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Examining Diversity in Organizations from Critical Perspectives: The Validity of the Research Process

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Abstract and Keywords

In this chapter we discuss how examining diversity in organizations from critical perspectives influences all phases of the research process. It affects the framing of research questions, the selection of research strategies, the collection of sources and analysis of data, the assessment of the role of the researcher and the theoretical contribution the research makes. Examining diversity in organizations from critical perspectives calls for research questions that, for example, examine organizational norms, reveal the intersection of different identity categories, or examine the interplay between agency and structure. They authors plea for taking the empirical perspective of the marginalized 'other' in the centre of the analysis and for an active reflection upon the role of the researchers in producing knowledge. Such an approach would takes both the agency of the researcher and the examined into consideration.

Keywords: validity, critical perspective, gender equality, research process, methods

Introduction

RESEARCH on diversity in organizations explores hierarchical organized dichotomies, such as the norm of the ideal worker and its implicit counterpart (Acker 1990; Tienari, Quack, and Theobald 2002). By examining the gender, race, class, age, or sexual orientation dimension of organizations, scholars reveal implicit assumptions about which categories are the norm and which categories deviate. Classical examples are organizations taking men's experiences and masculinity as the norm and women's experiences and femininity as the other (Calás and Smircich 1992; Knights and Kerfoot 2004; Bendl 2005), or the

experiences of the white minority as the norm and the black majority as the opposite (Holvino 2008). Feminist and anti-racist scholars have pleaded for critical perspectives on organizations, putting the experiences of people in subordinated categories as central rather than in the margins (Reinharz 1992). They argue that taking the empirical perspective of these subordinate 'others' in the centre of the analysis will positively influence the validity of the research results (Reinharz 1992; Essers and Benschop 2009), where validity is defined as 'whether the claims, implications and conclusions found in a piece of research can be justifiably made' (Mills, Durepos, and Wiebe 2010: 962).

We aim to (further) explore the meaning of validity in research from critical perspectives, by discussing how methodological decisions in different phases of the research process influence the knowledge that is derived. We define a critical perspective as a research approach that aims at revealing organizational norms, in particular hierarchical organized dichotomies, in order to make organizations more inclusive for groups that deviate from the norms. In this sense it differs from mainstream research on diversity in organizations, where gender, race, class, age, or sexual orientation are examined as single variables and organizational norms are taken for granted. In this chapter we illustrate research agendas of scholars who examine diversity in organizations from a variety of critical perspectives, and discuss their methodological decisions and the consequences for the validity of the knowledge they derive in different phases of the research process. (p. 540)

Research Agendas from a Critical Perspective

Social phenomena in organizations are often explored and explained from the perspective of hegemonic groups, in many cases white, heterosexual, middle-class, able-bodied men (Hearn 1996; Knights and Kerfoot 2004). To attain knowledge that incorporates the perspective of the whole organization, organization studies need to incorporate the empirical perspectives of marginalized groups. To put it bluntly, research from critical perspectives calls for studies that examine organizational phenomena from the perspective of women employees, black employees, lower class, ageing, and disabled workers, among others (Bryant and Jaworski 2011; Zanoni 2011). These studies can reveal how diverse identities in organizations can discursively and materially reproduce unequal power relations and so contribute to changing these power relations.¹

Organization studies are not only dominated by the perspective of white, middle-class heterosexual men, but also by the perspective of Western organizations (Prasad and Prasad 2002). This suggests that research in organizations with an American or European descent or location is often understood as providing universal knowledge that can be

applied in organizations all over the world. To prevent this knowledge from being falsely considered externally valid, organization studies need to involve the perspective of a broader variety of organizations, such as businesses run by immigrants in Western countries (Essers and Benschop 2009) and locally owned organizations in South America (Jabbour et al. 2011), Africa, and South East Asia (Saha 2012). Therefore, using critical perspectives calls for conscious decisions about which persons and organizations in which particular context to examine.

