Valuing difference in the name of diversity.

How difference is constructed in Swedish private organizations through the work of diversity and inclusion.

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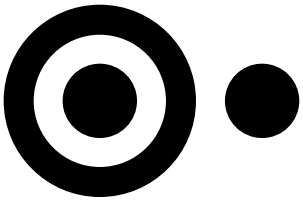
Master's dissertation 30 credits

Sociology | Fall semester 2021

Leadership for Sustainable Development Programme



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Abstract

Diversity and inclusion work is intimately connected to valuing difference in the workplace. This thesis aims to look at how difference is constructed through the language and practices of diversity and what it means to value difference in organizations. Diversity as an organizational principle has gained popularity since the 1990's and diversity work in Sweden has been, and is still heavily influenced by the US, where the modern diversity work as we know it today originated. When diversity work came to Sweden, it met a strong tradition of gender mainstreaming, that still has a strong impact on diversity work today. I have examined diversity work in Swedish private organizations from the perspective of the diversity practitioner, through qualitative interviews with ten diversity practitioners. The analysis shows that diversity is about working with contradicting value systems of what difference means, which has implications for employees that are named different.

Summering

Mångfald- och inkluderingsarbete är ofta kopplat till att värdera olikheter hos medarbetarna i organisationen. Denna masteruppsats har som syfte att undersöka hur olikheter konstrueras genom språket och aktiviteter som utförs i mångfaldsarbetet och vad det innebär att värdera olikheter. Mångfald som en organisationsprincip har ökat i popularitet sedan 1990-talet och är i Sverige starkt påverkat av USA, där mångfaldsarbetet, som vi känner till det i dag, uppkom. När mångfaldsarbetet kom till Sverige, mötte det en stark tradition av jämställdhetsintegrering, som jag har funnit, fortfarande har en stor påverkan på mångfaldsarbetet idag. Jag har undersökt mångfaldsarbetet i svenska privata organisationer, utifrån mångfaldsarbetarens perspektiv, genom kvalitativa intervjuer med tio mångfaldsarbetare. Analysen visar att mångfaldsarbetet innebär att arbeta med olika och motsägelsefulla värde-system som säger något om vad olikheter innebär. Detta påverkar i sin tur de anställda som konstrueras som olika genom mångfaldsarbetet.

Summary

Diversity and inclusion work is closely connected to valuing difference in the workplace. The purpose of this thesis is to research how difference is created through how organizations speak of and act for diversity in organizations. I am also researching what it means to value difference as that is an important part of diversity work. Diversity work has gained popularity since the 1990's and diversity work in Sweden is heavily influenced by the US, where the modern diversity work as we know it today started. When diversity work came to Sweden it met a strong tradition of gender equality work, that I found through my research, still has a strong impact on diversity work today. I have studied diversity work in Swedish private organizations by interviewing ten diversity practitioners. The results show that diversity work is about working with contradicting values of what difference means. This has implications for those groups of employees that are named different through diversity work.

Populärvetenskaplig summering

Mångfald- och inkluderingsarbete är nära kopplat till att värdera olikheter hos medarbetarna i organisationen. Denna masteruppsats har som syfte att undersöka hur olikheter skapas genom det språk och de aktiviteter som används och utförs i mångfaldsarbetet i organisationer och vad det innebär att värdera dessa olikheter. Mångfaldsarbete i Sverige har ökat i popularitet sedan 1990-talet och är starkt påverkat av USA, där mångfaldsarbetet som vi känner till det i dag började. När mångfaldsarbetet kom till Sverige, mötte det en stark tradition av jämställdhetsarbete, som jag har funnit, fortfarande har en stor påverkan på mångfaldsarbetet idag. Jag har undersökt mångfaldsarbetet i svenska organisationer genom att intervjua tio mångfaldsarbetare som jobbar på organisationer i Sverige inom det privata näringslivet. Analysen visar att mångfaldsarbetet innebär att arbeta med olika och motsägelsefulla värde-system som säger något om vad olikheter innebär. Detta påverkar i sin tur dem grupper som skapas som olika genom mångfaldsarbetet.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about diversity and inclusion work in organizations. My interest in this area began when I started a new role as the Diversity and Inclusion Lead at a large Swedish company. I have worked in Human Resources (HR) for more than twenty years, and diversity and inclusion have always been one aspect, but never the primary focus of my work. Once in the new role, I delved into the topic and found myself immersed in models about difference, how we are all different and that difference is something that should be celebrated and valued. The general sense when learning about diversity and inclusion was that it is good for the business and will create a better place to work and increase innovation, creativity, and business results. From a diversity perspective, difference can be about differences such as gender, gender identity and expression, ethnicity, religious beliefs, disability, or age.[1] It can also refer to differences such as educational background or work experience, as well as personal differences such as thought processes, leadership styles, communication styles or personality. Around the same time I started my new role, I also decided to go back to school to pursue a master's degree in Leadership for Sustainable Development. The studies provided me with critical perspectives to examine and understand the field I was professionally working in. All this talk about difference and I kept wondering, who is not different and different from what? What does it mean to be different and what does it mean to value difference? I was intrigued, wanted to explore more, and now I have a wonderful opportunity to do so in this thesis.

Reading literature from Black British feminist scholar Sara Ahmed (2012, p. 13) provided me with some theoretical insights to begin to understand my concerns and questions with diversity and inclusion work. Ahmed et al. (2006) problematized and summarized the main issues with diversity management:

1. It individuates difference, meaning difference is attributed to the individual rather than understood as produced by social structures.

2. It widens the understanding of what difference is, to include differences such as personality, leadership and communication style, which means that power structures, privileges and inequalities are not made visible through diversity management

3. It neutralizes or hides social struggles of injustices where diversity management offers an appealing view of society and the organization where conflicts and inequalities are somehow already resolved.

[1] These are categories of differences that are protected under the Swedish Discrimination Act (Diskrimineringslag 2008:567). Going forward, they will be referred to as discrimination ground or categories of discrimination interchangeably.

These three perspectives summarize the main problems with diversity management in the organizational context from a critical point of view (Ahmed et al., 2006, p. 11-12). To illustrate these potential problems, I will exemplify by looking at a statement from Diversity Charter Sweden, a Swedish member network organization, that exists to promote and support its member organizations to be successful with diversity and inclusion initiatives in their respective organizations. On Diversity Charter Sweden's website, their overall goal is a "world where different ideas, abilities, experiences, and competencies count, a world where difference is valued" (Diversity Charter Sweden, 2017). Difference is seen "as a resource that contributes to member organizations competitiveness, business purpose and continuous improvements" (Diversity Charter Sweden, 2019, p. 4).

Difference is here individuated in that the individual is assumed to bring ideas, experiences, competencies and abilities to the organization. From a critical point of view, looking at difference from an individuated perspective, sees social disadvantage and experience of inequality as something the individual harbor, rather than as the results of social structures. This statement is also a perfect example of how difference is broadened, difference is social experiences of inequalities as well as personal differences such as abilities, ideas and competencies. By defining difference in this matter, social power structures that creates unequal experiences and underprivilege are not problematized. The messages also portray an appealing 'good feeling' world where we are all valued for our differences, which might ignore or hide real struggles of inequalities and injustice. (Ahmed et al., 2006)

In addition, I would also like to add a fourth problem with diversity management, where difference is valued and seen as a resource to organizations to gain a competitive edge:

4. It frames difference in terms of monetary gain, organizational effectiveness, productivity, or a more innovative working climate. It is good for the organization to have diversity and to be good at diversity. This is the so-called business case for diversity and is problematic from the standpoint that diverse employees provide value to the organization and enrich the organizational culture, where social inequalities become organizational gain. (Prasad and Mills, 1997; Litvin, 2006; Ahmed, 2012)

To understand diversity and whether diversity work can be problematic, it is crucial to understand the workings of diversity, how diversity is operationalized in the organization. Diversity can be understood through how it is spoken of; the language of diversity, and how it is acted upon; what practices and activities are performed in the name of diversity in organizations. The language of diversity and the organizational processes and practices say something about difference (Ahmed, 2007; 2012) and construct the difference that diversity is about.

Diversity is also about valuing difference, and I would like to try to find out what it means to value difference and what it means for the ones being named different to be valued. This is something I want to explore in this thesis.

Purpose

The focus of this study is diversity work through the perspective of the diversity practitioner. In Swedish organizations, diversity work is often lead by an HR Manager or a specialist, for the purpose of this thesis, I will name them both diversity practitioners. The diversity practitioner leads, coordinates, and operationalizes diversity work in organizations through developing strategy, activities, and practices to make diversity happen. The diversity practitioner is an integral and key actor when wanting to know something about diversity work in organizations. They are the voice and the vehicle for diversity work to happen in organizations and will therefore be the central point of inquiry for this thesis.

The overall aim of this research is to build knowledge of diversity work in Swedish organizations within the private sector. Through the study of how the language and practices of diversity contributes to creating difference and how difference is valued in organizations, I hope to contribute to a deeper understanding of what diversity means.

The research questions that guide this study are:

- How is difference constructed through the language of diversity?
- How is difference constructed through diversity practices?
- What does it mean to value difference?

My aim is to understand how difference and diversity is spoken of and acted upon in organizations, to uncover the social processes that contribute to a deeper understanding of diversity and difference. An important aspect of diversity management is how it is framed in connection to value, and my aim in this study is to look at what it means to value difference in the name of diversity through the perspective of the diversity practitioner.

Clarifications and delimitations

The diversity practitioner is of importance to this thesis, as it is through the diversity practitioner I will collect my empirical data. For the purpose of this thesis, I define a diversity practitioner as an employee in an organization that has responsibility to lead and conduct diversity and inclusion work in that organization. In large corporations, diversity work might be divided into several roles, for example one role might only be focused on training and development of diversity work. Titles for diversity practitioners vary, the importance for this study is the responsibility of leading and conducting diversity and inclusion work

in the organization. This means that it can also be an HR Manager that leads and conducts diversity work in organizations. For the purpose of this thesis, they are all defined as diversity practitioners and throughout the thesis I will use diversity practitioner and diversity worker interchangeably. To have a narrow and purposeful scope that will contribute to expanding the current knowledge field on diversity, I am only including diversity practitioners in Swedish or international organizations within the private sector[2] that has a location in Sweden. If the diversity practitioner works in an international organization, the focus is diversity work in Sweden. I will come back to this discussion in the methods chapter where I will in more detail argue for reasoning behind these choices.

When writing about difference as being socially constructed, which is my ontological point of departure in this study, it is common to put citation marks around the word difference. As this whole thesis is about exactly that, the words difference and differences are used frequently, and it would result in many citation marks. Therefore, I chose not to use citation marks around the word, instead clearly present here my premise for this thesis. When using quotes from authors that have citation marks around the words difference or differences, that is of course included. Throughout this thesis I will use diversity, diversity management and diversity work interchangeably.

Outline

I will start with defining what diversity work is to build a foundation for a common understanding. I will then provide an overview of the background of diversity work through an historical exposé of how diversity management originated and how it came to Sweden. I will summarize previous research, focusing on research from the diversity practitioner's point of view, both from an international and Swedish perspective. I will then develop my theoretical framework which consists of intersectional theory of how difference is constructed and theories around language and practices of diversity, stemming from a critical feminist and race theoretical perspective. I will also use a four-filed analytical model to understand how difference is viewed and valued from an organizational theoretical perspective.

To provide the reader with an understanding of how I have conducted interviews and the complexity that comes with doing research and analysis of empirical material, I will account for this under the methods chapter. Following, is the results and analysis chapter where I will account for the empirical results coupled with analysis based on the theoretical framework, background, and

[2] One organization is strictly not private sector but is very closely tied to the private sector through funding and purpose of the organization.

previous research. I will end the thesis with a discussion chapter which includes a look at possibilities for meaningful change going forward.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN ORGANIZATIONAL WORK

In this chapter I will discuss what diversity and inclusion in the organizational context is to provide an understanding of what the work entails and how it is defined. I will also provide an overview of the history of how diversity work originated through a geographical account of how the language and practices of diversity spread from the United States (US) to Europe and Sweden and situate diversity work in a socio-political context. The chapter includes a summary of current research themes around diversity and research from the practitioner point of view, from an international and Swedish perspective.

What is diversity and inclusion?

Trying to unravel the concept of diversity and inclusion in an organizational context is no easy task. There are many different stakeholders that have a claim in the field with their own interpretations, such as corporate leaders, business consultants, activists, practitioners, and where legal policies and social movements also shape diversity work in organizations. (Litvin, 2006; Rönnqvist, 2008, p. 11). There is an aspect of diversity work that is legally mandated, but diversity management as a business practice is broader than the legal aspect. Diversity management in short can be defined as a "voluntary corporate initiative directed at the systematic recruitment and retainment of employees belonging to diverse social identity groups" (Prasad, Pringle, and Konrad, 2006, p. 2) and "about ensuring that diverse social identity groups are fairly represented in private and public organizations" (Prasad, Pringle, and Konrad, 2006, p. 3). Diversity is more than representation, it is also "about valuing differences, and not just demographic differences, but differences such as education, life-style, appearance, personality, communication and decision-making style" (Prasad, Pringle, and Konrad, 2006, p. 3). There are of course other definitions of diversity that highlights the same essence (Prasad and Mills, 1997; Litvin, 1997; 2006; Bendl, Fleischmann and Walenta, 2008), where Prasad, Pringle, and Konrad (2006) do a good job of clearly and concisely portraying that essence. Inclusion, as the second part of diversity and inclusion work, relates to how different demographic groups and different employees in terms of background, personalities, etc. feel welcomed, respected, and valued at the workplace (Prasad, Pringle, and Konrad, 2006; Ahmed, 2012).

Historical, geographical, and socio-political overview

Historical and social influences shape diversity work (Prasad, Pringle, and Konrad, 2006, p. 8). In this section, I will summarize historical and geographical

trajectories, and legal and social aspects that are relevant for the understanding of diversity management in Sweden today.

From equal opportunity and social rights to a business case for diversity

Diversity management as an organizational work area originated in the US, approximately during the early 1990's (Litvin, 2006, p. 2). A milestone in shaping diversity management was the report Workforce 2000 that predicted a changing workforce in the US. The workforce would go from a homogenous to a heterogenous workforce, which would have major implications for organizations employing this new workforce of older workers and where women, minorities and immigrants would be a larger share of the workforce population (Johnston and Packer, 1987). The report became very influential, both through coverage in daily papers (Rönnqvist, 2008, p. 76) and as a tool used by management consultants, highlighting the need for businesses to be able to accommodate a diverse workforce as essential to their survival as businesses (Prasad and Mills, 1997, p. 9; Litvin, 2006, p. 6).

To deal with the changing workforce, companies had to 'handle' or 'manage' a diverse workforce, which then became a new focus area for organizations. This perspective contributed to what we today see as a major driving force in diversity management, the so-called business case for diversity. The business case for diversity is connected to organizational productivity, performance, or profit. The underlaying thought is by having diverse employees, the company benefits from innovation and creativity as well as productivity, customer satisfaction and profits. This means that diversity will bring value to the organization, it is good for the organization to be good at diversity. (Prasad and Mills, 1997; Litvin, 2006; Rönnqvist, 2008, p. 17)

However, before diversity management, organizations often had equal employment officers whose objective was to ensure organizational compliance with legal regulations such as Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)[3] and Affirmative Action (AA)[4] which exists primarily in the Anglo-Saxon countries such as the US and the United Kingdom (UK) (Lawrence, 2000; Litvin, 2006; Kirton and Greene, 2009). This meant that the work was focused on social rights and equality from a moral, ethical, and legal perspective. One contributing factor to the popularity of diversity management was as a reaction to these legal regulations that were put on organizations. Diversity management could instead be packaged in a business oriented appealing way, moving away from a social rights and protected groups framework that came from EEO. (Litvin, 2006)

[3] EEO is the equal right for applicants and employees to not be discriminated against, due to person's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, transgender status, and sexual orientation), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information. EEO is a general description of several legal regulations that are bundled together to prohibit and prevent discrimination. (EEOC, n.d.)

