Editorial: Producing actionable knowledge about marginalized populations and communities: a challenge to editors and journals

Introduction

In this opening essay to the special forum on equality, diversity and inclusion in marginalized communities, we seek to address an important question: *how can actionable knowledge on this topic be produced, disseminated and acted upon?* The *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal* ("*EDI*") journal description notes that it "offers a platform for critical and rigorous exploration of equal opportunities concerns, including gender, ethnicity, class, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion, as well as other nascent forms of inequalities in the context of society, organisations and work." This focus is vital, given the persistence of inequity for which organizations, particularly businesses, bear responsibility. Scholars in this field seek to make the world more just and believe that businesses (among other organizations) must become more diverse and inclusive in order to achieve that goal. Many, if not most, of us working in this domain seek to bring together scholarly rigor with activist zeal in our writing and teaching. We are attracted to this field because we believe that there is an ongoing crisis of inequality – within and across organizations and societies – that must be addressed.

At the outset of our call for papers, we sought to explore the nature of SME responsibilities through the adoption of a feminist lens. From this perspective, many organizational scholars often focus on the *inequality regimes* manifested within organizations by examining the interlocking practices and processes that result in continuing inequalities in organizational life (Acker, 2006). Relatedly, and at the individual level of analysis, inequality regimes manifest through day-to-day interactions and personal experiences within the organization (Berry and Bell, 2012). Regimes of inequality also exist at higher levels of analysis, including those that are embedded in the policies, practices and (in)formal norms that govern organizational culture (Gupta, 2020). Further, and at a more macro level, inequality regimes manifest as broader societal and economic factors, including factors embedded within regulatory environments, societal norms and values and market conditions (Khilji, 2021). At this level of analysis, there are important and unexamined issues across markets and economies, including ones that shape the way we examine and prioritize the examination of the Global North versus the Global South, or alternatively, of multinational corporations (MNCs) versus smaller and more local forms of business.

Beyond these levels of analysis tied in various ways to businesses, and in reflecting on our experiences as the editors of this special issue, we also now wonder if existing editorial practices and structures of scholarly knowledge production contribute to perpetuating these regimes and if we, in our editorial roles, are equipped to truly respond to the inequality crisis through bringing forth and shepherding truly liberatory scholarship. The three of us are experienced journal editors and, as such, have responsibilities for determining whether scholarship meets the quality and rigor requirements required for it to be published. As an important scholarly

Opening Essay, Special Topic Forum on "Facilitating Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in Traditionally Marginalized Communities: Unpacking the Nature of SME Responsibility through Feminist Epistemology".

outlet for equality, diversity and inclusion, *EDI* participates in a scholarly knowledge production and dissemination system in which some work is accepted for publication and other work is rejected. While of course no journal can (or should) publish every article that is submitted for consideration, the gatekeeping function of editors and journals bears critical examination, particularly when the topics that are within a particular journal's scope relate to inclusion and marginalization. Such research is often difficult to produce as well as shepherd through journal review processes, and as a result, essential insights about equality, diversity and inclusion are lost, especially from scholars from and with first-hand knowledge of marginalized communities. Further, a persistent challenge facing editors is assessing research when it doesn't resonate easily with our life experiences, positionalities and privileges. In this respect, our positionality as scholars surely affects how we perceive and evaluate the work of others, which means that we need to be cognizant of its effects on our decision making.

Our essay proceeds as follows. First, we discuss our special issue call, the kinds of research we were hoping to attract and why we framed the call for papers as we did. We then reflect on the submissions received and introduce the two papers in the special topics forum. We then move on to a brief overview of the different dimensions of marginalization. Following this, we shift to a discussion of why research on marginalized populations and communities is so difficult to bring to fruition and then finally propose an agenda for expanding research on and from marginalized populations and communities.

What kinds of research were we hoping to attract?

