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Critical Studies in Diversity Management Literature

A Review and Synthesis

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Preface

Workplace diversity, namely the variation of social and cultural identities among people existing together in an employment or market setting, constitutes a reality in modern organizations. Thus, the aim of this study is to critically examine the current discourses concerning workplace diversity management practices and expand the perspective of current theoretical approaches and implementation interventions by underlying the potential contribution of different critical approaches to the process of shaping and informing more inclusive, as well as participative diversity practices.

The purpose of this book is to contribute to the elaboration of a nuanced framework for undertaking, supporting and implementing more egalitarian diversity policies. In so doing, we employ, analyze and systematically and thoroughly discuss critical perspectives that not only elevate respect for differences to an end, but also provide permeating insights into the nature and dynamics of differences, in view of an inclusive and truly participative organizational environment. In this respect, our purpose is twofold:

First and foremost, this study is intended to provide a detailed overview of critical diversity theories, by equally placing an emphasis on the potential commonalities underlying these highly diversified, if not inherently heterogeneous, streams of literature.

Second, we aim at exploring the potential links between critical diversity approaches and diversity management interventions in organizations: given the fact that all these approaches appear as inimical to, or at least critical of the business case, we seek to highlight and underscore alternative conceptions of diversity management. In this respect, we address the issue of translating central insights from critical diversity theories into diversity management practices, by elaborating a framework that encompasses criteria and principles of assessing diversity initiatives in terms of their likelihood to significantly enhance equality and inclusion in contemporary organizations.

To date, distinct and separate literatures have emerged in the field of critical approaches to diversity management, resulting in a somewhat fragmented view of the overall endeavour and in an ensuing ambiguity about the key determinants of such a critical approach. Despite the abundant literature on critical diversity approaches, there is a relative paucity of research, in terms of both monographs and journal

articles, on perspectives that explore, summarize and synthesize the core elements of these critical approaches. Accordingly, the differences observed across these distinct streams of research suggest that such an attempt to review the disparate literature is likely to yield helpful insights as to the very nature of the main constituents of an overall endeavour. The study is thus intended to fill this gap: taken for granted that the high conceptual, methodological and epistemological heterogeneity of such distinct theoretical streams renders any attempt to adopt an integrative perspective almost unfeasible, we are going to explore insights originating in such bodies of research that are in a position to inform diversity management practices. We thus seek to reassess and redefine diversity policies, strategies and initiatives through the lens of alternative, non-mainstream, or even heterodox paradigms.

The book is divided into five chapters: The first and second chapters are devoted to a brief overview of the connotations associated with workplace diversity and its effective management. The third chapter focuses on the organizational appropriation of differences through the formation and mediation of various diversity discourses: in the fourth chapter, we seek to demonstrate the particular articulations of these discourses with inequality and oppressive structures that perpetuate structural disadvantage, due to existing power disparity between dominant and unprivileged group members. Finally, in the last chapter we turn to operationalize these findings by underscoring the need of constructing relational and context-sensitive diversity management frameworks: the latter are expected to capture diversity-related issues in a way that moves beyond instrumental views of differences as a resource, or asset on which organizations can capitalize to enhance desired outcomes.

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Chapter 1
Workplace Diversity: A Resource or a Source of Conflict?

1.1 The Concept of (Workplace) Diversity

It is an undeniable fact that diversity is a societal reality in modern western societies (mainly due to globalization and migration), a reality that is inevitably mirrored in the workforce population, constituting, thus, a modern organizational phenomenon. Although defining diversity remains a challenging endeavor, since the term carries multiple, overlapping and often conflicting meanings (Hays-Thomas 2004; Prasad and Mills 1997), it is nevertheless necessary for determining the framework of our current discussion.

Undoubtedly, there is a rich variety of distinct approaches to diversity conceptualizations, yet a scholarly consensus emerges on diversity as a two-dimensional construct and as a socially constructed term (Qin et al. 2014, p. 146). Visibility (the social aspects of diversity) and job-relatedness (the information dimension of diversity) comprise two core dimensions, whilst perceived diversity refers to subjective interpretations of diversity attributes. Diversity can be defined as the collective amount of differences among members within a social unit (Harrison and Sin 2006). Many theorists discern between the more salient diversity dimensions (which are more obvious to other individuals), such as age, gender, race and ethnicity, and the more subtle diversity dimensions, not directly discerned by others, such as educational level, financial status, social class, religion, sexual orientation etc (Alcazar et al. 2013; Harrison and Klein 2007; Shore et al. 2009; Podsiadlowski et al. 2013). It is self-evident that these surface-level diversity dimensions comprise mainly of demographic, whereas the more subtle diversity dimensions comprise mainly of socio-cultural characteristics. Thus, DiTomasso et al. (2007) contend that diversity is indicative of a variety in socio-cultural and demographic characteristics that appear salient and symbolically meaningful in the relationships among group members. Nevertheless, these two diversity categories are not distinct but essentially interrelated, since, as Shore et al. (2009, p. 118) have pointed out, “surface-level diversity such as race is indicative of deeper-level differences, such as cognitive processes/schemas, differential knowledge base, different sets of experiences, and different views of the world”.

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To make the definition of the term more relevant to the working settings, Cox (2001) underlines that diversity is reflective of the variation in social and cultural identities among people existing together in an employment setting. Moreover, according to Gorman (2000), diversity may be conceived of as the varied perspectives and approaches members of different identity groups bring to the workplace.

It is also of great importance to underscore the fact that "… diversity is a geographically and culturally contingent phenomenon, and needs to be understood as such", as noted by Prasad et al. (2006, p. 3; see also Kulik and Bainbridge 2006; Tatli and Özbilgin 2012). This means that the characteristics perceived as prominent in formatting individual and group identities—and as a result, being accountable for the emergence of discrimination and injustice—are not consistent over time, space and cultural reality. To be more specific, in western societies gender has since long time been recognized as an important aspect of diversity and as a source of potential prejudice and discrimination. Concomitantly, a relevant discourse has been developed and corrective measures have been adopted at the legislative level with the aim to accommodate women in the workplace (although, the objective of extinguishing gender discrimination has not yet been fully realized). However, in other parts of the world, cultural reality (e.g. religious and social dictates) practically excludes women either from the workplace or from certain occupations.

1.2 The Prons and Cons of Diversity as An Organizational Reality

Workforce diversity is often presented in the literature as a panacea associated solely with positive organizational outcomes. This view is best mirrored in the 'value-in-diversity' hypothesis, according to which diversity brings net-added value to organizational processes (Cox and Blake 1991). However, a more critical approach to the effects of workforce diversity at the individual, team and organizational levels indicates that this is hardly the case: the phenomenon is related to both detrimental and beneficial organizational outcomes. As many empirical studies have shown, the effect of workplace diversity on individual, group and organizational performance is neither consistent nor conclusive (Jayne and Dipboye 2004; Kochan et al. 2003; Podsiadlowski et al. 2013; Shore et al. 2009; Thomas 1999; Watson et al. 1993).

To be more specific, there are studies that have indicated a number of benefits related to a heterogeneous workplace. Workplace diversity has been associated with improved decision making processes at the work group level, mainly due to the different cognitive backgrounds, mental-models, experiences, and perspectives brought by team members from different cultural backgrounds (Cox and Blake 1991; Kearny et al. 2009; Phillips et al. 2006; Tegarden et al. 2007). It has also been found that work-team heterogeneity can promote creativity and innovation (Jehn et al. 1999; Pelled et al. 1999), since minority views can contribute to the consideration of non-obvious alternatives, stimulating in this way 'out of the box' thinking (Nemeth 1985; Nemeth and Wachtler 1983 cited in Cox and Blake 1991).

Furthermore, diversity seems to result in better problem-solving at the group-level, mainly by limiting the 'groupthink phenomenon', an underlying mechanism referring to the absence of critical thinking within groups, through which the group members are trying to maintain team cohesiveness (Cox and Blake 1991).

What is more, a diverse workplace has a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining employees from a wider candidate pool (Cox and Blake 1991), having, thus, better access to talent and better resource acquisition potential regarding human capital. Additionally, groups with diverse demographic profiles can better mirror markets' composition and respond more easily to customers' demands (Joshi 2006; Kandola et al. 1995; Roberson and Park 2007; Singh 2007), since these groups have greater potential in reaching a broader set of external agents (Cox and Blake 1991). Moreover, at the organizational level, a heterogeneous employee base can render an organization more effective and flexible, as it better mirrors environmental complexity (Milliken and Martins 1996), thus responding to the demands of a turbulent environment much more efficiently.

Nevertheless, there are also numerous research findings indicating the negative effects of a demographically diverse workplace: in a highly diversified workforce, diversity may denote social identity faultiness activated by various triggers (Chrobot-Mason et al. 2009) that may be in turn conducive to stereotyping, lack of communication and conflict (Grimes and Richard 2003; Jehn et al. 1999; Pelled et al. 1999; van Knippenberg et al. 2004, Williams and O'Reilly 1998). Impaired communication and intra-group conflict appear to be a major challenge for culturally diverse work teams. Martins and Parsons (2007) underline the fact that different use of both verbal and non-verbal languages among culturally diverse team members can have negative effects on internal communication (see also Homan et al. 2007). What is more, perception of differences among employees may also result in negative affective dynamics within the group (Ayoko 2007; Hobman et al. 2003; López-Fernández and Sánchez-Gardey 2010; McKay et al. 2009). In the same trace of thought, according to social identity theory, workgroups characterized by a high level of demographic diversity, if not properly managed, are more vulnerable to identity conflicts and to decreased group cohesiveness, which can result to their degradation into subgroups (Milliken and Martins 1996; Pendry et al. 2007; Schneider and Northcraft 1999). Other costs of diverse working groups include lower employees' satisfaction, decreased cooperation (Chatman and Spataro 2005) and increased absenteeism and turnover (Jackson et al. 1991).

It is important to underline the fact that along with the above mentioned studies indicating either positive or negative results of workplace diversity in relation to performance, there are meta-analytic reviews showing that demographic diversity is far from exerting a statistically significant effect on group and organizational effectiveness (Joshi and Roh 2007; Webber and Donahue 2001; see, Bell et al. 2011 for an overall assessment). Thus, a critical question emerges: why such a discrepancy in research findings regarding diversity-related outcomes?

It seems that the relationship between a demographically diverse workforce and its outcomes on individual, group and organizational performance is much more complicated than was originally evaluated. This is primarily due to a number

of factors and processes mediating/moderating the link between diversity and its potential benefits and costs (see Qin et al. 2012). According to Herdman and McMillan-Capehart (2010), a number of organizational attributes moderate the relationship between diversity and firm performance. Chrobot-Mason and Aramovich (2013) identified four psychological outcomes (identity freedom, psychological empowerment, climate for innovation and organizational identification) that fully mediated the relationship between diversity climate perceptions and turnover intentions. Furthermore, Kochan et al. (2003) underscore that the extent to which workforce heterogeneity will have a beneficial or detrimental effect on group performance depends on how the heterogeneous groups are managed within an organization. Consequently, it can be inferred that a diverse workforce can be a potential competitive advantage for an organization associated with many benefits at the individual, team and organizational levels if a number of factors are taken into consideration and addressed in an effective way.

1.3 Factors Moderating the Relationship Between Workforce Diversity and Performance

Work drawn from the field of social psychology has the potential to massively contribute to the effective management of diverse work groups. Hewstone (2003), elaborating on Gordon Allport's 'contact hypothesis'—the assumption that contact between people of different race, ethnicity, cultural backgrounds, religion etc. can challenge stereotypes, thus, resulting in the amelioration of their relationship and in the development of more friendly attitudes—outlines five conditions that can facilitate successful contact between demographically diverse groups: *first of all*, contact should be effected under conditions of equal status of the group members. *Secondly*, group members should be brought together under circumstances where stereotypes are likely to be challenged and contradicted. *Thirdly*, intergroup cooperation appears to be of major importance. *Fourthly*, it is critical for the group members to get to know each other properly. *Finally*, it is essential that wider social norms support equality. It is necessary that these research findings should be taken into consideration when organizational experts design interventions both at the team and the organizational levels aiming at creating these conditions that will enable the effective management of diverse groups, minimizing in this way the negative effects and fostering the benefits of workforce heterogeneity. In this particular case, interventions informed by the aforementioned findings will result in the reduction of conflict between diverse working groups, enabling them in this way to improve the level and the quality of intergroup cooperation, making possible to fully capitalize on the positive aspects of diversity.

Another critical factor for obtaining the performance benefits of diversity—this time at the intra-group level—is the awareness of the work-group members of their cultural differences (Cox and Blake 1991). It is very important for the team members to be informed and fully aware of their differences at the attitudinal level and in respect to their cultural background, and how these differences may affect their

worldviews and their attitudes towards a number of issues. Organizations, having realized how vital this is for minimizing the possible negative effects of diversity, have developed relevant organizational intervention programs, labeled under the umbrella-term 'cultural awareness training'.

Interestingly, another important factor for the successful intra-group co-operation of demographically heterogeneous work-group members is the existence of 'a core of similarity' (Cox and Blake 1991). Work-groups are more effective when they are characterized by moderate levels of diversity: when they are neither too homogenous nor too heterogeneous. According to Shepard (1964), some extent of similarity fosters cohesion, which is essential for the success of a group. However, he underlines also the fact that not only excessive dissimilarity, but also excessive similarity is a potential threat to group performance. Drawing on this approach, Cox and Blake (1991, p. 51) denote that all work-team members should share some common values and norms as "the need for heterogeneity, to promote problem solving and innovation, must be balanced with the need for organizational coherence and unity of action".

Also, the extent to which the overall organizational context is supportive of diversity and diversity initiatives, is crucial to diverse teams' performance (Ely and Thomas 2001; Richard 2000; Shore et al. 2009). Other factors pertinent to the goal of enhanced performance in diverse teams, include CEO characteristics (Buyl et al. 2011), diversity beliefs (Meyer and Schermuly 2012), diversity climates (Lauring and Selmer 2011), firm competitive intensity (Andrevski et al. 2014), integrative learning methods (Van De Ven et al. 2008), leader-member exchange (Stewart and Johnson 2009), national variety (as opposed to social distance and national stereotypes, Ayub and Jehn 2014), network density and centralization (Tröster et al. 2014), organizational identities (Few and Joshi 2013), psychological safety (Singh et al. 2013), shared objectives (van Knippenberg et al. 2011), supportive learning environment and societal asymmetries (Ely et al. 2012), task complexity and group size (Wegge et al. 2008), team cognition (Mohammed and Nadkarni 2014), transformational leadership (Muchiri and Ayoko 2013), as well as workgroup discrimination and group size (Boehm et al. 2014). Van Knippenberg et al. (2013) advanced the concept of diversity mindsets to denote team members' mental representations of team diversity relevant to procedural implications for goal achievement: the accuracy, sharedness and awareness of sharedness of these mindsets moderate the diversity-performance relationship.

As Foster-Curtis and Dreachslin (2008) note, leadership, organizational culture and climate as well as organizational strategy determine the relationship between workforce heterogeneity and organizational performance. Robin Ely and David Thomas (Thomas and Ely 1996; Ely and Thomas 2001) identified certain critical conditions, namely the degree to which one feels valued and respected, quality of intergroup relations and significance of cultural identities in a work setting. They thus differentiated between integration and learning perspective, which assesses skills and experiences of diverse employees as a resource for learning and adaptive change, and two competing ones: the access and legitimacy perspective, which views diversity as an effective means of gaining access to and legitimacy in various groups and markets, and the discrimination and fairness perspective, supporting a

diverse workforce as a moral imperative to ensure justice and equal treatment by eliminating discrimination.

These three perspectives shape a framework subject to further elaboration. For instance, Podsiadlowksi et al. (2013) underline that organizational perspectives on diversity influences the impact of diversity within an organization: the way in which an organization approaches diversity is associated with the perceived costs and benefits of diversity both at the organizational and group levels, a factor that determines organizational and employee commitment to diversity interventions.

To be more specific, Podsiadlowski et al. (2013) drawing on the work of Thomas and Ely (1996) and Dass and Parker (1999) suggest a framework of five perspectives organizations can adopt towards diversity:

a) The *Reinforcing Homogeneity* perspective, according to which an organization actively promotes similarity among its employees through management practices such as selection and promotion criteria that are ascribed only to people from the dominant majority.
b) The *Color-Blind* perspective, according to which employees should be treated equally, irrespective of their cultural background.
c) The *Fairness* perspective, which like the color-blind approach emphasizes the importance of fair treatment and the need to minimize discriminative organizational practices, however, it also recognizes the necessity for offering support to minority and disadvantages groups in order to reduce social inequalities through specific management practices.
d) The *Access* perspective, according to which a diverse organization has a competitive advantage through better mirroring globalized market economy, and
e) The *Integration and Learning* perspective, according to which heterogeneity creates a learning environment where everybody can derive significant benefits 'through the mutual adaptation of minority and majority groups alike' (Podsiadlowski et al. 2013, p. 159).

As noted by the authors, the aforementioned perspectives influence not only the perceived drawbacks and benefits of a heterogeneous workforce and the organizational practices that will be implemented, but also employees' attitudes towards organizational diversity interventions, factors that determine whether workplace heterogeneity will constitute an organizational competitive advantage or not. Their research findings indicate that the 'Integration and Learning' perspective has more potential for leveraging the positive effects and reducing the negative effects of workplace diversity.

1.4 Organizational Diversity Interventions

Organizations, trying to capitalize on the positive aspects of a diverse employee base, design and implement specific programs and practices, aiming at better addressing the need for heterogeneous workers and at facilitating the successful

interface of diverse working teams, both at the intra-group and the inter-group levels. Most often these organizational interventions consist of human resource practices focused on increasing the numerical representation of minority employees, of educational and diversity training programs and mentoring.

More specifically, increasing the number of employees of underrepresented groups within an organization is attained through specially designed recruitment and selection processes. However, retaining a heterogeneous workforce can prove a rather challenging endeavor: minority employees appear to experience lower levels of job satisfaction (Cox and Blake 1991; Cox and Nkomo 1991) and higher levels of absenteeism and turnover (Cox and Blake 1991). Thus, organizations often develop work-life balance initiatives with the purpose of accommodating the needs of employees from different backgrounds and with different lifestyles, such as women, elderly workers and people of different religious convictions (e.g. more flexible working schedules, company-sponsored child care facilities etc.).

Mentoring is also frequently employed for the empowerment of staff members belonging to minority groups. A mentor, usually a senior, experienced employee, offers his/her guidance, support and feedback to a younger member of the staff either through formal or informal organizational processes. This is aspired to result in better career opportunities for minority employees (Foster-Curtis and Dreachsling 2008; Thomas 2001): the career trajectories of these employees are quite different from the professional development of employees belonging to the dominant cultural group, since the latter are given opportunities for professional advancement much earlier in their careers. Moreover, changing careers reflecting demographic shifts within the labor force, shape new expectations, experiences and career outcomes (Lyons et al. 2014). Thomas (2001) underlines that mentoring relationships are vital for successful career trajectories of minority employees, both at the pragmatic level, through access to assignments that give further opportunities for gaining professional competence, and the symbolic level, since a mentor's support helps employees to gain confidence and establish broader credibility within a firm.

Diversity and cultural awareness training are very common diversity initiatives employed by organizations with the aim to facilitate successful interpersonal interactions (Kulik and Roberson 2008), limiting the negative effects that diversity may pose to effective intra-group and intergroup relationships (Pendry et al. 2007). Through such programs it is aspired that employees will gain cultural awareness, by learning to realize their differences in terms of their cultural background, in particular how these differences affect their mental models and cognitive processes, as well as their attitudes towards co-workers belonging to demographically heterogeneous groups. They are also educated on stereotyping and discrimination issues, and through skill-building training they learn how to effectively respond to diversity related challenges in the workplace (Cox and Blake 1991).

Although the aforementioned organizational interventions are considered crucial for the successful management of a diverse workforce, it has to be underlined that again in this case research evidence remains far from being unequivocal as far as effectiveness is concerned (Foster-Curtis and Dreachslin 2008; Roberson et al. 2003; Sanchez and Medkik 2004; Bendick et al. 2001). Taking into consideration

that organizations devote considerable efforts and resources for implementing diversity imitiatives, it has to be emphasized that "more work is needed to design and evaluate specific interventions or experiments aiming at creating a positive link between diversity and performance" (Kochan et al. 2003, p. 18). We in turn proceed to briefly discuss alternative approaches to managing demographic heterogeneity, as well as the divergent ideological constellations that provide the foundations of the major developments in the historical evolution of these concepts.

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Chapter 2
Different Approaches to Managing a Diverse Workforce

2.1 Legally Imposed Organizational Policies: Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) and Affirmative Action (AA)

As it has already been underlined in the previous chapter, a demographically diverse workforce is an uncontested reality that is associated with a number of challenges and opportunities for contemporary organizations, which develop relevant strategies and interventions attempting to address this issue. At this point it is interesting to briefly examine how workplace diversity has been dealt with historically, as well as to identify the different approaches towards the management of a heterogeneous workforce.

Since workplace diversity mirrors demographic differences at the societal level, it is not surprising that USA was a pioneer regarding the issues associated with workforce heterogeneity. To be more specific, US adopted an anti-discrimination regulation as early as in 1964 in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Title VII is the main anti-discrimination law in the US (Kossek and Pichler 2006), making workplace prejudice and discrimination on the basis of sex, age, race, color, religion and national origin illegal. In order to comply with the legal mandates of Title VII, organizations in the US had to adopt Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) policies, in order to ensure the fair and equal treatment of all employees, irrespective of their racial, ethnical, religious etc. background. Thus, it can be argued that, according to the Podsiadlowski and colleagues (2013) framework of five perspectives organizations can adopt towards diversity, described in the previous chapter, EEO falls into the category of the 'Color-Blind' approach.

Another legally imposed perspective to the management of a diverse workforce (initiated in the US as well) is Affirmative Action (AA), known also as Positive Discrimination, a term more commonly used in the UK. According to Affirmative Action policies, the employment force of an organization should mirror the relevant labor market. Thus, AA is concerned with the creation of a more inclusive workplace, and its objectives are more specific in comparison to EEO policies: AA initiatives aim at increasing the numerical representation at the workplace of

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historically underrepresented groups, such as women and racial/ethnic minorities. Thus, AA policies fall into the 'Fairness' perspective of the Podsiadlowski and colleagues (2013) framework.

It is important to note at this point that, as it has already been underlined, US has led the way in regard to workplace anti-discrimination legislation. As remarked by Kossek and Pichler (2006: 254), "…many other nations and NGOs have adopted regulations and practices that are similar to US EEO concepts". Interestingly, European Union got more actively involved in mandating the antidiscrimination policy of the member states in 1997 with the Treaty of Amsterdam (European Commission, Implementation Checklist for Diversity Management).