[4] AA stipulates that any governmental contractor or organization receiving governmental funds is obligated to document their work to proactively eliminate discrimination (Cornell University, n.d.).

> Another reason was that if organizations by themselves chose to work with diversity management as a voluntary initiative, the legal pressure would perhaps be minimized. (Rönnqvist, 2008, p. 80)

Gill Kirton and Ann-Marie Greene (2009) researched this transition from managing equal opportunities to diversity management in the UK and found that the equal opportunities officers largely had been replaced by diversity practitioners. Where the equal employment officers had a more specialized background, the diversity practitioner had a more general HR background. While the EEO focus was about social rights and equal opportunity from a legal perspective, diversity management came with a broader and more general orientation, which contributed to making diversity more business oriented, 'modern', and with a 'positive' focus rather than social rights focus that was legally mandated. (Ahmed et al., 2006, p. 10-11) Diversity management meant that equality and social justice became one perspective out of many.

From a socio-political demand to managing diversity

Both the US and Europe (including Sweden) have a tradition of immigration where fairly large populations of immigrants and refugees shape politics and social context where organizations exist. (Leijon and Omanovic, 2001, p. 4; Rönnqvist, 2008) This contributes to how organizations create their diversity agendas. When in their new country, immigrants become ethnic minorities, and organizations face political demands to address the social disadvantages through the practices of diversity management. (de los Reyes, 2000) Disadvantages for immigrant groups can be seen in the differentiated labor market in Sweden today. For example, Wolgast, Molina, and Gardell (2018) found that Afro Swedes experience discrimination in the job market compared to the general population when it comes to holding a higher degree of low status and low paying jobs as well as not advancing in their career, regardless of educational level to the same degree. Another example is that people in Sweden who are foreign born[5] have a higher unemployment rate (15,1%) compared to people born domestically (4,4%) (SCB, 2020).

From gender mainstreaming to diversity in Sweden

Diversity as a management focus area came to Sweden partly through a network of Swedish individuals that travelled to the US, studied organization's work with diversity management and summarized their learnings in a few reports in the late 1990's. One reason diversity management gained traction in Sweden at the time was that diversity management provided a framework for how to recruit and retain a growing population of immigrants. However, diversity management was not imported 'as is' from the US context, it met a strong tradition of gender equality work in Sweden (Rönnqvist, 2008, p. 93-95) that is

[5] Persons born outside of Sweden or born in Sweden with both parents born outside of Sweden (SCB, 2020)

connected to the social context of gender inequality in the workplace. There is plenty of research that show that men's and women's work situation is not equal in terms of salary, sector and professional gender segregation, and parental leave gender differences (Martinsson, 2020). To prevent these inequalities the current legal framework where gender inequality is regulated is the Discrimination Act (2008:567). This law stipulates that discrimination is unlawful and that employers are required to work to prohibit and prevent discrimination and to actively work to promote equality concerning seven grounds of discrimination: gender, gender identity and expression, ethnicity, religious beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, and age. However, the legal framework has not always covered seven grounds of discrimination or been collected in one and the same law. The first equality regulation in Sweden came 1979 and regulated only gender equality in working life. Sweden later implemented regulations prohibiting discrimination based on ethnicity and religious beliefs, disability, and sexual orientation in separate laws. (Jämställ.nu) In 2008, these separate laws were disbanded and incorporated into one overarching law, Discrimination Act (2008:567), where gender identity and expression, and age were added as discrimination grounds.

As described above, Sweden had from 1979 a gender equality law requiring organizations to actively work to reduce gender inequalities in the workplace. This meant that when diversity management came to Sweden, organizations in Sweden were already familiar with the gender-related discussion where both problems and solutions were similar to those in diversity management (Due Billing and Sundin, 2006). As this have shaped Swedish organizations, it is an important aspect to consider when investigating diversity. One contributing factor to the focus on gender equality work in Sweden was that all federal authorities were mandated to actively promote gender equality through regulations from the government. The regulations prescribed gender mainstreaming, the notion that gender equality should be a perspective and a goal in all policies and processes in the organization. (Callerstig, 2004, p. 21-22, p. 31-32)

Gender mainstreaming in Sweden has received criticism, which I will not delve into deeper here, however, some criticism is worth mentioning, since general themes of the critique can be recognized in the critique towards diversity. For example, gender mainstreaming can reproduce the exact thing it aims to remove, gender inequality (Martinsson, Griffin, and Nygren, 2016) and that gender mainstreaming can lead to a focus on the act of mainstreaming rather than working towards gender equality (Andersson, 2017). Gender mainstreaming can also contribute to enforcing binaries, by assuming that balance is achieved when women and men are equally represented in the organizing (Martinsson, Griffin and Nygren, 2016). Lastly, focusing on mainstreaming can shift the focus from a political point of gender equality to a

professionalization of gender expertise, that gender mainstreaming is something organizations need to learn about (de los Reyes, 2016).

To conclude, diversity management has a predecessor in equal opportunity work in organizations. Through a shift in focus on managing an increasingly diverse workforce and by branding diversity as a business case, the equal opportunity work became one part of several perspectives of diversity work in organizations, perhaps leading to a broader, general, and less impactful work when it comes to impacting social rights and equal opportunity. When diversity management came to Sweden it met and merged with a strong tradition of gender equality work and gender mainstreaming. Some of the critiques towards gender mainstreaming is important to highlight as it has bearing on critique towards diversity management.

Overall themes in diversity research

Literature around diversity can be grouped into three major themes: studies of diverse groups and performance, diversity as an organizational principle, and critical work of diversity management (Rönnqvist, 2008, p. 14). I will summarize these main areas and situate my own study within one of these main themes.

Research on diverse groups generally separates demographic diversity, such as gender, ethnicity, age and nationality and job-related diversity such as education, knowledge, job function, and experience when looking at effects on group performance. Looking at the result from five meta-analytical studies, the research is not always clear on the effects of diversity. One meta-analytical study found that neither demographic or job-related diversity impacted group performance, neither negatively or positively (Webber and Donahue, 2001). Generally, the other meta-analytical studies, found that job-related diversity impacts group performance positively while demographic diversity cannot be concluded to impact either positively or negatively as the research results vary. (Horwitz and Horwitz, 2001; Stahl et al., 2010; Bell et al., 2011; van Dijk, Engen, and Knippenberg, 2012)

The second main area of diversity literature is diversity as an organizational principle. This area is management- and consultant-driven, primarily around the business case for diversity (Rönnqvist, 2008, p. 16). There are two influential reports from McKinsey (Hunt, Layton, and Prince, 2015; Hunt et al., 2018) that emphasizes the notion that diverse[6] companies perform better than organizations who are not diverse and opting out of diversity can be costly for the business. There are also different models for diversity work, one model is worth exemplifying as similar models contribute to shaping the understanding of diversity work in organizations and how difference is viewed. The model is originally developed by Marilyn Loden and Judy Rosener (1991 in Bendl,

[6] Diversity is primarily measured as gender and ethnicity (Hunt, Layton and Prince, 2015; Hunt et al., 2018)

Fleischmann, and Walenta, 2008, p. 387) and was further developed by Gardenswartz and Rowe (2021) and is called Four layers of diversity[7]. This model shows that all potential and current employees are diverse in their own way, by bringing different experiences, personalities, education, area of expertise, gender, race, or personal habits to the benefit of the organization and all employees. (Gardenswartz and Rowe, 2021)

From a critical perspective, which will then lead me in to the third overall theme in diversity research, the Four layers of diversity model is an example of how diversity individuates difference (Ahmed et al., 2006) and at the same time constructs all differences as equal (Bendl, Fleischmann, and Walenta, 2008). The model does not account for or take into consideration structural inequalities that amount to vastly different experiences compared to differences such as family status or personality. Rather, the model assumes difference is tied to the individual and all differences are of equal value to the organization. The difference is the difference that will enrich the organization. (Ahmed et al., 2006, p. 11; Bendl, Fleischmann, and Walenta, 2008, p. 387)

The critical literature on diversity, argues that diversity management has lost the focus on the social, legal, and moral rights perspective that was previously connected to equal employment opportunity work. In different ways, the critique highlights how diversity conceals power relations, and instead contributes to reproducing inequalities, by making diversity appealing and connecting diversity contributing to increasing profit and organizational performance. (Prasad and Mills, 1997; Litvin, 2006; Prasad, 2006, Sinclair, 2006; Ahmed et al., 2006; Swan, 2010; Ahmed, 2012; de los Reyes, 2016) My study, to a great extent, is part of this critical examination of diversity. Diversity management, as has been shown here, can be a broad and general organizational work area that primarily deals with difference. However, diversity gives a rather blurry picture of what difference is and what it means to be different in the name of diversity. With a critical and reflexive point of view, I aim to contribute to the field of diversity by looking at the elements of diversity and how diversity is operationalized in organizations, through the language and practices of diversity and what it means to value difference. With a deeper understanding of the elements and the social processes that constructs difference in the name of diversity, my hope is that diversity can be more purposeful in choosing practices and language that reflects that.

From the practitioner point of view

Because my research is focused on diversity through the diversity practitioner, I am focusing on previous research where diversity practitioners are the main point of inquiry. It is my belief that through the practitioner we can start to

[7] See Appendix A for an illustration of this model.

understand the workings of diversity in organizations, how diversity is talked about and acted upon and what consequences this has in the organization. The diversity worker is the vehicle in the organization for how diversity is operationalized, a starting point for understanding how diversity works in organizations.

From an international perspective, there is some research in this area, primarily from the public sector. In Sweden, there are few studies on diversity management from the practitioner perspective and the studies that have been published are about the public sector. Below I will summarize previous research, both from an international and Swedish context.

International context

Patricia Zanoni and Maddy Janssens (2003) interviewed 25 Flemish HR Managers[8] where diversity work was primarily focused on migrant workers and employees with disabilities. The authors found that the HR Managers contributed to constructing difference in migrant workers and workers with disabilities, in how they compared them to 'Flemish' workers and able workers as the norm.

Research conducted on the public sector in Anglo-Saxon countries, found that diversity practitioners are often personally invested from a human or social rights perspective. To navigate in the broader diversity work, where the business case for diversity is foundational, diversity practitioners adapted their language to fit the audience, regardless if it connected to their personal convictions or not, as long as it would reach results. This could, for example be a diversity practitioner who spoke about diversity through the business case for diversity in order to get acceptance and buy-in from managers. Diversity practitioners could also add stronger words such as inequality to emphasize injustices and make it visible in the organization. Diversity practitioners were strategic about these choices, using the language that they deemed most impactful. (Lawrence, 2000; Ahmed et al., 2006; Kirton, Greene, and Dean, 2007; Swan and Fox, 2010)

There are also studies that look at the workings of diversity in organizations through the diversity practitioner perspective (Ahmed et al., 2006; Ahmed, 2007; 2012) and others that look at how diversity is portrayed through images or diversity discourse (Litvin, 1997; Prasad, 2006; Bendl, Fleishmann, and Walenta, 2008; Swan, 2010) from a critical perspective. What they have in common is how they examine what diversity does, what diversity means, what the underlaying assumptions behind diversity work are and how they question and problematize how diversity can paradoxically contribute to reproducing inequality and social power structures. It is within this academic field I position

[8] It is not stated in the article what sectors the HR Managers work (Zanoni and Janssens, 2003).

my own study, however, with a scope to fit a master level thesis, only through the perspective of diversity practitioners within the private sector in Sweden. This means that I am not critically examining diversity practitioners, rather the workings of diversity and inclusion work through the diversity practitioners account of diversity work in itself.

To summarize, research indicates a reflective, strategic, and decisive diversity worker, often with a personal political agenda, that uses flexible methods to gain progress. Research is mainly conducted on public organizations. There are also studies that critically examine the workings of diversity, through the practitioner perspective, images or diversity discourse.

Swedish context

In Sweden, research concerning diversity practitioners is very limited, in most cases it is rather focused on implementation of policy or directives to mainstream diversity work, not from a diversity practitioner perspective, rather from the whole organization perspective. Research of the private sector is scarce. One of the reasons the Swedish public sector has been researched is due to federal regulation for government agencies to be a role model for increasing ethnic diversity among its employees. The impact of this regulation has been evaluated in two reports by the Federal authority of integration. The first report shows that federal government agencies experienced the work of increasing ethnic diversity as unfamiliar, that little reflection had been put into plans and that results where low. (Integrationsverket, 2004) Two years later, the Federal authority of integration issued a second report, looking at how federal authorities succeeded in mainstreaming diversity work, which was regulated in a policy with the goal of each federal authority should mirror the representation of diversity in its employee population. Findings indicate that due to lack of knowledge of how to mainstream and low follow up of plans, the mainstreaming policy was not very successful. (Integrationsverket, 2006)

On a local governmental level, a similar directive was decided upon in Malmö municipality, for Malmö municipality to represent the diversity in the municipality in its employees. The implementation was researched by Sofia Rönnqvist (2004), who found that the directive did not have a great impact on day-to-day work and that implementation of the directive varied between departments, since it was voluntary how the directive was implemented.

Sophie Linghag et al. (2016) researched employees in different levels of local, regional, and federal agencies in Sweden whom where tasked with mainstreaming equality and diversity work in their respective organizations. Participants were either appointed or volunteered and could be HR-staff, line managers or specialists. Given the complexity involved in equality and diversity work, the participants needed to use different strategies depending on situation

and context in the organization. Through this mainstreaming initiative, practitioners learned and became aware of existing power structures in the organization, at the same time were able to make these structures visible that were previously invisible.

In conclusion, I see similarities in the research findings by Linghag et al. (2016), Ahmed et al. (2006), Kirton, Greene, and Dean (2007) and Swan and Fox (2010) where they portray a diversity practitioner who reflects, adapts, and uses different strategies to aim for the higher purpose of equality. The diversity practitioner, even if it's unintentional, participates in constructing difference in the organization (Zanoni and Janssens, 2003). From an organizational standpoint, as exemplified in the reports evaluating top-down instituted diversity policies, as well as the research from Malmö municipality, clarity about the directive and lack of knowledge and follow up are found to stifle progress.

As we can see from the above review, diversity research has been mainly focused on the public sector in Sweden, in governmental organizations, at local, regional, and national levels. It has also mostly been focused on evaluation of top-down directives to implement diversity work. My research will fill an open space academically since I am focusing on the private sector in Sweden only. My research is also from the perspective of the diversity practitioner, not evaluating top-down directives or investigating diversity through documents or policies. In addition, I am adding another research layer, where I am looking at what diversity does, how difference is constructed and what diversity means.

THEORETCIAL FRAMEWORK

To create a foundation for my theoretical framework, I will apply an intersectional perspective, which will enable an understanding of how categories of difference are constructed, as difference is my main investigative inquiry. I will also use theories around language and practices of diversity, which primarily comes from a critical feminist and race perspective, very much linked to the intersectional perspective. Lastly, I will use an organizational theory on gender that I will expand upon to incorporate other categories of differences than gender. The organizational gender perspective provides a model of how the perceived value of difference can be understood based on the underlaying assumption about that difference.