The special issue call was published in 2020 and framed as a call for scholarship on "Facilitating Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in Traditionally Marginalized Communities: Unpacking the Nature of SME Responsibility through Feminist Epistemology." We focused on SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) because not only are they particularly prevalent in and important to traditionally marginalized communities around the world, but also because they are themselves sites of marginalization in national and global markets. We argued (and believe) that feminist epistemologies are especially important – yet underutilized – for conceptualizing business responsibility generally, unpacking the dynamics of SME marginalization at the market level as well as highlighting SME responsibility and responsibility to marginalized communities in particular. Discourses about business responsibility in our judgment have (over-)focused on MNCs and universal claims about business responsibility, to the exclusion of knowledge that is locally situated and focused on SMEs (Karam and Jamali, 2017; Spence, 2016). We therefore were hoping to attract research that (1) problematized universal and MNC-centric conceptualizations of business responsibility, (2) centered the interests and aspirations of traditionally marginalized communities, (3) adopted feminist epistemologies related to *knowing well* and *knowing responsibly* (Code, 1987, 1991) and (4) addressed the ways in which SME responsibility – generally and within traditionally marginalized communities – differs from MNC responsibility. SMEs differ from MNCs, for example, in terms of the parameters of responsible business conduct as mediated by social expectations and the need to maintain local legitimacy (Wickert, 2016). The context of traditionally marginalized communities matters not only in its own right but also because it surfaces important themes about the importance of place in discourses about business responsibility.

In so doing, we hoped to bring feminist approaches more to the forefront of conversations about the nature and content of business responsibility, a project that is gaining more and more attention within critically oriented management scholarship (Grosser and Moon, 2005, 2019; Calas and Smircich, 1997, 2006; Karam and Jamali, 2017; McCarthy, 2017), but with a focus on feminist epistemology and thus a focus on the disadvantages that the marginalized bear within the realm of dominantly produced knowledge on SMEs responsibilities. In the call for papers, we noted that:

Research methods tied to feminist epistemologies often aim to trace the *sociality of knowledge* with emergent knowledge seen as community-based and as the interconnected product of values, beliefs, experiences, power structures, and judgments (Harding, 2000). Adopting feminist epistemological methods leads researchers to bring multiple voices and perspectives to the table, particularly from underprivileged and oppressed communities, and to pay particular attention to the intersection and interconnectedness of multiple power dynamics within and among those communities (Hill Collins, 2000) that privilege certain notions of responsibility over others (Harding, 1993). It can also lead researchers to reflect on how privileging certain kinds of (non-situated) knowledge upholds particular structures and patterns of everyday industry and business practices, as well as particular groups and communities as the "worthier" receivers of the benefits of responsible business.

We believe that this sort of knowledge production is vital for addressing the equality, diversity and inclusion challenges that traditionally marginalized communities face. The call for papers was meant to attract research that not only crossed disciplinary boundaries but also brought new voices into the conversation that heretofore had not been included in scholarly outlets. And we hoped to attract scholarship that would push us to think about the ways in which universal knowledge claims get in the way of more liberatory, locally situated scholarship.

The two papers that are part of the special topics forum are examples of excellent scholarship on equality, diversity and inclusion. "LGBTQ+ in Workplace: A Systematic Review and Reconsideration," by Sucharita Maji, Nidhi Yadav and Pranjal Gupta, deals with the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ professionals. Leveraging insights from an integrative literature review of empirical research on this topic, they develop an integrated model of LGBTQ+ professionals' workplace experiences, showing that these professionals encounter both formal and interpersonal discrimination. The authors also point out that studies using US samples generalize poorly to other contexts – such as Asia – which challenges scholars working in this domain to broaden their focus in order to better understand better how aggression toward and unjust treatment of LGBTQ+ workers is expressed differently in different contexts, including legal regimes and societal mores related to homosexuality.