One of the key issues in examining diversity in organizations from critical perspectives is the way in which different strands of diversity are included. Organizations often perceive and treat workplace diversity as a strategic choice (Jonsen, Maznevski, and Schneider 2011), taking diversity initiatives focusing on single identities rather than considering the multiple identities that many diverse groups have to negotiate (p. 541) (Ruwanpura 2008). Previously this has also been true of diversity research, although there is an increasing recognition that research needs to take a more holistic approach towards individuals and their relationships with the organization. For example, Tatli and Özbilgin (2012) argue that diversity research reveals a dominance of an *etic* approach, which takes a single category focus, has static and fixed notions of difference, and therefore limits the inclusion of certain categories. However, to overcome fixed mutually exclusive categories, it is not sufficient just to add elements of diversity together (e.g. gender and race), as the experiences of a black woman are both different and similar to white women and black men (Nash 2008). Tatli and Özbilgin call for an *emic* approach, which starts the analysis of diversity by identifying relations and processes of power that manifest themselves in the struggle for the accumulation of different forms of capital, namely human and social capital. Critical perspectives call for ignoring disciplinary boundaries in empirical research and aim at breaking down universal categories for operationalization: scholars should recognize how all empirical knowledge about diversity is time and space, or in other words, context dependent. This is supported by the work of Özkazanç-Pan (2012), who postulates that the problem is with the very notions of 'inclusive' and 'alternative', which are still theorized based on Western liberal humanist ideas without regard to their meta-theoretical assumptions. It is not sufficient for researchers merely to 'contextualize' the participants of diversity research, as diversity cannot be independent of the particular research exercise. They need to investigate the interrelationships between context and power by developing theorizations and practices that turn this modality of power against itself (Ahonen et al. 2013).

There are a number of studies that demonstrate the benefits of analysing the intersection of multiple categories of diversity to understand inequality. For example, Woodhams, Lupton, and Cowling (2013) investigated the impact of multiple categories of disadvantage related to remuneration (i.e. gender, race, disability, and age). They found that those with more than one disadvantaged identity had lower pay than those with a

single disadvantage, and introducing more sources of disadvantage results in further remuneration penalties. A less obvious form of discrimination was identified by van Laer and Janssens (2011), who found that it was small exclusionary acts, such as not inviting women to social events, that had the most profound impact on reproducing power differences. These acts potentially endangered the motivation of employees, the way individuals performed, and the way they were consequently evaluated: reproducing gender, racial, and ethnic stereotypes. Disadvantage is socially constructed, thus in order to understand the context within which disadvantage occurs researchers should not only look at the organization, but also at wider society as well. This is clearly demonstrated in the work of Haq (2013) who explores the impact of multiple identities on women in India, including colour, caste, religion, ethnicity, and marital status. Exploring the socio-cultural traditions leading to the intersection of multiple identities offers a paradigm shift from mainstream, Western views of gender as a single dimension of inequality.

Most studies of diversity in organizations typically focus on the organization level, rather than individual or social levels, examining implementation of HR policies and change strategies through organizational practices. This has raised a number of interesting issues, including managers' commitment to diversity (Bell 2011), the level of involvement in implementation (Pitts et al. 2010; Sabharwal 2014), the areas of diversity that need to be addressed (Pless and Maak 2004), and the tendency to focus on specific groups (Roberson 2006). For example, in Brazil Jabbour et al. (2011) found that the beliefs and values held by senior management are crucial to the successful implementation of diversity policies and diversity management requires the strong and continuous support of senior management in order to sustain efforts to implement HR policies. This concurs with work in the UK (Mulholland, Özbilgin, and Worman 2006), US (Kossek, Markel, and McHugh 2003), and Asia (Saha 2012) which showed that if managerial beliefs and values were unfavourable, regardless of the elements of diversity covered by organizational policy, change strategies would be inadequate. For example, recruitment as a change strategy cannot tackle the institutional and structural framework of oppression (Healy et al., 2010) if there is not a positive climate and supportive group norms (Kossek, Markel, and McHugh 2003; Jonsen et al. 2013). HR policies that seek to eliminate discrimination without addressing the underlying unequal power relations tend to lead to unsystematic, uneven, and subjective treatment of different employee groups.