The theoretical framework in its entirety is chosen to be able to provide perspectives and critical examination to 'answer' my research questions. The intersectional perspective is foundational for all three questions, it is the background from which social processes in relation to my questions can be understood. To enable understanding of how difference is constructed through

the language and practices of diversity, I will focus on a few theoretical concepts. To shed light on what it means to value difference, I will apply the organizational model of difference and the value of difference. Below I will account for this theoretical framework.

An intersectional perspective – constructing difference

Diversity and intersectionality are deeply connected in how intersectionality provides a perspective to think about power and "the points at which power relations meet." (Ahmed, 2012, p. 14). In this way, intersectionality can highlight how diversity can be looked at from how it contributes those meeting points. By focusing on some meeting points, others recede from view and through the perspective of intersectionality power relations come into focus. Ahmed asks the question, "what recedes from view when diversity becomes view?" (2012, p. 14) The perspective of intersectionality provides a foundational framework to understand that.

Through intersectionality, one can understand experiences of multiple social categories of differences or identities, how they intersect and result in lived experiences, not one category at a time, but together, creating experiences bigger than the then sum of each individual identity category. (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991) Primary categories that are in view are gender, race/ethnicity, class, disability, and at times sexuality and transgender perspectives. How we understand categories of difference, is complex and gives different meanings and understanding to power and privilege depending on how you structure and create the categories. How we think about categories or differences provides different perspectives to understand and emphasize or minimize inequality. How we define and use categories are part of constructing those categories and matters to what degree social action can contribute to changing experiences of those categories. (McCall, 2005) Experiences within categories can be very different, and experiencing the world from a majority category, or privileged category standpoint, means that one is not aware of being in a category at all. (Ahmed, 2012, p. 176)

Candace West and Sarah Fenstermaker argues that categories of differences are created in social interactions, where we are "doing difference"(1995, p. 9), or in other words, construct difference through social interactions. The link to the language and practices of diversity is that in an organizational context, language and practices happen in social interaction, it is where difference is constructed. With this perspective, we have a way to understand how diversity, as in difference, is constructed and that highlights the mechanisms that create inequality (de los Reyes, 2017, p. 16).

According to West and Fenstermaker, the context contributes to constructing how difference is perceived, experienced, created, and re-created:

> [W]hile gender, race, and class - what people come to experience as organizing categories of social difference - exhibit vastly different descriptive characteristics and outcomes, they are, nonetheless, comparable as mechanisms for producing social inequality. (1995, p. 9)

This perspective gives a mechanism for understanding the bridge between daily interaction between individuals and the social structures that impact and contribute to how we experience and shape those interactions, social life is experienced as objective and factual. By recognizing the social construction of categories and their complex relationships in how power and inequality is experienced, produced and reproduced it also provides a perspective where there is a possibility to change.

Martha Minow (1990 in Bacchi and Eveline, 2009) argues that calling someone or a group different, involves naming someone different in relation to someone else, that is then assumed as non-different. Someone is labeling someone different, or one can also claim themselves to be different. This highlights how difference is created in and through social interactions, the dynamics of doing difference is in relation to one another. Carol Bacchi and Joan Eveline also emphasizes the social relationship between categories, how ideas and social practices in a historical context, contribute to experiences of inequality. Linking intersectionality and diversity, the authors notice a trend in European national organizations, United Nations, and the World Bank, that these organizations;

> embrace the language of diversity to describe equality initiatives. The term has become shorthand for describing the full list of groups commonly identified as excluded from the mainstream, including women, Blacks, the disabled, and gays/ lesbians. (2009, p. 6)

By using diversity as one descriptive term of different experiences of inequality, disadvantaged groups are bundled, assuming that the inequalities experienced are similar, which may also dilute action aiming to combat inequalities. (Bacchi and Eveline, 2009) Focusing on disadvantaged or excluded groups, as one experience of inequality, takes away focus from the privileged group, which means that the role of the powerful is not within view. (Bacchi and Eveline, 2009; Walby, Armstrong, and Strid, 2017)

In conclusion, the intersectional perspective brings the workings of how difference is created in social and situated interactions that can lead to experiences of inequality, it problematizes difference. Difference is constructed in relation to someone who is assumed non-different. Intersectionality is deeply connected to diversity, how diversity brings differences into focus but at the same time, hides how power relations impact organizational experiences of inequality.

The language of diversity – a paradigm of difference

As discussed previously, the term diversity stems from management literature, for example to 'manage diversity', or to 'value diversity'. The vocabulary is significant in that it allows to problematize words used in the name of diversity "as enabling different kinds of action within institutions […], how different words (such as diversity and equality) can work" (Ahmed, 2007, p. 237). The language of diversity can be a language of difference and below I will explore how the language of diversity might contribute to construct that difference.

A language of appeal

The shift from the focus on equality and social rights that preceded diversity management was perhaps more confrontational by calling into question power relations and inequality. The language of diversity can be seen as a more collaborative approach, built on sharing values as compared to enforcing values, as Ahmed states; ""[d]iversity" as a term might allow practitioners to work "with" rather than "against" an institution." (Ahmed, 2012, p. 64-65) An example of this could be that practitioners use the term diversity for practical reasons, it is perceived as less threatening and more appealing. However, being appealing and non-threatening is problematic when diversity hides, what is perceived as scary issues such as power structures and inequality. The appealing diversity stems from the language created by the majority group where dialogue and participation for non-dominant or minority group members are limited. In this way, diversity is one sided, it is an act of power to embrace diversity, on the premises of the majority. (de los Reyes, 2000; Ahmed, 2012)

However, using diversity in this way, can also open up doors for practitioners to talk about diversity to people in the organization that would not be concerned with diversity given their own background of being non-different:

> The language of diversity might be what enables practitioners to get people to the table. Once they are comfortable, perhaps you can aim to unseat them by addressing more uncomfortable issues. (Ahmed, 2012, p. 67)

The language of diversity can be a door opener for speaking about power and inequality, one door at a time.

Contradictory logics

Through the development of diversity, integrating equal opportunity work and the business case of diversity, diversity is characterized by different value-systems, where these contradictory logics are meshed or switched in between. By using the language of diversity, the practitioner becomes a 'translator' by customizing the language of diversity to different audiences. Depending on what

works for that specific audience to gain traction, different words and reasoning can be used to gain progress. This could have peculiar consequences;

> how quite contradictory logics are used simultaneously: in other words, the business model and the social justice model are used together, or there is a 'switching' between them, which depends on a judgement about which works when, and for whom. (Ahmed, 2007, p. 242)

Individuated, bundled, or polarized difference

Diversity from a critical perspective can contribute to an individuated, bundled, or polarized difference in how diversity is spoken about in organizations. From a critical perspective, how you frame diversity through these perspectives, have an impact to how difference is understood, in relation to the majority who are assumed equally different or non-different.

In the name of diversity, difference can be individuated, meaning that the difference is attributed to the individual in the organization. This means that it;

> creates the individual as the proper object: if diversity is what individuals has as individuals, then it gives permission to those working within institutions to turn away from ongoing realities of institutional inequality. (Ahmed, 2012, p. 71)

The Four layers of diversity[9], discussed earlier, is a good example of how diversity is framed from an individual perspective. When the individual is the focus of diversity it hides structural inequalities when the difference is seen as bringing value to the organization in the form of the individual. As Ahmed describes it; "[d]iversity provides a positive, shiny image of the organization that allows inequality to be concealed and thus reproduced." (2012, p. 72)

One can also look at the language of diversity from a bundled perspective as opposed to the individuated perspective, however, the interesting fact is that the result of individuating or bundling difference is the same. By bundling difference, the language of diversity can hide the plurality of disadvantaged groups, resulting in "all differences are created equal as otherness, bundled together, managed under the one program of diversity." (Sinclair, 2006, p. 13) This is very much connected to Bacchi and Eveline's (2009) and Walby, Armstrong, and Strid's (2017) reasoning around seeing diversity as one experience of inequality, which then hides from view the privileged group or the role of the powerful.

de los Reyes (2000) finds that the language of diversity creates two separate, distinct poles. Even though de los Reyes (2000) discusses difference in regard to white ethnic Swedes and migrants (ethnic diversity), I will apply the reasoning here in a general sense when discussing difference. de los Reyes (2000)

[9] See Appendix A.

argues that the language of diversity creates a paradigm of difference, where Swedes and migrants are portrayed as essentially different from each other, where that difference creates polarity and separateness in binaries; by being either different as in not belonging, or non-different as in belonging.

Diversity practices

Managing diversity is operationalized through the practices the organization takes on to promote diversity in the organization. As has been previously stated, managing diversity is connected to anti-discrimination laws, however, that is not the whole picture of what diversity management is. Diversity management as an organizational practice, is voluntary, where equality and anti-discrimination work is one part of that work. Through the management literature and diversity's increasing popularity, diversity practices can be seen from a showcase perspective, where a showcase is "a setting that facilitates the most advantageous arrangement and display of certain object." (Prasad and Mills, 1997, p. 8). In other words, the critique towards the practices of diversity management is that it emphasizes attractive accomplishments that can lead to positive publicity, rather than impacting equality. These practices can provide a critical perspective to understand how diversity practices can contribute to constructing difference. From the showcase perspective, diversity practices can be seen from three showcases; economic, guidelines and exemplars.

The economic showcase

The economic showcase of diversity builds on the notion that diverse employees will contribute to the performance and profit of the organization; the business case of diversity. Diversity practices under this showcase, strives towards increasing organizational efficiency, performance, and profit through hiring and retaining diverse talent, where diversity is framed as a corporate asset. (Prasad and Mills, 1997) This can be problematic from the standpoint that diverse employees provide value to the organization and enrich the organization from their differences, where social inequalities become organizational gain. (Prasad and Mills, 1997; Litvin, 2006; Ahmed, 2012)

The showcase of guidelines

The showcase of guidelines makes diversity doable; diversity is manageable through practices such as training, creating and implementing policies, guidelines, and processes to make diversity happen. The problematic aspect of making diversity doable, is that diversity management practices are portrayed as easy and non-confrontational, not changing the underlaying structures of inequality. (Prasad and Mills, 1997)

Training opportunities and practices to create awareness around diversity are used by organizations to succeed in diversity. de los Reyes argues that diversity trainings contribute to conceptualizing differences;

> in terms of 'natural' variations rather than socially constructed differences, the diversity approach implies that phenomena such as discrimination and segregation can be addressed by information. (2000, p. 262)

If organizations educate and inform enough, diversity is within reach.

Organizations often have processes where they regularly revisit diversity goals, a guideline that can contribute to making diversity doable (Prasad and Mills, 1997). On the other hand, by using data to show how the organization is not living up to its own goals regarding diversity, failure can be exposed. By exposing failure, data can be a tactic that diversity practitioners use to gain traction in diversity work, to get leaders to act on overall organizational commitments. (Ahmed, 2007, p. 246) From this perspective, the showcase of guidelines is strategically used, by showcasing failure, to push organizational action.

The showcase of exemplars

This perspective is illustrated by how organizations use success stories of diversity as positive publicity to manage their own brand (employer branding). Exemplars of how well the organization has managed diversity emphasizes the value of diversity management, and by celebrating success stories publicly, the happy, shiny image of diversity management is reproduced. What is not usually portrayed in the exemplars of success stories are gender and race tensions or frustrations. (Prasad and Mills, 1997)

Diversity from these three showcase practices means that:

> [T]he central hermeneutic question, what does diversity mean, is rarely addressed. As a result, we have a potpourri of popular views and opinions on what constitutes workplace diversity, without a serious consideration of the multiple and possibly conflicting meanings attributed to them. (Prasad and Mills, 1997, p. 13)

Diversity, from this perspective, is whatever the organization chooses it to be. The showcase practices can hide potential dilemmas and structural patterns that lead to discrimination in the organization, those dilemmas and structural patterns can be effectively hidden through the showcases. (Prasad and Mills, 1997)

The language and practices of diversity is fundamental to understand how difference is constructed. As has been shown so far, valuing diversity is an act ingrained in diversity management and looking at how and why diversity is

valued will provide insights into understanding what it means to value difference.

A model of difference and the value of difference

In the book Understanding Gender and Organizations, Mats Alvesson and Yvonne Due Billing (2011) develops a four-field model to facilitate a complex understanding of women leadership in organizations. The model summarizes four perspectives existing in academic literature of different reasons as to why women should have increased possibilities to leadership positions. It provides perspectives on how the value of gender as a difference is constructed and the underlaying reasons behind that view of difference. The power of the model, is that it does not provide one single answer to the question why women should be in leadership positions or why difference is of value, but rather offer different interpretations and understandings of complex and nuanced empirical material. As should be apparent to the reader, my focus in this thesis is not how women leaders are viewed in organizations, but rather how difference is viewed and constructed in organizations. I will use the model that Alvesson and Due Billing (2011) developed and apply it to the understanding of how difference is viewed in organizations, to include difference in general from a diversity perspective, rather than only of women in leadership positions. I will expand on the model developed by Alvesson and Due Billing (2011) to understand difference as portrayed through diversity. Rönnqvist (2004) have applied the model from a diversity perspective when she analyzed diversity strategies used in Malmö municipality. de los Reyes (2000) also suggests that methodologies used to understand gender relations can be of use and expanded upon to understand differences in general, not just for gender.

Equal opportunities perspective

The first perspective in the Alvesson and Billing model (2011) is equal opportunities. In this perspective difference is minimized, meaning there is no inherent difference due to demographic differences, and equality is emphasized from a justice, ethical, and political reason. The equal opportunity perspective highlights how inequality is produced and reproduced in organizations through processes and internal practices. In carrying out the everyday processes and practices to get the work done in organizations, inequality is cemented and confirmed. To combat these inequalities, the equal opportunity perspective emphasizes justice and ethics and aim for political and social change; everyone should have equal opportunities. Active action is required to change the underlaying structural processes and practices that lead to inequality. (Acker, 1990; Alvesson and Due Billing, 2011, p. 236-237) Much of the critical literature that has been discussed up to this point in this thesis assumes the equal opportunity position.

