Ambiguities of diversity management -

Employees' ambiguous perceptions of diversity

Annette Risberg and Sine Nørholm Just

Copenhagen Business School

Introduction: ambiguities of diversity management literature and practice

The (practical and scholarly) field of diversity management can be characterized as ambiguous; there are many different rationales and principles for engaging with diversity and many different practices and initiatives of diversity management. While this plurality might be seen as a positive consequence of the very topic of interest (the diversity of diversity, so to speak), emphasis is often placed on the negative aspects of ambiguity (Nkomo & Cox 1996, Liff & Wajcman 1996, Dick & Cassell 2002). Contrary to dominant tendencies, in this paper we begin from the idea that ambiguity is an unavoidable and constitutive condition of organizational practices generally, and practices of diversity, specifically. While ambiguity in this constitutive sense does not have an inherent value, it may be experienced negatively, positively or indifferently by the involved actors. Likewise, the effects of the ambiguity may be positive, negative or neutral.

Based on this assumption, we explore various expressions of ambiguity in theoretical terms and seek to assess their empirical value. The former is done through the development of a theoretical framework where we suggest three categories of ambiguity which may be used to analyze diversity in organizations: strategic ambiguity, contradiction, and ambivalence. The latter aim is carried out through an illustrative case study of diversity practices in a Swedish municipality in which we unfold expressions and practices of ambiguity. The purpose of the paper is to suggest ways forward for more productive expressions of ambiguity that may foster new and more inclusive practices of diversity. In order to realize this goal we present the ambiguities that are inherent to the theory and practice of diversity management, before moving on to the theoretical and analytical sections which form the main parts of the paper.

Tensions of diversity management

Diversity management is a strained field in several respects. For example, the impetus for managing diversity may derive from various sources: the need to comply with legal requirements, the desire to uphold moral standards, and the endeavor to achieve economic goals (e.g., Thomas 1992, Özbilgin, Mulholland, Tatli & Worman 2008, Mensi-Klarbach 2012). Furthermore, diversity management is often conceptualized along the lines of a set of binaries: difference/equality, structure/actor, group/individual, and problem/potential (Cox & Blake 1992, Liff 1997, Litvin 1997, Lorbiecki & Jack 2000). Also, the various reasons for engaging with diversity management as well as the compound underlying principles lead to

distinct practical approaches as well as a number of specific initiatives that can generally be grouped as either pertaining to affirmative action or equal opportunities (Liff & Wajcman 1996, Holvino & Kamp 2009). Finally, a fundamental tension is sometimes highlighted and criticized in the literature; the very notion of 'diversity management' could be seen as a contradiction in terms (Kirby & Harter 2001). That is, given the managerial impetus towards control, order, and regulation, the ambition and practices of managing diversity will, counter to the stated goals, lead to less rather than more diverse – understood as heterogeneous, pluralistic and varied – organizations.

In this section we present the tensions and strains that exist within conceptualizations and practices of diversity management and go on to unfold the externally raised criticism that diversity management is inherently contradictory. Having done so, we turn to the possibility of viewing the ambiguities of diversity management in a more positive light. This entails a reconceptualization of ambiguity and a presentation of its analytical implications in a framework for studying ambiguous diversity.

If one bundles the rationales of legal and moral responsibility, as both approaches ground diversity work in an obligation rather than in an opportunity, two seemingly opposed strands of diversity management may be identified (cf. Risberg & Søderberg 2008). One strand emphasizes the (legal/moral) commitment of organizations to protect and enhance differences by reducing the structural boundaries impeding certain social groups to gain access to and thrive within organizations through affirmative action programs (see e.g., Ahonen, Tienari, Meriläinen, & Pullen 2014; Amhed 2007; Benschop 2001). The other strand deals with how organizations can gain economic benefits by promoting equality and focusing on the potentials of the individual actor through equal opportunity initiatives (see e.g, Gilbert & Stead 1999, Friday & Friday 2003, Maxwell 2004). Thus, according to these rationales the tensions of diversity management could be solved by simply choosing one stance or the other. However, the literature suggests that organizations should not take this easy way out, but instead seek to integrate the various rationales, principles, and practices (Syed & Kramar 2009, Tomlinson & Schwabenland 2010, Danowitz & Hanappi-Egger 2012).

There is, then, an increasing and fundamental recognition within (studies of) diversity management that one cannot reduce the complexities by choosing one general approach or the other, but must engage with the tensions that arise from combining the two. In practice, however, the need for clarity all too often wins out, leading companies to focus on, for instance, including more women as a group through one initiative (i.e. quotas) and developing the talent of individual women in another initiative (i.e. talent management or mentor schemes) without regard for the tensions that may arise from the combination of initiatives. This tension could for example be manifested as follows: when women as a group are seen as in need of help to gain access, this might rub off on the subsequent careers of individual women. Promotion of a woman could, for example, be perceived as a result of organizational support rather than of personal achievements. Conversely, the inclusion of women might not take the form of a full-blown affirmative action scheme (i.e. quotas) for fear of neglecting the potentials and competencies of the individual (i.e. not choosing 'the best person for the job'). The result of not addressing these and similar tensions would be that neither initiative would be developed fully, and that the organization as

well as the women involved would be caught in a double-bind between group characteristics and individual propensities (Tienari & Nentwich 2012: 116-117).

The problems of diversity management, then, may be said to arise from the way in which the tensions are predominantly handled rather than from the tensions themselves. This leads to calls for more systematic or comprehensive approaches that allow each specific diversity initiative to be aligned with and embedded within an overarching company strategy. Diversity management, on this count, is first and foremost a matter of general organizational cultural change and only subsequently a question of specific organizational practices (Gilbert, Stead & Ivancevich 1999).

Diversity management as a contradiction in terms

Some scholars, however, question diversity management's ability to sort out the tensions ingrained in the concept, be it on the general level of organizational culture or the specific level of organizational practice, arguing that the very idea that diversity needs to be managed is conservative rather than progressive (Kirby & Harter 2001). By that they mean that diversity management mainly builds on preconceived, fixed categories and, thereby, reproduces existing norms and standards instead of enabling new, diversified practices.

This critique may be substantiated by examining diversity management's underlying concept of identity. Such examination reveals that diversity management relies on, rather than does away with, existing power relations between binary categories; what Jacques Derrida (1981: 41) terms violent hierarchies. More specifically, diversity management assumes the existence of a privileged subject position, namely that of the white, middle-aged, able-bodied, Christian, heterosexual man, and thereby essentializes and stabilizes this as well as alternative identity positions. Even if the aim is to include and benefit from alternative identities, these continue to be positioned in relation to, and as different from, the norm. Hereby the norm remains uncontested and the range of possible alternatives is severely limited (Christiansen & Just 2012). Within diversity management, then, identity is conceptualized "…as stable over time, representing an inner truth of individuals that can be characterised using different diversity dimensions, such as the 'big 6' (age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion and sexual orientation)" (Bendl, Fleischmann & Walenta 2008: 383). Not only does the reliance on stable identity position amount to an essentialist conception, the critics say, it also serves to maintain existing hierarchies between the presupposed positions (Bendl, Fleischmann & Hofmann 2009).

