DIVERSITY AND IDENTITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Connections and Perspectives

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Introduction: From Diversity to Identity and Back

Abstract This chapter serves as a short introduction to the topics of this book: identity and diversity. We also expose how these topics link with issues in the workplace and explain how we have organized our discussion in this book. Finally, we provide an overview of the different chapters.

Categories of difference, whether they are based on gender, race, age, sexuality or other traits, are not neutral and detached from individuals: they matter for a person's identity. We write this book starting from the concept of identity, as we believe that diversity management ultimately is about the management of people's identities. However, despite being crucial for diversity and its management, identity theory is too rarely mobilized to help us to understand and discuss diversity management. Foregrounding the links between identity, diversity and diversity management is, therefore, an original angle compared to the bulk of the existing diversity management literature. We also believe that the topics of diversity and identity are ones that reach far beyond the professional sphere and our work lives. These are concepts and issues with profound intellectual and emotional reach that are relevant to all and find an echo in everyone's experiences and reflections. Despite the fact that women, people of colour, the elderly and sexual minorities are often the target of

diversity management initiatives, everyone has a gender, everyone has an age and everyone has a sexuality; some are just more noticed and subject to being managed than others are, and some belong to the dominating norm and are thus less visible and not subject to being managed. Reflecting on identity, therefore, makes us ask: who am I? But also: who am I not? And who do I want to be? Thus, we hope that the contents of this book will resonate with the readers beyond their professional or scholarly interest in the topic.

Tentative Definitions and Reflections

The terms 'identity' and 'diversity' could at first glance be seen as opposites, either as two facets of a coin or as two extremes on a continuum. Diversity suggests a multitude of possibilities and configurations of traits and attributes, none of which entirely overlap. Diversity is popularly a synonym of difference; it is associated with the constructs of separation, variety and disparity (Harrison and Klein 2007). In its etymology, the term has shifted from considerably negative connotations to more positive ones. 'Diversity' comes from the Latin *diversus* or *diversitas*, meaning both 'various' and 'contrariety'. In both English and French, this duality of meaning carried on, as 'diversity' used to refer to a "fact of difference between two or more things or kinds" but also characterizing what is "being contrary to what is agreeable or right" (Etymonline 2018a). Before diversity became associated with a concern for inclusion and equality in society, it had since the late eighteenth century been a virtue associated with the rise of democracy as a political organization model. Identity, in turn, is synonymous with similarity, sameness and even oneness. The Latin roots of identity as *identitas* or *idem* point to a similar understanding. In addition, in its mathematical definition, identity is about equivalence rather than indistinguishability: A and B are identical if the equivalence is true despite changes in the values of the variables. Stronger theoretical and practical attention paid to the relational dimension of identity, of its situatedness, came about in the twentieth century, and the term 'identity politics' appeared only in the 1980s (Etymonline 2018b). There thus appears to have been a gradual shift from identity to 'ipseity', which means individual identity or selfhood.

Human beings are not mathematical objects, and exact meanings shift with time and place. A tension exists between the ideas of being identical to and being diverse from others: between the idea of being a 'self' different

from all others and identifying with a group of others. Beyond definitions, how is it that we experience diversity and identity? In a recent retrospective of the internationally renowned artist Marina Abramović at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art (Denmark), one of the authors of this book took part in a performance that museum-goers were invited to re-enact. The instructions and tasks were quite simple: sit opposite another person, look them deep in the eyes, keep this connection as long as desired and then leave. She was seated opposite another person who, at least phenotypically, resembled her in a way that would be acknowledged by the casual onlooker: it was a person of similar gender, age, height and skin tone. Staring into her eyes, the first thought she had was about the complete alterity that was facing her: even the similarities could be broken down into a myriad of dissimilarities. The more time passed, the more that person seemed estranged, yet, concurrently, the shared experience and the shared gaze created a momentary unity, harmony and alignment—maybe a shared identity. This personal example is just one modest illustration of how diversity and identity are experienced simultaneously and instantaneously and how this experience is relational and contextual. Moreover, this performance, this experience, insisted on silence and immobility. Furthermore, we multiply the possibilities of encounters and divergences when we remove these constraints and go beyond the 'physical envelope'.

So, how can we further characterize the relationship between diversity and identity? How can we work in this tension between diversity and identity—between the 'others' and ourselves? How does this translate in the workplace and into practices related to diversity and inclusion? Scholars and practitioners are without a doubt entitled to have diverging takes on these questions and diverging views on how to answer them. What we want to put on the front stage with this book is that definitions of diversity and identity are intrinsically linked and that these premises have consequences on how diversity management is studied, theorized and implemented in the workplace. In particular, we argue that the definitions and conceptualizations of identity are too often invisible or implicit in scholarly and practitioner efforts to develop the field of diversity in organizations and diversity management. Moreover, we see the relative absence of the acknowledgement of identity (theory) underpinnings to diversity-related debates as preventing a more fruitful dialogue across these vast arrays of perspectives, as well as between researchers and practitioners.

Taking identity and its different conceptualizations as a starting point is, however, not a straightforward task, and decisions had to be made as to

how to address variation without reaching a counterproductive level of complexity. Identity is a broad and multidisciplinary topic and as such has been studied from varied perspectives, which have themselves been classified and labelled differently across time and disciplines. A broad partition, beyond its limitations, is a relevant way to make sense of a substantial body of literature. In organization studies, Kenny et al. (2011) have, for example, used a division of six theoretical perspectives: social identity theory (SIT), psychoanalysis, Foucauldian perspective, symbolic interactionism, narrative and micro-interactionist perspective. In a review of the literature on multiple identities, Ramarajan (2014) outlines five key perspectives: social psychological, sociological, developmental/psychodynamic, critical and intersectional. Concerning the ambiguity between the emphasis on identity and ipseity, Ramarajan notes the following:

> A particular definitional issue that arises when analyzing the literature is that the terms 'self' (or 'self-concept') and 'identity' are used in at least three distinct ways. Scholars have sometimes used the terms self and identity interchangeably. They have also used the term self as a broad construct to denote the entire set of identities a person may have and the term identities to denote more specific targets, such as role or social group-based identities. Implied in this formulation is a hierarchical relationship between the self and various sub-components of the self, the identities. Scholars have also sometimes proposed the opposite, that a person has one core identity but it is composed of various selves. (Ramarajan 2014, p. 594)

When choosing our partition of the identity literature, we focused on perspectives that encompass both self and identity. For the analytical purpose of discussing the theoretical links between the identity and diversity research, we organize our reflection around the three following perspectives on identity: social identity and related theories; critical perspectives on identity; and post-structural perspectives on identity. In this book, we choose to discuss and interpret existing scholarly work and practices around diversity in the workplace along these 'fault lines'. Besides, some key division points are recurrent in the identity literature, mainly around the issue of "the extent to which identities are chosen or ascribed, stable or dynamic, coherent or fragmented" (Brown 2015, p. 23). Moreover, Brown emphasizes the notions of choice, stability, coherence, positivity and authenticity as central debates in identity research (2015, p. 21). We pay attention to such discussions across the chapters.

There are obvious limitations to our choices. First, they indeed limit our capacity to develop a finer-grained discussion of the identity literature. As we aim to provide a compelling yet succinct overview of what connects diversity and identity in the workplace, we refer the reader to more specialized accounts of identity scholarship in management and organization studies and beyond. This also means that we categorize existing work about diversity and diversity management into a predefined set of 'identity perspective boxes' that are not always a perfect fit and, more importantly, that reflect our subjective reading of scholarly work. Moreover, importantly, we could have gone the reverse way and started with existing classifications of the diversity literature to see if and how they match specific identity perspectives. As we aim to bring more focus on the concept of identity than is currently the case in diversity scholarship and practice, we have not chosen to do so. Moreover, while in some cases the identity-related theoretical inspirations of diversity scholarship are quite obvious, others draw on a synthesis of approaches, or such interrelations are left to the reader's appraisal. This is by no means surprising or specific to this stream of research, and a lack of explicitness is witnessed in identity scholarship itself (Kenny et al. 2011). Yet, we certainly hope that the authors we cite will not themselves feel pigeonholed and assigned a specific identity in a book where we try to deconstruct and reconstruct such lines of thought.

Outline of Aims and Contents

We lack a clear view of the overlap or discrepancy of the perspectives between researchers and between researchers and practitioners in the field. This is why this book targets students, scholars and practitioners interested in matters of diversity, its management and how employee identity is the object of such management. The purpose here is to review the different perspectives on identity and read the diversity literature through these lenses. The purpose of the review is not to judge the perspectives on identity and assign any normative value to their translation into diversity but to stress the importance of understanding the theoretical links between the different identity perspectives and the diversity literature. We propose to look at the diversity literature through the lens of identity and show the advantages and limitations of each approach. We do not aim to advocate for one of the existing perspectives or for a new one. However, we do not stop at the theoretical classification but are concerned with how our article

can foster research that is aware of the conceptual divisions and draw on the benefits of their differences. What we would like to emphasize with this approach is that even though no perspective is intrinsically 'better' than the others, there are dilemmas, situations, problematics, issues and political circumstances—theoretical as well as practical—that may call for the pre-eminence of one perspective over another. We do this in two ways: (1) we show how each perspective is distinct but also overlaps others and (2) we show how each perspective offers different possibilities and has different consequences for diversity management. Here is an overview of the chapters that constitute the remainder of the book.

In Chap. 2, we expand on the relevance of considering identity and diversity in conjunction and explicitly link diversity and identity in diversity scholarship and diversity management. Before moving on to the chapters delving more into the three perspectives on identity we focus on in this book, we discuss how identities are somehow invisible in the most popular paradigms for diversity management and more specifically address the social justice and business case paradigms. Additionally, we offer some broader considerations of categories and categorization and how these concepts are quasi-consubstantial to diversity scholarship and diversity management. Finally, we consider the tension or opposition between structure and agency, discussing how, on the one hand, diversity is managed and, on the other, how and to what extent individuals are actors in their self-definition.

Chapter 3 focuses on linking diversity work and SIT. SIT is arguably the most influential identity theory to date. The grounding idea in this theory is that an individual has not only a personal identity but also a social identity: that is, they feel an attachment to one or more groups with which they believe they share an attribute or value that is identity-defining. The chapter provides an introduction to the basic concepts of SIT, as well as a peek at more recent developments inspired by this stream of literature. We then consider in more detail how this perspective impregnates diversity work in research and practice. We then proceed to discuss a few ways in which diversity practice takes some shortcuts on essential concepts related to social identity formation and social categorization. The chapter also offers some thoughts on the limitations of the theory to give a complete picture of how to address diversity and identity in the workplace.

Chapter 4 moves on to the critical perspective. The critical perspective is mainly concerned with exposing the problematic power relations that accrue from defining social categories and how these keep historical power

relations intact. Chapter 4 takes us into a detailed overview of the critical identity literature, the critical diversity literature and their interrelations. However, we also contend that a critical approach must be supplemented with the development of practical solutions to the progressive changes that the critical perspective otherwise expounds.

In Chap. 5, we unfold and discuss a post-structuralist view on diversity and diversity management. In a sense, a post-structural perspective builds on—and extends—the critical perspective, as its critique (particularly of the SIT perspective but also the critical one) emphasizes that identities are fragmented and fluid and thus ultimately non-categorizable and non-manageable. Instead of management, the post-structural perspective is concerned with a reconceptualization of difference as something that 'is' towards one where difference is always 'becoming'. This means that a post-structural perspective on identity and diversity focuses on the transgression of categories, rather than categorization and belonging itself—regardless of whether this is to understand a category better, as in SIT perspectives, or to expose their dark sides, as is the case with the critical perspective. Post-structural approaches are thus important, as they encourage constant reflexivity about norms, structures, (self-)concepts and the continual need to undo these to pave the way for equality.

Chapter 6 concisely summarizes what we learned in Chaps. 2, 3, 4 and 5 and then looks at the future of research about diversity and identity, as well as developed avenues in the practice of diversity management. This is first done one perspective at a time, proposing and describing future possibilities for academics and practitioners for the social identity, critical and post-structuralist perspectives separately. In addition, we plead for more daring and more creative research designs that draw on all three perspectives, in order to avoid some of the limitations or dead ends that we highlighted for each perspective.

The concluding section of this book and takes the form of a brief epilogue taking stock of the writing process and of writing about diversity and identity.

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Diversity Management: Invisible Identities

Abstract In this chapter, we expand on the links between diversity and identity and on the relevance of considering them jointly in the context of the workplace. The chapter provides the reader with a succinct historical background of diversity management and a reflection on categories and categorization. The chapter also examines how the management of diversity contrasts with how individuals attempt to make sense of their identities in the workplace, thus speaking to the broader intellectual conversation about structure and agency.

Keywords Managed identities • Categorization • Equal opportunities • Business case • Structure • Agency

Introduction

The diversity literature and identity literature are profoundly intertwined in ways often not explicitly acknowledged by diversity scholars. This interrelation is especially noticeable in the stream of research about diversity management, which is the part of the diversity scholarship explicitly concerned with documenting and advising on the practical application of how differences 'are' and should be managed in organizations and to what ends (Holvino and Kamp 2009; Nishii and Özbilgin 2007). The ambition of this chapter is not to provide the reader with a detailed literature review but rather to highlight how diversity connects with the question of identity.

We also point to some key tensions and debates that are, we argue, rendering identities invisible, or at least not visible enough, in the diversity literature, as well as in diversity management practices. In particular, we consider the identity 'foundations' of the main paradigms within diversity management and discuss how the broader question of structure versus agency infuses diversity research and practice. As such, this chapter connects to Chaps. 3, 4 and 5, which each delves more specifically into a distinct perspective on identity and diversity in the workplace and thus contributes to answering some of the questions we highlight in this chapter.

Diversities and Identities

Diversity scholarship in management and organization studies has for many years discussed the way we perceive, treat and manage people's differences. In particular, there has been a focus on demographic or phenotypical differences in the workforce, such as gender, ethnicity, culture and age (Holvino and Kamp 2009; Jonsen et al. 2011). Another body of research also looks at the intersection of such differences (Rodriguez et al. 2016; Villesèche et al. 2018). As these differences are ascribed to an individual or a group of individuals, diversity theory is linked to the way that individuals are perceived and constructed by themselves and others. It follows that dealing with the issue of diversity is always closely related to individuals experiencing their own identities as 'being different or not' in a particular context: of belonging or not with a specific place or group. A context can be a specific location or occasion where you interact with a group of people. Taking a simple example, you may feel like you belong when you are with your family but less at the workplace; maybe it is the opposite or maybe it changes depending on other factors. At work, you may suddenly feel that you are different when joining a meeting in another department or at another hierarchical level; you may feel different when you are singled out for a specific achievement. Hence, feelings of difference or sameness may change according to the particular situation and group of people with whom you interact, often depending on the numerical majority in the group.

Thus, dealing with the issue of diversity is always closely linked to how individuals experience their own identities as being different or not in a particular context. As Czarniawska suggests, "selves are constructed in the interplay of alterity and identity. 'How am I different? Who from? How am I similar? Who to?'" (2013, p. 61). Identity can thus be considered a

construction of the self that rests on an alteration or construction of 'otherness'. Does this mean that we also have different identities in those shifting contexts and encounters? Weick suggests that "to shift among interactions is to shift among definitions of self" (1995, p. 20). So, it is not about a schizophrenic change of the self but about a subtler change in how we define who we are and how we have to act in the world. These definitions of self, if we follow Weick, can be multiple and are relational and thus socially constructed. How permanent these definitions are across time and space, what their boundaries are and what this means in workplace interactions are questions to which there are no unified answers.

The construction and perception of the self have been the focus of the interdisciplinary research field on identity. Identity theories aim at understanding how we seek to answer the existential questions 'who am I?' and 'how should I act?' (Alvesson et al. 2008), or 'how shall I relate to others?' 'what shall I strive to become?' and 'how will I make the basic decisions required to guide my life?' (Brown 2015). Moreover, identity construction does not happen in a vacuum. When constructing their identities, individuals draw on social identities or discourses available in their social environments—as we will see in Chaps. 3, 4 and 5, perspectives on this differ. Another relevant aspect is how others assign specific identities to us through gestures, in the form of behaviour or vocalized expectations, which impact our self-perceptions and behaviour by either internalizing or actively resisting the assigned identities. Regardless, there is agreement on the fact that such elements shape how individuals act and how they interpret events (Kenny et al. 2011; Roberson 2006; Toyoki and Brown 2013; Weick et al. 2005).

However, it is not only our self-perceptions that matter; others' perceptions of us also influence the way we see ourselves. From psychoanalysis, for example, we know that the sense of self—or identity—is constructed from very early on, based on how our parents or other important figures in our early lives perceive us, what they expect of us and who they raise us to be—or not to be (Driver 2009; Muhr and Kirkegaard 2013; Roberts 2005). In short, we construct our identities in the image of what others expect from us. Other people's opinions matter. As such expectations are constructed in and through societal norms, these are transferred to all of us. To take one of the most common examples, we can look at how boys and girls are raised differently. From very early on, boys and girls are raised distinctly: behaviour that is associated with being a boy is encouraged in boys and discouraged in girls, and behaviour that is expected from girls is

encouraged in girls and discouraged in boys. Girls thus quickly learn that they should be more nurturing, less aggressive, more emotional and so on, whereas boys learn not to cry, to take leadership and that it is OK to fight—'boys will be boys', as the saying goes. These expectations follow us for the rest of our lives, and we are socially sanctioned if we step outside these norms. Of course, some people do step outside the norms and live lives that do not match normative expectations (such as stay-at-home dads or childless career women); while they may not be directly bullied for their choices, they may constantly have to justify them to non-understanding friends and family (Kugelberg 2006). In this way, identity is also a constant negotiation between 'who am I?' and 'who does society expect me to be?' (Alvesson and Willmott 2002).

