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Understanding "Diversity in Organizations" Paradigmatically and Methodologically
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Summary

This paper is part of a larger dissertation project named: *A Production of Diversity: Appearances, Ideas, Interests, Actions, Contradictions and Praxis*. In this dissertation project, which is planned to be completed by the first half of 2006, I have attempted to describe, understand and analyse a process of diversity production at a large manufacturing company, which is located in Sweden and owned by a large American company (for the reason of confidentiality the name of the studied company, which is a large, technical-oriented company, has been changed and some of the information is modified, while another cannot be offered because it would expose the company. The studied manufacturing company will from now be called Diversico).

My ambition with this paper is to call attention to different paradigmatical and methodological ways of understanding and studying "diversity in organizations". A starting-point for my discussion here is an assumption that researchers, by exploring different social phenomena (including "diversity in organizations"), bring their different sets of assumptions to what the studied phenomenon is (or could be) but also at the same time make assumptions on what organizations are (or could be). In other words, researchers, by studying "diversity in organizations" (as well as other social phenomena) construct ideas of diversity by positioning this phenomenon differently, asking different questions or designing research projects differently. In that sense I try to actively engage in both showing some benefits and limits in the present literature and searching for new theoretical and methodological possibilities. In that sense, I give some empirical illustrations inspired by one of these other possibilities. More concretely, I show how my study fulfils images of diversity as actively produced and positioned significant issues, and as domination of particular sectional interests. Furthermore I give illustrations of universalization and naturalization of some aspects of diversity, as identified in the studied process of diversity production at the manufacturing company.

Keywords: Diversity, Critical Theory, Social-Historical Context and Domination

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Background

Since the beginning of the 1990s the study of "diversity in organizations" has become an increasing area of interest for organizational scholars. Several scholars claim that diversity as a topic for organizational study has emerged in the U.S. and that its appearances might be related to the anti-discrimination movement (e.g. Ashkanasy et al., 2002) that began in the U.S. in the 1960s, and which challenged occupational segregation.

Some of the first organizational contributions have been published in the context of the U.S. and in some of them researchers plead for a more business-oriented view on diversity (e.g. Thomas R., 1990) by paying their attention on performance of (culturally) diverse groups (e.g. Watson et al., 1993).

As the research area focusing on "diversity in organizations" has been developed by scholarly publications, it has, apart of being spread in contexts outside the U.S.[2], been also reviewed and divided in different categories. For instance Fine (1996) reviewed and divided the literature on "diversity" depending on what central themes characterized those publications. In the study of Litvin (2000), the author focused on the history of scholarly publications on "workforce diversity" while in the study of Lorbiecki and Jack (2000), the authors paid their attention on turns in "diversity management" history. Finally in the study of Omanovic (2002) the author focused on the underlying assumptions on which some of the earlier published studies were based.

One of the first publications which was paying attention to the strands of research on, as it is labelled, "cultural diversity in the workplace", was the article "Cultural Diversity in the Workplace: the State of the Field" written by Marlene Fine (1996). In this article the author divided research on (cultural) diversity into three categories: 1) general overview of diversity and related issues (e.g. problem-solving, decision making and access to new customers); 2) studies that offer a theoretical perspective and suggest research directions for studying diversity in organizations (e.g. studies focusing on understanding both the organizational behaviour of members of particular groups and diversity in organizations) and 3) research studies specifically on diversity in organizations.

Four years later, Deborah Litvin (2000) in her dissertation project also examined the history of scholarly publications on, as the author called it, "workforce diversity". Litvin´s analysis is based on "other researchers´ readings of their own assembled texts of workplace diversity"[3]. The purpose of this review is, as the author stated it, to document academia's limited role as "follower" rather than "leader" in the production processes of "workforce diversity".

In the study of Lorbiecki and Jack that was published in the same year as Litvin´s dissertation (2000), the authors identified four overlapping turns in ideas on the evolution of diversity management in the literature, which they labelled demographic, political, economic and critical. Each turn represents, according to the authors, shift in thinking about diversity management.

Finally in the study of Omanovic (2002), the author focuses his attention on the theoretical construction(s) of "diversity" by trying to answer the question: why and how is "diversity"

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[2] *For instance in the contexts of Canada (Taylor, 1995), Britain (Lorbiecki, 2001a, 2001b, and Jack & Lorbiecki, 2000), South Africa (Ngambi and Nkomo, 2000), Denmark (Hagedorn-Rasmussen and Kamp, 2002; Risberg and Soederberg 2004), Belgium (Zanoni and Janssens, 2002) and Sweden (Adu-Gyan, 2002; Leijon and Omanovic, 2001 and Widell, 2002).*

[3] *The studies of Fine (1996), Prasad and Mills (1997) and Wentiling and Palma-Rivas (1997).*

defined as it is in the literature. By identifying and contrasting different approaches on diversity the author's ambition is to stimulate different understanding of this phenomenon.

While in this section I have given a brief overview of a development and some directions within the research area focusing on "diversity in organizations"[4] I will, in the following section extend my own analysis (Omanovic, 2002), which is briefly introduced above, by showing how different researchers position the issues of "diversity in organizations" differently, ask different questions or design research projects differently. These illustrations of different ways of understanding and studying "diversity in organizations" not only, as will be shown, give a sense of how different researchers position the issues of "diversity in organizations" differently, but also they will show that diversity is not only one single thing, rather there are different ideas and interests related to this phenomenon that impact our view(s) of what diversity is or could be. A starting-point for the discussion about (different) understandings of "diversity in organizations" is Burrell and Morgan's (1979) and Morgan's (1980) arguments and ways of reasoning on paradigmatic differences.