Phases of a Critical Research Process

The methodological decisions in examining diversity from critical perspectives relate to the systematic and theoretical underpinning of the specific methods of data collection

and analysis. This has potential consequences for all phases of the research process: it may influence the research questions to ask, the research strategies to apply, the data sources to collect and analyse, and the way to assess both the role of the researcher and the contribution of research. In the following sections we will discuss with examples the consequences of these choices for the validity of the knowledge that is derived.

Research Questions

Using critical perspectives affects the research questions about diversity in organizations that are being asked. Being aware of the interrelatedness of different categories of diversity, scholars may prefer to explore the intersection between them rather than focusing on a single identity. For example, examining class through the lens of gender, disability, and age, in the context of automobile industries (Zanoni 2011), or examining gendered and classed bodies in relation to place, in the context of Australian mining and food industries (Bryant and Jaworski 2011). Nevertheless, we argue that focusing on a particular diversity identity, such as women, migrants, or disabled people, can be a useful step towards empowering marginalized groups, on the condition that scholars recognize the differences within these groups and do not reproduce the differences between (p. 543) marginalized and hegemonic groups. Since the context of knowledge is extremely important in critical diversity research, the research questions will be directed towards explaining a social phenomenon in a particular context rather than making universal claims. This does not disqualify critical research on diversity in organizations from being theory oriented or externally valid, rather it suggests that researchers using this perspective contribute building blocks to theory building via the use of case studies in particular contexts (George and Bennett 2004).

Critical Research Strategies

A critical research agenda influences how researchers attain knowledge about diversity in organizations. Studying diversity in organizations from a critical perspective calls for a research strategy that is suitable for revealing experiences that have not yet been theorized and that nuance or fall outside organizational norms. This will logically lead to a qualitative research strategy that allows for inductive knowledge production and an *emic* perspective (Tatli and Özbilgin 2012). A classical choice would be to conduct comparative or single case studies that allow researchers to examine particular social situations in depth and combine diverse methods of data collection such as open interviews, participant observation, and collecting documents and cultural artifacts. For example, Tomlinson (2010) used comparative case study research to study six organizations in the UK that included refugee women among their volunteers. Another

classical research strategy would be the ethnographic study, which allows the researcher to observe an organization from within by performing fieldwork for a longer period. Zanoni (2011) carried out three months of field work in a Belgian car factory, which allowed her to make informal contacts and observe informal communication at the factory gate, in the changing rooms, at the shop floor, and in the cafeteria, in addition to the more formal data collection via semi-structured interviews with employees and the collection of internal and external documents.

Alternative research strategies focus on one particular form of qualitative data collection, mainly open interviews (van Laer and Janssens 2011; Lin and Mac an Ghail 2013) or collection of documents (van den Brink and Benschop 2012). Van den Brink and Benschop (2012) focused on document analysis to examine the construction of academic excellence in professorial appointments in the Netherlands. They collected 971 appointment reports of application procedures. By comparing the criteria mentioned in the job description to the criteria during the final nomination phase, they were able to reveal what criteria were decisive in distinguishing between the candidates who were nominated and those who were rejected (van den Brink and Benschop 2012: 511).

As mentioned, a particular research strategy that is particularly appropriate in supporting the study of diversity in organizations from critical perspectives is action research (Eikeland 2006). In action research researchers not only study organizations from the perspective of outsiders or minority groups, but also consciously aim to (p. 544) improve the position of these groups by involving them in the research (Reid 2004). For example, Bendl and Schmidt examined diverse strategies of feminist activists at an Austrian university and supported this activism by organizing workshops that allowed discussion and reflection between different generations of women activists (Bendl and Schmidt 2012). As researchers they had been involved in various roles in feminist activism at their own universities and, by presenting their own reconstruction of the changes in national policies and in the managerial structure of their universities to different groups of activists, they were able to identify current needs and potential strategies for further feminist activism in the managerial structures at the university (Bendl and Schmidt 2012: 487). They wanted to give voice to both activists and administrators in order to learn as much as possible from the process of changing organizational reality through human interaction in the implementation of policy and strategy (Eikeland 2006). Räsänen and Mäntylä (2001) and Katila and Meriläinen (1999) also performed action research within their own Finnish university by involving their own colleagues in diversity issues via the use of seminars. Unlike Bendl and Schmidt (2012), they did not address activists but rather tried to support active reflection about diversity among all organization members.

