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Organisational practices and social inclusion

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Organisational practices and social inclusion: Inclusionary place-making in the library

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Abstract

Social psychology has long been concerned with social exclusion. Much of this interest has focused on people's negative intergroup attitudes and how these may be changed through individual-level interventions. In this paper we explore a different level of intervention – one that targets the routine organisational practices that communicate who is welcome and able to draw on the organisation's services. Specifically, we investigate how a public-facing organisation—a library service—engaged in a process of self-reflection on its routine social practices with the aim of making people experiencing various forms of exclusion (e.g., job seekers, benefit claimants, ethnic minorities) more welcome. Our data arise from interviews (N = 19) with staff concerning their attempts to transform the practices that constitute the library as a distinctive public place. Throughout, we explore how they reflected on their everyday organisational practices, how these may unintentionally exclude, and how they could be modified to facilitate social inclusion. Moreover, we pay particular attention to our participants' understanding of the challenges involved in changing organisational culture and creating a social space in which diversity is accepted.

KEYWORDS
inclusion, libraries, organisational change, organisational practice, place-making

1 | INTRODUCTION

Exclusion hurts. This is well-evidenced in research addressing the pain associated with ostracism (Williams & Nida, 2011), identity denial (Cheryan & Monin, 2005), and microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007). Less obviously, exclusion hurts because it entails missing out on the myriad benefits of group membership, for example, the availability of help should one need it (Haslam et al., 2012; Levine et al., 2005), having one's views respected (Wakefield et al., 2011). Exclusion can operate at various levels, from small groups through to a societal level and can impact multiple dimensions such that people's opportunities to access the benefits (material, social, informational, etc.) of community membership are circumscribed, and inequalities (re)produced.

Many interventions to counter such exclusionary outcomes focus on changing individuals' intergroup attitudes (e.g., through targeting individuals' unconscious and implicit biases: Banaji & Greenwald, 2013). Yet, as the impact of such interventions is limited (Brauer, 2023; Onyeador et al., 2021; Paluck et al., 2021) researchers increasingly propose group-level interventions. These are based on the premise that people often act in terms of their group memberships such that it is possible to build inclusionary practice through re-shaping people's understandings of relevant group norms (Prentice & Paluck, 2020). For example, a group's boundaries are not fixed but malleable, and establishing more inclusionary boundaries can result in a wider range of people being accepted as deserving of the benefits of membership (Wakefield et al., 2011).

In this paper, we explore the processes through which a public-facing organisation sought to develop and implement a more inclusionary vision of who was welcome and on what terms. Throughout, we highlight the challenges this entails. First, it requires considerable reflection on everyday organisational practices and how these may communicate exclusionary visions of who really belongs. Second, it involves developing alternative organisational practices facilitating the inclusion of those hitherto marginalised. Third, it involves managing such innovation in the face of resistance from those invested in historical practice.

We explore these issues through reporting data arising from interviews with staff working in an organisation that has sought to develop such inclusionary practice—the public library service in a Scottish city. We begin by discussing the significance of organisational processes for inclusionary practice. We then discuss the potential for libraries to serve as important social spaces where those routinely marginalised may be made to feel welcome and thus access the support they need to participate in the wider community. Finally, we explore our participants' approach to constituting the library as a socially-inclusive venue, and the ongoing challenges that such a project entails.

2 | ORGANISATIONAL PRACTICE AND INCLUSION

Organisational practices say much about who belongs and on what terms. Whilst some practices may be exclusionary by intent, others may be unintentionally exclusionary. Moreover, they can arise in ways that are not necessarily explicable in terms of an individual-level analysis. For example, with regard to recruitment, an organisation's assumptions that the employee profile must mirror their customer profile can mean businesses serving those from privileged backgrounds recruit their staff from a similar demographic (Brief et al., 2000; Martell et al., 2012). In turn, such recruitment practices can impact the experiences of those engaging with organisations (whether as customers, clients, or service users).

Whereas the privileged are routinely unaware of their everyday privilege, those less privileged are much more attuned to the ways in which they are judged negatively according to an organisation's norms and values. Examples include the pain felt by the economically marginalised in retail environments where they are confronted with expectations to spend money (Day, 1999; Wilton et al., 2018) and minority group members' experiences of enhanced levels of surveillance in public spaces (Pittman, 2020; Schreer et al., 2009). Accordingly, if inclusionary practice is to be developed, organisations must engage in a process of critical self-reflection on their taken-for-granted routines.

One easily overlooked feature of the exclusionary organisational practice is the way in which space is socially organised and belonging communicated. For example, the presence of symbols (e.g., religious motifs) associated with particular identities (rather than others) can serve as implicit signals regarding who belongs within that space and be consequential (Bilewicz & Klebaniuk, 2013; Cheryan et al., 2009; Schmitt et al., 2010). There is therefore good reason for organisations to reflect on their place-making practices and how they can be made more inclusionary.

