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Disability inclusion in Indian workplaces: Mapping the research landscape and exploring new terrains



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Abstract In this commentary, we reflect upon twenty years of disability research in the Indian workplace and identify possibilities for new conversations and terrains of inquiry. We trace the key frames, theories, and methodological tendencies that demarcate this scholarship. We suggest that researchers can open new terrains of inquiry by situating disability in context, exploring heterogeneous forms of organising and workplace arrangements, and connecting workplace relations and interactions with wider institutional and sociopolitical discourses. We conclude with reflections on disability and inclusion *otherwise*.

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Introduction

In this commentary, we reflect on twenty years of research on disability inclusion in the Indian workplace and identify pathways for new conversations and terrains of inquiry. An estimated 1.3 billion people in the world experience significant disability (16% of the world's population), with a majority of such persons (approximately 80%) residing in the

Global South (Ginsburg & Rapp, 2020). The number of Indians with a disability, according to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, is 2.68 crore or 2.21% of the total population of the country (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2022), a number that is contested as an underestimation by multiple stakeholders (Hindustan Times, 2017). Worldwide, and in India, disability inclusion is understood as the “meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in all their diversity, the promotion and mainstreaming of their rights into the work of organisations, the development of disability-specific programs, and the

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consideration of disability-related perspectives” (World Health Organization, 2023: 6). To address challenges and possibilities of disability inclusion, multidisciplinary academic research has proliferated alongside a growing disability rights movement across the world.

At the outset, we acknowledge the decades of mobilising and advocacy for more just futures by persons with disabilities and their allies. These collective efforts have translated into legal and policy change in terms of the inclusion of disability in census counts, legislation, workplace hiring, and corporate social responsibility initiatives, among others (Kulkarni, 2023). Similarly, as a result of disability advocacy, the 2016 Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act was passed. Consequently, the number of legally recognised types of disabilities has increased from 7 to 21 and disability definitions have expanded to include acid attack victims and individuals with chronic neurological disorders such as multiple sclerosis (Balakrishnan, Kulkarni, Moirangthem, Kumar, Math, & Murthy, 2019). Job reservation in public sector organisations has increased from 3% in 1977 (Friedner, 2013) to 4% (The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016). The Equal Opportunity Policy requires private sector employers with 20 or more employees to list jobs that can be suitable for those with a disability and to make reasonable accessibility arrangements (Advayalegal, 2017). Moreover, the central government incentivises private sector employers in myriad ways, such as by providing the employer’s contribution to some employees’ retirement fund for a predetermined period (Press Information bureau, 2010).

Such efforts towards disability inclusion in the Indian workplace have been the subject of attention in many disciplines, such as anthropology, disability studies, law, psychology, sociology, organisation studies, business ethics, human resources management, marketing and development economics. Researchers have adopted diverse theories (e.g., institutional theory, human capital theory, organisational socialisation, Marxist theory, Foucauldian and post-structuralist approaches) and methodologies (e.g., historiography, ethnography, interpretive and qualitative approaches, and surveys), with increasing interdisciplinary projects (e.g., Kaul & Ghosh, 2024). Through these theoretical lenses, methodologies and disciplinary paradigms, scholars have tracked how and under what conditions persons with disabilities are dispossessed, disenfranchised, participate in and included within workplaces.

In this commentary, we trace the key frames, theories, and methods that demarcate this scholarship.¹ We suggest that researchers can open new terrains of inquiry by problematising the workplace, situating disability, and reflecting upon our ethico-political imperatives. Drawing from scholarship in critical access studies (Hamraie, 2017), we also emphasise the need to constantly interrogate the concept and practice of ‘inclusion’. We ask what it means to say that

inclusion is happening and who gets to adjudicate. We focus on the Indian workplace given that what counts as (dis)abled and attendant experiences and social relations vary across social, cultural, political, economic, legal, and historical contexts (Ginsburg & Rapp, 2020; Kaul, Sandhu, & Alam, 2021). We recognise that disability rights activism and research have been powerfully influenced and supported by international discourses and policy paradigms, with cascading effects on national policies and legislation. As much as there are socio-cultural specificities of personhood that shape the category of disability, disability as an analytic and object of study can be considered a “universal social fact” (Ginsburg & Rapp, 2020: 54). Simultaneously, we also note that disability as a category serves as a travelling universal that can erase or elide other contextually relevant categories or ways of perceiving and understanding human differences (Friedner & Zoanni, 2018). In this commentary, we explore the particular experiences of disability in the Indian workplace. We conclude with reflections on disability and inclusion *otherwise* with implications for conversations worldwide on disability inclusion.