The second paper, by Ana Argento Nasser and entitled "From Inclusion to Acknowledgement: A Paradigm Shift," addresses a vital and yet understudied topic in inclusion: disability. Nasser notes that the discourse around disability has tended to add new terms and euphemisms but in so doing has failed to address the conceptual vagueness of the term "inclusion." She argues instead for a paradigm shift that starts by questioning the term "inclusion" and proposing the use of the alternative term "legitimate acknowledgement" in her Model of Communication and Legitimate Acknowledgement of Disability. Shifting the paradigm and conversation about disability places people with disabilities as members of society rather than outsiders to it. Acknowledgment is argued by Nasser to be a stronger basis for thinking about and responding to disability, whether in terms of public policy that ensures dignity or a society that truly values diversity. She argues persuasively that "every act of love implies an act of legitimate acknowledgement: love expressed in social esteem (Society), in self-knowledge and self-respect (PWD), and love expressed in protection (State)."

These papers are good examples of scholarship that seeks the equitable treatment of all people and the roles of organizations in bringing that essential goal about. They push us to rethink the ways in which we conceptualize diversity and organizational responses to it. And they bring underprivileged and oppressed communities to the fore in thinking about values, beliefs and power structures that are currently oppressive but that could become more equitable – even though progressing toward that goal requires attention to the specific contexts in which people who are being harmed live and work.

Looking beyond the accepted submissions, we further reflected on our call for papers and the pool of manuscripts received. We realize that what we were hoping to attract in terms of submissions fit poorly with how knowledge about responsible business is produced,

especially in thinking about SMEs and how feminist epistemologies might be brought to bear in our thinking about business responsibilities. In wanting to attract scholarship from traditionally marginalized communities, we did not account for the structural barriers to producing knowledge from members of them.

This remainder of this introductory essay, therefore, allows us to reflect on the forms, manifestations and dimensions of marginalization and thus how marginalization affects scholarly knowledge production. We then reflect on ways in which the processes of scholarly knowledge production and dissemination need to change in order to foster and eventually publish the kinds of work that meet the moment we are in and finally outline an agenda for expanding research on (and by) marginalized perspectives.

Reflections of marginalization in our editorial process

Our intent to bring feminist epistemologies to the forefront of conversations about the nature and content of business responsibility, with a specific focus on SMEs, was driven by the desire to avoid epistemic exclusion (Dieleman, 2012) and to provide a platform for scholarship that diverges from the mainstream. The low level of submissions received sparked intense conversations among the editor team on why this was the case. We were confident that our interest in exploring how SMEs – owned and run by individuals from traditionally marginalized communities – view, understand and enact *EDI* responsibilities was not ours alone. SMEs are, for example, a prevalent form of economic organization in such locales (Saiyed *et al.*, 2023), opening up economic opportunities that are unavailable otherwise. This is particularly true for entrepreneurship by women (Pidduck and Clark, 2021), indigenous women (Croce, 2020) and refugee populations (Abebe, 2023). We therefore discussed the potential dynamics and factors that could help us better understand the paucity of submissions – and why our attempts to create a forum for this kind of research were unsuccessful. Our discussions led us to reflect on the ways in which our efforts, strategies and positionalities may have resulted in the further marginalization of the very voices that we aimed to elevate. A key point of discussion revolved around debating the forms, manifestations and dimensions of marginalization and thus better understanding what it means to be on the margin and what it means to not be on the margin. Further, understanding the systems and actions that marginalize is also essential in this context.