Understanding Diversity in Organizations Paradigmatically and Methodologically

THE VARIABLE ANALYTIC TRADITION(S)

A number of (organizational) researchers focusing on diversity in organizations have investigated this phenomenon from perspectives that are inspired by the functionalist paradigm[5] and its different traditions (as described in Burrell and Morgan, 1979). In many of these writings diversity is often used with normative connotations with regard to the distribution of certain characteristics such as ethnicity, gender and age within an organization.

The researcher's task in the research inspired by these traditions is to collect objective data (e.g. by using survey methods), which is observable and measurable. The researchers often use a hypothesis testing inspired approach (e.g. Watson et al., 1993, Orlando, 2000 and Harrison et al., 1998) concerning the way in which the organization functions are grouped around goal orientation and maintenance. In other words, in order to study "diversity in organizations", it is necessary to objectify this concept (e.g. cultural diversity, racial diversity, or surface and deep level diversity) and make it into operational variables, capable of being measured (e.g. white and minorities/black, Hispanic, Asian, and American, or diverse culturally groups and homogeneous groups). In that way, this perspective may contribute to the description of diversity orderly patterns. However, a result of this objectifying and

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[4] *I put quotas on the term diversity in organizations because it is really difficult to put boundaries on what diversity literature is. There are many issues that could be classified as "diversity" issues (e.g. demography, discrimination, equal opportunity, research on gender and race, team-work, managing/valuing diversity/differences and the like). Different researchers labelled, as shown above, also differentlly the subject of their study (e.g. cultural diversity in the workplace, Fine, 1996 or workforce diveristy, Litvin, 2000). Furthermore, different authors, as it will be shown later in this paper, even though they use the term diversity, it is not necessary that they are talking about diversity. Rather their studies are focused, for instance, on meaning making (how people make sense of differences – how do they do differences) or how the production of cultural- ideological control has shaped the constructions of diversity and managing diversity in the context of the U.S.*

[5] *The researchers producing this discourse have been described and labelled in different ways. For instance, in Alvesson and Deetz (2000) they are labelled as methodological determinists, functionalists, normatives, covering law theorists, or as I labelled this section – research/ers practising the variable analytic tradition. From my point of view this term is the most suitable for the literature I will discuss in this section.*

"freezing" of what sex, nationality, class, race or diversity is, according to critics, is important options for reinterpretation, problematizing and questioning are lost. [6]

Furthermore, what is in common for the above-mentioned studies is that all of the above mentioned authors are located in the U.S. Some of them never spoke about the context of U.S. or other countries, while others, although mentioning that their works are based on experiences from the U.S., (e.g. from the large university located in south-western United States; Watson, et al., 1993) do not tackle the historical and structural complexity of workplace diversity in this context. The lack of historical origin and context of different societies as well as different organizational contexts in this kind of writings have, in the way, perceived diversity and its management as ahistorical and universal. These studies are, thus prescriptive in a way that attach themselves to the (American) experiences from diversity, without paying attention that their works are written in a context where the ideas of diversity have a certain kind of meaning.

THE INTERPRETATIVE TRADITION(S)

Unlike the variable analytic traditions, in an increasing number of studies inspired by interpretative traditions, the researchers aim at understanding meaning of diversity (but without influencing it). When interpretative researchers are doing diversity (or gender and differences), they are not necessarily talking about diversity (see for instance the studies of Hermon, 1996; Barry and Bateman, 1996; Gilbert and Ivancevich, 2000 and Gibson and Zellmer-Bruhn, 2001)[7]. They are also talking about other things, such as meaning making (e.g. how people make sense of diversity), understanding the concept of teamwork across national and organizational cultures (see Gibson and Zellmer-Bruhn, 2001), or on what is the shared understanding among executives and advisory panels representing diverse groups of employees (Hermon, 1996). In other words, interpretativists are very concerned with "how" questions and their studies are both descriptive and empirical.

Furthermore, the interpretative traditions, unlike the variable analytic traditions treat orderly patterns of diversity as created, constructed arrangements with latent possibilities, which can be transformed. Interpretative researchers believe, thus that diversity is socially constructed through the words, symbols, relations and behaviours of organizational members. In other words, diversity within this perspective is regarded as a negotiated and constructed process, and the researchers attend to the language, meanings and symbolic action by which diversity is created, sustained, and changed. Some interesting research questions within this perspective would be: How do organizational members (and researchers) "do diversity"? or How do they "do diversity" by valuing or managing diversity?

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[6] *For example, this kind of organizational literature mostly conceives of ethnicity or sex as discrete demographic variables and of minorities' or/and women as homogeneous categories. Thus, the social meanings of sex and ethnicity are viewed as "normal" or "essential" and it becomes very difficult to explain variation in gender relations in, for instance, the context of race and class.*

[7] *Apart from these organizational studies inspired by interpretative traditions there are also sevorral sociological studies, such as the studies of West and Zimmerman (1987) "Doing Gender" and West and Fenstermarker (1995) study "Doing Difference". Their theoretical arguments, that gender and differences are socially constructed are, from my point of view, highly relevant because they give a new way of thinking about these categories by allowing researchers to position the issues differently and ask different questions. Their line of reasoning could, in turn, be applied on organizational studies focusing on "diversity in organizations", and leads to a different (in comparison to the earlier discussed variable analytical traditions) understanding of this phenomena.*

SOME ALTERNATIVE POSSIBILITIES

Finally, there is also a group of (organizational) researchers and researchers from other disciplines, such as sociology and economic history that share the interpretative researchers view but who have also placed their emphasis upon some other issues that could be classified in the human radical paradigm (as described in Burrell and Morgan, 1979 and Morgan, 1980). Signs of a critical orientation in organizational researcher works could be, for instance, recognized in their intentions to challenge "truth" in ways that subvert taken-for-granted ways of thinking and to try to avoid established ways of thinking (e.g. Litvin 2000 and Lynch, 1997) or by identifying a way by which an alternative interpretation of motives and arguments for diversity in the context of the U.S. could be possible (Litvin, 2000). History, context, process, interactivity, power relations, power dynamics, and marginalized organizational members are some issues and directions that are suggested or raised in as well organizational as in some other discipline research. For instance, in the sociological inspired study of Amott and Matthaei (1997), the authors share the interpretative researchers view that gender, race-ethnicity and class are not natural or biological categories than social constructed, but the authors stress that it is difficult to discuss these categories outside of historical time and place, and separately from one another. Thinking about gender, race-ethnicity and class, then, necessitates, as the authors emphasize, thinking historically about power and economic exploitation.