Framing disability inclusion in the workplace

We can trace a co-existence and intermingling of multiple salient frames and models that have shaped the understanding of disability in India. These include biomedical, karma, charity, social, rights-based, and economic frames. Understanding these frames is important as the social positioning of a collective with disabilities can ascribe an institutional subject position that determines attendant inclusion treatment for the collective within society and workplaces (Kulkarni, Gopakumar, & Vijay, 2017; Kumar, Sonpal, & Hirandani, 2012). While these frames continue to co-exist, there appear to be the beginnings of a shift from a karma and charity frame to a rights-based frame (Mehrotra, 2011; Michael, 2017; Roy, 2008) and from an impairment-first to a person-first frame (Ahmad, 2015). This shift is evident in the labels that describe disability (e.g., from ‘retard’ to a ‘person with a learning disability’, Ahmad, 2015; National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2014). We see medical institutions using a biomedical approach to disability, non-governmental organisations using a rights-based approach, and the state using an approach that is based on entitlements and distributions (which is also ultimately based on a biomedical approach in that individuals must be evaluated and certified as having a disability by a government-affiliated medical practitioner). In effect, these models, which are ‘ideal types,’ are often messy and overlapping (Friedner, 2022) and researchers must attend to these overlaps.

Here, we provide an overview of these frames. The biomedical frame examines disability as lodged in the individual’s body, arising from some bodily lack or limitations (Michael, 2017). Towards employment, this frame may translate to concessions in loans and vocational training towards self-employment and to job reservations (i.e., the quota system) based on the percentage and/or severity of disability (The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016) or the provision of jobs based on accessibility arrangements (Advayalegal, 2017). The karma frame casts disability as a

¹ Even among the authors, we have disagreements about person-first versus disability-first language. As such, we use both the person-first language (e.g., persons with a disability) and the disability identity-first language (e.g., disabled persons). Our usage is in line with usage in Indian media (Karmarkar, 2016), government communications (Business Standard India, 2015; Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, 2021), and India-based research (Kulkarni, 2022b).

consequence of fate-based actions in past life, for which one pays (Buckingham, 2011; World Bank Report, 2009). Accordingly, inclusion in society may be an act of mercy or compassion (Mehrotra, 2011; Riewpaiboon & Blume, 2009). The charity frame, similarly, casts persons with disabilities as objects of sympathy, assistance, and help (Mehrotra, 2011). Here, we find businesses adopting a charity frame wherein the able-bodied offer help, assistance, and sympathy to those with a disability. Operating within this frame, when workplaces make the required accommodations or accessibility arrangements, they follow a benevolence or a social responsibility approach: those with disabilities are 'given' the opportunity to work (Mehrotra, 2011). Similarly, efforts by businesses to provide medical equipment, assistive aids, and appliances, or other material resources to disabled people might be considered acts of charity. An economic frame casts those with a disability as an economic resource and someone with certain abilities, enabling organisational productivity and lowering organisational attrition (Kulkarni & Gopakumar, 2014; Samosh, 2021). This economic frame can bust myths about the productivity and employability of persons with a disability. However, it also has the potential to reduce lives to economic and actuarial costs, benefits, and valuations while also valorising and trafficking in inspirational stereotypes about disabled workers. As such, over-privileging the economic frame for disability inclusion in the workplace can undermine or reverse decades of justice-framed struggles (Friedner, 2009; Johnstone, Kayama, & Limaye, 2019; Kumar et al., 2012).

Another frame or model that exists in India and which has spread from the UK and elsewhere in the Global North is the social frame, which delineates how disability is the product of social and material logics that *dis-able* participation (Michael, 2017). The social frame or model is often juxtaposed with the biomedical model (cf., Shakespeare, 2006). Impairment or disability is culturally and socially produced through the interaction of the individual body-mind and environment. The social disability frame also signifies the constraints on what a person with a disability can be or do and places these firmly in the environment, with the environment defined broadly to include infrastructure, policy, and practices. Importantly, the social disability frame also calls attention to ableism in society and how the able-bodied define dominant norms. Such a frame gets under the skin and into the body and surfaces how social determinants of health shape people's susceptibility to certain kinds of disabilities, the structural violence that produces disabilities (Farmer, 2006; Patel & Farmer, 2020; Varman & Vijay, 2021), or how disabilities condition people's social determinants of health, with lasting implications on livelihoods and employability (World Health Organization, 2023). Soldatic and Grech (2014) contend that in contexts of the Global South, we might want to return to the concept of impairment because political and socio-economic inequalities create impairment.