3 | SPACE, PLACE AND IDENTITY

The use of public space says much about one's social standing (Fenley, 2021; Painter & Philo, 1995). Spaces notionally open to all may be associated with particular groups such that their presence and their concerns are privileged, and others marginalised. This is particularly clear when places are racialised (Feagin, 1991; Tuttle, 2022), gendered (Day, 1999; Massey, 1994), and hetero-sexualised (Nisar, 2020; Valentine, 1993), so as to marginalise some but offer others material, symbolic, and psychological privileges (Crevani, 2019). That is, social exclusion often involves spatial exclusion.

Such issues underscore the observation that places are doubly constructed: in addition to being physical entities, they are socially constructed such that physical spaces are far more than neutral backdrops for behaviour (Gieryn, 2000). Rather, place-making practices ascribe social meanings to behaviour and identities to people (Dixon et al., 2006). Indeed, such is the link between place and group identities that the question of 'Who am I?' is intimately bound up with the question of "Where do I belong?" (Loader, 2006, p. 25 cited in Antonsich, 2010, p. 646).

The micro-politics of the construction of places are most obviously apparent in protest campaigns around symbolic sites (Di Masso & Dixon, 2015) and confrontations between police and youth over the latter's use of streets and parks (e.g., Gray & Manning, 2022). Some exclusionary practices are obviously intentional, for example, street furniture designed to discourage the homeless from occupying town centres (Rosenberger, 2019). However exclusionary outcomes may arise unintentionally (e.g., through the naming of buildings: Brasher et al., 2017; Woods & Ruscher, 2023), which then encourage forms of self-exclusion (Lang & Mell, 2020; Lovelock et al., 2011). For example, Trawalter et al. (2021) found that lower social class students self-excluded from public space on elite university campuses (which was associated with their lowered sense of University belongingness).

Inclusionary organisational place-making can counter such processes (as when establishing designated campus places for marginalised students counters their alienation through signalling their value to the university: Kirby et al., 2020; Evangelista et al., 2021). Yet, this requires organisational self-reflection on everyday taken-for-granted organisational practices and how they may be experienced by some as contributing to their marginalisation. In turn, it requires reflection on the organisation's values (e.g., the degree to which diversity is valued) and the ways in which innovation in organisational practice could facilitate inclusion. However, it is not enough to identify innovations in organisational practice: their successful implementation requires that all (e.g., those involved in their implementation and those impacted by it) conceive of such innovation as in-keeping with the organisation's identity (Haslam, 2014; Jetten & Hutchison, 2011; Landau et al., 2014; Sani & Reicher, 1999). This is particularly complicated if different actors hold different understandings of the organisation's identity. For example, changes made by a US engineering company in support of LGBT rights in the 1990s were met by resistance from elements of the workforce who argued the innovations contradicted their understanding of the company as being based on Christian values (Reed, 2017). In response, the management sought to represent their new policies as organisationally appropriate (through depicting them as aligned with Christian values). Such needs to manage the reception of innovation extend beyond the workforce to the organisation's users: innovations designed to welcome marginalised groups can prompt resistance from others used to their privilege. Indeed, those with a historically privileged sense of place may regard any newcomers as "space intruders" (Jaśkiewicz & Sobiecki, 2022), especially if the former's sense of feeling 'at home' derives in part from "the comforting realisation of others' absence" (Dixon & Durrheim, 2004, p. 459). Moreover, even in apparently

shared spaces, there can be informal segregation (Bettencourt et al., 2019; Dixon et al., 2020) and the reassertion of hierarchies of belonging.

Before turning to our data we first consider the emergent social significance of libraries as vehicles for promoting social inclusion and everyday citizenship. As will become apparent, this underscores the social relevance of studying place-making practices in a library setting.

4 | LIBRARIES AS VEHICLES FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION

Scotland has a long history of public library provision. Key to this was the philanthropic vison of Andrew Carnegie—the Scottish industrialist—who funded libraries to provide access to education and information (Davidson, 2019). Permeating this Victorian-era project of self-improvement was a desire to make the working classes "sober, pious and productive" (Rose, 2010, p. 238, cited in Davidson, 2019). Although this particular moralising ethos has diminished, the vison of the library service as a public good, remains, with the service seeking to respond to the contemporary inequalities affecting so many industrialised countries (Scott, 2011a, 2011b).