The studies of these authors, unlike the works of the variable analytic inspired researchers and the interpretative research indicate that diversity is (or could be) seen and studied as an issue, which is embedded in historical time and place, and power relations. In order to be able to study these processes and aspects of "diversity in organizations" (or other phenomena such as gender, democracy, multiculturalism, power and racial practices) they usual use qualitative approaches, such as conventional or another branch of ethnography, called critical ethnography[8].

The different ways of understanding and studying "diversity in organizations", as illustrated in this section, lead us to different questions, as well as possible results and implications for organizations (see table 1 on page 7).

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[8] *Some aspects of the critical ethnography, as introduced in Thomas J (1993), focusing on the studied phenomenon in terms of injustices (e.g. discrimination and marginalization) and domination of, for instance, particular sectional interests.*

Table 1: A summary of multiparadigmatic view of "diversity in organizations"			
Perspectives	**Variable analytic traditions**	**Interpretative traditions**	**Alternatives**
View of diversity	Ahistorical, essential and universal phenomenon.	Socially constructed phenomenom (through words, symbols and behaviours of org. members).	Socially constructed, process, history and context oriented view.
Implications for research	Objective approach; focus on static, status quo; science generates objective knowledge generalization.	Subjective approach, focus on here and now processes of interaction, understanding of particular events and actor´s.	Subjective approach; focus e.g. on power and domination dynamics, rhetoric, discourses, micro-practices and marginalized org. members.
Relevant questions	Practical problems, with a desire to improve group organizational performance, a kind of " how to succeed" questions.	How are we "doing" diversity? How do we "do" diversity by "valuing differences" or "managing diversity"?	Who is driving managing diversity and why?; What are (e.g.) the HR managers' discourses of diversity in the workplace?; and How has "a diversity machine" been refined, packaged and spread?
Favored methods	Quantitative data and hypothesis testing research.	(Conventional) ethnography, phenomenology and ethnomethodology.	Conventional/critical ethnography.
Posible results and implications for organizations	Orderly patterns. Control and expertise. E.g. focusing on and changing attitudes and behavior within different groups.	Commitment and quality work life. E.g. promotion and implementation of diversity as a learning process.	Participation and changes. E.g. focusing on diversity in terms of injustices (e.g., racism or discrimination); social control (e.g. language, norms and cultural rules); or/and power and domination

In some of the discussed organizational studies, the researchers call for alternative perspectives and methodologies of studying "diversity in organizations"[9] and indicate that it is necessary to be able to look at "diversity in organizations" with the different set of lenses that are really paying attention to issues such as history, context, process, power, and marginalized organizational members. Which ways are those ways?

There are multiple perspectives that pay attention on the above-mentioned issues, and each of them would allow us to do the work in a particular way. To continue to search for new paradigmatical and methodological possibilities for understanding and studying "diversity in organizations" (initiated by Fine, 1996, Litvin, 2000, Lorbiecki and Jack, 2000 and Omanovic, 2002) in the following section I will present and discuss one of these possibilities. The motives and reasons of choosing this theoretical orientation, which is, in my interpretation of Burrell and Morgan's work located in the radical humanist paradigm, are because it develops specific forms of critical thinking that is so far neglected in research on "diversity in organizations". In other words, this theoretical orientation can, from my point of view, contribute to new possibilities of knowing this phenomenon by allowing researchers, among other things, to understand and study "diversity in organizations" as a social-historical creation, which is accomplished in conditions of struggle and domination.

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[9] *For instance, the studies of Fine (1996) and Omanovic (2002) for critical theories; the study of Litvin (2000) for designing future research on "workforce diversity" upon "organizational ethnography or one consisting of extensive and comprehensive interviews" or the study of Lorbiecki and Jack (2000) in which the authors argue to awareness of "alternative ways" of studying "diversity in organizations" that should be reflexive and historically sensitive.*

Viewing "Diversity in Organizations" through Lenses of Critical Theory

INTRODUCTION

In this section I present and discuss, in brief, one of the alternative views for understanding and studying "diversity in organizations", to the already discussed views of diversity that are grounded in the variable analytic traditions and the interpretative traditions. This alternative view, which is only one of many other possible views on diversity, is grounded in the critical perspective of the Frankfurt school. Thus, I am not going to discuss the development in, for instance postmodernism, feminist theory or cultural studies – all of which nowadays are often included as part of critical theory[10] and which also, in my mind, can contribute to new possibilities of understanding and studying "diversity in organizations". The critical perspective of the Frankfurt school allows, as will be shown later in this section, researchers to position the diversity issue – in comparison with the variable analytic and the interpretative traditions – differently (e.g. ask different questions and/or design research projects and interpret/analyse empirical material differently).