The treatment of impairment can take many forms in society: social, political, medical, religious, and ethical (Winance & Devlieger, 2009). Overall, each of these frames surfaces specific aspects of the deeply naturalised ableism (i.e., organising around species typicality (Campbell, 2009)) within society writ large and the workplace more specifically. The tensions between these frames can be productive

to interrogate the social construction of the kinds of persons who are categorised as disabled. For example, while organisations may appoint the disabled drawing upon the medical frame, colleagues may construe this as procedurally unjust as they draw upon the notion of equity (Colella, Paetzold, & Belliveau, 2004). Either way, without a more radical justice frame, disability inclusion can remain a workplace 'topping' that one can sprinkle in convenient and indulgent measures rather than a fundamental ingredient in the composition of workplace practices. We note that ableism as a concept is increasingly talked about, at least by younger Indians, as Friedner has been observing in her research, and we stress that attention to ableism is needed in the Indian context.

Theorising disability inclusion at the workplace

We note how studies around disability inclusion in the workplace have been shaped by global discourses. Consider how a number of studies published between 2003 and 2010 subscribed to the 'development' paradigm, examine high rates of poverty among those with a disability, the high rates of institutional, environmental, and attitudinal discrimination faced by them, and the implications therein for their life course (e.g., Mitra & Sambamoorthi, 2006a,b, 2008, 2009; Yeo & Moore, 2003). More recent studies frequently invoke the vocabularies of 'sustainable development goals' to justify their enquiries (e.g., Deb, 2017). Cumulatively, these patterns signify how disability struggles about workplace rights and inclusion continue to be embedded in global discourses and paradigms. In this section, we identify how studies have theorised disability inclusion at multiple levels - including organisational processes, individual coping strategies and mechanisms, and stakeholder interactions. In so doing, we do not assume that organisations, persons with disabilities, and other stakeholders have secured meaningful participation. Rather, we trace how researchers have cast the question of disability inclusion.

The inclusive organisation. Organisational processes around recruitment, employment contracts, accessibility initiatives, and reasonable accommodations shape the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Studies document myriad inclusion initiatives at organisations such as the Tata Group (Kaul & Ghosh, 2024), Mirakle Couriers, Vindhya e-Infomedia, Lemon Tree Hotels (Dey & Babu, 2018; Sharma, 2011), Café Coffee Day (Friedner, 2013), Mphasis, Microsign (Vohra & Chari, 2015) and Union Bank of India (Abhishek & Saxena, 2015). Activities by these organisations include attending to the appropriate language at the workplace, awareness and sensitisation programs, accommodation policies and practices, promoting success stories of particular employees with disabilities, focusing on person-job and person-environment adjustment, employee resource groups, community outreach programs, participation of stakeholders who can enable organisational inclusion (e.g., placement agencies), training and development programs, the documentation of inclusion approaches, and the creation of best practices for replicability, among others (Ghosh, Liu, & Mishra, 2022; Heera, Maini, & Chandan, 2017; Kulkarni, 2016, 2019; Suresh & Dyaram, 2020; 2022a; Vohra & Chari, 2015). Cumulatively, these studies inform us of the context within which persons

with disabilities make choices and encounter constraints such as limited career trajectories (Friedner, 2013, 2015).

Some of these advances in workplace inclusion have been driven through collaborative action and partnerships among nodal stakeholders such as non-governmental organisations, disability training and placement agencies, and employing organisations. Kulkarni and Kote (2014) note that non-governmental organisations have played the role of facilitators, trainers, marketers, and partners in these inclusion endeavours. Specifically, non-governmental organisations have facilitated the employment of persons with disabilities by providing assistive devices, designing and conducting skill trainings, conducting job fairs in partnership with employing organisations, enabling study visits, and showcasing the abilities of candidates with disabilities to various employers. Similarly, disability employment or placement agencies play a role in enabling the transition of persons with disabilities from a training role to full-time and regular employment (Cobley, 2013). Finally, such agencies engage in both pre- and post-employment talent management activities, specifically, the identification of talent, ensuring a match between vocations and the candidate, crafting employment-specific activities, and provision of ad hoc support as needed post securing employment (Kulkarni & Scullion, 2015).