Data Sources, Collection, and Analysis

Organizational research is often based on interviews with or observations of members of hegemonic groups in Western organizations, such as (male) able-bodied managers and (white) professionals, but using such data sources runs the risk of reproducing unequal power relations rather than revealing or criticizing them. As the introduction suggests, critical perspectives on diversity in organizations call for the selection of research participants in empirical categories that fall outside organizational norms, such as migrant workers (Ortlieb and Sieben 2010; van Laer and Janssens 2011; Lin and Mac an Ghail 2013), (refugee) women employees (Tomlinson 2010), shop-floor workers (Bryant and Jaworski 2011, Zaroni 2011), homosexuals, bisexuals, lesbians (Pringle 2008), or disabled people within organizations (Wilson-Kovacs et al. 2008), businesses run by (women) immigrants (Essers and Benschop 2009), or locally owned small and medium enterprises in non-Western countries (Fielden and Davidson 2005, 2010). The sample can also be taken from mainstream categories (e.g. white professionals), but with the conscious intention to critically analyse the race, gender, sexual, and class identity of the organization rather than take it for granted.

Critical scholars plead for collecting documents and cultural artifacts, such as records, films, objects, and buildings to examine dominant culture (Reinharz 1992: 142). The advantage of examining artifacts is twofold. First, they are naturalistic, since they were not created for the purpose of the study but 'found'. Second, they are 'unobtrusive', since they are not affected by the process of studying them, as in the case when researchers ask interview questions or observe people. As Reinharz (1992) argued, the results of studies based on analysis of documents and artifacts may be potentially (p. 545) more effective in convincing hegemonic groups about the presence of unequal power relations than results of studies based on interviews and observations. For example, Ogbonna and Hassis (2006) collected company documents and cultural artifacts such as promotion videos, company newsletters, and training manuals to analyse the dynamics of employee relationships in an ethnically diverse workforce in the UK. These artifacts helped them to reveal indirect discrimination that was connected to language abilities rather than ethnic background, but which affected groups with diverse ethnic backgrounds disproportionately. Another example is the appointment reports of application procedures of full professors in the Netherlands collected by van den Brink and Benschop (2012), which helped to reveal gender and gendered practices in the construction of academic excellence. On the basis of analysis of documents, combined with interviews with application committee members, they showed that women were disadvantaged and men privileged in the application procedure on the basis of a gendered construction of academic excellence. The fact that documents were produced by the committee members themselves and could be unobtrusively accessed gave the research results credibility.

However, collecting and analysing documents also has potential disadvantages for the validity of knowledge production. Critical scholars have argued that the perspective of marginalized groups is sometimes not represented in official documents, since these documents express the opinions of the majority rather than minorities in organizations (Bleijenbergh 2013). In those cases the personal documents of members of those disadvantaged groups have to be collected to compensate for this bias. Boone Parsons and colleagues (2012) analysed letters from a US-based feminist grass-roots organization from the 1970s, Stewardesses for Women's Rights, to show the internal struggle between the feminist ideals of the founders and the increasing push towards a bureaucratic structure from the leadership of the organization. The organization was set up with the purpose 'to fight sexual and racial discrimination and to ensure that women are given equal employment and promotional opportunities'. However, the development of the feminist grass-roots organization into a corporate business structure, with an executive director who could make autonomous decisions, caused a loss of direct influence of the grass-root members it represented.

Sometimes personal documents are produced for research purposes rather than being 'found' within the organization. Lowson and Arber (2013) engaged twenty women nurses in the UK to produce personal documents such as audio sleep diaries during a three-week period to examine the gender effect of night work on their household responsibilities and childcare. In addition, their partners and children were invited to complete daily audio sleep diaries during a two-week period as well. They analysed seventy-four sleep diaries in total and undertook interviews with all family members, allowing the researchers to show how women night workers undertake complex planning of domestic tasks before their night shifts begin and re-enter established domestic routines after their night shifts end. So, when the perspective of marginalized groups is not represented in official documents, researchers may need to use personal documents such as diaries or letters to incorporate this perspective in empirical research. While collecting official documents may be the (p. 546) most valid choice to examine mainstream perspectives in organizations, the collection of personal documents may be a more valid choice to reflect marginal voices.