Hence, identity and identification are central concepts when aiming to understand diversity, and in the context of the workplace, such debates are clearly relevant. They create experiences of inclusion or exclusion, belonging or not belonging, misunderstanding and unfairness, as well as problems with retention, poor employee satisfaction and so on. Diversity management can therefore not, we argue, be seen as an utterly strategic issue detached from the emotional and relational reactions that individuals have to issues of diversity. Because diversity is always necessarily linked to the aspects of a person's—or a group of people's—identity, the way that diversity is managed, communicated and strategized will inevitably have a significant impact on group dynamics in the workplace. Yet, the theoretical intersection of diversity and identity is too rarely explicitly considered.

FROM SOCIAL JUSTICE TO THE BUSINESS CASE: LOCATING IDENTITIES

Diversity scholarship has documented practices and tools appropriated by diversity management, as well as proposed historical perspectives on them. This has led to the development of research tracing historical and paradigmatic changes. We outline them briefly here and connect them with the topic of identity. A contrast is commonly made between approaches driven by social justice—hence, a strive for organizational fairness and equality—and the business case, where arguments centre on the idea that diversity can bring added value and ultimately have a positive impact on the bottom line. In the wake of social movements in the 1960s and 1970s, affirmative action (AA) and equal opportunities legislation was drafted in the United States and the United Kingdom and progressively diffused to numerous

other countries. A central aspect of such policies is that organizations have to indicate explicitly that they are equal opportunity employers: that is, that they welcome applications and hire from a diverse talent base and that individuals will be assessed without regard to aspects such as gender and race. It is noted here that equal opportunities can be interpreted from a liberal or radical interpretation. While the liberal argument focuses on the provision of fair procedures (i.e. no discrimination in the hiring process), the radical version is more concentrated on the fair distribution of rewards, for example by practising positive discrimination in the hiring process to further equal representation of organizational minorities (Jewson and Mason 1986). Regardless, notions of fairness and justice are central and tied to the assumption that talent is equally distributed in the population, irrespective of categories and identities. Diversity management entered the (mainly American) management discourse with an affirmed conceptual distance to the preceding policies of AA and equal employment opportunities (EEO) (Holvino and Kamp 2009). While AA and EEO activities were deployed to reduce the adverse effect of exclusion and social stratification (both on the labour market and in organizations), diversity management paved the way for managing differences proactively by promoting the positive effects of inclusion within the organization (Jonsen et al. 2011). The AA and EEO programmes of the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s had, according to scholars, proven insufficient (Kalev et al. 2006; Kelly and Dobbin 1998; Muttarak et al. 2013; Oswick and Noon 2014; Shore et al. 2009). Notably, such programmes failed to achieve enhanced organizational inclusion of minorities, presumably due to insufficient involvement and commitment by managers (Janssens and Zanoni 2014; Tomlinson and Schwabenland 2010).

In the late 1980s, the equal opportunities perspective was gradually supplemented by the 'business case for diversity' approach, in which the central assumption is that diversity makes a distinct contribution to the resource bases of organizations and that the leveraging of such resources demands specific managerial attention. Holvino and Kamp (2009) traced the developments of diversity management on both sides of the Atlantic. They suggested that diversity management was at the onset a 'managerialization' of equal opportunities and AA—a shift that originated in the United States:

> With the turn to Reaganism in the 1980s, the political and economic landscape changed dramatically. AA and EEO enforcement waned, resources to

implement changes disappeared, and judicial decisions were overturned. Many reasons are cited as contributing to the emergence of DM. Demographic changes in the labor force, white male backlash, a turn to social conservatism, globalization and restructuring of work are the ones most often mentioned. […] The new discourse of DM was different and new: "inclusive, forward-looking, business-oriented," and non-confrontational, as opposed to political, "exclusionary, reactive, equity-oriented, and unpopular," like affirmative action (Litvin 2000, pp. 330–331). The Bush and Clinton administrations did not reverse Reagan's conservative politics and instead continued to undermine legislation, enforcement and judicial support for AA and EEO. (Holvino and Kamp 2009, p. 396)

Diversity management is meant to provide a robust set of arguments by means of the business case for diversity with which to persuade and mobilize management interests regarding the needs of marginalized minority labour (Kandola and Fullerton 1994). The business case is based on the idea that a diverse workforce can be a valuable asset for an organization if correctly managed, presenting diversity management as a way to value the unique competences of a diverse workforce and to create a win-win situation for employer and employees (Thomas and Ely 1996; Zanoni 2011).

The shift from social justice to diversity management also implied a move beyond the discrimination and equality debate and away from group-based differences and intergroup inequalities to a focus on the attributes of individuals—an approach adopted because it made business sense in an increasingly ethnocultural and globalized economy (Jonsen et al. 2011; Klarsfeld et al. 2012; Kelly and Dobbin 1998; Noon 2007; Tatli et al. 2012). Mainstream diversity management scholars promoted a broad set of individualized differences that included all conceivable elements, like personality traits, physical characteristics and cognitive capacities, in addition to the traditional 'big six': ethnicity, gender, age, physical ability, religion and, later on, sexual orientation (Ashcraft 2011; Thomas and Ely 1996). This individualization of differences was combined with a focus on the explicit and measurable aspects of diversity, backing up the business case rhetoric of how diversity pays off (Embrick 2011). According to Embrick, the increasing vagueness of the definition of diversity with the broadening of the term also caused the minimization or neglect of issues pertaining to racial/ethnic or gender diversity:

By increasing the number of categories of people that fall under the umbrella of diversity, companies can efficiently escape close examination of racial and

gender inequalities that might occur in their workplace; as long as no one brings it up, it can be ignored. The diversity management approach has helped corporations become increasingly sophisticated in their ability to portray themselves as supporters of racial and gender equality, while simultaneously they make no real substantial changes in their policies and practices to create real changes in the racial and gender composition of their workplace. (Embrick 2011, pp. 544–545)

Some of the criticism raised towards diversity management has been how the business case aims at demonstrating diversity as a strategic asset of the business, focusing on the unique potential of different organizational participants while sidestepping the inequality and power dimensions of the organization. However, minority groups are still predominantly perceived as *different* from those representing the norm and are 'classified and categorized' according to race, ethnicity, gender, age and, to a lesser degree, class, sexual preferences, education and disabilities (Risberg and Søderberg 2008). The difficulties of grappling with the issue of 'valuing difference' and the tendency to combine difference with otherwise marginalized groups in the labour market have led to a critique of diversity management as reinforcing stereotypes, especially ones about ethnic minorities and women in a corporate setting (Syed and Özbilgin 2009; Tatli and Özbilgin 2012; Zanoni et al. 2010). The calculative dimension of the diversity business case also entails the logic of 'counting' difference, which again can lead to stereotypical categorizations of employees and essentializing difference. Others again criticize diversity management as a means to gloss over and 'dissolve' differences in pursuit of harmonious corporate integration and profitability by integrating a wider variety of categories (Holvino and Kamp 2009; Jack and Lorbiecki, 2007; Noon 2007; Tatli and Özbilgin 2012; Tomlinson and Schwabenland 2010).

A gradual diffusion of diversity management practices followed in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Scandinavia and later to other Western countries. This helped to spread awareness beyond North American borders about diversity as a question that organizations should consider seriously. However, several articles have pointed out the limits and pitfalls of importing approaches and policies from other institutional contexts and have discussed the issue of translation (see, for example, Boxenbaum 2006; Chanlat and Özbilgin, 2016; Risberg and Søderberg 2008). For instance, in Denmark, diversity management was taken up in a particular socio-historical moment (at the beginning of this millennium),

when Denmark had minimal experience with immigration and suddenly faced the prospect of becoming a multi-ethnic society (Boxenbaum 2006; Holvino and Kamp 2009). The variant of diversity management that eventually emerged in these countries has thus focused primarily on difference in terms of ethnicity but was integrated with the discourse on 'the social responsibility of the firm' (Boxenbaum 2006; Holck 2018; Holck and Muhr 2017; Kamp and Hagedorn-Rasmussen 2004; Risberg and Søderberg 2008). Hence, in Denmark, the term 'diversity management' is usually used for ethnic diversity, whereas the terms 'gender', 'age' and 'disability' are explicitly used when talking about 'non-ethnic' diversity.

Moreover, in practice, the presumptions about identity with which human resource managers and other managers approach matters of diversity have practical implications. Notably, we argue here that definitions of identity have implications on the definition of the target group of diversity interventions, on which criteria of sameness/difference distinctions the diversity management activities and policies are based, and on whether the business case or social justice intentions guide the rationales behind diversity interventions (Oswick and Noon 2014; Kamp and Hagedorn-Rasmussen 2004). Whether diversity or 'difference' is defined in essentialist terms (considering specific individual traits or socio-demographic groups as the basis for diversity and/or identity definition) or whether identities and diversity are viewed as socially constructed in specific and dynamic contexts (Tatli and Özbilgin 2012) thus has significant implications.

Thomas and Ely (1996) and later Ely and Thomas (2001) propose that there are three main paradigms for diversity management: discrimination and fairness; access and legitimacy; and learning and integration, connecting diversity to work perspectives. The first paradigm, discrimination and fairness, is related to the question of social justice. Policies and practices tied to this paradigm are equal opportunities, AA and quotas. With the application of such procedures, Thomas and Ely argue, "the staff, one might say, gets diversified, but the work does not" (1996, p. 3), and the discrimination and differential treatment that minorities experience are not necessarily tackled, which might often end in minorities assimilating to the majority and 'toning down' their differences. Accordingly, Thomas and Ely propose that there are two paradigms related to the idea of the business case for diversity. In the access and legitimacy paradigm, there is wider acceptance, or even a celebration, of difference. However, this acknowledgement is mainly enacted at lower hierarchical levels, such as client-facing positions, so as to match organizational and consumer demographics, with the

problem of differentiation and pigeonholing minorities in particular positions and job categories according to their socio-demographic backgrounds. Finally, in the learning and integration perspective, organizations aim at "redefining markets, products, strategies, missions, business practices, and even cultures" (1996, p. 6). It is thus only within the learning and integration perspective that organizations go beyond diversity management centred on demographic categories by applying a broader diversity perspective to their operations, strategies and even cultures. Still, even in this supposedly more 'advanced' paradigm, there is an emphasis on category-based differences, rather than on inclusion. Moreover, although Thomas and Ely's 1996 article is now more than two decades old, there is little doubt that the implementation of the third paradigm in practice is still the exception, rather than the rule.

Several scholars have pointed out that paradigms may be distinct as theory or discourse but may collide in practice, whether voluntarily or not. Jewson and Mason (1986) show how, even when only considering the social justice perspective, radical and liberal approaches are intertwined in the implementation and enforcement of equal opportunities legislation. Tomlinson and Schwabenland (2010), in their study of UK-based non-profit organizations, illustrate how fairness and business rationales are reconciled by incorporating performance and utility arguments into a broader set of values about diversity and social justice. In the same vein, Tatli (2011) questions the assumed distinction and irreconcilability between equal opportunities and diversity management grounded in the business case. Interestingly, she documents how "diversity practitioners strategically drew on the business case discourse to increase the resources and support available to diversity management activities" (Ibid., p. 242) developed from the legal EEO requirements. With regard to identity, Tatli points to an example where "incongruously, this organization, which claimed to have moved away from the equal opportunities framework, does not seem to offer a new way of dealing with workplace diversity and equality issues, and diversity continues to be an attribute attached to minority groups rather than describing the individual differences" (Ibid., p. 243).

What we witness, we believe, is the 'invisibilization' of identity when we move towards a strictly business-driven discourse. Evident in the equal opportunities perspective, identities—with activism, advocacy efforts and identity politics in the background—become traits. These traits are treated as a resource: an asset that can somehow be detached from the individual,

grown by increasing the numerical representation of a specific demographic group and then leveraged at the organizational level; it can be measured and adjusted. A now classic example of this is the numerous attempts to prove that a diverse team of directors will lead to higher earnings, with the corollary assumption that profits can be increased merely by implementing a more diverse hiring policy, without implementing any deeper changes in the organizational culture or strategy.

Managed Diversity and Managing the Self

A growing body of scholarly work criticizes the current paradigms for diversity management. For instance, Litvin (1997) argues against the use of categories such as gender, age and ethnicity, as they can be divisive rather than inclusive by overemphasizing (group-based) differences. Elsewhere, Noon (2007) criticizes diversity management for marginalizing the importance of equality and suppressing the significance of ethnicity in the workplace by focusing exclusively on the individual and personal identity traits imbued in the business case. Finally, the different paradigms themselves can be criticized for merely being transient fashions or trends that do not participate in developing anti-discrimination solutions (Oswick and Noon 2014).

The coexistence of inclinations to simultaneously dissolve and highlight and to individualize and essentialize differences along social identity groups brings together two conflicting logics when dealing with diversity, both underpinning diversity management and the critical diversity research. The critical line of diversity literature has, in particular, focused on deconstructing and de-essentializing the notion of diversity. This stream of work documents how demographic categories are socially constructed and under constant redefinition, influenced by competing discourses and existing structures of power and varying with national and societal settings (Holck et al. 2016; Jack and Lorbiecki, 2007; Knoppers et al. 2014; Van Laer and Janssens 2011; Zanoni and Janssens 2004). The quest that underpins much critical diversity literature is to bring back in focus the question of *social justice*. This is done to 'unmask' power dynamics by illustrating how diversity management is a managerial practice of control by defining minority employees in fixed, essential groups with negative connotations (see also Boogaard and Roggeband 2010; Ghorashi and Sabelis 2013; Janssens and Zanoni 2014; Litvin 1997, 2002; Noon 2007; Roberson 2006; Roberson and Stevens 2006; Simon and Oakes 2006; Tatli and Özbilgin 2012;

Zanoni et al. 2010). Once categorized into essentialist, stereotypical categories, they are then more easily controlled and managed.

The two directions within diversity research point to how the act of intervening to craft a more egalitarian organization is navigating between the 'Charybdis and Scylla' of, on the one hand, the use of essentialist, stereotypical demographic categories and, on the other, individualistic, de-politicized categories (Tomlinson and Schwabenland 2010; Noon 2007; Kamp and Hagedorn-Rasmussen 2004). In practice, this has led to an oscillation between 'identity-blind' diversity policies in the quest to overcome resistance and 'identity-conscious' policies to further social justice (Holck et al. 2016; Tran et al. 2010). As Ghorashi and Sabelis (2013) argue, without the recognition of the salient differences that *matter in the context*, organizational policies for change become too diffuse to tackle the sources of exclusion requiring urgent attention. While target group policies like AA and EEO make historically disadvantaged groups seem like "absolute others who needed to be helped and accommodated", the more individualized diversity management policies render them "invisible altogether" (Ibid., p. 83). This highlights the difficulty of finding an adequate, balanced method for paying attention to a specific diversity category and yet avoiding fixation. Such critical voices are considered in more detail in Chap. 4.

However, categorizing is an inevitable activity that we as humans carry out to make sense of the world. In society at large, but also in organizations, classification and categorization help individuals to make sense of the constant and abundant information that they receive from their environments at any given moment. This allows us to make order out of chaos and to locate ourselves in the world (Ashforth and Mael 1989). In plain words, this mechanism keeps us able to interact in the world without going insane, as our brains cannot process all the information they receive about the world unbiased. We need categories to understand experiences; otherwise, our minds would experience information overload. However, categories and standards are not neutral or natural. In their book, Bowker and Star (2000) discuss in great detail how classification processes are largely implicit and invisible: how each system of categorization gives prominence to specific views of the world that are salient at one particular place and time. They ask three fundamental questions: what work do classifications and standards do? how does that work? and what happens to the cases—the persons—that do not fit? Most standards and classifications are invisible—or at least go unnoticed in our everyday performance or use

of them. In other words, we use classifications of gender, race, age, sexuality, disability, religion and so on every day, all the time, to understand ourselves and others, mostly unknowingly. We can try to be reflective about them and we can try to minimize their influence on our decisions, but we cannot escape them. Questions of identity classifications and categorization are therefore clearly relevant in order to be able to manage diversity in the workplace. Diversity management has to be understood in context: this means that a prerequisite of conducting diversity management must be an analysis of which categories and classifications exist and are used locally and what effects they have on individuals and their belonging to the group or organization. Throughout the following chapters, these questions will be addressed.

Negotiating Diverse Identities Between Structure and Agency

Furthermore, the tension or opposition between structure and agency is quite prominent in the debates around diversity and identity. On the one hand, agency is an individual's capacity to make their own decisions and act upon them freely. On the other hand, the structural view suggests that individuals and their behaviour are the products of structures (such as the state, the family and other types of organizations). This means that, depending on your structural position, you will be subjected to specific constraints. In its stricter version, this makes individuals rather powerless and makes free will a kind of illusion. In less orthodox understandings, this suggests that individuals have limits to their agency; that is to say, there may be decisions on which they will not be able to act. The relationship between structure and agency has been articulated in many ways. One essential debate is how structural-material conditions determine the extent to which agents are free to act as they wish (e.g. structural determinacy in Marxism). As a response to the emphasis on structural predetermination, Giddens (1984) attempted to reassert the prominence of agency. In his analysis, agency and structure are intrinsically linked:

> The constitution of agents and structures are not two independently given sets of phenomena, a dualism, but represented in duality. […] Structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they organize. Structure is not external to individuals […] it is, in a sense, more internal. (Giddens 1984, p. 25)

Whether structural constraints are internal or external is indubitably debatable. However, a helpful distinction can be drawn between internal, or normative, and external structural constraints. Normative/internal constraints are those we place upon ourselves and others in terms of cultural and social expectations (Tomlinson et al. 2013). By contrast, external structures are elements such as education and social and economic resources in accounts of career success that point to the continued significance of remuneration, repute and representation—or class, status and power (Archer 2007). A helpful synthesis is that structures are always both constraining and enabling (Giddens 1984). While some organizational members will feel enabled by certain structures, others will be constrained by the very same ones. Let us again consider an example. A wheelchair user is structurally invisible, as meeting rooms, buildings, offices and bathrooms are rarely built for wheelchair access. This means that when buildings are built or events are planned, wheelchair users are structurally invisible. However, when they enter a room (especially one not built for wheelchair access), they become visually visible. Conversely, an able-bodied person is structurally visible when a building/event is being designed. This is the body that the designer has in mind. The able-bodied person is, however, visually invisible: we generally do not notice able-bodied people—they just blend in. To put it directly, we do not think "oh, there is an able-bodied person" every time a person not in a wheelchair walks through the door. In other words, not being constrained by structures is an invisible privilege; we rarely think of it as enabling our lives, as it is just the way things are.