The potential for libraries to ameliorate the impact of inequality is significant. In an era of growing economic inequality, the fact that people's presence in the library is not contingent upon the expectation that they will spend money means libraries provide public sites for socialisation not available elsewhere (Baker & Evans, 2011; Scott, 2011a). They can also address another contemporary social inequality: inequitable internet access. Dealing with bureaucracies, accessing welfare, applying for jobs, and so forth, routinely requires online access, and the emergence of a "digital underclass" (Helsper & Reisdorf, 2017) limits people's opportunities to act as informed citizens able to exercise their rights. Furthermore, in an era of public funding cuts, libraries have increasingly taken on a function in signposting people to social, health, and welfare services and fostering civic engagement and participation (Davidson, 2019, 2020; Scott, 2011a, 2011b). More generally, to the degree libraries are inclusive, they can facilitate intergroup contact across different demographics (Igarashi et al., 2023; Johnston, 2019; Wiesel & Bigby, 2016), building trust and social cohesion (Appleton et al., 2018; Johnson, 2012; Vårheim, 2007, 2011, 2014). Public libraries across many industrialised countries have developed strategies promoting inclusive practice and the Scottish public library service is no exception (Scottish Library & Information Council, n.d.).

Yet providing a socially inclusive library service is challenging. In addition to practical barriers (e.g., poor infrastructure), public representations of the library can encourage self-exclusion. To the degree libraries are associated with social class hierarchies, marginalised groups (e.g., the unemployed) may feel 'out of place'. Similar observations may be made in relation to ethnic minorities (Vincent, 2009). More generally, design features (e.g., security gates) can alienate those with negative experiences of authority (Dolan & Khan, 2011; Gehner, 2010). Growing awareness of such practical and symbolic barriers has prompted awareness that although libraries have the potential to be inclusive, "whether this is reflected in the realities of service prioritisation, the manner in which services are delivered, and the institutional culture must be continuously questioned" (The Working Together Project, 2008, p. 11). Such a questioning entails reviewing routine organisational practice and the adoption of practices capable of encouraging a wider demographic to feel 'at home'. Our research explores a library service's attempts to engage in such a process and draws on data obtained through interviews with front-line staff in a city with significant social deprivation.

5 | METHODS

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Dundee's Research Ethics Committee. Prior to participation, participants provided informed consent. Participants received no compensation. As interview data may allow interviewees to be identified, our data are not publicly available. However, interested parties may contact the authors to discuss our analyses in more detail.

5.1 | Participants

19 participants (2 male) were interviewed. Each is identified by number (e.g., P1). Participants' years' library service ranged from 1 to 45. Our participants constitute a sample that had worked across all library branches and departments within the service. Interviews lasted between 18 to 68 minutes ($M = 34$ mins), were recorded, and transcribed.

5.2 | Procedure

The library service consists of 13 community-based branches, each offering a range of provisions, as well as specialised departments centralised within one larger location. Participants were initially recruited with support from a senior manager. The sampling strategy was purposive in selecting a range of libraries (small vs. large; open plan vs. closed plan; higher vs. lower deprivation areas). As relying on a senior service manager could bias the sample, a second round of sampling less reliant on formal introductions was pursued (with management approval) in order to explore potentially dissonant perspectives. This entailed visiting library branches and recruiting staff directly, resulting in a sample representing a range of experiences of organisational change processes. Interviewing and analysis proceeded in tandem. Data collection ceased when further interviews and visits to branches did not offer further insight in relation to our emerging analysis of inclusionary practice and organisational change.

Interviews were semi-structured with participants encouraged to raise topics they judged relevant. 17 interviews were one-on-one. One involved two participants in a joint interview. The interviews were conducted by RK. Interview questions addressed: participants' vision of the library's function; how this may have changed over time; the challenges faced in libraries attracting marginalised others; innovations in organisational practice; and how different groups used the library. Interviews were conducted within the branch where the participants were ordinarily based. An interview schedule (Appendix 1) was used to spark discussion on the topics of interest and was applied flexibly to allow discussions to develop naturally. Interviews ended when both researcher and participant agreed the discussion had reached a natural conclusion with the participant reporting they had shared their understanding of organisational change processes and the challenges of implementing innovations in (inclusive) practice.

5.3 | Analytic approach

Our reading of these data was shaped by an interpretative epistemology, which conceptualised participants as situated within specific social contexts which they interpret from their own vantage point. In turn, we sought to develop a "thick description" of the social processes at play through providing a "detailed account of field experiences in which the researcher makes explicit the patterns of cultural and social relationships and puts them in context" (Geertz, 1973, p. 6). We were guided by the logic of constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021) which argues that whilst one's analysis should be grounded in one's data, the reading of these data is shaped by one's theoretical commitments (Chun Tie et al., 2019). More specifically, our coding was shaped by our interests in inclusionary group-level interventions (Wakefield et al., 2011), everyday place-making practices (Gieryn, 2000; Dixon et al., 2006), and the identity processes impacting the acceptance of change (Haslam, 2014; Jetten & Hutchison, 2011). With regards to our own positionalities, neither author has significant experience of societal-level marginalisation (especially economic marginalisation) and our awareness of this encouraged us to conceptualise library staff as having valuable practical expertise concerning the challenges in developing inclusive practice.