It is an undeniable fact that EEO and AA organizational practices are mandatory, since they are legally enforced and organizations have to develop and implement such initiatives in order to comply with legal mandates (Kossek and Pichler 2006; Thomas 1990; Wrench 2007). Such policies are part of a punitive system aiming at preventing discrimination and promoting equality of treatment for all employees within a work environment (Johns et al. 2012; Maxwell et al. 2001). As a result, they are mainly reactive in nature (Wrench 2003) since the focus is placed on providing remedy for past injustice and malpractices for certain groups/categories of the population. In this respect, diversity is viewed as matter of justice (Noon 2007), and the underlying rationale of the respective organizational policies is mainly grounded on moral arguments (Thomas 1990); Wrench 2007). As underlined by Billing and Sundin (2006), EEO and AA initiatives are in accordance with a justice-based view and they are founded on moral imperatives, since their objective is to remove all barriers to fair employment practices, in conformity to the values of a democratic state. In line with this later remark, Litvin (2006) notes that civil rights have oriented the discourses of both EEO and AA.

Moreover, in the respective literature it is often remarked in regard to EEO and AA policies that the focus is placed on group differences, not on individual characteristics (Liff 1997; Thomas 1990; Wrench 2007). Consequently, it can be inferred that EEO and AA are more collectivist in nature in comparison to *Diversity Management*, which is a more individualistic approach to workplace diversity (Carnevale and Stone 1994; Johns et al. 2012; Jonsen et al. 2013; Wrench 2007), and which will be exemplified in detail later in this chapter. Depending on the viewpoint, this can be considered either an advantage or a drawback of EEO and AA. To be more specific, the collectivist approach to the management of workplace diversity focuses on the fact that the aforementioned legally imposed policies do not neglect the fact of structural discrimination and inequalities that certain categories of the population (such as women, racial and ethnic minorities etc.) have historically faced (Prasad et al. 2006). On the other hand, other organizational theorists remark that the focus on group based characteristics leads to the neglect of individual attributes such as competence and character on account of race, sex, ethnicity religious beliefs, origins etc. fact that simply entails another form of injustice and discrimination (Johns et al. 2012; Thomas 1990). In accordance with this argument, it is an undeniable fact that organizational policies based on EEO and AA philosophy often result in a backlash (often mentioned in the literature as the 'white male backlash'), since

employees belonging to the historically dominant groups perceive the recruitment and promotion of employees on the basis of demographic attributes, as a potential threat to meritocracy (Arnold 1997; Dick and Cassel 2002; Prasad and Mills 1997; Thomas 1990).

EEO and AA are also criticized for creating a gender-, culture- and color-blind workplace, focusing more on assimilating differences than on enabling every individual to perform according to its potential (Thomas 1990). Thus, EEO and AA practices often result in the integration of culturally diverse employees to the dominant cultural paradigm in a given organization, creating what is characterized as the *American melting pot* (Prasad and Mills 1997; Prasad et al. 2006). In this way, minority employees bare the burden of adapting to a work environment, where their special capabilities and innate background cannot necessarily be accommodated.

Furthermore, EEO- and AA-based organizational policies are also criticized for being mainly concerned with recruitment (Ford 1996; Liff 1997; Thomas 1990), getting minority employees to the entry level, without any provision for their upward mobility. Such policies provide just a boarding pass, not an upgrade, whereas the real problem is to enable such employees to fully meet their potential, breaking the ceiling-glass that prohibits their promotion to middle-management and leadership positions (Thomas 1990).

Although EEO and AA have been the focus of negative critiques (briefly outlined above), their contribution to the creation of a more inclusive workplace should not be underestimated. As noted by Dickens (1999), equality regulation:

a. sets an equality agenda for employers
b. determines -to some extend- the conditions under which employers' decisions are taken (symbolic function of law)
c. provides universal standard and minima regarding the management of an heterogeneous workforce
d. alters the cost of discrimination and organizational inaction in regard to equality issues (see also Becker 1971)

Nevertheless, when these minimum prerequisites for equality and inclusion in the workplace are met, equality regulation has no further role to play, since it consists of artificial and transitional interventions (Thomas 1990) with minimum contribution to the long-term objective of creating an essentially inclusive workplace.

2.2 Diversity Management (DM): Moving Beyond Legally Enforced Organizational Practices

Diversity management (DM) bears a wide range of connotations, but it predominantly refers to voluntary organizational actions designed to generate a process of inclusion of employees from different backgrounds to the formal and informal organizational structures through particular policies, events and initiatives (De Anca and Vasquez 2007; Foster-Curtis and Dreachslin 2008; Kossek et al. 2006;

Morrison et al. 2006; Ozbilgin and Tatli 2008; Pitts and Wise 2010; Prasad et al. 2006; Rodriguez-Garcia 2010; Seymen 2006; Shen et al. 2009; Singh 2008; Syed and Ozbilgin 2009; Thomas and Ely 1996). The term *Diversity Management* and the subsequent practices emerged in the US in the 1980's, when criticism about EEO and AA was massive. DM was seen as an alternative to the legally imposed organizational policies for the management of a heterogeneous workforce.

With regard to DM discourse, the focus is not placed on discrimination, but on the contrary, on matters of difference and inclusion (Prasad et al. 2006) of employees belonging to diverse social identity groups. Within this framework, diversity is treated as an organizational resource (Noon 2007), and not simply as an organizational attribute associated with challenges that the organization should address and overcome. Difference is seen as an asset: the ideal is the creation of a healthy work climate, where the potential of all employees is acknowledged and supported (Billing and Sundin 2006; Thomas 1990). As a result, within this diversity paradigm, workplace heterogeneity is generally perceived by corporations as a strategic choice (Jonsen et al. 2011).

As already noted, the focus of EEO and AA policies is placed on the group level, being more collectivist. On the contrary, the building block of DM approaches remains the individualization of differences (Jonsen et al. 2011; Kirton and Green 2009). Thus, the target of DM initiatives is not only employees belonging to certain social identity groups, but potentially all the employees of a given organization. Consequently, the resulting benefits of DM organizational policies are perceived as affecting an organization as a whole. Therefore, it can be easily inferred that the phenomenon of 'white male backlash'—that is, the resistance of traditionally dominant groups of employees to an organization's attempt to manage a heterogeneous workforce—associated with EEO and AA, is considerably limited when organizations engage in DM practices.

In comparison to EEO and AA, DM assumes the potential to address more subtle forms of differences (Liff 1997), dealing more substantially with the challenges of a diverse workforce and going beyond the simple numerical representation of historically excluded groups (Ford 1996; Thomas 1990), ensuring the inclusion of a diverse workforce in every aspect of organizational life (Kossek and Lobel 1996). Furthermore, DM is an approach that highlights differences, rather than minimizing them (Liff 1997). It is associated with the 'valuing difference' perspective (Noon 2007); It aims not at the assimilation or the integration, but rather on the inclusion of employees belonging to diverse identity groups, through an individualized treatment to meet individual abilities and needs (Liff 1997), and the maximization of individual potential.

Unlike EEO and AA initiatives which are entrenched in a legal requirement rationale, DM is most commonly justified on the grounds of business arguments, linking diversity to business performance (Billing and Sundin 2006; Carnevale and Stone 1994; Dickens 1999; Kossek et al. 2006; Litvin 2006; Yakura 1996). This approach is widely known as the 'Business Case' for diversity management. As noted by Dickens (1999), business case recognizes a business advantage in taking

equality action and the emphasis is placed on pragmatic business imperatives (such as: meeting the demands of a diversified customer base, enhancing labor relations, responding to the needs of global markets, securing an increased market share, as well as improved skills of workforce, already discussed in the previous chapter). This approach obviously focuses on pure and tangible economic benefits and is driven by profit and efficiency motives, treating diversity as an important asset that creates and maintains competitive advantage for any given organization. Thus, there is a strong incentive from the part of the organization to voluntarily engage in the management of a heterogeneous employment base.

2.3 The Limitations of the Business Case Approach to Diversity Management

As already mentioned, *Diversity Management* (DM) discourse has been closely associated with the Business Case underlying rationale, which focuses on the potential tangible bottom-line benefits that an organization can attain though a demographically heterogeneous employment base. However, this approach appears to be rather problematic for many researchers and organizational theorists. To begin with, as noted by Noon (2007, p. 775), DM discourse "…denies the legitimacy or value of social justice arguments". Consequently, we can infer that it neglects a moral-based grounding, and that it solely relies on instrumentality arguments. As a result, it depoliticizes the issues related to discrimination in the workplace by neglecting structural discrimination affecting historically disadvantaged groups, and it fails to challenge and potentially alter power relations, dominant ideologies or organizational goals already present within a given organizational context (Noon 2007). Thus, as underlined by Zanoni and Janssens (2004), DM discourse reflects the existing power relations between management and employees within a corporation (see also Cooper 2004; Zanoni 2011).

Moreover, relying solely on consequentialist, utilitarian arguments the business case for diversity management is very circumstantial: diversity is reduced to a commodity, or a resource subject to cost-benefit calculation (Gotsis and Kortezi 2013). The lack of an underlying universal principal for equality makes diversity management contingent in nature: this means that in some cases there is an economic-based rationale for discrimination (Noon 2007): if diversity is not beneficial enough for business pursuits, then it does not prove worth pursuing (Wrench 2005). On the contrary, there may be sufficient reasons for creating a 'biased' workplace, when according to the mirror-argument (outlined in the first chapter) organizations can benefit from a workforce that effectively and adequately mirrors the composition of their customer base (Jonsen et al. 2013). Then, the criteria for the composition of an organization's personnel are not based on equality, but rely on prioritizing the concerns of their customers. Business case discourses were thus informed by the Weberian notion of instrumental rationality insofar as "managing diversity

became an apolitical, rational call to respond to changing demographic factors with the rational goal of increasing companies' bottom line" (Nkomo and Hoobler 2014, p. 251). To sum up, the consequentialist nature of the BC paradigm for diversity constitutes a limitation of great importance, especially if we take into consideration that managers often adopt a short-term approach when they define criteria for assessing an organizational benefit (Dickens 2000; Humphries and Rubery 1995; Jonsen et al. 2013).

Another problem of the BC paradigm to diversity management is the fact that, although grounded solely on practicality arguments, there is lack of empirical evidence to support it. As underlined by Johns and colleagues (2012), research findings regarding the effects of diversity on measurable business outcomes are both scarce and mixed, making BC an insufficient rationale for the maintenance of a diverse workforce (Esmail et al. 2005), and limiting its use at a purely rhetorical, discursive level (Tatli 2011). These, as well as other important forms of limitations of the BC paradigm will be further discussed in the following sections, insofar as they have triggered strong criticism, as well as raised serious controversies among the academic and research community of diversity scholars. Such limitations not only denote an urgent need to effectively enrich the scope, as well as expand the perspective of various BC assumptions, but they have also shaped the foundations of alternative approaches to diversity and its proper management. As a result, the quest for and formulation of critical perspectives has been deeply informed by existing deficiencies of BC paradigm: the latter is being subject to theoretical scrutiny ranging from efforts to reconcile ethical and business arguments, to forms of devastating criticism, as we are going to explain in the next chapters.

To summarize, morally-based antidiscrimination arguments consisting in securing equality and justice with respect to group-level differences through legally enforced practices, have been often opposed to business arguments on the intrinsic value of individual level differences as an asset that has to be properly evaluated through voluntary, market-driven initiatives (see, Table below). Equality, inclusion and social justice perspectives on diversity are thus thought of as either competing or complementary to BC rationales for commitment to diversity, fact that entailed polarity and tensions between alternative discourses on demographic differences, on which we focus in the next chapter.

Initiatives-practices	Justification	Source	Nature-content	Level of implementation
EEO & AA	Moral arguments	Legally imposed	Focus on discrimination & justice	Focus on the group-level
DM	Business arguments (Business case)	Voluntary—market driven	Focus on differences as an asset	Focus on the individual level

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Chapter 3
The Rhetoric of Diversity Management: How Critical Diversity Studies Explicate Organizational Appropriation of Differences

3.1 The Content of Dominant Discourses I: Objectifying and Neutralizing Differences

Core Premises A core premise on which mainstream diversity literature is based is that workplace diversity discourses, mostly referring to certain demographic employee attributes, appear to define differences as immutable in encompassing people's essence in view of an individual's membership in an internally homogenous group. This membership however, represents a *socially constructed category* that embodies not only one's deepest personal motivations, dispositions and proclivities, but also the societal influences, institutional dimensions and power relations permeating various diversity discourses.

Extant literature shaping the diversity management field bears two important characteristics: *first*, it tends to prioritize single-level explorations, by examining a relevant issue at one, single level of analysis (e.g. career outcomes, group processes, organizational performance), often failing to account for multiple-level factors; and *second*, a radical dichotomy between critical diversity studies placing an emphasis on discrimination and inequity in employment settings on one hand, and mainstream approaches centered on performance-related outcomes of workforce diversity on the other, permeates the entire field. As a result, equality and inclusion approaches based on the tenets of reducing discrimination and promoting social justice considerations, are often confronted to more managerial perspectives focusing on a business case, as well as on securing enhanced performance.

Critical diversity studies emerged in the mid-1990s, representing a reaction to the appropriation of inclusive principles by the rhetoric of diversity management which came to dominate many corporate agendas: diversity management appeared as a positive, empowering perspective valuing different competences of a demographically diverse workforce. This paradigmatic shift initiated a critical discussion on the normative underpinnings of an endeavour that was viewed as concealing power disparities, as well as substantially hampering the ability to question structures of privilege and inequality within organizational settings. Informed by a wide range of methodological stances (discourse analysis, post-structuralism, post-colonial

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perspectives, cultural studies, feminist approaches, institutional theory) as potential alternatives to mainstream reductionist epistemologies, critical diversity approaches share two basic premises: *first and foremost*, a non-essentialist, non-positivistic conception of diversity and of underlying socio-demographic identities viewed as socially reproduced categories embedded in various context-specific processes, and *second*, these societal processes and the ensuing meanings of diversity are reflective of unequal power relations within a specific context, as well as of the role of multiple social actors in maintaining, resisting or altering them.

Critical discursive studies have crucially advanced the theory and research of diversity management in terms of their three fold contribution to a better understanding of the field: *First*, they have demonstrated that ideas, definitions and meanings of diversity are socially constructed and contextually embedded processes, emerging in specific organizational contexts. *Second*, they underscore the fact that these dominant constructions of diversity incorporate a business rationale often antagonistic, and sometimes inimical to genuine equality and diversity concerns. And *third*, they place an emphasis on the importance of historically constructed relations of dominance and subordination, as well as on the ensuing marginalization experienced by unprivileged and vulnerable groups. Diversity is thus viewed as an organizational discourse that seems to favour certain managerial and economic goals, even at the expense of other societal and organizational issues. We now proceed to discuss certain rationales for justifying such a statement.

The Problematic Nature of Diversity Discourses The diversity management field is, in nature ambivalent, often subject to competing conceptualizations. Drawing on French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concept of field, Tatli (2011) provides a new framework according to which the diversity management field delineates a *relational social space* consisting of and articulated by three core components: diversity discourses, diversity practices and diversity practitioners. Diversity discourses tend to confer legitimacy for various diversity practices, thus shaping an invaluable resource for diversity practitioners on which they effectively draw to justify a specific diversity practice. Diversity practices inform the experiences of target groups, either concealing or unraveling the institutional and structural dimensions of inequality. In addition, diversity practitioners are instrumental to enacting certain discourses and implementing particular practices. Diversity discourses however, are frequently identity blind, entwined with diversity practices in a way that disembedds differences from their wider societal context. These a-historic and depoliticized conceptions hardly favour a view of differences as socially constructed attributes roughly projected to group identities. There is in fact, a discrepancy between existing diversity rhetoric and particular diversity practices, the latter failing to result in an inclusive work environment transcending strict requirements of mere compliance to business or legalistic imperatives.

This sharp dichotomy continues to permeate various critical discourses on diversity. Not infrequently informed by a post-structuralist tradition, discourse analytical approaches have substantially influenced critical diversity studies in a two-fold way: *first and foremost*, they have succeeded in de-essentializing the very concept

of diversity by demonstrating the importance of social constructedness of various workforce demographic characteristics, and *second*, they are effective in properly deconstructing diversity rhetoric as a set of empowering discourses on the added value of diverse individual capacities, skills and competencies. Drawing on contemporary developments in the organizational, life and natural sciences and philosophy, Litvin (1997) has demonstrated the essentialist underpinnings of current mainstream diversity discourses centred on salient demographic characteristics underlying fixed and logically consistent social identities: such an approach hardly facilitates taking into account the societal context in which specific diversity categories emerge, evolve and become meaningful. Instead, Litvin critically argues in favour of a process-oriented conception that is in a position to:

a. Acknowledge the particular experiences associated with the social construction of the meaning of diversity categories,
b. Consider the complexities, ambiguities and multidimensionality of organizational and social roles in which diverse employees are involved, and
c. Assess the particular context in which power relations shape and govern social interactions and define the competing interests of various actors.

Martin-Alcoff (2006) advances this reasoning by further examining the importance of various perceptions of social identities. People place their emphasis on, and concomitantly engage in focusing on specific individual attributes, thus projecting their perceptions of social identities on those expected to act in conformity to this stereotype. These socially imposed, visible identities (such as gender and race) help consolidate differences in such a way that the reproduction of stereotyping processes remains far from being questioned. Visible identities may be also conducive to discriminatory treatment insofar as they foster compliance to societal expectations, even to the detriment of one's genuine self-identity: eliminating this visibility of socially constructed differences might be helpful in reducing socio-economic exclusion suffered by vulnerable groups' members.

The organizational implications of these observations deserve a thorough and comprehensive discussion. Liff and Wajckman (1996) underscore the limitations inherent in many diversity initiatives and argue in favour of more inclusive practices, moving beyond the traditional "sameness" and "difference" distinction: the former suppresses and minimizes differences fostering compliance to the dominant stereotype, while the latter acknowledges workforce differences, enhancing an individual's opportunities to benefit from diversity-friendly policies. The second perspective, albeit desirable, runs the risk of misinterpretation as a form of differential treatment: other forms of equality, Liff and Wajckman contend, based on less sharp dichotomies (than those of sameness/ difference) might serve more effectively the ideal of workplace inclusiveness (cf. Liff 1999).

Under certain conditions, however, differences may assume other than a centrifugal dynamic. Rink and Ellemers (2007) decisively move forward to that direction in their advocacy of the paradoxical notion of a "diversity-based identity" focusing on intra-group dynamics epitomized in interactive teams, by affirming the potential value of task-related group differences in view of building a shared identity of

membership in heterogeneous teams. Diversity is thus embedded in multiple organizational identities presupposing a principle of *norm-congruency*, substantiated when differences are elevated to a prototypical feature of a work team. Accordingly, differences assume a normative dimension in reflecting both mutual expectations and meaning attribution before and during collaboration.

A Variety of Discourses Enacted in Different Organizational Responses to Diversity Capitalizing on this dynamic, diversity management interventions are substantially informed by a variety of distinct diversity discourses. Kamp and Hagedorn-Rasmussen (2004) have critically explored and summarized the discourses on which the extant diversity management literature draws.

First and foremost, managerial emphasis on human capital reflects and incorporates a discourse on efficiency and individual achievement: organizations draw from the pool of disadvantaged groups in their recruitment and selection processes in view of securing competitive advantage and improving effectiveness, as dictated by the business case for diversity. Differential treatment is thus viewed as an impediment to the implementation of meritocratic reward and promotion systems.

Second, a cultural capital perspective draws on globalization discourses according to which culturally diverse employees are invested with a potential that is expected to make a significant contribution to organizational functioning.

Third, a social justice perspective involves organizational discourses centered on equity, fairness and on the need to alleviate historical injustices experienced by vulnerable groups' members.

And *fourth*, a learning and synergy perspective focuses on the dynamics of the learning organization to unleash a potential incorporated in unique individuals through synergistic initiatives that foster innovation and creativity. Accordingly, differences are intrinsically valued as a locus of prospective change.

Such discourses, Kamp and Hagedorn–Rasmussen (2004) contend, lead to different implications with respect to social identity groups in organizations. Equally importantly, these discourses seem to co-exist and co-evolve, albeit with varying importance to an organizational setting: not infrequently, the shift of emphasis from ethical to more pragmatic discourses is accompanied by the predominance of sameness and the concomitant perceived inferiority of otherness associated with assimilation. Diversity management however, is not always governed by business priorities; it may also assume ethical connotations. The authors analyse the Danish case in which diversity management involves a variety of discourses, among them those based on equality concerns, effectively appropriated by the particular business setting under examination.

Organizations are viewed as loci where emerging discourses on diversity are enacted, thus prompting typical responses to the reality of a diverse workforce. Organizational responses toward specific diversity categories encompass different perspectives, assessed in terms of different strategies undertaken by organizations across individual, career and organizational development. Such perspectives embody varying levels of commitment to unraveling privilege and status deeply embedded in organizations, and are ranging from the most negative (hostility as

reinforcing resistance to diversity initiatives) to the most positive ones (advocacy as reflecting increasing levels of commitment to diversity issues through publicly promoting inclusion ideals): compliance, inquiry and inclusion represent intermediary stances alongside the hostility-advocacy continuum (Rocco et al. 2009).

Tukiainen (2014) seeks to broaden the theoretical conception of discursive practices by identifying discourses that offer managers potential ways to construct subjectivities and ensuing power relations. Focusing on a Finnish-Polish setting, the study identifies an inter-discursive blend of four discourse types that shape sense-making of managing cultural differences. In the *cross-cultural learning* discourse, diversity management development has to incorporate learning processes of diverse others' capabilities. The *emotional dependency* discourse necessitates the development of trust, respect and relevant mutual emotional states, while the *rational managing* discourse makes diversity management dependent upon managerial interventions aiming at reducing cross-cultural conflict and promoting collaboration. Finally, in the *situation-bound* discourse the construction of diversity initiatives was constrained by situational factors and external circumstances.

In accommodating multiple forms of differences, organizations have adopted a variety of responses, not all of which necessarily fostering equality and inclusion. Employing a discursive approach, Ostendorp and Steyaert (2009) examined diversity management interventions in Swiss-based organizations from the standpoint of enabling, or foreclosing varieties of difference as perceived and interpreted by multiple organizational actors. The authors analyzed the sense-making processes by which the construction of differences through contextually enacted discourses is confronted with a standard image of the ideal worker; they thus underscored the *inherently political nature* of negotiations of sameness and otherness, affecting the way by which differences are acknowledged, mitigated, even obliterated.

Highly dependent on the specific interpretative repertoire employed by various stakeholders, differences may be perceived as unimportant to organizational functioning, related to the identification of specific minority groups, rationalized in terms of conflict between distinct interest groups, or included in hybrid organizational forms. The luxury repertoire conceives of differences as a *taboo*, as irrelevant to standard priorities. In the emergency repertoire, difference is constructed as *need*, as a deviation from the norm that addresses extreme necessity and vulnerability of groups on the margins of organizational life. Difference may also emerge as *dispute* between interest groups striving to secure their position in an organizational space; finally, in the inclusion repertoire associated with prospects of change, differences are moved at the centre of a hybrid organization, elevated to a *sine qua non* condition of social interactions. Only in a perspective that is intended to have an impact on power relations, incongruities and discrepancies between business and personal, or societal spheres tend to drastically diminish, and ultimately perish. We proceed to unravel further ambiguities, as well as contradictions pervading the mechanisms through which diversity discourses are articulated, established and maintained in a work setting.