On the margin and in the center

The Oxford dictionary defines "margin" as the edge or border of something, and as such, it is understood relative to a "center" or a "reference." This center is typically considered the mainstream or dominant segment of a society, a market, a body of knowledge, or a way of knowing, each of which holds a set of idealized and paradigmatic values, processes and resources. The center therefore represents the standard or norm against which all else is measured, especially in normative terms. Actors in the center often, therefore, have a privileged positionality. Actors on the "margin" are those who, due to their location, find themselves at a relative disadvantage compared to the "center" and thus are more likely to experience a state of marginality and be subjected to forces of marginalization. Being on the margin often means being subjected to demands for compliance from those at the center. Applied to a business context, MNCs are often at the center of social and economic systems due to their vast power and influence. In contrast, SMEs are often on the margin, especially if they are suppliers to MNCs, as is the case for many traditionally marginalized communities and economically poor countries. Put another way, being at the center can allow whoever is there to dictate the terms of exchange with those who are on the margin, creating a contract of adhesion imposed from the center that can be accepted or rejected but not negotiated by those

at the margin (Van Buren, 2001). The concepts of centrality and marginality can help us understand social and economic relationships and, by extension, experiences of marginality.

Experiences of marginality
From a sociological perspective, the noun marginality refers to the state or condition of being isolated from and not fully accepted by the dominant society or culture and therefore frequently disadvantaged. Relatedly, marginality can also refer to the state or condition of being outside the mainstream or far from the center of activity and attention. The key idea here is that these different locations (i.e. being isolated or being outside the mainstream) are significant because they shape the experiences and opportunities available to the actors within them. Marginality offers inherently different – and, in the main, diminished – levels of access to resources, power, influence and recognition. Some locations are more richly endowed with these assets, while others are not. Further, having access to assets and resources today makes it more likely that a person, business, or country will not only have access to them tomorrow but also that they can be leveraged in ways that impose exploitative terms of exchange with those who are on the margin. Generally speaking, the experience of marginality and thus the essence of marginalization refers to actors – individuals, people, communities, organizations, collectives and so on – experiencing the world on the lower spectrum of a power hierarchy in terms of economic, social, or cultural resources and relates to the relative position or location within these societal dimensions (Varghese and Kumar, 2022).

Experiences of marginalization can take many forms, occur at different levels of analysis and are better understood when situated within time and place (Mowat, 2015). Feminist scholars have, for decades, explored the notion of marginalization and the ways in which it manifests. Young's (1990) theory of oppression, for example, conceptualizes marginalization as one of the five "faces of oppression" and defines it as the exclusion from societal labor systems, which not only leads to material deprivation but also dependency on state or other third-party assistance for survival. This dependency often leads to the suspension of basic rights like privacy, respect and choice. Young's work is a treatise on justice and works to challenge the traditional liberal view that prioritizes a focus on fair distribution. She argues that analyses of marginalization and other processes of oppression should look beyond distribution to explore processes linked to exploitation, lack of power or autonomy over one's work, cultural imperialism and systematic violence (Young, 2005). Young's work, in part, highlights the experiences of marginalization resulting from everyday practices and unquestioned societal norms, and it further highlights the ways in which these experiences are intimately tied to identity politics.

Systems and actions that marginalize
The verb to marginalize encapsulates the deep-rooted, structural and socio-politically complex forces and dynamics that cause forms of marginalization and thus a distancing from (barriers to accessing) mainstream values, processes and resources, either by physical location, cultural practices, social status, or political power. The systems and actions that marginalize others are complex, taking in both intentional actions of others that impose marginality as well as systems that no one person or entity creates but that people with power and privilege benefit from and sustain. As critically oriented management scholars, we are cognizant of the ways in which powerful (central) businesses exploit the (marginalized) powerless (Banerjee and Linstead, 2001; Contu, 2020). Indeed, calling out exploitative business practices is essential to the work of both critical management and *EDI* scholarship. When business strategies marginalize others or work better when others are marginalized, justice requires that they be challenged.

However, it is also the case that wider social systems reify structures of advantage and disadvantage as well as centrality and periphery. In her work on structural injustice, Young (2006, p. 106) notes that they occur

> when social processes put large categories of persons under a systematic threat of domination or deprivation of the means to develop and exercise their capacities, at the same time as these processes enable others to dominate or have a wide range of opportunities for developing and exercising their capacities. Structural injustice is a kind of moral wrong distinct from the wrongful action of an individual agent or the willfully repressive policies of a state. Structural injustice occurs as a consequence of many individuals and institutions acting in pursuit of their particular goals and interests, within given institutional rules and accepted norms.

