (Shore et al., 2011; Gotsis & Grimani, 2016) to add practices that promote well-being as input to inclusion.

Career advancement as an output of inclusion (Shore et al., 2018), is subject to many contributing factors such as exclusion prevention practices, defined career paths and opening advancement opportunities to under-represented groups. Although it may be true that inclusive organizations are more likely to create a learning environment (Shore et al., 2018), the literature pays scant attention to the role of career advancement practices in fostering inclusion. Both empirical studies indicate that career development practices provide inputs to inclusion.

From the organizational perspective in the first study, a minority referred to formal career development programmes as practices that foster inclusion. In contrast employees, described career development activities as providing important experiences of inclusion. However, these experiences were within the context of interactions with line managers and through work allocation, rather than formal development programmes. It may be that the investment in career development for under-represented groups leads to career advancement shown in the inclusive workplace model (Shore et al., 2018). However, both empirical studies provide evidence to extend the model of the inclusive workplace (Shore et al., 2018) to include career development practices as inputs to inclusion.

5.3.4 Employees prioritise task-related inclusion and being valued

Further, the study makes three empirical contributions. Firstly, it provides empirical support for the theoretical framework by Nishii and Leroy (2022) that employees are more likely to experience inclusion through their work, or task-related inclusion. However, employees experienced not only task-related inclusion but inclusion and exclusion simultaneously. Several participants described feeling included in the work but their contribution was not valued so they felt simultaneously excluded. This supports the critical perspective of inclusion, that challenges “the inclusion/exclusion duality”, the dominant perspective in the inclusion literature (Nguyen et al., 2023). Although junior women prioritised task-related inclusion, more specifically findings show that employees prioritise being valued for their professional expertise. This contrasts with the organizational perspective from D&I Leads, where the focus is on belonging, with rare mention of how diverse skills are valued and leveraged to enhance organizational goals. Further, D&I Leads place little emphasis on involving employees in decision-making but this is important to employees who consider involvement validates and evidences the value attached to their expertise and uniqueness. Thus, the study with junior employees provides empirical evidence in support of the conceptualisation of inclusion that employees are more likely to experience it as task-related and extends this to suggest that

task-related inclusion is prioritised by employees and is validated when employees are able to influence decision-making.

In task-related experiences of inclusion employees sought both belongingness and uniqueness. Where the literature conceptualises inclusion as treatment that balances the tension between needs for uniqueness and belongingness, where too much differentiation stimulates a need for more belonging (Shore et al, 2011). In contrast, findings indicate uniqueness and belongingness may operate as reinforcing, theorised by Nishii & Leroy (2022). This is demonstrated by the interviewee who felt her expertise was valued as she was assigned to develop a new product. But she was working in isolation and wanted more interaction with others, or belongingness. This interviewee was not feeling that her unique skills differentiated her too much from the group, leading her to seek belongingness. She felt included because her unique skills were recognised but the *context* of working in isolation stimulated a need for more belongingness. It may be that different types of inclusion needs are driven by individual differences in perceptions and psychological profile. Nevertheless, these findings suggest belongingness and uniqueness may be reinforcing, experienced in task-related activities. Thus, the study provides a more nuanced understanding of task-related inclusion, that the context and individual differences may stimulate different types of inclusion needs and that belongingness and uniqueness may be reinforcing.

5.3.5 Line managers as the primary context for inclusion

A second empirical contribution concerns the literature that differentiates between different levels of leadership and their role in fostering inclusion. Scholars have noted the different roles of different levels of leadership in organizations, Nishii and Leory (2022, p683) suggest that “at every level, leaders are foundational to employees’ experience of inclusion”, senior leaders set strategy, policy and practices that help employees perceive the organization as inclusive but “lower-level” leaders implement practices and translate them into everyday experiences of inclusion. The D&I Leads’ organizational perspective tends to focus on senior leaders and organizational practices to raise awareness of under-represented groups and promote more inclusive behaviours in leaders.

The D&I Leads view was that the leaders are either “blockers” or “enablers” to inclusion, suggesting although leaders set strategy, policy and practices, they do not necessarily ‘live’ the strategy, they may in fact ‘block’ progress to inclusion. Equally, inclusion practices may overlook exclusion. Leaders may believe the organization is inclusive because of their investment in inclusion activities. But if these practices are insufficient to address the hierarchies and inequalities between groups of employees (Dobusch et al., 2021), if the inequality regimes (Acker, 2006) have not been challenged and changed, the practices may not deliver inclusion for under-represented groups. They may even have unintended consequences of reinforcing exclusion. In addition, it is interesting that employees do not necessarily experience inclusion through the formal organizational activities, they describe inclusive managers as good people managers.

Nishii and Leroy (2022) theorise that lower-level leaders “are more likely” to promote everyday experiences of inclusion, these findings provide a more textured view that line managers, who possess good people skills, provide the primary context for inclusion within day-to-day interactions. Employees described inclusive managers as “good people managers”, who demonstrated values such as respect for everyone regardless of status and appreciation of all employees’ unique perspectives. Employees, not only prioritised work-related inclusion, but experienced inclusion through everyday work-related interactions and in the relationship with their line manager. Describing inclusive managers as being good people managers is a potentially useful descriptor as managers can learn good people skills. Although, organizational effort is focused on interventions aimed at senior leaders, it may be that interventions to develop good people skills in lower-level managers may be more fruitful. Lower-level managers are newer to the organization and less advanced in their leadership careers, which may mean they are more open to learn new inclusive people skills and behaviours. In sum, this study provides empirical evidence of a more textured theorisation that lower-level leaders more likely to provide the experience of inclusion to suggest that line managers are the primary context for experiences of inclusion within the everyday relationships and interactions.

5.3.6 Employees respond to inclusion

A third empirical contribution is that employees will proactively seek to manage their own and others inclusion. Although not directly addressed in the literature two bodies of literature may be relevant. One is on inclusive leadership, that leaders role model inclusive behaviours which reinforces behaviours in others (Mor Barak et al., 2021; Shore & Chung, 2022) and employees learn to be inclusive. The second is the literature that conceptualises inclusion as treatment that satisfies the psychological social identity need for belongingness and individual identity need to have uniqueness valued (Shore et al., 2011). These identity needs may motivate people to seek inclusion and through the learnt behaviours are able to foster their own and others inclusion. This study extends the propositions in these theoretical papers, that employees can be proactive and manage their own and others' inclusion.