Analysis entailed reading and re-reading transcripts, identifying text pertaining to the library's contemporary mission, how organisational practice could be exclusionary, and how it could be changed. This process involved memo-making to identify links and connections between different codes or sections of text. As analysis progressed,

coding developed from descriptive codes (e.g., the use of children's artwork in decoration) to more analytic codes (e.g., inclusive place-making).

6 | ANALYSIS

Iterative coding of the data led us to develop six key analytic categories. These concerned i. participants' visons of the ideal library as an inclusive place; ii. their understandings of ongoing barriers to realising this ideal; iii. their re-imagination of the library-community relationship; iv. their innovations in place-making practice; v. their approach to managing diversity in a shared space; and, vi. their conceptualisation of the library's distinctive identity. As we reflected on the relationships between these six categories, we identified three higher-order analytic categories that together allow a process model of the issues involved in developing inclusive organisational practice. The first (comprising i and ii) captured the process of critical organisational self-reflection in which the ideals of the library formed a framework for identifying exclusionary practice. The second (iii and iv) concerned the processes relevant to engaging those routinely marginalised. The third (v and vi) concerned participants' navigation of the challenges in implementing change.

The presentation of our data is organised in terms of these hierarchically organised analytic themes. When presenting quotes, excluded text is indicated by ellipses (…). Text in square brackets […] reports information that has been edited for anonymity or offers additional contextualisation.

6.1 | Critical organisational self-reflection

6.1.1 | Envisioning the library as an inclusive place

Across interviewees, the vision of the ideal library was one in which all were welcomed. For example, as one interviewee (P1) explained "What we have as our objective is to deliver library services for all, and it's, for all people who live, work, study and volunteer in [City] (…) there is a place for everybody within the libraries". They continued:

> "one of our key priorities is to make sure that we've got inclusion at the top of our agenda (…) What we want is for people to feel comfortable in the library, and it shouldn't matter why they're coming in. If they are coming in just to sit, then why shouldn't they?"
>
> P1

Similar sentiments were expressed by another interviewee when discussing different groups' use of the library:

> "I think just being seen as some place that you can go, and you don't have to spend any money and you can spend as long as you like. You know, we have families that come in on a Saturday in children's library and they'll be there practically the whole day."
>
> P3

More generally, participants emphasised the need to redress inequalities in information access. For example, one interviewee (P10) explained the library had a role in "helping people organise information" and had particular responsibilities to the "vulnerable or less able aspect in society who need help with the information that they need and navigate it to find out things." Accordingly, staff envisioned an organisational identity which emphasised social inclusion.

This vision of the ideal library was important. It formed a framework for participants' evaluation of the library's public reputation and the challenges of translating this vision of an inclusive social space and place identity into a reality that others (especially the marginalised) would recognise and be drawn to. In particular, this process of organisational self-reflection resulted in the identification of a series of cultural barriers maintaining exclusion.

6.1.2 | Identifying ongoing barriers to realising the inclusive library

One cultural barrier was judged to be the image of the library as a place of strict social norms which many would find alienating. For example, one interviewee explained "a lot of people do have this bad experience of being in a library and it's ssshhh, quiet, everything has to be quiet" (P9). Moreover, this same interviewee explained that the library was routinely characterised as a socially-classed place in that libraries are:

> "seen as almost a posh place, for posh [high class] people, or hoity-toity people [people with an air of assumed importance], and it's seen as authoritative figures as well, and people in schemes like Southtown, Northtown, Westtown [local deprived housing estates] these sort of places, think that they can't go in there because you're going to clype [Scottish for telling tales or informing] on them to the police or they think they're not good enough."
>
> P9

Clear here is the awareness that any vision of the library as an inclusive place must address exclusionary (class-based) representations (which define the library as a "posh place, for posh people, or hoity-toity people") and make people "think they're not good enough". Moreover, they cautioned that to the degree libraries were conceptualised as serving the concerns of the privileged they would be associated with the authorities and function as places of surveillance to "clype" (inform) on one to the police. The implication was clear, to the degree such representations of the library remained, people would self-exclude.

Similar concerns were voiced with regard to the historically racialised nature of the library space. Speaking of the library service's role in curating cultural products (e.g., Victorian-era pamphlets, newsletters, posters) associated with the region's past, one interviewee explained that some reflected a history of colonialism and perpetuated racist stereotypes. Recognising this could be deeply alienating, the participant explained there were questions as to how to present such materials in a manner that properly addressed this history such that no one was alienated:

> "Pretending that these things aren't part of our collections isn't helpful or fair, but how to sort of deal with them properly? Because with more people coming into the collections, more people are going to ask questions, and that's a good thing, but yeah, how do I, especially as a white person, mediate that when bringing things to a wider audience."
>
> P5

Thus far we have examined participants' vision of a more socially inclusive library space. So too, we have hinted at staff members' awareness of several dimensions of organisational practice (e.g., associated with class and racialisation) that could encourage self-exclusion. We now turn to participants' understandings of the organisational ethos and strategy required to realise inclusion.