3.2 The Content of Dominant Discourses II: Accommodating Differences, or Mitigating Social Tensions?

The Underlying Rationale As already noted, the promises and prospects of mainstream diversity management approaches have been subject to strong criticism in critical diversity studies. Drawing on Habermas' model of discursive ethics Kersten (2000) views diversity management as a core ideological strategy that is intended to re-assert the autonomy of the corporate sphere in view of employment decisions: diversity initiatives are inextricably associated with an overall socio-political attempt to regulate identity conflict, to mitigate existing societal tensions and to subsume social contradiction. Diversity management is thus effective in building a model that is "relational rather than structural in nature, emphasizing training, communication, mentoring and teamwork and excluding the more fundamental issues of structural equity and accountability"(Kersten 2000, p. 243). In ignoring the pervasive influence of the societal context, and by developing a pluralist strategy that celebrates diversity in view of attaining competitive business advantage, diversity management tends to conceal conflict of competing interests and to neutralize race and gender. Rather than reflecting a robust dialogical movement centred on differences, diversity discourses are degenerated into a mere rhetoric of equality that ultimately denies the need to challenge, if not eradicate inequity. Kersten views diversity management as an *intrinsically political* activity, a by-product of ongoing ideological tensions; Kersten (2000, p. 245) posits:

> …rather than resolving these tensions, diversity management offers a new ideological and mediated cultural response designed to contain, restrain and obscure the fundamental racial inequalities that are inherent in our society.

In this respect, only an undistorted dialogue on differences is in a position to facilitate meaningful change by deconstructing these claims that fail to make sense of organizational structures as ideological constructions. Diversity management encompasses strategies of containment of struggles for domination and resistance in view of harmonizing social influence antagonisms instigated by marginalized discourses. Swan (2010) for instance, analyses the visual imagery employed to support an organization's commitment to diversity as a by-product of consolidation of power and argues that the commercial appropriation of the aesthetic representation of diversity tends to acknowledge differences, yet simultaneously commodifying, if not discrediting them. Bell et al. (2011a) argue that some work environments foster silence climates, refraining from encouraging voice of diverse employees, in particular those belonging to sexual orientation groups.

Valuing diversity necessitates specific mechanisms enabling pro-social voice as critical to the success of change management efforts. We in turn proceed to examine the degree to which prevailing discourses on diversity help unleash the potential of diverse workforces, as well as shape an agenda centred on the recognition of disadvantage and lack of privilege suffered by vulnerable group members.

Diversity Discourses: Do they Always Unleash Potential of Diverse Workforces? An over-emphasis on the business justifications of diversity on the grounds of addressing organizational bottom line issues, has failed to ensure equitable employment outcomes (Syed and Kramar 2009). Hamdani and Buckley (2011) identify in the lack of attention to the institutional forces in diversity practice, one of the principal reasons that restricted the value of diversity on mere economic gains. Risberg and Søderberg (2008) investigated the universal concept of diversity management adapted in a Danish context: the Danish companies encouraged diversity by drawing on two entwined discourses, a business case and a social responsibility one, the latter focusing on vulnerable groups, being more pertinent to the Danish context. Jones et al. (2013) endorse this view in claiming that diversity training should be an integral part of a moral imperative according to which bottom-line justifications have to be enriched with social justice arguments. In so doing, employees are expected to recognize the ethicality of diversity-related decisions, increasing their motivation to engage in inclusive behaviours.

Not unexpectedly, discourses centred on the business case for diversity plausibly assume an intrinsically a-political and a-social function, as they appear devoid of ethical connotations. Equally importantly, diversity management fails to simultaneously address business and social justice outcomes of diversity (Martin-Alcàzar 2012). Johns et al. (2012) indicate the inconsistencies in applying business case arguments to diversity management in public sector institutions and advocate a moral case for advancing and justifying policies that go beyond the mere individualism of business imperatives. Kirton and Greene (2010) argue that the shift from equal employment opportunities to a business case, individualistic paradigm lends support to the statement that structural inequalities are not addressed; gender equality initiatives are primarily viewed as a means to attain greater returns on investment, fact that proves the seductiveness of prevailing discourses as detrimental to a gender equality perspective. In a similar vein of reasoning, Van den Brink and Stobbe (2014) identify and reframe a support paradox reflecting the ambiguous and contradictory forms of doing gender in contemporary organizations. Questioning the taken for granted nature of social support men enjoy, presupposes deep reflection on the fluidity of gender identities rooted in exploring the supposedly gender neutrality of the dominant discourses on meritocracy, as well as in disrupting prevailing socially constructed forms of the gender binary.

Differences are neutralized as denoting a set of individual attributes subservient to organizational goals. Perriton (2009) claims that, rather than informing effective strategies in improving the promotion of women, corporate discourses founded on the business case tend to invariably frame, restrict and depoliticize gender issues. Far from being neutral, market discourses that dominate corporate agendas provide an inadequate response to equity and social justice concerns by reproducing discrimination of social identity groups. Bendick et al. (2010) raised similar concerns about discriminatory employment practices that generate inequalities in earnings and promotion decisions, thus substantially restraining opportunities for minority groups. An inclusive, fair and socially responsible diversity management originates

in processes that entirely meet the principles of organizational (distributive, procedural and interactional) justice (Fujimoto et al. 2013).

Diversity Discourses: Do they Promote a Politics of Recognition? Business rationales for diversity draw on common knowledge assumptions, yet there is a relative paucity of research on how social identities are related to a set of attitudes and competences in ways beneficial to certain employees, but detrimental to others (cf. Litvin 2002, 2006). In their review of the critical turns in the evolution of diversity management, Lorbiecki and Jack (2000) summarize the basic assumptions underlying the critical debate within the field. Drawing on research streams such as ethnic/racial studies, radical feminist approaches and linguistic analysis, they explore existing critiques of diversity management by placing an emphasis on the added value of post-colonial perspectives for enriching our understanding of diversity interventions in organizations. They thus argue that diversity management tends to proliferate, and consequently perpetuate, rather than eliminate structural workforce inequalities. This may be attributed to the fact that diversity management delineates a sort of an inviolate separating line between diversity managers, who are assumed to possess fixed, stable and uncontested identities, and diverse employees whose ambivalent, fluid and low-status multiple identities make them more prone to a variety of organizational control mechanisms.

In this vein of reasoning, diversity management is viewed as a set of organizational practices based on specific ideological constellations that serve to justify, if not legitimize existing organizational structures. Based on a Foucauldian framework, Jack and Lorbiecki (2007) expanded these findings by exploring the links between national identity and organizational globalization within the context of three British organizations' attempts to synchronize corporate identities through diversity management initiatives: their findings suggested that national identity is entwined with corporate and personal identities in a most ambivalent and contradictory manner. Jack and Lorbiecki (2007, pp. 83–84) view diversity management as a form of an overarching organizational discourse, and argue that such initiatives operate as a mechanism to formally legitimize managerial interventions into organizational identity issues, this process pervading the deeper levels of diverse employees' subjectivities. Accordingly, diversity discourses reflect a kind of organizational regulation in view of aligning employees' personal identities with an archetype of an ideal self pertinent to the attainment of predetermined objectives.

Such an approach to diversity based on the primacy of fixed individual differences, hardly facilitates the endeavour to eradicate discrimination against specific identity groups. In this respect, and grounded on an essentialist interpretation of identities, diversity is primarily viewed as consisting in individualized attributes that help to classify people in seemingly objective group categories, thus obscuring status and power differences. Moreover, in ignoring the dimension of the historical and societal roots of discrimination, diversity management is effective in invariably reproducing existing hierarchies, by diminishing organizational change pursuits. Consequently, diversity initiatives do not adequately meet the need for inclusion, insofar as they fail to address the unfulfilled expectations of disadvantaged

members. In this line of thinking, post-colonial and critical management theories appear invested with a potential that facilitates diversity management in being both critical and historically-sensitive and possibly, more reflexive.

Diversity discourses tend to inevitably frame different diversity dimensions through rigid social categorizations that fail to consider not only the fluidity and intersectionality of various categories, but also how such discourses are articulated, regulated and contested. In analyzing migrant women representations through a culturalist discourse on integration and emancipation Ghorashi (2010) focuses on the necessity to challenge basic assumptions of this dominant discourse. Failure to do so is tantamount to reinforcing social boundaries instead of shaping alliances, as well as to strengthening binary opposition between emancipated selves and un-emancipated others: this process results in isolation rather than empowerment, perpetuating suppression, instead of fostering emancipation.

From another lens and drawing on queer theory, Bendl et al. (2008) placed an emphasis on the performativity of diversity discourses, as well as on their socially and contextually shaped temporality and relationship to a constellation of power processes. This approach is intended to disclose the particular ways in which social identities are constructed, positioned within boundaries and assessed against invisible criteria in dominant diversity discourses: the latter tend to replicate binary notions of identities that hardly facilitate possibilities for human agency and preclude engaging in change initiatives. Queering diversity management necessitates a constant struggle against deeply entrenched patterns on which justification for exclusion and marginalization is grounded, through a process-related strategy of deconstructing prevailing norms and altering hierarchical structures.

3.3 The Content of Dominant Discourses III: The Nature of Management Rhetoric

The Underlying Rationale Diversity discourses are not proliferated in, and imposed upon various settings in a purely mechanistic way. Undoubtedly, diversity discourses embody rhetorical aspects employed to mitigate social tensions, as well as to justify the respective practices by which they are enacted. In providing a brief overview of diversity rhetoric in organizations exhibiting a strong commitment to inclusion, Levine (2003) identifies two key issues: the denial of hatred in the organizational metaphor of a peaceable kingdom, and the ensuing claim that life experiences associated with group identities enhance creativity. Identities are taken for granted, challenged or problematized through discursive constructions that resonate with, and reflect prevailing patterns in management rhetoric (Ainsworth et al. 2010).

Rhetoric on diversity is more germane to an overarching managerial rhetoric. Morrison et al. (2006) explore the failure of this rhetoric to align diversity management with social justice pursuits as first order constructs that enable leadership commitment to diversity. Kirton and Greene (2006) identified in the main constituents

of diversity discourses (a business-driven motivation, focus on the individual, and diversity as a top down managerial activity) an encompassing rhetorical strategy, not always pertinent to equality pursuits. Drawing on this widespread business case rhetoric, diversity management is unremittingly outcomes- rather than equity-orientated, a strategic choice that resonates with Friedman's view on the social responsibility of organizations (Kramar 2012, p. 256).

Management Rhetoric and the Formation of Diversity Discourses A certain trend in critical diversity studies focuses on the importance of power in shaping organizational discourses underlying the prevailing rhetoric on differences. Postcolonial theory in particular, views workplace diversity as involving efforts at destabilizing and subverting hierarchical systems of binary oppositions, by shaping discursive sites of resistance in which the marginalized groups question dominant discourses of otherness, struggle with structural positions of privilege and contest consolidated asymmetries of power (Prasad 2006, pp. 138–139). Drawing on critical discourse analysis, Zanoni and Janssens (2004) explored the ways in which power and diversity discourses are intertwined in specific settings, through managerial rhetorical strategies that are reflective of, and commensurate with existing power relations. In analyzing the interviews of 25 Flemish HRM managers, Zanoni and Janssens investigated the role of power in the construction of differences by examining diversity discourses as a by-product of the specific context in which they emerged. They in turn denoted how these managers construed their diversity discourses through resorting to certain rhetorical agendas, schemes and techniques permeating their respective narratives and argumentation on the primacy of strategic rationality in terms of organizational goals and priorities. Even equality-based discourses failed to challenge underlying power structures, taken for granted that they were confined to promote intergroup equality, while the relationship between employees and management continued to be remaining intact.

Diversity management, as implemented in practice, tends to degenerate into a mere rhetoric revealing its essentialist underpinnings. Advocating and outlining a set of best practices in view of bridging the divide between diversity education and diversity training (see, King et al. 2010), albeit important, may not suffice in addressing the implications of this rhetoric. A thorough investigation of the microdynamics of language and of its various connotations is supportive of the contention that managers ultimately view employees on the basis of specific group membership founded on a given essence. As a result, differences are objectified and consolidated in a way that precludes individual agency and renders employees more compliant to organizational norms. This conceptualization of diversity appears devoid of the potential necessary for challenging dominant discourses and enacting processes of organizational change, at least to the extent that diversity discourses emerge in a cluster of asymmetrical power relations between privileged and disadvantaged groups, diversity managers and diverse employees.

This binary opposition between diversity managers and diverse employees, albeit important in critical management studies, is far more complicated than one would expect. One main reason resides in the fact that diversity managers are acting

in a contingent rather than uniform manner, seeking to effectively mitigate a variety of tensions resulting from competing agendas. Drawing on post-colonial theory, and on hybridity as a heuristic concept, Schwabenland and Tomlinson (2008) explore such tensions in UK voluntary organizations involving diversity programmes designed to enhance community renewal: they thus identify existing discrepancies between the organizational mission to empower vulnerable groups on one hand, and the expectations engendering the very act of contracting with state and other financial bodies, on the other. In this respect, and in conformity to a strategy of essentializing differences by maintaining inferiority in marginalized identities, diversity management is highly ambivalent insofar as it is constrained by a variety of regulatory and accountability mechanisms that prevent diverse employees from inventing their own responses to the threat of persisting inequality.

Unavoidably, managerial discourses imbued by a business case rhetoric seem to be too restrictive in scope and perspective. McVittie et al. (2008) demonstrated that current diversity interventions are far from fully capitalizing on the assumed benefits of workforce diversity. The authors employed critical discourse analysis in commenting on qualitative data from HRM and personnel managers' interviews in Britain: they then focused on the proper use of language incorporated in and shaping diversity discourses. Linguistic constructions are not neutral: they emerge in constantly evolving settings in which renewed processes of conflict and negotiation between competing interests govern and shape interpersonal interaction.

As a result, diversity interventions fail to address equity concerns, thus posing an impediment to fostering inclusion. Rather than making participants more sensitive to diversity issues, diversity programs are merely concealing enduring patterns of exclusion (Prasad and Mills 1997) by idealizing the "sameness-difference dilemma" through which diversity is attributed a given essence, assimilated, and ultimately rendered invisible (Holvino and Kamp 2009). Dominant constructions of diversity inform discursive practices of homogeneity that are in turn employed to justify social categorizations and related exclusion (Knoppers et al. 2014). Relatedly, organizations with diversity structures are not necessarily transformed into procedurally fairer environments for underrepresented groups, insofar as they tend to legitimize the status quo (Kaiser et al. 2013). Diversity discourses reflect an individually-focused rhetoric that unremittingly conceals inequalities, hardly ensuring commitment to an equitable treatment of vulnerable groups.

In some instances, rhetoric on diversity may be more comprehensive, as well as multifaceted. Commenting on the Danish case for diversity, Christiansen and Just (2012) argue that discourses on diversity frequently invoke goals of inclusion of suppressed groups, as well as objectives of creating multilevel benefits: due to this two-fold emphasis, diversity discourses appear both restricting and liberating This rhetoric is constitutive of diversity management field under the form of discursive regularities that both underlie and restrain diversity practices: enhance the field necessitates a deeper understanding of such regularities and of their current articulation that is in a position to restrain the emergence of alternative, and eventually competing discourses.

Aniti-Discrimination Discourses as Fashion Cycles Certain studies explore the process through which anti-discrimination discourses gained popularity among both the academic community and the community of practitioners. For instance, discourses of fashion are instrumental in enabling meaningful organizational change, insofar as they exert significant influence on various practitioners. Prasad et al. (2011) investigated the ways through which discourses of fashion shaped diversity management initiatives in six Canadian organizations. Their findings illuminate a variety of paradoxical effects of management fashions: an adverse effect of such discourses was critical in making these organizations adopt and implement a diversity policy on the grounds of imitating competitive others, an endeavour resulting in uniformity, superficiality and organizational cynicism. This is due to the fact that management fashions, albeit conferring certain legitimacy to those who conform to them, are devoid of local relevance and profound sensitivity to the specific context, insofar as they are triggered by external imperatives.

Oswick and Noon (2014) analyse the discursive trends and rhetorical strategies employed by their respective proponents to confer credibility and legitimation to a favoured discourse, often to the detriment of antagonistic others. In this view, substitution of different terms in alternate discourses does not necessitate a paradigm shift in the approach to equality displayed by organizations: equality, diversity and inclusion embody rhetorically-embedded and fashion-like qualities that reflect overlapping patterns and other commonalities. Despite core differences in principles underlying diversity comparing to equality discourses, the move to diversity management is viewed as a change *in emphasis* rather, than as a genuine paradigm change in Kuhnian epistemological terms (cf. Oswick 2011).

Accordingly, the underlying pattern of the rise and decline of a distinct form of anti-discrimination discourse, as well as the concomitant transition from one set of discourses to another, may be reminiscent of management fashion cycles in terms of a rhetorical framing that renders a certain anti-discrimination approach integral to a fashion-oriented rhetoric. However, and contrary to management fashion, there is a potential in viewing different anti-discrimination solutions as concurrently interacting, complementary or synergistic: treating them in isolation runs the risk of discrediting, marginalizing and suppressing constructive arguments, the latter appearing to be denigrated in our attempt to establish and justify the superiority of the new rhetorical constructions over the alleged outdated ones.

3.4 The Content of Dominant Discourses IV: Reproducing Neoliberal Precepts

The Underlying Rationale As already discussed, various streams in critical diversity research hold and share the view that diversity management not only fails to create genuine opportunities for inclusion, but it also *reduces differences to a minimum*, in accordance with the established criteria of standard organizational functioning

(Zanoni 2011) and in conformity to individualistic (Ozbilgin and Tatli 2011), conservative (Tatli 2011) or neo-liberal precepts (Matus and Infante 2011; Holvino and Kamp 2009). Individualization of differences has been feasible through introducing discursive practices by which the dominant diversity management paradigm has displaced the more collectivist discourses of equality perspectives to the margins of organizational rhetoric (Jonsen et al. 2011).

This is due to business case arguments that have dominated the field of diversity management and shaped a worldview in which diversity is valued and respected to the extent it entails predictable, controllable and desirable outcomes (Janssens and Zanoni 2005). Contingent upon the labour market context and the prominence of competitive firm strategies, the utilitarian rationale underlying the business case cannot sufficiently meet the needs of underrepresented groups, thus exerting considerable negative effects on more traditional, universalizing equality and fairness considerations (Noon 2007): in this respect, diversity interventions have failed to concurrently satisfy business and social justice outcomes.

Equally importantly, business case assumptions tend to be idealized, insofar as salient demographic attributes involve contradictory aspects that generate social categorization processes triggering detrimental outcomes, significantly diverging from those advocated by business case proponents (Chatman et al. 1998; Chrobot Mason et al. 2009; Jayne and Dipboye 2004; Jehn et al. 1999; Jehn et al. 2008; Pelled et al. 1999; see, Williams and O'Reilly 1998 for a review). As discussed in the first chapter, mainstream literature has demonstrated that the effects of diversity on work-related outcomes are far from being unconditionally positive; diversity can enhance, as well as disrupt team and organizational performance, the outcome depending not only on the distinction between relational and functional aspects of diversity, but also on the moderating role of variables, such as: diversity beliefs and climates (Homan et al. 2007; Meyer and Schermuly 2012; Lauring and Selmer 2011; van Knippenberg et al. 2004, 2013), participative strategy (Richard et al. 2013), psychological safety (Martins et al. 2013; Roberge and van Dick 2010; Singh et al. 2013), shared objectives (van Knippenberg et al. 2011), task complexity (van Dijk et al. 2012), leader-member exchange (Stewart and Johnson 2009), transformational leadership (Muchiri and Ayoko 2013), CEOs expertise (Buyl et al. 2011), organizational change initiatives (Van De Ven et al. 2008) and other contextual (Qin et al. 2012) and demographic (Bell et al. 2011b) factors. Rather than being unequivocal, and despite their evidence-based nature and plausibility, business case arguments tend to inadvertently serve as an overlapping ideological apparatus in advocating, and unavoidably prioritizing voluntarism and deregulation over collectivist and normative concerns (Tatli 2011). The societal dimension, however, permeates diversity management in many significant respects that deserve thorough examination (Healy et al. 2010; Litvin 2006).

Salient Aspects of Current Ideological Controversies on Managing Diversity A significant attempt has been made to identify the precise content of the ideological constellation underlying diversity discourses that dominate organizational life (see the detailed analysis in O'Brien and Gilbert 2013). Nkomo and Hoobler (2014)

provide permeating insights into underlying societal changes in beliefs and attitudes on minority status that have affected diversity research and practice in the US. They thus identify four major diversity ideologies, white supremacy, colour-blindness, multiculturalism and inclusion, and argue that these conceptual shifts, rendering terminologies "benign and more palatable to all", fall short of focusing "on the real issues of reducing past and continued discrimination" (Nkomo and Hoobler 2014, p. 255). Cavanaugh (1997) argues that despite its presumed transcendence of conflicting interests and the ensuing openness to human achievements, workplace diversity is imbued with political connotations: the construction of otherness is *an intrinsically political project* that subsumes managerial thinking to policy orientations favoured by neoconservative interests. Rattan and Ambady (2013) seek to explicate the differentiated effects of distinct ideologies consisting of a set of beliefs, values and practices regarding diversity, on the dynamics of intergroup relations. In so doing, they argue that colorblindness and multiculturalism, albeit intended to foster equality, differentially shape attitudes toward inequality and disparate outcomes between majority and minority group members.

Interestingly, more comprehensive explorations of diversity ideologies can also be found among the extant literature. Diaz-Polanco (2007) endorses a radical formulation of the critical view in advocating a case for diversity that challenges the ideological and philosophical premises of modern globalized societies. Diversity discourses, culminating in the triumph of multiculturalism, are transformed in an instrument of manipulation and cultural control, posing no real threat to the inequality and hierarchical structures that are so pervasively entrenched in a variety of diverse identities. Multiculturalism is unavoidably reduced to a by-product of neo-liberalism insofar as it neither involves a comprehensive social justice agenda, nor facilitates genuinely emancipatory practices: much in alignment with political liberalism's universal claims, or communitarianism's deeply particularizing aspirations, multiculturalism seeks to effectively delineate a social space of accepted and consequently, tolerated differences. Only a wider political agenda incorporating the precepts of solidarity, sustainability and social justice elevates diversity to a coherent meta-principle informing a dynamic process of social change.

Others have argued that political liberalism does not provide a strong case for diversity ideals. Kilby et al. (2013) critically investigate elite discourses on immigration and ethnicity from British liberal media commentaries, addressing wider ideological concerns on diversity, immigration, state politics and welfare in Britain: employing critical discourse analysis, they arrive at the conclusion that the ideological positions advocated, established and defended in the respective texts tend to inevitably obscure core tenets of liberal politics by subtly, yet persuasively resorting to social representations inimical to enlightened humanitarian ideals.