The structure versus agency debate plays out in a variety of ways when we consider diversity and identity. As we will develop during the course of the following chapters, when speaking about difference versus sameness, we are speaking about making categories. As we said earlier, we all make categories; otherwise, we would not be able to function as human beings. However, how the categories are made, and how we can or cannot react to ourselves being categorized, is a chief locus between diversity and identity. For example, the authors of this book are usually categorized as female. The basis for differentiation is sex/gender, which generally means that we are considered binary opposites to individuals who are categorized as male. At the individual level, this can play out in different ways. We could agree with this categorization: that is to say, recognize ourselves as being in this phenotypical category. We could also disagree and not self-categorize ourselves as female but rather as male.

We could also agree with the phenotypical category and identify as female while disagreeing with the values or personality attributes that are associated with being phenotypically female, such as being holistic, caring and creative but not assertive, direct and strong. Finally, we could be perplexed by both sides of this binary. Categories are made based on how diverse we are: how different we are perceived to be from another group of individuals. However, this diversity can collide with the perceptions we have of ourselves, our self-definitions: in sum, our self-identified identities. This entails a debate about our possibility to (re)act upon this categorization. Strong agentic views would suggest that yes, we can and do occasionally contest the identities assigned to us, and conformity is a conscious choice. Conversely, strong structuralist views would argue that our upbringings (our socialization in specific institutional settings) form our perceptions and self-definitions in a way that limits not only our possibility but also our willingness to contest categories and the attributes tied to them.

From Imposition to Emergence

In the workplace, this poses the question of following the imposed or the emerging approach to managing diversity. Jonsen et al. (2013) point out the dilemma of voluntarism versus coercion. Indeed, at the organizational level, there is also a theoretical tension between choosing to develop diversity management practices (along one or more of the previously outlined paradigms) or being forced to incorporate policies and tools that are misaligned with other aspects of the organization's strategy culture (i.e. its identity). Still, in practice, "normative demands and expectations from corporations are driven by voluntarism rather than coercive legal measures. The premise of voluntarism lies in the belief that organizations, without recourse to coercive regulation, will proactively pursue workforce diversity at all levels because it is in their interest to do so" (Jonsen et al. 2013, p. 275). This supposes that organizations behaving rationally should promote diversity out of self-interest, which makes diversity an issue of organizational agency, rather than the acknowledgement of individual- or group-level identity politics. Yet, in this process, the coercion of the bottom line replaces the coercion of social justice laws, and identity questions are replaced by economic rationality at the level of the organization. Erasing identity from the management of diversity may also have broader consequences; indeed,

if too many organizations choose to ignore effective and thoughtful management of diversity, this may leave large numbers of people unemployed and marginalized, and their skills underutilized. In essence, the tragedy is that the inclusion of less powerful groups in the workforce at all levels would be better for society as a whole. However, this societal interest may contradict the strategic choices of individual firms. (Jonsen et al. 2013, p. 274)

Besides socio-economic effects, where does this leave individuals and their identities in the workplace? The organizational literature has extensively documented how firms develop and maintain strong cultures or identities, and organizational psychologists have looked at how employees identify with their organizations and the consequences at the individual, organizational and inter-organizational levels (see, for example, Jones and Volpe 2011). Nevertheless, there are still too few bridges between this type of research that foregrounds identity and the existing body of work about diversity and diversity management. Beginning to formulate an answer to this question, we would say that individuals have to engage with the question of diversity through 'identity work'. In the context of the workplace, identity work can be defined as "the practices and strategies by which people construct and negotiate professional, work and organization-based identities" (Brown 2015, p. 23), or as "people being engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening, or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness" (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003, p. 1165).

We will delve more into the locus between diversity and identity by addressing three different perspectives on agency and structure throughout the remainder of this book. These perspectives are (a) social identity theory (explored in Chap. 3), (b) critical theory (examined in Chap. 4) and (c) post-structural theory (explored in Chap. 5). We examine how each of these different theoretical perspectives has a particular take on categorization and on the tension between structure and agency and how this creates different consequences with regard to the connections between identity and diversity in the workplace.

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Categorizing Diversity and Managing Identities

Abstract Social identity theory (SIT) is arguably the most influential identity theory today. The grounding idea in this theory is that individuals not only have 'personal identities' but also have 'social identities': that is, they feel an attachment to one or more groups with which they believe they share an attribute or value that is identity-defining. Group-based diversity management, especially when related to gender- or race-/ethnicity-based social identity, is linked and discussed with regard to SIT-inspired scholarship in its original and more recent developments. The chapter also offers some thoughts on the limitations of the theory to give a complete picture of how to address diversity and identity in the workplace.

Keywords Social identity • Self-categorization • Social psychology • Categorization • Depersonalization • Normative fit • Comparative fit

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we consider the cluster of identity theories concerned with what is called 'social identity', which has been, we contend, the most influential underlying assumption in diversity management in practice, as well as in the way that scholars approach diversity academically. We start with an introduction to the basic concepts of social identity theory (SIT), as well as more recent developments inspired by this stream of literature. We then

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consider in more detail how this perspective impregnates diversity work in research and practice. We then examine a few ways in which diversity management practice takes shortcuts on essential concepts related to social identity formation and social categorization. Finally, we point out what we see as substantial limitations in the social identity perspective in enabling a holistic understanding of diversity and identity in the workplace.

SOCIAL IDENTITY AND SELF-CATEGORIZATION THEORY

While interest in who we are goes back to time immemorial, both academic and popular debates of the last half-century have primarily related to a concept of identity as described in the field of social psychology since the early 1970s. Instead of focusing on the study of individual behaviour in groups, this body of work poses the question of "how do groups behave within individuals?", as Miller and Prentice astutely put it (1994, p. 451). This perspective is concerned with how groups and group structures form individuals' identities. While SIT *sensu stricto* focuses mostly on intergroup relations (Tajfel and Turner 1979), the corollary self-categorization theory (SCT) focuses on how individuals relate to categories (Turner et al. 1987). As common assumptions drive both streams of research, terms such as 'social identity' and 'self-categorization' are at times used indifferently in this chapter. Our aim here is not to provide a detailed review of the related literature but to emphasize central aspects of such theories before linking them to diversity management.

To start with, in social psychology, a distinction is made between personal identity and social identity. On the one hand, personal identity is composed of the self-categories that make an individual feel distinct from other individuals. The basis of distinction here is 'me' versus 'you'; there is a focus on difference and unicity. On the other hand, there is social identity, which refers to the process of categorizing oneself, as well as being categorized by others. The basis of distinction here is 'us' versus 'them'. For example, part of your personal identity could be to believe in God; then, your social identity could be to identify with a specific group of believers, such as Christians or Muslims—or smaller subgroups such as Episcopalians or Shias. Another part of your personal identity could be that you have dark skin; your social identity, in turn, could be to identify with a specific ethnicity. The idea here is that personal identity is what makes you who you are, while social identity is not automatic and is more open to change. For example, you can convert to another religion during

your life, or you can consider that your skin colour is not attached to a particular group-level identity. Social identity arises from a process of social categorization, as described by Tajfel and Turner:

> Social categorizations are conceived here as cognitive tools that segment, classify, and order the social environment, and thus enable the individual to undertake many forms of social action. However, they do not merely systematize the social world; they also provide a system of orientation for self-reference: they create and define the individual's place in society. In that sense, social groups provide their members with a source of identification of themselves in social terms. These identifications are always relational and comparative: they define the individual as similar to or different from, but also as 'better' or 'worse' than, members of other groups. It is in a strictly limited sense, arising from these considerations, that we use the term social identity. Social identity consists, for the present discussion, of those aspects of an individual's self-image that derive from the social categories to which individuals perceive themselves as belonging to. (Tajfel and Turner 1985, p. 283)

This means that, in such a perspective, identity is composed of, on the one hand, characteristics that are tied to the self (such as phenotypical attributes, traits and values) and, on the other hand, "a social identity encompassing salient group classifications" (Ashforth and Mael 1989, p. 21), which can be multiple. For example, one can identify as a woman, an accountant and a Dane. SIT is thus mainly concerned with how a fundamental part of who people think they are (and are not) arises from the groups they identify with and the ones they compare themselves to. For example, we can categorize ourselves and others as being part of the group men versus women, or white-collar versus blue-collar workers. Consequently, it can be argued that social identity expands the sense of self; yet, at the same time, it leads to what Turner called 'depersonalization', as we replace 'I' with 'we'. Such social psychological theories of identity also contribute to explaining why people go beyond their self-interest and defend group stakes.

Comparative and Normative Fit of Social Identity

Furthermore, there are a number of fundamental premises of SIT that are often overlooked and deserve our attention before we move on to connecting this group of theories to diversity and diversity management. SIT

is not only interested in states but also in the processes of group formation and self-categorization. Overall, SIT can be said to align with principles from Eriksonian psychology. In that perspective, individuals make free and autonomous decisions in their lives and have the practical capacity to influence who they are by the choices they make (Carolan 2005; Erikson 1959). The attributes and traits that can serve as the basis for a social identity are neither random nor universal, however. SIT scholars thus insist that both relational and contextual aspects are at play in social identity formation.

Categorization is relational in the sense that it reflects comparative fit, so a focal category emerges when the average differences with a set of individuals are perceived as less than the average differences with another set of individuals. This process, based on contextual differentiation, can thus be expected to lead to different outcomes depending on the context. Furthermore, "the variation in how people categorize themselves is the rule rather than the exception" and "the collective self arises as part of this normal variation" (Turner et al. 1994, p. 455). In turn, some social identities will have more relevance and salience depending on the individual and the context, and one or more of these groups will constitute the basis for a social identity (Dokko et al. 2014; Deaux 2001).

Finally, social identity and self-categorization also have a normative dimension. Normative fit can be defined as "the degree to which perceived similarities and differences between group members correlated with the social meaning of group memberships and in a direction consistent with such meaning of the group identities" (Turner and Reynolds 2012, p. 403). So, the differences between two groups should align with norms and beliefs about them. This means that to categorize a group of individuals as part of the category 'men' rather than 'women', they have to differ from what we believe or expect the differences will be between the two groups. The concept of normative fit thus complements the premise that categorization changes with context, yet it does not include a discussion of norm formation; this aspect will be commented on in the last part of the chapter.

Social Identity, Groups and Diversity

In the context of organizations or in a given team or unit, social identity constitutes a key explanatory factor for group formation and for inclusion or exclusion dynamics in diverse groups. Terms customarily used to refer

to such processes are 'similarity-attraction' (Byrne 1971; Lazarsfeld and Merton 1954), 'in- and out-group effects' (Ellemers et al. 2002; Shore et al. 2011) and 'minority–majority relations' (Bernd et al. 2008). Similarity-attraction means that we are more attracted to a given group due to things we have in common, such as physical attributes, behavioural traits, beliefs, values, and so on, which is in line with the definition of social identity. Similarity-attraction is important to organizational outcomes because attraction has been found to lead to increased interaction and attention and thus better work processes (Hartz 1996; McCroskey et al. 1974). The literature on similarity-attraction has also investigated how this can be detrimental to the groups that constitute the basis for comparison. For example, looking at gender as a basis for similarity-attraction, Binning et al. (1988) found that students who reviewed the credentials of hypothetical applicants intended to adopt a more confirmatory and less disconfirmatory questioning strategy with same-gender applicants than with opposite-gender applicants. Other studies have found that students who read transcripts of hypothetical interviews rated same-gender applicants as less aggressive than different-gender applicants (Wiley and Eskilson 1985).

As Tajfel and Turner (1985) suggest, categorization is not only about similarity or difference but also about perceiving a group as 'better' or 'worse'. Thus, 'in' and 'out' not only denote dissimilarity but also hierarchy between an in-group and an out-group, where we consider individuals who match our social identity as superior in some way to the groups that serve as the basis for differential categorization. Besides documenting the effects of being in the in- or out-group (see, for example, Shemla et al. 2014), researchers have also looked for ways to mitigate these negative effects. For example, Pettigrew (1997) tested the intergroup contact hypothesis and found that intergroup friendships (being in the in-group and having a friend in the out-group) led to less prejudice, and this effect was stronger than the path leading from prejudice to fewer intergroup friendships.

In organizations and teams, the in- and out-groups often reflect numerical balance, with the in-group being the numerical majority and/or the wider standing of a given group in a given context, and also being the one with higher status. So, in male-dominated organizations, men will form the in-group, and women will be seen as part of the out-group both because they are less numerous and because there is a societal hierarchy favouring the masculine over the feminine. Similarly, in a consulting firm,

consultants will form the in-group compared to information technology (IT) support staff, who will form (one of) the out-group(s). In- and out-group effects are thus also related to minority–majority aspects, whether numerical or normative. The literature focusing on majority–minority interrelations has, for example, shown that minority status tends to augment chances for group formation based on a shared trait or attribute, such as race or gender (Mehra et al. 1998). Moreover, Westphal and Milton (2000) have shown that corporate directors who are demographic minorities on a given board can mitigate for detrimental effects by having connections to majority directors through other common memberships, and majority directors who are themselves in a minority position on other boards will enhance the influence of minority directors.

This testifies to the fact that SIT-inspired theories are prominently featured in the literature about organizational diversity. As SIT is originally a small-group theory, this theory is especially mobilized in the research taking an interest in team-level diversity. Racial/ethnic diversity and gender diversity are by far the 'diversity categories' that have received the most attention in the SIT-inspired literature, whether explicitly in the field of social psychology, in connected fields such as organizational behaviour or in management and organization studies more broadly. This body of work attempts to document how team diversity directly affects organizational outcomes such as performance, innovation and organizational processes. A sizeable body of work has investigated such relations and has found support for a positive impact. A popular example is the research examining the effect that women directors on corporate boards have on firm performance (Hoogendoorn et al. 2013; Lückerath-Rovers 2011).

Conversely, some studies show no effect or even a negative effect. For example, Mamman et al. (2012) found negative relationships between perceived low-status minorities, organizational commitment and citizenship behaviour. Adams and Ferreira (2009) looked at female directors' impact on firm performance with a sample of US firms and found a negative effect, despite the fact that more diverse teams improve monitoring efforts. The negative effect of diversity has often been explained by the similarity-attraction hypothesis, which states that people are attracted by similar others (Byrne et al. 1966; Morry 2005; Selfhout et al. 2009). Finally, a number of meta-analyses have attempted to unify the findings, yet without conclusive results (see, for example, Joshi and Roh 2009) or indicating that other variables, notably contextual ones, were stronger explanatory factors (Schneid et al. 2015).

Social Identity and Diversity Management

Overall, the stream of literature mobilizing SIT and SCT connects with what is popularly known as the 'business case for diversity', whether authors are trying to prove or disprove its validity. The baseline idea of the business case for diversity perspective is that individuals categorized as diverse can bring added value to organizations. It is not only about hiring the best and brightest from the full pool of talent but also about the fact that there is an advantage to hiring someone categorized as 'different' compared to hiring 'more of the same'; there is also a linked assumption that this added value can be measured. Diversity is deemed to lead to positive outcomes such as bottom-line gains, improved corporate image, enhanced problem-solving ability, and increased team and organizational learning (Thomas and Ely 1996; Cox 1994). Such work is also echoed in publications from leading audit and consulting firms, which in turn advise their clients on how to reap the benefits of increased diversity at all hierarchical levels.

The prevalence of the SIT-inspired body of literature can thus be linked to preferred approaches in practice. Specifically, we argue here that diversity management largely rests on assumptions derived from SIT and SCT, or at least on a partial understanding of the relevance of considering social and relational dimensions in human resource management. On the one hand, diversity work focusing on categories such as gender and race can be considered positively as an acknowledgement that problems (and solutions) related to diversity should not (only) be apprehended at the individual level. Also, as discussed in Chap. 2, category-based considerations were initially developed to address legal dispositions such as equal opportunities; such provisions, in turn, were the result of social movements involving grassroots, social identity–based groups. However, the merging of the social justice aims of equal opportunities and similar policies with the more neoliberal discourse on diversity as a business-related interest (Tatli 2011) has practical consequences. For example, this means that the tools developed in practice allow recognition of the out-group status of some organizational minorities yet also impose this identity on organizational participants, whether or not they participate in or benefit from such managerial practices.

For example, in a large number of organizations, support schemes in the form of groups or networks are targeted at 'diverse employees'. Such networks are thus based on social identity (Benschop et al. 2015). In

many firms, such efforts usually start with a focus on gender. Internal women's networks, often called 'corporate women's networks', have existed for more than 30 years (Donnellon and Langowitz 2009). First seen as a way to connect the few women employed in a given firm, today they aim to provide female employees with a formal framework in which to develop their career opportunities. In such groups or networks, participants can exchange experiences and have access to both expressive and instrumental resources such as advice, career opportunities and mentors (Villesèche and Josserand 2017). Also, at the organizational level, such networks participate in creating awareness about diversity and discrimination. Despite these laudable aims and the tangible opportunities offered, women-only networks have been criticized in connection with the assumptions and stereotypes regarding the category 'women' in organizations. In particular, participants can fear being pigeonholed as employees who need help. More senior participants want to avoid the perception that they owe their promotions to their minority diversity status; in addition, they may prefer to stay away from such networks because they do not want to be associated with a somewhat stigmatized social identity and the afferent stereotypes. This distancing is often referred to as 'queen bee syndrome' (Cohen et al. 1998; Derks et al. 2016; Faniko et al. 2017; Rindfleish and Sheridan 2003), making it an individual-centred issue. In this context, it also signals that organizational participants may not always find a satisfactory alignment between their self-categorization and the way they are categorized by others, or between their personal identity and social identity in the workplace.