Meritocratic perspective

The second perspective is the meritocratic perspective, which aims for full utilization of qualified human resources that can contribute to the organization and make it more effective. This perspective, compared to the equal opportunities perspective, is not based in justice, ethics, or political reasons, but rather driven by the purpose to use the best resources from the full population and not just a portion of it. The meritocratic perspective emphasizes personal merits and qualifications with the purpose to not consider gender, ethnicity, religion, age, sexuality, gender identity or disability which a meritocratic position deems irrelevant. The value of difference is minimized, bringing sameness into focus. A meritocratic perspective ensures equality by only giving merit to an individual's own capabilities. For meritocracy to be successful, transparency and impartiality are key to create fairness. Both the meritocratic and the equal opportunity perspectives aim for equality and both are aware and recognizes disadvantages or injustices. However, where the equal opportunities position emphasizes social justice as the end goal, meritocratic position emphasizes organizational effectiveness. The purpose is to ensure that all competencies are fully utilized, ensuring an effective and impartial handling of human resources in the organization, whereas the equal opportunities perspective, equality and non-discrimination is the purpose in and of itself. (Simpson, Ross-Smith, and Lewis 2010; Alvesson and Billing, 2011; Kim and Choi, 2017)

Special contribution perspective

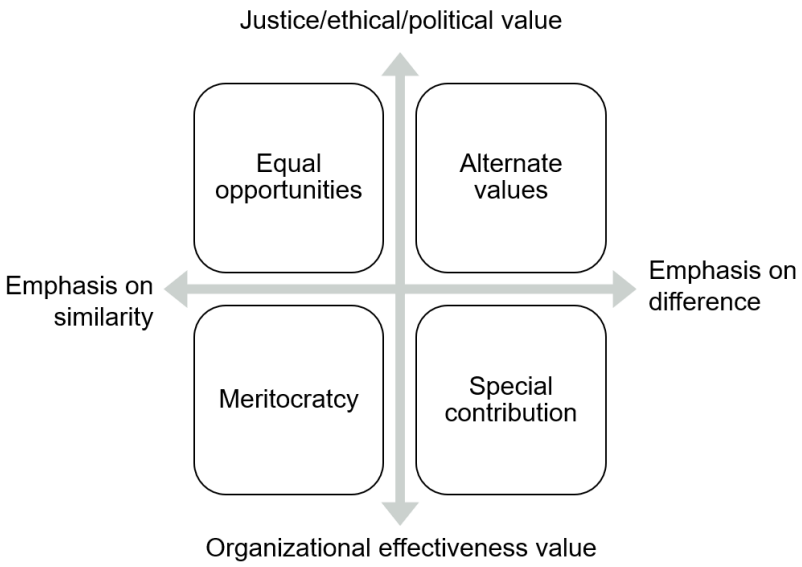
The third perspective is special contribution. In contrast to both the equal opportunity and meritocratic perspectives, the special contribution perspective, emphasizes difference. It is difference that is a source of competence and contribution to the organization. Through socialization, values, and thought processes minority groups are seen as different than if you belong to the majority group and will therefore bring these complementary differences to the organization. Difference is celebrated as an organizational asset (Simpson, Ross-Smith, and Lewis, 2010). Difference is the source of the competence as it brings different values, experiences and thought processes that can contribute to the organization. (Alvesson and Due Billing, 2011, p. 241-247)

Alternate values perspective

The fourth perspective, the alternate values, also emphasizes difference. Similar to the special contribution position, through socialization processes, minority groups develop special abilities and competencies. The alternate values standpoint, emphasizes the differences between the cultural values and norms that groups are socialized into, where the marginalized position minority groups in society contributes to this difference. Since most organizations are created by the majority group the culture reflects that, possibly leading to frustration for members of minority groups, or an effort to try to assimilate to the

majority culture. The alternate values position sees this as a possibility for employees belonging to minority groups to stay true to their values and constructively question and speak up for change, incorporating alternate values in the organization. Another path in the alternate values perspective, is the possibility to create organizations that from the beginning are created genuinely equal from a minority group perspective. Rather than integrating alternate values into traditionally run organizations, instead creating organizations based on alternate values where equality is the designing principle. (Alvesson and Due Billing, 2011, p. 247-253)

These four perspectives are summarized and illustrated below:



Model from Alvesson and Due Billing, 2011, p. 255.

As Alvesson and Due Billing (2011) point out, I also want to emphasize that the dimensions of the model are a continuum rather than four distinct boxes. These positions are theoretical distinctions to guide our understanding of how difference is viewed and valued.

In summary, the theoretical framework is developed to provide an understanding to my three research questions where intersectionality is the foundational perspective to understand all three questions; how difference is constructed and what that means for the difference being constructed. Theoretical concepts of the language and practices of diversity are chosen to explain the workings of diversity and how these practices may contribute to construct difference. To understand what it means to value difference and why difference is valued, an organizational analytical model will be applied.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this chapter I will summarize the epistemological and ontological perspective this thesis is grounded in. I will also describe methodology, process of gaining access to respondents, method of choice, ethical considerations, my role as a researcher and decisions and arguments for those choices. I will also include my own critical reflection of my own performance as a researcher and interviewer.

Epistemological and ontological discussion

As the purpose of this thesis is to understand how difference is constructed and what diversity means, the epistemological approach is that of interpretivism; where meaning and human behavior needs to be interpreted in a social context to contribute to knowledge (Bryman, 2016). The background of how diversity originated, the geographic travel of diversity and previous research on an international and local level, the organizational perspective and the interview situation and interview narrative contribute to providing that context. The interpretivist perspective is also deeply connected to the theoretical perspective of intersectionality where the context is essential to understand how difference is constructed in and through social interactions.

Given an interpretivist epistemological approach, the ontological perspective that follows is through constructionism, which has already been discussed previously. This perspective is reflected throughout the thesis, with its foundation in the intersectional, critical feminist and race perspective as well as how I use the four-field model of difference to understand how and why difference is valued. The ontological perspective of this thesis, also guides choice of method, which I will discuss shortly.

Methodology

To capture empirical data that can contribute to creating knowledge from an interpretivist and constructionist standpoint, the methodological approach is qualitative. To assess the value of knowledge created through a qualitative methodology, principles for evaluation should enable a high-quality research process that leads to valuable knowledge from the perspective of a qualitative approach. Lucy Yardley (2000) have proposed such principles that aim for high quality in qualitative research; sensitivity to context, researcher commitment and rigor, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance of the research. These principles take into consideration the specific knowledge that is created through a qualitative methodology and will provide criteria from which the quality of my research can be assessed.

Method

I will rely on qualitative semi-structured individual interviews with participants. According to Sandy Qu and John Dumay (2011, p. 241), semi-structured interviews are appropriate when trying to find meaning to events within a social context which fits the purpose of this thesis like a glove. Further, Michèle Lamont and Ann Swidler, argues for

> a more open-ended and pragmatic approach to interviewing, one where we aim to collect data not only, or primarily, about behavior, but also about representations, classification systems, boundary work, identity, imagined realities and cultural ideals, as well as emotional states. (2014, p. 157)

Through the interviews I hope to see how the respondents tell their stories about diversity work, what practices are taken on under the diversity umbrella and how diversity is talked about in organizations.

In qualitative interviews, the surrounding context, the space where the interview happens, the interviewer, the interviewee, and the bodies of participants in the interview plays a role; it is the context to where knowledge is created. The research interview is a context that impacts the interview and what is talked about and how. The interview in this sense is not a neutral space. (Alvesson, 2003, p. 13; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014, p. 120-121) Due to COVID-19 restrictions, all interviews were conducted digitally via a video meeting application and recorded using an application for audio recording on a smart phone. Will a digital video meeting impact the interview space? Yes, I would say so, it is different from meeting face to face and being able to read body language which also creates a closeness that is lost in a digital video meeting. Do they still work for the research purpose? Yes! The participants are all dealing with restrictions due to COVID-19 and have digital video meetings as part of their normal workday and have been for the last year (including myself), which results in comfort with the digital video format.

Interviewing is often referred to as a work of art (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014). As a first-time interviewer in an academic setting it is intimidating to know that if you are going to be good at interviewing you need to be highly experienced, a contradiction if you are taking this on for the first time. I have made mistakes during the process and some of my learnings include not to be so careful in framing the questions I ask the respondents. For example, instead of just stating the questions as I had it written down in the interview guide, I often introduced the question by connecting to something else they said earlier or added meaningless introductory words before the question which made it harder for the respondents to understand. In the first couple of interviews, I had specific questions about the respondents view of difference in their diversity work. These questions were hard for respondents to understand and answer

and I realized this is the question I am asking of the empirical material, not of them as respondents. I removed these questions from the rest of the interviews[10].

Respondents

The respondents are diversity practitioners that are responsible for creating strategy, implementing, and working in day-to-day activities doing diversity work in Swedish organizations[11] within the private sector. To gain access to willing participants I have used a combination of different strategies.

To begin, I wrote a very short description of my research project on my status in my LinkedIn profile and as a message on two professional network communication platforms where I am a member. In these posts, I described the thesis subject, general participant attributes I wanted to be in touch with, where I am a student, that participants would be anonymous and that if they are interested in participating to contact me directly[12]. Through this strategy, a combination of goal oriented and availability sampling (Bryman, 2016, p. 497-498), I received answers from five voluntary participants that fit the criteria. I also used snowball sampling (Bryman, 2016, p. 504-506) where I asked the respondents that I interviewed for recommendations of other diversity practitioners that fit the criteria. From this method I found three more respondents. At that time, I had eight respondents and from the empirical data I had gathered so far, I assessed that I needed more respondents to gain a sense of saturation in the data. I posted new messages on LinkedIn and in professional networks[13] but was unsuccessful in gaining additional respondents. Lastly, I went through my contacts in LinkedIn and wrote a direct message through the LinkedIn app, to everyone who was in a diversity practitioner or an HR Leader role, in a Swedish or international company in the private sector, asking if they would be willing to participate[14]. I found two additional respondents and after completion of these interviews I assessed that the number of ten respondents was enough and could see that I had a saturated empirical material.

When discussing number of participants and method for choosing participants in the research, generalizability is often an important topic. When it comes to qualitative research and the aim of this study, generalizability is not the aim, it is rather to contribute to a deeper understanding of diversity work through comparison to theory (Bryman, 2016, p. 485), in my case an intersectional

[10] See Appendix B for interview guide in its entirety.
[11] Participant diversity practitioners can work in international organizations that have offices in Sweden and the focus is on the Swedish organization to ensure and include as many participants as needed for the research.
[12] See Appendix C.
[13] See Appendix C.
[14] See Appendix C.

perspective, coupled with race and feminist theory and organizational theoretical perspectives through a four-field analytical model.

Background information about the respondents

One respondent self-identified as man, the remaining respondents self-identified as women. Respondents range from 31 to 56 years old, with a median age of 44 and a mean age of 43,1. The areas of business, where the respondents work are; Telecommunications (where three of the respondents work), Energy, Education, Real estate, Construction, Technology, Home appliances, and Engineering. Two respondents work at the same company. Nine respondents work at incorporated companies, where three are global, one operates in Europe, three in the Nordics and Baltics, and one operates in Scandinavia. One company is privately owned, and one organization is an NGO, with primary funding from the private sector.

Three of the respondents have HR Manager roles, which includes responsibility for diversity and inclusion. Two diversity practitioners have a split responsibility between diversity and inclusion and other responsibilities, such as recruitment and performance management. The remaining respondents have diversity as their primary work. To safeguard anonymity, all respondents will be named diversity practitioner when presenting citations.

Ethical considerations

Throughout the process of asking for voluntary participants, anonymity has been a key principle. Given my dual role, I have an extra motivation to safeguard anonymity since in my professional role, I might meet the respondents in networks, seminars, etc. Before the actual interview took place, I sent each respondent a consent- and information-form[15] to the email of their choice. Before the interview began, I stated the purpose of the survey again and referred back to the information and consent-form if they had any questions or concerns before we began. I was also clear about when the recording started. Participants were told, their company would not be disclosed, however, the line of business would be disclosed. I was also clear about that I would use citations of what they said in the interviews to be transparent (Yardley, 2000; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014, p. 110). I have asked participants for self-identified gender and age, which are personally sensitive information according to the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR 2016/679) in order to be able to have some general demographic information about the participant group as a whole. This information is completely voluntary, as are all questions during the interview.[16]

[15] See Appendix D.
[16] See Appendix B for the interview guide in its entirety.

When discussing ethical considerations, one aspect is the utility of the research for the participants, which is also a quality marker of the research (Yardley, 2000; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014, p. 105). Many of the respondents have asked for the thesis when completed, and I have promised to send them a copy when final. To better serve the respondents I will, in addition, provide an overall and extensive business summary to send to them, specifically targeted to their needs summarizing key learnings, diversity practices, and findings.

Role of the researcher

As part of the ethical considerations also lies the role of the researcher (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014, p. 111-112). So far in this thesis, my role as researcher as well as my role as a professional diversity practitioner has been mentioned previously. I want to expand on these perspectives in this section as it contributes to full transparency (Yardley, 2000). I will start with how my professional role as a diversity practitioner can impact and provide context to the topic of this thesis, possibly being considered an insider according to Kvale and Brinkmann (2014). I have a similar role in my professional life, and I also know of some of the interviewee participants through professional networks. I do not know them personally but know of them through professional interactions in networks. It also means that I have in-depth knowledge about the subject area of study. Is that an asset or a hindrance in conducting research? According to Kvale and Brinkmann, knowledgeable of the subject matter is a criterion for a skilled interviewer (2104, p. 208). It gives me as a researcher deep knowledge about the subject where I can ask pointed and critical follow-up questions (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014, p. 208). Perhaps it can also hinder me in that I have a pre-conceived notion of what participants tell me, believing that I know what they are referring to when I do not. This risk can be minimized by using follow-up questions asking for concrete examples and descriptions[17].

Analytical approach

All the interviews have been recorded and transcribed by me. I used Word Online that offers a transcribing function to have the interviews initially transcribed from spoken conversation to written language. I then listened to all interviews and edited the transcriptions for accuracy and correctness. Repeated words, stuttering or sounds as “hm” are not transcribed. Where the audio recording is inaudible, this is noted in the transcribed interview as [inaudible]. Identifying information such as names and company names have been removed and replaced with generic substitutes such as [Name] and [Company name]. The interviewer in the transcribed documents is noted as EW and the respondent is named Respondent 1, 2, 3, etc. When quotes are used in the thesis, they have been edited to portray correct written format without changing

[17] See Appendix B for examples of follow-up questions used.

the meaning of the quote. This is done from an ethical consideration to portray participants in a respectful and professional manner (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014). Eight out of ten interviews were conducted in Swedish, transcribed and analyzed in Swedish. When quotes are presented, they are translated by me. Two interviews were conducted, transcribed, analyzed, and quoted in English.

For the purpose of this thesis, the basis for analyzing and interpreting the empirical data is through a hermeneutic interpretation of meaning of diversity in the context of the theoretical framework for this thesis (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014, p. 256). This is also specifically requested by Prasad and Mills (1997) where they critically state that the meaning of diversity needs to be looked into when examining diversity. A hermeneutic analytical approach is a constant movement in the analytical interpretation from the empirical material, in a specific meaning expressed, to the context of the meaning in the whole interview, the theoretical framework and back again. (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014, p. 252-253) This means that statements made by respondents in the interview, have been analyzed from the whole context of the interview, how do they speak about diversity in the whole context of the interview, and how can I interpret one statement in light of everything else that is said on the same topic.

To analyze for meaning, I have used a thematic analytical approach (Bryman, 2016, p. 702-709), primarily based on the theoretical framework, coupled with critical reflexivity by challenging my interpretations throughout the process, looking for a multitude of meanings in the material and acknowledging ambiguity (Alvesson, 2003, p. 14). Reflexivity is a conscious and consistent effort to look at the empirical data from different viewpoints and not to favor any one interpretation. The theoretical framework, primarily the four-field model provides such a framework where more than one perspective can provide an understanding, minimizing the risk of emphasizing only one way of understanding empirical data. (Alvesson, 2003, p. 25)

When analyzing for meaning, another risk is an eagerness to find coherence in the empirical material. The actual interview situation can also contribute to this, when respondents are asked to recount their views that in itself, encourages coherence and meaning. This can result in less contradiction and unpredictability than what ‘real life’ has to offer. The hermeneutic approach in itself encourages this perspective, the researcher needs to be ever so mindful of this (Lamont and Swidler, 2014, p. 163). I will use this critical, reflexive, and pragmatic approach to enable viewing the empirical material through several perspectives and question my own interpretations. The theoretical model by Alvesson and Due Billing (2011) is such a model that contributes to this approach as it is meant to provide a critical and reflexive understanding of a complex and multifaceted experience, reflecting that there can be multiple interpretations and understandings of social actions and values.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter I will start with summarizing what differences are talked about in the name of diversity in the interviews. I see this as a first step in understanding how and what differences are constructed through diversity. How categories are defined and acted upon is a foundation for how difference and inequality is constructed and contributes to the understanding of inequalities in working life. I will then explore the language of diversity and the four perspectives of valuing difference. Practices of diversity will be analyzed under each perspective of valuing difference, since different practices are instituted based on assumptions of difference or has consequences reflected through the four perspectives of the model.