Many aspects of diversity discourses are viewed as entrenched in, and imbued by neoliberal reasoning. Heavily drawing on indigenous critiques of liberal feminism, Verbos and Humphries (2012) highlight the potential of critical contributions to the formation of a social justice agenda. In identifying managerial constraints to which egalitarian ideals are unwittingly subject to, the authors denounce the instrumental logic of a "sophisticated strategic diversity management through which a selective

assimilation has more deeply embedded a neo-liberal logic that, by definition, cannot support universal inclusion of divergent values" (Verbos and Humphries 2012, p. 518). Matus and Infante (2011) analyze the relations between the advancement of neutral diversity discourses and the value-free practices reflected in neo-liberal educational agendas: the authors contend that the academic community tends to adopt and discursively reproduce value-free meanings of differences reflecting a market oriented rationality imbued by business imperatives. Chan-Tibergien (2006) endorses this view in arguing that the prevailing conceptions of diversity not only serve to invariably replicate hegemonic discourses, but they also fall short of addressing the potential of cultural narratives, exemplified in politics of difference struggling for recognition in the organizational and public spheres.

This line of thinking is by no means unparalleled in the respective literature. Rodriguez-Garcia (2010) endorses the political connotations of this view in contending that support for diversity should be inscribed within a framework of political equality; elevating diversity to a societal value through active participation in a civic space is more likely to yield not segregated or divided, but cohesive and equitable societies. From a business ethics lens that Verbeek (2011) advocates, the goals of equal treatment, equality of results and business recognition on which affirmative action, equal opportunities and diversity management focus, can be subsumed into two generic, comprehensive employment equity policy frames, those of good practice and bad idea, both based on a combination of deontological and utilitarian reasoning. Good practices are grounded on the premise that moral rules claim universal validity and application, as well as because they promote organizational effectiveness, whereas the bad ideas frame is reflective of the adverse effects of good intentions manifest through unintended consequences in practice.

As already noted, many streams of thought in critical diversity scholarship consider business and social justice arguments as not synergistic, but competing, or mutually exclusive: a social justice agenda runs the risk of being subservient to profit considerations, fact that necessitates the separation of a business from a social change agenda evaluated against each other (Jones and Stablein 2006, pp. 160–161). Evidence based on critical studies unravels the contested nature of diversity management processes, thus opposing a more simplistic, a-contextual, a-historical and a-political notion of workplace diversity. Tatli (2010) demonstrates that diversity discourses in the UK are overly influenced by the US originated neoliberal managing diversity perspective, shaped by business case rationales which prioritize business needs, display top-down managerial approaches and focus on individual-based, a-political definitions of diversity.

Relatedly, structural inequalities are rendered invisible, insofar as they are not involved in cost-benefit calculations. Informed by neoliberal discourses, "diversity is treated as a marketable product and as a resource that contributes to the bottom line" (Tatli 2010, p. 292), fact that undermines "the credibility of the diversity management paradigm in terms of promoting inclusive organizational practices and structures" (Tatli 2010, p. 297). In this respect, the diversity management field embodies a discursive dimension that narrates "a neoliberal story that pushes the political nature of differences and discrimination under the carpet while bringing

profit concerns into the focus of debate" (Tatli 2010, p. 300). In certain instances, an unlikely and paradoxical combination of neoliberal discourses and inclusive ideals into a unifying framework imbues unique attributes into diversity practices.

Ideological Components of Paradigm Shifts: From Equality to Diversity Discourses and Beyond Not infrequently, the paradigm shift from equality to diversity discourses has been considered as representing an ideological challenge to moral, legal and social justification of equality (Noon 2007; Wrench 2005). Albeit organizations do hold responsibility for satisfying multiple societal needs, business case arguments place an emphasis on shareholders' rather than on organizational stakeholders' interests (Kossek et al 2006, p. 70). Holgate et al (2012) argue that the need for undertaking equality initiatives is not at all diminished, but reinforced in contemporary neo-liberal environments in which short-term orientations culminating in a depreciation of collective pursuits gain prominence over distributive justice ideals. Kirton and Greene (2009, pp. 173–174) suggest that diversity practitioners resort to business case arguments as a rhetorical strategy consonant to the principal tenets of a neo-liberal policy climate: diversity management as a particular neo-liberal discourse reflects "a fairly low level of politicisation of inequalities and a strong belief in shared management and employee interests." On the contrary, there is less scope for those employing a more progressive agenda, or motivated by a sense of social justice, in advancing and defending equality pursuits.

Business case and social justice rationales for undertaking diversity initiatives are thought of as incommensurate, yet their precise relationship may be more complicated. Rather than being viewed as two opposing philosophical visions, equal opportunities and diversity management could be integrated into a strategy intended to address discrimination in employment settings (Kirton and Greene 2000; Liff 1996). Drawing on research in UK voluntary, non-profit organizations, Tomlinson and Schwabenland (2010) highlight the ambiguities inherent in local constructions of equality and diversity. The authors focus on a controversial issue in claiming that a radical practice of diversity does not necessarily entail abandoning the business case: their findings denote the strategies and tactics through which diversity practitioners were effective in reconciling business and moral rationales: in so doing, they re-inserted utilitarian arguments into the overall organizational commitment to justice principles. Contrary to conventional business case views entrenched into a prevailing neo-liberal discourse according to which social justice considerations are far from being an organization's primary concern, moral and business rationales appear closely linked in support of a socially just mission, even in the case of addressing disadvantage. Undoubtedly, a high degree of instrumental treatment of employees as a means to achieving desirable ends undermines organizational identities centered on fairness; in this respect, diversity values are critical to reconciling efficiency with the pursuit of social justice.

From an entirely different point of view, there has been an effort to theorize diversity management as interwoven not merely with political ideologies, but primarily with social and public policies. Ozbilgin and Tatli (2011) make a first step to this direction, arguing in favour of a reconceptualization of the diversity field,

one that allows for reconsidering the struggle for symbolic domination between multiple institutional actors for imposing their own vision of diversity: "diversity and power are embedded and intertwined in any social phenomena" (Ozbilgin et al. 2011, p. 186). In sum, business case arguments reflect the core premises of a neo-liberal ideology that seeks to individualize, if not de-collectivize workforces.

Concomitantly, an orthodoxy based on preponderant neoliberal ideas of voluntarism and individualism has established its hegemony in the diversity management field: however, and contrary to the domination of this paradigm, tensions generated through particular struggles of power between different actors over legitimacy gaining, are effective in challenging this hegemony, as well as in revitalizing equality concerns (Ozbilgin and Tatli 2011, p. 1248). In this view, the state assumes a critical role in enforcing credible ethical cases for diversity management through policy-making that is in a position to significantly affect the patterns of resource distribution between different actors. Successful interventions and identity politics fighting deeply entrenched inequalities are highly dependent upon the particular philosophies evoked to justify such interventions, or prevent from undertaking reasonable and appropriate political action (Tatli and Ozbilgin 2009).

Entrapped in a Neo-Liberal Dilemma? We argued that moving beyond strict neo-liberal precepts enriches our understanding of diversity management at least to the extent this paradigmatic shift involves public policy implications. Jonsen et al. (2013) expand this perspective by suggesting an alternative conceptualization of workforce diversity that is in a position to capture the contradictions between self-interest and social welfare. The authors reframe the debate on diversity by introducing the notion of the "tragedy of the uncommons", conceived in terms of a fundamental conflict between organizational and societal interests: this conflict epitomizes a primary social dilemma with respect to a society's most uncommon and consequently, stigmatized members. Disadvantaged groups experience discrimination and suffer persistent inequality as two potential aspects of this tragedy: mismanagement of diversity entails marginalization and sub-optimal utilization of diverse employees' skills. Failure in utilizing diversity is perceived as a manifestation of an enduring tension between strategic business choices informed by the rules of instrumental rationality on one hand, and societal interests based on pro-social preferences, sustainability and benevolence on the other.

In this perspective, diversity substantiates a form of *collective good* involving structural issues which cannot be solved exclusively by voluntarist, individually-focused and eventually, isolated organizational initiatives. The tragedy of the uncommons involves various institutional actors and should be primarily dealt with at the societal level, by central state authority: it reflects a perpetual tension between specific social needs and universally held business priorities that is *redistributive* in nature, and as such it requires typical welfare interventions. Jonsen et al. (2013) convincingly argue that, because of the interactive games between multiple stakeholders, we should consider diversity as a multifaceted, societal rather than as an one-dimensional, strategic corporate choice; diversity management presupposes a combination of public redistributive policies and inclusive organizational initiatives

to yield sustainable change in addressing inclusion concerns. A shift from neoliberal premises to policy-making principles supportive of the equality agenda, Jonsen et al. (2013, pp. 282–283) conclude, is deemed a precondition to effectively tackle with this dilemma: a viable solution to the permanent problem of inequality consists in mobilizing and redistributing resources in more equitable and socially responsible ways, as we are going to discuss in the following.

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Chapter 4
The Social Construction of Diversity Discourses: Critical Perspectives on Diversity Management, Power and Inequality

4.1 Diversity and The Social Reproduction of Inequality

Theoretical and Methodological Underpinnings As noted earlier, a commonplace assumption in mainstream diversity research consists in the centrality of individual differences in many managerial discourses on diversity: in so doing, diversity management fails to adequately differentiate between cognitive, cultural and power-based forms of differences, thus forestalling possible focus on structural inequality epitomized in unequal power relations, and avoiding to consider issues of historically rooted inequity and persistent discrimination. On the contrary, diversity management is contrived to reduce institutional and systemic disadvantage to more subtle forms of social boundaries: it focuses on perceived inferiority of out-group members, as well as on individual prejudice toward and stereotypic representations of the dissimilar others, without properly accounting for prevailing patterns of inequality in the allocation of privilege, material and symbolic resources and social influence within an organizational setting. DiTomaso et al. (2007) underscore the substantial relevance of inequality research to a more adequate and informed understanding of workforce diversity, as well as the potential links of the latter to multiple structural relationships among societal groups in terms of power, status and demographic composition. In this respect, organizational interactions and cultures tend to inform the reproduction of inequalities, the latter being embedded in the distinct ways diversity practices designed to address such issues, are implemented.

A stream of literature focuses on the normative assumptions underlying multiple socially constructed forms of difference. Drawing on this body of research, as well as on intersectional studies, human resource management and diversity literatures, Williams and Mavin (2012) seek to identify the relevance of conceptualizing disability for work organizations: they theorize disability as a form of constructed difference, differentiating competing disability discourses. Individual discourses of disability emphasize personal tragedy and the consequences of biological impairment, while a social model views disability as *socially shaped* through a variety of socio-economic relations and other structural factors. Finally, social interpretation discourses of disability focus, not merely on social oppression, but on discursive

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constructions emerging as an outcome of social organizing processes in which non-disability is construed as an organizing norm that devalues the organizational requirements of disabled persons. Rather than engaging in an essentialized conception of differences, social interpretation discourses significantly contribute to an exploration of disability as *a negated, constructed difference* the implications of, and practical responses to which need to be further considered in management studies.

Furthermore, this emphasis on individualized differences tends to inadvertently position minority groups at the fringes of organizational life, considering out-group employees as rather devalued members: this is exemplified through reinforcing dominant narratives and mitigating differences in view of pursuing the established goals of profitability and effective integration of social identity groups. As Holvino and Kamp (2009, p. 398) have noted, various critical diversity streams of research (informed among others by post-structuralism, post-colonial studies, queer theory or radical feminism) have demonstrated the relational, socially-constructed and integral to a particular subjectivity notion of diversity in reframing the contradictory, fluid, power-based and contextual nature of differences; nevertheless, an essentialized and *inherently a-historical* view of identities has by no means ceased to dominate current diversity management theory and practice.

Inequality may also be attributed to more pragmatic reasons. In reviewing the extant literature on recent changes to US employment relationships, Bidwell et al. (2013) focus on the causes, and consequences of these changes for inequality. Driven by market pressures, employment changes have affected inequality patterns in a two-fold manner, by either influencing the distribution of rewards within organizations, or altering the allocation of rewards between various stakeholders and consequently, income distribution on the macro-level. More specifically, conflict between identity-based social movements, social interest groups and political actors are conducive to shifts in negotiating power and offer new possibilities for action; women and minorities as traditionally underrepresented groups seem to suffer disproportionately from these changes. Implementing diversity-oriented practices from which disadvantaged minorities should in principle benefit, may complicate efforts to reduce inequality by generating cognitive bias intended to penalize and disparage members of those target groups: the latter are more likely to experience derogation and exclusion (Bidwell et al. 2013, p. 98).

We have thus far demonstrated that a business rationale dominates corporate policies in support of diversity issues: diversity management exemplifies a business, marketing and human resource strategy that encourages team creativity and innovative problem-solving, facilitates access to local communities, increases a firm's market share and ensures overall financial performance. These positive effects are elevated to an end, thus rendering differences a means in attaining instrumental gains, often to the detriment of various equality and social justice concerns. Rather than posing a threat to the status quo by inaugurating a process of organizational change, diversity management is more likely to maintain and reproduce power and social influence asymmetries insofar as diversity strategies appear to be disentangled from moral and humanistic discourses that might be critical in challenging basic neo-liberal underpinnings of the business case.

Inequality as Endemic to Diversity: Historical and Organizational Dimensions As implied earlier, diversity discourses are socially fabricated in various settings in which equality concerns enter into a dynamic interplay with the interests of various actors, not infrequently confronted with structural asymmetries of power (Deaux et al. 2006). Cooper (2004) explores the politics of diversity in the wider context of societal values that are reminiscent of the omni-presence of social relations of disadvantage, oppression and inequality. Diversity considerations evolve in a complex environment in which a variety of social identities strives to gain legitimacy in a socially contested terrain that hardly privileges the principle of equality. According to Nkomo and Cox (1996), because the very concept of diversity lacks historical specificity, a new, conceptual model of diversity necessitates a relational reframing of identities that is in a position to unveil the origins of various forms of domination inherent in many societal contexts (c.f., Nkomo 1992).

Diversity never ceases to represent a discursive construction that encompasses several progressive aspects while simultaneously exhibiting traditional values of assimilation. As already mentioned, diversity management has been theorized in terms of its functional implications in resolving conflict and reducing gender and racial inequality in job allocation. Despite these promises, structural and status divides between those responsible for diversity recruitment and those making final hiring decisions, in combination with widespread beliefs on the problematic validity of diversity as an evaluation criterion, may thwart diversity recruitment initiatives (Rivera 2012). Linnehan and Konrad (1999) argue that diversity management initiatives should intentionally aim at reducing intergroup inequalities in organizations as a decisive step toward eliminating detrimental intergroup conflict.

Interventions in favour of historically stigmatized groups may question the legitimacy, as well as threaten the particular interests of most privileged members. Collins (2011) argues that despite its inclusive rhetoric, diversity does not necessarily address more subtle forms of inferiority, disadvantage and marginalization of vulnerable groups endemic in today globalization processes; this is due to the fact that the concept of diversity seems to be purposively fluid as its very meaning is subject to a continuous shift manifest in maintaining, not altering the status quo.

From a sociological viewpoint, Marvasti and McKinney (2011) conceive of diversity as a means through which social justice is served; instead of advocating a set of best practices for attaining this goal, the authors suggest that diversity issues become meaningful with respect to history, institutional structures and individual interpretation as inextricable from vested group and individual interests. In this respect, diversity discourses should be assessed in terms of their potential to affect policies shaping, or transforming dominant ideologies on differences; in view of advancing equality, social actors have to be involved in negotiations that constantly challenge not only the self-other position, but also the ensuing differences that arise from this positioning in societal contexts. Using data from upper-level managers in *Fortune* 1000 companies, Embrick (2011) contends that diversity ideology has enabled organizations to curtail a deeper investigation of persisting inequalities, thus preventing diversity practitioners from undertaking efforts to create an equitable environment, as well as from subverting dominant power structures.

In essence, historical inheritance is reflected in the complex entwinements between inequality and diversity. Organizational discourses are at times reminiscent of past historical experiences that have not ceased to affect the mechanisms through which organizations operate in a highly globalized business environment. Muhr and Salem (2013) argue that the role European colonial history has played in shaping various national identities is critical to any attempt to effectively integrate diverse employees in workplace settings. In their analysis of a Swedish multinational organization's policies, the authors detect the remnants of an overarching colonial discourse that deeply influences foreign employees' identities and value-systems to the direction of discrediting basic equality concerns.

Furthermore, organizational discourses encapsulate hegemonic aspirations engendering specific power effects on constraining antagonistic discourses. In their qualitative study of different meanings of ambition in two Dutch organizations, Benschop et al. (2013) identify three manifest discourses of ambition: individual development, mastery of the task, and upward career mobility. Employing critical discourse analysis, the study indicates a set of cultural rules on gendered practices underlying these discourses and unravels a fourth dominant discourse grounded in cultural and historical norms and framed by a socially constructed hegemonic masculinity, ambition as a resource, viewed as a major source of inequality.

The Societal Underpinnings of Inequality Social class considerations occupy a prominent place in reframing diversity discourses (eg Acker 2006), because of the positioning of social identity groups in a continuum of power relationships reflecting historical and socio-political conditions (Jonsen et al. 2011). Scully and Blake-Beard (2006) locate and embed class considerations into organizational diversity by employing a tri-partite approach to social class: class as *structure* is viewed as being outside organizations, as an external factor legitimating inequality, despite the prevalent rhetoric on meritocracy. Class as *style* consists in an aesthetic appreciation of class differences, centered on valuing universal styles of reasoning and speech; finally, class as *process* locates this dimension inside organizations in determining ways in which organizational procedures reproduce inequality. A class-biased conception of social progress and equality undergirds diversity management, despite the attempts to minimize gender and racial boundaries by codifying egalitarian ideals in organizational structures (Berrey 2014). Class is inextricably entwined with social identity attributes shaping the lived experiences of employees, and motivating change initiatives in view of inclusive, fair and meaningful workplaces.

Equally importantly, discursive constructions of multiple social identities may be reflective of, and commensurate with underlying class relations between labour and capital, and as such they are implicated in the ongoing process of their reproduction over time. Focusing on labour as a source of economic value in the market economies, Zanoni (2011) argues that an approach to diversity that allows for such concerns provides an analytical tool appropriate for capturing the dynamic nature of unequal power relations and the maintenance of inequality in organizations. Inequality is theorized as a by-product of class relations that tend to structure organizations as constellations of power delineating accepted social identities. Diversity

is contingent upon social class insofar as social identities appear inextricable from the evolving process of capitalist organizing: not infrequently, minority employees are discursively constructed as unwilling to perform in a way that meets standard expectations; a set of negative identities ascribed to these groups can in turn offer legitimacy to an organizational decision unfavourable to diversity issues, and consequently responsible for the material reproduction of class relations.

Ashley and Empson (2013), seek to explore social exclusion on the basis of social class within leading law firms sector in London. The authors explain why, despite the ongoing governmental rhetoric on the desirability of workforce's social mobility, law firms still engage in discriminatory practices as an effective rational response to conflicting commercial imperatives. Heavily drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's distinct forms of capital, Ashley and Empson analyze social class as both a *discursive construction* and a *concrete structure* and argue that existing approaches to discrimination on the basis of either relative deprivation of human and social capital, or an elite defensive mechanism to secure privileges can *partially* explain the persistence of social exclusion in the British legal sector. Unless such competing demands are resolved, equality agendas based on difference are subsumed into a business case for diversity that fails to effectively enlarge the scope of recruitment and selection processes. The authors contend that beyond occupational closure, the aspiration to build reputational capital in terms of specialized knowledge, as well as to avoid high-risk strategies will prevent isolated firms from pursuing and implementing diversity policies at a larger scale, thus reducing rhetorical emphasis on diversity to a mere justification of a competitive advantage.

A certain stream of critical scholarship is committed to analyzing the dimensions of social stratification and oppression relevant to diversity: these societal factors oppose any effort at erasing inequality when undertaking diversity initiatives. In addition, policies intended to compensate for perceived inequalities and alleviate historical injustice run the risk of exacerbating the respective differences they were designed to address. In exploring practical responses to educational diversity issues, Lawson et al. (2013) outline socially just and equitable responses to diversity grounded in reconsidering the interaction between personal experiences, interpersonal relationships and action. Herring and Henderson (2012) argue that critical diversity theory should focus not only on an inclusive rhetoric, but also on an analysis of exclusion and discrimination, challenging the established notions of colourblindedness and meritocracy. Bell et al. (2013) introduced the concept of discriminatory job-loss to denote the long-term negative organizational and societal consequences of discrimination and job-loss intersections.

In this respect, critical diversity theory has to not only embrace, celebrate and value cultural differences, but to consider issues of inequality and inequity experienced by, and historical injustice perpetrated against unprivileged groups. The dimension of distributive justice appears integral to a critical diversity endeavour based on the premise that ensuring a just distribution of benefits should be accompanied by enabling a more equitable distribution of power and privilege, through properly reallocating various forms of valuable resources. In this view, the institutional and organizational benefits of diversity should be more adequately

demonstrated if diversity management was designed to offset the pervading effects of segregation, discrimination and deprivation suffered by most vulnerable groups.

4.2 Control and Manipulation of Disadvantaged Groups' Dynamics

The Rationale We have so far argued that, despite the strong emphasis on the business case for diversity, commitment to diversity should not imply that more humane considerations be discredited, or disregarded. Diversity initiatives are presumably far from taking precedence over short-run priorities, insofar as managing diversity does not always entail predictable outcomes. Moreover, because diversity goals do not precisely coincide with more instrumental objectives, an internal fit between identity group needs and rigidly defined business imperatives is difficult to achieve, thus remaining a rather unfeasible objective (Dickens 1999).

Undoubtedly, the instrumentality criterion is deemed necessary enough to provide sufficient and plausible motivation for a company to enact and successfully implement diversity initiatives (c.f., Morgan and Vardy 2009), yet a strong commitment to diversity as an intrinsically valued resource should not imply degeneration of diversity interventions into some kind of manipulative practices. Diversity management has to not only focus on enhancing corporate profitability, or on fostering impersonal justice demands (Buttner et al. 2010; Tomlinson and Schwabenland 2010), but to primarily contribute to shaping an organizational environment in which all participants be afforded the opportunity to achieve their inner potential, *irrespective of* the social constraints they are ultimately subject to.

Constraints imposed upon unprivileged groups reflect social boundaries culminating in specific forms of control that assume various organizational aspects. Bell et al. (2010) for instance, underscore the role of social closure and social dominance orientation as pertinent to persistent discrimination, exploitation and abuse experienced by low skills Hispanic immigrant workers in the US, fact that has not been subject to theoretical scrutiny in mainstream literature. Crowley (2013) emphasizes that female work groups tend to confront more coercive arrangements, especially bundles of control organized around direct supervision, that erode autonomy, meaningfulness and deeper foundations of work dignity. Infante and Matus (2009) contend that social models of disability involve a political struggle for change. The authors examined the production and circulation of diversity discourses within the Chilean educational context: these discourses perpetuated symbolic order through a fragmented approach to diversity framed around uncontested, universal categories of marginalized others, devoid of any potential to initiate genuine inclusive practices. It is then necessary to discuss forms of control on diversity dynamic, as well as the possibility of responses to such controls.