THE ORIGINS AND SOME POSITIONS OF CRITICAL THEORY

Although the term critical theory and its theoretical orientation owe much to Kant, Hegel, Freud, Marx and Lukács (e.g., Agger, 1998; Burill, 1987; Kellner, 1989; Deetz and Kersten, 1983 and Held, 1980) the term was first introduced by the members of the Institute of Social Research (Horkheimer and Marcuse) in 1937 (Burill, 1987)[11]. Unlike the earlier social sciences, the Institute of Social Research should have "interdisciplinary nature and aim towards understanding society as a whole, a totality of dialectic connections" (Burill, 1987). Even though the themes covered by the Frankfurt school are extensive and vary during different periods (as well as between the original members), the hope of the original members of the school was always, as Held (1980:38) in his analysis of the Frankfurt school stated, that their work would help establish a critical social consciousness able to penetrate existing ideology, sustain independent judgement and be capable of maintaining its freedom to think things might be different. For instance, according to Marcuse, one of the original members of the Frankfurt school, the aim of the critical theory is to analyze society in the light of its use and unused or abused capabilities for improving the humane condition. In that sense, the certain focus should be paid on the established way of organizing society against other possible ways. Thus, a specific historical practice should be measured against its own historical alternatives (Marcuse, 1994:xlii).

An important concept/position of the Frankfurt theorists is uncovering and demystifying domination found in people's everyday experiences and activities. This concept/position become known as ideology critique. In that sense, the Frankfurt theorists´ critique of ideology[12] was very much directed to critique of the dominant influence within social

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[10] *See for instance Agger´s (1998) review of the varieties of critical social theory.*

[11] *After Horkheimer assumed the directorship of the Institute in the year 1930 most of the original members became well known as members of the Frankfurt school (Held, 1980:29). During the 1930´s the Institute was, because of the Nazis´rise to power, transferred to Geneva (February, 1933) and then to Columbia University in New York (1935). By 1953 the Institute was re-establish in Frankfurt (Held, 1980:38).*

[12] *Ideology is referred by the Frankfurt theorist as domination, which is conceptualized as a tendency to view society as an internalized and potent piece of nature (see Agger, 1998:83). Thus, ideology refers to a distorted conceptualization, collectively produced, sometimes institutionalized, explanations of how society functions and the role of individuals in it. It is viewed as distorted because it served, from the Frankfurt theorists point of view, to keep an individual mired in false consciousness while pretending to free him. Following this line of reasoning, the notion of false consciousness is seen as*

sciences (positivism) and technological rationality by challenging one of the major assumptions of positivism "nature" or an external reality. The technological rationality has, according to Marcuse (1994), become totalitarian because it creates a kind of one-dimensional thinking and one-dimensional society, which is only one kind of thinking (about society):

> *The way in which a society organizes the life of its members involves an initial choice between historical alternatives which are determined by the inherited level of the material and intellectual culture. The choice itself results from the play of the dominant interests. It anticipates specific modes of transforming and utilizing man and nature and rejects other modes. It is one "project" of realization among others. But once the project has become operative in the basic institutions and relations, it tends to become exclusive and to determine the development of the society as a whole. As a technological universe, advanced industrial society is a political universe, the latest stage in the realization of a specific historical project – namely, the experience, transformation, and organization of nature as the mere stuff of domination (Marcuse, 1994:xlviii).*

In other words, in Frankfurt theorist mind, the positivist tradition helps somehow to get the impression that social relations resemble relations in the natural world and thus cannot be changed significantly. The Frankfurt theorists reject, therefore positivism as world of adjustment, the world that perceived as rational and necessary – thus unchangeable. Unlike the positivists, the critical theorists attempt to develop a mode of consciousness and cognition that breaks the identity of reality and rationality, viewing social facts not as inevitable constraint, but as a pieces of history that can be changed (Agger, 1991:109, see also Held, 1980 and Alvesson and Deetz, 2000). The Frankfurt theorists assume, in other words, that societal conditions are historically created (and influenced by the asymmetries of power and certain interests), and thus they can be changed. In that sense, this theoretical perspective could be viewed as the perspective that is oriented towards challenging rather than taking for granted that which is already established.

Finally, in this introduction of the origins and main positions of the Frankfurt school, I will in brief introduce some interpretations of the work of Habermas, Adorno´s assistant, who is usually introduced as the leading Frankfurt theorist of the so-called second generation of the Frankfurt school (e.g. Burill, 1987 and Alvesson and Deetz, 2000). Habermas conceives of his project as an attempt to develop a theory of society with a practical intention: the self-emancipation of people from domination (Held, 1980). Habermas believes that only through self-reflection and communication people (really) can control their own destiny and restructure society in humane ways. In other words, only through interaction and communication people can, in Agger´s (1998:94) interpretation of Habermas work, master society, forming social movements and achieving power. From his point of view, a successful communication is underpinned by four (validity) claims/criteria: *comprehensibility*, *sincerity*, *truthfulness* and *legitimacy*. The ideal speech situation for Habermas is that in which chances for dialog are equal for all participants:

> *The structure of communication itself produces no constraints if and only if, for all possible participants, there is a symmetrical distribution of chances to choose and to apply speech acts. (Habermas, cited by Alvesson and Deetz, 2000:91 and Alvesson, 1997:84)*

The opposite to undistorted communication that can lead to the ideal speech situation, is according to Alvesson and Deetz´s (2000) and Alvesson´s (1997) interpretation of Habermas

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the acceptance of an un-reflected notion of the society (or organizations) as given, as truth without interpretation and thinking by individuals who have "forgotten" the processes that make up reality and their participation in those processes (Eyerman, 1981a and 1981b).

theory of communicative action, systematically distorted communication, in which for instance power relations, ideological dominance (e.g. technocratic consciousness and instrumental reasoning)[13], distorted descriptions and disinformation influence the communication process. A central aspect of systematically distorted communication is that it follows the principle of the dominance of "goal rational acting systems" (Alvesson, 1997:85), which means that the imperative that follows from "given goal/means relations consistently is given priority and dominates the agenda".[14]

The work of the Frankfurt theorists has also been criticized on a few fronts, such as their critique of the domination of nature as a technological utopisam or a romantic strain,[15] as well as the critique of the Habermas theory of communicative action for its overemphasizes the possibility of rationality as well as the value of consensus and puts too much weight on the clarity and rationality potential of language and human interaction. Furthermore, the poststructuralist inspired researchers have criticized the aim of the earlier Frankfurt theorists towards understanding society (or different social phenomena) as a whole or totality.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF CRITICAL WORK WITHIN ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES

As I have earlier indicated, several traditions within critical theory could be recognized, which does not make easier for anyone who wants to give a sense of critical work within organizational studies. Furthermore, in some studies, authors tried to overcome the distinction, for instance between structuralist and humanist arguments (e.g. Benson, 1977) or between interpretative and humanist (critical) arguments (Alvesson and Billing, 1997). However, taking into account the previous discussion and introduction of some main arguments and directions within the critical theory (of the Frankfurt school), I am in this section providing a very short rather than a more detailed review of the organizational and management research. In this we can recognize some arguments of the radical humanist paradigm, or more specified critical theory.