In practical terms, what is at stake here is a desire for order based on an assumption of causality; that is, diversity management practitioners often assume that individuals have stable identity positions based on their group memberships and take specific expressions of identity to be the results of such memberships. Critics, however, claim that the relationship is the reverse: individual and collective identities are the results of discursive and social practices, not their cause (Bendl, Fleischmann & Walenta, 2008). Or, as Judith Butler states in relation to gender: "there is no gender identity behind the

expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (1999: 25). This claim may be generalized to state that identity is performative; that identity does not stem from underlying social categories, but produces these as the effects of their performances. However, this insight does not lead to the claim that individuals are free to construct their identities every which way they want. Instead, "… it is only through the experience of recognition that any of us becomes constituted as socially viable beings" (Butler, 2004: 2); the individual subject, then, is as much an effect of the expression of gender and other social norms as are the norms themselves. The successful expression of an individual identity is contingent upon the social acceptability and acceptance of that expression of identity. And while it may be true that the more limited or restrictive the norms of a given context, the smaller the room for recognizable identity performances and the less diversity, it would not be possible to imagine a completely open or unrestricted context either. Rather than creating unlimited space for identity expressions, such a context would exclude the possibility of successful expression altogether as there would be no norms or regularities by which to recognize such expressions. The turn to performativity, then, does not lead to naïve relativity, but to a careful consideration of the relationship between the general conditions of performativity (the social norms of recognizable identity) and specific performances (individual expression of identity).

If practices of organizational diversity (diversity management would no longer be an apt term) were to take Butler's theoretical understanding of identity as their starting point, it would not be possible to assume that individuals have pre-defined needs or interests based on their group memberships, nor would it be possible to assert such needs or interests as the normative basis for the inclusion of minorities. Instead, one should seek to create room for different expressions of identity that could, in turn, become the basis for defining needs and interests – not as stable categories, but as the results of their continued dynamic and contingent expressions. This is obviously no easy task, and it is complicated further by the fact that every expression of identity is inherently productive of effects; no matter how 'alternative' or 'subversive' a given expression might be, the recognition of it would be productive of new norms, replete with limitations as well as possibilities (Butler 2004: 115). The challenge, then, is to create inclusive practices that remain inclusive. How may we create norms of recogniziability that are open to alternative expressions of identity; to identities that are not already sanctioned, perhaps because they have not yet been heard of within the specific social context or do not yet exist, and therefore not thought of as belonging to the realm of recognizable identity (Just & Christiansen 2012: 332)? In other words how can one keep invitations to and expressions of diversity diverse? In the following section we explore ambiguity as one possible way to do so.

Potentials of ambiguity - A framework for studying ambiguous diversity

As has hopefully already transpired, the critique of diversity management for seeking to identify or order not only its principles and practices, but also the involved social categories and individual subject positions is also inherently a critique of the urge for disambiguation. Diversity, on the alternative count,

is inherently ambiguous, and one misses the chance for creating more inclusive practices, more room for the expression of difference, if one does not embrace, perhaps even seeks to enhance, this ambiguity. Thinking of ambiguity as a potentially productive force, however, demands a reconsideration of the concept that moves beyond its common-sense and usually negative connotations of equivocation and misunderstanding. Thus, we will now turn to conceptualizing ambiguity and setting up an analytical framework for the study of ambiguous diversity practices. The remaining issue of whether and how diversity practices may actually prosper from ambiguity is partially addressed in and through the analysis, but also taken up for more directly normative consideration in the concluding discussion.

The main defining feature of ambiguity is its indeterminateness or plurality; if a situation, practice or utterance is ambiguous, it does not have one clearly specified meaning, but is open to various different interpretations. This also goes for the concept of ambiguity itself: there are many different definitions and meanings of ambiguity in the relevant literature (Risberg 1999: 106). While some scholars consider ambiguity to be a problematic or abnormal situation that should be avoided or resolved (e.g. McCaskey 1982, Thomas 1988), we begin from the assumption that ambiguity as an unavoidable feature of human interaction (Martin 1992, Meyerson 1994). Noting that ambiguity is inherent to discursive and social practices also means moving beyond the issue of whether ambiguity is good or bad; in itself ambiguity is neither, it is, instead, a non-normative condition of possibility that may have both positive and negative effects through the concrete practices and expressions it elicits. In keeping with the theory of performativity that was outlined above, then, expressions of ambiguity have normative effects, and, accordingly, the analytical task is to determine the effects of ambiguous expressions. In order to accomplish this task, however, we need both a deeper understanding of the general potentiality of ambiguity and a more specific idea of how ambiguous potentials may be expressed and with what effects. In sum, the theoretical ambition of this paper is to provide a framework for studying the effects of ambiguous expressions of diversity.

We may begin to grasp the potential of ambiguity as a means of expressing and fostering diversity by noting its affinity with the concept of 'queerness' which points to the possibility of performing existing norms differently, of queering them through "…an attitude of unceasing disruptiveness" as Martin Parker (2002: 148) puts it. Queerness, then, is a theoretical and political stance that refuses to accept reified meanings and identity positions, insists on the contingent and constructed – ambiguous – nature of what is currently taken for granted, and seeks out potentials for alternative meanings and practices (Butler 1993: 19). Although it is important to note the link between queer theory and an activist stance on (non-heterosexual) identity politics, we follow Erin J. Rand's lead in detaching queerness from specific identity positions and highlighting the general 'undecidability' of queerness. Rather than being a quality of certain individuals and groups, queerness is a characteristic of sense-making *per se*; it is "the lack of a necessary or predictable relation between an intending agent and the effects of an action" (Rand 2008: 298). Or, to put the point bluntly, queerness is ambiguity.

Relating ambiguity to queerness in Rand's sense of the word brings us closer to an understanding of the potential of ambiguity. Queer or ambiguous expressions have many possible meanings, rather than one intended and/or predictable effect; they hold up the possibility of indeterminate agency, of repeating

existing and recognizable norms with a difference, of bringing about change from within. In order to unpack this claim let us look closer at the concept of agency and its link to ambiguity. As indicated above, the question of how individual expressions of identity relate to general norms is central to the theory of performativity – individual performances of identity are recognizable because they rely on and are repetitive of a limited number of existing norms, yet the norms do not exist outside of their expression and, hence, depend upon their reiteration for continued effect. This is what creates the possibility of queerness, of repetition with a difference, or, in Amy Allen's (1998: 463) words: "the very fact that it is *necessary* for norms to be reiterated or cited by individuals in order for them to maintain their efficacy indicates that we are never completely determined by them." From this perspective, blatant rejections or negations of existing norms will not result in recognizable expressions of identity, but more subtle, nuanced, ambiguous expressions offer agential potentials whose effects are not given, whose resulting subject positions are not pre-determined.

The potential of ambiguity, understood as a 'queer form', is that it holds indeterminate agency and, hence, may rework the relationships between existing norms and their expressions, opening up new opportunities for performing identity within given social contexts. But what forms do such ambiguous expressions of agency take, more specifically? How may an agency, the effects of which are indeterminate, be put to purposeful use by individuals and organizations? Here, we will briefly introduce three ambiguous forms whose potential for enabling and enhancing, but also hindering, diversity will later be explored in the analysis: strategic ambiguity, contradiction, and ambivalence.