Interviewing those who are outsiders to organizations or members of minority groups within organizations is a good alternative for identifying their experiences with and perspectives on organizational phenomena. This has consequences for the sample as outsiders to organizations, or minorities within organizations, may be more difficult to access than members of hegemonic groups, either because of their marginal position or their low number. As a result, researchers often use snowball sampling to identify their research candidates and involve them in the study. For example, van Laer and Janssens (2011) interviewed twenty-six second generation migrant professionals from Turkish or Maghreb backgrounds in Belgium to investigate subtle discrimination at the workplace.

Since only a few employees fitted that profile, they started by asking HR managers they were acquainted with and multicultural organizations they knew to identify individuals within this profile and, when contacting these individuals themselves, they asked them to refer them on to other professionals with a migrant background. By interviewing second generation migrant workers in white-collar jobs they selected a group in a token position, potentially vulnerable to subtle rather than blatant discrimination (van Laer and Janssens 2011: 1208). Essers and Benschop (2009) also collected their respondents via snowball sampling when interviewing entrepreneurs with a Moroccan or Turkish background in the Netherlands. This technique was also used by Lin and Mac an Ghail (2013) who conducted twenty-eight life-history interviews with male peasant workers in China to understand workplace relations of local, non-Western working men. By conducting life-history interviews lasting between one and four hours, they were able to reveal how the men constructed their own identity in the process of moving from a rural context to an urban space. The men's narratives showed how they deployed traditional cultural resources while in the process of constructing modern, urban-located masculine identities in the workplace (Lin and Mac an Ghail 2013: 501).

Analysis from critical perspectives will often take a reflexive approach, requiring participants to reflect on their knowledge and experiences. For example, Saha (2012) used critical management incidents to explore the impact of values and beliefs on hiring decisions in India. Critical management incidents support the participant to remember critical moments in decision-making and to actively reflect upon them. Saha found that even those managers who were more in favour of hiring minority candidates had mixed attitudes towards those candidates, demonstrating that personal attitudes alone are not sufficient to determine the implementation of recruitment strategies. It is perhaps not surprising that behaviour is not necessarily reflective of attitude, as those involved in the process of transformation towards diversity have complementary and conflicting ways of constructing their own self (Bendl and Schmidt 2012). As a result, the way they construct others is likely to be even more conflicted, inhibiting their ability to understand the different needs and perspectives of those who do not fall within the norm and hence their approaches to diversity management and inclusion (Bell 2011).

(p. 547) Assessing the Role of the Researcher

Another methodological decision to be discussed concerns the position of the researcher in the production of knowledge about diversity. Scholars using critical perspectives argue that the role of the researcher in the research process is not value free (Reinharz 1992). Researchers examining diversity in organizations from critical perspectives are (like researchers in general) expected to reflect upon their own role in the research process (Chapter 16, this volume) to evaluate how they are part of the construction of knowledge

(Reinharz 1992; Essers and Benschop 2009). In a reflection upon her life-story interviews with women entrepreneurs of Moroccan or Turkish origin, Essers (2009) argues for the explication of the different social locations of the researcher and the participants examined to show how power structures may be reproduced. She argues that balancing power relations in the data collection, data interpretation, and writing phase of research is difficult to achieve and that researchers should not strive to do so: rather she argues for recognizing the agency of both researcher and participant in accomplishing organizational change (Essers and Benschop 2009). Bleijenbergh, van Engen, and Vinkenburg (2013) reflect upon learning from the way deans in Dutch universities portray women academics as opposite to the ideal academic. The researchers' disciplinary background in arts made them expect publishing in international peer reviewed academic journals to be the requisite for excellence. This was indeed confirmed by interviews with arts deans, but the science deans considered visibility in popular media and valorization of knowledge more important requisites for excellence. The researchers learned that the characteristics of excellence were fluid and changeable, while the deans consistently assumed that women academics deviate from the ideal. The most radical position a researcher can take within the research process is within an action research, aiming at changing organizational reality (e.g. Reid 2004; Bendl and Schmidt 2012). The aim to improve the position of marginalized groups in organizations calls for an involved rather than neutral and distanced position for researchers towards research participants.