Limits of Category-Based Diversity Research and Management

Overall, the SIT-inspired literature has undoubtedly advanced our understanding of diversity in the workplace, if only by consistently portraying diversity as a variable of strategic interest for management and governance. While there are no firm conclusions to be made as to the positive or negative direct effects of diversity on specific organizational outcomes, the controversy has kept a vivid conversation going among both academics and practitioners and has contributed to putting diversity on policymakers' agendas. In addition, more recent SIT literature has attempted to better connect diversity categories and local contexts by looking at dimensions such as the diversity climate or diversity attitudes (Homan et al. 2007;

Lauring and Selmer 2011; Olsen and Martins 2012; Van Knippenberg et al. 2013). In these studies, such dimensions are the main hypothesized drivers of the effect on performance, rather than the diverse individuals directly. For example, Lauring and Villesèche (2017) show that openness to diversity has a positive relationship with the performance of knowledge-intensive teams and that this effect is strongest when teams lean towards gender balance. However, whether the results highlight the advantages of or issues about diversity in organizations, this body of work examining the effects of diversity on organizational outcomes risks reinforcing the idea that categories are something scientific and fixed and that people are largely identical within given diversity categories.

As suggested, categorization based on social identities such as gender, ethnicity and sexuality helps to develop and maintain awareness about diversity and discrimination in organizations and constitutes a shared representation of which tools and practices to develop for diversity and inclusion in the workplace. However, we believe that this also means that such diversity management practices rest on at least two problematic assumptions: that these groups have stable and homogeneous social identities and that this type of categorization is the most relevant, regardless of organizational context.

Overall, diversity management based on categories supposes that the related social identities are fairly enduring and fixed, when they actually are contextual and multiple (Deaux 2001; Tran et al. 2010). It is often assumed that the stability argument is in line with SIT and SCT. However, as the authors of these theories remarked early on, these theories rest upon the assumption that categories and categorization are relational and contextual phenomena that have local consequences on intergroup relations (Tajfel and Turner 1979); otherwise, "there would be no need for the development of theory to explain when such outcomes were more or less likely to define social relationships" (Turner and Reynolds 2012, p. 401). Going back to some of the defining concepts in SIT and SCT, what is generally neglected in the category-based approach to diversity management are the conditions of fit in a given context: both comparative fit and normative fit. With comparative fit comes the idea that salient social identities will be different depending on the context; in the case of a focal organization, this can cover various dimensions, including but not limited to demographic composition (overall and in units, departments and teams). For example, in a consulting firm, there may be a much stronger in- versus out-group effect between consultants and IT staff than between

male and female consultants. Yet, management practices tend to focus on demographic categories such as gender—regardless of context. The concept of normative fit, then, suggests that in a specific context, the embracing of social identities will have to align with norms about these social identities in the local environment. This contributes to explaining why, for example, large multinational corporations fail in their efforts to implement the same diversity policies in some of their subsidiaries, where the local context differs significantly concerning norms.

In turn, the prevalence of category-based policies and practices in the workplace can be argued to impact research, as this creates fewer opportunities to study and document alternative approaches, especially when considering large or prominent firms that others in the field might look to for best practices. This can contribute to explaining why social identity–based categories such as 'women' have been more consistently researched and considered in practice. For both researchers and practitioners, this takes the attention away from finding out which social identities are important and salient in a particular regional, national or organizational context. Also, such an essentialist approach to diversity studies often combines with a single-category focus (with a strong inclination towards gender and race/ethnicity), thus largely ignoring the intersections of multiple forms of difference and how they possibly intersect (Villesèche et al. 2018). This is problematic, as it largely limits scholarship to preexisting and supposedly enduring categories.

In a kind of chicken-and-egg story, this can lead to the development of even more diversity policies and practices in the workplace that at times poorly address actual needs or concerns. This is what Tatli and Özbilgin (2012) identify as an "etic" approach to diversity: "etic approaches are underpinned by an assumption that salient diversity categories are fixed and, as such, salience can transcend time and place" (p. 180). Overall, they argue that taking an approach based on pre-established and prefixed (*ex ante*) categories diverts us from paying attention to emerging categories of difference. Also, in a time perspective, the SIT-inspired literature and managerial practices largely ignore the complexity of shifting and multiple forms of identification that people draw on in changing situations and contexts (Calás et al. 2013). Such goals are not easy to achieve, as "operationalization of intersectionality is complicated by the politics of choosing the 'differences that make the difference'. In fact, etic approaches to 'differences that matter' dominate not only workforce diversity research but also intersectionality scholarship" (Tatli and Özbilgin 2012, p. 188).

LIMITATIONS OF SIT FOR DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

There are also a number of criticisms to voice about the theory itself. In particular, as mentioned earlier, SCT highlights the phenomenon of 'depersonalization' (Turner and Reynolds 2012; Turner et al. 1987). As explained at the front end of the chapter, as a social identity becomes salient, the individual will consider their similarity and interchangeability with any other member of this group, rather than focusing on aspects of their personal identity. This depersonalization, or 'de-individualization', also has consequences for the perception of members of the out-group; this accentuation means that, for example, men will tend to focus on stereotypical differences with women (Hogg and Terry 2000; Hogg and Turner 1987). Doing category-based diversity management may thus inadvertently reinforce discrimination and stereotyping issues that such tools and policies are meant to address.

Besides, espousing a given social identity means to recognize oneself as an embodiment of the in-group prototype. A prototype is "a subjective representation of the defining attributes (e.g. beliefs, attitudes, behaviours) of a social category" (Hogg et al. 1995, p. 261). As the focus in SIT-inspired work is generally at the group level, there is meagre consideration of the fact that individual perceptions of the prototype may vary contextually and may also change over time. Finally, a key underlying assumption is that unified selves are the norm, yet this supposes that social identities are chosen, rather than imposed. Moreover, in SIT, individuals are considered relatively autonomous in their identity processes, as they can identify with multiple groups and foreground different social identities depending on their salience in a given context. There is little discussion about the relational aspects of self-categorization, especially about how one is also categorized by others with few possibilities of contestation if the attributed social identity is based on normative fit. For example, this means that women adopting traits normatively considered as masculine, and/or self-identifying with the male gender, would still be assigned a female social identity. This categorization would rest, notably, on normative expectations regarding physical attributes and cis-gender traits. Relatedly, the lack of attention paid to power and inequality in relations in SIT and SCT, as well as in category-based diversity management, renders invisible the logic of classification at play. This has led to an oscillation between 'identity-conscious' diversity policies in the quest for social justice and 'identity-blind' ones in the quest to overcome resistance to diversity management

inequalities (Konrad and Linnehan 1999; Tran et al. 2010). Such aspects, and how they gave rise to more critical considerations of diversity and identity in the workplace, are discussed in further detail in Chap. 4.

In the next chapter, the focus will be on critical perspectives on identity, which have nourished most of the previously outlined debates about the limitations of SIT and the category-based diversity literature and management practices they have inspired. Besides, in Chap. 6, we propose several avenues for both academics and practitioners about when and how to move on with or move away from the social identity perspective. In particular, we will consider how this theory can be used to help us to understand better the diversity–identity locus beyond the traditional focus of diversity and diversity management work in focal organizations.

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Reclaiming Identity: The Critical Diversity Project

Abstract Critical scholars of identity and diversity share an interest in uncovering social injustice and domination in organizations. Their chief object of criticism is the perceived apolitical approach of mainstream identity and diversity management research. Such practices are criticized for being blind to measures of managerial control and marginalization through identity categorization and assignment. The critical perspective focuses on how organizational members as agents can actively alter and resist organizational modes of domination. However, we also contend that a critical approach must be supplemented with the development of practical solutions to the progressive changes that the critical scholarship otherwise expounds. This chapter ends with a discussion of how this might be achieved.

Keywords Critical management studies • Deconstruction • Emancipation • Domination • Identity work

INTRODUCTION

The essentialized, fixed and static perception of identity imbued in social identity theory (SIT) and the mainstream diversity management literature is the straw man of critical scholars of identity and diversity. While useful when attempting to uncover group-based power differences in teams and organizations, the SIT perspective provides inadequate guidance to

explore the complexity of the lived experience of organizational members: that is to say, to uncover the complexity of identities. A critical lens acknowledges the need to 'untie' the persistence of identity. As it does so, it is mainly concerned with exposing the problematic power relations that accrue from defining social categories and how these keep historical power relations intact. Critical scholars of identity have a long tradition of engaging in, for example, neo-Marxist critiques of class divisions and how these influence the managerial exploitation of employees.

Critical identity studies investigate the ways that organizational identities are shaped within structures of inequality and through systems and practices of power and resistance in organizations. Hence, it is not identity per se that is the focus of critical studies but rather how the very process of categorizing—of assigning different social and/or occupational identities and group memberships to others or oneself—is a form of systemic domination, as well as an agency of opposition (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Ashcraft 2007, 2013; Barker 1993; Fleming and Sturdy 2011; Scott 2010).

CRITICAL EMANCIPATORY IDENTITY WORK

Considerable attention has been paid to whether organizational identities should be seen as autonomously chosen by resourceful organizational members (agency) or, instead, as being ascribed to individuals by historical forces and institutional structures (Brown 2015). On the one hand, there has been a structural focus on how identity ascription can be seen as a more or less covert form of domination. This critical approach deals with normative, socio-ideological modes of control in organizations that "use social identity and the corporatization of the self as a mode for managerial control" (Kärreman and Alvesson 2004, p. 149; see also Fleming and Spicer 2003; Fleming and Sturdy 2009, 2011). Scholars within this strand commonly describe employees' identities as 'manufactured' or 'regulated' (Alvesson and Willmott 2002) through 'concertive' forms of control (Barker 1993) to produce, for example, 'engineered' (Kunda 1992) or 'corporate' selves (Brown 2015). On the other hand, critical scholars examine how individuals strive to create a positive and coherent social sense of self in response to the multiple and perhaps even conflicting scripts, roles and subject positions they encounter in organizational relations (Kunda 1992). Organizational members may accommodate the identities offered to them by more or less cynically performing them

(Nicholson and Carroll 2013; Scott 2010). They can also try to amend and redefine them; distance themselves from these identities through the use of irony, humour and cynicism; or even actively contest them (Fleming and Spicer 2003). Organizational members are in this perspective not "unthinkingly accepting 'cultural dopes', but nor do they choose unconstrained the contexts in which their identity work takes place or the influences and imperatives that shape their preferred self-understandings" (Brown 2015, p. 7). As highlighted by Alvesson and Willmott (2002), identity work in organizations is not only crucial but also problematic.

Most critical identity scholars presume identity construction to be a dialectic process between structure and agency: "while identities are achieved rather than ascribed, such identities may not always be of your own choosing" (Clark et al. 2009, p. 347). As such, identity creation is the product of both socially orchestrated identity regulation—the exercise of power—and individual identity work (Alvesson and Willmott 2002). By taking the double-sided structural and agentic perspective to identity construction and identity work, the critical perspective moves away from a transmission of a 'solid state of identity' towards uncovering and analysing the political processes and dynamics that come to constitute, reproduce and disrupt identities and end up categorizing organizational members in different subgroups (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Fleming 2005). These subgroups often form around similar interests and reflect shared professional, gendered, racial, ethnic or occupational identities. They might also end up reinforcing structural inequalities and a power hierarchy, where some identities are privileged while others are disadvantaged. For instance, Acker's (2006) 'inequality regime' describes the organization as a power landscape consisting of both formalized, explicit structures of equality (e.g. a formalized diversity policy) and more informal, tacit substructures of inequality. The latter are often tacitly practised in the ordinary lives of organizations, in which, for example, gendered and racialized assumptions about minorities and the majority are embedded and reproduced and inequality is perpetuated (Acker 2012; Holck 2017).

As a result, many analyses conducted from a critical perspective distinguish between (disadvantaged) employees' interests and those of the (privileged) managers and focus on efforts of control and reactions of resistance to the corporate power hierarchy (Fleming 2005; Hudson et al. 2017; Knights and McCabe 2016; Nentwich and Hoyer 2013; Noon 2010, 2018). The uncovering of privilege and disadvantage, by making categorizations and identity construction practices visible, might thus be

turned into political action. It can be seen as a point of departure for mobilizing structurally disadvantaged individuals by creating group solidarity to ignite change (Alvesson and Willmott 1992; Hvenegård-Lassen and Staunæs 2015; Staunæs and Søndergaard 2008). In that sense, critical identity studies might also imbue an emancipatory potential by uncovering systemic ways of regulating organizational identities as a form of normative control mechanism:

> Emancipation is seen as an element in struggles between the exercise of power and reactions to power techniques. It is important to recognize that power involves, apart from a possible starting point for emancipation, subordination as well as the expansion of productive capacities. (Alvesson and Willmott 1992, p. 447)

Hence, emancipation might be at the cost of estranging the individual from the occupational identity(ies) available in the organization, together with a sense of the productive self and a related loss of identity and arising anxiety (Alvesson and Kärreman 2004; Muhr et al. 2013). It is this sensitivity to both conventional social categories and identity regulation dynamics intersecting with an attempt to explore identity work and reflexive identity as dynamic, open-ended and polyphonic identity construction processes (Hatch and Schultz 2002; Humphreys and Brown 2002) that the critical perspective explores (Bardon et al. 2015; Kuhn 2006; Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003).

THE CRITICAL DIVERSITY LITERATURE AND POWER

Following in the footsteps of critical identity scholars, critical diversity scholars seek to 'unmask' power dynamics by illustrating how diversity management as a managerial practice can be a form of managerial control by defining minority employees in fixed, essentialized groups with negative value associations (see, for example, Boogaard and Roggeband 2010; Ghorashi and Sabelis 2013; Jack and Lorbiecki 2007; Śliwa and Johansson 2014; Tatli and Özbilgin 2012; Zanoni et al. 2010). The critical diversity literature has particularly been focused on deconstructing and de-essentializing the notion of diversity and on demonstrating how demographic categories and social identities should not be perceived as static and fixed but as socially constructed and constantly redefined under the influence of competing discourses and structures of power (Jack and

Lorbiecki 2007; Zanoni and Janssens 2004; Van Laer and Janssens 2011). To give an example of such socially constructed discourses and structures of power, let us take the case of people with ethnic minority backgrounds applying for jobs in so-called Western countries. It has been shown many times how a non-Western name on a CV results in much lower evaluations of professional skills compared to a Western-sounding name (Agerström and Rooth 2009; Carlsson and Rooth 2007; Segrest 2010). This means that despite having the exact same—or better—competences, having a non-Western-sounding name decreases a person's chances of being invited to a job interview, let alone getting the job. Moreover, more mainstream diversity (and inequality) literature has shown how women, ethnic minorities, disabled people and other minorities are systematically discriminated against because of their minority status and how this, among other things, is caused by strong societal bias. Critical diversity scholars have analysed how these biases are socially constructed and produced in a cultural and historical power hierarchy between, for example, women and men, and white and black people. The critical project, in other words, has been to exposed how such power hierarchies are influencing everyday decisions and cannot be ignored in, for example, hiring or evaluation processes.

If we stay with the example of ethnicity, these power hierarchies are predominantly made up of two sources. First of all, they stem from larger societal discourses on difference that cast ethnic minorities as a problematic category, resting on a binary of the 'native majority' and 'immigrants', marginalizing the entire group of individuals (Acker 2012; Holck and Muhr 2017; Lorbiecki and Jack 2000; Van Laer and Janssens 2011). This might explain why, for example, ethnic minority employees are excluded or marginalized as low-skilled citizens in the labour market: ethnic minorities are overrepresented in low-skilled and temporary jobs, underrepresented in management positions and more likely than members of the majority ethnic group to face unemployment (Janssens and Zanoni 2014; Ortlieb and Sieben 2014; Siebers and Van Gastel 2015). These macro trends are also reflected in the micro situation in organizations, where societal discourses of difference permeate and are reproduced in relations between organizational members, leading to organizational unequal opportunity structures and the endurance of the inequality that accompanies them (Acker 2006; Boogaard and Roggeband 2010; Holck 2017; Muhr and Salem 2013; Siebers and Van Gastel 2015; Śliwa and Johansson 2014; Tomlinson and Schwabenland 2010). Much critical diversity research has consequently been focused on uncovering the generalized

societal discourses on immigration related to minorities' experiences with discrimination at the organizational level (e.g. Ahonen et al. 2014; Al Ariss et al. 2012; Ashcraft 2013; Benschop et al. 2015; Holck and Muhr 2017; Tomlinson and Schwabenland 2010; Van den Brink et al. 2010; Van Laer and Janssens 2011).

The second source of the power hierarchies influencing diversity management is the argument that mainstream diversity management is normative, utilitarian and characterized by a managerial rhetoric that serves to maintain inequality through the repetition of group stereotypes, such as the lazy, uneducated foreigner and the submissive, nurturing woman (cf., Ahmed 2007; Gotsis and Kortezi 2014; Jack and Lorbiecki 2007; Muhr 2011). Critical diversity scholars have documented how diversity management as a managerial practice is shaped and interpreted through social power hierarchies that favour majority employees by considering them the 'natural' body for prestigious jobs or occupations (e.g. Acker 2006; Ahonen et al. 2014; Al Ariss et al. 2012; Ashcraft 2007, 2013; Zanoni et al. 2010). For example, scholars have shown how the white male body is seen as a natural fit for managers (Ludeman and Erlandson 2006), pilots (Ashcraft 2007) and soldiers (Muhr and Sløk-Andersen 2017). Such normalization of certain bodies for certain jobs produces inclusion/exclusion mechanisms, giving the white male body a competitive advantage in choosing, being chosen for and educating oneself within and practising the given profession (Ashcraft et al. 2012). Much of this literature takes a point of departure in deconstructing the business case for diversity, based on the idea that a diverse workforce can be a valuable asset for organizations if correctly managed, presenting diversity management as a way to value the unique competences of a diverse workforce and to create a win-win situation for employer and employees (Jack and Lorbiecki 2007; Lorbiecki and Jack 2000; Noon 2018; Oswick and Noon 2014). The business case for diversity management is heavily criticized from a power perspective because diversity management as a managerial practice functions as a form of managerial control, with majority employees setting the tacit and implicit standards up against which minority employees are measured (Boogaard and Roggeband 2010; Ghorashi and Sabelis 2013; Dobbin and Kalev 2016; Muhr and Salem 2013; Ortlieb and Sieben 2014; Schwabenland and Tomlinson 2015; Zanoni and Janssens 2015).