Strategic ambiguity

The notion of strategic ambiguity was first presented by Eric M. Eisenberg (1984) as a strategic use of communication to enable multiple interpretations. Davenport and Leitch (2005) call this a "'space' in which multiple interpretations by stakeholders are enabled and to which multiple stakeholder responses are possible" (Davenport & Leitch 2005: 1604). Eisenberg (1984) established three central characteristics of strategic ambiguity: 1) it promotes unified diversity, 2) facilitates organizational change, and 3) amplifies existing resource attribution and preserves privileged positions. For our purpose, the first two characteristics are particularly relevant.

Strategic ambiguity may be used as a way to attain organizational goals by reaching unified diversity. That is, strategically or purposefully leaving messages open to multiple interpretations may allow people to hold different views or opinions while continuing to work towards a common or overall goal. When strategic ambiguity is used, e.g. in organizational goals and mission statements, "it is […] not the case that people are moved toward the same views (in any objectively verifiable sense) but rather that the ambiguous statement of core values allows them to maintain individual interpretations while at the same time believing that they are in agreement" (Eisenberg 1984: 231). The main argument for strategic ambiguity is that it allows for creativity and flexibility. Thus, strategic ambiguity may enhance the possibility of diversity within organizations generally speaking, but can also be linked directly to diversity

management in that it may be a device to overcome the tensions and conflict that are built into the concept of diversity. It is likely that contesting views towards diversity are held in the organization. It may be that diversity is understood differently by different individuals or in different organizational units or that it is resisted.

Strategic ambiguity tends to be used in organizational missions, goals, values and plans enabling conflicting interpretations to exist simultaneously and allowing diverse groups to work together (Eisenberg & Witten 1987). Eisenberg (1984) posits that concretely stated organizational goals are ineffective; ambiguously stated goals, missions and plans, to the contrary, foster the productive existence of multiple viewpoints in an organization. He further claims that it is "a political necessity to engage in strategic ambiguity so that different constituent groups may apply different interpretations to the symbol" (Eisenberg 1984: 231). In our case the symbol would be diversity, and ambiguity would be used strategically to foster agreement on the abstraction of diversity without limiting specific interpretations of what it may mean. A typical example of this would be to write diversity polices in a general and abstract manner so that the interpretation of what diversity is and how to achieve it can be locally interpreted by the internal stakeholders (c.f. Davenport & Leitch 2005). Diversity and equality work in organizations is not always accepted by the organizational actors, and too clear and open goals may lead to the mobilization of dissent (Davenport & Leitch 2005; Eisenberg 1984). Research on strategic ambiguity finds that it is a valuable political resource as it enables the mobilization of collective action and change where organizational constituents hold different interests (Jarzabkowski, Sillince & Shaw 2010), and it could thus be useful in the implementation of diversity in organizations. Specifically, value statements such as 'we value diversity' or 'we see difference as an asset' are ambiguous enough to be open to different interpretations. For example, they could be seen as maintaining tensions between expressions of moral support for diversity and articulations of the economic benefits of diversity. They also allow what is considered as diversity to remain ambiguous and open for interpretation for different organizational units.

Strategic ambiguity could also be used as a way to preserve a sense of continuity in diversity work; the label ('diversity') remains the same, but its ambiguous expression allows for gradual change in interpretation over time (c.f. Eisenberg 1984). For instance, the diversity categories that are in focus may vary over time and by being strategically ambiguous in the general definition of diversity the organization allows for shifting or new categories to be emphasized. A current practical example of this is the rising focus on LGBT issues in many organizations' diversity work; the general definition of diversity usually remains the same, but the scope of the concept is broadened or earlier emphases (typically, gender and ethnicity) are downplayed or displaced.

Strategic ambiguity, however, is not only a positive resource; Abdallah and Langley (2014) discuss what they term the double edge of strategic ambiguity pointing to the pitfalls as well as the potentials. Whereas strategic ambiguity may hold great potential, as Eisenberg points out and we have sought to illustrate above, it may also cause confusion and even lead to what Denis, Dompierre, Langley and Rouleau (2011) call escalating indecision. According to Abdallah and Langely (2014), the result depends on how the receiver of the message interprets it. Abdallah and Langely draw on de Certeau, presenting

organizational members as consumers of strategy discourse who are free to "creatively consume it in multiple and sometimes unexpected ways" (Abdallah & Langley 2014:236). Individual readings may be productive and constructive or constraining and disabling. Abdallah and Langely conclude that strategic ambiguity does offer all the benefits laid out by Eisenberg (1984); in particular it may be very useful to launch new initiatives and to initiate change. Sooner or later, however, tensions are likely to (re-)occur as the outcomes of divergent interpretations become clearer, but this does not mean that strategic ambiguity becomes less important, only that the strategic process of (dis-)ambiguation enters another cycle.

All in all, strategic ambiguity may be a way to enable diversity in organizations where different interpretations of diversity occur, but also where resistance against diversity exists. It could be used initially to launch the notion of diversity in the organizations, but as the diversity work proceeds at least part of the work may call for less ambiguous discourse which could lead to disambiguation, but also to new rounds of strategically ambiguous expressions.

Contradiction

Contradiction, as conceptualized by Valerie Renegar and Stacey Sowards (2009), is linguistic opacity broadly speaking; Renegar and Sowards suggest that what may be seen as an irreconcilable clash between two opposed principles, positions or practices could, in fact, "…foster agency in social, political, and collaborative contexts" (2). "Rather than condemning the rhetorical practice of contradiction," they argue, we should view it as "a strategic and agential orientation that enables marginalized perspectives to find voice" (3). Contradiction, then, is here conceptualized as a way of introducing a new or subversive idea or position by relating it with its opposite. Applying this conceptualization to diversity management suggests that the contradiction in terms that was detected and criticized above may not only serve to delimit or discipline diversity, but could also be a strategy for bringing diversity into the field of management, for enabling a discussion and a possible change process that would otherwise be inconceivable. While the current tendency is for management to overrule diversity, the contradictory relationship works both ways, so to speak, and is not necessarily to the disadvantage of diversity. Subversive groups or individuals, then, could use the initially delimiting contradiction as a means of voicing their views and bringing more diversity into management and organizations.

Whereas contradictions are usually seen as logical dead-ends or fallacies, they can be used productively as an ambiguous form that is particularly suited for overcoming dichotomies and limited choices. That is, contradiction may be used as a starting point for thinking about alternatives to the two exclusive and exclusionary options seemingly presented by the contradiction or for discovering ways of merging the opposites (Renegar & Sowards 2009). Moving from the general articulation of diversity management to its underlying principles this could, for instance, involve dissolution of the tendency to focus either on individuals or groups, equal opportunities or affirmative action, the business case or the moral arguments. Diversity management, it could be claimed, is all these things at once, and while that may

seem (indeed, be) conceptually messy, it is also helpful since it creates the potential for new and unthought-of concepts and practices. Ultimately (and, perhaps, exaggerated), the messier, more logically inconsistent, the concept, the more potential for change and for forging new pathways. The conceptual contradictions of diversity management, then, could be seen as resources to be explored, rather than as obstacles to be overcome. As an ambiguous theoretical form, embracing the contradictions of diversity management, then, could be seen as a means of becoming 'conceptually queer'; that is, to not only deconstruct and criticize existing theories of diversity management, but also to begin building alternative theories that are susceptible to their own inconsistencies, using these as starting points for further articulations, invitations to further dialogue, rather than as weaknesses to be hidden in one's own work and dug out in the work of others.