Defining difference in the name of diversity

My main purpose with this thesis is to investigate differences. How categories are defined, talked about, and acted upon is how difference is created and recreated in social interaction. The context, where social interaction happens, is the organization where diversity work happens. How categories are defined in relation to each other is a first step in understanding differences in diversity work, how diversity constructs difference. I will start with presenting the differences that are present in the interviews, see Table 1.

Table 1: Identified differences by respondent

Respondent	Gender	Ethnicity	Sexuality	Gender exp/id	Religion	Disability	Age	Personal	Parenthood	Class
1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes		
2	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes						
4	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes	Yes	
6	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes			
7	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes		
8	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes				
9	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes						
10	Yes	Yes				Yes		Yes		
Total	10	10	7	6	2	7	5	5	3	1

These are the differences the respondents have brought up as they speak about diversity and inclusion throughout the interviews. I have not specifically asked about what differences diversity and inclusion work entails[18]. These are the differences that has come up in the interview as the practitioners describe and reflect about their work. It is how diversity practitioners define what categories of difference diversity is about. The total number if a category is mentioned in the empirical material, is not a reflection of importance or focus of

[18] See Appendix B for the full interview guide.

the diversity work itself, it reflects whether the category is thought of as being part of diversity work overall. I am using ethnicity as a summary name, as that is the category definition according to the Discrimination Act (Diskrimineringslag, 2008:567). However, respondents use other names such as foreign background, foreign-born, race, and skin color. Sexuality and gender identity and expression are sometimes referred to as LGBTQI[19]. Under personal differences, I have summarized how respondents name personality, personal traits, cognitive abilities, backgrounds, perspectives, and opinions.

Gender

The main and most common diversity category is gender, and that is also the primary focus of the activities in the diversity work that is found in the empirical material. Even though the whole area is named diversity and is referred to as diversity by the practitioners, primary goals and practices target gender equality. A lot of the work described under the umbrella of diversity, is targeting gender. One main contributing factor to this could be the history of gender equality work in Swedish organizations and mainstreaming efforts of such work (Callerstig, 2004). Another contributing factor could be the legal framework in Sweden that historically focused on gender equality first, adding other discrimination categories later. Gender is also the only discrimination category where employers are allowed to take action to increase one gender over the other in employee categories where one gender is over-represented (Diskrimineringslag, 2008:567). History, tradition, and legal context contributes to making gender the primary category of difference for diversity work. In a few cases, diversity practitioners say that there is a need to 'broaden' diversity work to include more differences, but state that it is hard when the law prohibits tracking and collecting data on other discrimination grounds than gender and age. Another reason for the primary focus of gender, is that organizations face gender inequality and that it is perceived as a need to be dealt with first.

All but one diversity practitioner work in organizations that set companywide goals for gender equality, for example 50/50-split or a 60/40-split of women and men in the whole employee population, job-categories, or leadership roles. These goals are in some organizations made public. By defining gender goals quantitively and in binaries of women and men, the gender norm of binaries is reinforced (Martinsson, Griffin, and Nygren, 2016). This is interesting since it is contradictory to the aim of being inclusive of gender identity and expression. Measuring progress of equality in binary terms of women and men is itself a practice of exclusion, making non-binary employees invisible by not recognizing them in overall goals of the organization. However, tracking gender in any other

[19] An umbrella term to describe sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, recognizing criticism of social norms; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer. (RFSL, 2019)

way other than binary of women and men is generally interpreted as unlawful according to GDPR (2016/279).

Ethnic background

Ethnic background is the term used in the Discrimination Act (Diskrimineringslag, 2008:567) and the respondents name this in slightly different terms but indicating the same meaning. Some organizations measure percentage of employees with foreign background, aiming to represent the Swedish population foreign-born in their overall employee population. A few organizations aim to take on internships for people who are newly migrated to Sweden, aiming to provide work experience in Sweden.

LGBTQI

When it comes to sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, sometimes referred to as LGBTQ or LGBTQI, is mentioned by some diversity practitioners as a focus area, primarily through training practices, for example workshops or digital educational modules around norm critical perspectives and unconscious bias awareness trainings. However, these trainings are about diversity and inclusion overall, where LGBTQI is one category of difference. Some respondents also participate in Pride to officially ‘take a stand’. Other activities can be to host events or combining learning about LGBTQI and socially connecting employees across the company. I interpret these practices to ‘take a stand’ both internally and externally that the company supports LGBTQI rights.

Disability, age and religious beliefs

Although diversity practitioners mention disability, age and religious beliefs as being part of diversity work, when speaking about the work, specifics around disability, age and religious beliefs are not mentioned in detail. This does not necessarily mean that it is not part of the work, or that disability, age and religious beliefs are ignored. It can also be a result of that I have not requested in detail a description of all diversity practices in the organization. The amount of material that approach would have resulted in, would have been impossible to handle in a master thesis and it is also not the purpose of this thesis to list all possible diversity practices. On the other hand, as these perspectives are rarely present in the empirical material, it can also reflect that these areas are not the primary focus of diversity work.

Personal differences

Differences in the material that are not protected categories according to the Discrimination Act (Diskrimineringslag, 2008:567) are personalities, personal traits, perspectives, cognitive abilities, backgrounds, and opinions but are part of diversity and inclusion work. In my interpretation, this reflects the impact of a

diversity model such as the Four layers of diversity (Gardenswartz and Rowe, 2021). Some diversity practitioners refer to different personalities, opinions, and perspectives where these differences are seen as contributing to business success. This type of diversity is then mixed in with diversity concerning categories of disadvantaged employees and by stipulating these differences as equally important for the business to thrive, they are made equal. (Bendl, Fleischmann, and Walenta, 2008). This perspective means that all differences are seen as valuable, while making social justice reasons and power relations invisible. (Ahmed et al., 2006; Ahmed, 2012)

Parenthood

Some respondents mention parenthood, this is reflected in the Four layers of diversity (Gardenswartz and Rowe, 2021), and a protected category in Sweden as part of the Parental Leave Act (Föräldraledighetslag 1995:584) and the Discrimination Act (Diskrimineringslag 2008:567). However, as for the literature around diversity in general, parenthood is not defined as part of diversity and is therefore not a focus in the analysis going forward.

Class

One diversity practitioner speaks about socio-economic class, specifically related to the users of the service the organization provides. Class is not generally present in the diversity literature or diversity work. How diversity is framed, generally focuses on other differences than class. Another contributing factor is how diversity is imported from the US and adapted to Sweden. In that travel, class was not included in diversity work and was not part of how diversity work came about in organizations. The legal framework in Sweden does not include class as a protected category which I believe is another contributing factor that it is not part of diversity work. The end result is that class is not made visible through diversity, class is not in view.

Analytical conclusions

Difference is spoken of in categories as defined in the Discrimination Act (Diskrimineringslag, 2008:567) as well as personal differences. Through diversity, some differences come into view, others do not (Ahmed, 2012). The differences that are primary in view is gender, ethnicity, and personal differences, perhaps also LGBTQI, but activities and practices in this area, are in the empirical material more diffuse than the others. Difference is constructed through diversity in relation to someone else, and that someone is different from another (Minow, 1990 in Bacchi and Eveline, 2009). Through diversity, difference is constructed, as we have seen above through categories of difference. By speaking about some differences, one omits the ones who are not different, the ones that difference is compared to. Through the categories that are raised in the material, perhaps one can conclude that the non-different

is the white male ethnic Swede who is a heterosexual Cis-person[20]. However, this is only implied by constructing the other, the ones who are different are clearly in view through diversity, where the non-different is not within view.

The language of diversity

The language of diversity is a powerful foundation and explanatory tool for understanding how difference is created. By speaking about diversity in terms of making diversity appealing and by individuating, bundling, or polarizing difference, power relations and disadvantaged groups can be hidden from view, reproducing the inequalities diversity aims to diminish. (de los Reyes, 2000: Ahmed et al., 2006; Sinclair, 2006; Swan, 2010; Ahmed, 2012)

Making diversity appealing

In some instances, diversity can be made appealing in how diversity is talked about. One diversity practitioner describes an activity where employees can learn about LGBTQI by connecting with other employees across the company while doing a physical activity. Through a non-threatening social activity, employees are encouraged to connect with each other and learn more about LGBTQI. On the one hand diversity is in this example, packaged in a non-threatening and fun activity to enable speaking about inequalities experienced by people who identify with LGBTQI. The activity is packaged in a light-hearted way to be able to speak about inequalities and to get it on the organizational agenda (Ahmed, 2012).

Another example is how diversity can be perceived as sensitive to talk about, where one diversity practitioner reflects about the difficulty in speaking about diversity. To solve that, the diversity practitioner changes the word of diversity to inclusion, meaning everyone are included and valued for each and everyone's unique differences:

> I experience that matters of inclusion are not as sensitive, compared to walking into a workshop on diversity, where there is a preconceived notion of what diversity is about. To speak about inclusion, is to include everyone, we all want to be included, validated, respected and valued for what we do. (Respondent 1, Energy sector)

By speaking about inclusion, it is a way in and packaged to be easier for everyone to talk about. Perhaps it also reflects that by focusing on inclusion, the majority, or the dominant group, is also included in the diversity work, where they would otherwise not be? To include the non-different, diversity includes differences that can also be attributed to the non-different: personality, cognitive abilities, and personal traits. For the majority to feel part of diversity work, there

[20] Someone who identify with the gender they were legally assigned at birth; woman or man. (RFLS, 2021)

is a shift from diversity to inclusion, the non-different are also valued in the work of diversity.

Why does it need to be packaged or spoken about in terms of inclusion? Why is it threatening or perceived as a sensitive issue to talk about without the packaging? Diversity can be packaged in a non-threatening language to hide scary issues such as power structures and inequality. When diversity is made appealing it is adjusted to the language created by the majority group, for the majority group, where dialogue and participation for non-dominant or minority group members are limited. In this way, diversity is one sided, it is an act of power to embrace diversity, on the premises of the majority. (de los Reyes, 2000; Ahmed, 2012)

Contrary to this, there are also some diversity practitioners who use 'threatening' language purposefully and who clearly openly discuss, and challenge power structures, injustices, and inequality. For example, one diversity practitioner speaks about gender difference, which is also reflected in the diversity plan for the company, where one goal in the plan is about challenging gender structures in the organization; to increase women in leadership positions. Another diversity practitioner speaks about power structures and how social norms contribute to inequality in the organizations diversity trainings.

Contradictory logics

Underlaying and contradictory value-systems, such as the business case for diversity and the equal opportunity work can be switched in between, or flow in and out of each other, as in this example, where one diversity practitioner reflects on diversity work:

> For me it is about basic human rights, it is about justice. It's a question of values for me and I am absolutely convinced that it contributes to better business and organizational gain overall, but it is on so many levels, it is very fundamental for me. (Respondent 1, Energy sector)

The foundation is equality from a human rights perspective; a political and ethical standpoint. However, the business perspective is also apparent, although mentioned second, that it is also good for the business to be good at diversity, as it will benefit the business. The human rights perspective is coupled with a profit thinking, two contradictory value-systems are almost used simultaneously or switched in between (Ahmed, 2012). A human rights perspective assumes the underlaying value-system as human rights as a reason in and of itself. When coupled with the business case of diversity (Prasad and Mills, 1997; Litvin, 2006) it dilutes the human rights perspective by attaching it to profit to gain credibility in the business context.

These strategies that are used when speaking about and operationalizing diversity in the organization can be mixed, combined, and used differently at different times by the same diversity practitioners. Contradictory logics that are used almost simultaneously or switched between effortlessly (Ahmed, 2012). One explanation for this can be that diversity practitioners use different strategies to gain results, depending on the specific audience, what the diversity practitioner judges be the most effective way to gain the organizations buy-in and participating in diversity practices. (Ahmed, 2007; Kirton, Greene, and Dean, 2007; Swan and Fox, 2010; Ahmed, 2012)

Individuated, bundled, or polarized difference

Through diversity, difference can be individuated, bundled, or polarized. The construction of difference in these perspectives can have consequences for the people in organizations who are named different but also for those who are deemed non-different or rather implied as non-different.

In the empirical material, individuating difference can be exemplified when diversity practitioners speak about how employees of diverse backgrounds contribute to better results for the organization, from an individual employee perspective. The individual brings the difference that is of value to the organization, difference contributes innovation, creativity and competence that stems from the difference itself, a perspective that hides the potential disadvantage of difference. Struggles of disadvantaged groups, through the individuated difference, are hidden from view and seen as a value to the organization. By individuating difference, the possible social disadvantage of being identified as belonging to a discrimination category is lost by seeing difference as something that is attributed to the individual. (Ahmed et al., 2006; Ahmed, 2012)

Bundling difference can be exemplified when difference is spoken of as a bundled group of employees compared to those who are not different;

> when we have performance reviews we speak about, all the time, that there are biases, how do we assess women and men and others who are different. (Respondent 2, Telecommunications)

In this example, difference is defined as “others who are different” (except women and men that is extracted from others who are different), it is implied who are different and not different and who is doing the naming of difference. Another example of where difference is bundled is in training or workshop opportunities. Even though all discrimination grounds are specifically mentioned in trainings, the trainings are targeted towards difference as a whole, it is about those who are different. (Sinclair, 2006; Bacchi and Eveline, 2009)

There are also examples, where difference is un-bundled. Some organizations measure, or is actively working to develop to measure, diversity in more

categories than gender, foreign background, and age, through voluntary surveys to capture employee experiences from self-identified categories to be able to incorporate feedback to be a more inclusive employer for all groups. This activity speaks to seeing different disadvantaged groups separately to be able to act and improve according to differentiated needs (Bacchi and Eveline, 2009; Walby, Armstrong, and Strid, 2017).

Several respondents speak to the complexity related to how categories are defined in the Discrimination Act, where there are seven different discrimination grounds that need action and follow-up. From a legal perspective, it is very clear that each category of difference needs its own attention and specific action, differentiated by different needs due to different disadvantages (Bacchi and Eveline, 2009; Walby, Armstrong, and Strid, 2017). Some diversity practitioners express a feeling of not being able to meet all these demands, one respondent reflects:

> Well, the most important is that you actually do something, rather than having all these fancy plans. I really think that is most important. It is better to do something than feeling as if all the seven discrimination grounds are screaming in your face. It is better to say […] We can take on working with gender and age equality. Then we can do a pilot for foreign background [to take on an intern with a foreign academic degree who needs work experience in Sweden], to test it in one part of the company […] we test and then go to another part of the company. (Respondent 2, Telecommunications)

In this example, the awareness that different disadvantaged groups have differentiated needs is expressed coupled with a business reality of not being able to do everything one would like to do, having to make a choice in what groups to focus on.

Analytical conclusions

Diversity can be made appealing to smooth over issues of inequality and power-relations. By making diversity appealing, this can be hidden, and inequalities can be reproduced. However, it is a door-opener to start listening and discussing inequality and power-relations that can hopefully lead to deeper conversations. (Ahmed, 2007; 2012) Some diversity practitioners, on the other hand, do not hide or make diversity appealing, rather use inequality and power-relations as a point to emphasize why diversity work is important, how diversity can make a difference to mitigate inequality, rather using the confrontational language to their advantage.