5.3.7 Implications for policy and practice

I do not under estimate the difficulties in fostering inclusion in organizations which are complex social entities, with multiple actors and agendas at work. This complexity is compounded by the shift to remote working which has introduced new barriers to inclusion when inclusion is still proving elusive for many. Remote working may fulfil short-term inclusion needs, to help balance work and home priorities, but we have yet to understand the longer-term impact of remote working on skills development and career advancement for under-represented groups. Theories and concepts may be deemed too simplistic to capture the complexities of the social world but this study identifies four implications for practice and one policy implication.

The first implication is that the study indicates that the primary context for inclusion is in everyday interactions, the second that it is within the relationship with the line manager rather than through formal inclusion interventions. This is not to say that formal interventions are unnecessary but organizations must be aware that inclusion practices may overlook exclusion. If the organization overlooks the structural forces that perpetuate privilege and exclusion through

racism and sexism, exclusion may be overlooked, even reinforced as norms are not challenged or changed. Any resistance or inertia towards new structures and change must not be ignored or obscured. It is vital that organizations introduce and monitor formal anti-discriminatory practices and address structural barriers to inclusion and career advancement. For example, the study supplies an example of systemic change involving de-gendering and changing the organizational prototype of success to be more inclusive to all groups. Ultimately, if organizations fail to recognize and address the structural causes of inequality, any initiatives they implement are unlikely to foster meaningful progress with respect to inclusion. Nevertheless, the study identifies that employees feel valued and included within the context of everyday interactions with line managers who possess good people skills. Organizations might consider redirecting some organizational effort towards developing good people skills in junior managers, which may deliver more immediate and direct experiences of inclusion for employees.

The third implication concerns the experience of inclusion as being valued for professional expertise and fourth is feeling valued when treated as an individual through well-being and career development practices. Organizations tended to focus on facilitating belonging, possibly due to the impact of lockdowns and being aware that many individuals were working in isolation, living alone, in possibly inadequate home working space. Nevertheless, despite this isolation employees prioritise being recognised and valued for their expertise and contributions to organizational goals. This will require organizations to be intentional about including more employees in decision-making, using their differences as a resource, not just creating more connection through generating water-cooler type moments. This involves more than making it easier for employees to participate, organizations need to intentionally gather input to decisions. This can be enabled through technology, such as video conferencing and survey tools, which enables more people to be involved in decision-making whether that is updated on progress of key decisions, or to gather diverse opinions. Employees also felt valued and included through well-being and career development practices when they felt treated as an individual balancing home and work priorities.

Organizations might benefit from recognising the value of these practices and embed them within the organizational system, ensuring under-represented employees not only have access to these resources but are encouraged to take advantage of them. Most important, is that there is genuine intent behind these initiatives, that they are value and behaviour driven across all levels of the organization, not just a performance of care.

From a policy perspective it is vital that organizational thinking and policy develops to promote inclusion as valuing differences alongside facilitating belonging. Organizations prioritise facilitating belonging, but employees prioritise being valued. Thus, at a policy level, organizations might re-message inclusion to focus more on valuing differences as a resource to contribute to organizational goals, alongside belonging. This might help shift initiatives towards providing more potent experiences of inclusion for employees.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research

This research contributes to the inclusion literature by broadening the explanatory lens that theorises how inclusion is fostered in the workplace, by talking to both D&I Directors/Leads and junior diverse employees about their experiences of inclusion but there are limitations. I discus limitations, relevant to each study in Chapters 2-4, here I draw on the factors affecting the overall study and thesis. One limitation is that the timings of both empirical studies may have provided unique contextual influences. Both studies commenced in the wake of the murder of George Floyd and the mobilisation of the Black Lives Matter movement. This may have focused the D&I Leads on race/ethnicity issues but interestingly this was not mentioned by any of the junior employees, despite some of the interviewees being from minoritised ethnic backgrounds. Data were also collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, in the first study D&I Leads were grappling with implementing effective working from home practices. In the second study employees were returning to the workplace after the third lockdown, getting used to new ways of hybrid working. Although it might be reasonable to suggest that D&I Leads prioritised belonging to maintain connections with the organization whilst everyone was working remotely. One might also assume that employees,

getting used to hybrid working and reconnecting with their colleagues, would also prioritise social connections and belonging. Yet consistently junior employees prioritised being valued, which adds credibility to the finding that employees prioritise being valued over the need to belong. As working arrangements continue to evolve and become embedded as new ways of working, future studies might investigate *inclusion at work*, rather than *workplace inclusion.* Also, experiences of inclusion may vary according to whether employees are working remotely, from home, in-workplace or hybrid working. Other contractual arrangements might also influence experiences of inclusion and differences between part-time, full-time, contract and permanent employees might provide fruitful findings.

Additionally, in designing the research I considered the role of intersectionality which has become an important analytic device for researchers to interrogate the dynamic and contradictory workings of power. Viewing research through an intersectional lens enables exploration of the ways that race, gender, disability, sexuality, class, age, and other social categories are shaped and interrelated, to capture structural processes and challenge inequality to enact change (Rodriguez et al., 2016). However, this study specifically aims to explore the organizational practices that foster experiences of inclusion and the sampling strategy was carefully considered. I wanted to collect the most rich and detailed data on experiences of inclusion and thus in the second empirical study I chose to gather data from women. I made this choice as organizations have a legacy of targeting D&I interventions to this group, thus women were likely to have more extensive experiences of inclusion. Another consideration is that the women were from different social backgrounds, ages and ethnicities which may have influenced their experiences differently. Also, invitations to contribute to the research were issued through the gender network which may have influenced participants to privilege their experiences as women rather than their other valued identities. It may be that in other circumstances they might value and draw on a different identity, which may provide different experiences of inclusion, not captured in this study. Nevertheless, the 36 semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions and diligent probing for examples and clarification provides in-

depth and rich data. Although empirical generalisations about the entire population cannot be made from this sample it is possible to make theoretical generalisations from the quality of data and theoretical reasoning (Bell et al., 2019). I do not ignore that individuals from different under-represented group may have different experiences. It would be useful to conduct this qualitative research with other under-represented groups to gain a greater understanding of similarities or differences in their experiences of inclusion.