The turn to contradiction, in sum, is consistent with the radical critique of diversity management, as outlined above, but also moves beyond the critics' rather schematic take on 'poststructuralism' in order to take seriously the possibility of thinking – and speaking/writing – differently about difference (and diversity) (for various takes on the question of how to present ones theories in ways that open up to difference rather than foreclose it (see inter alia Derrida 1997: 56, Malabou 2007: 434, Lyotard 2011: 13).

Moving from theory to practice, contradiction as a specific mode of articulating ambiguity may contribute positively to diversity management in two respects: first, it may help recover/uncover the social contradictions and conflicts of interest that diversity management in a sense sets out to unveil and address, but may end up obfuscating or even reproducing (Kersten 2000). Thus, diversity management with its claims to (establish) 'color-blindness', 'gender equality', and the like may, in fact, blind itself to the persistent inequality of and discrimination against people who represent minorities within organizational settings. Saying 'we do not discriminate' does not (necessarily) do away with discrimination, and contradiction may be a particularly effective way of pointing to gaps between organizational talk (e.g. 'we value difference') and practices (e.g. upholding a homogenous workforce). Contradiction, then, can serve to raise awareness of the structural differences which diversity management initiatives leave intact and the conflicts of interest associated with these differences (e.g. male members of the organization might have to give up some privileges if 'gender equality' were to become rigorously enforced). Second, contradictions may not only serve as a means of promoting collective interests, but are also "…useful rhetorical tools for negotiating complex lives in a complicated world" (Renegar & Sowards 2009: 3) that may help individuals to construct and come to terms with their own multiple and strained identities (6). Thus, contradictions are apt tools for bringing and acting out the intersectionalities of which one's (social) identity consists (Staunæs 2003); for instance, a female manager might describe herself as an 'insider-outsider' (which is, in specific rhetorical terms, an oxymoron, a condensed contradiction) and use this as a privileged position for analyzing (and changing) the social setting (Naples 1996; see also the following section of the present paper).

In sum, contradiction offers the possibility of negotiating tensions between identity and difference, of maintaining and using those tensions creatively, rather than dissolving them or falling on one side or the

other of the contradictory pair(s) – in theories and, more to the point of the upcoming analysis, practices of diversity (management).

Ambivalence

Renegar and Sowards' contradictions are primarily linked with a bottom-up or subversive approach by which marginalized groups can point out structural differences and discriminations and individuals can construct complex identities, whereas Eisenberg's strategic ambiguity has an instrumental top-down and possibly unethical flavor (Davenport & Leitch 2005: 1606), meaning that it is primarily a managerial tool for securing and maintaining 'unity in diversity'. Debra E. Meyerson and Maureen A. Scully (1995) offer a strategy for expressing ambiguity that is positioned midways between bottom-up (and, perhaps, reformative) and top-down (possibly conservative) uses of ambiguity: ambivalence. Ambivalence, Meyerson and Scully suggest, enable 'tempered radicals' to identify both with the organizations of which they are members and with very different, perhaps opposed, groups, communities or causes (Meyerson & Scully 1995: 588). The both/and stance of ambivalence may enable organizational unity and diversity simultaneously and provide a means for different individuals to not only enter organizational settings on their own terms, but also to diversify organizations from within.

In the context of diversity management, the position of 'tempered radicals' may be occupied by both diversity managers, who seek to diversify organizations through policies, strategies, and initiatives, and subjects of diversity, who live and breathe diversification every time they enter the organizational context. Both are 'change agents', who may use their professional and/or personal ambivalence (oftentimes diversity managers are themselves representatives of one 'minority' or another) as a means to overcoming resistance to change. Meyerson and Scully offer two main advantages of the ambivalent subject position, corresponding to two ways in which ambivalence may be advantageous to diversity management. First, it offers a more detailed account of and way of harnessing the previously mentioned insider-outsider position (or 'outsider within' in Meyerson and Scully's terms): "While insider status provides access to opportunities for change, outsider status provides the detachment to recognize that there even is an issue or problem to work on" (Meyerson & Scully 1995: 589). The insider-outsider, then, may use his or her ambivalent position to advocate diversity (or, indeed, other forms of organizational change) in a form that is recognizable to those who would otherwise not see a need for change or, indeed, be resistant to it. Second, the ambivalent stance of the tempered radical may act as a bridge between advocates of the status quo and advocates of more radical change, thus mediating between the various fractions of the organization – and in so doing he or she can both be critical of and advocate for both the more conservative and more radical positions (Meyerson & Scully 1995: 589). This provides a good starting point for sustainable diversification processes because it offers the possibility of reflecting upon all the various interests and positions of the organization, thereby setting goals upon which everyone can agree and providing steps towards these goals that take their starting point not only in the dominant organizational consensus, but also in the existing opposition to it.

The strategy of ambivalence, by being positioned in the middle of the other two strategies and drawing on both, may seem to provide the best option for using ambiguity productively to enhance diversity in organizational settings. However, we do not want to rule out any of the strategies beforehand; instead, we now turn to exploring their potentials empirically through three vignettes in which we illustrate the ways in which ambiguity is expressed and discuss whether the various expressions produce more or less (opportunities for) diversity. In the course of doing so, we will pay particular attention to the interplay of structure and agency and seek to assess to which degree the effects of the various expressions of ambiguity is reformatory/conservative. Do they serve to overcome or maintain structural inequalities? Do they enable or delimit the performance of alternative identities?

Expressions of ambiguity in diversity practices

This is a case study of diversity work in a large Swedish municipality (approximately 20,000 employees)[1]. The fieldwork was conducted between May 2008 and December 2010 and mainly consisted of observations of daily work, meetings and events, but also of interviews. In addition, organizational texts have been collected and analyzed. Examples of collected texts are equality and diversity plans, personnel reports, budgets and strategic plans. Observations were conducted for a period of two months in a city district unit doing community work, for two and a half years with a city district reference group on diversity, and for about two years in an organization wide network for equality and diversity. Observations were also carried out at diversity events and trainings when the opportunity arose. Interviews were conducted with employees of the city unit and key people such as HR strategists, politicians and a city district administrative director. All interviews have been transcribed *verbatim* and all field notes have been transcribed. The resulting texts have been analyzed with the use of NVivo.

The municipality is situated on the south-west cost of Sweden and has a large population with foreign background[2]. Out of the approximately 286,000 (in 2010) inhabitants about 40 % has a foreign background. The municipality has a political goal stating that "the share of the municipality's personnel with foreign background shall at all levels correspond to the share of the total population." This political goal is important for the organizations' diversity work as it, together with two other political goals (aiming at equality between genders) and the Swedish anti-discrimination bill from 2009,[3] serves as a basis for the diversity work in the city.

The city has for many years consciously worked with equality and diversity. Every city administration must write, update and follow up an equality and diversity plan every year. Whereas the Swedish law stipulates that large employers should write and update equality plans every third year, the politicians of

---

[1] The field work was conducted by one of the authors, Annette Risberg.
[2] Foreign background is defined as born abroad or born in Sweden with both parents born abroad (source http://www.malmo.se/Kommun--politik/Om-oss/Statistik/Befolkning.html accessed last time 2014-05-28).
[3] The anti-discrimination bill, 1 January 2009, aims at preventing discrimination based on gender, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation and age. The bill can be found at http://www.notisum.se/rnp/sls/LAG/20080567.htm and http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/11043/a/111986.

the municipality have decided to do it every year in order to put focus on equality, and most administrative units also include diversity in the plan. All administrations should also have an equality and diversity reference group, though it is organized differently in different units. There are continuously different events, organized locally or centrally, that focus on equality and diversity. A typical event is a public lecture by a popular lecturer often with a background in media, entertainment or business life. Various forms of equality training are also offered; for example the city developed abnd implemented a diversity board game as a means to train all employees of the municipality in diversity and equality issues at the time of the field work.