To make up for the 'flaws' of an essentialized, static account of diversity, an 'emic' approach based on emerging and situated categories of social identities, rather than predetermined ones (i.e. the 'etic' or *ex ante*

approach described in Chap. 3), has been proposed by critical diversity scholars (Calás et al. 2012; Kenny and Briner 2013). Tatli and Özbilgin (2012) criticize the prevalence of an etic approach to diversity and the construction of diversity categories and point out that scholars adopting an etic perspective tend to focus on a single diversity category, thus overlooking the overlap between multiple forms of differences. Tatli and Özbilgin propose that an emic approach is one "in which the salient categories of diversity are emergent rather than pre-determined, and they are empirically identified and locally defined according to their role in generating power, privilege, advantage, disadvantage, discrimination and inequality at work" (p. 181). The focus on emerging and varying categories of differences that we see in the critical perspective is also recognized under the label of intersectionality. The main goal of the intersectional approach within the critical perspective is to analyse multiple identities in order to "avoid reducing [for example] ethnic minority employees to mere representatives of a stigmatized social group" (Janssens and Zanoni 2014, p. 317), avoiding the risk of reproducing the inequality institutionalized in broader society.

Re-politicizing Identities in Search of Social Justice

The underlying aims that underpin most critical diversity literature are to unveil the marginalization and discrimination of minority employees and to pursue social justice and organizational fairness—in line with the emancipative perspective of critical identity scholars. As Christiansen and Just (2012) emphasize,

> [m]anagement implies control and regulation, and the concern is that it will delimit diversity rather than set it free. Diversity, viewed through the lens of management, is far from the open space for realisation of difference that the term seemingly implies. The managerial perspective also implies that a business case must be made for diversity, and this does not always sit well with ideals of social justice. (p. 401)

The (seemingly) progressive rhetoric of diversity management suggests that efforts are being made to empower organizational minority groups while enhancing productivity (Thomas and Ely 1996). According to Lorbiecki and Jack (2000), the diversity management discourse presents managers as "the privileged subject who sees diversity as an object to be

managed" (p. 23), creating two separate groups: those who manage and those who are different from those who manage. Furthermore, Knoppers et al. (2015) contend that categorical constructions of gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality and so on are not neutral but are products and resources of power. The successful activation of such products and resources thus reinforces the foregrounded pertinence for managers to construct these categories. Hence, the dominant discourse on diversity and its management equips managers with a great deal of authority in creating their preferred version of diversity and how they situate it in a productive logic (Janssens and Zanoni 2005).

CRITICIZING THE CRITICS

Critical diversity research has persistently emphasized that diversity management is 'depoliticizing' the field of diversity by wrapping it in an effectivity and business case rhetoric (Dobbin and Kalev 2016; Holck and Muhr 2017; Oswick and Noon 2014; Zanoni and Janssens 2015). A large part of the critical diversity literature has discussed diversity management's poor track record in making organizations fairer or more just. Diversity management research has been criticized for mainly addressing diversity in socio-psychological terms as an effect of (majority) prejudice and for suggesting that this harm could be addressed with human resources (HR) management practices such as training, mentoring and networking activities (Noon 2018; Janssens and Zanoni 2014). According to critical diversity scholars, these widespread HR practices of diversity management have generally proven insufficient. In fact, little empirical evidence supports their ability to foster workplace equality (Janssens and Zanoni 2014; Noon 2010, 2018; Oswick and Noon 2014). One line of critique is that HR diversity management practices are 'premature' or based on trial-and-error processes, rather than scientific knowledge (Jonsen et al. 2011). Another line of critique suggests that the inadequacy results from the targeting of cognition, rather than the structural dimensions of privilege, domination and disadvantage (Noon 2018; Oswick and Noon 2014; Zanoni et al. 2010). These critics further suggest that such practices might even backfire, resulting in the stereotyping and re-marginalization of the very minority employees who were to benefit from such schemes, "leaving organizational structures and routines which reproduce inequalities and normalize the privileges of the dominant group (e.g. white and male employers) unchanged" (Janssens and Zanoni 2014, p. 2).

For instance, Boogaard and Roggeband (2010) explore how identity can, paradoxically, act as a source of both discrimination and agency when deployed by minority employees. On the one hand, leveraging the business case rhetoric of diversity as a source of special skills and knowledge imbued in minority identities might challenge 'traditional' inequality regarding ethnicity and gender when minority members move up the organizational hierarchy. The business case for diversity thus introduces elements that contradict and potentially undermine unequal power relations along gendered and ethnic discourses within the organization. On the other hand, actualizing particular 'diversity skills' linked to minority identities might concurrently serve to re-marginalize and reproduce inequality, as minority employees are recognized as having deviant and different identities from the majority norm, which tends to pigeonhole minorities into specific jobs. So, while several studies have pointed to the limitations of the business case as a way to challenge inequality (Noon 2010, 2018), Boogaard and Roggeband (2010) suggest that business case arguments, if appropriated and drawn upon by minorities, can help to create positive identities and might create new (discursive) spaces of opportunity and not solely reproduce inequality.

Moving Critique to the Field

Despite the scathing criticism of diversity management, only a handful of empirical studies have traced the effects of specific diversity-related measures (e.g. diversity staff positions, mentoring programmes and diversity training) on the inclusion and promotion of historically disadvantaged groups (Benschop et al. 2015; Boogaard and Roggeband 2010; Dobbin and Kalev 2016; Janssens and Zanoni 2014). Even fewer critical diversity scholars have engaged with practitioners to help to develop workable tools for HR practice or to provide other types of practical solutions to the progressive changes that the critical perspective otherwise expounds (for exceptions, see Akom 2011; Ghorashi and Ponzoni 2014; Ghorashi and Sabelis 2013; Janssens and Zanoni 2014; Ortlieb and Sieben 2014; Staunæs and Søndergaard 2008).

The criticism raised towards critical diversity scholars is that they do not step far beyond mere critique but mainly operate in a theoretical sphere, where ideologies and false consciousness are uncovered through deconstructing these discourses (Ghorashi and Sabelis 2013; Holck et al. 2016; Ortlieb and Sieben 2014; Schwabenland and Tomlinson 2015; Zanoni

and Janssens 2007; Zanoni et al. 2017). This might partly explain the obstacles that critical diversity researchers experience when relating their theories to practice. Accordingly, it has been suggested that critical diversity research should apply a "more proactive, performative perspective that is not afraid to consider alternative approaches and solutions to the practice of diversity management" (Schwabenland and Tomlinson 2015, p. 3), in order to achieve greater insight into "how organizations can achieve greater equality despite their capitalist nature" (Janssens and Zanoni 2014, p. 311). Diversity scholars and practitioners alike underline the necessity to gain more insights into diversity practices and activities, as well as how to change these, as "our current knowledge of how organizations can actually achieve power *equality* remains poor" (Janssens and Zanoni 2014, p. 317; see also Ahmed 2007; Zanoni et al. 2010). Accordingly, a growing number of critical diversity scholars have themselves emphasized the need for more critically informed research into the practices of diversity and inclusion (Benschop et al. 2015; Holck et al. 2016; Schwabenland and Tomlinson 2015; Zanoni et al. 2017). There has also been a call for organization-level analysis and practical, relevant critical diversity studies (Boogaard and Roggeband 2010; Dobbin and Kalev 2016; Ghorashi and Sabelis 2013; Zanoni et al. 2010; Zanoni and Janssens 2015). Hence, diversity in organizations is in need of revitalization, both theoretically and methodologically.

One of the barriers to critically engaged scholarship is the tendency to consider power as located primarily outside of individual reach: in structures, contexts or discourses. Hereby, another kind of 'fixing' of the subjects' positions is produced. Excessive (structural) determinism, and/or the vision that specific groups (managers and majority employees) hold power, underplays (the perceived dominated) individual agency. For example, critical research, with its emancipatory aims, has tended to reify managers as being powerful and other employees as powerless or to assume that bureaucracy is necessarily detrimental to the objective of developing egalitarian, inclusive and democratic organizations and that power is necessarily repressive. Such views have been critiqued in both theoretical and empirical work (see, for example, Courpasson and Clegg 2012; Ekman 2013; Fleming and Spicer 2014; Holck 2017). Further, Janssens and Zanoni (2014) demonstrate how the management can use its position in the employment relation to redefine the relation so that the indirect discrimination of minorities is avoided: "The employer can namely craft an employment relationship in which multiple competences are valued and

multiple identity positionings are offered and enforced in all its practices. As a result, an 'alternative' organizational space is created where all employees' contributions are valued and differences are normalized, and where all employees are expected to comply with broadened norms (rather than asking only minority employees to unilaterally adjust and assimilate to historical majority employment norms)" (p. 328).

With critical research remaining by and large abstract, deductive and disconnected from practice, this research domain has not adequately recognized the active role of the practices through which dominating realities are enacted and has not investigated more fully how the possibilities of agency could be opened up (Holck 2016, 2018; Zanoni et al. 2017). This has led to studies of social movements in and around the organization. For instance, Gagnon and Collinson (2014) document how resistance can form different identities. Through a critical identity lens, they uncover the regulatory practices that constitute an idealized leader identity in a leadership programme, as well as participants' conformity with or resistance to the prevailing models of global leaders prescribed in the two programmes. Other critical studies of minority agency show how the organizational context might even prompt agency of resistance (Holck 2016; Zanoni and Janssens 2007). Drawing on Archer's (2003, 2007) distinction between structure and agency, Holck (2016) shows how minority agency not only reproduces but also challenges organizational opportunity structures. In a structure-agency perspective, minority employees are 'knowledgeable agents' who are free to act but are simultaneously restricted by their awareness and reflexive interpretation of the structural conditions, opportunities and constraints they face (Ortlieb and Sieben 2014). Minority employees are viewed not merely as passive receptacles of control but as agents who reflexively act in more or less compliant ways. These actions might create partial organizational spaces for their micro-emancipation and, potentially, lead to more emancipative ways of organizing diversity (Ghorashi and Ponzoni 2014; Janssens and Zanoni 2014; Tatli and Özbilgin 2012; Tomlinson and Schwabenland 2010).

Another fruitful avenue is the recent call for theory and practice to re-politicize and develop more norm-critical approaches to diversity issues (Choo and Ferree 2010; Christensen 2018; Holck and Muhr 2017; Lui 2018; Pullen et al. 2016; Staunæs and Søndergaard 2008). As will be explored in more depth in the next chapter, norm-critical methods are perceived as a way to reintroduce difference in a different—and less categorical—way compared to the traditional business case logic. A norm-critical

approach seeks to move beyond and transcend both the diversity management praise of differences and the critical stance describing the pre-imposed hierarchical relationship between ethnicities, sexes and so on. Such an approach can help to escape the limits of both critical and SIT-inspired investigations and practices, which can be related as follows:

> Diversity management is caught between a focus on either individual differences or social group characteristics. When emphasis is placed on group characteristics, diversity management takes an essentialist stance and reduces differences to innate, predefined categories. When emphasis is placed on individuals, we lose sight of the structural inequalities and discriminatory practices that may actually bar some social groups from entering organisations and participating on equal terms with everyone else. (Christiansen and Just 2012, p. 401)

Inspired by Muhr and Sullivan's (2013) term 'queering leadership', which was designed to challenge the masculine norms tacitly enacted within leadership, a norm-critical practitioner questions majority–minority distinctions by creatively transgressing the binaries. By broadening the norms of competences and allowing multiple identities to counter societal understandings of, for example, ethnic minorities or women, the majority norm of the ideal worker in the organization can be confronted and destabilized. A concrete example could be to stop talking *about* 'ethnic minorities' and instead have a conversation *with* people with minority ethnic backgrounds. As such, 'minority' would go ahead of 'ethnicity'. This, as Christensen (2018, p. 115) argues, is "a deliberate norm critical choice", as it is "the minority position that is problematic and not people's ethnic backgrounds per se". It is not one's ethnic background but how one is 'minorized'. A norm-critical approach can thus help to identify the current limitations of the business case and its focus on profitability. Moreover, it can help to move diversity management towards goals of learning and social development in a democratic, empowerment-oriented organization that promotes the spirit of autonomy: that is, the idea that the 'other' can manage and influence decisions affecting that otherness.

Concluding Comments

Scholarship adopting the critical perspective is still rather young and emergent and thus holds great promise but also has limitations. To start with, although existing critical contributions to the diversity literature

have successfully helped to understand the shortcomings of SIT and essentialist, de-politicized categorizations, such streams have yet to develop solid empirical work mobilizing these theoretical insights. Critical scholars have themselves pointed out this challenge (Lewis 2009; Tatli and Özbilgin 2012). For example, Tatli and Özbilgin (2012) acknowledge that the limitations of the application of emic perspectives in empirical research are due to both the convenience and legitimacy of the inquiry: "there is a strong tradition of using established categories of difference in analyses, whereas starting with an exploration of relations of power, leading to identification of salient categories, may yield surprising strands of differences, but leave the researcher in unchartered territory" (p. 189).

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Post-identities: The Transgression of Diversity Categories

Abstract In Chapter 5, we unfold and discuss the post-structuralist view of identity, diversity and diversity management. Arguably, the post-structural perspective builds on and extends the critical one, as it emphasizes that identities are fragmented, fluid and thus ultimately non-manageable. The post-structural perspective suggests a reconceptualization of difference where difference is always becoming. This means that post-structural takes on diversity and identity insist on the instability and transgression of categories. Post-structural approaches thus encourage constant reflexivity about the way that norms structure our concepts and they foreground the continual need to undo these to pave the way for equality.

Keywords Post-structuralism • Transgression • Fluidity • Queering • Becoming

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we unfold and discuss the post-structuralist view of identity, diversity and diversity management. Arguably, the post-structural perspective builds on and extends the critical one, as it emphasizes that identities are fragmented and fluid and thus ultimately non-manageable. Instead of the management of diversity, the post-structural perspective suggests a reconceptualization of difference where difference is always

becoming. This means that post-structural takes on diversity and identity insist on the instability and transgression of categories, rather than on discussing approaches to categorization—regardless of whether the discussion aims at the better understanding of given groupings (as in the social identity theory [SIT] perspective) or to expose the dark sides of them. Post-structural approaches are thus important, as they encourage constant reflection about the way that norms structure our concepts and they foreground the continual need to undo these to pave the way for equality.

Fragmented, Fluid and Intersecting Identities

A post-structural perspective implies a shift from identity to subjectivity. Such a shift is necessary in order to highlight how our sense of 'who we are' is shaped by the power relations we are subject to, or how we are subjects of fluid rather than fixed qualities, as emphasized, for example, by Foucault (Loacker 2013; Loacker and Muhr 2009; Staunæs 2003). For Foucault, discourses do not only dictate culturally acceptable behaviour, which is how the concept of discourse is defined in the critical perspective. He adds that they also "systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault 1972, p. 49). As such, discourses create normalizing standards of behaviour in relation to which individuals perform and understand their identities (Fleming and Spicer 2003). Foucault (1988) explains this monitoring as "an exercise of self upon self by which one tries to work out, to transform one's self and to attain a certain mode of being" (p. 2).

Normalizing discourses thus produce certain socially agreed-upon 'truths' in our everyday lives, which inform our understanding of the 'way *things* should be' and thus also about the 'way *we* should be' to fit in. So, the concept of identity itself is considered a form of subjugation: an internalization of socially constructed and accepted norms. Through a post-structural, discursive lens, the SIT perspective on identity as centred, autonomous and unified—an essence or 'being'—is exchanged with a perception of identity as in constant 'becoming' and radically decentred (Ahonen et al. 2014; Tsoukas and Chia 2002). That identity is constantly becoming means that one's identity is always influenced by—and negotiated with—the society one is part of, the people one socializes with, the media one reads and so on. For example, a man's gender identity and the corresponding masculine behaviour cannot, following the post-structural perspective, be understood solely from a biological angle. Instead, post-structuralists see masculinity as something men are taught to perform and

thus normalize since they are young children. Every day, boys and girls are taught what it 'means' to be a boy or a girl: in nursery, in school, with friends and by their parents. If one falls out of the norm, that is to say, if a boy displays stereotypical 'feminine' behaviour such as crying, playing with dolls, wearing pink or preferring to draw princesses instead of playing with cars, they are socially sanctioned—or socially controlled—into 'normal', or normative, behaviour. This social control need not be direct or cruel, and many therefore do not even notice it. Often, it happens through small everyday comments such as "act like a big boy", "that's a girl colour", "don't be such a sissy" and "real boys like cars". Through small everyday practices, we 'learn' what it means to be a girl or a boy in the society that we live in and thus which identities fit our bodies.

As most individuals are exposed to different—and often mutually exclusive—discourses that influence their identities, identity is, in the post-structural perspective, seen as fragmented by a variety of nested, overlapping identities, external influences and levels of consciousness. One of the authors has been conducting interviews with Danish police officers with minority ethnic backgrounds.[1] Many of them tell stories of how they experience conflicting and overlapping identities privately, where, for instance, they feel neither Indian enough (for those with an Indian background) nor Danish enough. Similarly, professionally, their non-white bodies do not seem to fit with how the society imagines a police officer. This creates an apparent conflict in their police identities, as they are struggling to construct stable identities within the mutually exclusive discourses of foreignness, professionalism, home culture and police culture. According to the post-structural perspective, however, it is not a conflict that needs to be resolved but rather understood and manifested in order to negotiate their experiences of simultaneous sameness and difference (Ghorashi and Sabelis 2013). Another classic example is the female leader. At work, she fights to be accepted as equally professional and competent as her male peers at the risk of being called 'bossy' and 'bitchy' if she is too assertive; at home with family and friends or when picking her children up from nursery, she has to struggle to be seen as a good mother, as having long work hours clashes with society's ideal of motherhood. Thus, her identity is never stable but constructed in the struggle between the discourses of

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[1] 'Minority ethnic background' here refers to people born in Denmark and with Danish citizenship but whose parents or grandparents come from non-Western countries, such as Morocco, Somalia, Nigeria, India or Pakistan.

womanhood, motherhood and leadership. Bodies that more naturally fit a given category, such as the white male police officer or the white male leader, do not have to struggle with equally many mutually exclusive identity discourses, as the discourses of being white and a man better fit the ones of being a professional, a breadwinner and a father (Kugelberg 2006). Conversely, however, a stay-at-home dad will experience similar struggles with mutually exclusive identity discourses, as society's perception of masculinity still does not include fatherhood, cleaning and cooking.