Regulative Controls on Diversity Processes of organizational control and manipulation are subject to theoretical scrutiny in certain strands of critical diversity

research. This analysis is based on two premises: *first*, managerial discourses operate as control mechanisms through identity regulation, i.e. through a process of shaping self-identities and work orientations that pertain to, and are supportive of established managerial objectives; and *second*, these discourses delineate a symbolic space in which potential opportunities for minority groups to resist control, or even micro-emancipate can, ultimately, emerge. Zanoni and Mampaey (2013) for instance, investigate processes of achieving inclusion of ethnic minority students in Flemish semi-market secondary educational systems in which positive reputation is often achieved to the detriment of enhancing ethnic diversity. Reputational capital can be secured through the construction of alternative discursive practices affirming high quality education, redefining the relation between students' ethnic diversity and quality of services provided, and finally reconstructing diversity as an educational resource: a potential space for micro-emancipation is thus opened up to fight disadvantage stemming from structural inequality and initiate social change (Zanoni and Mampaey 2013, pp. 18–19).

Zanoni and Janssens (2007) analyzed the processes through which minority employees engage with control in distinct organizational settings. The authors argue that critical diversity studies tend to overlook the material structure in which these discourses are embedded, thus reducing control to its solely discursive dimensions. In addition, critical discourse analysis is confined to an investigation of official managerial discourses whilst diverse employees' role in assimilating and reproducing, even contesting them might be of, at least, equal importance. In this perspective, diversity management is defined "as a combination of controls embedded in an organization's mutually constitutive material and discursive structures" (Zanoni and Janssens 2007, p. 1373). Diversity management consists of a constellation of both discursive and bureaucratic controls organized around the idea of a "model employee", thus affecting the ability of disadvantaged members to effectively meet a dual set of expectations, one stemming from standard organizational requirements and another originating in specific minority group membership. Control is an ubiquitous phenomenon: the degree to which these control mechanisms may not be left unquestioned considerably varies, thus creating a social space for potential responses to control efforts, as we briefly explain in the following.

Responses to Regulative Controls: Agency and Micro-Emancipation Drawing on critical management studies of control, as well as on Antony Gidden's structuration theory (see, Veliquette 2013 for a review), Zanoni and Janssens (2007) posit that minority employees act as agents, dynamically re-shaping and re-organizing their particular subjectivities in view of resisting to, or complying with the constellation of controls they are subject to. Employees, Zanoni and Janssens (2007, p. 1393) contend, are not only subject to multiple controls originating from both within and outside their work environment, but they are in a position to articulate their proper responses to these controls, striving to elaborate positive self-identities and acting in unique ways. These individual strategies, albeit not driven by strategic rationality criteria, open up possible spaces for micro-emancipation in one context (for example, that of a local migrant community), even in the case they are perceived as

inducing compliance in another (in a work setting). In this respect, diverse employees experience a form of cognitive dissonance by internalizing certain tensions due to mutually competing, contradicting and sometimes irreconcilable demands: "micro-emancipation is fragmentary and temporary", insofar as the "one and same identity and behaviour might be compliant in one context and emancipatory in another" (Zanoni and Janssens 2007, p. 1395).

Active agency of members of social identity groups is thus reflected in micro-strategies invented and employed to counterbalance detrimental and generate beneficial work outcomes. Janssens et al. (2006) conceive of female expatriates as agents intended to overcome structural impediments to the development of effective professional identities by seeking to interpret, as well as to position themselves within gendered interactions. In so doing, successful female expatriates are situated within discursive structures drawing on and positioning themselves along certain power-ladden identity discourses (e.g. gender, ethnicity and culture) that not only constrain, but also enable proper action conducive to professional success.

To renegotiate their location, redefine their positioning in various symbolic spaces, and disrupt the institutionalized constructions of the Otherness, social identity groups draw on their lived experiences to strategically develop agency forms to their benefit. In this respect opposing and evading asymmetrical power relations based on manipulative controls through a strategic deployment of social identity attributes is critical to enabling a micro-emancipatory potential. Pio and Essers (2014) explore professional migrant Indian women narratives that place an emphasis on situatedness, interdependences and affiliations of gender and ethnicity: these interactive strategies are integral to gendered practices invented to deconstruct the dominant view of these women as entirely prone to marginalization, or as practically unable to fight exclusion in the labour market. Van Laer and Janssens (2014) posit that ethnic minority employees seek to invent coherent identity narratives allowing them to negotiate their workplace experiences with non-work identifications and affiliations in view of constructing multifaceted, hybrid identities: such diverse employees are experiencing identity tensions due to the fact that these novel identity claims are far from being uncontested. In this respect, social and political processes that constrain the scope of alternative, possible selves in effectively reconciling competing contexts do not prevent minority employees from engaging in positive meaning attributions in identity-work.

Manipulation and control are pervading phenomena which may assume more covert, invisible and subtle forms. In analyzing the accounts of 26 s generation minority professionals working in majority-dominated organizations in Flanders, Van Laer and Janssens (2011) examined experiences of subtle discrimination characterized by ambiguity, often yielding feelings of disempowerment through displaying an apparently empowering behavior. More subtle forms of discrimination are viewed as micro-expressions of macro-level power dynamics operating through ambiguous ways, being inextricably linked to societal structures and institutionalized discourses that help perpetuate power inequalities. More specifically, findings revealed that subtle discrimination is reflective of four distinct processes of subtle power:

a normalization process according to which exposing difference appears tantamount to judging difference;
a legitimization process involving situations in which ethnic minority professionals feel legitimized as individuals, yet marginalized in terms of membership in their respective ethnic group (collective de-legitimization);
a legitimization process of Otherness by which individual presence is embraced and celebrated whereas uniqueness is not valued, and personal competences, interests and opinions are rather disregarded;
and *a naturalization process* in the context of which intolerant behavior is approved through seemingly or superficially tolerant majority members' attitudes.

Evidently, contextual elements encompassing societal discourses and power structures are critical to the overall process of disempowering diverse employees: subtle forms of control are proliferated by posing invisible barriers to out-group members through certain allegedly unproblematic and neutral attitudes, thus maintaining power imbalances. We in turn proceed to discuss distinct conceptualizations of power *per se* as a locus through which established meanings of diversity and its management are far from questioning inequality, discrimination and control, operating as a sort of organizationally beneficial rhetorical convention.

4.3 Power Relations as a Focal Point in the Study of Workforce Diversity

The Theoretical Underpinnings As noted earlier, mainstream diversity management has been subject to strong criticism for being converted to a bundle of practices dependent on managerial discretion in a way that prevents its underlying values and assumptions from being questioned. This view fails to adequately consider power and other forms of hierarchical relations that are of the utmost importance in many critical approaches to workplace diversity. Power and status occupy a preeminent position as salient categories in critical diversity research, insofar as they involve the capacity of an individual to influence or modify the state of others by withholding, or providing resources, or administering sanctions and enabling reparation of injustice. Diversity literature has in part disregarded power relations, seeking to explain them either on an individual, or on an interpersonal basis (Groeneveld and van de Walle 2010; Martinez et al. 2011; Schor et al. 1996).

Sheehan et al. (2014) seek to identify the dimensions of power on which HRM function draws to gain influence on organizational performance. They thus found that HRM professionals utilize three power dimensions, in particular power of resources, power of processes and power of meaning: each one of them is highly relevant to diversity issues, as already implied. From a more mainstream sociological point of view, Lucas and Baxter (2012) summarize this line of reasoning on power, status and influence: they thus indicate major influence differences in social groups and convincingly argue that members of disadvantaged status groups (eg women

and minorities) are expected to exert decreased influence on work processes and outcomes. Rather than viewed as prototypical group members, minority employees experience discrimination and devaluation due to their salient social identities, inevitably facing insurmountable challenges in gaining access to influential leadership positions, or refraining from acquiring power. Members of unprivileged groups could increase their influence "by moving to more highly valued categories on status characteristics within their control, acting assertively and presenting their contributions as motivated by the best interests of the group" (Lucas and Baxter 2012, pp. 65–66), in combination with efforts to institutionalize environments in which low status group membership poses no impediment to one's aspirations to improve her/his relative position in organizational hierarchies.

As previously demonstrated, critical diversity scholars have consistently explored the impact of organizational and societal discourses on structural sources of persisting inequality in contemporary organizations. The notion of power is central to these discussions, as either a constraint on differentiated forms of agency and micro-emancipation within these structures of dominance (Zanoni and Janssens 2007), or a challenge to the attempt at transforming established patterns of inclusion. Embedding the contested nature of diversity within the power-shaped relations of production, Janssens and Zanoni (2005) address various shortcomings in the extant literature by exploring the ways in which specific understandings of diversity expand or constrain diverse employees' opportunities to challenge established power relations. Diversity as an identity-regulation mechanism is conceptualized to explicate the interplays between socio-demographic differences, organization of work, underlying structures and overall profit-seeking pursuits. The authors underscore the role particular constellations of work play in affecting understandings of diversity and diversity management policies that in turn create or foreclose possibilities of employees' agency, resistance and micro-emancipation.

Bell et al. (2012) outline the processes through which power-related issues incurring unequal distribution of privilege are endemic in cultural perspectives on how and why people engage in learning with respect to various constructs of demographic differences. Institutionalized and discursive power structures are thus integral to processes through which inequalities are replicated through mechanisms of multiple marginality, despite the prevalence of many inclusive agendas (Harris 2013; Prasad and Mills 1997; Van Laer and Janssens 2011). Accordingly, diversity management may not suffice in acknowledging existing distributions of power in society (Groeneveld and Van de Walle 2010). Using data from an ethnographic fieldwork in a Danish multicultural organization, Lauring (2009) resorts to the inequality and power relations paradigm, as well as to theoretical perspectives focusing on both information and decision-making, and social categorization processes, to clarify knowledge sharing in culturally diverse organizations.

Admittedly, the role of power in its wider structural connotations, is conceptualized in ways that reflect distinct methodological stances epitomized in various streams of critical diversity research. At this point we deem necessary to elaborate and develop a tentative taxonomy of different approaches to power and diversity interrelationships, by briefly discussing certain of these lines of reasoning that

reveal a particular scope on theorizing inequality and power in distinct strands of critical diversity literature. Primary emphasis is attributed not to the analysis of organizational discourses *per se* (as in chap. 3), but to the underlying processes that generate varying forms of domination, power and diversity articulations, embedded in specific organizational, societal and group settings.

Critical versus Foucauldian Approaches Conceptualizing diversity management as a discourse that prioritizes individual competences and nurtures an individualistic climate helps to explicate the socially constructed meanings of diversity, especially the web of power relations in which discursive practices are embedded. Concomitantly, power effects of organizational discourses are disseminated through multiple intensification practices: power relations shape discursive and material practices intended to generate compliance, or to minimize resistance to an overall strategy (Hardy and Thomas 2014), as well as to manage threatened and stigmatized identities (Toyoki and Brown 2014). Drawing on a Foucauldian approach to the Finish case of diversity management, Meriläinen et al. (2009) view gender equality as an institutionalized discourse that frames the particular meanings attributed to diversity management, and demonstrate how alternate discourses emerging in specific contexts challenge the ability of diversity discourses to permeate corporate agendas. Grounded on a gender egalitarian context, the Finish case for diversity favours equality rhetorical conventions manifest in specific types of diversity initiatives, at the expense of antagonistic others.

The theoretical underpinnings of Foucauldian approaches need due examination. Ghorashi and Sabelis (2013) identified in diversity studies a sharp contrast between two opposing perspectives on power, a critical one according to which power is consolidated in structures of domination and oppression, and a discursive approach focusing on processes of formalization, routinization and legitimization of everyday practices. More specifically, conceptions of power in Foucault's later work, involving systems of control such as *biopolitics* and *neo-liberal governmentality* have been employed in management studies (Fleming 2014; Munro 2012). By placing an emphasis on subtle articulations of power and context within diversity discourses, diversity emerges "as socially constructed markers of difference that may be malleable but nevertheless stand for the ways in which social relations are organized in society" (Ahonen et al. 2014, p. 277). The difference between critical scholarship focusing on social justice and mainstream research highlighting performance-related outcomes is *inherently political* in nature, yet the type of knowledge encouraged by both research streams tends to be biopolitical and governmental, insofar as "context matters as a component of power relations in the production of diversity knowledge" (Ahonen et al. 2014, p. 279).

Unlike perspectives centered on resistance to manipulative controls of managerial elites, a Foucauldian approach views discursive power as diffuse in a web of social relations, thus pervading both elite and subordinating groups in ways detrimental to genuine human agency. To mitigate this tension, and to reframe the sameness-difference polarity, Ghorashi and Sambelis (2013) resort to the dynamics of contiguity, the latter fostering inclusion in non-hierarchical relationships. Most

importantly, the authors underscore the need to challenge the rigid discursive positioning that constrains identity groups' attempts to reshape their fixed identities: new discursive, hybrid positioning in the intersection of distinct societal and organizational discourses presupposes enabling reflection on the normalized forms of exclusion, in particular "a constant search for, and claim of temporal niches for reflection to create non-norm based negotiation of positions to foster shared meanings and to plan common goals" (Ghorashi and Sabelis 2013, p. 84).

Dialectical Approaches Unlike interpretative approaches, socio-historical tendeforcies investigate the processes through which particular actors in specific societal contexts impose on others their own vision of diversity that is commensurate with, and reflective of their structured interests. In his study on diversity management, Omanovic (2009) applied a dialectical perspective exemplifying how various actors in different social milieu are intertwined in a complex network of relations, as well as how their ideas about and interests in diversity enter into potential conflict, given the unequal power positions these actors occupy in a social setting. The author endorses the view that diversity management is conditioned by socio-historical relationships that deprive diversity production of a fixed and immutable meaning; the process of diversity construction is subject to manifestations of human praxis, and as such, it is prone to contradictions. In the US case for instance, diversity construction is assumed to embody an emancipatory potential, while ultimately maintaining an established social order; in Sweden, diversity rhetoric on integrating minority groups and improving social welfare, is often at odds with business interests that constrain possibilities of conceiving of alternative praxes. Reconciling existing tensions between a business rationale for diversity and marginalized interests based on discrimination and segregation concerns is integral to designing policies more sensitive to the concrete needs of diverse communities.

A dialectical approach is in a position to capture the process through which tensions between distinct stakeholders evolve. Omanovic (2013) advances this view by conceptualizing diversity not merely as a socially constructed phenomenon, but primarily as a *contradictory process* unfolding over time in workplace dynamics. He then proceeds to examine "how a social production process -opening and closing the door to diversity- shapes and prioritizes, and concurrently sup-presses and marginalizes, ideas about and interests in diversity in organizations" (Omanovic 2013, p. 100). Discursive closures are schematized as processes of domination that suppress conflicting interests and diminish the possibility of similarly-situated actors to undertake collective action for organizational change, either by introducing a unitary, one-dimensional mode of thinking on diversity issues, or by elevating diversity to a universal value, disembedded from its societal context.

The study explores three distinct processes of discursive closure, universalization, naturalization, and disqualification, through which one form of discourse is privileged while another tends to be marginalized, in view of preventing sources of potential conflict from proliferating in a work setting. Omanovic identifies in the diversity program of a major Swedish company, two forms of domination, one referring to a discursive closure in attempting to control the kind of diversity production,

and another substantiated in fragmented sectoral interests that may not coincide with, or even differ from power relations embedded in formal positions within the organizational structure. A business rationale for diversity, exemplified in the quest for multicultural competencies and in the prevalence of informational diversity, shapes the favoured meanings of diversity management: informed by instrumental forms of rationality, such a conception renders alternative discourses reified and unrealistic, by closing the door not only to social justice concerns, but also to those associated with promoting equality, or reducing discrimination.

Bourdieuan Perspectives Beyond dialectical perspectives on the nexus between power and diversity, a stream of literature draws on Bourdieuan approaches as invested with new theoretical potential. Pierre Bourdieu's social thought in particular, has been far from being unnoticed in certain areas of management studies: such a perspective is helpful in identifying underlying practices endemic to generating inequalities experienced by unprivileged group members (Fossland 2013; Hanappi-Egger 2012; Karataş-Özkan and Chell 2014; Nentwich et al. 2014; Ozbilgin and Tatli 2005, 2011; see, Sieweke 2014 for a comprehensive review).

Drawing on these premises, Vaara and Faÿ (2012) elucidate the ways in which the overwhelmingly institutionalized forces of global reproduction shape the prevailing ideas, and constrain opportunities for change in management education. Their analysis is conducted at three interrelated levels: in their multifaceted framework, the structuration of the field at a global scale is substantiated in and maintained through dominant societal beliefs, informing the prevailing pedagogical practices. Management education generates symbolic capital in affording students status and prestige, by transmitting ethically controversial ideas (grounded in the tenets of neo-liberalism) that in turn reinforce problematic cognitive and behavioural dispositions. Initiating change presupposes an increasing awareness of this symbolic violence, as well as of underlying power relationships in an organizational space: acknowledging agency possibilities and developing ethical consciousness integral to managerial subjectivity, appears of critical importance to resisting self-reinforcing expectations in reproducing established interests.

Bourdieu's thought remains influential in certain streams of critical diversity literature. Al Ariss et al. (2013) for instance, employ a Bourdieuan analysis in demonstrating the importance of the varied forms of agency highly skilled ethnic minorities exhibit and exercise in two European countries: agency of minority ethnic workers is critical to shaping work experiences amidst inequality structures and exclusion that constrain career choices and outcomes. This perspective might be considered in and applied to the respective sub-field of diversity learning, in particular for enriching our understanding of the interplays associated with the reproduction of dominant discourses through various diversity courses and seminars. Relatedly, Samaluk (2014) employs a Bourdieuian conceptual framework to explore the articulations of ethnic privilege and disadvantage through labour market experiences of migrant workers from post-socialist Central and Eastern Europe.

Most importantly, Bourdieuan perspectives have been ardently employed to theorize the diversity management field as not static, but dynamically shaped through

interdependencies between different stakeholders (eg identity groups, employees) and institutional actors (eg trade unions, statutory equality bodies, private and public sectors, employers' organizations) that can decisively influence equality agendas. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of field, Ozbilgin and Tatli (2011) illustrate the negotiated and intrinsically political nature of diversity practices and underscore the partiality of policies intended to facilitate inclusion, but failing to adequately address the complexity and multiplicity of the societal actors involved in diversity issues. In so doing, they map the diversity management field as a *relational social space* that locates the relative positions of various actors striving to gain sufficient access to legitimacy, power and other scant resources.

Ozbilgin and Tatli (2011) depict the equality and diversity field as encompassing both structural and agentic dimensions, the former consisting in power and resource distribution between societal actors, while the latter involving differentiated interests and aspirations of these actors. Concomitantly, the diversity field is constructed through and accommodates processes recapitulating the struggle for symbolic domination between multiple actors, who compete for imposing their own vision of diversity. These actors seek to position themselves across the axes of individualism versus collectivism, and voluntarism versus regulation, as well as to establish hegemonic frames of reference that set boundaries for alternative meanings of diversity and constrain the scope of effective practices.

More specifically, the first dimension of collectivism versus individualism refers to the *visibility* of inequalities, insofar as imposing an individualized vision of diversity significantly reduces the possibility of considering group-based forms of differences; the second of voluntarism versus regulation depicts the *legitimacy* of inequalities, taken for granted that the degree of regulation is contingent upon the extent to which inequality is perceived as intolerable and illegitimate. This approach accounts for the specific ways by which an organization becomes more egalitarian by exhibiting a commitment to "transforming social and economic inequalities that reinforce imagined differences" (Ozbilgin and Tatli 2011, p. 1244).

Intersectionality A stream of critical research focuses on multiple identity categories examined, not in isolation, but placing an emphasis on their intersection. An intersectional framing of social divisions informs a better understanding of the articulation of identity formations and ensuing forms of inequality, through a shift from essentialized notions of differences and belonging toward a state of "translocational positionality" (Anthias 2011). Styhre and Eriksson-Zetterquist (2008) advance the idea that intersectionality as a (meta)concept is pertinent to the endeavour of capturing the multidimensionality of the social life, as well as the complexity of human identity constituted as a set of interwoven regimes of knowledge and power. Moving beyond diversity *per se*, researchers can incorporate the multiplicity of identities suggested by intersectional approaches (Cronin and King 2010): in an era of increasing individualism, theories of intersectionality and other relational models can offer permeating insights towards more robust formulations of organizational inequalities (Vallas and Cummins 2014). Intersectionality has been operationalized in fruitful ways for diversity concerns in specific policy-making areas, in

view of addressing structural sources of inequality, both within and between groups (Bagilhole 2010). An "intersectional sensibility" is thus helpful in unraveling the persistence of intersectional inequalities, even in environments overtly committed to challenging inequality regimes (Healy et al. 2011).

An intersectional framing of multiple identity categories involves theoretical promises for critical diversity studies. In conducting intersectional research Sawyer et al. (2013) recommend an expanded focus to explicate how these intersecting identities operate in a meaningful manner: intersectional analysis helps to understand the underlying processes that generate dominance and oppression in specific settings. This structural dimension of inequality stemming from intersecting identities is shaped by material and discursive structures, and stakeholders' agency. Edification of solidarity across varying experiences of multiple, intersecting differences necessitates an "understanding of difference as intersectional, relational, and as a basis for identification and collective action" (Dempsey 2011, p. 56).

Bernstein et al. (2011) adopted a view that significantly diverges from most common conceptions of intersectionality as consisting in mutually constitutive relations among social identities: they thus enrich intersectional analysis with specific parameters that reinforce diversity research through a focus on social policy. This view is pertinent to examining the ways in which employment arrangements for instance, generate diversity of experience within gender, class and nationality categories. Furthermore, such an approach allows for capturing concrete intersections by identifying both the opportunities (interpersonal encounters, affiliations, social capital bonds) and oppressions deeply embedded in them.

Inequality dimensions reflecting power disparity are conceptualized in an intersectional framing of diversity. Boogaard and Roggeband (2010) examined inequality from an intersectional perspective in the context of the Dutch police force, a diverse, segregated and multifaceted organization. The study considers individuals as agents engaging with intersecting identities, as well as with the unequal power relations embedded in and deriving from them; albeit employees seek to challenge inequality entrenched in social identities, they ultimately tend to reproduce it in order to preserve their relative status. Findings unravel two principal paradoxes: the first consists in the fact that individuals reproduce structures that yield inequalities along these social identity axes. The second paradox involves both a structural disadvantage along identity categories and a discourse of a potential advantage centered on multicultural competences and enhanced performance. In this view, and contrary to other predictions, the business case for diversity is indicative of an attempt to capitalize on elements that contradict, and potentially undermine unequal power relations. To facilitate change and enable employees resist marginalization, diversity practices should exhibit a *situational logic* that considers the interaction between organizational structures and employees as reflexive agents.

Not unexpectedly, this line of reasoning is not unparalleled in the extant literature. In their introduction to the special issue of *Gender, Work and Organization* devoted to gender, diversity and inclusion in professional organizations, Muzio and Tomlinson (2012, p. 463) indicate that intersectionality is central to the analysis of the ways in which gender relates to multiple sources of inequality, in order to

elucidate the subtle processes through which occupational segregation and marginalization are both reproduced and challenged at multiple levels. Healy (2009) deems that an intersectional approach enables a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underpinning the resiliency of inequalities in organizations in which discrimination is enacted at both organizational structures and relational interactions. She then argues that "an examination of work experiences demonstrates how the work setting is firmly connected to increasingly remote relations of domination and subordination in the wider social fabric" (Healy 2009, p. 98).