A strength of this research is that it includes two different perspectives of inclusion from the D&I Leads' accounts of organizational practices and employee experiences at an individual level. However, investigating employees' experiences at an individual level, defines inclusion through an individualistic, Western lens of uniqueness and thus risks perpetuating the exclusionary notions of the 'ideal worker' (Dobusch et al., 2021). Inclusion investigated at an individual level is described as an "individualist ontological stance" by Janssens and Steyaert (2019) which implies that the measurement of inclusion in organizations and the design of inclusion practices revolve around the individual, making the individual the locus for organizational change. Janssens and Steyaert suggest this neglects the role of organizations and their historically developed inequalities. Hence, it may be helpful to explore differences in organizational structures, investment and the processes involved in transitioning to inclusion, specifically to consider: What are the constituent parts of organizations when they are ready to transition to inclusion? How do organizations transition to inclusion when they have a legacy of exclusion? What are the similarities or differences between smaller and larger organizations and different sectors in transitioning to inclusion? Also, it would be interesting to consider whether employees that have a stake in the organization have different experiences of inclusion, raising questions such as: How is inclusion experienced in partnership, private and publicly owned organizations? What is the impact of profit sharing, equity compensation, employee share ownership and stock options on experiences of inclusion? More broadly, future research might also investigate how organizations transition to inclusion within a collectivist or individualistic society.

5.5 Personal Learnings

In this section I aim to consolidate my thoughts on my PhD experience which involves a mix of personal, practical, intellectual and emotional trials, or “rights of passage” (Amran & Ibrahim, 2012 p.528) and personal learnings. Although writing the PhD and the three articles were the most challenging aspects, I encountered many trials which I now reframe as triumphs and gains, from skills learnt, problems solved, hurdles overcome and the people I met. In this reflexive phase I examine my development as a researcher which impacted on the research design and findings.

I had few expectations of the PhD experience other than that it would be unpredictable and at times difficult but these very experiences have enabled me to gain many new skills. For example, I found research interviewing more difficult than I had imagined. As an experienced interviewer with 20 years in executive search and having trained as a psychologist and executive coach I assumed a level of competence but I was over-confident in my skills. The types of interviews referred to above have some similarities to research interviews, for example, the importance of building rapport and empathy (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) but in the first study after the first few interviews I learnt that I needed to collect richer and more in-depth data. I had to learn research interviewing skills and valued the experiences shared by my supervisors. We had detailed discussions to develop and refine interview guides for each study (Appendices F.2 and G.2), my supervisors provided feedback on my interviews from transcripts and we conducted joint interviews which provided both feedback and the benefits from observing highly skilled researchers. Reflexing on my research interviewing skills, from the first empirical to second empirical study, prompted me to use more follow-up and probing questions to elicit richer, more in-depth and detailed data.

I was also mindful that as a British, white, female and main researcher power was bestowed upon me through my position and I needed to balance this power dynamic with participants. I am most familiar with interviewing senior executives which was useful in the first empirical study with D&I Leads as I had the confidence to probe and seek clarification. However, interviewing non-managerial

staff in the second study, I wanted to minimise any projected unequal power dynamic. I consciously spent more time to establish rapport, to comprehend the significance of their views without judgement, I validated their experiences and used judicious self-disclosure. I aimed to show respect for their experiences and contribution to research, acknowledging the ethical dilemma of not 'trespassing on the person' (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015 p84), to pursue interesting knowledge. I am honoured that these strangers were prepared to divulge sometimes intense experiences (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) and unconditionally respect their contributions.

One of the biggest challenges and points of personal development has been as a project manager of this research but without positional power. In my corporate career, in an international executive search business, I led numerous transformational change and thought leadership projects, across international borders, impacting employees, leaders and external partners. As I embarked on my PhD, I was confident that I was well-equipped to manage my research as a project. But I had failed to appreciate how much my project management success was predicated upon my senior status, tenure and trusted position, all of which conferred positional power. This power will have impacted on the extent to which I was able to engage and influence stakeholders, to deliver on time and budget. In this project I had only my personal power; I relied mostly on my resilience and perseverance. When I became frustrated that timings and deadlines drifted, I kept in mind the words of Winston Churchill, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts" and "Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm". I did not want to consume my supervisors time but on reflection I should have been more robust in asking others for help. I now see asking for help as a sign of strength and resourcefulness, a demonstration to others that I trust their ideas and feel confident in their skills.

Having said that, the main hurdle I had to overcome was the impact of COVID lockdowns which meant everyone was confronting a new world of work. I started my PhD in February 2020 and the UK went into COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020. This could have de-railed the research, for example, interviews for the first

empirical study with D&I Leads was due to take three months and start in March 2021, but we entered a second lockdown and it was difficult to gain access to senior executives. Potential interviewees were focused on crisis management, contributing to research was not a priority, hence, interviews were delayed until June 2021. My corporate career taught me persistence but I had to learn patience, and to maintain the enthusiasm and quality of interviews over the six months it took to conduct 15 interviews. COVID lockdowns could have de-railed my research plan but I found hidden benefits. I was able to devote more time to the SLR which provided a firm foundation to the research, I was also able to invest more time in data analysis.