The inclusive individual. Studies have also examined how persons with disabilities adopt specific practices to adapt to their workplace, such as maintaining a positive mindset (Kulkarni & Gopakumar, 2014), building and leveraging networks (Chhabra, 2021; Kulkarni & Gopakumar, 2014), developing resilience (Bhaskar, Baruch, & Gupta, 2023; Chhabra, 2021), seeking help from co-workers (Kulkarni, 2013), navigating disclosure (Kulkarni, 2022a), sensitising others to their abilities and engaging in awareness building or advocacy (Chhabra, 2021; Kulkarni & Gopakumar, 2014), enabling oneself through assistive technology (Bhaskar et al., 2023; Chhabra, 2021) and harbouring a stance of non-acceptance towards social rejection (Bhaskar et al., 2023). Pre-entry relationships with co-workers (Kulkarni, 2013), self-esteem, disability pride, and a positive disability identity (Heera & Maini, 2019) are also noted as factors that enable disability inclusion in the workplace.

The inclusive stakeholders. Workplace stakeholders include supervisors and co-workers who play a key role in inclusion and socialisation (Heera & Maini, 2019; Kulkarni, 2013; Kulkarni & Lengnick-Hall, 2011). Support from supervisors can be seen as a double-edged sword, where, on the one hand, it can help with encouragement at work, addressing work-related and personal issues, and overcoming hierarchical challenges (Heera & Maini, 2019; Kulkarni & Lengnick-Hall, 2011; Suresh & Dyaram, 2022a). On the other hand, supervisor attention can lead to social exclusion by co-workers who perceive such managerial attention as causing a lack of parity (Kulkarni, 2013). Alongside, studies have highlighted the role of co-worker support, acceptance, and relationships as being critical for workplace inclusion of those with a disability (Heera & Maini, 2019) as co-workers can provide informal task-specific help, help develop appropriate workarounds, act as mentors, help in understanding organisational values, and connect with other colleagues, enabling overall socialisation (Kulkarni, 2013; Kulkarni & Lengnick-Hall, 2011; Suresh & Dyaram, 2022a). In addition, having similar others (i.e., others with a disability) can help

new employees with disabilities adjust better to their workplace, develop networks, and perceive an inclusionary workplace (Kulkarni & Gopakumar, 2014; Kulkarni & Lengnick-Hall, 2011).

Troubling inclusion. While these studies locate diverse approaches towards societal and workplace inclusion, some researchers problematise the linear ways we read these institutional and organisational changes. For example, Friedner (2015) notes that the more non-profit advocacy groups collaborate with corporations for disability inclusion, the more they employ the instrumentalising language of business and economics (e.g., cost-effectiveness, productivity and lower attrition), and focus less on rights and equality. Friedner (2015) has also raised concerns about the role of non-governmental and other agencies in ‘tracking’ disabled trainees into specific kinds of employment and that arrangements between non-governmental organisations and organisations mean that the former often serve as gatekeepers to who secures employment from specific organisations. Similarly, Johnstone et al. (2019) note that global and national policies shaped by a neoliberal global economy scaffold actors such as non-governmental organisations towards more short-term strategies that assimilate more than meaningfully include those with a disability. In so doing, non-governmental organisations can unwittingly reinforce the narrative of workplaces becoming more caring by employing those with a disability, thus turning a ‘socially produced disadvantage into financial advantage’ (Friedner, 2013, p. 40) wherein those with a disability are encouraged to become ‘normal’ (Johnstone et al., 2019). In effect, researchers have raised cautionary notes about current institutional arrangements and short-term project orientations of delivering ‘inclusion’ that can, in fact, create deviations from the rights-driven agenda.

Studies also question the tangible and long-term impact of some workplace initiatives that result from these collaborative efforts. For example, Kulkarni, Gopakumar, and Patel (2018) submit that non-mandated interventions, such as sensitisation workshops, aimed at disability inclusion have limited effectiveness if organisations do not weave these interventions into their broader organisational culture. Such workshops, conducted collaboratively with external agencies, may attract those who least need such sensitisation, making minimal impact on organisational inclusion regimes. Further, Friedner and Osborne (2015) note how, in addition to providing social services and funding for social programs, organisations (along with other actors such as the state and non-governmental organisations) may also create a disability marketplace that benefits a minuscule sliver of the population of individuals with disabilities. Moreover, limited knowledge and familiarity with disability at the employer level have resulted in the neglect of certain types of disabilities in Indian workplaces (e.g., disabilities apart from orthopaedic, hearing, and vision disabilities (Suresh & Dyaram, 2022b)) and certain chronic illness that are disabling (Manchanda & Thakur, 2021).