6.2 | Engaging Marginalised Community Members

6.2.1 | Reimagining the library-community relationship

With regard to the process of re-representing the library as a socially inclusive place, participants emphasised the importance of understanding and anticipating the community's needs. Thus, when asked "What do you consider to be some of the most important aspects of developing inclusion within the library and how is this managed?", one interviewee explained:

"Understanding the local community is key. If you don't know what the needs are, I mean you can't know what all the needs are because they might not have been voiced, but as far as you can, to know and anticipate what people are wanting and to listen."

P1

In similar vein, another interviewee emphasised the need to adapt practice according to people's needs:

"When different people come along with different needs, whether it be physical, or behavioural, or mental, if there's something that's needed, you think about it and adapt. Libraries should be inclusive; they should be embracing all the different people and different things."

P9

The need for organisational responsiveness was also underscored by another interviewee who argued it was key in transforming the representation of the library amongst community members. Arguing that "it's all about social inclusion and being involved", they emphasised the need to:

"be seen to be adaptable and be willing to sort of break down whatever walls there are there and make it accessible as we can. (...) I'd like us to be seen to be there when we're needed, you know, and play every part we can. We can't do everything, but we try and do as much as we can, and, you know, if we don't know the answer to something, we can find out from someone."

P15

Here again, we see a vision of the library as an organisation working closely with the community, breaking down "whatever walls there are there", and being responsive to their informational needs (such that "if we don't know the answer to something, we can find out"). Moreover, there is an emphasis on being seen to be making efforts in this regard ("I'd like us to be seen to be there when we're needed, you know, and play every part we can"). That is, there is a sense in which this participant highlights the significance of this willingness to listen to (and act on others' behalf) as functioning to communicate that all are valued and deserving of the library's resources.

In turn, in order to deliver such inclusivity, staff reported on how they themselves needed to undergo an on-going process of training. For example, one interviewee explained that as "the public's needs have changed" so staff members have needed to learn more about their communities' needs, how these are evolving, and in turn, learn new skills:

"So the, from it being just exclusively books and newspapers, we've had to do a lot of training. We've had to be aware of protection of vulnerable adults and children, we refer people to foodbanks, we help people with forms, to the point, where, you know, people can't really read or write, they've left school and can't really read or write, so we do a lot of form-filling for people. We help people access different areas, different charities, we have a lot of involvement with people with Autism, ADHD, anywhere on the Autism spectrum, come in and look for help. It's always changing, always changing."

P9

Again, the analytic point is clear. In addition to understanding diverse communities' needs, the pursuit of inclusivity requires organisational practices which ensure ongoing staff training such that they are better able to anticipate and respond to those needs.

6.2.2 | Innovative inclusive place-making practice

Translating this vision of inclusivity into action entailed a range of place-making practices. This involved improving physical access and reconfiguring space to accommodate people in wheelchairs, children in pushchairs, and the elderly using walking aids and shopping trolleys. There was also attention to the need to make people feel 'at home' through tailoring the configuration of space for particular groups and events. For example, one interviewee (P8) explained "spatial awareness is a thing that we do (…) we do rearrange rooms for the mums and babies to create a more welcoming area". In turn, staff explained their modifications to the library's decoration. Take another interviewee, who explained their attempt to make children (and their families) welcome through decorating the library with their work:

> "I really wanted it filled with the children's work. I wanted the children to make things, have them put them up, then it would be filled with their work, and they would then see themselves reflected in that room, so that, again, it's their room, and make it feel like a space that was safe for them. And it's slowly but surely, it's happening, it's starting to turn into a room that's more theirs."
>
> P6

Important here is the emphasis on the active engagement of the children in the process of place-making: in addition to the work being produced by local children, they were involved in putting it up such that "they would then see themselves reflected in that room" with the corollary that it would be "a room that's more theirs". Another inclusionary modification to the physical environment concerned the provision of greater privacy for women from particular communities:

> "We've started having different groups coming in from ethnic minorities, which has been amazing, we've really kind of embraced that. We've got women's yoga group that started up here, which has been challenging for us because of the architectural design of this building, which is very open, we've got lots of windows. And the women obviously want to exercise without their headdress and they want to feel free to be able to do that. So, finding ways to cover up the windows, and make this a space that is open and accessible for them has been really interesting and seeing the increase of people from ethnic minorities has been really beneficial."
>
> P6

Again, this example illustrates the significance of understanding diverse groups' concerns in developing an inclusive environment. Moreover, it illustrates how simple acts (e.g., "finding ways to cover up the windows") could function to welcome new groups—here, headscarf-wearing women (a routinely marginalised community). In turn, as this accommodation respects the women's modesty concerns, it signals organisational recognition of their minority identity and rights to occupy public space on their terms (without having to compromise on modesty-related concerns). That is, it communicates respect.