Having presented the general case and some of the diversity and equality work taking place in the municipality we will now turn to three empirical examples or vignettes. The vignettes represent ambiguous behaviors in regards to diversity and non-discrimination that recur in the empirical material as such and are analyzed in order to shed light on the types of ambiguous practices that occur and to evaluate the limitations and possibilities of such practices.

Vignette 1 – Ambiguity of goals and practices

This vignette points to a lack of strategic ambiguity leading to negative effects in terms of less rather than more room for diversity. It also illustrates some contradictions in the diversity goals at different levels of the organization. Whereas the diversity literature states that it is important to have clear diversity goals, the same goals may, if one follows the notion of how strategic ambiguity can encourage unity while safeguarding diversity, also appear as barriers for diversity practices. In the following we will depict a case of such tension between specific goals and diverse practices where the goals, while promoting structural diversity, may actually limit specific instances of diversity work.

The municipality has three political goals serving as ground for the diversity work. One was described earlier in the paper, namely that the share of employees with a foreign background shall reflect the demographic composition of the inhabitants in the municipality. The second political goal states that there should be no irrelevant differences in pay for equal work in the municipality, and the third states that all employees have the right to work full time or part time according to their choice. A rather blunt translation of these goals is that the first addresses ethnicity whereas the two latter address gender (aiming to ensure that men and women get equal pay and to decrease involuntary part-time jobs in the care sector). These goals are broken down into more activity specific goals in the municipality units' different plans.

Although the Swedish anti-discrimination bill includes seven discrimination grounds, most of the goals in the diversity and equality plans of the municipality's various units are focused on ethnicity and gender. There is no overall organizational template for the plans, wherefore they may be written in different ways. For the city district included in this study the plans were detailed and specified in terms of goals and key performance indicators (KPIs).

The yearly update of the plan starts with the diversity committee collecting diversity goals and KPIs from each unit in the city district. During this exercise the units are also asked to follow up on last year's goals, though that is not reported in the new plan. A goal is typically divided into four headers, the main goal, the goal indicator (Key Performance Indicator - KPI) (for overall goals not for unit specific goals), how the goal will be achieved, and the responsible person/department. Sometimes a goal may have several goal indicators, how's and responsible persons. An analysis of the city district's diversity and equality plan 2009 shows that out of 25 stated goals four goal categories emerge; gender, foreign background, diversity/differences (categories are not specified) and discrimination/violation/safety. The latter category is probably organization-specific as the municipality has units dealing with social welfare, family matters and schooling. The other discrimination grounds are not mentioned in the plan. The most commonly mentioned category was gender (11 times), followed by foreign background and diversity/differences (7 times each) and last the discrimination/violation/safety category (5 times).

In the 2009 plan for the city district only one goal (of 25) included another discrimination ground, age (not included as a category above as it was only mentioned once). It is quite clear both from the plan – and enhanced by how employees talk about diversity and equality in the municipality – that diversity practices are more or less limited to gender and ethnicity. When the plan mentions diversity or differences in general, the follow-up text mentions underrepresented groups or people with foreign background, so to interpret this as gender and ethnicity is probably not to an exaggeration. In this case the political goals aimed at some democratic principles (the right to get a job and equal pay), but resulted in a limited view of what diversity includes. The goals in this case put a strain on the diversity practices as they delimit what should be included in the term diversity.

Whereas a diversity and equality plan may be an important tool for specifying the diversity practices and following up on what has been done, the format itself makes the plans limiting. Most goals were translated into KPIs or How's that can easily be measured in one way or another, but may not have any other purpose than the measurement itself. That is, it is not necessarily specified what the activity will actually lead do. For example, a goal from the Health and Care unit states that in order to increase the awareness of and understanding for differences the responsible manager shall invite lecturers from different associations. This tool is both very specific and at the same time rather blunt, as it does not specify what the lecturers should talk about or how the lectures should increase awareness. Furthermore, it does not specify how one knows when the awareness and understanding has been increased. Thus, the goal is very specific in its activity and very vague about the possible effects – a kind of strategic ambiguity in reverse, one might say.

Though the diversity and equality plan is seemingly very structured and informative in regards to what to do and who should do it, when discussed in the organization it seems to be reduced to a check list to be ticked off once a year. The goals and the measures (KPIs) serve both as control devices and facilitators for the diversity work, but also work as barriers for the practices since they often install specific activities, but do not invite reflection, nor open up for independent decisions on what the goals should mean for the department/individual and how they should be reached at local levels.

One result may be that people are only focusing on diversity practices that can be measured against the KPIs. In fact, during some of the observed meetings organizational members expressed worries that the indicators in the diversity and equality plans throughout the organization limited the diversity work to that which can most easily be measured. In one incident when the diversity goals were questioned by an organizational member another employee argued for keeping such goals just because they were measurable.

Another result of the political goals was that organizational members and especially managers had difficulties making sense of the goals and translating them into their daily operations. One reason for this could be that the political goals were not aligned with the operational and budget goals. The underlying rationale of the political goals is moralistic and can be understood in terms of equal opportunity: all people (regardless of national background and gender) should have the same opportunity to get a job and to be treated equally at work. Thus, the moral aspects can be understood as the base for the diversity work in the organization. This was also how many informants defined diversity when asked. However, when managers discussed diversity in relation to their activities and operations, the moral base was not enough for them to make sense of the political goals. During the observations and in interviews managers from different parts of the municipal organization expressed concerns with diversity as a concept. Managers had difficulties making sense of why and how their unit or department should implement diversity. Most of the people encountered during the fieldwork expressed the opinion that everybody should have equal opportunities to get a job, thus aligning themselves with the democratic and fairness perspective. Yet, it was not always clear to them why diversity should be implemented, when thinking about it in terms of the organizational logic, nor how it could be integrated in their operations and daily work. Thus, in translating the moral reasoning into measureable KPIs something gets lost, and many employees expressed the feeling that the resulting ambiguity was troubling rather than enabling; they could (usually) see what to do, but no longer understood why they should do it.

In sum, the relationship between organizational goals and practices was ambiguous in a number of ways, but none of them were very productive, and some had rather negative consequences. One could say that the goals were both too clear and too ambiguous at the same time or to put it differently, strategic ambiguity was not in place. First, and somewhat surprisingly, the very specific goals were barriers to the practice of diversity; they did not create room for local and individual interpretations and creative solutions. That is, the goals were not expressions of strategic ambiguity in the positive sense. Second, the specific diversity goals were sometimes misinterpreted in an even more specific direction than intended; this shows how employees, because of the seeming clarity of the goals, were seeking the 'official' interpretation (which they sometimes got wrong) rather than promoting the interpretation that would be most productive in their own work. The goals, then, did not enhance ambivalent strategies either, but were conducive of 'loyal', if mistaken, employees. Finally, the political goals – in the diversity plan and in other strategic documents – were sometimes contradictory; while some employees could use other goals to argue why they couldn't fulfill diversity goals, productive tensions or third options did not arise. E.g. one possible answer to the problem of not having qualified job candidates with an ethnic minority background could be to initiate special educational programs for the relevant groups, yet such

bridges between the various principles were not made. Thus, the goals may have been operationalized and, to some extent, realized, but employees carried them out mechanically and/or grudgingly rather than practicing them in a personalized and creative manner. Indeed, the very focus on being able to measure diversity was at the heart of the problem; a measure is a number that can be reached once and for all, a 'head count', rather than a dynamic, open-ended practice.

