Call for papers

Special issue in *Gender, Work and Organization*

Diversity and inclusion at work: Time to talk (again) about class

Deadline January 31th 2019

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This special issue aims to advance the field of research on critical diversity and inclusion (D&I) by theoretically and empirically exploring its multiple articulations with the notion of class.

Now entering its fourth decade since the historical publication of the Workforce 2000 Report by the Hudson Institute (Johnston and Packer, 1987), diversity and inclusion (D&I) scholarship has curiously managed to largely evade engaging with the notion of class. This neglect can be explained by the 'business' roots of the notion of diversity, its intrinsic relation to the business case, and lack of attention for the dynamics of power and conflict (Ahonen et al., 2014; Jonsen et al., 2011; Holck, 2017; Zanoni et al., 2010). Arguably, the paradigmatic shift of the field towards the notion of inclusion, with its promise of organizational harmony, has not helped to recover attention for power or for class dynamics. More broadly, an aggressive and pervasive neoliberal meritocratic ideology fostering individualized 'responsible' subjectivities, has effectively eroded the available discursive space for the constitution of class-based identities (e.g. Eribon, 2009; Van Eijk, 2013). As a result, even the more explicitly critical diversity literature has often taken class for granted or acknowledged it cursorily, rather than focusing on workplace power dynamics of (specific) social identities (for exception see e.g. Scully & Blake-Beard, 2006; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012; Zanoni, 2011).

The 'obscuration of class', as Nancy Fraser (2000) called it, is both striking and problematic in important ways. First, it is arguably quite difficult to properly conceptualize identity-based processes of inequality within capitalist firms independent of the foundational unequal relations that capitalist firms, and societies more broadly, rest upon (Beck, 2007; Flemmen, 2013; Livingstone & Scholtz, 2016; Savage et al., 2015; Strangleman, 2012). Class is a foundational axis of power in the workplace between waged labor and capital, and thus one that cannot be disregarded in studying the dynamics of difference and power (Acker, 2006; Anderson, 1997, 2007; Anderson and Curtis, 2012). This difficulty is reflected in on-going debates about the very (im)possibility of any form of meaningful equality along socio-demographic axes within capitalism (Ahonen et al., 2014; Fraser, 2000; Fraser & Honneth, 2003; Kumar et al., 2012; Muhr & Salem, 2013). Second, the global economic and financial crisis has increased public awareness of the rising inequalities produced by late, neoliberal capitalism and its disproportionate effects on certain categories of workers and populations defined along demographic lines of gender, race, geographical location, disability (Anderson, 2007; Beck, 2007; Crompton, 2010; Irwin, 2015). This

crisis has unveiled the vulnerability of large groups of populations, which hitherto had come to believe that they were part of the "middle class" (Flemmen, 2013; Irwin, 2015; Livingstone & Scholtz, 2016). Finally, it is becoming less and less credible to envisage political projects fostering solidarity, social justice and equality in disregard of the structural links between class and diversity, and addressing them simultaneously. If the complexity of mechanisms reproducing subordination and oppression points to the impossibility to neatly classify them along one power axis (Acker, 2006; 2012), the projects mobilizing individuals and groups to resist and combat them shall likely fail, unless they find ways to understand, embrace and strategically leverage such complexity (Cregan et al., 2009; Guillaume, 2015).

The few management scholars who have to date addressed class related to diversity have conceptualized it either as a group characteristic affecting an individual's opportunities in the workplace (i.e., as one of the key social identities intersecting with gender and race to determine one's place in organizations, see Acker, 2006, 2012; Berrey, 2014; Crowley, 2014; Gray & Kish-Gephart, 2013; Holvino, 2010; Scully & Blake-Beard, 2006), or as a fundamental 'master matrix of power' of capitalist organizations onto which social identities such as gender, age and disability become anchored (e.g. Zanoni, 2011). Underpinning these studies are three distinct understandings of class, respectively as macro-social categories of social stratification based on the grounds of income, property and power; as a base of social classification and self-identification structurally interacting with other identities; or as basic structure defining capitalist organizations including the organization of work processes with individuals as 'mere' labor.

Grounded in our belief that the field of D&I has a lot to gain from exploring the articulation between class and (other) social identities, this call for paper invites theoretical and theoretically informed empirical contributions on diversity, diversity management, and inclusion that explicitly address class in all its variety. Topics of interest to this special issue include but are not limited to:

- Theoretically informed analyses of the causes, modalities and effects of the 'obscuration of class' from the diversity literature
- Contemporary understandings of class and the role of D&I within them
- Studies exploring the intersection of class and (other) dimensions of diversity as race, ethnicity, gender, ableism, sexuality, religion etc., and the power implications of such intersections
- Studies of how the corporate/business elite, elite identity and elite social practices deal with its internal diversity
- Studies of how labor market, migration, and educational policies/legislation intersect to exclude certain social groups and make them more vulnerable
- Investigations of the precarization of work, class subjectivities, and diversity
- Studies of valuation processes that may challenge class and diversity-based hierarchies in workplaces
- Studies of how (sub)conscious and affective processes inform the construction of classed and diverse subjectivities at work
- Analyses of struggles in the mutual constitution of socio-demographic differences, hierarchized jobs and professions
- Analyses of the classed materiality and embodiment of diversity

- Innovative engaged and performative methods in the study of class, inclusion, diversity and (in)equality
- Critical investigations of the management of diversity among low-rank employees
- Critical investigations of the relationship between talent management, class and diversity
- Critical investigations of how the role of information technologies in the (re)production of (novel) discourses and subjectivities of diversity and class
- Critical investigations of the notion of inclusion in diversity management and how it depoliticizes and hides understandings of class and diversity markers in general
- Mobilization and organization of solidarity of diverse constituencies
- Flexible work, class and diversity

Both theoretically informed empirical and theoretical contributions are welcome. Please don't hesitate to send your inquiries about the special issue to the guest editors.

Deadline for submission end January 31st, 2019

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