Related efforts to respond to the needs of the unemployed (who might otherwise feel "out of place") involved the strategic placement of library materials addressing the needs of job seekers. Speaking of "job shop days" when activities are organised for job seekers, another interviewee explained:

> "We do promote our own material. We've obviously got, like, CV-writing books, how to do the perfect interview, and I've tried to make, one of the branches I work in, [location], we've got a selection of display books that just go out on the job shop days, we put them round the computers when all the job seekers are there."
>
> P8

Other inclusionary practices were made possible through partnership working with other community-serving organisations. Take the library's partnership with a charity supporting people facing cancer (whether themselves or amongst family members). This partnership involved libraries having comfortable spaces where people could talk about their concerns and get advice. One interviewee explained this partnership as follows:

> "We've got [charity name] now, coming into a lot of the libraries. New sofas, that's the best thing. That's all the customers see at the moment 'oh, they're new, aren't they?' 'Yes, they're from [charity name]!' And you can almost see it on their faces sometimes, like, 'why are [charity name] putting couches in libraries?' Because we're doing this partnership, we're promoting all their health leaflets, so that, you know, you don't necessarily have to go to a big, scary hospital or go somewhere for information, it's right here."
>
> P8

The broad logic to such a partnership was (again) that the library was an organisation responsive to people's needs (here, needs for advice and reassurance in relation to health). Indeed, the significance of this place-making activity was that it created a welcoming environment that was very different from the alternative—"a big, scary hospital".

However, it is one thing to develop new practices that might include the otherwise marginalised, it is another to revisit familiar practices that welcome some but could alienate others. Take one interviewee's reflections on the challenges of different library users having different expectations and what this meant for the use of Christmas decorations:

> "At Christmas, everything's like, there's Christmas stuff everywhere, and if you don't celebrate Christmas, is that off-putting? And I don't know, in general I am quite in favour of having sparkly things anyway, you know, a bit of light when it's been miserable dark weather for ages. But you know, could that be done in a way that isn't explicitly, sort of, Christmas? (…) I mean that's just one of the sorts of things where I think a default position is assumed, and it's, you know, not necessarily a default position for everyone that's coming in the library."
>
> P5

Such observations underscore the point that any review of organisational practices must critically reflect on those which are adopted as "a default position" and the ways in which these can unintentionally alienate others for whom that default is alien. Building on this insight the participant hinted at the potential for "sparkly things" to meet the need to brighten the dark months of winter that did not have strong Christmassy connotations. Yet, this example also hints at the challenges of satisfying different groups' cultural expectations. As we will see below, whilst changes in established practice may be designed to welcome new communities to the library, so they may alienate others – especially more traditional users of the organisation.

6.3 | Navigating the challenges in implementing change

6.3.1 | Managing diversity in shared space

The challenges of addressing different groups' needs were particularly pressing in open-plan, shared spaces. Describing such an environment, one interviewee explained:

> "You're trying to do rhyme-time [with children] in one corner, someone is trying to finish a university assignment in another corner, somebody just wants to come in and read the papers. If all of these things are happening in the same room, I think some people feel that their needs are not being met—other people's needs are being met at the expense of the place they want to be."
>
> P8

Such comments highlight the potential for some to experience the diversity of activity in the library (a key component of being an inclusive place) as problematic because these people's diverse needs were in some sense incompatible. In turn, the participant cautioned that some may conclude that to the degree that others' needs are addressed, the library could no longer be the place they wanted it to be ("other people's needs are being met at the expense of the place they want to be").

Addressing such scenarios, participants routinely highlighted more traditional library users' frustrations at sharing space with less traditional library users. For example, one interviewee explained many people were "anti-people who have got addictions" and continued:

> "So, it is a challenge, if you've got somebody who's, staggering a bit, or falling asleep at a computer, then it is off-putting for other customers and it's how do you support the person who's got addiction without alienating the customer who is not, not wanting to sit on a PC next to that person. Haven't solved that one!"
>
> P1

The challenges of managing such diversity were echoed by another interviewee (P6) who reported receiving complaints about someone with an addiction falling asleep in the library. Explaining their reaction as being "Oh, he's not doing any harm, he's ok", they continued:

> "And if anything happens, we'll just have to go with that and that's just a case of, 'I'm very sorry, is he in your way at all?' And just try and allay their fears that he was in the library at all, but I feel that, I feel bad that I am making excuses for somebody who is using the space legitimately for what it is there for, it is supposed to be providing a safe space for everybody."
>
> P6

Again, this points to the challenges involved in creating an inclusive place. Whereas the presence of those with addictions points to the organisation's success in welcoming a highly marginalised constituency, it is clear their presence could be resented such that the member of staff had to work hard to "allay their fears". Moreover, this quote reveals how, even in apparently mixed space, hierarchies of belonging can be inadvertently reproduced with the participant expressing regret over their own role in this process (through offering what was essentially an apology for someone's presence: "I feel bad that I am making excuses for somebody who is using the space legitimately for what it is there for"). That is, although such reassurance may facilitate co-existence, it can also legitimate a conception of place and an organisational identity which privileges the presence of some over others.