This constant and shifting external influence on the formation of self implies that "a fragmented self constantly fluctuates among diverse and changing identities, pulled by issues and events to focus on one aspect of the self rather than the other—temporarily" (Martin 1992, p. 156). This perception aligns with Mead's (1934) conception of the individual as a parliament of selves. In this sense, people must continually renegotiate with powerful and at times oppressive discourses. Identity is "constantly open and available to be negotiated and re-negotiated, defined and redefined" as the everyday self emerges out of the reflexive social interaction with others—claiming a discursively constructed rather than essential self (Tracy and Trethewey 2005, p. 169). Because of this, Tracy and Trethewey (2005) also assert that there is no such thing as a 'genuine' or 'fake' identity. We often hear interviewees repeat the popular distinction that their private self is more 'true' or 'real' compared to their professional self and that their professional self is a mask they put on in the workplace (in line with Goffman's notion of front stage/back stage). Tracy and Trethewey (2005) argue, however, that because we as individuals are always influenced by—and constructed in—the experiences we have (on all stages), it does not make sense to talk about one identity being truer than another. Rather, one can say that in the context of home, it makes more sense to identify in a certain way and then in another way in the context of work. Thus, different aspects of our identities are foregrounded depending on the contexts we are placed in and the interactions we experience. This is perfectly exemplified by the 'career woman' who at work feels like she should stay longer to complete an assignment or perform extra tasks and when picking up her child from nursery two minutes before closing time feels guilty and sees herself as a bad mother when she faces the judging look in the nursery teacher's eyes. However, it will never be possible for her to prioritize one identity over the other. She is both, despite the fact that they are socially constructed as mutually exclusive. It is the complexity of all these various stages that our lives are performed on that makes up

the foundation for the fragmented and fluid aspects of identity that individuals continuously move in and out of, which they negotiate and renegotiate.

For the purpose of understanding fluid and fragmented identities, the concept of intersectionality becomes helpful. The term 'intersectionality' was coined by legal theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw. Crenshaw (1991) argues that the particular situation of black women cannot be equated with that of white women, as colour intersects with—and influences how—gender is constructed. Thus, intersectionality diverts from a single, dominant focus on gender, as well as from considering only binary variables, and takes into consideration the multiple categories that simultaneously construct our identities. In management and organization studies, the theoretical lens of intersectionality is becoming increasingly popular (Villesèche et al. 2018). Scholars have used it both as a theoretical lens and as a methodological approach, covering areas such as identity (Johansson and Śliwa 2014; Atewologun et al. 2016), language (Johansson and Śliwa 2016), entrepreneurship (Knights and McCabe 2016), diversity management (Zanoni and Janssens 2007) and international business (Zander et al. 2010). What unites these analyses is a problematization of how identity is often (particularly in SIT-inspired perspectives) portrayed as an individual, free choice between a multiplicity of available social identities. In problematizing such free choice and stressing the way that identities are influenced by multiple discourses, intersectionality theory argues for a reaffirmation of how these identities are always already traversed by power. Attending to one category at a time is, therefore, from an intersectional perspective, insufficient if we want to understand the multiple and simultaneous intersecting processes of identification. This also means that simply listing the accumulated effects of each category is not an option, as it does not do justice to the complexity of intersectionality theory either (Christensen 2018). A classic exercise showing the importance of being able to see multiple intersecting identities simultaneously is to ask people to write down five identity markers that they feel represent them. One could, for example, write 'woman', 'mother', 'lesbian', 'academic' and 'white'. Together, the five identity markers give a picture of who this person is. In a second step, however, we ask this person to only choose one of the identity markers: to choose the one that best captures their identity. However, this is an impossible choice. We rarely want to be seen as only one of the categories. If the person chooses 'mother' before 'academic', does this mean that she does not take her work seriously enough? Or that

she wants her colleagues to see her only as a mother? If she chooses 'academic', does this mean that she is no longer a mother when she is at work, or that she prefers her work over her family? Maybe she does not feel like choosing 'lesbian' first, as sometimes it is a relief to 'just' be a woman. Similarly, maybe she does not feel like choosing 'white', as even though she knows she always lives the privilege of being white, she does not want this to overshadow the other identity markers. However, this is what diversity management initiatives often do. They single out one identity marker and make a policy for this group of people (women; senior workers; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) staff; etc.) as if this identity marker overrules the others. Therefore, an intersectional perspective is crucial to understand the way that diversity and identity work in fragmented and overlapping ways. Although it is undoubtedly important to have, for example, LGBT policies, to work on getting more women in management or to develop a religious inclusion programme, few employees want to be reduced to 'the female leader', 'the gay key account manager' or 'the Muslim IT specialist'. An interesting exercise to make this even more explicit is, for a week, to mark the norm, instead of the minority. So instead of talking about a co-worker as 'the female engineer', noticing 'the male nursery teacher' or 'the same-sex couple' holding hands on the street—try to emphasize whiteness, maleness, able-bodiedness and heterosexuality. When we use sentences like 'my able-bodied colleague', 'our heterosexual CEO', our 'male accountant' or 'my white partner', people react with surprise. When we single out able-bodiedness, heterosexuality, maleness or whiteness, it becomes visible how invisible these identity markers usually are in our everyday language—because they are the norm.

Perceiving identity as fragmented, fluid and constructed by ideological intervention and the management of meaning—and differences as constructed and governed to produce desired managerial effects—renders diversity and its management a contested site of discursive struggles (Ahonen et al. 2014). This leans on a post-structuralist understanding of identity and of the phenomenon of diversity, emphasizing how diversity is, on the one hand, articulated, staged and performed by employees and, on the other, enforced upon and attributed to employees and articulated in the processes of social relating and casting (Czarniawska and Hoepfl 2002; Down and Reveley 2009). Diversity can, therefore, be used for divergent purposes, such as an idea, a taxonomical tool or a mechanism for disciplining identities (Ahmed 2012; Foldy 2002; Kirton

and Greene 2000; Liff and Wajcman 1996; Nkomo and Stewart 2006; Prasad and Mills 1997). Viewing diversity as a discourse furthermore helps to explain why many diversity objectives are poorly understood, defined and operationalized and have negligible effects on equality and inclusion (for an example of this, see Christensen and Muhr 2018). The very idea that diversity management can work as an unbiased mechanism for social justice is naïve and at times even unethical (Muhr 2008), as it ends up casting and categorizing an individual along essentialist and one-dimensional lines. To resist the subjugating power of diversity, the primary objective becomes to "unmask 'hidden' contexts and 'invisible' power relations" (Ahonen et al. 2014, p. 270) and to question established structures of domination and subordination (Meriläinen et al. 2004). Post-structural approaches to diversity therefore often argue for an uncategorical approach (Muhr 2008; Risberg and Pilhofer 2018), or at least one in which the categories are rethought as events, actions and encounters between bodies. In sum, they argue for considering relational existence as becoming, rather than as being (Puar 2012).

In such post-structural critiques of diversity, researchers have proposed approaching diversity from a transgressive point of view, where the transgression of binaries is at the centre (see, for example, Ashcraft and Muhr 2017; Muhr and Rehn 2015; Pullen 2006; Muhr 2011; Phillips et al. 2013). The discriminating effects of dichotomies, particularly those concerning the split between masculinity/femininity, heterosexuality/homosexuality and black/white, are particularly well documented and problematized within feminist and queer studies, which we turn to next.

Transgressive Identities and Queer Theory

Appending to the post-structural critique of diversity management, feminist and queer theories highlight the contingent foundations of gendered and sexual subjectivities (Butler 1990, 1993b). In so doing, they put forward a political project aimed at opening up restrictive, dualistic notions of embodiment to a broader multiplicity of sexed, gendered or sexual being(s). Queer theory emerged as a way to mark political practices that resist normalization, specifically those mechanisms that produce and sustain heterosexual relations as *the* standard—a phenomenon also labelled 'heteronormativity' (Eng et al. 2005; Lee et al. 2008). Queer theorists reject the notion that masculinity and femininity are mutually exclusive opposites. Therefore, queer theorists claim that desire for one another is

not natural but secured by the normalization of the 'heterosexual matrix'. The heterosexual matrix is a concept that Butler (1990) developed to denote the way that a dualistic alignment between bodies, gender and desire is naturalized and normalized, such that we are brought up with the perception that 'real' men perform masculinity and desire women, and vice versa. Queer theory challenges such binary identity formations and problematizes the core categories of men–women, masculine–feminine and heterosexual–homosexual as primary agents of oppression (Fuss 1991). They are oppressive, it is argued, because if one falls outside the norm, for example, a masculine woman or a feminine man, one is seen as unnatural. In her studies, Muhr (2011) analyses the case of a female chief executive officer (CEO). She finds that this female CEO displays and embodies both hyper-masculine and hyper-feminine traits and that, in consequence, her employees see her like a machine and not as a woman. A male leader who deprioritizes having or taking care of children and who is ruthless and strategic might be perceived as strict, assertive and in the best interest of the company but rarely as non-human and machine-like. This happens, queer theorists would argue, because we have difficulties seeing the category of 'woman' (her body) together with the category of 'masculinity' (her behaviour). In other words, it is a violation of the heterosexual matrix and thus perceived as an 'unnatural' combination.

As an alternative, queer theory calls for the normalization—or at least acceptance—of the transgression of categories and as such encourages resistance to fixed-identity politics (Harding 2016; Parker 2002; Pullen et al. 2016). In this way, queer theory does not condemn heterosexual relations, feminine women or masculine men but argues for the necessity to let anybody—and any *body*, literally—perform femininity/masculinity and heterosexuality/homosexuality. As Butler (1990) contends, queer identity signals a radical otherness—a claim to difference that cannot be defined and categorized. Thus, to remain what Butler (1993a) calls 'critically queer', queer has to resist any definition, and the word 'queer' can therefore never fully describe the subjects of—or for—whom it speaks (see Eng et al. 2005; Pullen et al. 2016). Instead of speaking of a queer position, then, it makes more sense to conceptualize queer as situated conditions of possibility (Muhr et al. 2015): as practices of 'queerness' or acts of 'queering' (Brewis et al. 1997; Muhr and Sullivan 2013; Parker 2016). On the one hand, it is possible—in fact, quite likely—for a person to identify as queer, to be actively engaged in queer politics and to be informed by queer theories in both personal identification and political activism. On the other hand, it

may be difficult to imagine a single way to be properly queer. In fact, if queer is constant questioning, one will never be able to be queer enough.

A tension thus runs through queer theory: on the one hand, an impulse to make alternative gender-sexual practices and selves visible and legitimate and, on the other, an impulse to disturb identity categories altogether (Butler 1993b). In other words, as much as the tension perplexes, it also carries forward the promise of queer, insisting on the multiplicity of gender-sexuality (Pullen et al. 2016). Such multiplicity will never be a 'multiplicity of the same' (e.g. multiple masculinities, which clings to the binary origins of the man–woman opposition) but a fuller, ontological multiplicity, with infinite becomings of difference (Ashcraft and Muhr 2017; Linstead and Pullen 2006).

In organization studies, post-structural work inspired by queer theory draws on the thinking of Butler but also, for example, Ahmed, Cixous and Kristeva. This body of work has mostly discussed gender and has emphasized a transgressive, multiple or fluid way of seeing identity: one that is positioned to break with gender essentialism in organization studies (Borgerson and Rehn 2004; Linstead and Pullen 2006; Muhr 2011; Muhr and Rehn 2015; Pullen 2006). Muhr and Sullivan's (2013) study of a transgender manager, for example, documents how her colleagues—although they perceived themselves as supportive and tolerant—changed their expectations about her managerial abilities and skills after her change of gender appearance from man to woman. Moreover, the situated contexts within which these physical differences are perceived and responded to undoubtedly influence the way that the transgender manager herself negotiates her professional and queer identity in fluid and fragmented ways (Muhr et al. 2015). Such research aims at destabilizing our common sense and our normalized understanding of gender identity and sexuality by analysing the way that the heterosexual matrix produces expectations about what normal behaviour is and is not (see also Rumens 2008; Rumens and Kerfoot 2009; Thanem 2011; Thanem and Knights 2012; Thanem and Wallenberg 2014). Destabilization, therefore, can only be achieved by contesting and broadening the norms, as well as by creating new and more flexible norms. Such norms should offer multiple positionings that avoid a value hierarchy (e.g. perceiving masculine as superior or more desirable than feminine) and transgress the hierarchical relationships between multiple norms, for example gender and ethnicities/origins. This kind of disruption creates space for individual experiences beyond the automatic diversity categorization.

Queering, therefore, means destabilizing the heteronormative concepts and phenomena that presently dominate management and organization theory and multiplying gender-sexual potentialities instead (Muhr and Sullivan 2013; Parker 2002). Drawing on queer theory, Ashcraft and Muhr (2017) developed a mode of analysis called 'promiscuous coding', meant to disrupt the gender divisions that presently anchor most leadership metaphors, as well as organizational metaphors in general. They did so, first, by developing an analytic practice based on queer principles and, second, by addressing specific habits of conduct that facilitate queering. According to Ashcraft and Muhr (2017), promiscuous coding resists essentialism and binaries by enacting strategic *'in*essentialism', which means toying with various possible essences, positions and shape-shifting. Crucially, even as it "refuses any normalizing moral accountability, then, promiscuous coding is not without ethico-political responsibility (see Diprose 2009; Pullen and Rhodes 2014); it is not a reckless or 'self-serving' (in either identity or egotistical senses) analytical rampage" (Ashcraft and Muhr 2017, pp. 219–220). As they sum up, "in short, we intend promiscuous coding as an analytical method that gleefully *and* conscientiously 'gets around'" (Ibid., p. 220).

Performativity

To understand how fragmented, fluid identities are negotiated and renegotiated against normalized discourses and how these discourses can be transgressed, the concept of performativity becomes imperative. The concept of performativity conceives individuals not only as passive receptacles of disciplining discourses but also as shaped by discourses when performing them. The concept of performativity, Butler (1993a) suggests, offers a framework within which one may explore and challenge current limitations to articulations of alterity while remaining aware of the constraints and boundaries that one's own alternative articulations will necessarily incur. Performativity, in sum, "should be […] understood not as a singular or deliberate 'act', but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (Butler 1993b, p. 2). That identity is performative thus means that individuals, as agents, can reflect and act upon such discourses in more or less compliant ways, creating opportunities for micro-emancipation and spaces of resistance (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Zanoni and Janssens 2007). This is the case even when adopting and performing contradicting discourses simultaneously (Egan-Wyer et al. 2018).

As such, identity is constructed while performing it. Thus, if identity is constructed in the performance, new variations of one's identity are always possible through small (or larger) alterations of such performance. Identity resistance or change therefore does not have to be a result of a revolution, exposure or direct critique (as the critical perspective would emphasize) but can also happen through small everyday acts of resistance. Studies in this vein have shown how subjectification can be mobilized through a wide range of systems in contemporary organizations, with the result that the very identities of organizational members are enlisted to achieve political ends, such as productivity and efficiency.

This kind of thinking has informed research exploring the mutually constituting relationship between power and identity (e.g. Ashcraft 2006; Gagnon and Collinson 2014; Nicholson and Carroll 2013; Scott 2010; Toyoki and Brown 2013; Tracy and Trethewey 2005). In particular, feminist philosophers, in part drawing on Foucault, such as Butler (1990, 1993b), Irigaray (2002), Grosz (2004) and Braidotti (2002), have insisted on seeing the subject as that which in essence is multiple, fragmented and only temporarily integrated and rendered stable. This has inspired more recent diversity scholarship not only to think in multiple terms but to do so while also rising up against binaries and stereotypes.

If we see diversity management practices themselves as performative, they also enact these dualisms, bringing them into active, present being and force. In other words, diversity management practices themselves are engaged in gender (and race, religion, class, etc.) performativity. They are not merely static or abstract heuristics used to describe practices: they are knowledge *practices* that in their naming, classification and mobilization produce ontological effects. They 'do gender', they 'do race' and they 'do class', continually yielding the 'realness' of binary difference (West and Zimmerman 1987). However, just as categories are performatively constructed, so are the resistance and critique of normalized performances. As a consequence, a critical performative approach to diversity must always be norm-critical, with the intent to disturb, disrupt and undo the patriarchal and 'Western' norms from which categories of difference, and thus identity categories, are usually derived. As Christensen argues, "this [norm-criticism] remains work-in-progress and new norms for organising are developed along the way. A concluding remark would therefore be that norm-critical reworking of organisational norms is a never-ending endeavour if it is to be queer, performatively, and avoid unreflexive replacement of one set of norms with another" (2018, p. 126).

Conclusion and Critiques

Ahonen et al. (2014, p. 278) succinctly sum up a post-structural perspective on diversity in this way:

> 'Diversity' is not and cannot be independent of the particular research exercise of which it is part, but rather, it remains contingent on the choices made by scholars who co-create research and connect to diversity in different ways, fuelled by managerialism, social justice, or a combination of the two. […] Context in this kind of analysis is not, then, a 'variable' or 'background', but a complex of power relations, discursive practices and forms of knowledge that need to be analysed.