Having spent most of the first two years working in solitary confinement I missed in-person interaction and opportunities to discuss ideas with other researchers but I found other ways of connecting. WhatsApp groups may be a poor substitute for in-person interactions but provided connectivity with researchers in a similar position. Cranfield University were quick to adapt and support students by migrating masterclasses and meetings onto Zoom. My supervisors instituted fortnightly rather than monthly Zoom meetings to help me keep on track, which was invaluable. I also benefitted from being a member of the Cranfield Gender Leadership and Inclusion Centre presenting quarterly updates and discussing my research with scholars in the field. I filled knowledge gaps through YouTube lectures on research philosophy and design and Hull University modules on NVivo. I joined the Cranfield researcher network, Cranium, that provided lectures on a broad range of research topics and methodology. This evolved into the New Scholars Network where internationally renowned scholars such as Alvesson, Chia and many other eminent researchers shared and discussed their work. The British Psychological Society, the British Academy of Management and Academy of Management all provided online events, extending my learning opportunities. Completing the first two years of my PhD during COVID-19 lockdowns tested my ability to be self-motivated and work independently but I also found new ways to manage my own learning and research process.

Reflecting on the abilities and skills I learnt during my PhD research I benefitted enormously from volunteering to help on other research projects. In the first instance I conducted coding through NVivo for a project led by my supervisor on remote working during COVID-19. This knowledge prompted me to use NVivo for my SLR which proved an invaluable resource throughout the research. I then had an opportunity to contribute to the practitioner annual report *FTSE Female Board Report 2021: Inclusion works for everyone* (Vinnicombe et al., 2021). Despite the considerable investment in time to contribute to this report, it enabled me to gain more detailed familiarisation with the data, contributing to richer analysis. Contributing to this report gave me access to senior participants for the first study, and they also provided access to participants for the second study - on all counts, a worthwhile investment.

As I reflect on my PhD journey, I am struck by the messiness of the process, the numerous debates that led to many redirections and retracing of steps. The messiness is compounded by me as the researcher as part of the data; I shape interviews, analysis and interpretations based on my personal experiences. Yet I cannot know the limitations of my own self-reflection, or how hidden experiences have shaped the data. In Chapter 1, I explored my background and how it shaped the research topic and some choices in research design but what of the experiences that I have not surfaced? As a researcher it is impossible to be objective; my research is inextricably mixed with my values, beliefs and experiences some of which may remain hidden. My aim from this personal reflection and being transparent about what brings me to this research, is to reveal more of me as a researcher that shaped the research process, to provide more rigour to the research findings.

5.6 Publications and Future Plans

Publication details and future plans for the papers are shown in Table 5-2.

Table 5-2 Papers and publications

Paper	Title	Journal Submission	Other
1	An Exploration of How Organizations Foster Inclusion	To be updated for future submission	
2	Understanding Which Practices Foster Inclusion: A View from the Top	Accepted for publication, December 2023, in "Diversity, Equality and Inclusion: An International Journal" Appendix F.3	Preliminary findings published: "The Female FTSE Board Report 2021: Inclusion Works for Everyone", sponsored by EY. Presented at national launch 8th November 2021
3	Experiential and Contextual Understandings of Inclusion	Draft prepared for submission to Gender Work & Organization	

Regarding my next steps and continuing development, I do not see my PhD as a finished or final product, I would like it to be part of a larger conversation. I would love to continue collaborations with scholars at Cranfield University and with academics from other universities. I am looking forward to conducting more research and contributing to the literature on the inclusive organization. I am also looking forward to working with practitioners to disseminate the study findings and broader literature to help organizations foster inclusion to contribute to their delivery of their UN Sustainability Goals, through their environment, social and governance agenda, with particular focus on the social. The UN Sustainability goals are far reaching but as Desmond Tutu said, "Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world".

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APPENDICES

Appendix A Systematic literature review panel

Panel member	Organisation	Title	Role
Prof. Sue Vinnicombe	Strategy People and Leadership, Cranfield University	Prof. of Women and Leadership	Feedback on drafts and literature selection
Dr. Deirdre Anderson	Organisational Behaviour and Applied Psychology, Cranfield University	Senior Lecturer in Organisational Psychology	Feedback on drafts and literature selection
Dr. Colin Philbeam	Safety Leadership, Cranfield University	Principle Research Fellow	Guidance on review protocol
Ms. Mary Bettis-Grey	MIRC, Cranfield University	Business Information Specialist	Guidance on search methodology
Mr. Bill McKim	ThoughtWorks, Ebay	Former Director	Practitioner perspective

Appendix B Five key articles used to validate search strings

Author	Date	Title	Journal	Rationale
Roberson	2006	Disentangling the Meanings of Diversity and Inclusion in Organisations	Group & Organisation Management	Introductory paper referenced by Shore, Cleveland & Sanchez, 2018
Sabharwal	2014	Is Diversity Management Sufficient? Organizational Inclusion to Further Performance	Public Personnel Management	Focuses on the concept of organizational inclusion which goes beyond diversity management to inclusion practices
Mor Barak, Lizano, Kim, Duan, Rhee, Hsiao & Brimhall	2016	The Promise of Diversity Management for Climate of Inclusion: A State-of-the-Art Review and Meta-Analysis	Human Service Organization Management	First to differentiate between diversity management and inclusion efforts
Shore, Cleveland & Sanchez	2018	Inclusive workplaces: A review and model	Human Resources Management Review	Coherent model for the inclusive organisations and role of practices and processes
Randel, Galvin, Shore, Ehrhart, Chung, Dean & Kedharnath	2018	Inclusive Leadership: realising positive outcomes through belongingness and being valued for uniqueness	Human Resources Management Review	Focus on inclusive behaviours

Appendix C Inclusion and exclusion criteria for literature review

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion	Rationale
Relevance for review question			
Organization	Inclusive organizations, workgroups, work places	Environmental, societal inclusion	The focus is inclusive organizations, how individuals experience inclusion in the work place.
Inclusion	Inclusion practices, inclusive leadership, inclusive culture	CSR, finance, investment, marketing, technology	Inclusive cultures and inclusive leaders influence behaviours which may influence organizational practices.
Practices	Inclusion practices, processes, actions, procedures and behaviours, work arrangements	Systems, policies,	Policies and systems might be published but may be interpreted as intentions or guidelines, not necessarily translating into practices; behaviours translate into practices. Practices are produced, reinforced and change, informing the habitual and recurrent nature of organizational reality and how it is experienced as inclusive.
Search strategy			
Electronic searches and alerts	Business Source Complete EBSCO, ABI/INFORM ProQuest, Psych INFO EBSCO Alerts on all and Zetoc	Emerald Insight, Scopus	These are the main electronic databases for Science of Management and organizational inclusion.
Types of publication	All peer-reviewed publications listed in the CABS Academic Journal Guide (CABS, AJG)	Journals not in the guide	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, is a relevant 1* journal and should be included, thus the study is not restricted to 3 and 4* journals. Including journals regardless of publication status will help reduce effects of publication bias (Cochrane, 2020). Listing in CABS, AJG indicates journal is peer reviewed and judged on scholarly grounds.
Date range	2006 to 2021	Articles published prior to 2006	Articles on inclusive organizations are relatively recent. Shore et al.'s (2011) literature review identifies studies on inclusive workplaces evolved from Bilimoria, Joy, &