Vignette 2 – Ambiguity in structure and practice

This vignette points to how contradictions between stated policies, practices and actual structures lead to negative ambiguity. The vignette depicts the practiced and experienced ambiguities among members of a diversity committee in one of the municipality's city districts. Much responsibility for the diversity work in the city district is placed upon this committee called the diversity reference group. In the city district diversity plan it is stated that "*the reference group coordinates the diversity work in the city district. The group shall function as a source of inspiration and as an engine. It shall be responsible for the follow-up and evaluation of the diversity work in the city district. It shall propose goals and measurements to be taken in cooperation with each department. The representatives in the reference group shall act as its department's diversity expert and contribute to the initiation and execution of an active diversity work in each department*" (our translation).

As the municipality is a politically driven organization, the city district council must ensure that the diversity and equality work in the city district is conducted in accordance with the municipal goals and decisions. The administrative director of the city district has the ultimate responsibility for the diversity work and must make sure it is conducted within the intentions of the municipality. Each operative unit is responsible for appointing a representative to the diversity reference group and for anchoring the diversity and equality work in the every-day business. According to the written diversity plan, then, it seems as if many are involved in the diversity work and that the committee has plenty of back up and support in its job to promote and enhance diversity and equality in the city district.

Yet, organizational structures do not allow the committee members to realize this potential. We will here point to three contradictions between organizational structures and practices that lead to ambiguous organizational diversity. The first contradiction regards the city district's aim to have all city district operations and departments represented in the diversity reference group; this aim is contradicted by the nature of many of the operations which made participation impractical. The second contradiction regards the mandate of the reference group, where the diversity plan stipulates that members of the group should carry out specific diversity work, but they are not given room within their ordinary job positions to do so. The third contradiction regards the allocation of decision making authority, where the reference group was given a lot of responsibility for the diversity work in the city district, but given no or very limited authority to make decisions concerning budget and activities. The three contradictions will be illustrated with examples from the case.

1) While all members of the committee were dedicated to promoting diversity and equality in their workplaces, they also had full time jobs to carry out. The committee must represent all operations in the

city district wherefore the members of the committee came from different departments and units of the city district, as well as from various hierarchical levels. Although the original intention was to find representatives from all departments (there were five), the number of committee members varied a lot over time and most of the time only three operations were represented (schooling, care, and the HR unit representing the city district administration's office). All departments were only represented at one point in time during the observations (spring 2009). The committee met between two and five times per semester (but not during summer). The members' units or department managers had all agreed they could take time off for the committee meetings, but did not schedule extra time to conduct other diversity tasks outside the meetings. Thus, the official city district aim to delegate part of the diversity work to a reference group to promote diversity contradicted with organizational practices that worked more or less directly and consciously against this aim.

2) The politicians have decided the political goals (on ethnicity and equality) which drive the diversity work in the municipality, they have also decided that an equality plan must be written and followed up on an annual basis (as mentioned above). The management group of the city district has delegated the responsibility and initiative for the diversity work to the committee. There are, however, no structures in the different departments and units allowing organizational members to take on dual roles in terms of their ordinary job and as diversity workers. The teachers, pre-school teachers, and nurses had great difficulty in leaving their ordinary work in order to do diversity work outside the reference group meetings. Their unit managers did not schedule for this kind of work, and if it was not scheduled it meant they had to perform the diversity tasks outside their working hours. One example specifically pertinent example of this is that when the group members organized a diversity training session they did so in the evening and not during office hours. The organization thus put responsibility for diversity work on the committee members, but the structures did not allow them to do this work (or only allowed them to do so at personal cost; e.g. using their spare time).

3) A further structural difficulty facing the committee members was a lack of decision-making authority. Every time the committee wanted to implement a diversity activity they were required to seek permission from either the HR manager or the administrative director of the city district. Thus they had the responsibility for diversity work without the requisite authority. One example is when the committee planned the diversity board game – a diversity awareness training tool – activities for the city district. It had been decided centrally that 80% of all organizational members should play the board game before the end of the year. As a means to achieve this goal the diversity committee planned and scheduled a number of board game events open for all city district employees. The city district management group had delegated to the acting HR manager to make decisions regarding the activities of the diversity committee. At its next meeting the committee was informed that the HR manager had said no to spending so much time on the board game and the committee was asked to organize fewer events. This meant that the municipal goal that 80% of all employees should have played the board game at the end of the year could not be fulfilled.

This vignette points to a negative consequence of ambiguity to do with the fact that the organizational structures were not aligned with the way the diversity work was conducted. A conclusion is that, not surprisingly, managers need to create structures that enable the practices they want to promote –

otherwise, the resulting ambiguity will restrictive, rather than enable the agency of individual employees. For instance, if diversity training is prioritized by the top management, it should also make sure that it is possible for the unit managers to train the personnel during work time without jeopardizing the daily operations. In terms of the framework for studying ambiguity that we set out above, the experienced discrepancy between the stipulated responsibilities of the diversity committee and its actual ability to act is first and foremost one of paradox. This, however, is primarily a restrictive situation in which individual members of the committee (and other employees) can point to the structural barriers that impede diversity, generally, and diversity work, specifically, but cannot use the paradox actively as a means of changing the situation. Here, strategic ambiguity is also at play in its negative sense; the municipality presents ambitious goals and plans, but does not provide the necessary resources for realizing the stipulated goals – a structural fact that is partially hidden beneath the strong expressions of willingness. Thus, the employees' expressions of the paradox may serve as a first awareness-raising initiative that could (if one accepts that the municipality is actually committed to diversity) eventually change the structures (or put the hypocrisy of the organization on display). A more positive interpretation of the strategic ambiguity that is operative here is that it actually allows for various decentralized actions. In a structurally complex organization such as the municipality the diversity practices may be diverse themselves so that it is possible to adapt the diversity work to local structures. While this does not help the diversity committee much, it suggests that the most important diversity work goes on at the specific sites where the diversity goals should be realized rather than in the committee setting that is, while nominally presented with responsibility, both structurally and practically unable to implement the goals in the day-to-day operations of the municipality. Perhaps, then, a greater potential exists at the nexus of the over-all goals and specific practices? We explore this possibility in the second vignette.

Vignette 3 – Ambiguous practices

In this vignette we will illustrate how the above-mentioned overly clear political goal regarding the reflection of the ethnic background of inhabitants in the workforce created ambiguous interpretations that were turned into ambivalence by tempered radicals. The vignette points to how strategic ambiguity and ambivalence may lead to stronger agency and nuanced negotiations of identities.