6.3.2 | Conceptualising the library's distinctive identity

In addition to managing a diversity of needs, staff also described the challenge of ensuring that changes in organisational practice were aligned with the fundamentals of the organisation's identity. For example, one interviewee responded to the question "how do you consider your particular role to have changed, particularly in respect to inclusion, since you started?" as follows:

"That's a difficult one. We've always had inclusion as part of our remit. I don't know, how much it's changed, maybe in the sorts of things we offer now, but we've always tried to bring people in from different backgrounds, different minorities, children and families with different abilities. So, I don't think that side of things has changed much."

P11

Such constructions implied that although at one level practice had changed, at another level there was a continuity of purpose ("we've always tried to bring people in from different backgrounds"). However, it is also appropriate to note staff concerns as to whether particular innovations compromised the distinctiveness of the library as an organisation. Such concerns were most evident in relation to the diminished focus on books and literacy. For example, one interviewee (P14) explained the diversity of activity in the library meant that "some things have come to the forefront and sometimes you feel that they've taken over from the relevance of books, which is, something that I sort of, have, different feelings about", and continued that as young people's levels of literacy were dropping "and we're not being used to help that as much as we possibly could, I think the relevance of books shouldn't be under, underplayed." Yet, even when such issues were noted, participants routinely observed that an advantage of catering to those who may not otherwise use the library was that these practices attracted those who "wouldn't have come across the door of the library" because now there is "something here for them" (P13). Moreover, some observed that this created opportunities to promote the library's book service. Thus, another interviewee explained that whilst people may visit the library for health-related information, this:

"also helps us raise awareness of us as an organization, like 'Yes, come in. You've come to see your diabetes nurse? That's great, but hey look, did you know, we have this whole section here that you might find useful'. Or, 'Look, we are a library, and oh look, we have audiobooks, we have large print books', all those sorts of things."

P8

More generally, staff were clear that in providing such diverse services it was important to emphasise the library's distinctive identity as a provider of information. For example, one interviewee was clear that the library must be seen to be different from a "community centre". Speaking of the library's collaboration with health charities, they explained:

"We link that to the health and wellbeing stock and digital services and stuff like that. So, I think it's important for us as well, for our own identity, that we keep reinforcing those links so that people realise that's why we're doing it, because otherwise if you lose your identity then we might just be, not that a community centre isn't valid, but that's not what we are."

P3

Whilst this participant was supportive of the library's diversification of provision, they cautioned of the danger of the library becoming "*just*" another community centre and so underscored the importance of communicating the distinctive resources the library offers that differentiate it from other venues. That is, emphasising the library's expertise in information provision (e.g., "the health and wellbeing stock and digital services") was important in asserting and communicating the organisation's distinctive identity (and the continuation of that identity). Indeed, it is through such assertions of organisational identity continuity that the public were to have a proper appreciation of the library's purpose, and as the interviewee continued, "know who we are and what we're doing it for".

7 | DISCUSSION

Social psychology has long addressed issues of inequality and exclusion. Often this has entailed investigating the barriers posed by individuals' intergroup attitudes and how these may be modified through individual-level

interventions. We have explored a different level of intervention – one which addresses issues of organisational identity and practice in a public-facing organisation. Addressing such organisational-level practices (both formal and informal) is important. Although social (and spatial) exclusion is (re)produced and contested (Dobai & Hopkins, 2020; van den Bogert, 2021) in all manner of informal activities and encounters, organisational practices can be particularly significant in signalling belonging. To the degree they carry the weight of corporate authority, organisational practices say much about how people are judged and valued. Accordingly, much can be gained through complementing individual-level analyses with an organisational-level analysis of social practices and the process through which they can be reconfigured. Moreover, the library is an ideal place to start. Libraries are one of the few public spaces that are free to use and have enormous potential to help the marginalised navigate all manner of bureaucracies and participate in the wider community (Igarashi et al., 2023; Vårheim, 2014). Yet, in order to serve such a function, libraries themselves must be inclusive, and this underscores the importance of exploring such processes of self-reflection in this particular setting.

Our analysis identified three broad organisation-level processes. The first involved critical organisational self-reflection in which staff articulated a vision of the ideal library and reflected on the ongoing barriers to the realisation of that vision. The second involved re-imagining the library-community relationship (such that the library was responsive to emergent community needs) and the implementation of inclusive place-making practice. The third involved navigating the challenges in implementing such practice when it brought different communities into the same space and involved activities that might be judged discrepant with traditional conceptions of the library's identity.