Diversity involves different logics and underlaying value-systems, something I will analyze deeper through the four-field model in the following section (Alvesson and Due Billing, 2011). Sometimes diversity practitioners can mix contradictory logics and switch in between them. This can partly be explained

by the diversity practitioner using the perspective that they think will gain the most progress in the organization, targeting the message to the specific audience. (Ahmed, 2007; Kirton, Greene, and Dean, 2007; Swan and Fox, 2010; Ahmed, 2012)

Individuating difference can lead to focusing on celebrating difference, while hiding the disadvantage of that difference, experiences of social struggles are re-framed to be of value of the organization (Ahmed et al., 2006; Ahmed, 2012). Bundling difference can contribute to seeing disadvantaged or excluded groups as one experience of inequality which can take away focus from the privileged group, the role of the powerful is not within view (Bacchi and Eveline, 2009; Walby, Armstrong, and Strid, 2017). On the other hand there were several diversity practitioners that un-bundled experiences to enable complex understandings of differentiated experiences.

Diversity work is complex, because at the same time as it broadens difference by individuating difference, which means that the majority employee group is also part of diversity work, it can also, at the same time, be polarizing in and of itself (de los Reyes, 2000). Diversity work entails working with, or rather about, everyone who is different. The view is not on the majority group in the organization, it is on those who are different, creating an implied polarity between those who are different and not different. These contradictory perspectives exist side by side in the language of diversity.

Value and underlaying assumptions about difference

The four-field model developed by Alvesson and Due Billing (2011) is an analytical tool to understand how difference is viewed and constructed and to make visible, underlaying reasons behind valuing that difference. More than one perspective can be reflected in the empirical material from one and the same diversity practitioner, perspectives can be switched in between and exemplified through different practices. These four analytical perspectives, in themselves, are also implications of how difference is constructed in organizations. By speaking about diversity and through the practices of diversity, difference is constructed through relationships and interactions in the organization (West and Fenstermaker, 1995; Bacchi and Eveline, 2009). The model provides an understanding of how the value of difference is assigned and the implications of valuing.

Equal opportunity

The equal opportunity perspective minimizes difference, by focusing on all humans equal value and rights. The underlaying assumption about difference is that there is no difference, which is grounded in social, ethical and, political justice reasoning. (Alvesson and Due Billing, 2011) From a diversity perspective, practices are focused on equality and reducing differences in

organizational processes. Diversity is framed from a social or political point of view for human rights and equality. This is present in my material in several of the interviews and is the perspective that is reflected by the majority of the respondents. Often, this is also connected to a personal and political perspective (Ahmed et al., 2006; Kirton, Greene, and Dean, 2007; Swan and Fox, 2010; Ahmed, 2012). To exemplify, one respondent expresses:

> I come from a family full of women and all of them being super strong, leading families, being 100% in charge of families. So, for me that was my reality when it comes to family. But when I started looking at […] the work environment, the work industry […] I had a lot of shocks when it comes to like the data and how few females, we had in leadership positions. (Respondent 3, Telecommunications)

From personal experience of growing up in a matriarch family situation, the shock of the inequality of the working world was a factor in deciding on a career path. Difference is not highlighted but rather, a shock that the working world exhibits inequality where there should be none, because there is no difference in the view of the respondent and from the equal opportunity perspective.

A common practice in the empirical material is to institute organizational diversity goals, coupled with a process of following up on the goals regularly. Eight out of ten respondents have overall organizational goals, some of them are public, for example most common is a target percentage out of the employee base to be women or a certain percentage of women in leadership positions. These goals, are from an equal opportunities perspective, enforced to minimize difference, focusing on representation. The goal is to have equality, because the reason is that there is no difference and hence, employee representation should mirror that when it comes to gender.

One can also look at setting goals as a practice that is closely tied to the economic showcase (Prasad and Mills, 1997). Goals are set to increase the performance of the company and contribute to the organization being run more effectively. Setting goals and following up data can be seen as a practice that makes diversity doable, goals are set, followed up, measured, and can be reached. In this way it is also part of general business operations. However, it is done from the perspective of equal opportunity, the respondents speak about these goals as they are instituted and put in place as a mechanism to drive progress towards equality and representation. The goals provide commitments in the organization and in some cases, managers are measured individually, making incentive pay contingent upon reaching gender representation targets. This can be seen as an example of a how an organizational process can be designed for equality, to mitigate structural inequality in the organization (Acker, 2006). Another example of such a process, designed to mitigate organizational inequality (Acker, 2006) is in recruitment where a couple of the diversity

practitioners work with a process to increase number of women in work units where the majority are men, and the result is tied to managers´ compensation. This has resulted in more women being hired.

Several diversity practitioners use statistics such as gender percentages of employees in leadership positions, role categories, organizational levels, and percentage of employees with foreign background. This type of data can be used to show failure and to turn that failure into action (Ahmed, 2012). This can be illustrated when one diversity practitioner reflects:

> There has been a tremendous change for me now that we have these public goals because I can now use them to bang them upon people's heads [figuratively speaking] and say: Look, we have these public goals that we have committed to our investors, now we have to achieve them, right? (Respondent 5, Telecommunications)

The public goals in this example are used as a way to gain traction and progress in diversity from an equality and representation standpoint, where the aim is to mirror society to have equal representation of gender and foreign-born. One can perceive that this is actually highlighting difference, but the foundational assumption is that since there is no difference, the organization should have equal representation that exists in society around the organization and that comes from an equality and justice point of view.

Several organizations have developed and implemented trainings or workshops, often mandatory, for example where all managers need to attend training before recruiting or as part of a general roll-out of workshops for all managers. Trainings and workshops, according to Prasad and Mills (1997) fall under the showcase of guidelines, aiming towards making diversity doable. Diversity trainings can imply that if we learn and have enough information, equality can be achieved (de los Reyes, 2000). From an equal opportunities standpoint, these trainings and workshops emphasize unconscious bias awareness training and/or critique of social norms that contribute to exclusion and inequality. It is common to invest 2-4 hours per manager to go through these trainings. In the empirical material, there is a focus on trainings as a diversity practice, which can contribute to a professionalization of the diversity role. Diversity is an expertise the organizations need, and it is the diversity practitioner that is the expert who teaches everyone about diversity. (de los Reyes, 2016) The purpose of the workshops or training can be:

> To create a greater awareness about our unconscious biases, how they impact our everyday lives, how they impact our decisions, how they impact possibilities of everyone being treated equal and have equal opportunity for career development. […] Why is this important and what can we practically do to be more inclusive? So, we provide tips and

> tricks about what employees can do. (Respondent 7, Telecommunications)

This contributes to making diversity doable, by offering tips and tricks on what to do and how to do it, making it appear that diversity and equality can be achieved by applying simple and quick tips and tricks. On the other hand, it also gives background to why we have inequalities in working life and how our behaviors contribute to that. Another diversity practitioner reflects around diversity training and workshops:

> It's partly knowledge increasing activities, well not that you participate in a workshop and then everything is solved, far from it. My goal is that it provides some kind of mutual understanding for what we are doing from a critical perspective of social norms and power. (Respondent 4, Education)

I interpret Prasad and Mills (1997) and de los Reyes (2000) to be critical of trainings around diversity and inclusion as it provides information and assumes, employees will act according the information in simplified terms. That can certainly be the case, but some examples of trainings and workshops do question and offer social justice and equal opportunity perspectives on diversity. If diversity practitioners incorporate perspectives to question power and social norms in the organizations, I would think that is something that can contribute to equality, by questioning power structures and social norms.

There are also examples when workshops do not overtly question power or social norms. One diversity practitioner reflects over a workshop with employees where some younger employees brought up that they were automatically expected to take notes in meetings because of their more junior status. This was brought up and talked about in the workshop to make visible that it is happening and prevent it from happening going forward. In describing the situation, the respondent continues:

> When talking about this we could have a dialogue and after this workshop, it was almost something that was joked about in meetings, like, now we look at you [indicating looking at a younger employee], I didn't mean to, let's look at the oldest person instead or perhaps we should rotate note takers […] not to diminish but at the same time try to keep it light, so that it is easy to relate to. (Respondent 2, Technology)

The workshop is a practice to create awareness and make visible, invisible social norms in the workplace that contributes to inequality, in this example, age. It brings into view how daily interactions at work create inequality, in this case for younger employees who are expected to take notes due to their junior status. From one perspective, this could be considered a practice to create equality, but on the other hand, the complexity of diversity is also visible. Rather than only talking about it from a perspective of inequality to be able to change

behaviors to create equality, which they did, but it is also framed as “easy to relate to” in order to “keep it light”. With a non-threatening (Ahmed, 2012) and non-confrontational perspective, the workshop can begin to create awareness of inequality, by threading lightly, not stepping on any toes. Perhaps it is perceived that diversity and inclusion is pointing the finger towards the majority group and structures of power and privilege, and in order to not point the finger, diversity is then framed in a non-threatening way. However, if it is not threating these structures, can it really begin to unravel these structures? As Ahmed (2012) says, it is a way in to start discussing inequality to perhaps later on be able to discuss inequality and power structures without keeping it light.

Some organizations host recurring events, often connected to, for example International Women’s day, Pride, or International Day of Persons with Disabilities. This can be seen as showcases of exemplars (Prasad and Mills, 1997), in other words, employer branding events are to showcase the organization as an attractive employer, and to show that the organization is valuing diversity. On the other hand, some of these events also have the purpose to contribute to increasing young women’s interest in technology, for example, and to ensure more gender equality in the technology business in the future. One respondent reflects over their event:

> We seek out girls to inspire them to apply to technical education programs and we have several female profiles and a man or two that talk about that technology is a pretty good business to be working in; there are women working there, not just men, and you make a ton of money compared to working in health care, you make probably three times as much. No, really, I think this is really important to talk about, I think we should talk about salary, money and power with young girls. (Respondent 5, Telecommunications)

Yes, it is an employer branding event, showcasing the organization as valuing diversity, however, highlighting the structural gender gap in pay, and working towards increasing women’s interests in obtaining a technical education. The organization contributes to actually changing structural difference between women and men, and the organization is in no way hiding inequality and power structures.

To conclude the equal opportunities perspective, two of the respondents told me in the interviews about a picture of how diversity from the equal opportunity standpoint can be illustrated, that they use in their diversity work. The illustration has four boxes named from the left top corner; status quo, equity, equality, and justice[21]. This illustration summarizes the equal opportunity viewpoint by recognizing privileges and injustices, and that different actions are required based on different experiences (Acker, 2006). Both diversity practitioners use

[21] See Appendix E.

this illustration to explain and talk about diversity from an equal opportunity standpoint as the ideal of what diversity is about, what diversity work is trying to achieve. Difference in this way is minimized by showing that structural inequalities construct the difference as illustrated by the fence. By evening out social inequalities through equal opportunities where support structures (the box) are differentiated depending on social disadvantage. Difference is deconstructed this way, and equality can be achieved. However, both also state, “we are not there yet” (Respondent 3 and 4, Telecommunications and Education).

Meritocracy

From a meritocratic perspective, difference is minimized, just as in the equal opportunity perspective, meaning that difference is not seen to bring value in itself. The meritocratic perspective recognizes injustices and inequality and to ensure equality, the solution is to consider merit only, to see beyond the differences. Business benefit is important in this perspective, and it is not in the best interest of the business to only consider a portion of the population for employment. The business needs to ensure that all qualified candidates receive a fair chance based on merit. (Alvesson and Due Billing, 2011; Kim and Choi, 2017) An important difference from the equal opportunity perspective is that in the meritocratic perspective, equality is desirable since it is seen to give value to the organization (Alvesson and Due Billing, 2011). In contrast to the intersectional perspective, critical racial feminist perspective and the equal opportunity perspective, the meritocratic perspective does not acknowledge power structures or social privilege, in that the solution is to ensure everyone is considered for merit only. To illustrate, one respondent talks about diversity work:

> [Diversity is about] acquiring the right competence and the right people for the purpose of the organization. I think that the more you focus on competence and personality, or personality traits, you will get the right people into the organization and then gender, ethnicity or disability is totally irrelevant. (Respondent 10, Construction)

Personality and competence are discussed from the perspective of what will be the best fit for the role that is to be performed in the organization, where differences such as gender, ethnicity or disability should not matter. Through the meritocratic perspective, this is to ensure equality. By focusing on competence, the matter of difference is minimized, because from a competence perspective, difference in itself is not a competence, and this provides a fair framework where discrimination can be avoided. If the company or the hiring manager focus on the competences needed for the job, discrimination and inequality is avoided. Respondent 10 continues; “it [gender, ethnicity or disability] is something that should not be an issue if we focus on being an

attractive employer for all people." Differences are in this statement minimized, if the meritocratic perspective is applied, all potential and current employees are equal and should be treated that way, in the best interest of everyone, for the individual and the organization to thrive.

Another diversity practitioner reflects on their work from the meritocratic perspective how diversity relates to the business:

> So, the organization has now established very clear goals, and again, the purpose is to have a solid and good talent pool to recruit from, securing many competent candidates to the company and being perceived as an attractive employer […], it is first and fore most about securing the right competence for the company. (Respondent 8, Engineering)

Coupled to the goals of the organizations is the ability to recruit the best and most competent candidates, regardless of difference, it is about making sure that the organization can recruit the best and that they are perceived as an attractive employer to be able to recruit the best. The same respondent also states that it is important to develop the recruitment process "as fairly as possible and that recruitment can happen completely without consideration to background, religion or ethnicity." Difference in this perspective is minimized and justice and equality are emphasized to ensure that the best qualified individual will be hired, regardless of difference, to be able to contribute to the business. Organizational processes, in this perspective strives to ensure that irrelevant demographic differences are not considered in the process to allow that all candidates get a fair and equal chance. I see this as an example of an effort to design the recruitment process to prevent subjectivity or discriminatory practices. According to Prasad and Mills (1997), this would not ensure that the root of the problem would be addressed, rather making it appear that by following a process, diversity is achieved. However, from the meritocratic perspective, designing a process that enables objectivity and equal treatment, is ensuring equality.

Another example where the meritocratic perspective is reflected, is when one diversity practitioner describes a discussion in the leadership team, where they discuss ways to become more diverse. One suggestion from a manger was to reach out to a federal authority to offer work to a few recent immigrants to Sweden. The diversity practitioner reflects around this:

> Well, that is great, but if we work and integrate the gender- and diversity model [that the company has implemented] and start using these tools and really start thinking of inclusion for real […]. We will get more women and more employees from other countries, and that we for real become more welcoming. If we have structured processed, not by calling the federal authority […], but we must truly work with this, deeply. It is about catching yourself every day and coaching managers by looking at how they could have done something differently that

> results in them being more professional and inclusive for real. (Respondent 10, Construction)

For this diversity practitioner, it is about ensuring that everyone gets the same fair chance by only seeing merit. The activity of giving a few recent immigrants work experience can, from the diversity practitioner perspective, be seen from the difference only, which from a meritocratic perspective is not fair and it does not serve the organization in the best way. In this way, this diversity practitioner is using the criticism that is highlighted in the showcase of exemplars (Prasad and Mills, 1997), by showcasing a few examples, equality is not achieved, rather it is just one achievement that can be used as a success story, without changing anything fundamentally. This diversity practitioner also connects professionalism with being inclusive, by only looking at merit, the business ensures fairness and equality in the best interest of the company, being professional is being fair to everyone.