Employees at unit level felt compelled to work towards specific goals, but could not always see how they would be able to fulfill the goals, if they were also to comply with other criteria like hiring the best person for the job or offering citizens the best possible service. One particularly troubling example of this relates to the goal of reflecting the population; this was sometimes interpreted as if employees with a foreign background had to be proportionally represented at each organizational level and in each unit. A manager said: "*And it is this with reflecting the foreign population, but how can we do that. In the neighborhood where we work there are many inhabitants with a Somali background, and many of them are illiterate. The person we are looking for needs a specific education and skills, so it does not make sense if we need to hire to reflect the inhabitants in the area where we work".* During the observations several similar statements were overheard. However, the interpretation that all units had to be

representative of their local communities in the strict sense was not the intention with the political goal. In an interview with a politician it was made clear that the representation should be measured at an overall organizational level, not for each administration or organizational unit. This was, however, not well communicated to the civil servants; instead a mistaken clarity, which employees created through their own interpretations, meant that the goal became a barrier to their work practices – or caused a sense of frustration with not being able to reach the goal. This was however not the case in all units; some used the ambiguity productively, instead of reducing it in unfruitful ways.

Many managers at different levels had, during observations, expressed how the goal of reflecting the population would make more sense if it was operationalized or incorporated in the budget goals. This was actually done in a Personnel Report (an annual report on the municipal employee demography). In one of these annul reports it was stated that one should employ people with foreign background to better serve the citizens. This interpretation of the goal was not sanctioned by the politician responsible for democracy and integration, who emphasized that the goal should be purely democratic and not turned into a business case. However, the change of the logic behind the goal meant that it made more sense to the organizational members – and became easier to work with.

In similar manner a unit managers depicts how he took agency and operationalized this goal to better fit his operations. Articulating what diversity means to him, he said:

 "*For work and for our unit it means a sort of added value, eh, to me diversity is a way to achieve better results. I don't think this unit would have been where it is today if we had been a group of people looking like me and Sue or the like. Instead we have had the benefit of having such a mixed group, with different experiences, different ages, different sexes, we also have different ethnic backgrounds, eh, different educational backgrounds, not just that one has different experiences but also different exams. I believe that has been a very important factor for our success. I don't think we would have been as successful if not [having such a diverse work group] because then we would not have had such a broad spectra of knowledge and such broad perspective when looking at our task*".

The quote illustrates how diversity was made sense of in relation to the outcome of the operations. Many managers, however, could not see this connection, and the view expressed in the quote is, indeed, in contrast to the democratic rationale underlying the political goal. Thus, managers who saw diversity as a specific resource to their operations were more successful in achieving the diversity goals, but they applied a different logic – one closer to the business case than the moral case for diversity – to make sense of their achievement. These managers became tempered radicals who espoused the official goals of the organization, but used alternative logics to make sense of them and/or found different practices to realize them. The ambivalent stance of these manager meant that they both took on more personal agency and became better able to realize organizational goals.

While it is arguably not the best solution that managers work on the basis of a different logic from that of the organization in order to achieve organizational goals, the example nevertheless points to the potentials of ambiguity in a general sense and of ambivalence, more specifically. When diversity is seen as a resource to the operations rather than a goal to be achieved, it becomes possible to maintain and

promote diverse identities and different practices, to cultivate ambivalent stances to the benefit of the organization. This final vignette, although shorter than the two others, points to the potential of ambiguity for promoting diversity; understood as an open-ended practice that both allows individuals to maintain their ambivalence(s) towards the organization and the organization to prosper from the employees' precarious stances ambiguity may create room for diversity as both a managerial tool and a liberating project.

Conclusion

Diversity management practices are ambiguous. We have, through our theoretical framework and empirical analysis, illustrated some of the ambiguous aspects of diversity and its management, focusing on the effects of strategic ambiguity, contradiction, and ambivalence in terms of creating more room for diversity practices as related to the stated goals and existing structure of our case organization.

Strategic ambiguity seems to be a necessity in writing diversity goals, as too clear and specific goals leave little room for localized interpretations and actions. Diversity is contextual, also within an organization – and especially in a large organization such as our case where many different types of daily operations exist, requiring different types of competences and different backgrounds among employees. For diversity management to work, the overall organizational diversity policies and goals must be ambiguous to allow for local translations. In our case we saw that the very specific goals and especially the focus on measurability often had adverse effects, especially as regards the limitations of what diversity might mean, and what categories might be included. In the municipality diversity was mostly reduced to a question of ethnicity or gender, whereby other types of diversity and, especially, intersectionalities between diversity categories were ignored.

 Contradiction is probably unavoidable when diversity and its management are introduced in an organization; that is, existing structures will usually present barriers to the suggested practices of (promoting) diversity. Our case has, however, illustrated that contradictions can have both positive and negative consequences. A contradiction can be the signal needed to raise awareness about inequalities and covert discrimination taking place in the organization, and instead of turning it into something negative (e.g. reversed discrimination) pointing out a contradiction could become an opportunity for the organization to become more inclusive. Contradictions, then, may present opportunities for addressing existing tensions between stated goals of inclusion and existing structural limitations on individual agencies, but they must be harnessed by individuals as a means of raising awareness – and organizations must respond positively to the raised challenges – if the positive potential is to be realized.

Ambivalence seems to be the ambiguity type with the greatest potential for creating positive effects, as it allows the organizational members to negotiate their identities in and through practice. When organizational members act as tempered radicals they turn the ambiguous diversity into something productive which enables more diversity and allows for more benefits of diversity. Having said this, we would like to emphasize that ambivalence is unlikely to be able to exist if other ambiguous conditions

are not at hand. For example, strategic ambiguity may be a necessary means of creating room for the exercise of ambiguity, for the negotiations of identities to take place, and contradiction may be a way of creating ambiguity from the bottom-up if organizational leaders do not create sufficient ambiguity strategically. Hence, in our case the tempered radicals, in this case a middle manager, managed to make room for ambivalence despite the non-ambiguous diversity goals.

In sum, what we have sought to demonstrate in both theory and practice is that and how ambiguity may work to provide enhanced opportunities for the diverse practice of ambiguity. When understood as a defining feature of all organizations, however, ambiguity is neither inherently good nor bad, and we have illustrated how it may have both positive and negative effects. Further research as well as experiments with diversity practices may shed light on the specific ways in which ambiguity may be employed so as to avoid its possible delimiting consequences and provide the most positive results in terms of structures that are more inclusive and provide better possibilities of negotiating and practicing various diversities in ongoing and open-ended processes rather than as fixed categories or obtainable objectives. Ambiguous diversity, then, is not something that can be achieved once and for all or organizations can ever be done with, but an open stance which organizations and their members alike could apply so as to enable the ever unfolding negotiations of collective interests and individual needs.

References

Abdallah, C & Langley, A 2014, 'The Double Edge of Ambiguity in Strategic Planning', *Journal of Management Studies*, 51 (2). pp. 235–264.

Ahmed, S. 2007. The language of diversity. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30(2): 235.

Ahonen, P, Tienari, J, Meriläinen, S & Pullen, A 2014, 'Hidden contexts and invisible power relations: A Foucauldian reading of diversity research', *Human Relations*, vol. 67, no. 3, pp. 263–286.

Allen, A. (1998): Power Trouble: Performativity as Critical Theory. *Constellations*, 5(4): 456-471.

Bendl, R., Fleischmann, A. & Hofmann, R. (2009): Queer Theory and Diversity Management: Reading Codes of Conduct from a Queer Perspective. *Journal of Management and Organization*, 15(5): 625-638.