Adopting an intersectional lens on the prospects of gender mainstreaming in realizing its emancipatory potential, Baines (2010) underscores the impediments to un-doing colonial relationships, due to their intersection with various gendered, heteronormative aspects. Chaney (2013, p. 37) underscores the need of a long-term transformation in policy-making to "systematically address the specific needs of older people at the intersection of protected equality characteristics and identities", given the failure of the UK's administration's practices and welfare policies to secure systematic intersectional initiatives. Anthias (2013) adopts a more radical perspective, moving beyond integration discourses informed by binary constructions, albeit purportedly seeking to mitigate social divisions. Drawing on an intersectional framing of social identity categories, the study focuses on the complexity and irreducibility of these identities in order to associate belonging with social locations of marginality and subordination. Achieving inclusion presupposes a political agenda that involves "an intersectional sensitivity which recognizes the possibility of more reflexive forms of political struggle and avenues to greater dialogue and collaboration between groups organizing around particular kinds of struggles rather than particular kinds of cultural identities" (Anthias 2013, p. 338).

Tatli and Ozbilgin (2012a) expanded intersectional analysis to cover issues of inequality in the UK arts and cultural sector. Intersectionality is thus viewed as operating at a sectoral level and generating outcomes varying across industrial contexts and contingent upon a particular employment setting. The study of exclusionary processes based on multiple inequality categories (social class, ethnicity, race, disability) necessitates a fundamental shift from a static and categorical conception of inequality, to one that embeds and situates inequality dynamics within a spatio-temporal context of processes shaping, maintaining and reproducing power structures. The authors contend that, though different labour market contexts share a set of common attributes of domination, they entail unique inequality dynamics due to the historical and relational nature of disadvantage- and privilege- related processes. In the specific sector under examination, the invisibility and legitimacy of inequality reflected a process of entwinement of class inequality with two other significant forms of disadvantage, ethnicity/race and religion/belief.

Under specific conditions, minority groups can benefit from, as well as capitalize on their intersecting identities. Employing a relational approach, Sang et al. (2013) explored the work experiences of migrant women academics in the UK higher education sector from an intersectional perspective. Interestingly, findings indicated that the intersection of multiple forms of disadvantage did not necessitate a cumulative effect translated into further marginalization of this vulnerable group;

rather paradoxically, these migrant women were effective in coping with discriminatory practices through capitalizing on various aspects of otherness, as well as on repertoires of identity and adopted career strategies.

The intersections of multiple identity categories have been attributed due attention in critical diversity scholarship. Holvino (2010) argues for an analysis of the organizational dynamics within the broader social context: because the latter may be unsupportive of change interventions, the author extrapolates that we need to explicate how this context is manifested in unequal power relations when locating organizational actors in their particular settings. In the selection of diversity attributes an organization needs to manage in view of designing a comprehensive bundle of HR practices, it is particularly relevant to consider the joint effect of salient diversity categories on generating power, inequality or privilege, embedding diversity in a proper contextuality (Alcázar et al. 2013, p. 44).

Arifeen and Gatrell (2013) endorse this view and argue that intersectionality is the most valid method to study the complexity of social identities, involving a focus on marginalized people, as well as on multiple institutional factors that converge in shaping inequality through power interplays. In combining both structural and individual-level analysis, intersectional perspectives stand between reductionist and particularized approaches, and contribute to bridge, even in part, the existing theoretical divide between critical theory on one hand and liberalism, or deconstructionist tradition, on the other (Arifeen and Gatrell 2013, p. 162).

Intersectional perspectives have been applied to many diversity issues. Ozbilgin et al. (2011) elaborated an intersectional approach to work-life interface through the lenses of multiple diversity categories: the authors argue that we should focus on the social context that generates disparities of power, by considering resource differentials between social groups, rather than reducing our scope to a micro-individual explanatory level. An intersectional analysis to the treatment of diversity and power has to expand the scope of the critical tradition that considers structural relations of power, yet is devoid of an *intersectional framing* of these issues. Intergroup power relations are introduced to the analysis, through examining individuals' structural positions across multiple identity group memberships. Discrimination experienced by out-group members has to be contextually situated, insofar as asymmetrical power relations are pervasive to work-life intersection at the levels of policies and employee experiences. Ozbilgin et al. (2011, p. 191) posit:

> The intersectional approach is not prescriptive about work- life research should focus on in terms of diversity categories, but calls for a new mind set to examine the contextual processes and relations that embed power imbalances, which draw the territory of work- life problematic in today's society.

Emic versus Etic Approaches Intersectional approaches have been recently enriched with a significant potential that provides a more concise understanding of the interplays underlying the diversity management field. Tatli and Ozbilgin (2012b) extensively commented on the importance of the distinction between an etic and an emic approach in the intersectional study of workforce diversity. Etic approaches to diversity, albeit predominant in the extant literature, have generated

serious limitations that substantially affect our research scope when examining diversity issues, and subsequently framing the respective field.

First and foremost, there is a tendency to overlook the role of intersectionality, by not properly taking into consideration the interactive dynamic between multiple forms of differences in our construction of diversity categories. *Second*, diversity categories are devoid of contextuality, thus lacking historical and geographic specificity: difference codes are inextricable from their contextual and historical dimensions. And *third*, employing pre-determined categories operating at a level of abstraction from institutional contexts, is conducive to a static, a-contextual and universalistic conception of workplace diversity, hardly being sensitive to the particularities of the specific societal context. This etic framing of diversity shapes the researchers' analytical focus on those attributes, by placing an emphasis on instrumental outcomes in organizational performance studies, and on the diversity category salience for discrimination in social equality studies.

As a result, various categories of diversity appear fixed and essentialized as *a-historic* and *a-contextual* constructs. An emic approach on the contrary, pays due attention to the role of *relationally* and *contextually situated* categories in generating power and privilege on one hand, and inequality on the other: it is thus essential to situate differences in the context of historical experience and social institutions. This situatedness of identities helps to overcome an overly reductionist view of differences as individual attributes; differences become meaningful only in relation to their specific setting. Furthermore, etic and emic approaches to the study of diversity significantly differ from a methodological point of view, in terms of both analytical focus and epistemic priorities. Tatli and Ozbilgin (2012b, p. 188) posit:

> Etic approaches to interactional analysis start with a pre-established number of categories of difference (ex ante) and explore intersectionality among them when exploring diversity at work. Emic approaches to intersectional analyses, however, start with the specific context of investigation and identify a number of salient categories of difference (ex post), which lead to privilege and disadvantage, by focusing on relations of power in that setting.

Consequently, emic approaches do not focus on marginalized subjects as the target of discriminatory practices; on the contrary, they seek to identify power relations and structures that frame a setting in which salient diversity categories emerge, as contextually, historically and socially constructed forms of differences.

Tatli and Ozbilgin proceed by operationalizing their emic approach. In so doing, they resort to Pierre Bourdieu's relational theory of capitals that distinguishes between social, economic, cultural and symbolic capital. Only an emic approach to the analysis of workforce diversity, the authors contend, can help to identify the social categories pertinent to the process of creating and sustaining privilege and disadvantage in a specific context, given the differentials in various forms of capital, that is the variation in the access to and ownership of various material, cultural and social resources. Tatli and Ozbilgin (2012b, pp. 192–193) hold the view that diversity scholarship can benefit from exploring "the ways in which ownership and distribution of different forms of capital between different groups and individual actors creates intersecting inequalities and privilege in organizational settings". Such an analysis is in a position to explore the processes involved in the struggle for

capitals between competing groups, the location of these groups in the capital and resources continuum, as well as the impact of multiple group membership in this positioning across the organizational field.

This three-fold perspective (centrality of power relations, spatial and temporal specificity, and relationality) provides solid theoretical underpinnings of this research stance. Identifying unequal power relations that are manifested in various groups' struggle for and accumulation of distinct forms of capital serves as a precondition for the analysis of workforce diversity. Individuals not only have at their disposal a varying set of endowment in terms of economic, social, cultural and symbolic resources, but they are also subject to multiple group identities in a way that relates privilege and disadvantage to salient categories of difference in a specific context. Tatli and Ozbilgin (2012b, p. 193) believe that we could "determine empirically the categories of difference that become effective and salient in terms of access to capitals under different temporal and contextual configurations".

From another point of view, Mahadevan (2012) reveals the emic dimensions of resistance to identity change, as well as processes of sense-making via various metaphors. Identity-based resistance to diversity change originates in an inability to link past collectives selves to present conditions: rather than viewed as a static difference between consolidated identities and dynamic change, resistance to change may be transformed to an asset for diversity change through emergent narratives of the self that help enrich the ability of making new sense of past identities. Power asymmetries on the contrary, affect the extent to which employees feel enabled to engage in intercultural cooperation. In sum, emic approaches are invested with sensitivity towards the *societal embeddedness* and *relational nature* of distinct forms of capitals, and their effect on inequality in a particular spatial and temporal setting. In this stream of research, diversity scholars are urged to thoroughly explore the processes of capital accumulation, by identifying the respective groups that seek to gain legitimacy, accrue advantage and benefit from such processes, as well as by positioning those who experience deprivation of these valuable resources across a continuum of privilege and disadvantage in a given work setting.

Interdisciplinary Approaches A certain stream of literature calls for different possibilities in diversity theorizing, in alignment with contemporary critiques of global social capital, as well as of the hegemony of the Western cultural paradigm. Integrating feminist post-colonial scholarship, transnationalism and geographies of space literatures, Metcalfe and Woodhams (2012) seek to offer fresh insights in the development of diversity scholarship that can expand the scope of intersectionality and social constructionist epistemologies through formulating a heuristic device fruitful in conceptualizing the field. In sharp contrast to universalizing tendencies that ultimately disparage, or render invisible marginalized experiences, representations of diversity have to be complemented by a thorough examination of the dominant discourses, power relations and governance structures, as well as by considering the intersectional differences in the situated positioning of employees across various dimensions of differentiation (gender, race, ethnicity, class, disability): this is a prerequisite for articulating discourses of equality that enable and

stimulate policy development. The authors contend that a relational social praxis is required, in alignment with multiple intersecting processes at various (micro, meso and macro) levels of organizing in view of designing development strategies beneficial to the ideals of inclusion, equality and social justice.

Strategic Essentialism As already noted, critical diversity research employs various categories of difference (based on salient features of social identities) as a response to structural inequalities inherent in multiple levels of organizational life. In its attempt to avoid meta-narratives claiming universal validity and to transcend essentialist thinking which is responsible for disparaging marginalized identity claims a critically oriented scholarship has viewed the interplay between these categories of difference through the lenses of a theoretical paradigm that reifies identities by reducing them to a mere discursive component of organizational power, thus repudiating, even deprecating the subjectivities of individuals.

In abandoning this stringent demarcation between, as well as in subverting the assumption of ontological separation of competing paradigms, Prasad (2012) introduces the concept of strategic essentialism. Prasad (2012, p. 584) argues that the deployment of this methodological stance could "operate as functional mechanism by which individuals in privileged positions can de-center the locus of institutional and systemic power within organizations and within organization studies". In this view, sexual identities are hardly perceived as a mere element of an intersectional phenomenon insofar as "studying a particular phenomenon along a multitude of diversity categories results in ontological incommensurability, which renders approaching research questions empirically a rather difficult methodological task" (Prasad 2012, 585; c.f., Prasad and Mills 2010). In this vein of reasoning, strategic essentialism can be fruitful in investigating "the dual but interrelated objectives of identifying the fluid aspects of social reality and of showing the culturally fabricated nature of essentialist binaries" (Prasad 2012, p. 586).

We have so far argued that the interplays of inequality, power and systemic disadvantage permeate diversity issues in many significant respects. We now proceed to investigate why and how diversity management is embedded in and shaped by varying institutional, cultural and societal contexts.

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Chapter 5
Operationalizing Critical Diversity Theories: A Contextual Framework of Implementing New Diversity Practices

5.1 The Societal Embeddedness of Distinctive Diversity Management Practices

The Underlying Rationale From the preceding analysis, we can easily infer that the majority of the critical studies on workforce diversity favours a view of diversity management as consisting in a bundle of practices that have to be embedded in a specific context, so as to effectively tackle one-sidedness that seems to have dominated equality and diversity research (Soltani et al. 2012). Accordingly, context is of paramount importance to diversity issues. Jonsen et al. (2011) acknowledge the need to adopt a more institutional approach to the study of diversity, one that accounts for examining the specific societal context and the embedded social mechanisms to avoid undue generalizations, as well as for investigating underlying values and beliefs arising in a particular context. Bridgstock et al. (2010) provide rich contextual insights in their examination of the nexus between networked diversity and social innovation grounded on reconciliation between overarching social ends and business pursuits of various UK social entrepreneurs.

From a more mainstream perspective, Joshi and Roh (2009) in their meta-analysis of 39 studies examined the role of contextual factors (industry, occupation, team level parameters) as potential moderators influencing the performance outcomes of relations-oriented and task-oriented diversity: findings reveal that contextual factors explained significant variance in effect size across different studies. Support has also been lent to the proposition that demographic social context moderates the relationship between team diversity and team performance (Jackson and Joshi 2004; Joshi and Roh 2007, 2013). Workgroup context variables such as culture (people- and competition-oriented), strategies (stability-, growth- and customer-oriented), and human resource practices (diversity- and training-oriented) have been found to moderate the relationship between group diversity and performance-related outcomes (Jehn and Bezrukova 2004). In sum, work-group (inclusive climates, supervisory leadership), organizational (diversity management procedures, CEOs' diversity beliefs) and societal factors (culture, legislation, socio-economic situation)

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shape the context in which effective diversity management emerges (Guillaume et al. 2014).

There is a different scope in exploring context in critical diversity scholarship. A certain trend in literature focuses on various stories of diversity management as a relationally and contextually constructed field. Employing a storytelling approach, Ozbbilgin and Tatli (2008, p. 249) argue that the UK diversity professionals stories examined, reflected the particular position of these professionals in the subfields of diversity, as well as their connectedness and interrelatedness with other individuals, sets of stakeholders and circumstances in the broader diversity field. Nishii and Ozbilgin (2007) elaborated and articulated an inclusive model of global diversity management based on a conceptual framework formulated to effectively address deficiencies and other shortcomings of global diversity management programmes. The model encompasses three principal aspects:

First, it involves the inclusion of global units to make employees feel respected and empowered in view of contributing to various organizational processes and decisions. *Second*, it has to demonstrate flexibility in the design of HR practices through exhibiting sensitivity towards and accommodating possible cultural differences based on an optimum combination of standardized and localized priorities. *And third*, definitions of diversity should capture the socio-historical power discrepancies within a particular cultural context, by setting locally-defined goals for alleviating the historically rooted sources of discrimination: ensuring unification of diversity goals and objectives across global units is a precondition that prevents the attainment of the wider purpose of fostering and maintaining diversity from being disembedded and eventually, fragmented.

Comparative Studies of Diversity Management Practices: The Need for Contextual and Societal Embeddedness As implied earlier, a certain stream of research in critical diversity studies arrives at the conclusion that the concept of diversity is intrinsically contextual, contested, temporal and inevitably devoid of a universally fixed meaning. Proponents of this view posit that diversity management seems to be temporarily fixed through a constant political process of negotiation involving different societal actors displaying power differentials; concomitantly, there is a rationale in examining the historically and contextually embedded processes of the emergence of distinct meanings of diversity initiatives, insofar as framing diversity seems to be inherently *path-dependent*, and shaped by unique national histories and local regulatory and institutional contexts. Ethnic privilege for instance, should be embedded within its historical development that infuses new meanings on the prototype of an ideal employee. (Nkomo and Al Ariss 2014)

These premises have informed comparative research on diversity management policies in different societal settings. In exploring various contextual and relational influences on the construction of diversity discourses in three European countries, Tatli et al. (2012) employed a discursive politics approach to investigate the ways through which the concept is redefined across national and regional borders. Dominant frames of diversity management are consolidated in processes of bending, stretching, and shrinking of the meanings conferred to diversity practices: such

processes evolve as a by-product of a struggle for power, domination and legitimacy between multiple stakeholder- and interest groups. Findings revealed that temporarily fixed meanings of diversity management were contingent upon the specific institutional contexts: these meanings may be shrunk to instrumental logic and bottom-line concerns due to a pro-business case agenda (e.g. in the UK), or stretched as a practical response to business needs (e.g. in Germany). Equally importantly, distinct blind spots in the hegemonic framing of diversity management meanings in specific settings were accounted for the exclusion of social class inequalities and/or religious discrimination from many corporate agendas.

As repeatedly noted, we can identify a variety of rationales for organizations to design and efficiently implement diversity practices. Klarsfeld (2009) distinguishes the Anglo-American business case based on the underlying economic rationality of such an adoption, from other cases better explained on the grounds of either neo-institutional theory or social regulation theory. Neo-institutional theory views diversity management as a consequence of environmental pressures exemplified in isomorphic change processes, while social regulation theory posits the diffusion of diversity management as an integral part of creating new rules and of the concomitant choice to comply or not with them. In the French context under examination, coercive rules are influential in shaping diversity initiatives not only because of the perceived threat associated with avoiding to comply with legal requirements, but also out of a calculus of implementation costs and flexibility of choice.

These two frameworks bear theoretical, as well as empirical promises for contextual perspectives on diversity management. In unraveling the ambivalences of diversity management, Klarsfeld et al. (2012) employed Reynaud's social regulation theory to question the assumption of an effective demarcation between regulation and voluntarism in implementing diversity policies. In so doing, the authors consider the diffusion of diversity management practices as integral to a social regulation process according to which evolving regulatory and voluntary forces are intertwined to generate negotiation processes framed by organizational decision-makers. Equality and diversity scholarship can significantly benefit from an empirical exploration of the complex interplays between control and autonomous rules, binding precepts prescribed by the degree of enforcement of state regulation and various sources of self-regulation (business case, moral imperatives, and resource dependency arguments) in different sectoral and organizational settings.

Stringfellow (2012) employs a discursive institutionalist perspective to explain the different responses of Swedish and German trade unions to, and their involvement in managing diversity. Stringfellow argues that the motivations of social actors in institutionalizing diversity management, as well as the ensuing diffusion processes affect practical responses to diversity discourses: albeit diversity management is more likely to reflect social deliberation processes when introduced as a means to cope with social and political crisis, demand-side motivations of employers to secure softer regulation may undermine social dialogue on improving the situation of disadvantaged groups.

Equally importantly, other frameworks can be adopted for similar purposes. Al Ariss et al. (2013) seek to explicate the agency of skilled ethnic minority employees

in view of shaping their work experiences, career choices and outcomes in two European countries, France and Germany. Employing a Bourdieuan approach, the study illuminates processes of social inequality and exclusion by framing the agency of ethnic minorities in terms of accumulating and deploying salient forms of cultural, social, economic and symbolic capital. Findings indicate that the two different societal contexts reveal explicit differences regarding employees' agency to efficaciously mobilize their resources. In France, this agency has helped minority employees resist assimilation, and even to a certain extent, subvert inequalities in employment and bypass structural impediments to the realization of career ambitions. On the contrary in Germany, skilled ethnic minority workers were somewhat unable in efficaciously renegotiating inequalities that limited their career trajectories insofar as these employees were constrained in their work and life choices; this may be attributed to the fact that their endowment of different forms of capitals appeared rather devalued and depreciated in this very context.

5.2 A Relational View of Diversity Management

The Rationale Single-level conceptualizations of diversity management do not adequately account for power disparities demarcating the interplay between individual choices and structural conditions, or between agentic and structural equality and diversity concerns. Syed and Ozbilgin (2009) outlined a relational, multilevel approach as a context-specific alternative to the single-level studies, by placing an emphasis on the interaction of structural and agentic factors in view of understanding organizations and employees as interdependent rather than as autonomous entities. They thus argued that diversity as a negotiated process *is socially and historically embedded*; it has to be understood in relation to the complexity of multilevel factors responsible for the construction of workforce differences and indicated the mechanisms through which multiple (macro-, meso- and micro-) levels of enacting diversity initiatives are interrelated, interdependent and mutually affected in different ways. A relational approach is in a position to transcend the positivist versus interpretive dichotomy insofar as it bridges the objective and subjective divide in diversity research; Syed and Ozbilgin (2009:2449) posit:

> a relational approach may be instrumental in developing a comprehensive understanding of the unique discourses and enactments of diversity management within each society because of its reliance on macro-national and historical contexts in addition to organizational and individual level considerations.

The Model The relational framework under examination incorporates contextual and contingent elements allowing for structural, organizational and individual phenomena to be situated in their societal and historical contexts. The macro-national context encompasses institutional structures (demographic composition of the workforce, anti-discrimination legislation, political ideologies, social and economic

policies, labour market arrangements, and historical context), social differences codes and social stratification resulting in emerging processes of inequality. The meso-level involves organizational policies, routines and hierarchies that help to explain the extent to which social difference codes are replicated in employment settings by maintaining inequality; finally, the micro-individual domain incorporates multiple and intersecting identities, as well as subjective experiences and aspirations as unique resources that help employees to formulate their proper responses to various organizational and societal pressures.

Worthy to note that the first level incorporates policies aiming at eliminating, or eradicating discrimination in socio-economic and cultural contexts; the second involves inclusive workplace structures and organizational routines, while the third tackles with the impact of intersecting and multiple identities on career trajectories and outcomes of diverse employees. Most importantly, a more comprehensive, realistic and contextual framing of diversity management necessitates the examination of the broader historical context in which power disparity, discriminatory practices and disadvantage are invariably and deeply rooted.

Applications A stream in critical literature advocates that the relational model under consideration can yield permeating insights as invested with significant explanatory and predictive power in a variety of cases. Al Ariss et al. (2014) advance a relational approach to explore ethnic privilege in management research: they thus theorize whiteness at the individual, organizational and macro-contextual levels, as well as at those of history and geographies of space, in which intersectionalities occur. Syed and Kramar (2010) applied this relational, multi-level model to examine policies enacted at the macro-national, meso-organizational and micro-individual levels, by taking into account the joint effects of multiple intersecting identities. The authors hold the view that a more realistic conception of diversity management necessitates integrated perspectives that are in a position to capitalize on the advantages and simultaneously minimize potential challenges. Unless such a perspective is adopted, the paucity of adequate resources to enable full participation and inclusion of ethnic minority groups is less likely to entail beneficial business and equity outcomes associated with diverse workforces.

Moreover, multi-level institutional support is deemed a precondition of context-sensitive and inclusive interventions. Forstenlechner et al. (2012) applied this relational framework to understand the introduction of quota-based diversity interventions in the United Arab Emirates as contingent upon contextual influences and situated within a complicated web of socio-economic and political value-systems; they thus illustrated the complexity of vested interests, the multiplicity of societal discourses and the interplay of change and resistance motives underlying the normative success or failure of such change and transformational practices.

International diversity management faces particular challenges in striving to balance global integration on one hand, and local responsiveness on the other. In this respect, relational and multilevel perspectives are in a position to inform a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of global diversity management: focusing exclusively on organizational policies shapes a rather fragmented view of the

complex and interdependent challenges in the labour market, insofar as diversity management is interwoven with and affected by both macro-societal (societal and work values, social support sub-systems, legal ordinances) and micro-individual (workplace bargaining processes) issues (Syed and Pio 2010).