Unlike the variable analytic tradition, which has a much longer tradition within the organizational and management research, various themes characterized by the critical theory (of the Frankfurt school), from the late 70-ies have also begun to appear in organizational studies. For instance, in some of the studies one can recognize a prevailing interest in ideology critique, expressed in form of naturalization where a socially/historically constructed world is treated as necessary or natural (e.g. Deetz and Keresten, 1983 and Deetz, 1992). Another theme that could be identified in the discussed organizational writings is a kind of universalization, in which particular sectional interests have a tendency to become universalized and experienced as everyone's best interests while conflicting interests are pretty much suppressed or ignored (e.g., Deetz, 1985 and 1992).[16]

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[13] *According to Habermas (as interpreted in Alvesson and Deetz, 2000 and Held, 1980) instrumental reasoning can potentially be a productive form of thinking. However, its highly specialized, means-fixed character contribute to the objectification of people and nature, and thus to various forms of destruction.*

[14] *For instance, effectiveness interests dominates, according to Alvesson (1997:85), conceptions of what is relevant, important, and legitimate, and give little room for questioning more basic conditions.*

[15] *In spite of this critique of the domination of nature and the suggestion by some of the Frankfurt theorists that social changes might be assessed by the extent to which it achieves the "redemption" some of these ideas have, as Agger (1998) stated, been put into practice by environmentalists and theorists of technology and nature.*

[16] *In the study of Alvesson and Deetz (2000), the authors direct their critique to organizational studies inspired by the functionalist traditions in which conflicting interests are often suppressed and ignored. Treated as such they are, as the author stated, exercised only occasionally and usually reactively, often being represented simply as economic commodities or "costs".*

An important process through which individuals and groups become freed from repressive social and ideological conditions, upon the development and articulation of human consciousness – emancipation is discussed in the study of Alvesson and Willmott (1992). In this regard the authors argue for, as they called it, microemancipation, which could, according to the authors, be materialized by using the critical ethnography.

In some organizational studies, researchers were analysing organization as structure of communicative action (Forester, 1983 and Alvesson, 1997). These studies are inspired by the work of Habermas who is usually introduced as the leading Frankfurt theorist of the so-called second generation. In regard to this tradition of critical organizational studies, the authors pay their attentions, among other things, on communicative distortions that are, as Forester (1983) shows, in no sense natural or socially necessary and on the explorations of the structure of communication that is systematically distorted because of power relations or dominance involved in these processes (Alvesson, 1997:84).

Finally by investigating organizations, the researchers have also focused on issues such as a development of organizational dialectic, by showing among other things, how a social production of social reality depends upon the power of various participants, and how they can control the direction of this social production (Benson, 1977) and formulating and applying a dialectical method (Benson, 1982 and 1983; Grimes and Cornwall, 1987; and McGuire, 1988). For instance, by using a dialectical view, Grimes and Cornwall (1987) examined a process of disintegration of an organization while the focus in the work of McGuire (1988) was on interorganizational networks. Although a dialectical view, as presented in the studies of Benson (1977 and 1982) is, in my interpretation, consistent with a critical perspective, the concepts of conflict, contradiction and praxis seems to figure more prominently in organizational studies inspired by this view than in other presented organizational studies in this section.

EMPIRICAL ILLUSTRATIONS FROM MY STUDY

After a short introduction of a critical theory of the Frankfurt school and some of its central positions/conceptions, as well a few illustrations of organizational studies inspired by some thoughts of this research tradition, I am in the following section giving illustrations of some implications for my own study of diversity at the large manufacturing company, which is located in Sweden. In that sense I analyze below two of these characteristics by giving illustrations of how my study fulfils images of diversity as actively produced and positioned significant issues, as well as a production of diversity as domination of particular sectional interests.

"Diversity" in Sweden and "Diversity" in Diversico as Actively Produced and Positioned Significant Issues

In my dissertation (Omanović, 2006 forthcoming) diversity is viewed and studied as a socially constructed phenomenon, which is understood through ongoing performance (people constructing ideas of diversity). However, my study also shows that (an idea of) diversity is also a (social)-historical creation. Thus, in order to be able to study a process of diversity production[17] at Diversico consistent with that assumption I might to tackle the

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[17] *Although I follow the line of reasoning of the interpretative paradigm (that reality is socially created and socially sustained) I have chosen to use a term production instead of construction. The reason for it is that "social production", in my interpretation, refers to a process through which people acting within certain social conditions produce different social phenomena (or organization). So, compared to the researchers first and foremost inspired by interpretative traditions (who probably would chose a term construction instead for production), my ambition is to more emphasize and focus on how the organization of production processes shapes what can be produced. Thus, the process of reality creation may be influenced by psychic and social process of reality, which channel, constrain and control the minds of human beings (see for instance, Morgan and Burrell, 1979; Burrell, 1980; and Benson, 1977).*

complexity of the historical time and the social context (place) of the studied phenomenon. An important research question for my study in this regard was: *How does diversity appear in the specific social-historical context of Sweden and what are the ideas and the interests attached to it?* This question is important because diversity is, as critical researchers would say, being actively produced and positioned as a critical issue in several societies (including the Swedish society). In other words, the appearance of diversity in Sweden (as well as in other societies) could be seen as an active political mobilization. However, different societies and researchers are probably producing diversity in different ways. Therefore, diversity could not, from critical researchers point of view, be studied and understood outside of specific social context and outside of history. Diversity is constructed by particular parties, which are involved in its productions in a specific social-historical context.