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion	Rationale
			Liang (2008) and Roberson (2006). Roberson notes that the concept of inclusion has been embryonic for the past decade.
Language	English	Non-English	Most high-quality studies are published in English language journals.
Other resources	Conference papers, books, grey literature, unpublished studies, recommendations from inclusion scholars, SLR panel, review panel	Popular & trade press, blogs, editorials, interviews	Electronic searches may only account for 30% of relevant literature (Denyer & Tranfield, 2009) and are effective for peer-reviewed articles, not grey literature. Other methods will be used and recorded. As inclusive practices and inclusive organizations are relatively new areas of enquiry, it is important to include the broadest literature to help fill the gaps and reduce bias (Daniels, 2019).
Types of studies			
Types of research	Empirical, theoretical, conceptual, literature reviews, practitioner reports	Working papers	Practitioner articles are included as the review aim is to guide a study on organizational practice and practitioners are the ultimate user of the findings. This will help close any gap between academic and practitioner focus (Adams et al., 2017).
Method-ology	Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods	None	Integrative synthesis of quantitative and qualitative studies, will help identify categories and higher order themes (Briner & Denyer, 2012).
Regional focus	International studies	None	Inclusion may be experienced differently in cultures that are deemed more collectivist than the individualistic. It is uncertain whether there are important differences in effects among this sub-group. This will be assessed in the review.
Study partici-pants	Adults, all diverse characteristics including age, ethnicity, gender, LGBTQ+. At all levels of the organization	None	Inclusion is the concept under review, thus studies on all diverse characteristics will be included. Findings will be extracted that are relevant to inclusive organizations and practices.
Organization	All sectors, sizes (workgroups, SME's, large corporates) and	None	Practices relevant to SME's may not be relevant to large

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion	Rationale
	ownership models (private, listed, public sector, not-for-profit).		corporates but this will be assessed in the review.
Intervention of interest	Inclusive practices, inclusive leadership, and inclusive culture	Organization practices, general leadership, organization culture	Inclusive practices will be enacted by leaders and inform the culture which will lead to the experience of inclusion; thus, they are included. The wider literature on organizational practices, leadership and culture will be too broad.
Outcome measures meaningful to stake-holders	Perceptions of inclusion, belonging, uniqueness valued, talent retention, promotion, well-being, organizational performance, employee commitment	None	Identifying outcomes of inclusion practices is a review question. Priority outcomes will be identified as most relevant for the review, assessed as primary or secondary.

Appendix D Quality criteria for article screening

D.1 Conceptual and literature reviews: assessment criteria

Quality Assessment Criteria – Conceptual and literature reviews					
Element	**0 Absence**	**1 Low**	**2 Medium**	**3 High**	**Not applicable**
1. Theory robustness: Is the theoretical underpinning clear, with methodological evaluation, synthesis, and insight.	The article does not provide enough information to assess this criterion	Poor awareness of existing literature and debates.	Basic understanding of the issues, some evaluation, under or over referenced.	Deep knowledge, synthesis of relevant literature, providing rich insight.	This element is not applicable to the study
2. Concepts: Are all concepts clearly defined, provide more holistic interpretation, re-categorisation?	The article does not provide enough information to assess this criterion	One or more concepts has not been defined.	Each concept has been defined, but more information is needed in interpretation.	All concepts have been defined clearly and provide holistic interpretation or new categories.	This element is not applicable to the study
3. Methodology: Is the method outlined, paper well organized and clearly written?	The article does not provide enough information	The article is poorly structured and the argument is	Article is clearly written, method outlined, but the argument is poorly constructed	Article is well written, method provides clear boundaries, the argument clearly structured	This element is not applicable to the study

Quality Assessment Criteria – Conceptual and literature reviews					
Element	**0 Absence**	**1 Low**	**2 Medium**	**3 High**	**Not applicable**
	to assess this criterion	difficult to follow			
4. Framework: Is the conceptual framework novel, coherent/ comprehensive and relates to phenomenon? Report = generalisable	The article does not provide enough information to assess this criterion	Framework is incomplete and only partially relates to phenomenon	Framework is partially coherent/ comprehensive and relates to phenomenon. Some references questionable	Framework is coherent/ comprehensive appropriately referenced by respected sources	This element is not applicable to the study
5. Contribution: Does it advance our thinking of prior theory? (For practitioner reports =relevance for practice)	The article does not provide enough information to assess this criterion	It is not clear the advance it makes	Although using others' ideas, builds upon the existing theory.	Develops existing knowledge, expands the way the issue is explained.	This element is not applicable to the study

D.2 Qualitative papers: assessment criteria

Quality Assessment Criteria – Qualitative Studies					
Element	**0 Absence**	**1 Low**	**2 Medium**	**3 High**	**Not applicable**
1.Theory robustness: Does the study improve our understanding of prior theory?	The article does not provide enough information to assess this criterion	Low validity of theory. It is not clear the advance it makes.	Theory is weakly related to data. Although using others' ideas, builds upon the existing theory.	Theory is relevant. Develops existing knowledge, expands the way the issue is explained.	This element in not applicable to the study
2. Conceptual framework: Is the conceptual framework clearly articulated?	The article does not provide enough information to assess this criterion	Limited concepts, one or more concepts not defined.	Sufficient, defined concepts but more information required.	Abundant and appropriate concepts, defined clearly.	This element in not applicable to the study
3. Method: Is the method rigorous, credible and does	The article does not provide enough information to	Flawed research design, lack of detail. One or more findings are	Methods fit stated goal. Adequate detail Research design may be improved	Appropriate method. Research design rigorous and transparent, concrete detail.	This element in not applicable to the study