The post-structural perspective thus criticizes the SIT perspective for being managerial and functionalist, and it criticizes the critical perspective for being blinded in its search for social justice. Therefore, post-structural diversity scholars often stress that researchers should be critical not only of the diversity practices under scrutiny but also of their very own framing and comprehension of them, including the blind spots and bounded paths that their approaches bring about. In a sense, it emphasizes the need for double criticality.

Finally, some of the critique that has been raised towards the post-structural perspective on identity and diversity is to a large extent in line with the critique of the SIT perspective. Detractors point out that in the more austere and deterministic versions of post-structuralism, the individual has no autonomy in identity creation but is the subject of hegemonic discourses shaping and imposing specific identities. This leads to overemphasizing the fragility of the self and its vulnerability to the power of discourse, in what Alvesson and Kärreman (2011) term a "muscular discourse": "associating identity as tightly intertwined with and a product of the operations of power offering a hard-to-resist template" (Alvesson 2010, p. 207), rendering actors' identities colonized and cloned (Gagnon and Collinson 2014) or formed as 'gingerbread' or 'McSelves'—generic identity moulds that each "elects to fit itself into" (Scott 2010, p. 219). It has also been argued that individuals have a certain degree of agency, voluntarism and choice that is inherent in every power relation, meaning that actors do not experience the mortifying "loss of self through institutionalization" but "willingly discard the old selves in the hope to find something better" (Scott 2010, p. 219)—within a limited range of possible identities, however.

In that sense, the post-structuralist approach can be seen as an unfruitful decoupling or disconnection of discourse (what is said) and practice (what is done) (Alvesson and Kärreman 2011, p. 1125). Moreover, Foucault's work, for example, does not let us clearly locate domination, including domination in gender relations: he claimed that individuals are constituted by power relations, but he argued against their constitution by relations such as the domination of one group by another. That is, his account makes room only for abstract individuals, not women, men or workers (Hartsock 1990, p. 169). This means that, for example, the feminist identity risks being lost under the discursive turn of post-structuralism (Calás et al. 2012).

Overall, the post-structural perspective has relied heavily on theoretical deconstructions of binaries and stereotypes and has successfully pointed to some very problematic assumptions in diversity management. However, this approach suffers from a lack of empirical studies. This scarcity of fieldwork can be tied to the fact that the critique posed dissolves when applied to practice, rendering empirical studies—as well as practical implications—difficult to develop. In Chap. 6, we will propose some scholarly and practical avenues in that direction.

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From Theory to Practice

Abstract As deliberated in the introduction, this book takes its point of departure as the exploration of the complex connections between the identity and diversity literature. We start this chapter by briefly summarizing the main findings when comparing the three lenses offered on the relation between identity and diversity: the social identity, critical and post-structural perspectives. We then proceed to discussing the implications for practice, as well as prospects for future research for each perspective and across them.

Keywords Research avenues • Practical implications • Cross-perspective insights

Introduction

In this book, we have proposed a tripartite reading of diversity scholarship through the lens of identity with (1) a perspective grounded in social identity theory (SIT) and similar streams of literature; (2) a perspective grounded in critical theory and critical of SIT in a way that emphasizes the social/structural embeddedness of identity work, identity construction and power dynamics; and (3) a perspective grounded in the post-structuralist approaches to identity, where the concept of identity is transgressed or 'queered' and seen as a form of subjugation in and of itself.

To start with, drawing on SIT, we developed a better understanding of how sets of attributes serve as a basis for individuals to identify with different groups. We have also seen how, in practice, this too often leads to a reification of those attributes and identifications in diversity management. Then, in line with more critical scholarship and a large part of the identity work literature, diversity was put in the wider context of societal structures and power differentials that re-politicize the perception and construction of identity. This important and highly insightful work has developed our critical understanding but to some extent has emphasized the fixity of structures against the agentic possibilities of individual actors and has privileged the description of identity and diversity management practices over proposing practical tools. Finally, a post-structural perspective makes identity and, in turn, diversity localized and discursive phenomena that constantly do and undo structures (that have thus no materiality outside of local power/knowledge matrices) and opens up agentic possibilities for change through discourse, including embodiment and performance. However, this is done at the risk of diluting and relativizing the experiences of individuals and groups of individuals of lesser power and status. In addition, while theoretically rich, such a perspective provides us with few practical tools and examples of how to achieve change in practice.

Taking stock from these learnings, we now propose to discuss some of the possible avenues for diversity research and diversity management practices from these three perspectives on identity. In addition, the last section of the chapter centres on reflections arising from issues and synergies across chapters. We refer to others' work yet illustrate avenues mainly from our own ongoing research interests; we look forward to seeing others develop related or entirely different ideas in the future.

SOCIAL IDENTITIES IN AND AROUND ORGANIZATIONS

As suggested in Chap. 3 and developed in Chap. 4, there are limitations to approaching diversity and diversity management solely with *ex ante* categorizations. We also pointed to how the scholarship and practices derived from SIT have a tendency to fix, reify and essentialize categories and individuals inside them, as well as to often overlook the question of agency versus structure. However, this does not mean that SIT and related streams should be dismissed entirely. Understanding more about categorization, self-categorization and their implications in groups and organizations is of importance, as these social phenomena are hardly escapable. Moreover,

understanding more about the interplay of self-categorization and the categories into which others put us can also contribute to push such scholarship beyond its assumption regarding agency.

Developing SIT-inspired scholarship, we believe, thus requires closer attention be paid to contextual variables and to variations beyond simple dichotomies. For example, Purdie-Vaughns et al. (2008) have shown that in organizational contexts where there is both low ethnic minority representation and low acknowledgement of the value of diversity, individuals identifying with such an ethnic minority will perceive a threat to their identities and have low trust in the organization. In other words, diversity cues are interpreted differently depending on the context, leading the authors to label this 'social identity contingencies'. In turn, Hamamura (2017) argues that, in organizations with positive diversity attitudes, majority nationality group members are more likely to feel that their social identities are threatened in national cultures where social identities are collectivist (which is the standard assumed in most SIT-inspired research) rather than relational (as customary in many Asian countries). More work in this vein would let researchers work with categories that, albeit being *ex ante* and largely assumed to be fixed and enduring, could be more locally and dynamically understood and not seen as the core element that needs to be 'fixed'. Such work could, in turn, inspire practitioners to investigate local specificities—national, cultural, institutional, organizational, and so on—in relation to categories such as gender and ethnicity before implementing borrowed best practices. In the case of multinational corporations, getting inspiration from such work could lead to more flexible diversity management adapted to subsidiary locations and strategic roles of subsidiaries without compromising core values.

In addition to the intra-organizational focus that dominates existing scholarship, we wanted to take a first step in developing a new direction for the use of SIT in diversity scholarship and in pointing to ways in which relating to and managing 'organizational others' based on social identity categories can be both problematic and fruitful when looking beyond organizational borders. To this end, we developed two examples: women in management and corporate alumni. In Chap. 3, we discussed the example of internal women's networks as an intra-organizational management practice and discussed some of their limitations related to the reification of the female social identity and the risk of seeing female staff as a homogeneous category that needs help or that benefits from preferential treatment in hiring and promotion. However, such networks also exist outside

of organizational boundaries, where they are set up by professional bodies, industry-level associations or independently by groups of women. In a sense, one could say that they are extending problematic diversity management tools to the inter-organizational space. Nevertheless, women can be more eager to engage in external networks, as such networks do not require them to 'showcase' gender-based social identities in their workplaces and also because they are likely to access a wider variety of contacts and resources, especially if they work in industries with lower numbers of women (Villesèche and Josserand 2017). However, to date, there is a lack of evidence on the instrumental outcomes and realized advocacy potential of such networks. This arguably creates a tension between the aspiration to escape categorization and the need to use predefined, social identity–based categories to organize their actions, which needs to be further researched.

For diversity managers or human resources (HR) managers, such external networks can also be of interest. To start with, for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), this can be an opportunity to encourage networking with other women at similar or higher hierarchical levels. Indeed, such possibilities are limited in SMEs. As there are, overall, fewer women higher up the hierarchical ladder, it is unlikely that there would be enough participants for an internal network; this can also be the case in male-dominated industries or sectors (Broadbridge 2004). External networks can also be either a supplement or an alternative to internal women-only networks in larger organizations. Higher-level female managers can find more peers in such external networks and can sharpen their internal profiles by enriching their networks with ties to other firms. Organizations can also be exposed to other diversity practices that individual participants report on or by sending firm representatives to the public panels and debates on the topic that are often organized by such networks. This last aspect is of importance, as the aim is not so much to 'outsource' diversity management than to approach it outside of the traditional boundaries.

Second, a SIT perspective can be mobilized to understand agency in self-categorization in a changing world of work. We illustrated our argument with the example of the social identities of corporate alumni. New career models are quite different from those in the last century. For several decades, the main normative career model was a linear one: we would finish school, join a private or public organization and work there until retirement—this was certainly not the case for everybody, but it would correspond to stereotypical, normative expectations or aspirations. This

means that after retirement, one is no longer part of the in-group of workers and is thus excluded from work-related processes, relations and social identities. However, other streams of research in careers have increasingly pointed to a 'new normal' of non-linear, protean and boundaryless careers (Briscoe and Hall 2006). In this context, many of the former employees of a given organization actually do not leave the workforce but start working in other organizations or start their own ventures. In this case, they are not transitioning from the in-group of workers to the out-group of retirees but simultaneously are workers and ex-workers. Over time, in reference to the term that has long been used in higher education, this category of workers has come to be called 'alumni'.

This newly available social identity can become salient for some alumni, who can, for example, join formal alumni networks. Such networks can fill both instrumental aspirations and the broader need for self-continuity and belonging (Bardon et al. 2014, 2015). Firms also increasingly see an interest in managing their relation to this category of individuals (Bardon et al. 2015; Barlatier et al. 2013). However, the relations with the in-group (the current management and employees) are not necessarily straightforward. In our research, we came across firms where there was an explicit policy of not engaging with former employees; in one instance, they were even referred to as 'black sheep'. It thus requires a shift in mindset and a consideration of alumni as a management or even strategic issue. On the other hand, exit routines and placements have been part of the business model of top professional firms for several decades, as their 'up-or-out' systems predated the wider shifts in the workplace we mentioned earlier. It is expected that former staff will facilitate commercial relations with their future places of employment, which has been confirmed by a handful of empirical studies (Carnahan and Somaya 2013; Iyer et al. 1997). In this case, identity is once again turned into just another resource, akin to practices related to the business case for diversity. Overall, we argue that alumni, as 'organizational others' and as a group of individuals who potentially want 'in' but are somehow kept 'out', could also be a relevant object for diversity management practices. We also contend that there may be other social identities that evade the traditionally used demographic categories and organizational borders and that could be relevant to moving towards a more emic but also less firm-centred approach to diversity in the workplace and its management.

These constitute just two examples of how both diversity and identity are dynamic concepts that do not start or end with organizational borders.

These examples are also in line with research on identity work (Brown 2015) and its connection to institutions and institutional logics, which are present in organizations and beyond their precincts. Such work also contributes to developing a reflection on agency versus structure in connection with social identity, its enactment and its attribution. Such work has, for example, examined how individuals work on their identities to cope with their feelings of 'otherness' compared to the prototypical employees in their workplaces, for example in the case of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) ministers (Creed et al. 2010). Elsewhere, Styhre (2018) shows how life-science professionals who work neither for large firms nor in academia construct their social identities by drawing on or distancing themselves from the dominant identity-defining narratives for their professions. Extending such work and bridging it more explicitly with diversity research also constitute important research avenues and can remind practitioners how work cultures in and around organizations and their inherent approaches to diversity categories can impact individuals in both their professional and private lives.

EXTENDING THE CRITICAL VOICE

If diversity categories are seen as fixed and unified, diversity management will focus on managing not the individuals but the groups of individuals who are associated or identify with the groups. This approach is arguably the most prevalent in today's organizations (Tatli and Özbilgin 2012), notably through the popularization of the 'business case' for diversity. It simplifies HR work by tailoring practices to whole groups rather than individuals and simplifies the justification of diversity policies, as group identification and assignation are seen as based on objective differences, rather than on power differentials and constraints. Alternatively, the business case promotes an apolitical, power-void perception of diversity as individualized and a matter of personal skills and talents (Tomlinson and Schwabenland 2010; Noon 2007).

If diversity is seen as a more intersectional issue not only between different phenotypical or 'deeper' attributes but also as intersecting in specific contexts and structures, we open up a finer-grained understanding of how individuals cope with available discourses and existing power structures and can go in the direction of less stereotyped and globally homogenized ways of addressing diversity in organizations (Janssens and Zanoni 2014). Working with critical, but practitioner-relevant, scholarship thus

necessitates a situated and context-sensitive approach, acknowledging how diversity initiatives are embedded in the organizational setting and the organization of tasks, as well as how these initiatives draw on national discourses on difference. Only by taking an organizational-level approach is it possible to assess and hence redress the often tacit organizational 'underbelly' of power battles related to privilege, disadvantage and resistance.

In a critical intervention-based study of a team-based organization employing international knowledge workers, employees expressed experiences of harassment based on language, skin colour and ethnicity (Holck 2017). Through interviews and observations, the author identified that poor employee satisfaction was founded in similarity-attraction guiding collaboration based on stereotypical perceptions of minority and majority members' skills and capabilities (Holck 2017). Different collective processes, like seminars, workshops and continuous conversations with management, were implemented to challenge and collectively formulate a change agenda to alter these collaborative practices. Emerging themes in these collective conversations dealt with how an international background was paradoxically seen as a skill in itself (giving access and legitimacy when dealing with international business partners) *and* an inherent deficiency in the required Danish-language competence, hence making the employee difficult to work with. Consequently, the collective conversations highlighted the 'dark sides' of diversity far from the harmonious 'win-win' situation portrayed in the business case. On the one hand, collectively exploring these themes seemingly amplified segregating practices to the detriment of cross-cultural collaboration. On the other hand, collective reflections rendered these hitherto invisible practices visible and tangible, which turned out to help to articulate minority frustrations and restore their dignity. Even though the changing conversations did not *immediately* translate into changed cooperative practices in favour of equal opportunities, a collective awareness was created on the hypocrisy of discursively claiming to commit to diversity to enhance innovation and creativity while actively thwarting diversity by practices of homosocial reproduction and similarity-attraction as guiding collaborative practices.

In terms of implications for practitioners, diversity managers can develop interests in how economic expectations can be met while developing a higher sensibility regarding the forces at play in a given context and how they can be accounted for in local diversity policy development and implementation, thus participating in integrating diversity in the

organizational identity (Cole and Salimath 2013). For instance, Janssens and Zanoni (2014) demonstrate how multiple and diverse identities can be inscribed in the organizational culture as valuable and as an asset to general performance in the face of a multiplicity of customers and markets, without pigeonholing employees with ethnic minority backgrounds into particular ethnically designated positions and tasks to the detriment of their career prospects. For example, one of the authors did consulting work for a highly ethnically diverse service company. Here, it turned out that despite being mainly employed at the front level, migrant workers generally had higher educational backgrounds (albeit with non-Danish degrees) compared to their Danish co-workers. This gave rise to a potential programme to raise awareness of the competences and former working experiences of employees with migrant backgrounds, both to broaden the pool of talent internally in the company and to create a more inclusive pipeline of future leaders and specialists.

Moreover, a critical approach can encourage policymakers and (HR) managers to find different solutions from the popular 'top-down' practices, such as quotas and internal groups/networks targeted at a supposed homogeneous group. As we outlined in our critique of the SIT perspective, such top-down practices often end up marginalizing the minority as 'needy' and 'less competent', reinforcing the power dynamics documented by critical scholars. Moreover, many top-down practices are perceived as unfair by the majority. Quotas are a good example. In 2010 and 2011, one of the authors interviewed 45 managers from 37 organizations in Denmark about gender (in)equality. Many different viewpoints surfaced in those interviews, but, strangely, despite Denmark only having about 20% female top managers (among the lowest in the European Union), all the interviewees agreed that quotas were not the solution to the problem (see Christensen and Muhr, forthcoming). In fact, most of the respondents saw quotas as frightening—the worst-case scenario for their organizations. In their eyes, quotas cheated both male and female applicants, if they were awarded a job 'simply' because of their gender. As most pointed out, companies should solve the problem themselves: anything else would be an admission of failure. One of the reasons for such fear, we argue, is that quotas challenge our faith in the idea that we live in a meritocracy, where a professional recruiting process always ensures that the best candidate gets the job, with no bias or cronyism. Most chief executive officers (CEOs) almost automatically repeat the sayings "I always hire the best"

and "I look at competences, not gender". However, we know for a fact that people display unconscious (if not conscious) bias, and such a strong belief in meritocracy—and supposed equality—allows for a distorted practice that systematically holds women back and effectively functions as a 'male quota'. Critical scholars thus aim to offer alternatives to the contested top-down initiatives. This can notably be achieved by broadening the traditional focus on diversity categories (e.g. social identities like nationality, ethnicity, age and gender) to include differences in terms of professional skills, competences and work experience.

Another avenue is to explore further the dynamic relation between structure and agency, as discussed in Chap. 4. Until now, the critical diversity literature has largely discussed power along socio-demographic identity groups or the historical relation between minority and majority groups resulting in their unequal access to resources (Janssens and Zanoni 2014). However, as Janssens and Zanoni (2014) suggest, agency might stem from managers altering structural conditions in favour of equality: forcefully working to make possible employment relations based on the normalization and valuing of multiple competences and identities. In a Swedish organization in the pharmaceutical industry employing highly skilled chemical engineers, one of us was invited to conduct research in order to help to develop diversity initiatives and formulate arguments to create a more progressive diversity image (Romani et al. 2017). After documenting the recruitment process, it turned out that highly skilled engineers with migrant backgrounds were predominantly recruited for technical positions in the production department, with limited access to career possibilities, while their Swedish colleagues with the same degrees would be hired for more privileged developmental and managerial positions, retaining their titles as engineers. Through continuous conversations with HR leaders and the CEO, these findings were debated, leading to the revelation that Swedes were employed with a view for future career perspectives, while non-Swedes were employed to remain in the positions they were initially hired for. Moreover, in the light of our discussions, the management was able to make better sense of a recent employee satisfaction survey that showed a lack of confidence in management and feelings of unfairness and favouritism. The discussions helped the management in connecting the survey results to problems of racialized tasks and a racialized hierarchy and acted as a platform for change.