For instance, in the case of my study, the sings of diversity appearances in Sweden I find in documents with political and legal background. The promotion of, as it is called in the new Swedish integration policy, *social diversity* ("*samhällets mångfald*" in Swedish) could be seen as a new way of addressing the problem of first and foremost inequities of the representation of different kinds of social diversity (*cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic*). In that sense, an important goal of this (pro) active political action, initiated by the Swedish government, was to slow or to stop the negative trend of growing segregation and unemployment among immigrants (ethnic minorities). The promotion of social diversity in the political documents could, thus, be seen as a goal and a means for integration of (mostly) immigrants and/or individuals with foreign background, whose number "has during a short time changed" (increased). Although the equality and demographic aspects were significant, they were not the only reasons for promoting diversity. Another important reason was constructed on economic rhetoric and the expectations of creating better suppositions for welfare (see e.g., SOU 1996:55 and Prop. 1997/98:16).

Furthermore, the diversity movement as recognized in the Swedish integration policy opened possibilities for several other actors/arenas in the context of Sweden such as the law(s), the mass media, conferences, seminars and workshops, consultant and research writings, organizations and companies. Thus, there have been encounters between the idea(s) about diversity as presented in the documents of a political background and the idea(s) on diversity in other arenas.

Finally, the diversity movement as recognized in the Swedish integration policy has not, however, necessarily always determined the directions of the diversity productions in these other arenas. Rather, the original diversity ideas and interests, constructed/produced in the new Swedish integration policy[18] has, by being relocated in different arenas, been partly reinterpreted and this has created new ideas, interests and actions. Thus, the original reasons for the promotion of, as it is called in the integration policy, social diversity, are partly modified, or to use Escobar's formulation (1995), hybridized.

As mentioned-above, one of the identified arenas in which diversity appeared is "organizations and companies" located in Sweden. In that sense the studied manufacturing organization, Diversico, figures in my study, as organizational example of working on diversity in the context of Sweden.

By following the similar theoretical and methodological line of reasoning, as in the case of diversity appearances in the Swedish society, the following questions were relevant regarding my study subject, Diversico: *How has diversity appeared at the studied manufacturing's*

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[18] *See table 2 in Appendix.*

agenda? and *How and why is the studied manufacturing company and its employees producing diversity?* Those two questions were important because diversity would from critical perspective be viewed as an actively produced and positioned significant issue, not only in the Swedish society but also in the studied manufacturing company. There are different ideas, interests and actions within the organization and outside it that affect (directly and indirectly) this phenomenon. The production of diversity within the manufacturing company was thus itself guided and constrained by its contexts (both societal and organizational), that could be, in turn, impacted by the organizational participants whose ideas and interests are partially, as Benson (1977) stated, autonomous from the contextual situations in which they exist.

In regard to the process of the diversity production at Diversico, it can be stated that the production of diversity within the studied manufacturing company, as in the case of diversity production in the political document, was an active political mobilization. In Diversico's work on diversity issues, a number of Diversico people from the corporate level as well as from the unit level were involved. Furthermore, a couple of people outside the organization were also involved in this work through a council, called the Global Diversity Council. In addition to that, Diversico, as one of the largest companies in Sweden whose history is closely linked to the growth, development and changes in Swedish society, was a welcome guest at various events promoting diversity, which were held outside Diversico. At these events the studied manufacturing company was invited as a "good/positive example" of integration, internationalization and/or diversity. On the one hand, the involvement of Diversico (together with some other Swedish organizations and companies) in these events could be seen from the perspective of the organizers of these events as a way of promoting diversity by giving (good) examples of such work to a broader audience (in Sweden).

On the other hand, Diversico's involvement in these events is not only showing Diversico´s involvement in a substructural network or relations, as well as its (rhetorically) incorporation of institutionalized expectations, but its involvement in these events could also be seen as a way of increasing Diversico´s legitimacy. In other words, by demonstrating that it is supporting collectively valued purposes (e.g. regarding "the multicultural Sweden", integration and diversity) Diversico probably gather legitimacy as one of the companies in Sweden that actively (or more actively than other companies, which were not invited at those events) work with diversity. This kind of public relations which (rhetorically) incorporates institutionalized expectations about diversity and which enables Diversico to show the world its positive side, is also Diversico's way of interacting and co-operating with its environment. Thus, apart from producing products of very good quality, which is an important image of the company, or better said the company's corn stone (e.g. through modernization, efficient coordination and control of productive activities), Diverico´s intention is also to be more legitimized, and in that way is to be more successful, and more likely to survive within the "X- industry" and the market characterized with an increasing competition.

Production of Diversity as Domination of Particular Sectional Interests

Another implication, as a result of incorporating the critical theory in the interpretations and analysis of the collected empirical material, is related to uncovering, challenging and questioning dominate ideas and interests in a process of diversity production. As earlier indicated, in the process of diversity production some certain ideas and interests can be favoured while alternative productions can be obscured and misrecognized. Thus, the way in which an organization (or a society) organizes the life of its members involves an initial choice between (historical) alternatives, which are, as Marcuse (1994) emphasizes, determined by the inherited level of the material and intellectual culture. The choice itself is,

however, a result from the play of the dominant interests, which can, depending on certain social conditions (historical time and place), be the interests of managers, the interests of workers, the interests of men/women, the interests of majorities/minorities and the like. In that way the dominant interests shape then the process of diversity production by channelling and controlling what can (and what cannot) be produced. In other words, specific modes of producing diversity anticipates (which can, in turn, be motivated with the "objective order of things", such as economic laws, the market and the like) and rejecting other modes. Once this way of producing diversity (e.g. by developing the programme/policy for diversity) has been approved (e.g. by the Management Team, the Government or by political parties), it can tend to be exclusive (and often treated as everyone's interests).