A more holistic depiction of career development helps to recognize a wide range of vested interests operating at multiple levels (Al Ariss et al. 2012). In identifying institutional dynamics that impede international careers of minority groups, Al Ariss and Syed (2011), employed a relational perspective on skilled migration and self-initiated expatriation that transcends the scope of human capital contributions. Drawing on Bourdieu's theory of capitals, they provided a relational explanation of skilled migrants' capital mobilization that encompasses micro-individual, meso-organizational and macro-contextual factors affecting migrants' career choices. Al Ariss and Crowley-Henry (2013) elaborate on a more relational and inclusive model that is diversity-informed, context-specific, reflexive and triangulation-sensitive to better address self-initiated expatriates' experiences and motivations. Tentatively, the complex interplay of micro-individual, meso-organizational and macro-contextual factors on the intersection of multiple diversity categories may help to explicate reduced levels of institutional commitment to equality issues in many employment settings (Kamenou et al. 2013).

Beyond mere economic resources, social, cultural and symbolic capital in terms of resources accrued by virtue of one's personal relationships, as well as intercultural competences and reflected power enabling individuals to accumulate and deploy other forms of capital are central to the prospects of undertaking international mobility and career advancement. In assessing the effectiveness of diffusion of gender equality policies to two Muslim majority countries, Ozbilgin et al. (2012) applied a relational perspective to the possibility of transferring equal employment opportunities, which contextualizes and embeds diversity practices through local adaptation rather, than through imposing foreign principles on indigenous settings. Findings revealed that equality practices were reminiscent of and commensurate with social agendas stemming from such institutional contexts.

In sum, the international transfer of diversity management practices can be explored through a relational lens in a more comprehensive manner. Lauring (2013) adopted a relational approach in exploring the local adjustment of diversity management practices in an ethnographic field study of the experiences of Danish expatriates in a Saudi subsidiary: findings demonstrated that the motivation to transfer and implement such practices in multinational corporations was contingent upon a set of intentions, business imperatives and power-related issues that dominate corporate agendas. Rather than being viewed in isolation, racism and personal strategies for resource maximization are intertwined with meso-level group dynamics and intergroup interaction patterns, as well as with macro-level policies.

Furthermore, different institutional factors and cultural values, combined with a high degree of autonomy enjoyed by the subsidiary might be accounted not only for the perceived ineffectiveness of an empowering and inclusive diversity management style and a concomitant strategizing of ethical standards, but also for the existence of both socio-psychological power-related and financial reasons to sustain

various forms of inequalities. Accordingly, these findings support the argument that a relational approach is effective in bridging the existing divide between multiple levels of analysis and entails a "more comprehensive, realistic and context-specific framing of international diversity management" (Lauring 2013, p. 221).

5.3 Framing a Context-Sensitive Approach

The Premises We have so far underscored the need for adopting a context-sensitive view of diversity management, one that significantly diverges from a logic of best human resource practices implemented universally, in a rather uniform and undifferentiated manner, irrespective of contextual, historical, cultural and societal differences in various settings. The research focus on the societal embeddedness of diversity management interventions on one hand, and the relational approaches already examined on the other, make a significant step toward realizing such an objective. Syed (2009) for instance, underscores the need for contextualizing diversity management discourses as a realistic way forward, especially in the cases in which deploying context-sensitive diversity strategies becomes an imperative, due to cultural and institutional underpinnings of inequality. A context-sensitive framing of diversity discourses has to take into account the contextual, structural and individual factors shaping diversity management strategies. These discourses must be grounded on societal processes, by accounting for the unique attributes of the targeted workforce, as well as identifying meaningful indicators, categorized into macro-national, meso-institutional and micro-individual factors.

Adopting a different perspective based on Bourdieu's social theory, Pringle (2009) argues that an inclusive theory of workforce diversity has to integrate macro and micro forces into a unifying framework allowing for a contextual analysis of the dynamic shifts in power relations between individuals and structures. In so doing, she proceeds to positioning workplace diversity in a field that encompasses social justice and economic rationales, fairness and economic efficiency, by indicating two main delineators: power as pivotal signifier in delineating the boundaries of workplace diversity, and macro-contextual factors broadening the perspective. A multilevel approach is then introduced, effectively combining country context and socio-political arrangements, organizational policies and practices, and intrapersonal, interpersonal and inter-group dynamics. These distinct levels of analysis are dynamically interrelated through the interaction between the habitus (in a Bourdieuan sense) and the field, through processes of assimilation and accommodation on one hand, and action enabling processes of modifying the rules of the institutional and organizational fields, on the other.

At this very point, two additional, but substantial components of context-sensitive perspectives have to be attributed due consideration in the literature. The first research dimension to be examined consists in the type of rationality disadvantaged groups adopt to negotiate and attain their personal and collective goals, as well as in

the kind of rationality criteria diversity initiatives should comply with, and espouse to meet diverse employees' needs. The second dimension of context-sensitive approaches refers to the importance of considering diversity practices in terms of their impact on processes of organizational change, by paying attention to multi-level contextual factors challenging the status-quo, facilitating empowerment and proactive voice of diverse employees and fostering change, or replicating inequality structures by inducing resistance to change initiatives.

Enhancing Different Kinds of Rationalities Analyzing the precise type of rationality criteria underlying diversity management remains a relatively unexplored task in the respective literature. In considering diversity management and gender mainstreaming as two distinct technologies of government in the Foucauldian sense, Prügl (2011) explores the contemporary apparatus of gender as subject to a type of rationality that resonates well with liberal ideas, by juxtaposing it to a disciplinary rationality underlying nineteenth century controls of women's selves. Diversity management is thus viewed as engendering rationality forms inherent in neoliberal bio-political gender construction: it focuses on activating differences as assets and on generating a set of regulations that enable market mechanisms to validate diversity practices in ways that ambiguously advance emancipation agendas.

Formal diversity initiatives are frequently introduced as commensurate with an attempt to eliminate inequitable treatment and discriminatory practices, yet these interventions are inevitably bound by the distinctive context that may be tolerant of inequalities. Healy et al. (2010) underscore the theoretical value of incorporating diversity into a comprehensive framework in demonstrating how the design and implementation of various interventions are shaped by a set of competing rationalities that imbue organizational arrangements. The authors resort to a multi-layered framework that enables them to employ distinct rationality concepts as reflective of political processes, as well as particular outcomes in different institutional contexts; not unexpectedly, such processes and outcomes appear irreducible to formal, instrumental rationality driven by self-interested or egoistic motives.

In this view, practical and formal rationalities originate in, or presuppose relational, substantive rationalities: examining the interdependences between these forms of rationality underlying a diversity strategy enriches our understanding of their interaction in affecting context-specific interventions. In addition, the societal context exerts a direct impact on different actors' substantive rationalities and primarily, on their interrelationships. More specifically, the strategies, experiences and agency forms of disadvantaged, sidelined and practically, invisible groups that do not comply to strictly instrumental as well as strategic rationality criteria, constitute potential areas of research interest, worthy of further consideration.

Initiating Diversity-Friendly Organizational Change Prospects of change occupy a central position in certain trends of critical diversity reasoning. A core issue refers to the potentialities of diversity management practices to nurture transformative capacities reflecting a high degree of integration of discriminated groups (Barth and Mahieu 2012). In their assessment of the interplay between gender segregation and regional talent shortages in five emerging Asia-Pacific economies, Tatli

et al. (2013) argue in favour of the legitimacy of considering regulation for gender quotas as addressing gender inequality manifest in path-dependent behaviours, as well as leveraging untapped female potential due to contextual differences emanating from social, cultural and economic variations. A transformative agenda should be organizationally focused, but it has to adequately consider structural barriers that prevent vulnerable groups from gaining positions of influence in workplace settings. Equally importantly, disadvantaged groups resort to networks outside a formal organization to invent creative ways of empowering themselves, mobilize resources and negotiate new structures diverging from the norm, yet remaining within the neoliberal value framework. (Avdelidou-Fischer 2011)

Change initiatives are primarily considered an organizational level endeavour. Diversity change is then viewed as a systemic, multilevel and nonlinear process, the sustainability and resilience of which necessitates a holistic approach, incorporating demographic, as well as diversity-related political and cultural change (Gonzalez 2010). Shen et al. (2009) elaborated a framework according to which top management should foster a philosophy, leadership styles and an organizational culture supportive of diversity: because inequality and discrimination still widely persist, organizations have to adopt a range of improved HR policies focusing on appreciating and utilizing diversity, moving beyond mere compliance to legally sanctioned and legislative requirements.

As noted earlier, there is an urgent need to substantially enrich business case justifications of diverse workforces. Litvin (2006) strives to delineate an alternate way of conceiving diversity that would prove beneficial to stimulating change; such a shift in organizational discourses can engender a substantial change in underlying power structures. In this respect, effective change requires abandonment of the business case founded on a Mega-Discourse according to which human beings are thought of as a means to the achievement of supreme organizational goals: the pursuit of profit and maximal financial returns on various assets dictate the ultimate ends to which employee behaviour should necessarily conform.

Organizations function instrumentally, subjugating differences and uniqueness to overarching bottom line priorities. An alternate perspective presupposes an entirely different stance placing an emphasis on humans as *terminal values*: it reveals a new organizational purpose in serving the concrete needs of various stakeholders, in enhancing employee well-being, in affording members the opportunity to achieve their personal goals, and in overcoming uncertainty and enabling society to pursue shared objectives, otherwise unattainable (Litvin 2006, pp. 87–88). Accordingly, helping individuals flourish and thrive by fostering personal growth irrespective of perceived individual differences, by no means remains a utopian design; on the contrary, unleashing diversity potential articulates and realizes a vision culminating in the formation of this alternative, but feasible Mega-Discourse.

Organizational change processes beneficial to affirming and valuing diversity should thus exhibit such a context-specific sensitivity. Stevens et al. (2008) underscore the practical deficiencies of prevailing diversity initiatives and advocate all inclusive multiculturalism as a vehicle for positive and sustainable organizational change. They also posit that this perspective is an position to yield positive

outcomes: a sense of inclusion that fosters feelings of interconnectedness, trust and organizational commitment, increasing levels of empathy and understanding of individual differences, social and emotional support, high quality interactions, the development of social capital through embeddedness in local contexts and ultimately, enhanced psychological well-being. Furthermore, an equality-sensitive accommodation of competing interests and antagonistic perspectives in the construction of normative diversity discourses may result in a unifying framework, that of a *relational* community, within which fragmented social identities and dispersed narratives of diverse and heterogeneous groups have to be properly reconciled, and various tensions have to be effectively resolved (Margaret et al. 2013).

Diversity professionals involved in the development and implementation of equality and diversity policies, and in particular their responses to both business and social justice aims, play a decisive role in fostering multilevel organizational change. Tatli and Alasia (2011) theorize the resources (in terms of various forms of capital) available to diversity managers in deploying certain rationales promoting and enacting change. Kirton et al. (2007) seek to explore the relative weight of these actors to the appropriateness, effectiveness, limitations and constraints of diversity policies within organizations. Findings demonstrated that this professional group, often on the margins of mainstream policy-making, exhibited a high level of commitment to diversity goals, yet business imperatives were not necessarily viewed as contravening transformative pursuits. Most importantly, the study suggests that the "tempered radicals" characterization seems to more accurately capture the strategies, tensions and change orientations of people occupying a position of ambivalence within organizational settings. At this very point, we proceed to present Tatli and Ozbilgin's context-sensitive model of organizational change.

A Context-Sensitive Model of Organizational Change Dimensions and Implications Change interventions involve a variety of interrelated factors situated and operating at different levels of organizational reality. In this line of reasoning, diversity management has to focus on the importance of human agency in situated contexts as relevant to diversity-related processes and outcomes. Tatli and Ozbilgin (2009), as well as Ozbilgin and Tatli (2008) elaborated and developed a coherent conceptual framework to depict the agency of diversity managers in the overall organizational change envisioned as a *societally embedded* process. Three core concepts, *situatedness*, *relationality* and *praxis* originating in Bourdieu's contribution to organization studies, are thus identified and discussed. Comparing to Antony Gidden's structuration theory which purports that social structures and human agency co-evolve to re-affirming and re-constituting one another, Bourdieuan formulations embody higher levels of explanatory and predictive power insofar as they allow for considering the kind of varied forms of capital and resources that individuals draw on to enact their respective strategies: the latter are negotiated in and shaped by the logic of the broader field that is in turn transformed by the manifestations of human agency. (Ozbilgin and Tatli 2008, p. 400)

This three-dimensional conceptual framework "seeks to situate both the role of diversity managers as individuals and the diversity management as a change

process in a social and organizational context", thus posing certain challenges to change agency literature "which conceives change agents as autonomous, de-contextualized and apolitical beings" (Ozbilgin and Tatli 2008, p. 414). In so doing, "change is envisioned as an embedded process and diversity managers as resourceful, creative and strategic, but yet constrained, agents of change" (Ozbilgin and Tatli 2008, p. 415). The scope of diversity managers' agency in initiating organizational change is then demarcated in a three-fold way.

First and foremost, *situatedness* is critical to capture and demarcate the contextual nature of human agency, in particular to frame the ways in which diversity managers' actions, as well as the choices and constraints that generate them, are embedded in the historical trajectory of social and organizational contexts. Diversity managers' agency is being embedded in both the social and the organizational fields, in labour market dynamics and in a changing business environment, in specific structures and power relations, as well as in diversity policies, integration of and support for diversity goals across multiple levels, and organizational culture.

Second, *relationality* refers to the interrelationships of these actions with various identities and structures: human agency is thus entrenched in a web of relations through the dynamic of interdependence, intersubjectivity and interactivity. Rather than viewed as autonomous rational entities, individuals and organizations constitute relational beings entwined in complex processes that frame purposeful agentic change strategies. Relationality is enacted at multiple levels of social reality: at the micro-level, relationality denotes how diversity managers refer to their own values, beliefs and strategies. At the meso-level, relationality is manifested in both intra- and extra-organizational relations through managers' efforts to mobilize social capital and to draw on formal and informal networks that in turn enhance or constrain their agentic power through negotiations, persuasion tactics and voluntary involvement in supporting this case. Macro-level relationality is central to framing diversity managers' agency by considering demographic circumstances in view of transforming the sensitive balance between past experiences, present situations, future aspirations on one hand, and organizational field on the other.

Third, *praxis* (or *performativity*) reveals the dynamic nature of this agency across the dimensions of reflection and action, denoting interactions between different forms of capital, discourses, identities and structures. Praxis encompasses *doxic reflection* demonstrating diversity managers' power to properly reflect on experiences of exclusion and inequality pertinent to diversity in order to reveal the uncontested premises that serve to legitimize these inequality regimes and the ensuing hegemonic cultures. Strategic action remains the second component of praxis according to which managers' change agency is framed by their capacity to secure access to different forms of capital and to allocate and distribute them, as well as by the ability to employ strategic discourses of inclusion as integral to managerial practices. Diversity managers' change agency is thus viewed "as embodying a symbiotic relationship between the symbolic power of knowing (awareness of diversity discourses through doxic reflection) and doing (practice of diversity management through strategic action) in organizational settings" (Tatli and Ozbilgin 2009, p. 253). In this respect, managerial agency is conceived as "a nonlinear and

negotiated phenomenon, which embeds daily activities of diversity management in organizational politics, resistance, and power relationships" (Tatli and Ozbilgin 2009).

The implications of this model for initiating organizational change can be outlined in terms of the respective resources and constraints setting the boundaries for managerial agentic power. The social field of situatedness is facilitated by economic growth, a supportive political environment and an equality culture, while a diversity-friendly organizational field necessitates inclusive organizational cultures, organizational and managerial support, and financial and symbolic resources. Conversely, economic decline, unsupportive societal environments, discrimination, marginalization of diversity practices and lack of resources pose a serious threat to the implementation of diversity interventions.

Furthermore, relationality thrives through a deeper understanding of structural inequalities, as well as through adherence in and membership to supportive networks, and availability of resources, in the absence of which diversity initiatives are substantially undermined. Finally, work settings that appear to contravene diversity principles may constrain managerial ability to effectively negotiate a wider range of differences and to strategically deploy economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital required for a more comprehensive scope of change initiatives.

5.4 Discussion

We have so far demonstrated that current intellectual trends (among them: critical diversity theory, radical feminist studies, intersectional approaches, post-structuralist contributions, post-colonial perspectives, equality and inclusion literatures, queer theory, geographies of power) seek to critically inform and re-conceptualize the field of diversity management as a practical response to the instrumental attempt of capitalizing solely on the tangible advantages of differences in contemporary organizations. Albeit their evident heterogeneity, these trends share the commonality of fostering critical thinking on the potential foundations of new diversity interventions, based on the premise that diversity should be valued as an end in and of itself (cf. Luijters et al. 2008; Triana and Garcia 2009).

In this respect, the study offers certain insights into the particular conditions that may help organizations design and implement diversity strategies facilitating thriving and fulfillment of diverse employees, grounded on the affirmation of *otherness/uniqueness* of distinct identity groups and individuals. Critical diversity studies have advocated a progressive problem-shift in the dominant diversity research program from a labour market-driven and business-case oriented diversity management to one presupposing a substantial change in organizational priorities. In so doing, and despite their vast heterogeneity and profound divergence in both methodological and analytical terms, critical approaches may be considered as pursuing an overall research agenda that addresses issues in which rational, utilitarian

business arguments on diversity as a mere competitive advantage in organizations (see, Richard and Charles 2013 for a review), are confronted with certain particularizing expectations, demands, exigencies and aspirations of distinct identity groups. We in turn provide a brief and concise overview of the main prospects and theoretical promises of critical diversity literature.

Promises and Prospects of Critical Approaches As repeatedly noted, diversity as a new paradigm for differences has been subject to theoretical scrutiny for at least three interrelated reasons.

First and foremost, a certain trend in critical diversity scholarship focuses on the positivistic ontology of identity on which social psychological approaches to differences seem to heavily rely. Identities are objectified as fixed and objective entities reflected in predominant diversity discourses according to which individuals are thought of as invested with a genuine, essential identity, irrespective of the social construction processes on which these identities are grounded. *Second*, in insisting on pre-defined identities considered salient in work settings, mainstream diversity literature appears to inadequately consider the role of organizational and societal contexts in shaping fixed meanings of diversity, or in making them more malleable and fluid. And *third*, this micro-individual focus of diversity literature conceives of differences instrumentally, as a resource or input, yielding potential benefits through its proper management. Identity-based power disparities are primarily viewed in terms of perceived or real discrimination experienced by, and posing a threat to vulnerable groups: such discriminatory acts remain disembedded from societal contexts that position unprivileged groups in ways reflective of structural disadvantage and unequal access to material and symbolic resources.

As demonstrated earlier, a certain research stream focuses on examining the emergence, construction and dissemination of diversity discourses in specific sociohistorical and organizational contexts. Another body of literature investigates the role of various societal actors in informing discourses of diversity, as well as the active engagement of minority groups in constructing meaningful and empowering workplace identities. Agency is thus central to the efforts of identity group members in resisting discursive controls, and maintaining, disrupting or challenging persistent inequalities. Furthermore, intersectional perspectives allow for considering the interactions between intersecting identities, power relations and other, relevant to diversity concerns societal phenomena.

From a sociological lens, social identities tend to operate in ways through which structures of domination and inequality regimes are highly pervasive realities in today organizational settings. As the extant literature on politics on diversity and power suggests, a silence of issues on power and privilege conducive to marginalization of identity groups, necessitates a critical examination of the factors accounted for perpetuating inequities in workplace settings: a more proactive stance in addressing persistent discrimination is deemed a requirement for enhancing inclusivity, equality and fairness in today organizations (Priola et al. 2014; McGuire and Bagher 2010; Sims 2010; Zanoni 2011; Zanoni et al. 2010b). In this respect, social and cultural locations and positionality in terms of regional, societal and political constituencies

can substantially influence multiple identity constructions, work-related outcomes and organization development priorities (Metcalfe and Woodhams 2008).

The theoretical promises and prospects of critical diversity scholarship in enriching and expanding the present state of the art in the study of workplace diversity, as well as in offering new and constructive insights, are by no means reduced to these tentative remarks. Zanoni et al. (2010a, pp. 17–20) have offered certain directives for building radical, alternative projects for diversity research focusing on capturing the dynamics of power and diversity in organizations operating in a highly globalized business setting. More specifically, the authors underscore the role of a critical performative stance in stimulating social change (sse, Spicer et al. 2009), for instance through an agentic perspective, by conducting action research, or through the formation of inclusive organizational environments that will be in a position to develop practices and interventions exhibiting an affirmative, engaged and pragmatic ethos of diversity.

Furthermore, research has to move beyond deconstructing the rhetorical underpinnings of diversity in organizational discourses to critically explore the complicated relationship between diversity discourses and social practices that embeds individual agency within a web of structural inequalities. Organizational stakeholders do not merely draw on dominant diversity discourses, but they are in a position to selectively appropriate and elaborate on them, jointly with other available discourses to create new meanings in the identity sense-making process. Relational perspectives in particular, are invested with a potential that overcomes typical business case criteria strongly denounced by the critical literature, a vast body of which has challenged hegemonic conceptualization of diversity in organizations.

As noted in the first chapter, diversity bears a wide range of conceptual connotations. In her qualitative content analysis of gender and diversity issues in public relations professional publications, Austin (2010) indicates that diversity is framed in several distinct ways: diversity is understood as "different" separated from others, as a language problem, as a journey or process, as a HRM responsibility, as a bottom line concern, as a resource intensive issue, as inclusion of "others", as inducing workplace culture transformation, as enhancing the organization and the profession, as an issue needing to be justified, and finally, as power-driven. These frames are expected to reflect and operationalize competing rationales for undertaking diversity interventions. More specifically, adopting and defending alternative, yet feasible and realistic rationales for engaging in practices supportive of the case for equality and inclusion, remains one of the major challenges a vast body of critical literature is currently facing, as well as seeking to effectively cope with.

Critical and Mainstream Diversity Literatures: Is There Any Legitimacy in Seeking a Possible Ground for Potential Synthesis? We have argued that several streams of critical research favour a *contextually embedded* vision of diversity management that challenges not only the rigidity of strict business imperatives, but also certain deficiencies of equality discourses. Mainstream diversity management literature has also attempted to tackle with these very issues, by expanding the perspective and enriching its agenda. Plaut (2010) convincingly argues that a comprehensive

diversity science requires a thorough examination of both minority and majority group perspectives, as well as of their dynamic interaction, beyond typical binary categorizations. Diversity science has to focus on both psychological and societal consequences of intergroup distinctions as a by-product of social interactions grounded in historically derived beliefs about differences, as well as in a set of practices reflective of these beliefs, that in turn shape work experiences: the latter interact with, and reinforce structural inequality and power disparity.

Once again, we summarize a variety of rationales for effective diversity management that has been illustrated in the extant literature. For instance, Seymen (2006) elaborates a classification of such underlying reasons for engaging in diversity management: from a managerial perspective diversity should be supported as *an instrument* for achieving competitive superiority, viewed as *a resource* encapsulating both beneficial and disadvantageous aspects, considered *a mere HR programme*, or strategy and evaluated as *an integral part of global management*. From a value-based perspective, support for diversity as celebrated within a multicultural organization, is opposed to views subjugating diversity into a dominant organizational culture, or defending adaptability and resiliency of universal cultural values instead of fostering a multicultural organizational structure.

