

Editorial 29.2: Inclusivity and innovation

Wilkinson and Pickett stated that equal societies “are better to live in . . . and better for everyone” (cited from [Djerf-Pierre, 2011](#), p. 43). Equal societies are based on inclusivity or a situation where “everyone feels welcome, valued, and respected, no matter who they are or where they come from” ([Ricee, 2022](#), n.p.). While inclusivity is a value in itself and should not be monetized, it is not surprising that inclusivity also brings about benefits to workplaces because inclusive workplaces are more innovative due to a diversity of perspectives that foster creativity and innovation. On top of that, inclusive workplaces result in enhanced problem-solving and decision-making, enhanced employee engagement, increased productivity, increased organizational reputation ([Miller, 2023](#)), etc. [Meng and Neill \(2021\)](#) argued that everyone needs to be treated equally and with respect and have their voices heard because research shows that practitioners of diverse origins often feel unheard, unsupported and not appreciated, which calls for more inclusive leadership and diversity in the communication industry. In the first editorial I wrote, after the first two years of editorship ([Topić, 2022](#)), I argued that *Corporate Communications: An International Journal (CCIJ)* has always been at the forefront of CSR, crisis and general corporate communication scholarship but that we expanded our scholarship to include equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) scholarship (in the USA, the term used is DEI (diversity, equality and inclusion)) and that we will continue to publish works that innovate corporate communication field, as academic journals should be open to all authors and inclusive in their approaches to publishing. Therefore, authors from marketing communication, media and several other areas were invited to submit their articles and consider *CCIJ* as a venue for publishing their work so that all elements of corporate communication are covered by the journal.

A lot of work has been published on gender equality, particularly that of women in public relations, advertising and media. In public relations, scholars have argued since the 1980s that women face discrimination in the communication industries ([Aldoory and Toth, 2002](#); [Toth and Grunig, 1993](#)) and that when one issue gets resolved, another one arises, thus opening the question of whether women are facing perpetual discrimination in mass communication industries ([Tench et al., 2017](#)), with other studies arguing that the discrimination of women has reached a full circle with the same issues from the 1980s returning to the agenda after the 2010s ([Topić et al., 2020](#)). [Tindall and Waters \(2013\)](#) also argued that gay men see public relations as a welcoming profession, but they also face the so-called “lavender ceiling” by serving as someone who needs to educate others on what it means to be gay, while other studies also argued that gay men face work harassment ([Waters, 2013](#)) due to the industry often operating under heteronormative assumptions ([Edwards and L’Etang, 2013](#)). The standard practitioner is traditionally white, able-bodied and heterosexual ([Aldoory, 1998](#); [Tindall, 2013](#)). Race is an even bigger problem in public relations and corporate communication, with some authors calling for organizations to include race in their corporate responsibility policies to tackle social injustice and make a difference ([Logan, 2021](#)). In advertising and media, a similar situation occurred with scholars reporting heteronormativity and gendered discrimination including a strong sense of masculinity within organizational practice and women, for example, having to be one of the boys to succeed and progress in their careers whilst others fall behind ([Topić, 2021a, 2023](#); [Mills, 2014](#); [Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2020](#)).

In the past three years, *CCIJ* has increased the publication of EDI/DEI topics by publishing works in a wider area of equality such as gender quotas ([Lefley and Janecek, 2023](#), [Hamplová et al., 2022](#)), female journalists and their leadership experiences



(Cunha and Lúcio Martins, 2023), female empowerment and internal communication (Li *et al.*, 2023), gender and the office culture (Polić and Holy, 2021; Tripathi *et al.*, 2023), femvertising (Lima and Casais, 2021), gender and leadership (Zeler *et al.*, 2022; Zheng *et al.*, 2023, Meng and Neill, 2023), CSA and gender equality (Marschlich and Bernet, 2024), JEDI issues and media irresponsibility (Painter and Sahn, 2023), CSR and gender (Painter *et al.*, 2022), and these are just articles published during my editorship and excluding some special issue articles. Therefore, *CCIJ* is emerging as a journal that increasingly publishes equality scholarship in corporate communication, contributing towards knowledge creation in this field as well as widening participation and bringing inclusivity to scholarship by opening doors to equality scholars in corporate communication. This issue of the *CCIJ* continues in that manner and presents articles on gender equality, femvertising, marketing communication and media but also overconsumption and informality in strategic communication, two largely unexplored issues in corporate communication scholarship, thus continuing with the EDI orientation of the journal whilst fostering scholarly innovation.