Further, studies have identified various factors at the organisational level that have hindered the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workplace. These include positive discrimination due to affirmative actions, gaps in job design, the lack of a career path (Friedner, 2015; Gupta & Priyadarshi, 2020), stereotypes regarding disability, and

disparities in work assignments, pay, interactions, and in the implementation of policies and programmes (Varshney, 2022). Complicating the inclusion trajectory are intersectional forms of privilege and oppression, such as class, caste and gender (Kayama, Johnstone, & Limaye, 2021), which shape opportunities for upward mobility, accessibility and accommodation (Saigal & Narayan, 2014; Suresh & Dyaram, 2020).

Finally, studies ostensibly explore disability inclusion within the *organisation* - whether it is the business process outsourcing centre (Friedner, 2015), cafés and other hospitality outlets (Friedner, 2013), small business firms (Varshney, 2022), or multinational organisations (Kaul & Ghosh, 2024; Kulkarni, 2016). In this vein, some have compared the variations in disability inclusion practices across organisational types such as foreign multinationals, Indian multinationals, Indian startups, public and private sectors, among others (Ghosh et al., 2022; Kulkarni, Boehm, & Basu, 2016; Kulkarni & Rodrigues, 2014; Suresh & Dyaram, 2020). Consistent with broader tendencies in management and organisation studies, these studies tend towards circumscribed images of organisations and their attendant working relations (see also Janssens & Zanoni, 2021). However, in a country like India, where over 90% of the population is engaged in the informal economy (Srija & Shirke, 2014), attending to intra-organisational inclusion practices invariably excludes the vast majority of persons with disabilities. Moreover, with increasing casualisation of the workforce and rising gig employment (Collier, Dubal, & Carter, 2017; Duggan, Sherman, Carbery, & McDonnell, 2020; Kango, 2023), greater prevalence of disability in rural (2.3%) versus urban (2.0%) areas (The National Sample Survey Office, 2019), the divergence between rural and urban disability schemes, and challenges of those with a disability in agrarian labour markets (e.g., Mitra & Sambamoorthi, 2006a, 2008, 2009), focusing on the organisation as the dominant image of the workplace can truncate our understanding of work and employment outcomes for those with a disability.

Methodological tendencies in studying disability inclusion

Research around workplace inclusion has been methodologically circumscribed in multiple ways. Consider how we understand little about the differential needs and access for different disabilities. Friedner, Ghosh, and Palaniappan (2018) highlight that the umbrella categorisation of ‘persons with disabilities’ can lead to access conflicts where the needs of one disability may conflict with the needs of the other. They also point out that individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities are often left out of mainstream disability movements. Organisational practices, informed by such studies, may thus overlook certain disabilities. Beatty, Baldrige, Boehm, Kulkarni, and Colella (2019) point out that disability as a ‘master status’ identity can imply masking other equally important identities that influence workplace treatment and inclusion. For instance, Chhabra (2021) calls attention to the specific category of the ‘YAVI’ (young adults aged 20–35 years with a visual impairment) to examine individual and structural risks and the protective factors that shape social resilience in the labour market. Manchanda

and Thakur (2021) delineate the specific case of those dealing with chronic illness and the resultant disability, noting how such disabilities are episodic and the symptoms visible only around these illness episodes. In these ways, researchers’ attention to what the umbrella category of disability obscures is crucial to prevent the reification of a monolithic category of ‘persons with disabilities’.

Further, there are few longitudinal panel studies on workplace experiences and outcomes of those with a disability. Existing large sample studies are mired in the problems of definition and categorisation of disability as well as the limitations of current statistics (e.g., infrequent surveys). Conventional methods that necessitate meeting the researcher at a designated place, written responses, or participatory methods may not be appropriate for specific disabilities (Yeo & Moore, 2003). Moreover, qualitative methods involve individual case studies wherein organisations have taken measures towards disability inclusion (e.g., Kaul & Ghosh, 2024). While these studies inform how organisations engage in novel approaches to disability inclusion, and organisations are keen to promote their interventions, such organisations are less keen to share quantitative data on parameters such as the number of recruitments and promotions of or post-entry treatment of employees with disabilities (Heera et al., 2017). In effect, extant methodological tendencies can skew disability research towards emphasising a few organisations’ initiatives, with limited analysis of what is happening at a systemic level.