In Young's conceptualization of structural injustice, wider social systems (social processes) lead to the domination of some and the deprivation of others. However, these systems are not caused by any one actor; while it is the case that there are intentional actions by particular actors that lead to domination and exploitation (distinct moral wrongs caused by individual agents, including businesses, as well as by repressive states), the moral wrongs brought about by structural injustice are distinct from them. In this line of analysis, when powerful (individual and institutional) actors act to further their goals and interests within established institutional rules and accepted norms, they are benefiting from background conditions that they did not create but nevertheless have responsibility for precisely because they are benefiting from them.

Being marginalized, therefore, can occur due to intentional, malign actions by individuals and organizations that seek advantage for themselves by imposing disadvantages on others. But being marginalized can also be the result of background conditions that no one party – including, of course, the marginalized – intended directly to bring about. Unpacking the different causes and explanations for marginality is therefore essential for responding to the exploitation that is the predictable result of it.

Scholarly knowledge production and marginalization

We now turn to marginalization's effects on the dynamics of scholarly knowledge production. We will first consider these dynamics at the individual, meso and macro levels of analysis. We will then turn to thinking about our roles as editors and how the marginalization of potential authors might have been at play in this special issue.

At the individual level of analysis, marginalization is often tied to identity politics and can manifest across various dimensions, including but not limited to socio-economic status, gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation and disability. Each dimension intersects and overlaps with others, creating a spectrum of disadvantages that is complex and unique to each individual or entity (Carbado *et al.*, 2013). The *intersectional* nature of marginalization means that experiencing disadvantage in one area can exacerbate vulnerabilities in another, leading to compounded and deleterious effects that are greater than the sum of their parts.

At the meso level of analysis, marginalization is often tied to structural inequalities and epistemic exclusion. *Epistemic exclusion* is defined by Settles *et al.* (2020) as the devaluation of some scholarship as illegitimate and certain scholars as lacking credibility. It occurs when individuals or institutions devalue scholarship outside of the dominant discipline (i.e. the so-called "mainstream") and claim that marginalized scholars (e.g. from the Global South, women of color and queer scholars) fail to make contributions to the production of knowledge (Dotson, 2014). On the other hand, dominant or mainstream approaches are those that are perceived to be central to the field, and as such, scholars using these approaches tend to hold more power within the discipline (Settles *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, disciplinary biases drive epistemic exclusion, specifically biases about the qualities and markers of good scholarship,

in combination with identity-related biases about who has credibility as scholars and who does not.

This epistemic exclusion leads to epistemic injustice and oppression. Godrie and Dos Santos (2017) define *epistemic injustice* as a type of inequality in the access, recognition and production of knowledge and different forms of ignorance. These inequalities hinder the development of the full potential of human beings' worldviews and knowledge and contribute to relationships of economic and epistemic oppression. Hall *et al.* (2020) use the term *epistemic inequalities* to emphasize the difference in credibility accorded to the worldview and knowledge of social group members, depending on their location in the hierarchy of what is considered credible and legitimate knowledge. In some cases, the internalization of these inequalities causes people to exclude themselves from an interaction or minimize their own cognitive potential (Hall *et al.*, 2020). Here, and despite our conscious efforts for epistemic inclusion, given the nature of our special issue call, we cannot help but stop and ponder whether the low submissions received were due to the self-exclusion of marginalized authors, which led them not to submit their scholarly work to the special issue. Alternatively, it may be that marginalized scholars were not within the social network through which the call for the special issue was disseminated.