Quality Assessment Criteria – Qualitative Studies					
Element	**0 Absence**	**1 Low**	**2 Medium**	**3 High**	**Not applicable**
the data support the findings?	assess this criterion	unsupported by the data	Findings relate to literature	Meaningful connection with literature	
4. Findings: Are all the findings/ interpretat-ions appropriate-ely warranted?	The article does not provide enough information to assess this criterion	The paper is poorly structured and the findings lack evidence.	The paper is clearly written, but the findings have limited evidence.	The paper is well written, with rich description, self-reflection. Findings clearly evidenced, and triangulated.	This element in not applicable to the study
5. Contribu-tion /implication for practice: Do results make contribution and relevant to practice?	The article does not provide enough information to assess this criterion	Ideas presented do not further knowledge, difficult to implement, not relevant for practitioners	Conceptual/ theoretical contribution. Potential for implementing the proposed ideas, with minor adjustments	Significant conceptual/ theoretical contribution Transferable findings. Significant benefit may be obtained in practice	This element in not applicable to the study

NOTE: Practitioner papers weighted with double score for findings and contribution/implication

D.3 Quantitative paper: assessment criteria

Quality Assessment Criteria – Quantitative Studies					
Element	**0 Absence**	**1 Low**	**2 Medium**	**3 High**	**Not applicable**
1.Theory robustness: Does the study inform or improve our understandi ng of prior theory?	The article does not provide enough information to assess this criterion	Poor awareness of existing literature. Low validity of theory	Basic understanding of the issues. Theory is weakly related to the data	Deep and broad knowledge of the literature. Theory relevant and good theory-data relation	This element in not applicable to the study
2. Conceptual framework: Is the conceptual framework	The article does not provide enough information to assess this criterion	One or more concepts has not been defined	Each concept has been defined, but more information is needed	All concepts have been defined clearly.	This element in not applicable to the study

Quality Assessment Criteria – Quantitative Studies					
Element	**0 Absence**	**1 Low**	**2 Medium**	**3 High**	**Not applicable**
clearly articulated?					
3. Methodology: Is the methodology clearly described, does the data support the claims?	The article does not provide enough information to assess this criterion	Data inaccuracy and not related to theory. Flawed research design.	Data are related to the arguments, though there are some gaps. Research design may be improved.	Data strongly supports arguments. Research design is robust: sampling, data gathering, data analysis rigorous	This element in not applicable to the study
4.Generalizability: are the results generalisable to the general population?	The article does not provide enough information to assess this criterion	Only to the population studied	Generalizable to organizations of similar characteristics	High level of generalizability	This element in not applicable to the study
5. Implication for practice: Are the results relevant to practice?	The article does not provide enough information to assess this criterion	Very difficult to implement the concepts and ideas presented. Not relevant for practitioners.	There is potential to implement the proposed ideas, with minor revisions or adjustments	Significant benefit may be obtained in the ideas being discussed are put into practice	This element in not applicable to the study

(Adapted Pittaway et al., 2004; Tracy, 2010; Kutzer, 2013)

Appendix E Details of articles within the review

E.1 Publication years

Years	Number of articles
2020-2021	10
2015-2019	26
2010-2014	8
2006-2009	1

E.2 Journal titles

Journal Titles	No.
Human Resource Management	3
Human Service Organizations Management, Leadership and Governance	3
Equality Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal	3
Journal of Management	2
Journal of Managerial Psychology	2
Journal of Organizational Behavior	2
Personnel Review	2
Reports	2
Academy of Management Review	1
International Journal of Management Reviews	1
International Journal of Manpower	1
Journal of Business Ethics	1
Journal of Leadership Accountability and Ethics	1
Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies	1
Journal of Management Development	1
Journal of Organizational Change Management	1
Military Psychology	1

Journal Titles	No.
Nature Human Behaviour	1
Organization Studies	1
Personnel Psychology	1
Public Administration Review	1
Public Money and Management	1
Public Personnel Management	1
Review of Public Personnel Administration	1
The International Journal of Human Resource Management	1
Journal of Non-Profit and Public Sector Marketing	1
Group and Organization Management	1

E.3 Details by author, year and title

Authors	Date	Title
Armstrong-Stassen Marjorie; Francine Schlosser	2011	Perceived organizational membership and the retention of older workers
Ashikali, Tanachia; Groeneveld, Sandra	2015	Diversity Management in Public Organizations and Its Effect on Employees' Affective Commitment: The Role of Transformational Leadership and the Inclusiveness of the Organizational Culture
Bernstein, Ruth Sessler; Bulger, Morgan; Salipante, Paul; Weisinger, Judith Y	2020	From Diversity to Inclusion to Equity: A Theory of Generative Interactions
Boehm, Stephan A.; Kunze, Florian; Bruch, Heike	2014	Spotlight on age-diversity climate: The impact of age-inclusive HR practices on firm-level outcomes
Boekhorst, Janet A.	2015	The role of authentic leadership in fostering workplace inclusion: A social information processing perspective
Bozani, Vasiliki; Drydakis, Nick; Sidiropoulou, Katerina; Harvey, Benjamin; Paraskevopoulou, Anna	2019	Workplace positive actions, trans people's self-esteem and human resources' evaluations