Therefore, four articles tackle equality, three from a gender quota perspective and one studies femvertising. The gender quota articles are published by the same team of researchers from the UK and Poland studying these issues with *CCIJ*, a journal that has published results of this important work, both conceptual and empirical. The first two articles published by the team in previous issues of the *CCIJ* (Hamplová *et al.*, 2022; Lefley and Janecek, 2023) conceptualized gender quotas by asking whether quotas are the solution and what an equitable target percentage of women in corporate boards will be, arguing also that quotas will stop being an issue once we no longer have gender inequality or “the question will be answered when it no longer needs to be raised” (Lefley and Janecek, 2023, p. 528). In this issue, three articles analyze gender diversity on corporate boards by looking at perceptions of quotas (Lefley, Vychova and Trnkova) and arguing that when quotas are at stake, male professionals show negative perceptions of quotas and their need, whereas female professionals show more positive perceptions. However, since there is a negative perception of female quotas, authors argue that some female professionals might be hesitant to apply for positions linked to quotas, thus also arguing that positions need to be filled on merit, which links with previous works already mentioned that argued that the gender quota problem will be solved when it is no longer needed. Equally relevant, Lefley and Janecek in this issue also look at board gender diversity and the critical mass theory, arguing that the EU directive of 40% women representation on corporate boards will not be successful unless the critical mass of 40% includes independent women calling and working towards resolving the collective issue of underrepresentation of women and a wider inequality. In addition to that, in this issue, Lefley, Trnkova and Vychova also looked at gender diversity on corporate boards by focusing on female traits and characteristics and their perception among university students. In that, the authors argued that there is gendered bias in views on the value female professionals bring to corporate boards, and the negative bias is particularly prominent among male respondents. The authors argued that “the apparent discrimination against women is not just because they are female but from a perceived mismatch between inferred female characteristics and male stereotype leadership requirements.” On a different equality note, Aleena Amir, David Roca, Lubaba Sadaf and Asfia Obaid wrote about femvertising in a patriarchal context by focusing on Pakistan. Using qualitative interviews, authors argued that “male and female consumers revealed varied and sometimes contradictory perspectives on the perception, understanding, and behavior towards femvertised adverts, which are governed by patriarchal gendered norms,” thus also arguing for an extension of femvertising research from non-Western perspectives, taking into consideration local contexts. These papers provide a platform for publishing new research on equality and open new avenues for research. Given the multiplicity of data, concepts and views as well as the methods used, papers provided epistemological and methodological

diversity to corporate communication scholarship as well as *CCIJ* as a journal and met the aim of the journal to be open to all and to increasingly focus on scholarship that tackles equality, diversity and inclusion. Authors conducting studies in these areas continue to be invited to publish in the *CCIJ*, particularly race scholars who are currently underrepresented in *CCIJ* scholarship.

In addition to general equality scholarship, in the inaugural editorial I already mentioned (Topić, 2022), I also argued that *CCIJ* will continue to publish works on environmental inequality as part of the larger equality debate and continue to tackle unconventional issues in the wider area of inequality. Studying environmental affairs from an equality perspective is relevant because the ecological devastation of the planet started with the rise of modernity and continues until the present day due to Cartesian dualistic objectivism, which instrumentalizes nature and seeks to dominate it, thus placing humanity above nature and denying a connection between humans and nature (Topić, 2021a, b; Singer, 2002; Godfrey, 2008). In this issue, Andrea Lučić and Marija Uzelac wrote about global overconsumption and communication appeals offering “guidelines to empower anti-consumption among different industries,” an issue not largely explored in corporate communication scholarship but the one that has relevance for the equality debate and innovates corporate scholarship, as well as contributing to the environmental movement, which could consider these suggestions to launch a consumer campaign on reducing consumption, the latter being one of the fundamental drivers of environmental destruction.

Continuing with innovative topics, in this issue we also published works that tackle relatively unexplored issues such as informality in strategic communication and the role of journalists in internal communication – two areas that contribute to knowledge with an innovative thematic focus of their research. Olaf Hoffjan wrote about informality in strategic communication and argued that the concept is largely forgotten in scholarship, proposing a theoretical framework for future studies of this issue. Vibeke Thøis Madsen and Helle Tougaard Andersen wrote about journalists leaving media industries and taking employment as internal communicators. In that, the authors did not look at journalists moving to the so-called “dark side,” a common view of public relations and a term used for journalists who switch professions, but how could journalists use their skills to improve internal communication. The authors looked at concepts such as autonomy, altruism and expert knowledge and, using qualitative interviews, argued that journalists perceive their skills as helpful in identifying employee perspectives, writing relevant stories and delivering them quickly, along with courage and a lack of fear of authorities, which enabled them to challenge decisions made by senior managers, particularly regarding what and when to communicate, thus contributing to corporate communication practice.

Finally, and as per the call from the first editorial (Topić, 2022), two marketing papers have been published. Neil Richardson and Ruth M. Gosnay conducted a hermeneutic literature review of internal marketing and argued that there is an interest in internal marketing but not in the internal marketing orientation of organizations, thus also showing that despite significant potential, internal marketing orientation within organizations lacks awareness and adoption, offering a conceptual framework for further research and advocacy. Also, Maja Šerić, Maria Vernuccio and Alberto Pastore wrote about integrated marketing communications during a pandemic, using the tourism and hospitality industries as a case study for their research. The authors looked at the strategic implementation of integrated marketing communication during a health crisis and argued that “most firms successfully transitioned from tactical to strategic IMC implementation,” but “some problems were reported in the coordination of communication tools and channels. Whereas the use of digital technology was enhanced, database management did not receive sufficient attention. Message clarity represented the greatest challenge, while consumer-centric communication was the most neglected principle. Relationship building was pursued mainly through B2B rather than B2C

communication, whereas brand equity development pursued through communication mix mostly focused on increases in awareness, perceived quality, and attitudinal loyalty.”

The current issue is thus a blend of equality scholarship and innovation in corporate communication scholarship, and with that, this issue contributes to innovation in the field and widening participation and inclusivity both in terms of EDI/DEI scholarship published by the journal as well as publishing new and unconventional research topics. In the remaining part of the year, apart from regular issues, we will also publish special issues tackling internal communication and workplace culture, sustainability and communication, and there are special issues in preparation tackling inclusive marketing and flexible working schemes in communication industries. With this, we continue to widen participation and give a platform to scholars studying various issues relevant to corporate communication, and we widen corporate communication to include not just public relations but also media, advertising and marketing communication. In a world of political division and attacks on the equality and diversity movement, we will continue to publish these works along with mainstream works and works that open new areas and innovate scholarship and the journal will remain open and inclusive of all views and all scholarship.

Martina Topic

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