Reflections on these points led us to reflect on how epistemic inequalities are tied to economic and social inequalities. For example, many underprivileged scholars might not have been able to afford high-quality doctoral program training, travel to prestigious conferences, subscribe to multiple databases (directly or indirectly through their institutions) or be part of research networks. People in these situations should not be excluded from participation in scholarly conversations or publication opportunities. We posit that in the main, such exclusion is not intentional – but not being intentional does not make it any less real. In organizational practice and academic research, epistemic, economic and social inequalities are often reinforced (Hall *et al.*, 2020). For example, little is known about some topics because there is not adequate funding to investigate them or because some realities are not considered sufficiently interesting by dominant groups.

At macro-levels of analysis, knowledge structures have effects on how scholars from marginalized groups are able to access and enter into ongoing scholarly conversations. There are complex dynamics surrounding marginalization that have been proposed by other feminist scholars, such as Fricker (2007), who proposes the notion of *hermeneutical injustice* to capture distinctive processes that perpetuate experiences of marginalization. She highlights that privilege often provides people the power to create linguistic tools that reflect their experiences. In contrast, marginalized groups often lack the means to develop concepts and terms – much less disseminate them – that accurately represent their experiences, particularly those related to their marginalization. This disparity leads to a gap in representational resources for marginalized individuals, hindering their ability to comprehend and articulate their experiences. There are thus conceptual and linguistic gaps in our collective understanding of situations of marginalization.

Alcoff (2017), Khader (2019) and McLaren (2017) attempt to dismantle the hegemony of these so-called global values, highlighting the need for diverse, context-specific understandings that resist imperialistic exploitation. They highlight that global institutions often favor Western and corporate interests, perpetuating structural inequalities that lead to harms like deprivation, discrimination and violence. Feminist analyses view these outcomes of globalization as systemic injustices. Postcolonial and decolonial feminists (Ballestrin, 2022; Littler and Rottenberg, 2021; Ozkazanc-Pan, 2012) note that colonial legacies of economic inequality, racism and cultural marginalization have been exacerbated by neoliberalism, disadvantaging the global south. They argue that international policies and institutions systematically benefit Western nations while sidelining the voices and needs of women and indigenous groups in the global South. These feminists challenge the use of so-called universal

concepts to advance imperialist agendas, advocating for normative stances that critique neoliberalism and ethnocentrism.

We return here to think about our role as editors of the special issue. Of course, we wanted to attract scholarship that would push the boundaries of what we know about *EDI* in traditionally marginalized communities, focusing on the role that SMEs, as pervasive business forms in those locales, play. As scholars dedicated to feminist analysis and scholarly inclusion, we had hoped for work that fit within the ambit of *EDI* and the special issue. However, we (and indeed other editors and gatekeepers within systems of scholarly knowledge production) did not fully account for the marginalization's effects on the dynamics of scholarly knowledge production. We now outline a general agenda for expanding research on and from marginalized perspectives.

An agenda for expanding research on (and by) marginalized perspectives
In this section, we proffer an agenda – based on our reflections as editors generally and editors of this special issue particularly – for expanding research related to and by those who are marginalized. Following the three levels of analysis and the interconnectedness of the dynamics of being in the center and on the margin, a number of issues emerge that we see as fruitful for future research. We focus on three: (1) knowledge structures and the perpetuation of the mainstream, (2) epistemic exclusion in scholarly and business standards and processes and (3) intersectionality in scholarly identities and experiences.

Knowledge structures and the perpetuation of the mainstream
The hegemony of globalized knowledge, characterized by the predominance of Western and corporate interests, shapes the foundations and dissemination of information in ways that frequently marginalize alternative epistemologies and local wisdoms. In academia, Anglo-Eurocentric and Global North centered knowledge is privileged as dominant knowledge, thereby functioning as a mode of "the monoculture of knowledge and the rigor of knowledge," and as the "exclusive canon of knowledge production or artistic creation" (Sousa Santos, 2018, p. 172). This prevailing dominance not only limits the spectrum of voices heard but also standardizes a narrow interpretation of possible realities, which often eclipses indigenous, non-Western and grassroots perspectives. The challenge, therefore, is to look beyond monolithic knowledge paradigms and to try to foster a more inclusive intellectual ecosystem that recognizes and integrates the richness of alternative knowledge systems.