Authors	Date	Title
Brimhall, Kim C.; Palinkas, Lawrence	2020	Using Mixed Methods to Uncover Inclusive Leader Behaviors: A Promising Approach for Improving Employee and Organizational Outcomes
Brimhall, Kim C; Mor Barak, Michàlle E; Hurlburt, Michael; McArdle, John J.; Palinkas, Lawrence; Henwood, Benjamin	2017	Increasing Workplace Inclusion: The Promise of Leader-Member Exchange
Brown, Tara A.; Ratwani, Krista L; Key-Roberts, Melinda J; Simmons, Mathias J; Toumbeva, Tatiana H; Nishii, Lisa H	2020	Contextualizing inclusion: Developing a framework and measure for a military context
Bryer, Alice	2020	Making Organizations More Inclusive: The Work of Belonging
Chen, Chiyin; Tang, Ningyu	2018	Does perceived inclusion matter in the workplace?
Cottrill, Kenna; Lopez, Patricia Denise; Hoffman, Calvin C	2014	How authentic leadership and inclusion benefit organizations
Ellemers, Naomi; Sleebos, Ed; Stam, Daan; de Gilder, Dick	2013	Feeling Included and Valued: How Perceived Respect Affects Positive Team Identity and Willingness to Invest in the Team
Gotsis, George; Grimani, Katerina	2016	The role of servant leadership in fostering inclusive organizations
Huang, Yan; Bortree, Denise Sevick; Yang, Fan; Wang, Ruoxu	2020	Encouraging Volunteering in Nonprofit Organizations: The Role of Organizational Inclusion and Volunteer Need Satisfaction
Hur, Hyunkang	2020	The role of inclusive work environment practices in promoting LGBT employee job satisfaction and commitment
Jansen, Wiebren S.; Otten, Sabine; van der Zee, Karen I.	2015	Being part of diversity: The effects of an all-inclusive multicultural diversity approach on majority members' perceived inclusion and support for organizational diversity efforts
Jansen, Wiebren S.; Otten, Sabine; van der Zee, Karen I.; Jans, Lise	2014	Inclusion: Conceptualization and measurement
Janssens, Maddy; Steyaert, Chris	2019	A practice-based theory of diversity: Respecifying (in)equality in organizations
Joyce, William; Roberson, Bruce	2021	What Really Works? Ensuring Inclusive Working Cultures

Authors	Date	Title
Kulkarni, Vaibhavi; Vohra, Neharika; Sharma, Supriya; Nair, Nisha	2018	Walking the tightrope: gender inclusion as organizational change
Le, Huong; Palmer Johnson, Catrina; Fujimoto, Yuka	2020	Organizational justice and climate for inclusion
Li, Yiqiong; Perera, Sanjeewa; Kulik, Carol T.; Metz, Isabel	2019	Inclusion climate: A multilevel investigation of its antecedents and consequences
Meacham, Hannah; Cavanagh, Jillian; Shaw, Amie; Bartram, Timothy	2017	HRM practices that support the employment and social inclusion of workers with an intellectual disability
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Appendix F Understanding organizational practices

F.1 Participant information sheet

Invitation

You are invited to participate in this research to investigate how organizations foster an inclusive workplace. As an expert in D&I your contribution is important and would be appreciated.

What is the project's purpose?

The purpose of this study is to uncover inclusion practices that foster an inclusive organization. There is increasing interest in creating inclusive organizations, where fostering a sense of inclusion enables the organization to attract, retain and promote diverse talent, although diversity across many dimensions continues to remain elusive.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part. If you decide to take part you will be able to keep a copy of this information sheet and consent form. You can withdraw at any time and you do not have to give a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

I am looking for volunteers to take part in a one-to-one interview that will last around 60 minutes. The interview will involve discussing your experience of inclusion practices, what works and the outcomes you hope to achieve.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Fostering inclusive organizations is important to help open opportunities for under-represented groups, level the field and also benefits organizational performance. In addition, more inclusion in the workplace may help create a more inclusive society. I will send you a copy of the final report.

Will the interviews be recorded; will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

Interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and analysed into general themes. All the interview data is anonymised and stored using GDPR-compliant protocols and servers. The results will be aggregated and participants will not be identifiable. The data will be permanently destroyed at the end of the study. This study forms the first phase of the research and will be reported within the final thesis.

Who has ethically reviewed the project?

The study has been ethically approved by Cranfield University. If you have any concerns or questions about this study you can contact me, Christine de Largy at Christine.de-largy@cranfield.ac.uk, or my supervisor Dr Deirdre Anderson at deirdre.anderson@cranfield.ac.uk

What do I have to do?

Please let me know if you would be willing to be interviewed. There are no other commitments associated with participating.

F.2 Interview guide

Introduction

Many thanks for accepting the invitation to participate in this research. I know you have returned the informed consent form but I would like to remind you of some key points. During the research all references to you as an individual will be anonymised, neither you or your organization will be identifiable. All the data will be aggregated into the development of themes and confidentiality will be maintained and data will be held securely in accordance with GDPR-compliant protocols and stored on a secure server. All data will be destroyed at the end of research. You may withdraw at any time either during the interview or up to seven days after the interview.

These interviews usually take between 45 and 60 minutes.

If you are happy with all of that I will start the recording now.

Aims

There is an increasing interest in creating organizations, which foster a sense of inclusion. The aim of this study is to understand which organizational practices are used in your organization to foster inclusion.

Questions

Initial questions:	Follow up questions:
Please can you give me some examples of interventions and practices that foster inclusion in your organization?	Please will you clarify? Tell me more about….. I'm curious about …. How did they work in practice? What made them successful? What outcomes are you looking for? What other practices have you used?
Which initiatives have been dropped?	What was the reason for that? Have they been replaced with anything? Please will you clarify …..? Tell me more about….. I'm curious about …. What outcomes are you looking for?
What new initiatives have been launched?	What was the reason for launching them? Please will you clarify? Tell me more about….. I'm curious about …. What outcomes are you looking for?

Thank you for your time today. The next phase of research is to interview employees and their experience of inclusion. Would you be interested in being involved in this important research. I will share a copy of the report with you.

F.3 Article published February 2024

Journal title: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An international journal

Link to article:

[Understanding practices which foster inclusion: views from the top | Emerald Insight]

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Understanding practices which foster inclusion: A view from the top

Journal:	*Equality, diversity and inclusion: An international journal*
Manuscript ID	EDI-10-2022-0292.R2
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	Inclusive organization, Inclusion practices, Leadership, Belonging, Valuing uniqueness
Methodologies:	

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UNDERSTANDING PRACTICES WHICH FOSTER INCLUSION: VIEWS FROM THE TOP

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to deepen understanding of inclusionary practices used within organizations, and how they satisfy specific inclusion needs.