For instance, one idea of increasing "diversity" within the studied manufacturing organization was to bring different backgrounds/perspectives into Diversico. This idea was guided by the interest in recognizing and reaching "untraditional customer groups", which should, as the organizational participants believed, in turn lead to fulfilling Diversico's objectives of increasing profit and the number of sold products. In other words, Diversico has shown prevailing interest in diversity of perspectives and viewed diversity as a goal designed to enhance the overall effectiveness of the business itself. At the same time, in Diversico's process of diversity production other ideas and interests were (partly) made invisible and marginalized (see e.g., Deetz 1992 and 1995).

The following example is illustrative because it shows how Diversico was opening the door for some kinds of diversity while at the same time how it was distancing itself of some other kinds:

> *Diversico's customers are men and women, young and old, living in most countries around the globe. For business reasons, we need more people in our management organization with experience of living and working in different countries and with experience of different cultures… [The Corporate Citizenship Report, 2000]*

By using terms such as "experience of living and working in different countries" and "experience of different cultures" in this policy document Diversico was at the same time distancing itself of some kinds of *social diversity*, identified for instance in the new Swedish integration policy. In other words, the interests in "experience of living and working in different countries" and "experience of different cultures" do not necessarily mean that Diversico's interest in diversity is related to diversity of background. For instance, the number of company's managers can be increased by employing people with the same ethnic (and gender background) as the present managers but who have experiences of different cultures or/and who have experiences of living and working in different countries.

In addition to the above-mentioned, the prevalently economic interests at the same time limited the presence of some of, as the organizational participants expressed it, "uncomfortable" ideas and interests - the ideas and interests that are "not going to help our business". To be more precise, ideas and interests about welfare, as well as equality, segregation and discrimination of different minority groups living in Sweden, the ideas and interests about some dialectical tensions that exist around diversity in Swedish society, were partly excluded or marginalized in the process of diversity production at Diversico. In other words, in this process creates a kind of vacuum around a number of (potentially) conflict-laden, and, as the organizational participants expressed it "uncomfortable" areas which despite being core components of the problem and the reasons for diversity in the context of

Sweden, are suppressed and marginalized in the message and absent in the formulation of strategies.

A story about one of the studied manufacturing company's employees (in the study called, Per Ahmadi) is illustrative in this regard, because it shows how some "sequences" from his article published in the Diversico´s internal magazine "Views" (e.g. in regard to possible segregation and discrimination of immigrants in the Swedish society and at Diversico), in the President of Diversico interpretation, of the article (at one observed meeting that had "diversity" at its agenda) were excluded while other "sequences" were privileged (such as economic aspects). The article named, *Why Immigrants Boycott Diversico's Products*", was written by Per Ahmadi who works as a project leader at the Department of Analysing and Verifying at Diversico. In the article Per Ahmadi gave illustrations of his very difficult and for many people born in Sweden unusual way of getting "qualifications" for a job at Diversico[19], illustrations of discriminatory behaviour of the salesman at Diversico´s dealer store against Per Ahmadi, as well as, suggestions of increasing the proportion of (competent) immigrants in management positions and letting immigrants who have sought a political asylum and lived in refugee camps in Sweden participate in the debate about and a discussion-making process in regard to diversity. However, Diversico´s President in his interpretation of the article at the observed event (the second Global Diversity Council meeting) privileged particular sectional ideas and interests mentioned in the article. His use and interpretation of the article is mostly constructed on economic rhetoric and the expectations of creating better suppositions for Diversico at the market (through finding the ways of recognising and reaching potential customers from the minority groups, and thus increasing Diversico´s profit).

Thus, in the President of company's presentation of the article we could recognize a kind of domination of one interest in diversity, namely business one. This dominating aspect becomes a kind of ideology that in a way impacts socially embedded and unreflective organizational participants consciousness. For instance, by diverting the organizational participants´ attention from some aspects of discrimination and segregation, this way of "standardizing" the interest for diversity, or by using Marcuse (1994) terminology one-dimensionality, not only tries to control practice and to direct discourse in regard to diversity, but it also leaves (some) of the organizational participants without the possibility of either discovering anything that is not already posited in the dominate practices and discourses.

Signs of univerzalization and naturalization in the process of diversity production at Diversico

In the process of diversity production at Diversico we can also recognize at the least two processes of, as Deetz (1992) calls it discursive closure[20] or in Mumby´s (1988) interpretation of Giddens, functions of ideology[21]. The process of univerzalization could be recognized in Diversico´s prevailing business interest in diversity, which is often, at the observed events, treated as if it was everyone's interests. This way of producing diversity has a tendency to control the direction of diversity production and the suppression of conflicting interests (e.g. Deetz, 1992, Mumby, 1988 and Alvesson and Deetz, 2000).