Kaul et al. chart a relatively under-explored and promising line of enquiry by adopting historical methods to inform why and under what conditions businesses adopt pro-disability measures and with what consequences (e.g., Kaul & Ghosh, 2024; Kaul, Sandhu, & Alam, 2019). For instance, Kaul et al. (2021) trace how businesses in British India shaped specific organisational forms, such as asylums that were produced by colliding colonial and locally situated discourses around religion, social practices, caste-based expectations, and exposure to Western education and Victorian and Protestant ideologies. Such historical accounts that portray how businesses have responded to disability inclusion over a long duration can be frame-shifting, changing the narrative beyond the state- and non-governmental organisations-driven legislation. Such historical analyses inform our understanding of shifting lexicons and discourses of disability across time and geographies.

Similarly, Friedner (2009, 2013, 2015) adopts an ethnographic methodology that explores disability *in situ* in the everyday practices of persons with disabilities. Ethnography thus affords a critically missing *emic/etic* or the *experience-near/experience-far* perspective on disability (Geertz, 1974), which is especially important given the under-representation of persons with disabilities in the sphere of knowledge production (Yeo & Moore, 2003; Chhabra, 2021). Ethnography allows researchers to spend time with disabled workers at their workplaces, analyse interactions between disabled and non-disabled co-workers, and learn about how workers perceive and experience their workplaces, co-workers, and employment trajectories. We suggest that what are needed are more long-term ethnographies that allow us to see how employees, disabled and not, age in their workplaces and the kinds of career trajectories that exist.

Mapping new terrains of disability inclusion

In this section, we refer to other under-explored spaces to expand our understanding of work and organising for persons with disabilities. First, we unpack the need and possibilities for theoretical lenses and socially situated research. The immediate practical concerns regarding disability at the workplace are likely reasons why disability research on the Indian workplace predominantly tends towards being atheoretical (see also Ginsburg and Rapp (2013), Shuttleworth and Kasnitz (2004) for similar patterns in other contexts). Disability research can be anchored on theories of norms, conventions, socialities, habitus, and institutions that can reshape our understanding of workplaces and how individuals with disabilities are treated within them, thus paving the way for innovative and previously unexplored approaches to practical applications.

Second, given that disability can be seen as a social, political, and economic construction, there is an urgent need for more situated studies that examine organisational processes around disability, not merely in the Anglophone world, but also the meanings and articulations of disability in vernacular spoken and signed languages, such as Indian Sign Language. What happens when we look at disability inclusion without foregrounding the category of ‘disability?’ What about individuals not (yet) diagnosed or legible as ‘having a disability’ in workplaces?

Third, noting the circulation of the category of ‘persons with disabilities’, we suggest that an intersectional lens can splinter this monolithic disability category. Intersectionality theory, originating from Black feminist movements, delineates how multiple, interlocking forms of structural privilege and oppression (e.g., race, class, gender and sexual identity) shape the experiences of those who hold marginalised identities (Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality can help us examine differences given the high degree of heterogeneity - including caste, rural-urban differences, and multiple languages to which studies already point.

Fourth, we call for research across different forms of organising and workplace arrangements. For example, inclusion can be studied in ‘Disabled People’s Organizations’, which employ community-based participatory approaches to generate employment alongside rights advocacy (Grills et al., 2020). Similarly, research can delve deeper to evaluate the self-employment programs for persons with disabilities and stakeholders’ experiences therein (e.g., Mitra & Samba-moorthi, 2006b). In general, we note that much research tends to be focused on urban areas and in formal employment sectors. We need more research conducted in rural and non-formal settings (and note that returning to our concerns about the role of non-governmental organisations in employment training, we have not seen many prominent non-governmental organisations take up the issue of informal sector employment or providing training for such employment). Further, those with a disability can also be seen as customers to explore what inclusive practices may mean for businesses to engage with such customers (e.g., Abhishek & Saxena, 2015). However, we also note that the framing of disabled people as customers in order to attribute value to them is enmeshed in a capitalist frame. Finally, we can direct research efforts towards understanding what it means for persons with a disability to interface more broadly

with different kinds of organisations such as the state, the legal system, hospitals, academia, and recreation and leisure spaces such as theatre or dance groups (Janssens & Steyaert, 2020).