Prevailing rationales for engaging in diversity initiatives are subject not only to theoretical, but also to empirical scrutiny. In retaining a diverse workforce HRM policies should not appear standardized and homogeneous, but they should display *contextual sensitivity*, adapted to the particular needs and values of various categories of employees (Groeneveld 2011). In identifying distinct diversity interventions in Austrian workplaces, Podsiadlowski et al. (2013) extrapolated and operationalized five diversity perspectives ranging from striving for homogeneity to supporting and nurturing heterogeneity: these perspectives are associated with specific interrelated assumptions about the perceived costs, benefits and appreciations of diversity on both group and organizational levels. Groeneveld and Verbeek (2012) differentiated between "soft" and "hard" managing diversity policies, the former focusing on fostering a sense of belongingness for both ethnic minority and native employees, while the latter intended to increase the influx of minorities in compliance to strict legal ordinances, yet entailing resistance, controversy and lack of effectiveness. At a more strategic level, Vangen and Winchester (2014) frame a cultural paradox in identifying a set of interrelated tensions germane to managing cultural diversity through efforts centered on governance of collaborations in view of attaining collaborative advantage.

Multilevel factors are expected to influence diversity interventions. At the individual level, specific social identities triggered by diversity management affect employees' appraisal of diversity initiatives that in turn elicits particular affective, cognitive and behavioural responses such as resistance to, or support for diversity policies (Tran et al. 2011). The issue, however, is more complicated. Pitts et al. (2010) address the particular factors affecting the implementation of diversity management practices: their analysis is based on the premise that organizations develop diversity programmes as an effective response to the challenges and opportunities

that their internal and external environment poses to these entities. In this vein of reasoning, environmental uncertainty, environmental favourability and institutional isomorphism delineate the main predictors of diversity programmes, albeit in varying degrees. Organizations expected to adopt such programmes to a higher extent than their counterparts, are those operating in uncertain, resource-affluent environments, and motivated by mimetic or normative forces in doing so.

Yang and Konrad (2011) resorted to institutional and resource-based theories to identify antecedents of diversity management: focusing on legitimacy, the former help us to clarify the normative factors affecting adoption of diversity practices, while the latter underscore the relevance of these practices to strategy formation in terms of achieving sustained competitive advantage. Interestingly, Ewijk (2011) proposed a concise model capturing fundamental choices in the ontology of diversity (the selection, interpretation and taxonomy of the respective categories of differences), the related deontology in terms of motivation for diversity in an organizational setting (individual or collective base of differences, practical or moral arguments in support of diversity), and finally an instrumental choice referring to the type of policy approach adopted (high or low intensity, perceived relevance of collective differences for policy-making). The perceived relevance of group-based differences to policy-making is expected to be high for all approaches encouraging intervention types affecting an organization in its wholeness.

We proceed to examine research themes that both mainstream and critical approaches incorporate in their respective agendas, albeit through a different lens and distinct scope, as highly relevant to valuing diversity. In this respect, at least two issues of shared interest can be identified in certain streams of both mainstream and critical literature: a focus on articulating relational paradigms, as well as the need to underscore the centrality of inclusive climates to this very purpose, might be viewed as issues of potential interest across two competing, yet not entirely irreconcilable, or intrinsically incommensurate research programmes.

The Need for Relational Paradigms Relational approaches occupy a prominent position in certain strands of critical diversity research, as demonstrated earlier in this chapter. Interestingly, the effects of diverse teams on team processes and outcomes may also be viewed through a relational lens, in a way that seeks to effectively reconcile structural and institutional macro-dimensions with micro-social psychological explanations. Ely and Roberts (2008) employ a relational approach to reframe diversity research moving from a perspective that emphasizes differences to one that focuses on relationships: the former depicts diversity as a static dimension in binary terms, while the latter "is constituted by multiple and intersecting relations of power that manifest at several, mutually reinforcing (and sometimes conflicting) levels of analysis" (Ely and Roberts 2008, p. 180). This perspective embodies the history of societal relations, as well as the distribution of power between distinct identity groups, which in turn shape social roles, expectations and meanings associated with group membership. As a result, societal power disparity between different groups poses particular threats to social identities that exert detrimental effects on the effective functioning of diverse work teams.

To properly cope with such problems, people develop two types of strategies as a response to these threats: in contrast to defensive responses epitomized in pursuing inward-focused goals which often involve tensions and group conflict, employees can constructively engage in outward focused goals through advancing shared social ideals, furthering organizational mission, or enhancing quality of interpersonal relationships. Identity abrasions, Ely et al. (2006) argue, can be overcome by formulating principles for constructively engaging differences: a fundamental shift in mindsets is required to address the disruptive effects of negative attitudes such as divisiveness, overprotection, self-limiting behaviors, polarization, suspicion and withdrawal.

Most importantly, organizations are in a position to facilitate this important shift by providing genuine opportunities for mutual learning, as well as redirecting the potential unleashed in diverse teams toward achieving outward focused goals conducive to organizational ends. Policies, practices and norms supportive of learning can shape loci of new forms of interaction by motivating identity group members to deviate from conventional and stereotypical scripts. For instance, organizational cultures that encourage men not to succumb to accountability to conventional gender beliefs, may help this identity group pursue alternative goals inimical to societal gender norms of enacting masculinity at work, thus initiating a process of un-doing gender (Ely and Meyerson 2010).

The Importance of Inclusion and Diversity Climates As already noted, organizational change is germane to efforts aiming at creating a functional context accommodating diverse workforces. In developing an integrative theory of workplace diversity, Shore et al. (2009, p. 127) posit that "in order to move forward, we need to change our originating paradigms which are primarily negative, emphasizing discrimination and victimization, to explore diversity from a more positive and proactive standpoint". In so doing, focusing on inclusive climates may be pivotal in a scholarly endeavour to "move beyond old paradigms and limited ways of thinking to develop integrative and practical diversity theories that help organizational leaders create systems in which diverse human beings are able to thrive and to help their organizations do likewise" (Shore et al. 2009, p. 129). Relatedly, inclusive pursuits might not be unimportant to acknowledging numerous power differentials in view of attaining social justice. (Geiger and Jordan 2014)

Workplace inclusion remains a central problem that critical diversity theory seeks to holistically address. From a more mainstream point of view, recent literature on inclusion may purportedly enrich our understanding of the underlying mechanisms that account for the so much denounced one-dimensionality of business-case diversity initiatives. For instance, Singh (2008, p. 276) posits that an integration of diversity management and inclusive policies induces equitable and flexible work climates that are in a position to mitigate the negative effects of persistent and systemic group level inequalities. In examining the respective scholarly literature, Roberson (2006) suggests a conceptual demarcation between diversity and inclusion and theorizes inclusion as a distinctive approach to diversity management, the determinants and outcomes of which deserve further consideration.

Inclusion literature offers permeating insights that remind us of certain concerns raised by a variety of critical perspectives on diversity management. Scott et al. (2011) argue that organizations placing an emphasis on an inclusive organizational culture and integrating diversity into all levels of HR policies and practices are more likely to experience beneficial outcomes compared to organizations that focus on isolated initiatives, but fail to align their business operations with diversity practices, or ensure that diversity is embraced as a core organizational competency. Hays-Thomas et al. (2012) developed a preliminary model of values, knowledge and skills deemed as appropriate in diverse environments: accordingly, all involved in managing diversity (front-line managers, supervisors and executives/CEOs) should display value in diversity, self-awareness and empathy as core competencies for effective diversity interactions.

Inclusive ideals should claim more legitimacy than that recognized by rhetorical conventions and discursive strategies. Stewart et al. (2008) underscore the inherent dangers facing diversity instructors who espouse to teach inclusion as a means to justify diversity-related outcomes, yet perpetuating the demarcation between perspectives that sanction and value diversity, and those challenging a pro-diversity social justice agenda. The authors seek to identify critical elements for the development of diversity competencies as integral to strategies facilitating a more inclusive diversity instruction: the ability to take perspectives on one's proper attitudes, beliefs and behaviours through self-reflexivity, engaging in open and frank discussion about these perspectives, cultivating a positive intergroup interaction presupposing focus on multiple identities, as well as on dominant group experiences, and fostering an environment in which exposure to counterviews is managed through an effective combination of support and constructive challenge.

Diversity has to be elevated to a central and distinctive organizational attribute, otherwise diversity discourses may be jeopardized as falling short of being perceived as an act of genuine interhuman respect (Marques 2010). Mor Barak (2011, pp. 240–246) identified two major diversity management paradigms: the human resource paradigm exemplified by Kossek and Lobel (1996) encapsulates four distinct HR approaches to diversity management (diversity enlargement, diversity sensitivity, cultural audit and strategy for achieving organizational outcomes), on which Kossek et al. (2006) draw to consider connections between HR practices, workforce diversity and organizational outcomes. The multicultural organization paradigm is grounded on the typology of the monolithic-multicultural organizational continuum elaborated by Cox (1994, 2001). The multicultural organization reflects an ideal rather than a real entity: it is characterized by a culture that fosters and values cultural differences and espouses acculturation rather than assimilation processes in incorporating its members. Both paradigms however, are subject to certain limitations: under economic necessity for instance, the voluntarism of diversity interventions contravenes their long-run sustainability. Furthermore, broad definitions of diversity run the risk of diluting the implications of historical injustices perpetrated against vulnerable groups, while the one-sided emphasis on economic benefits makes diversity management contingent upon these beneficial outcomes. A

strong ethical commitment to diversity has a potential to counteract such detrimental effects (Mor Barak 2011, p. 250).

Inclusion is a multifaceted, generic construct (Da Rocha 2009; Sabharwal 2014): an inclusive workplace is defined as one that "values and utilizes individual and intergroup differences within the workforce, cooperates with, and contributes to, its surrounding community, alleviates the needs of disadvantaged groups in its wider national environment, and collaborates with individuals, groups and organizations across national and cultural boundaries" (Mor Barak 2011, p. 253). Interestingly, Chavez and Weisinger (2008) introduced a strategic, relational approach designed to yield an inclusive culture of diversity: a shift in organizational priorities necessitates a cultural and attitudinal transformation aiming at managing for diversity, the latter intended to integrate the unique aspects of diverse workplaces.

Most importantly, Shore and colleagues (2011) elaborated an inclusion framework that embodies two primary dimensions, belongingness and uniqueness that have to be considered jointly to advance research in the area of diversity: a singular focus on one dimension results in dysfunctional effects both for diverse employees and organizations. Emphasis on belongingness, perhaps to the detriment of employees' uniqueness, induces the strongly criticized assimilation according to which one is treated as an insider in a workgroup on the grounds of her/his conformity to dominant norms; on the contrary, high value attributed to uniqueness entails segregation and problematic interpersonal interactions according to which one's unique attributes are viewed as conducive to group success, albeit she/he is not treated as an insider in the work team. In a similar vein, failure to concurrently value both of these two dimensions is conducive to a state of exclusion of out-group members that undermines any effort to implement programs beneficial to disadvantaged and unprivileged groups. Only those organizations that score highly on both of these dimensions can establish inclusive climates supportive of interventions that treat minority employees as insiders worthy of equal dignity and respect, by encouraging them to retain their unique attributes within a work setting.

Furthermore, perceptions of a strong diversity climate among diverse employees constitute another critical dimension supportive of equality and inclusion agendas (Buttner et al. 2010, 2012; Gonzalez and Denisi 2009; Herdman and McMillan-Capehart 2010; Lauring and Selmer 2011, 2012).Openness to and appreciation of diversity remain two core components of a positive diversity climate (Luijters et al. 2008; Hofhuis et al. 2012). Job-seekers for instance, high in other-group orientation may be intent on pursuing employment opportunities in organizations deemed to value diversity, as they expect that their salient identities are more likely to be affirmed in these settings (Avery et al. 2013).

Diversity climates represent a decisive move toward alleviating those who have experienced the disrupting effects of discrimination. Guillaume et al. (2013) highlight the need to consider the critical role of organizational cultures by examining the influence of managers and leaders behaviours on, as well as the content of necessary interventions in shaping, changing and sustaining positive diversity attitudes. Groggins and Ryan (2013) exemplify the premises on which a strong

positive climate for diversity should be based. Diversity principles are reflected in organizational values, as well as in the development of key employee competences. Accommodating differences as a rule (and not as an exception) entails openness to change, as well as efficacy for change efforts. Respect for differences as a necessity (and not as nicety) culminates into openness to others and in the development of interpersonal competences. Learning as a continuous process informs efficacy for improvement: a structurally inclusive workplace reinforces inclusion and enhances objective and subjective person-work environment fit. Embracing uniqueness might thus have an impact on organizational effectiveness.

A significant step to enrich diversity management through prioritizing an integration strategy as pertinent to inclusive environments, has been made by Olsen and Martins (2012). The authors developed a typology of diversity approaches based on intersecting three value types (terminal, instrumental and dual value) with two forms of acculturation strategies (assimilation and integration) in order to yield six distinct approaches to diversity management (terminal assimilation, terminal integration, instrumental assimilation, instrumental integration, dual-value assimilation and dual-value integration). A dual-value integration approach in particular, is effective in combining organizational goals and diversity's inherent value as an end state: organizations demonstrating moral sensitivity and social responsibility in their effort to manage diversity are implementing policies that leverage diversity through achieving business and socially beneficial outcomes.

Integration is more germane to the ideals of inclusion, empowerment and pro-active voice. Rather than assimilation, separation or marginalization, integration as an acculturation strategy will help individuals benefit from a wide range of dominant culture-based and ethnic enclave-based social networks, as well as achieve the most favourable job search and employability outcomes (Samnani et al. 2012). Identity integration ranging from separation to integration, as well as identity plurality shape identity patterns that create both benefits and challenges for multicultural employees through personal, social and task outcomes. (Fitzsimmons 2013)

These tentative remarks are not devoid of practical value; hopefully, they might be interpreted as reflective of a more mainstream response to address certain concerns that critical perspectives have legitimately raised in defending alternative views of diversity and its management. Undoubtedly, future research is needed to more precisely delineate potential areas of communication between these competing paradigms; the fecundity of such an intellectual encounter could be acknowledged by approaches diverging in nature, though not incommensurate enough to avoid engaging in various forms of ardent, yet constructive theoretical controversy. Ultimately, equality, diversity and inclusion can be elevated to an explicit value and binding principle of engaged scholarship in view of developing multiple academic communities in the management field. (Özbilgin 2014, p. 1)

5.5 Implications for Practice and Policy-Making

One major challenge that the extant critical diversity literature has left unanswered, at least in part, refers to the precise nature of a bundle of diversity practices that have to be designed and implemented to fully address equality, inclusion and social justice concerns, so much evoked by critical theorists. The task is by no means easy to undertake and fulfill, as relying upon a variety of situational, contextual and contingent factors that need to be properly taken into consideration in view of implementing context-sensitive and relational diversity interventions.

Diversity management literature calls for due attention to the undeniable fact that usable knowledge for diversity policies, derived from existing theoretical and empirical research on diversity outcomes, remains in extremely short supply (Pitts and Wise 2010): as a result, there is a paucity of evidence-based research providing sufficient guidance to human resource professionals as they design organizational development diversity interventions (Foster-Curtis and Dreachslin 2008). Valuing diversity requires deeper cultural transformations within organizations, accomplished through the joint effect of leadership, empowerment and institutionalization (Ewoh 2013). Kulik (2014) identifies a research-practice gap in diversity management, and urges researchers and practitioners alike to acknowledge the challenges of above the line research, by considering diversity programmes (and not isolated practices), designing programme bundles, assessing the effectiveness of alternate programmes, contrasting diversity management and HRM programmes, as well as by placing more emphasis on macro-level outcomes. Noon et al. (2013) argue that compliance with good practices and formal procedures does not suffice to ensure that diversity and equality values are embedded in work settings. Bell et al. (2014) underscores that, even in more diverse organizations, the emergence of a new multi-racial hierarchy perpetuates inequality through changing manifestations of differential treatment. These remarks are akin to critical diversity scholarship recommendations to diversity practitioners, insofar as they necessarily operate not only at a pragmatic, but also at a higher, meta-ethical level in comparison to that of measurable relationships between diversity and performance on which a substantial body of mainstream research focuses.

Interestingly, Riccò and Guerci (2014) identify an implementation gap in diversity management and propose an integrated process of change that treats diversity management as integral to a company's strategy, adopted at the strategic, tactical and operational levels. Effective diversity management consists in framing a new vision, selecting relevant diversity dimensions, selecting DM lines of action, designing DM policy and practices, implementing the designed practices, communicating the company commitment to DM, making DM accountable and finally, re-thinking the entire process. As prescribed by more critical approaches, diversity management is embedded "in a process of cultural and organizational change that affects the company's vision, leadership, strategy, policies, practices, measurements, and communications" (Riccò and Guerci 2014, p. 244).

Implications for policy-making that directly draw on critical diversity studies should be specified in accordance with the particular societal, sectoral and organizational context. Diversity practices cannot be viewed as an isolated phenomenon: rather entwined with, than disentangled from other HR practices, they should be in congruence with core value orientations, vision and leadership. To move policies from rhetoric to collective action presupposes aligning diversity management with other organizational priorities through embracing diversity initiatives an an opportunity to transform, create, improve and expand organizational capabilities (Myers and Wooten 2009). In sum, motivation for undertaking such initiatives has to be combined with deeper ethical sensitivity and enhanced social responsibility in view of eventually outweighing the detrimental consequences of inequality, discrimination and structural disadvantage. Janssens and Zanoni (2014) for instance, envision possibilities for an alternative diversity management that is in a position to foster ethnic equality at work. In contrast to more traditional practices which focus on individual cognitive biases toward out-group members, equality-fostering DM consists in broadening dominant norms on competences and identities, as well as countering societal, institutionalized understandings of ethinc minority employees through mere membership in a stigmatized social group. A deeper transformation of the employment relationship results in the emergence of an alternative organizational space in which all employees should behave in conformity to broadened norms, rather than unilaterally adjusting and assimilating to prevailing, historically shaped, majority norms.

Moreover, new practices need to be introduced to mitigate the adverse effects of status- and power disparity unfolded in several diversity programs. Based on the insights inferred from the critical perspectives analysed above, context-specific research has to be conducted to elaborate, articulate and outline certain clusters of diversity management interventions (at the individual, team and organizational levels, respectively) as components of a unifying framework of practices that critical diversity studies tend to either explicitly or implicitly endorse, or to which distinct streams of research in critical diversity literature appear to converge. Policy efforts sensitive to historical and current differentials in access to resources, as well as considering multilevel issues, reducing subtle forms of exclusion and curtailing bias in organizational life through climates supportive of inclusion, are more likely to harness the power of diversity (Bond and Haynes 2014). In addition, we are in need of new rationales for diversity interventions: beyond deontological ethics evoked by equality scholars and utilitarian ethics underlying the business case, an ethic of care might enrich the scope of many inclusive agendas (Gotsis and Kortezi 2013; Wallace et al. 2014).

Accordingly, and despite the profound irreducibility of critical diversity studies to an integrative approach organized and conceptualized around properly defined and effectively identified commonalities, we can still insist on the utility and purposefulness of translating the arguments, discourses and particular views involved in and supported by various critical perspectives into context-sensitive, inclusive and diversity-friendly initiatives. Enacted at multiple (individual, team, organizational) levels of organizational reality and more specifically, deeply entrenched in

different organizational, institutional and societal contexts, such diversity interventions are primarily intended to address experience of disadvantage, marginalization and exclusion by displaying high levels of sensitivity to and care for the needs of our societies' most vulnerable and unprotected members.

5.6 Concluding Comments

To summarise, a theoretical framework capturing the importance of the formulation of critical diversity perspectives for managing workplace diversity, is introduced. Diversity discourses reflect a rhetoric informed by business rationales that resonate well with free market economic philosophies and political ideologies: we argued that their basic premise of static and essentialized individual differences is highly contentious, given the socially constructed nature of differences and diversity categories, and the concomitant societal embeddedness of many diversity discourses. These discourses seem to gain prominence over any antagonistic, equality and social justice ones, as they tend to systematically conceal issues of deeply entrenched inequality and existing power disparity, by solely focusing on work-related beneficial outcomes of a demographically diverse workforce. Because of such claims to universal validity and application, diversity management practices appear to be a-historical, non-contextual, devoid of societal relevance, and failing to sufficiently incorporate the multifaceted interplays between multiple organizational, social and institutional actors.

Critical diversity studies share an emphasis on the potential limitations of a managerial rhetoric organised around a set of dominant discourses that are more likely to reflect instrumental patterns of thinking, as well as to reproduce hierarchical power structures and to drastically impede possibilities of human agency, in particular that of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. It is thus proposed that a deconstruction and a concomitant reframing of diversity management rhetoric is in a position to provide a rationale for diversity policies and practices intended to purposefully alleviate extreme disadvantage and to potentially eradicate persisting discrimination. Such practices that are likely to unconditionally affirm human dignity, deeply respect and value differences, and promote inclusion of out-group members, are also expected to incorporate formal governmental and organizational initiatives allowing for human agency in view of employee micro-emancipation.

Albeit we cannot identify a priori the precise set of diversity initiatives that critical approaches tend to justify, we could plausibly argue in favour of interventions fostering a creative, interactive, positive sum game between in-group and out-group members. In addition, psychological empowerment of distinct identity groups through inclusive initiatives that unconditionally value alternative identities, subjective experiences and aspirations, personal biographies and different narratives might be also conducive to a drastic elimination of both the negative connotations engendering a business case for diversity, and the potential limitations of certain equality and social justice perspectives.

Promoting diversity is germane to the very experience of life itself, insofar as "there is inherent in life the potential for diversity, and it is this potential which offers to life its defining capacity to respond with a variety of options and alternatives for growth and development" (Marsella 2009, p. 134).Worthy to mention once again that diversity should not be reduced to an effective means for attaining and satisfying desirable organizational ends, nor should it be assessed in conformity to an instrumentality criterion. Indeed, this appears to have been the case underlying a consequentialist approach to diversity management, according to which diversity interventions should be based on a calculus of anticipated benefits and costs.

A non-instrumental view of diversity issues that challenges established assumptions of diversity management requires a radical shift from static and rigid conceptions of differences, that appear predominant in the respective literature, in favour of an approach that embeds and construes diversity management in the wider societal context of processes and structures shaping and maintaining the inequality dynamics of power interplays. This might also allow for the undistorted expression of multiple experiences of vulnerable groups, help empower the collective constructive voice of out-group employees and shape various caring managerial practices addressing the needs and meeting the expectations of specific target groups. We thus deem that a pro-diversity climate, characterized by openness toward and appreciation of diversity (Hofhuis et al. 2012) and founded on an inclusive culture of psychological empowerment (Sippola 2007), as well as vision and mission grounded on holistic, societally embedded management and/or leadership philosophies (April 2007; De Anca and Vazquez 2007), are in a position to offer an entirely new impetus to socially accountable and societally sustainable diversity interventions in contemporary, global organizations.

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