Design/methodology/approach – We adopt a qualitative research design, reporting on data from semi-structured interviews conducted with 15 Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Directors/Leads and using a thematic approach to analysis.

Findings – Our study expands understanding of inclusion practices, showing that they are not uniformly implemented and that practices may satisfy both needs to belong and differences valued, with interviewees prioritising belonging. Well-being and career development are seen as important inclusion practices demonstrating support and appreciation of difference, thus as inputs not outputs of inclusion challenging existing assumptions. Inclusionary practices are malleable and the extent to which they foster inclusion depends critically on the leaders involved and their commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

Originality – Our study shows ***how*** practices satisfy inclusion needs and that the implementation of practices varies, depending on the leaders involved.

Key words – Inclusive organization, Inclusion practices, Leadership, Belonging, Valuing uniqueness

Paper type – Research paper

The inclusive workplace

Organizations are increasingly focusing on initiatives to foster equality, diversity and inclusion, going beyond diversity to create a workplace where people from many backgrounds are valued. Organizations accrue benefits through increasing diverse representation to improve performance (Sabharwal, 2014) and see it as morally right (Ferdman, 2014), yet diversity across many dimensions remains elusive. Literature

Appendix G Individual experiences of inclusion

G.1 Participant information sheet

Thank you for your interest in this research study. I am a doctoral researcher in the Gender, Leadership and Inclusion Centre, School of Management, Cranfield University. I am undertaking research exploring individual experiences of feeling included within your employing organization. This document provides you with more detail about the research, and what would be required, should you choose to participate.

Many organizations are committed to fostering inclusion as part of their approach to diversity and inclusion across many dimensions of diversity. The research will involve speaking to women in the Cranfield Step-Up network, at various levels, from level one to six, who have been working in the organization for at least one year. Your experiences are of significant interest for the project and therefore we would love to invite you to take part and share your views as an interview participant.

Participating in this research will involve you making a brief note of events, over a two-week period, that have led you to feel either included or excluded. This will be followed by a one-to-one online interview with the researcher, lasting 45-60 minutes. In the interview I will ask you to talk more about the events you have noted. With your permission, these online interviews will be recorded to provide an accurate record of what has been said. Taking part is completely voluntary and is confidential; resulting data will be anonymised and neither companies nor individuals will be named. Recordings will be deleted once the transcripts have been produced, and all data will be held securely on the Cranfield University server.

The anonymised findings will be included in my doctoral thesis and may additionally be used in presentations or academic journal articles. This research has been reviewed and approved by Cranfield University's Ethics Committee.

If you would like to participate, or if you have any questions about this research project or would like further information, please contact me:

Lead Researcher: Christine de Largy, PhD Researcher, Leadership and Management, Cranfield University. christine.de-largy@cranfield.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about this study, then please contact my research supervisors:

Dr. Deirdre Anderson: deirdre.anderson@cranfield.ac.uk

Prof. Sue Vinnicombe: s.m.vinnicombe@cranfield.ac.uk

G.2 Interview guidelines

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. I am a doctoral researcher at Cranfield University. I am exploring individual experiences of feeling included within your employing organization.

You might have made brief note of events, over the past two weeks, that have led you to feel either included or excluded. I would now like to ask you to talk more about the events you have noted. Our conversation will last about 45-60 minutes - Are you happy with that? In which case, are you happy for me to start the recording?

START RECORDING

Before we start I know you have signed the consent form but just a reminder that with your permission, we would like to record this interview to provide an accurate record of what has been said. Taking part is completely voluntary and is confidential; resulting data will be anonymised and neither companies nor individuals will be named. You may withdraw at anytime up to one week after this interview. Recordings will be deleted once the transcripts have been produced,

and all data will be held securely on the Cranfield University server. I will be analysing all the interviews and the data will be used for my doctoral thesis and also for academic journal articles. The interview transcript won't be included in full, just selected anonymised quotes.

Is that all OK? Great so let's get started.

There are four main questions with follow up questions and then some questions about you. Before we start do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

Interview questions

Feeling included within the organization is important and this study aims to help organizations understand what works. So I am interested in your experiences of feeling included at work.

Please will you focus on those occasions you have felt included. Feel free to refer to you notes from the past couple of weeks to help you recall specific incidents.

1. **a) Could you describe, in as much detail as possible, a situation at work in which you *felt particularly included*?**

    Could you say more about that?

    Can you think of a particular incident?

    What was the context?

    Who was involved? What did they do?

    What happened next?

    What was it that made you feel included?

Search for other examples

b) Can you think of any examples when you felt that you particularly *fitted in, belonged or felt you were particularly valued?*

Can you think of a specific situation?

Could you say more about that?

What was the context?

Who was involved? What did they do?

What happened next?

What was it that made you feel included?

Search for other examples

2. **a) Can you give me an example *of something* the organization does that gives you the experience of inclusion?** Please would you explain in as much detail as you can.

   If they provide a number of initiatives…..Which is the most powerful in fostering inclusion?

   Can you give me a specific example?

   What does it look like? How does it work?

   Who was involved? What were you doing?

   What is it about this that makes you feel included?

   b) Can you give me an example *of an initiative* the organization has implemented that gives you the experience of inclusion? Please would you explain in as much detail as you can.

   Which ones stand out to you?

   Which is the most powerful?

   What does it look like? How does it work?

   Who was involved? What were you doing?

   What is it about this that makes you feel included?

3. **If you were advising the organization to be more inclusive, where you and others might feel more included, *what would be the main change* you would recommend?**

   What would it look like?

   What would the organization need to do to deliver that?

   Who would be responsible for that?

   What would be a tangible outcome?

4. **And finally is there a question I haven't asked that I should have, or there other thoughts that have arisen during our conversation?**

    Can you tell me more about that? As above.

5. **Demographics** – Can I just check a few details about you and your work before we finish?

    What is your age?

    Where are you Zooming from today?

    How long have you been in the organization?

    What is your role/position?

    How long are you in your current role?

Thank you so much for your help today. Your insights are really helpful. Before we finish are there any questions you would like to ask me?

Great. Once again, I really appreciate your help. Have a good rest of the day.