In summary, difference is minimized, where diversity practitioners strive to ensure equality by designing organizational processes where differences such as gender, ethnicity, disability, or religion are not regarded. Instead the employee should be assessed based on merit only to ensure the best outcome for the individual and the organization.

Alternate values

This perspective emphasizes difference from a justice, political and ethical perspective and the value of difference lies in that employees of minority groups can strive to change the organization's values from within to a more equal organization. In the empirical material, this perspective is the least represented, one could question if it is represented at all. Perhaps an Employee Resource Group (ERG) could be seen from this perspective, where the ERG can be seen as pushing for more change, expressing that the company is not doing enough to drive equality. An ERG is a voluntary internal network in the organization focused on driving gender or general diversity issues in the organization. Some organizations facilitate and fund these internal networks as part of the diversity work. In this way the ERG is trying to change the values of the company where they work. As Alvesson and Due Billing (2011) states, the toll on individuals in the organizations trying to impact and change values of the organization can be a struggle and might therefore not be very common.

From a showcase perspective, ERG's can be seen from an exemplar perspective (Prasad and Mills, 1997), it is a positive example for the organization to show that alternate values are considered. Where perhaps instituting and ERG showcases the organizational commitment, but where the employees expect faster and more profound change than the organization can deliver on.

The other aspect of this perspective, creating organizations for minority groups by minority groups or alternate organizations is quite self-explanatory not present in the material since respondents are employees of business-oriented organizations in the private sector.

Special contribution

The special contribution perspective, sees and values difference as a benefit to the company. Difference in and of itself, is the value that individuals bring to the organization. The primary example of this perspective, is how several respondents refer to research that diversity leads to better results, it is spoken about as a general known 'fact' that it contributes to better working culture, creativity, innovation, dynamic workforce, and results. All diversity practitioners referred to, in one way or another, that diversity is good for business, it impacts business results as is also reflected in the economic showcase (Prasad and Mills, 1997). Regardless if the primary focus of diversity work is within one of the other perspectives, a clear example of when contradicting logics (Ahmed, 2012) are mixed and in this reasoning, the fundamental difference behind the logics is not questioned. I interpret this an example of how the business case for diversity has really established itself as the norm for how diversity is perceived and talked about, when research on the matter might not always be this clear (Horwitz and Horwitz, 2001; Stahl et al., 2010; Bell et al., 2011; van Dijk, Engen, and Knippenberg, 2012). This perspective manifests itself in the empirical material, in how diversity is spoken of and the underlaying idea behind the question of 'why' diversity should be something organizations should invest in.

Diversity can also be closely connected to the purpose of the business. A real estate organization, that builds and manages rental properties, has as its core business purpose to create a society for diversity, where diversity contributes to a society where human beings thrive. As an example, they reserve a specific percentage of their apartments to immigrants in need of housing. There is certainly a portion of the purpose that is from a perspective of 'this is the right thing to do' but it is framed and built on research that argues that in a diverse society human beings feel better. By mixing in diversity, everyone in society will benefit.

Analytical conclusions

The equal opportunity perspective is the most prevalent perspective in this study, the equality perspective is a foundation of diversity work. Compared to EEO work that existed before being integrated into diversity management, the equal opportunity perspective was the only perspective where political, ethical and justice reasons were reasons enough. Through this analytical model, I can see that it is one perspective among others, and it can be interpreted as an

option to frame diversity work with the main purpose of aiming for equality and justice. How you work with diversity is up to the business.

The value of applying an analytical model of four different perspectives, is that it can contribute to our knowledge and understanding of complex empirical experiences, which seldom can be seen from one perspective only. These four perspectives contribute to an understanding of diversity work where different underlaying assumptions, stemming from very different value-based systems are mixed in the name of diversity work. In this analysis, I have shown that depending on the underlaying value-system that is used to view, frame and value difference, have consequences, primarily for the ones that are named different.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Through this work it has become apparent that the primary focus of diversity work is gender. Even though the work is named diversity, gender is the difference that has the most focus, partly as it is measured and actively followed up in overall company goals. It is also around gender where organizations have the most clearly formulated actions to reach gender equality. It is almost as if the gender equality work has just been given a new name, diversity and inclusion, and the primary work is still gender mainstreaming, only now it is called diversity and inclusion. There are of course other activities as has been discovered in this thesis, however, they are not as clearly defined, measured, or followed up on as the activities and goals for gender equality. Gender is in primary view through diversity work.

With this thesis I have tried to answer the call from Prasad and Mills (1997) by asking diversity the hermeneutic question, what does diversity mean? I have looked at how difference is constructed through the language and practices of diversity and what it means to value difference in the name of diversity.

How the language of diversity can contribute to constructing difference

The language of diversity is a tool for how difference is constructed. Part of diversity work involves defining categories of difference, and how categories are defined and structured, have major impact in how these categories of difference are related to and in comparison, to the other who is doing the naming (Minow,1990 in Bacchi and Eveline, 2009; McCall, 2005). The most prevalent categories of difference that are in view in my empirical material are gender, ethnicity, and personal differences. Through the language of diversity, difference can be constructed by individuating, bundling or polarizing difference. By using these perspectives of constructing difference, the complexity of the language of diversity is emphasized and contradictory meanings are used

effortlessly within diversity management. When difference is individuated, difference is connected to bringing value to the business, as it is through the special contributions perspective, I have shown that it can hide power-relations and inequality, where social struggles are celebrated as valued difference in the name of diversity. When personal differences are included in diversity work and spoken about as equal differences to socially disadvantaged categories, the majority group of employees are in this way included in diversity work, diversity work is also about them. In this way, diversity is made appealing for everyone in the organization, everyone wants to feel included and valued and can be through the work of diversity and inclusion.

Difference can at the same time be polarized, and in the process of writing this thesis, I find that perhaps it is diversity work which is polarizing in and of itself. Diversity work entails working with everyone who is different. Someone is naming someone different, and at the same time constructing themselves as not different (Minow, 1990 in Bacchi and Eveline, 2009). By speaking about difference, you omit the ones who are not different, the ones that difference is compared to. Who is not different according to diversity? The non-different is blurry, assumed, and implied. This means that the focus of diversity is difference, difference is in view through diversity which implies that the non-different can continue to reproduce structures and privileges by not being in view. The constructing of difference is an act of power and privilege in itself. It is from this perspective where diversity can actually contribute to reproducing inequalities, when diversity constructs difference, power relations and inequalities are intact. In this way, diversity is one sided, it is an act of power to embrace diversity, on the premises of the majority. (de los Reyes, 2000; Ahmed, 2012)

What it means to value difference

I have shown that difference can be valued from four different perspectives, that reflect underlaying value-systems about difference that mean different things for the difference that is valued. The most prevalent perspective in my research is the equal opportunity perspective. The primary reason for why diversity work is important for organizations to work with, from the equal opportunity perspective is to strive for equality and justice. From this perspective, power-relations are in view and several diversity practitioners emphasize this perspective in their work, which is also reflected in the practices of diversity, striving to minimize difference and create processes that supports equality (Acker, 2006).

In the meritocratic perspective, the underlaying value-system is the same as the equal opportunity perspective, emphasizing justice and fairness, where difference in itself is not valued. What matters is competence, experience and merit, emphasizing non-difference and it is the organizations responsibility to ensure non-discriminatory processes to allow for merit only to be considered.

However, compared to the equal opportunity perspective, the value for the business is essential, by ensuring the most merited employees are recruited, rewarded and retained through non-discriminatory processes.

Difference can also be the source of value; the difference is what is celebrated to provide benefit to the organization. This can be summarized through the special contribution perspective. It is by valuing the difference in and of itself, all differences can be seen as equal and where difference is individuated, which I have shown to have negative consequences for employees or potential employees who belong to a socially disadvantaged group. This can lead to that inequality and injustices are reproduced, rather than minimized. Diversity practices that contribute to this view is primarily under the economic showcase, constructing difference as a value to the organization.

By looking at diversity management from four different perspective, I have shown that diversity is multi-faceted and complex, with different underlaying value-systems that support the work and can be used interchangeably in different contexts and for different audiences. Diversity practices can also be multifaceted and incorporate, for example both special contribution perspectives as well as the equal opportunity perspective. By picking diversity apart, my analysis provides a nuanced perspective on diversity, a deep understanding of the underlaying value-systems that are brought into diversity through the language and practices of diversity. Ahmed asks “[w]hat recedes from view when diversity becomes view?” (2012, p. 14) From my study, I can add to that question by including different aspects of diversity that might give different views. Walby, Armstrong and, Strid (2017) argues that the role of the powerful recedes from view when diversity becomes view, and I agree with them. However, if you look at diversity from the equal opportunity perspective or the alternate values perspective, the role of the powerful *is* in view. The problem with diversity might then be, that these perspectives are optional to focus on and that it is one aspect out of several aspects of diversity work. Diversity is a mix of perspectives, as I have found in the empirical material, and the human rights, equality, and power structures are perspectives, however one aspect out of several aspects of diversity work. Through the equal opportunity perspective, diversity work is framed in the organizational context as work for social rights, equality, and the role of the powerful is questioned but not as fully as it could be if it was the only perspective. This is of course written from the perspective of equal opportunity perspective, highlighting critical aspects of power relations and structures that contributes and constructs difference, non-difference, and inequality.

Meaningful change in the name of diversity?

To explore how diversity work can contribute to meaningful change, Ahmed offers a starting point: “If diversity is to remain a question, it is not one that can

be solved" (2012, p. 17). Perhaps the job of diversity is to ask questions? One such question diversity can ask is; who is in view when diversity is in view and who is not in view (Ahmed, 2012)? One of my learnings from conducting this research is that diversity is about differences, primarily minority groups. Perhaps the focus should be on the majority group instead? To take strides towards equality and justice in organizations, the view can be on the majority group and what changes the majority have to implement for equality to be a possibility. Diversity can also contribute by questioning whose experiences are in view and whose experiences are considered in the name of diversity. Ahmed offers some reflections:

> There is an implicit relation between categories and mobility that we can make more explicit. When a category allows us to mass into the world, we might not notice we inhabit that category. When we are stopped or held up by how we inhabit what we inhabit, then the terms of habitation are revelated to us. We need to rewrite the worlds from the experience of not being able to pass into the world. (2012, p. 176)

By asking questions and shifting the perspective, other experiences than the majority can be in view. Perhaps the role of diversity is to shift the view, from difference to the non-different?

To shift the view, Bacchi and Eveline (2009) proposes a coalition of engagement, where members of the organization come together on a voluntary basis for the purpose of the work to be done. People align around a cause or priority that needs to be worked on, not from a position of ones assumed identity, but where identity is self-claimed and self-identified, for the purpose of the work of the coalition. Bacchi and Eveline (2009) proposes to move away from data and facts, instead using deep listening, as a way to engage people in the work, listening to the questions employees ask and who is doing the asking.

To continue developing diversity research and work, I believe there is an opportunity for action research based on Bacchi and Eveline's (2009) proposed coalition of engagement, coupled with Ahmed's call for diversity to ask questions and shift the perspective of diversity. This could be an action research collaboration with organizations to contribute to knowledge and deeper understanding of how diversity can make an impact in organizations.

In my research, my point of departure has been diversity from the diversity practitioner perspective, and there is definitely an open space for research focusing on how diversity is experienced by the recipients of diversity work. How do employees who are named different, according to diversity, experience diversity work? Or how do employees who are deemed non-different, according to diversity, view and perceive diversity work? This would also contribute to switching the view of diversity. Another future research possibility is on how the most senior leaders of the organization understand and contribute to diversity

work in organizations? What is their view of diversity, how do they assign value to diversity and what does that mean? Research investigating these aspects has not been conducted and would add valuable knowledge to how diversity can develop in a meaningful and purposeful way.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Four layers of diversity model

Picture not included in the digital version.

Picture of model is taken from Gardenswartz and Rowe (2021).

Appendix B: Interview guide (English)

The purpose of this research is to understand diversity and inclusion work in organizations within the non-public sector in Sweden from the perspective of the diversity practitioner's work and reflections over the work.

Before we begin, I want to ask you about the information and consent form that I sent you before our interview and which you have emailed me your written consent to participate voluntarily and that it is ok (or not ok) record the interview. I just wanted to know if you have any questions that you want to discuss in regard to that form? For your information, I will use direct quotes, it will only be associated with descriptive terms as for example, diversity practitioner at xxxx sector.

If for any reason whatsoever, there is a question you do not want to answer, you just say so and we will move to the next question.

I also want to say something about my own role, I am a diversity practitioner myself when I am not a student, and we might have been in contact through professional networks. Four our meeting today, my goal is to put that role to the side and focus on my student/researcher role according to the purpose of this interview.

I estimate that this interview will take around 60 minutes (maximum 90 min). I will start with some specific questions to get a sense of your background. The second part of the interview is structured in open ended questions where I can ask follow-up questions to clarify that I have understood you correctly or ask you to expand on a topic. The final part is a couple of demographic questions to be able to say something general about the groups of respondents if you choose to answer and some general questions around your participation. I will now turn on the tape recorder.

Part 1:

What is your title?

How long have you been in this role at this company? How did you get this job?

Where in the organizational structure does the role report? To what departments?

How long have you worked in the field of diversity and inclusion? How did you get your first role working with diversity and inclusion?

Why do you work with diversity and inclusion?

What does diversity and inclusion mean to you?

Part 2:

What are the goals of the diversity and inclusion work in your organization? What do you think about these goals? How do they impact your day-to-day work?

What is the link between the overall organizational goal and the goals of diversity and inclusion?

If applicable, depending on answer above: How do you reflect over that diversity and inclusion is framed in the context of a business case (for example, linked to profit or overall organizational performance)?

Which diversity- and inclusion activities are in place in your organization? Who initiated them and whom is the owner of these activities? What is your role in these activities? What authority do you have to initiate and drive these activities? What happens when you do?

How do you drive the diversity and inclusion activities in your organization? What response or reactions to you get from managers and employees in the organization when driving diversity and inclusion activities? Gan you give an example? How do you handle these reactions? What do you think about it?

What stakeholders are key to your success in driving diversity and inclusion initiatives? Can you give an example?

How do you evaluate the effectiveness of the diversity and inclusion work? Do you know what the people that are targeted in the diversity and inclusion activities think of the work?

How do you work with the Swedish Discrimination Act? Do you involve other functions in the organizations or other co-workers in the work with aktiva åtgärder/ active measures? Can you give an example? Are there any contradictions to the diversity work in your organization and what the law states? Can you expand?

Do you have a diversity and inclusion policy in place (or other policy documents)? How important is that policy to your work and in what way?

What dilemmas do you encounter in your work? Can you describe a situation, your actions and thought-process around a dilemma?

Do you experience complexity in your work? Can you give an example? Where is the complexity? How do you handle it? How do you reflect over it?

What is the most difficult part of your job? Can you describe an example? How do you deal with that?

What is your reflection over that diversity is an area of work that ‘deals with differences’?[22]

Would you say that there is any category of employees that are not included in the work of diversity and inclusion? How come?[23]

Part 3:

How would you self-identify in terms of gender? Woman/Man/Non-binary/Do not want to state

How old are you?

Why did you say yes to participate in this research?

If I have follow-up questions or clarifications that are needed, would it be ok for me to contact you again?

Can you recommend one or two other persons that I could contact that you think might be willing to participate (from the scope of the research)?

I do not have any further questions; do you have anything you would like to add or ask before we end?

Thank you for your time and contribution. Do you have any questions before we end?

Thank you again.

[22] A question I only asked in the first couple of interviews, and later removed as discussed under the methodology chapter.
[23] Same as above.