Finally, future lines of enquiry may connect the behaviours of those with a disability and their interactions with co-workers with wider institutional discourses - globally, nationally or sub-nationally. We push for deepening theoretical engagement by drawing on literature around practice, interaction and collective action, for example, to understand individual, relational and intersubjective perspectives. Similarly, studies can explore the institutional structures and discourses that shape the lives of persons with disabilities and their co-workers. For example, how do neoliberal technologies of self-making that responsabilise and prudentialise the individual for their health and well-being, while absolving the state and employer of responsibilities (Foucault, 1991; Han, 2017) shape subjectivities among persons with disability and that of their co-workers? How do these institutional discourses cast persons as ‘bad’ or ‘good’ subjects (Kulick & Schieffelin, 2005) or as ‘experts’ at the workplace? Such studies could further our understanding of the larger social canvases within which individual coping strategies and interactions are embedded, shaped and contested. Such enquiries can help interrogate how the experiences of those with disabilities intersect or diverge with others’ experiences of inclusion and exclusion at the workplace. In these ways, disability serves as a prism to understand society’s normative views around what is socio-culturally desirable, normal and acceptable (Butler, 2004).

Concluding remarks: Disability and inclusion otherwise

When we consider disability and inclusion *otherwise* - or from the perspective of the Othered subject - it is not merely the disciplines, theories, and methods that are called into question, but our very modes of presentation and representation. Our research is performative of social reality, and new imaginations and social transformations necessitate other types of knowledge (Janssens & Zanoni, 2021). As Sedgwick (2003: 124) notes, “knowledge does rather than simply is...” Mainstream management and organisation studies remain predominantly North-centric, marked by epistemic universality and discourses that jettison the othered subject to the margins (Vijay, Gupta, & Kaushiva, 2021). Disability studies call into question how knowledge about diversity and inclusion can be meaningfully produced, co-produced, and circulated. For instance, the dominant mode of knowledge production in academia remains the written text. How may modalities such as podcasts, text-to-speech readers, sign language video blogs, or artwork redefine academic systems? What kind of knowledge production would encourage the participation of neurodiverse people? Research-based enquiries into these questions can shape our classroom pedagogical practices as well.

Further, the production of knowledge around disability inheres questions of representation in research (Hardy, Phillips, & Clegg, 2001). Who is the author? Who undertakes, analyses, and writes the research? As researchers, our representations constitute a discourse around how the subject of

research thinks and behaves (Kulkarni, 2017). In 2003, Yeo and Moore raised questions regarding the routine exclusion of those with a disability from international development policy, practice, and research on disability. Nearly two decades later, Chhabra (2020) reflected on the epistemology of being a visually impaired researcher conducting research. Barring a few exceptions, Yeo and Moore's (2003) injunction remains valid today. Although significant strides have been made in policy and practice, with vocal representation and rights-based advocacy by organisations such as NCPEDP, there is a profound need for representation by persons with disabilities in research on disability. We argue that researchers, including ourselves, must take more active steps towards including disabled people as knowledge-makers in our research studies.

In sum, despite greater biomedical and societal awareness, the production of knowledge around disability and the workplace needs more considered theoretical and empirical attention in work and organisation studies. Disability and inclusion *otherwise* can reconfigure scholarly attention to examine categories of disability expertise - such as how persons with disabilities manage their co-workers' perceptions, discursive strategies, and the construction of spatial and temporal infrastructures for fellow persons with disabilities (see Friedner & Osborne, 2015; Hartblay, 2020). The academic fields of management, organisational studies, and business studies could find productive resonances with disability studies. In these ways, disability and inclusion *otherwise* can break knowledge silos around barriers, suffering, experiences of exclusion, or stigma, to examine virtuosity and expertise as those with disabilities navigate workplaces (Hartblay, 2020) and advance more just futures. Indeed, imagining disability and inclusion *otherwise* also means that we must think critically about who is proclaiming something to be inclusive and who is benefiting from such a proclamation. We argue that just as disability is a category with many meanings and experiences under its umbrella, so is inclusion. Inclusion is an unfinished process that must be constantly interrogated.

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