Bendl, R., Fleischmann, A. & Walenta, C. (2008): Diversity Management Discourse Meets Queer Theory. *Gender in Management*, 23(6): 382-394.

Butler, J. (1993): Critically Queer. *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies*, 1(1): 17-32.

Butler, J. (1999[1990]): *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

Butler, J. (2004): *Undoing Gender*. New York : Routledge.

Christiansen, T. J. & Just, S. N. (2012): Regularities of Diversity Discourse: Address, Categorization, and Invitation. *Journal of Management and Organization*, 18(3): 398-411.

Cox, T. H. & Blake, S. (1992): Managing Cultural Diversity: Implications for Organizational Competitiveness. *Academy of Management Executive*, 5(3): 45-56.

Danowitz, M. A. & Hanappi-Egger, E. (2012): Diversity as Strategy. In M. A. Danowitz, E. Hanappi-Egger & H. Mensi-Klarbach (Eds.), *Diversity in Organizations. Concepts and Practices* (pp. 137-160). Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Davenport, S & Leitch, S 2005, 'Circuits of Power in Practice: Strategic Ambiguity as Delegation of Authority', *Organization Studies (01708406)*, vol. 26, no. 11, pp. 1603–1623.

Davenport, S. & Leitch, S. (2005): Circuits of Power: Strategic Ambiguity as Delegation of Authority. *Organization Studies*, 26(11): 1603-1623.

Denis, J-L, Dompierre, G, Langley, A & Rouleau, L 2011, 'Escalating Indecision: Between Reification and Strategic Ambiguity', *Organization Science*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 225–244.

Derrida, J. (1981): *Positions.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Derrida, J. (1997): *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Dick, P. & Cassell, C. (2002): Barriers to Managing Diversity in a UK Constabulary: The Role of Discourse. *Journal of Management Studies*, 39(7): 953-976.

Eisenberg, E. M. (1984): Ambiguity as Strategy in Organizational Communication. *Communication Monographs*, 51(3): 227-242

Eisenberg, EM & Witten, MG 1987, 'Reconsidering Openness in Organizational Communication', *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 12, no. 3, pp. 418–426.

Eisenberg, EM 1984, 'Ambiguity as Strategy in Organizational Communication', *Communication Monographs*, vol. 51, no. 3, pp. 227–242.

Gilbert, J. A., Stead, B. A. & Ivancevich, J. M. (1999): Diversity Management: A New Organizational Paradigm. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 21(1): 61-76.

Holvino, E. & Kamp, A. (2009): Diversity Management: Are We Moving in the *Right* Direction? Reflections from Both Sides of the North Atlantic. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 25(4): 395-303.

Jarzabkowski, P, Sillince, JA & Shaw, D 2010, 'Strategic ambiguity as a rhetorical resource for enabling multiple interests', *Human Relations*, vol. 63, no. 2, pp. 219–248.

Just, S. N. & Christiansen. T. J. (2012): Doing Diversity: Text-Audience Agency and Rhetorical Alternatives. *Communication Theory*, 22(3): 319-337.

Kersten, A. (2000): Diversity Management. Dialogue, Dialectics and Diversion. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 13(3): 235-248.

Kirby, E. L. & Harter, L. M. (2001): Discourses of Diversity and the Quality of Work Life: The Character and Costs of the Managerial Metaphor. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 15(1): 121-127.

Liff, S. & Wajcman, J. (1996): 'Sameness' and 'Difference' Revisited: Which Way Forward for Equal Opportunity Initiatives? *Journal of Management Studies*, 33(1): 79-84.

Liff, S. (1997): Two Routes to Managing Diversity: Individual Differences or Social Group Characteristics. *Employee Relations*, 19(1): 11-26.

Litvin, D. R. (1997): The Discourse of Diversity: From Biology to Management. *Organization*, 4(2): 187-209.

Lorbiecki, A. & Jack, G. (2000): Critical Turns in the Evolution of Diversity Management. *British Journal of Management*, 11: S17-S31.

Lyotard, J.-F. (2001): *Discourse, Figure*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Malabou, C. (2007): The End of Writing? Grammatology and Plasticity. *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms*, 12(4): 431-441.

Martin, J. (1992): *Cultures in Organizations. Three Perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press.

McCaskey, M. B. (1982): *The Executive Challenge. Managing Change and Ambiguity*. Marshfield: Pitman Publishing Inc.

Mensi-Klarcbach, H. (2012): Diversity Management: The Business and Moral Cases. In M. A. Danowitz, E. Hanappi-Egger & H. Mensi-Klarbach (Eds.), *Diversity in Organizations. Concepts and Practices* (pp. 63-89). Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Meyerson, D. & Scully, M. A. (1995): Tempered Radicalism and the Politics of Ambivalence and Change. *Organization Science*, 6(5): 585-600.

Meyerson, D. (1994): Interpretations of Stress in Institutions: The Cultural Production of Ambiguity and Burnout. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 39(4): 628-653.

Naples, N. A. (1996): A Feminist Revisiting of the Insider/Outsider Debate: The "Outsider Phenomenon" in Rural Iowa. *Qualitative Sociology*, 19(1): 83-106.

Nkomo, S. M. & Cox, T. (1996): Diverse Identities in Organizations. In S. R. Clegg, C. Hardy & W. R. Nord (Eds.), *Handbook of Organization Studies* (pp. 338-356). London: Sage.

Özbilgin, M. F., Mulholland, G., Tatli, A. & Worman, D. (2008): *Managing Diversity and the Business Case*. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Parker, M. (2002): Queering Management and Organization. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 9(2): 146-166.

Rand, E. J. (2008): An Inflammatory Fag and a Queer Form: Larry Kramer, Polemics, and Rhetorical Agency. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 94(3): 297-319.

Renegar, V. R. & Sowards, S. K. (2009): Contradiction as Agency: Self-Determination, Transcendence, and Counter-Imagination in Third-Wave Feminism. *Hypatia*, 24(2): 1-20.

Risberg, A. (1999): *Ambiguities Thereafter. An Interpretive Approach to Acquisitions*. Lund: Lund University Press.

Staunæs, D. (2003): Where Have All the Subjects Gone? Bringing Together the Concepts of Intersectionality and Subjectification. *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 11(2): 101-110.

Syed, J. & Kramar, R. (2009): Socially Responsible Diversity Management. *Journal of Management and Organization*, 15(5): 639-651.

Thomas Jr., R. R. (1992): Managing Diversity: A Conceptual Framework. In S. E. Jackson (Ed.*), Diversity in the Workplace: Human Resources Initiatives* (pp. 306-317). New York: Guilford Press.

Thomas, H. (1988): Policy Dialogue in Strategic Planning: Talking Our Way through Ambiguity and Change. In L. R. Pondy, R. J. Boland & H. Thomas (Eds.), *Managing Ambiguity and Change*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Tienari, J. & Nentwich, J. (2012): The 'Doing' Perspective on Gender and Diversity. In M. A. Danowitz, E. Hanappi-Egger & H. Mensi-Klarbach (Eds.), *Diversity in Organizations. Concepts and Practices* (pp. 109-134). Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Tomlinson, F. & Schwabenland, C. (2010): Reconciling Competing Discourses of Diversity? The UK Non-profit Sector between Social Justice and the Business Case. *Organization*, 17(1): 101-121.