Appendix B: Interview guide (Swedish)

Syftet med denna undersökning är att förstå mångfalds- och inkluderingsarbete i organisationer inom den privata sektorn i Sverige (eller icke offentliga) utifrån mångfaldsutövarens arbete och reflektioner över arbetet. Jag är mycket tacksam för att ni tar er tid att träffa mig och det är mycket uppskattat!

Innan vi börjar vill jag fråga dig om den information- och samtyckesblankett som jag skickade till dig före vår intervju och som du har mailat mig ditt skriftliga samtycke till att delta frivilligt och att det är ok (eller inte ok) spela in intervjun. För att förtydliga kommer jag spela in via iPhone (sparas lokalt). Jag ville bara veta om du har några frågor som du vill diskutera när det gäller den formen? All information kommer att anonymiseras och avidentifieras, jag kommer använda citat från vår intervju och det kommer publiceras i en masteruppsats vid Södertörns universitet.

Om det av någon anledning finns en fråga som ni inte vill besvara, så säger ni bara det och vi kommer att gå vidare till nästa fråga.

Jag vill också beröra min roll, när jag inte är student jobbar jag med mångfald och inkludering själv och vi kan ha varit i kontakt med varandra genom professionella nätverk. Mitt mål för vårt möte idag är att lägga den rollen åt sidan och fokusera på min roll som student/forskare i enlighet med syftet för denna intervju.

Jag uppskattar att denna intervju kommer att ta cirka 60 minuter (högst 90 minuter). Jag börjar med några specifika frågor för att få en uppfattning om din bakgrund. Den andra delen av intervjun är strukturerad i öppna frågor där jag kan ställa följdfrågor för att klargöra att jag har förstått dig rätt eller be dig att utveckla ett ämne. En sista avslutande del om demografiska faktorer för att kunna säga någon om respondenterna. Då börjar vi och jag kommer nu sätta på bandspelaren.

Del 1:

Vad är din titel?

Hur länge har du varit i den här rollen på det här företaget? Hur fick du det här jobbet?

Var i organisationen rapporterar din roll? Var i organisationshierarkin finns rollen?

Hur länge har du arbetat med mångfald och inkludering? Hur fick du din första roll med ansvar för mångfald och inkludering?

Varför arbetar du med mångfald och inkludering?

Vad betyder mångfald och inkludering för dig?

Del 2:

Vilka är målen för mångfalds- och inkluderingsarbetet i din organisation? Vad tänker du om målen? Hur påverkar dem dig i ditt arbete i vardagen?

Vad är kopplingen mellan övergripande organisatoriska mål och målen för mångfald och inkludering?

Om tillämpligt, beroende på svaret ovan: Hur reflekterar du över att mångfald och inkludering är kopplat till affärsmålen, till exempel kopplat till vinst eller övergripande effektivitet/prestation för organisationen?

Vilka mångfalds- och inkluderings-aktiviteter är viktiga i din organisation? Vem initierade dem och vem är ägare till dessa aktiviteter? Vilken är din roll i dessa aktiviteter? Vilket mandat har du? Vad händer när du använder mandatet och kan du beskriva hur du gör det?

Hur driver du mångfalds- och inkluderingsaktiviteterna i din organisation? Vad möter du i din organisation när du driver dessa frågor? Kan du beskriva ett exempel, vad som hände och hur du hanterar det? Vad tänker du om det?

Hur utvärderar du effektiviteten i mångfalds- och inkluderingsarbetet? Vet du vad de medarbetare som är målgrupper för mångfalds- och inkluderingsaktiviteterna tycker om arbetet?

Vilka intressenter/samarbetspartners, både interna och externa, är viktiga för dig att driva mångfalds-arbetet? Kan du ge exempel?

Hur jobbar du med Diskrimineringslagen? Hur arbetar du med Aktiva åtgärder? Involverar du andra funktioner i organisationerna eller andra medarbetare i arbetet? Kan du ge ett exempel? Finns de några motsättningar i din organisations mångfaldsarbete och det som Diskrimineringslagen föreskriver? Kan du berätta mer?

Finns det en mångfalds- och inkluderingspolicy på plats (eller andra policydokument)? Hur viktig är den policyn för ditt arbete och på vilket sätt?

Vilka dilemman stöter du på i ditt arbete? Kan du ge ett exempel, genom att beskriva en situation, dina handlingar och dina reflektioner kring ett dilemma?

Upplever du komplexitet i ditt arbete? Kan du ge ett exempel? Vari består komplexiteten? Hur hanterar du den? Hur reflekterar du över det?

Vad är den svåraste delen av ditt jobb? Kan du beskriva ett exempel? Hur hanterar du det?

Vad är din reflektion över att mångfald är ett arbetsområde som "hanterar skillnader/olikheter"?[24]

Skulle du säga att det finns någon kategori av anställda som inte ingår i arbetet med mångfald och inkludering? Hur kommer det sig? Vad tänker du om det?[25]

Del 3:

Hur skulle du identifiera dig själv när det gäller kön? Kvinna/Man/Icke-binär/Vill inte ange

Hur gammal är du?

Vad var det som gjorde att du tackade ja till att delta i denna undersökning?

Om det är ngt som jag skulle behöva följa upp eller klargöra, är det ok att qjag kontaktar dig igen vid ett senare tillfälle?

Kan du rekommendera en eller två personer som du tror skulle vilja vara villiga att delta i denna undersökning? Får jag säga att jag fick namnet av dig?

Jag har inga fler frågor. Har du något mer du vill ta upp eller fråga om innan vi avslutar intervjun? Tack igen.

[24] A question I only asked in the first couple of interviews, and later removed as discussed under the methodology chapter.
[25] Same as above.

Appendix C: Posts and messages to obtain respondents

In a private network group via LinkedIn, posted below message on January 25, 2021:

Picture is not included in digital version.

On LinkedIn, posted as a status update on my profile page on or around January 26, 2021:[26]

Picture is not included in digital version.

[26] On or around that date, no actual date for the post is available on LinkedIn

In a private network where members have a collaborative Teams-group, I posted below on January 26, 2021:

Picture is not included in digital version.

Second try, in a private network group via LinkedIn, posted below message on May 10, 2021:

Picture is not included in digital version.

Second try, on LinkedIn, posted as a status update on my profile page on or around May 10, 2021:[27]

Picture is not included in digital version.

[27] On or around that date, no actual date for the post is available on LinkedIn

Examples of direct message via LinkedIn. Sent on May 17, 2021 to LinkedIn contacts in an HR Manager role or diversity practitioner role:

Pictures are not included in digital version.

Appendix D: Consent and information form (English)

Consent to processing sensitive personal data in student projects at Södertörn University

I consent to Södertörn University processing the following personal data in the "master thesis on diversity- and inclusion work" student project, in accordance with the description below.

What personal data will be processed?

- name
- e-mail
- title
- company name

What sensitive personal data will be processed?

- possibly age (if you choose)
- possibly gender (if you choose)

What is the purpose of processing this personal data?

The purpose of collecting the above-mentioned information is to be able to contact the respondents for the survey, be able to ensure selection that respondents are responsible for diversity and inclusion in the company the respondent works and to be able to assess the industry for the company. Furthermore, age and self-identified gender are of interest in being able to describe the respondents in general terms from a demographic perspective. All information will be handled by me (Erika Wirén). All information will be anonymized in the report and the data collection will be deleted when the thesis is approved. Of course, it is completely voluntary to provide sensitive personal information and "do not want to provide" is also an option.

An ethical review has been conducted by the supervisor*:* Eva Karlberg

The ethical review has been conducted in accordance with the principles for research ethics that are set by the Swedish Research Council. Read more here.

What is the legal basis for processing personal data?

Personal data is processed with **your explicit consent**. Participation in the study is entirely voluntary. You may recall your consent at any time, without stating a reason. There will be no negative consequences if you do not consent to the processing of your personal data.

Storage and security: Interviews will be recorded via iPhone and transcribed, and after transcription, the digital recording will be deleted. Transcription will take place in the word processing program Word and will be anonymized.

Storage period and deletion: Personal data will be saved until the thesis is approved and there after deleted.

What are my rights?

According to the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), you are entitled to know what elements of your personal data are being processed. You are also entitled to have this corrected if it is incorrect. You may also request to have it erased or limit its use, or object to the processing of personal data. You are also entitled to data portability, i.e. the right to transfer personal data from one controller (the party legally responsible for processing) to another without being prevented from doing so. You may recall your consent at any time, without stating a reason.

Who do I contact if my data is wrong or if I want to withdraw my consent?

If you need to have incorrect information corrected, add missing information (correction) or withdraw your consent (recall) you should contact the student and/or their supervisor (see contact details below). You can also contact Södertörn University's data protection offer via dataskydd@sh.se.

Data controller: Södertörn University is legally responsible for how the student processes personal data in their essay/project. You can always contact Södertörn University via e-mail: registrator@sh.se or by calling +46 (0)8 608 4000.

Data protection officer: If you have questions or complaints about how your personal data is processed, you can contact Södertörn University's data protection officer via dataskydd@sh.se.

Complaints: If you are unhappy with how the university has processed your personal data, you can submit a complaint to the Swedish Data Protection Authority. You can contact them by emailing datainspektionen@datainspektionen.se or calling them on +46 (0)8 657 6100.

Contact details for the student(s) and supervisor:

Master thesis, Sociology, Institution for Social Sciences

Supervisor: Eva Karlberg

Student: Erika Wirén

……

My signature below confirms that I have received the above information and understand how my personal data will be processed. I am aware that my

participation is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw my participation in the study without providing a reason.

_____

Place and date

_____

Signature

_____

Name in block capitals

Given strict restrictions due to COVID-19 and if you wish to participate, please read the appended information and consent form carefully. Then reply to this email with the following text:

I confirm that I have read the information and consent form appended to an email to me on Month XX, 2021. I understand how my personal data will be processed. I am aware that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from participation in the study without providing a reason. Though this email, I provide my consent to my personal data being processed as part of the diversity- and inclusion work study.

Appendix D: Consent and information form (Swedish)

Samtycke till behandling av känsliga personuppgifter i samband med studentarbete vid Södertörns högskola

Jag samtycker till att Södertörns högskola behandlar följande personuppgifter i studentarbetet ”masteruppsats om mångfald- och inkluderingsarbete” i enlighet med nedanstående beskrivning. Syftet med uppsatsen är att undersöka mångfald- och inkluderingsarbetet i organisationer utifrån de personer som är ansvariga för arbetet; hur de bedriver arbetet och egna reflektioner kring arbetet.

Vilka personuppgifter kommer att behandlas?

- namn
- e-postadress
- titel
- namn på företaget du är anställd vid

Vilka känsliga personuppgifter kommer att behandlas?

- Ev. ålder (om du väljer att delge)
- Ev. könstillhörighet (om du väljer att delge)

Vad är syftet med behandlingen av personuppgifter?

Syftet med insamling av ovan nämnda uppgifter är att kunna föra kontakt med respondenterna för undersökningen, kunna säkerställa urval att respondenter är ansvariga för mångfald och inkludering på det företag respondenten arbetar och att kunna bedöma bransch för företaget. Vidare är ålder och självidentifierad könstillhörighet av intresse för att kunna beskriva respondenterna i generella termer utifrån demografiska perspektiv. Alla uppgifter kommer hanteras av mig (Erika Wirén). All information kommer att anonymiseras i rapporten och datainsamlingen kommer att gallras när uppsatsen är godkänd. Självklart är det helt frivilligt att uppge känsliga personuppgifter och ”vill inte uppge” är också ett alternativ.

Etikprövning har skett av handledare*:* Eva Karlberg

Etikprövning sker i enlighet med de forskningsetiska principerna fastställda av Vetenskapsrådet. Läs mer här.

På vilken rättslig grund kommer personuppgifterna att behandlas?

Personuppgifterna behandlas med **ditt uttryckliga samtycke**. Deltagande i studien är helt frivilligt. Du kan när som helst återkalla ditt samtycke utan att ange orsak. Om du inte samtycker till personuppgiftsbehandlingen kan du göra det utan att drabbas av negativa konsekvenser.

Lagringsform och skyddsåtgärder: Intervjuer kommer att spelas in via iPhone och transkriberas och efter transkribering raderas den digitala inspelningen. Transkribering kommer ske i ordbehandlingsprogrammet Word och kommer anonymiseras.

Lagringstid och gallring: Personuppgifter kommer att sparas till dess att uppsatsen är godkänd och kommer därefter att gallras.

Vilka är mina rättigheter?

Enligt EU:s dataskyddsförordning har du rätt att få ta del av samtliga personuppgifter om dig som hanteras (registerutdrag) Du har även rätt att få dina uppgifter rättade vid fel. Du har även rätt att begära radering, begränsning eller invända mot behandling av personuppgifter. Fortsättningsvis har du rätt till dataportabilitet, dvs. rätt att överföra personuppgifter från en personuppgiftsansvarig till en annan ”utan att hindras”. Du kan när som helst återkalla ditt samtycke utan att behöva ange orsak.

Vem ska jag vända till om uppgifter är felaktiga eller jag vill ångra mitt samtycke?

Behöver du få felaktiga uppgifter rättade, komplettera med saknade uppgifter (rättelse) eller ångrar du ditt samtycke (återkallelse) kan du i första hand kontakta ansvarig student och/eller dennes handledare (se kontaktuppgifter nedan). Du kan även vända dig till Södertörns högskolans dataskyddsombud på dataskydd@sh.se.

Personuppgiftsansvarig: Södertörns högskola är juridiskt ansvarig för studentens personuppgiftsbehandlingar i studentarbeten. Du kan alltid nå Södertörns högskola via e-post registrator@sh.se eller telefon 08 608 40 00.

Dataskyddsombud: Har du funderingar eller klagomål om hur dina personuppgifter behandlas kan du alltid vända dig till Södertörns högskolas dataskyddsombud på dataskydd@sh.se.

Klagomål: Är du inte nöjd med högskolans hantering av dina personuppgifter har du alltid rätt att lämna klagomål till Datainspektionen. Du når dem via e-post: datainspektionen@datainspektionen.se eller telefon 08-657 61 00.

Kontaktuppgifter till ansvarig(a) student(er) och handledare:

Masteruppsats, Sociologi, Samhällsvetenskapliga institutionen

Handledare: Eva Karlberg

Student: Erika Wirén

……

Genom mitt undertecknande nedan bekräftar jag att jag har tagit del av ovanstående information och är införstådd med hur mina personuppgifter kan komma att behandlas. Jag är medveten om att mitt deltagande är helt frivilligt och att jag kan avbryta mitt deltagande i studien utan att ange något skäl.

Datum och ort:

_____

Underskrift:

_____

Namnförtydligande:

_____

På grund av digitala intervjuer i och med COVID-19 restriktioner går det bra att svara i mail med bekräftelse enligt nedan:

Jag bekräftar att jag har tagit del av informations och-samtyckesblankett som bifogades i e-post 2021-0x-xx till mig. Jag är införstådd med hur mina personuppgifter kan komma att behandlas. Jag är medveten om att mitt deltagande är helt frivilligt och att jag kan avbryta mitt deltagande i studien utan att ange något skäl. Jag bekräftar med denna e-post att jag ger mitt samtycke till att mina personuppgifter behandlas inom ramen för studien kring mångfald- och inkluderingsutövare i svenska organisationer.

Appendix E: Status quo vs. equity vs. equality vs. justice illustration

Illustration not included in the digital version.

Illustration from The Avarna Group (n.d.)