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[19] *According to Ahmadi, he had to change the first name to Per and to study Engineering once more at Chalmers Technical High School in Sweden in order to be considered serious (as the job applier) and to get a job as an engineer in Sweden.*

[20] *According to Deetz (1992) discursive closure exists whenever potential conflict is suppressed but also when one form of discourse is privileged while another is marginalized. The author identified several processes of discursive closure, such as disqualification, naturalization, neutralization and legitimating.*

[21] *According to Mumby´s (1988) interpretation of Giddens there are three principal functions of ideology: the representation of sectional interests as universal; the denial of contradictions; and the naturalization of the present through reification.*

The process of univerzalization identified in Diversico´s process of diversity production is significant because it is interrelated, in my interpretation, to another process of discursive closures, or a function of ideology called naturalization (e.g. Deetz, 1992, Alvesson and Deetz, 2000 and Mumby, 1988). In this process, which I identified in the process of Diversico´s production of diversity, the business interest in diversity is perceived and experienced as "objective" in the sense of being independent of the organizational participants who created it. One consequence of perceiving diversity in such way is the reduction of ideas, which makes, in the case of Diversico possible the univerzalization of the business interests. In other words, common sense tells us that this is "the way things are" (Mumby, 1988), and thus what is "real" becomes fixed and immutable. Another consequence of this way of producing diversity is that a discussion about this phenomenon stops at the place where it could, probably start. For instance, an alternative way of producing diversity could be to initiate a discussion about some of the earlier-discussed dialectical tensions that exist around diversity in the Swedish society. In that sense, the organizational participants could probably relate a discussion about diversity to questions such as: How did it come that some of immigrants living in Sweden are still unemployed despite living here for more than ten years? Do they get jobs equivalent to their educational levels at Diversico? To what extent?

By marginalizing the discussion about these issues one view on diversity is "frozen" and thus perceived as the way the thing is rather then as it is only one possible way of producing diversity (e.g. Deetz and Alvesson, 2000). In that way the reification of day-to day experience limits the possibility of conceiving alternative social realities (e.g. Mumby, 1988). If such alternatives are, however articulated (e.g. the GDC-members adopt broader visions in regard to diversity and the Diversity Director tries to approach diversity from "the more visionary and morally based way") they are usually derided as unworkable, or against the best interests of organization. In this process, in which the ideas and interests in regard to diversity are reduced, we can recognize the presence of ideology, which is, in Deetz and Kersten´s (1983:163) interpretation, seen as a way to control. In other words, ideology both shapes and limits the construction of social reality (1983:163).

Summary

A production of this paper is driven by my ambition to call attention to different paradigmatic and methodological ways of understanding and studying "diversity in organizations". Following the line of reasoning of different paradigms (as introduced and discussed in Burrell and Morgan, 1979 and Morgan, 1980) I have, in the beginning of the paper, paid my attention on the theoretical construction of the research area that I have labelled "diversity in organizations" by giving illustrations of how diversity is represented in, in particular, within the management/organizational literature.

A starting-point for my discussion has been the assumption that researchers, by exploring "diversity in organizations", bring their different sets of assumptions to what "diversity" is (or could be) but also at the same time they make assumptions what organizations are (or could be). By giving illustrations of different ways of understanding and studying "diversity in organizations" (inspired by the variable analytic traditions, the interpretative traditions, as well as some other alternative possibilities) I have not only shown how different researchers position the issues of "diversity in organizations" differently, ask different questions or design research projects differently but I have also shown that diversity is not only one single thing, rather there are different ideas and interests of what diversity is (or could be).

However, by calling attention to different paradigmatical and methodological ways of understanding and studying "diversity in organizations" my ambition has not only been to show how different researchers have understand and studied "diversity in organizations" but also to try actively engage me in searching for new theoretical and methodological possibilities of understanding and studying "diversity in organizations" (that was initiated in some of the recent studies on "diversity"). In that sense I have first, very briefly, introduced the origins and some of the main positions of the critical theory (of the Frankfurt school) as well as how some organizational researchers applied some positions/aspects of this perspective on the studies on organizations. An important motive and reason of choosing this theoretical orientation is because it develops specific forms of critical thinking that is so far neglected in research on "diversity in organizations". In other words, this theoretical orientation can, from my point of view, contribute to new possibilities of knowing this phenomenon by allowing researchers, among other things, to understand and study "diversity in organizations" as a social-historical creation, which is accomplished in conditions of struggle and domination.

Finally, in this paper I have also given some empirical illustrations[22] of how my study fulfils images of diversity as actively produced and positioned significant issues, as well as a production of diversity as domination of particular sectional interests. Furthermore I have given illustrations of univerzalization and naturalization of some aspects of diversity, as identified in the studied process of diversity production at the manufacturing company.

One of the conclusions regarding the studied process of diversity production at Diversico is that the production of diversity is not only a way of making organizations more vibrant and welcoming participants of many different "types". Without denying it, I have also shown how in the process of diversity happens a kind of struggle for diversity when opposite and conflicting ideas and interests encounters. Although we can, for instance in Diversico´s process of producing diversity, recognize the intentions of progressive praxis, the form of these changes affirm, more or less, the existing order against those who try to affirm the need for "negating" or questioning it. Thus, in this process diversity is to some extent excluded from the potential conflictual site of its origin and treated as a concrete, relatively fixed entity. In that sense Diversico ideas and interests in diversity, prevailingly focusing on business, could be seen as a problematic idea, an idea that in some way covers up what is problematic. A respect for diversity itself could be, then seen as an attempt to get unwanted values/perspectives out of Diversico so that decisions could be more rational rather than a way to enrich values/perspectives and conceptions of rationality (Deetz, 1995:83).

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[22] *Based on the empirical material collected at the large manufacturing company in the period from October 2001 to May 2002.*

Appendix

In table 2 below I summarized some of the main ideas, interests and actions in regard to (social) diversity appearance in Sweden (in political and legal based documents).

Table 2: The Appearance of (Social) Diversity in Sweden (in Political and Legal-Based Documents)		
IDEAS	**INTERESTS**	**ACTIONS**
social diversity *(cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic differences)*	to promote equal rights and opportunities without regard to ethnic background; integration of (mostly) immigrants and/or individuals with foreign background; to minimize the negative trend of the growing segregation and unemployment of immigrants; the expectations of creating better suppositions for welfare	political *(e.g. through different initiatives, seminars, "integration days", publications, financial support of different projects/activities)* legal *(e.g. working on the development of new propositions, policies and laws)*

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