The repercussions of this hegemony are far reaching and significant, not least their unfair impacts on collective forms of social understanding (Fricker, 2007). Fricker (2007) notes that this unfair influence provides dominant groups with greater social understanding primarily because they have more accessible and appropriate means to interpret their experiences, while marginalized groups struggle to make sense of their experiences due to a lack of fitting societal interpretations. She further suggests that the lack of accessible and appropriate means of interpretation is a form of hermeneutical injustice, where some significant area of one's social experience is obscured from collective understanding. Fricker (2007) calls for opportunities where marginalized communities can share partially understood experiences and that, by sharing these experiences, different aspects previously obscured or unspeakable can be illuminated. This process of sharing not only brings clarity and cognitive confidence but also enhances the ability to communicate experiences more effectively.

The notion of hermeneutical injustice is aligned with feminist activist and scholar Audre Lorde's famous (1984) essay "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." This phrase can be interpreted in the context of social power, which shapes our collective understanding such that the marginalized cannot effectively challenge or change oppressive

structures using the same methods, ideologies, or frameworks that the dominant group (the "master") has established. Lorde implies that truly transformative change requires new tools and perspectives — ones that are not tainted by the biases and limitations of the existing dominant frameworks. In essence, future research must be more open to alternative means and methods that make marginalized experiences understood and that help to dismantle the structures that perpetuate marginalization.

Future research questions in this regard could include: How do the structures of academic publishing and grant allocation contribute to the perpetuation of hermeneutical injustice against marginalized scholars and SMEs? In what ways can interdisciplinary research methodologies enhance the visibility and understanding of the experiences of marginalized communities and SMEs in academic literature? What role can academic institutions play in fostering an inclusive environment that values and amplifies the voices and knowledge of marginalized scholars and SME representatives?

Epistemic exclusion in scholarly and business in standards and processes
When a body of knowledge appears to have an ongoing overrepresentation of research about "the center" (e.g. MNCs, Global North, etc.), this necessarily leads to the underproduction of research about more marginal communities, locations, entities, or perspectives. The standards and policies, often promoted from the center, can uphold and perpetuate the place and stature of those within, and this results in the epistemic exclusion of those on the margin.

By reflecting on how to overcome epistemic exclusion, our aim is to advocate for a broadening of the boundaries of knowing and to redefine what are considered valued topics and methodologies as well as who is a "legitimate" scholar (e.g. Louis, 2007; Monzó and SooHoo, 2014; Settles *et al.*, 2021). Here, it becomes important to explore the ways in which the norms and practices of knowing can be challenged and how an inclusive knowledge community can be forged when some marginalized groups are unjustly excluded from invoking those norms or participating in those practices because of who they are, how they speak, or what they say (Dieleman, 2012).

We found Fricker's (2007) and Goetze's (2018) advocacy of epistemic virtue helpful, especially in developing as agents who are virtuous hearers. Goetze (2018, p. 14) recommends "epistemic humility" on the part of agents, which requires admitting the gaps in one's own interpretive tools and "especially with respect to the experience of the marginally situated." Building on Florence Piron's (2021) work on cognitive justice and open science, epistemic justice and knowledge democracy are important from an ethical and political point of view. This can help conserve otherwise lost knowledge and contribute to the emergence of new paradigms (Hall *et al.*, 2020). To achieve this, an area worth exploring further is whether the newly established Open Access Movement will help make the knowledge produced by people at the margins, such as in the Global South, more visible, leading to a more inclusive and equitable system of knowledge production and sharing, or whether such open access systems will amplify the overrepresentation of knowledge produced by Northern actors and institutions and further the exclusion of knowledge produced by marginalized groups. It would be highly relevant to further study the extent to which open systems may potentially replicate the very values and power imbalances that the movement initially sought to challenge, thus replicating epistemic injustices (Albornoz *et al.*, 2020) instead of ensuring epistemic justice.