Throughout, we paid particular attention to place-making practice. Although there are specialist fields in psychology interested in space and place, social psychology has tended to overlook the micro-politics of place construction and people's understandings of who belongs and on what terms (Hopkins & Dixon, 2006). Yet, as Gieryn (2000) (writing of the significance of place for sociology) argues, place should not be judged as merely context, the background for something else that becomes the focus of attention: rather, "everything that we study is emplaced; it happens somewhere and involves material stuff" (Gieryn, 2000, p. 466). This 'material stuff' takes many forms (e.g., objects, people, practices) and turns a space into a place with implications for who can enjoy the privileges of belonging (Crevani, 2019) and who feels uncomfortable (and so self-excludes). Accordingly, addressing the everyday micro-politics of place is key to a social psychological analysis of social exclusion, how it is facilitated, and how it can be countered.

Participants were also acutely aware that innovation in practice required management. In part, this was because hitherto marginalised groups could find themselves in spaces shared with the traditionally advantaged (who could resent their presence: Wnuk & Oleksy, 2021). Accordingly, our analysis highlights the importance of public-serving organisations recognising the heterogeneity in 'the community' they serve and understanding that what may be welcoming for one group may be judged differently by another.

Participants' accounts of the management of change also demonstrated their awareness of the importance of aligning innovation in organisational practice with the organisation's distinctive identity (Haslam, 2014; Jetten & Hutchison, 2011). Inevitably, an organisation's identity shapes the potential for inclusive practice. Some inclusionary activities may be judged as tangential to the core purpose of the organisation and thus as diluting the organisation's identity. Moreover, some organisations—even though they espouse inclusivity – may have other priorities that pull in a very different direction (Boliver et al., 2018) such that the commitment to inclusive practice is experienced as undermining other core elements of organisational identity.

With regards to the limitations to our research there are several. Participant recruitment involved convenience sampling (in the sense that participants were at work when the library was visited). Yet, this strategy allowed us to access individuals directly involved in face-to-face interactions with the public. Furthermore, our sampling ensured we obtained data from staff with experience of all the city's libraries (allowing an overview of staff experiences across different city neighbourhoods). Another issue concerns the challenges of generalising for a small-scale study of a particular organisation. However, it is appropriate to note that any generalisation is to be made in terms of

organisational processes (i.e., critical self-reflection, engaging marginalised community members, and navigating the challenges of implementing change) rather than in terms of individuals' particular behaviours. Needless to say, the practices and challenges relevant to any organisation will likely differ, but the broad principles have a wide-ranging applicability.

Future research could explore the outcomes associated with library staff members' efforts. Ethnographic observation could investigate the diversity of groups physically present, the degree to which their identities are recognised (Ryan et al., 2023), the degree to which space is shared and intergroup contact takes place (Johnston, 2019; Kauff et al., 2020), the manner in which hierarchies of belonging are (re)produced. Such research would complement the current analysis through addressing the degree to which staff members' attempts to communicate and establish a socially-shared vision of the library as a venue where all were welcome (and diversity valued) were successful.

Yet if such work is for the future, the wider significance of the current research is to emphasise the importance of complementing our discipline's traditional focus on individual-level interventions in relation to diversity with a group-level alternative (Prentice & Paluck, 2020; Wakefield et al., 2011). In turn, it emphasises that it is not enough to focus on acts of deliberate derogation. The benefits of group memberships (whether social, emotional, practical, informational, or material) are empowering and missing out on them compromises one's everyday citizenship (Hopkins, 2022). All this underscores the importance of social psychological and community research addressing the processes by which organisational practice can be interrogated and changed. In this paper, we have shown how this process requires continual reflection on organisational practices. Organisations must consider their current practices and how these are aligned with their values. Where practices are recognised as potentially exclusionary, then begins exploration of how these can be changed, and innovation implemented. During and after the implementation of change, this reflective process begins anew, considering how these now-current practices may be interpreted by different groups and the organisation's valued identity maintained.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors confirm that there are no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

As the data may allow identification of the interviewee, they are not publicly available. However, interested parties may contact the authors to discuss the analysis.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Dundee's Research Ethics Committee. Prior to participation, participants provided informed consent.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

What is your role within the Library and how long have you held this role?

Over the years, how has the function of the library changed?
    Can you give some examples?
    How do you feel about these developments?

With regards to the use of the library by different groups…
    Are there any challenges?
    What are the most significant challenges?
    How have you and your colleagues sought to address these challenges?
    How successful has this been?
    Can you illustrate successes/difficulties?

Looking ahead what are your ambitions for the library?
    What would you like to see change?

How has your role changed since you started?

What tensions, difficulties and/or challenges do you experience in promoting inclusion?

Do you experience challenges in managing the expectations of different library users?
    How do you seek to address these challenges?
    Can you illustrate with examples of success/difficulty?