In order to ignite change, diversity managers and scholars alike should focus on how to provide otherwise disadvantaged minority employees with material and symbolic resources in order to strengthen their participation to empower them to fight against their marginalization: are participation structures inclusive? Do all employees have an equal voice and ability to participate in decision-making processes that influence their work? For instance, Ciuk and Śliwa (2017) demonstrate how staff members can see it as a welcome challenge to use a non-native language, even when they are not fluent in that language. In a Danish organization, changing to a bilingual language policy and shifting between team meetings in English and Danish helped international staff to gain more of a voice, while Danes did not feel 'oppressed'. Indeed, language asymmetries might positively impact collaboration. As with any kind of learning, many employees enjoy learning languages. Diversity managers can play the role of facilitators who create learning opportunities for others and who learn together with them, rather than that of 'damage minimizers' whose role it is to tackle the negative consequences of differences in language competences. Likewise, other team members can act as enablers of team members' learning. This can create an alternative organizational space founded on learning and valuing each co-worker's contributions as equally worthy. In addition, this will lead to a broader definition of competences to include language skills and asymmetries, former work experiences and the ability to facilitate co-workers' learning and development, regardless of ethnic affiliation.

Finally, diversity managers and scholars alike could benefit from better taking into consideration the *relationality* of organizational members when tactically navigating the multidimensionality of organizational power. In particular, reflecting on resistance in relation to power illustrates how the articulation of resistance involves the reification and reproduction of that which is being resisted: it is being legitimized as an area of political context (Benschop et al. 2015). Practitioners and researchers need to go into this oftentimes emotional and difficult conversational room to challenge and highlight resistance to pinpoint where change 'hurts'. Simultaneously, changes could be made less frightening by affiliating change with positive collective identity construction in terms of an improved collaborative and social organizational environment, which can lead to both increased employee satisfaction and improved corporate performance.

Performing Transgression and Achieving Long-Term Change

Finally, fully discursive approaches allow us to see identity and diversity as fluid and historically situated concepts (Ahonen et al. 2014); concepts such as technologies of self or gender performance allow us to understand identity and diversity not only as 'being' but as a constant 'becoming'. Nevertheless, these approaches are rather remote from the concerns of organizations, which look for ways to administer the 'now' and tend to function in an ethos of performance- and data-driven HR management (i.e. a measurable numerical and representative approach to diversity management). Nevertheless, it is our argument that diversity management initiatives inspired by the post-structural perspective can be very fruitful for long-term equal opportunities, as these initiatives target the organizational culture and employee identities at a much deeper level, where basic assumptions, power hierarchies and privileges are targeted. Diversity management initiatives in the post-structural perspective therefore aim not only to give the minority different—or fairer and more equal—opportunities, as in the critical perspective, but also to change the power structures radically by disturbing—and then normalizing a transgression of—the ideologically embedded power hierarchies (male/female, white/black, hetero/homo, etc.).

In other words, these initiatives try not only to erase or reverse the power hierarchy but also to make it obsolete by transgression. Initiatives in this perspective thus aim at encouraging practitioners to question their own assumptions and to reflect on the extent to which individuals perform and embody identities that are imposed on them by the organizational discourse itself, rather than as core and fixed self-identities. Hence, the destabilization of identity categories in itself constitutes a political act (Butler 1990), and acquiring greater awareness of the political and power structure implications of the complex entanglement of identity and diversity is a first strategic step to opening up possibilities for more situated, changeable and ongoing choices when dealing with differences on an everyday basis (Janssens and Zanoni 2014). Because such initiatives aim at deeper ideological change, they are often characterized by interventionist methodologies, where participants are not 'just' being taught a new method but also have to experience and 'feel' it (see, for example, Holck 2018 for an elaboration of affective diversity management).

As a first example of how interventions can be performed, we will turn to a current research project that two of the authors are involved in. In November 2017, we went to Greenland to host a leadership seminar for the Greenlandic police force as a result of a two-year study of the Danish–Greenlandic police collaboration. Based on ethnographic data on the organization, we facilitated a workshop on culture and inclusion to help the police forces to initiate a very difficult and sensitive discussion of their cross-cultural challenges. Our study showed how the police forces constructed each other along two very strong discourses of 'being' Greenlandic or Danish. However, our study also showed how this division was artificial and constructed along racialized and colonial power hierarchies that distorted their collaboration (see also Holck and Muhr, forthcoming). Thus, one of the purposes of the leadership seminar was to conduct an intervention on the way they constructed each other. We did so by—through lectures—offering them the post-structural terminology of cultural fragmentation (ambiguity, hybridity and in-betweenness), rather than integration and differentiation (unity, similarities and stability) (see, for example, Martin 1992), and through dialogue, discussion and role play got them involved in a reconceptualization of how they perceived each other and what consequences it had for their collaboration. What we experienced was that paying particular attention to the need for simultaneously framing identity as integrated, differentiated and fragmented made a processual and relational approach to diversity possible, which was fundamental for transgressing the stereotypical way that they understood each other. Of course, one leadership seminar cannot eradicate years of colonial ideology, but it sparked an understanding of where the problem originated and how allowing transgressions, rather than blaming one another, could show them a new path forward. Based on the leadership seminar, we are now developing dilemma games, role plays and narrative exercises for continued involvement in the transgression of categories.

Another example comes from the current interest that two of the authors have in how activists and activist methods can inform diversity management initiatives in a more radical manner. Viewing de-politicization as an obstacle for progressive diversity initiatives, Holck et al. (forthcoming) bring attention to the performative potential of activist practices: that is, to re-politicize diversity research and organizational practices. They particularly stress how feminist activist practices are interesting, as such practices (per their definition) work with nuances and resist oppressing gender norms, thereby pushing for political change (Thomas and Davies

2005; Staunæs and Søndergaard 2008). Bringing feminist activist practices into formal organizations holds the potential to readdress diversity management initiatives more radically. Working with three activists—(1) a twerk dancer and psychologist who is a co-founder of a fourth-wave feminist group called Girl Squad, (2) the spokesperson and project manager of two national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) concerned with LGBT+ rights among ethnic minorities, and (3) a youth-house anarchist, gender-network and gender-debate moderator who is also a university college teacher—Holck et al. (forthcoming) explore the ways in which activist methods can be brought into formal organizations in order to address political and sensitive issues of diversity and difference, aiming to influence the participants at a much deeper affective level to initiate a longer-term and lasting fundamental change. Their study shows how activist practices discursively work through tensions of (1) personal ↔ public issues, (2) safe ↔ unsafe spaces and (3) creative ↔ conventional methods for norm-critical approaches to diversity issues and hold the performative potential for addressing such issues in formal organizational settings. The potential of activist methods, we argue, may challenge, counter and bypass existing norms of difference in current diversity management, thereby destabilizing the normative constructions and categorizations that marginalize and even stigmatize the subjects of which they speak.

Reflections and Actions Across Perspectives: Towards a Multi-perspective Approach

The chapters in this book have described and discussed different underlying perceptions of identity that have implications for the way we perceive, study and derive implications for practice in what can be seen as a polarized diversity field. The diversity field, arguably, is thus torn between proponents of 'mainstream' diversity management and then critical and post-structural perspectives on it. We want to highlight how all three theoretical perspectives fulfil different agendas. This means that the three outlined perspectives are not to be hierarchized or that there should be an idea of progress from one perspective to the next; rather, they should be seen as a continuum of perspectives on the perception and construction of the self and of how individuals can be considered and managed in an organizational context. We have shown how SIT has inspired practices such as diversity management and has triggered the development of a critical

literature that is itself also critical of extreme versions of post-structuralist perspectives on diversity. However, one could also highlight the partial overlap or continuity between different perspectives. Indeed, SIT acknowledges a relational dimension in identity formation, thus making it a socially situated act, paving the way for literature discussing both inward- and outward-facing identity work (Watson 2008), while critical work can help to consider how power and inequalities infuse this relational process. Similarly, discourse is considered an essential element of identity and diversity debates in both critical and post-structuralist work. Finally, extreme versions of post-structuralism have been criticized for 'diluting' the reality of the discrimination against specific groups of individuals and thus overplaying the capacity of the individual to transcend existing states of power.

As a consequence of these overlaps and connections between perspectives on identity, we claim that polarization and asking researchers and practitioners to make clear-cut choices are not the ways forward and could even constrain the ability to create new knowledge. This situation might be turned into an opportunity for fruitful and creative developments of diversity and identity research if the three perspectives are combined in a multi-perspective approach to explore research avenues that go beyond an *either-or* of critical, post-structural and 'mainstream' social identity research to a *both-and* position. We argue that a multi-perspective approach can make a prone template for carrying out performative diversity research when it *must* involve an element of new knowledge *and* be practically oriented. Such a multi-perspective approach calls for cross-disciplinary research with a focus on both criticality and practicality: this underlines the enabling potential of a critical and post-structural perspective *and* the constraining aspects of diversity management scholars' portrayal of diversity and inclusion as a harmonious 'win-win' situation.

Importantly, diversity management predominantly insists on practicability, and research must address the concerns raised by practitioners. The element of practicability indicates the constraints of both critical and post-structural research in prompting visions of emancipatory organizations but not how to convert these into viable alternatives (Hartmann 2014). More research is needed that cuts across disciplines and perspectives to employ a progressive, multi-perspective approach in order to identify more emancipatory ways of organizing diversity and identity involving *both* a critical reading *and* a practical orientation. Echoing Janssens and Zanoni (2014, p. 318), we "refuse to leave diversity management to non-critical,

functionalist research paradigms which aim to enhance performance instead of challenging inequalities. At the same time, [we] acknowledge the difficulties of the task at hand and do not evade critically self-reflecting on the (im)possibilities of equality-fostering diversity management in capitalist organizations". This *both-and* insistence for going beyond the three lenses is something we see as a bridging endeavour to align the polarized diversity field, as well as to bridge research and practice.

For example, sometimes there is a need to, albeit temporarily, fix identities and the related categories to render them visible so as to embark on change (Ghorashi and Sabelis 2013). Without this focus on salient differences and related identities, organizational policies for change might become too diffuse to tackle the sources of exclusion. As Ghorashi and Sabelis wisely muse,

> the ongoing experiment is to find a stance between the necessity of the attention for a specific diversity category and yet being aware of the possibility for it to become fixed. Simultaneously, we realize the need to address the chosen category in the context of the situations that it is presented. Keeping an eye open to the effects of fixation on difference within organizations means a continuous struggle to go beyond essentialism. […] The main challenge would be to recognize otherness while making space for individual experiences beyond categorisations. (2013, p. 83)

Following such a multi-perspective path, the relevance of SIT is to improve understanding of 'diverse' individuals not only in a focal workplace in which they are managed but also as individuals spanning different organizational settings, as well as spanning different societal settings beyond the workplace. From a critical perspective, we may then highlight the entwinement of power and inclusion/exclusion processes otherwise ignored within diversity management, which predominantly draws on an apolitical, power-void notion of diversity and identity. In addition, a post-structuralist approach might shed light on the enabling factors of identity, giving ample room to develop possibilities of agency and transgression and giving rise to resistance and to fluid and fragmented identity work. Here, a post-structuralist approach to diversity and identity makes way for organizational agents to demonstrate constant attention to the implicit (taken-for-granted) power relations imbued in perceptions and enactments of identity: it gives way to a balancing act between approaching differences in a non-hierarchical manner without essentializing otherness (Ghorashi and Sabelis 2013; Zanoni and Janssens 2007).

Tracing emancipative organizational practices beyond the reified proto-types, inferred theoretical causalities, political standpoints and ideological dogmas of a polarized field will be fruitful, we believe. The use of cross-disciplinary research on, for example, feminist and critical organizational theory in combination with research on diversity and identity could help to develop exciting multi-perspective work. However, it is neither the the-ory applied nor the organizational form under scrutiny that matters—it is the ambition to go beyond, experiment with and confront prevalent taken-for-granted dogmas by studying the combination of diversity and identity in their empirical, organizational settings in the quest for improved equality-fostering organizational practices. Apart from theoretical implica-tions, a multi-perspective approach also has methodological potentialities. Proponents of critical diversity portray diversity management as a 'prema-ture' managerial concept that is based on 'trial-and-error' processes, rather than grounded in scientific considerations and knowledge (Oswick and Noon 2014; Noon 2007, 2010). In the same vein, among critical and post-structural scholars, there is an ongoing debate on the problematic disdain for management as a practice and how scholarship must directly engage with practice to fulfil its emancipatory aspirations (Ghorashi and Sabelis 2013; Holck et al. 2016; Janssens and Zanoni 2014). Consequently, a different form of research has been called for: one that engages both academics and practitioners. A viable option, we believe, is to employ intervention-based research to create a 'critical friendship' (Holck 2016, 2018) or 'tempered radicalism' (Meyerson and Kolb 2000) of moving away from 'armchair theorizing' to engage actively with practitioners to formulate collectively a more critical-progressive agenda in organizations.

This kind of research insists on a critical edge—playing devil's advo-cate—while simultaneously engaging as an empathetic partner in the prac-tical problems and concerns raised by the participants (Bleijenbergh 2018). For instance, Holck (2018) examines what happens when critical research goes to work and engages with those who do the work. This implies ques-tioning how the active, engaged role of the researcher affects interventions, as well as the subsequent interpretation of data. Also, what are the mea-sures of 'success' when intervening to mitigate organizational inequality? Intervention-based research imposes a dual role of researcher and change agent, affected by feelings of shame, anxiety and pride when personally involved in the participants' everyday work lives and the 'drama' of change (Ahmed 2004; Staunæs and Søndergaard 2008). The 'drama' of change imposes a key dilemma of needing support from exactly the same powerful

elite who benefit from the status quo of the present distribution of privilege and status. However, equally important is support from hitherto disadvantaged minorities clinging on to the privileges of performing 'ethnified', representative tasks (Boogaard and Roggeband 2010; Ortlieb and Sieben 2014; Zanoni and Janssens 2007). Holck's (2018) study demonstrated how an engaged approach can render visible the 'stickiness' of privilege and disadvantage, tying certain organizational groups together in 'communities of fate' while involving the researcher/change agent in intricate processes of inclusion and exclusion (Ahmed 2014). Consequently, the involved researcher needs to reflect critically on the impact of this entanglement in the research process, especially how affect makes it difficult to distinguish personal experiences from 'actual' organizational changes.

Intervention-based research both enables and constrains exploring diversity and identity *in situ*. According to Strumińska-Kutra (2016), critical collaborative research might be torn between opportunism (researchers pressuring for problem-solving actions aimed at altering existing power asymmetries), paternalism (researchers having 'superior' knowledge of the problem) and paralysis (stuck with local stakeholders' views of the problem at hand and which solutions might be feasible). A self-reflexive researcher/practitioner thus needs to ask himself/herself: whose agenda do I legitimize? There is always the fallacy of ending up a tame, toothless or temporarily lost radical. This calls for further research, in particular through empirical contributions, to explore how to understand and develop diversity and identity between the 'extremes' of each approach. Given this information, we suggest that while pursuing the development of diversity theory, research conducted from all perspectives would benefit from a clear understanding of the opportunities and limits of each of the ways that identity and diversity are intertwined, not to reach a unified and potentially sterile framework but rather to work within and beyond these tensions and to engage thoughtfully with practice.

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Epilogue

In this book, we have attempted to outline the connections between diversity and identity in the workplace. We chose to consider three perspectives on identity—the social identity, critical and post-structural perspectives—as a starting point to understand diversity scholarship and diversity management practices. We discussed each perspective on identity in turn, including their shortcomings, and considered the connections to the diversity literature and diversity management in the workplace. Moreover, we highlighted possible connections and overlaps between these perspectives, rather than seeing them as mutually exclusive or issuing conclusive judgements as to their respective value for research and practice.

We have also attempted to make these perspectives and connections accessible not only to fellow academics but also to students and practitioners. Because this book could have been written in so many different ways, we are eager to hear from all our readers how they evaluate their reading experience and to learn from these inputs for future revisions and publications. Yet this is the form it reached for this first issue, although holding all the possibilities of becoming something different the next time around, and we hope that it made you puzzled, angry, thrilled and meditative all at the same time. Now that we are literally out of words, we invite you to wander and wonder further with identity and diversity, in and out of the workplace.

This reminds us to finish this book by briefly remarking on what cannot be seen on these pages. What is invisible in the book is our own journey in writing it, more specifically our journey of writing a book on topics that not only inspire us as researchers but that resonate with us in our daily lives.

As scholars, writing this book was an amazing opportunity to develop ideas and reflections we have developed together or separately over the years. It was an opportunity to take stock and to have space for theoretical reflections but also relatable examples. Being able to apply your research as an example in a different context than originally intended is a privilege that opens up new avenues for reflection, especially in regard to applicability and relevance for practitioners. While we have worked together on different research projects, we each had and have perspectives that we are more expert in. Addressing the social identity, critical and post-structural perspectives on identity separately and attempting to find both divides and bridges between them were thus learning opportunities for us. This resulted in the rich set of reflections and avenues for research and practice that we outlined in Chap. 6, in which we notably advocated for multi-perspective work, so that it is not only identity and diversity that can be better connected in future work but also paradigms and epistemologies.

As individuals, writing about diversity and identity in conjunction means, for each argument, for each example, asking ourselves: Is this who I am? Is this how I act? How much agency do I have? Do I want my identity, my 'diversity', to be managed in the workplace in these ways, or at all? These questions echoed some of those we asked in the first two chapters. Finally, while the 'we' used as a narrative device somehow hides our individualities, the reader will certainly realize that, as individuals, we could be categorized as similar or different based on a myriad of traits or attributes, and we certainly have had different and similar experiences writing this book.

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