Another point that warrants reflection is the epistemic impacts of higher education (Vallaeys, 2007). Here, we found the work of Maistry and Lortan (2017) important as they raised very important questions to assess the epistemic impact of scholars: What kind of knowledge are we producing, why and for whom? Do we foster a democratic science or a

science in the hands of the elite? What knowledge should we produce and how can we disseminate it to meet the epistemic deficits that hinder sustainable development (Maistry and Lortan, 2017)?

We believe that more attention needs to be given to engaged scholarship and research conducted by, with and for communities, as they have the potential to reinstate an emphasis on scholarship that addresses structural inequities and social, health and cultural disparities (Schensul, 2010). The engaged scholarship movement is rooted in frustration with the neutrality of traditional positivist science, the elitism of the university, and its claim to privilege in the production of objectively developed and valued knowledge (Barker, 2004, as discussed in Schensul, 2010). Epistemic justice demands a shift in attitude by academia to acknowledge and value the knowledge embedded in communities as it pertains to their lived realities (Maistry and Lortan, 2017). In fact, structural injustices call for structural remedies (Anderson, 2012). Attending to epistemic injustices is not an easy matter. It requires the reconfiguring of epistemic institutions so as to prevent epistemic injustice from arising. Epistemic virtue is therefore needed at both individual and structural levels of analysis.

Intersectionality in scholarly identities and experiences

Some researchers have privilege and choice, while others' (due to their positionality) experiences of disadvantage in one area can exacerbate vulnerabilities in another. Nash (2008) and Garry (2011) highlight that of equal importance to exploring marginalization is a better understanding of the processes of privilege and, additionally, how marginalization and privilege can be experienced simultaneously. Intersectionality recognizes that individuals may experience privilege and marginalization simultaneously, depending on various aspects of their identity such as race, gender, socioeconomic status and so on. This concept is crucial to understanding the nuanced experiences of individual scholars and persons in academic settings. It also helps us think about the barriers to scholars that occur throughout their careers, which in turn affect their access to opportunities to create and disseminate knowledge. Put another way, the participants in systems of scholarly knowledge production and dissemination – including editors and publishers – need to think about the ways in which each element of soliciting and evaluating scholarly work accounts for the effects of intersectional marginalization.

There is increasing attention being given to the ways in which academic journal review and publishing practices advantage some scholars and disadvantage others. Common responses by journals and publishers include initiatives such as manuscript development workshops, which certainly have some utility. However, we think it is important to think more broadly about how scholarship is produced and disseminated. The problems of equality, diversity and inclusion require new thinking about scholarly knowledge production and dissemination, especially with regard to addressing associated structures that have the effect (if not the intent) of excluding necessary voices and perspectives from those who heretofore have been marginalized in these spaces. As editors, we believe that thinking about our roles as gatekeepers is necessary to open up not just publishing opportunities but also conversations about inclusion that are genuinely inclusive. We call upon editors, journals, publishers and academic organizations to think more about who is not part of the ongoing, necessary conversations and how those who have been excluded can be included as equal participants. Doing so, however, requires that we reflect on how knowledge is produced and disseminated as well as how various gatekeepers in scholarly publishing think about their roles and responsibilities.

Conclusion

In this essay, we have introduced the two papers in the special topics forum and reflected on our experiences as editors of it. Scholarly work on equality, diversity and inclusion has done

much to advance the conversation about how to bring about more just organizations and societies. Our special issue call sought to bring feminist epistemology to bear on analyses of SMEs and marginalization, but unfortunately, did not attract the kind of work we hoped it would. We hope that our reflections on the process are useful contributions to necessary conversations about whose scholarship is fostered and whose perspectives are heard.

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