Assessing the Research Contribution

As we have argued, studying diversity in organizations from critical perspectives will often lead to context oriented knowledge. How to assess the theoretical contribution of such studies? The overview in this chapter shows that the research contribution, for example, can be found in understanding the interplay between norms and opposite in a specific context, in understanding the way different identity categories intersect, and how inequality, discrimination, and unequal power relations are both reproduced and can be altered. For example, Essers and Benschop (2009) have shown how the theoretical concept of the entrepreneur is based on Western norms and how entrepreneurs with a migrant background switch between identities to meet demands from their ethnic community and the hegemonic Western societal norms. The theoretical contribution is (p. 548) showing how entrepreneurial identities are adapted and negotiated to fit with the specific context. Bleijenbergh, van Engen, and Vinkenburg (2013) showed how the image of the ideal scientist that deans at Dutch universities reproduce is fluid and varies between different academic disciplines, but that the process of 'othering women' is constant. Here the theoretical contribution is that the norm of the ideal worker depends on the specific context, but that its masculine characteristics are continuously

reproduced. Further, Bryant and Jaworski (2011) demonstrated how assumptions about gender, embodiment, and place influence how organizations understand and respond to skills shortages in the mining and food and beverage industry in Australia. The ideal of a bodiless, abstract worker dominates the way these industries attract and retain workers in rural and remote areas. The three studies mentioned above reveal how norms are both reproduced and can be altered in very different organizational contexts.

Another contribution of studying diversity from critical perspectives is increasing our theoretical understanding about the relation between agency and structure. Tomlinson (2010) showed the interplay between the agency of refugee women in the UK in negotiating belonging and the structural processes of organizations in perpetuating their status as outsiders. She compared the position of African and Middle East refugee women in the UK with those of Iranian refugee women in the Netherlands (Ghorashi 1997), in that they want to be accepted as equal citizens but were treated as strangers. She argues that refugee women should not be considered as passive victims, but rather as active agents within the limited possibilities available to them (Tomlinson 2010: 292). Consequently, researchers studying diversity in organizations from critical perspectives produce contextual knowledge, but also contribute to larger theories. For example, they contribute to theories about agency and structure by showing the complex interplay between agency and structure for particular diversity identities in particular contexts.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have argued how examining diversity in organizations from critical perspectives influences all phases of the research process, such as how to frame research questions, what research strategies to select, which data sources to collect, and which participants to choose, how to analyse the data, how to assess the role of the researcher, and, finally, what contribution to make with the research in itself. Examining diversity in organizations from critical perspectives calls for research questions that, for example, examine organizational norms, reveal the intersection of different identity categories, or examine the interplay between agency and structure. These questions are often asked for specific places, groups, and time periods, since information about the context is considered very important for understanding social phenomena related to diversity.

We argue that using critical perspectives on examining diversity in organizations calls for an *emic* perspective, that is, the empirical perspective of the marginalized 'other', such as women refugees in labour organizations in their host country, lower class rural workers in an urban context, and entrepreneurs with a migrant background. Sometimes insiders, such as white, male managers in Western organizations, may be research

participants as well. Scholars include them in their research with a reflective approach to involve them in organizational change process and to prevent the hegemonic perspective being taken for granted.

We found that scholars studying diversity from critical perspectives often use qualitative research strategies, such as case studies, field studies, or action research, and perform a broad range of methods of data collection, such as participant observation, open interviews, and collecting documents and cultural artifacts, sometimes combined with quantitative research strategies, such as surveys or desk research, analysing existing data. They collect policy documents, but also cultural artifacts, such as records, films, subjects, and buildings, to show how unequal power relations are produced and reproduced. To reveal the perspective of minority groups or outsiders to organizations they may also collect personal documents or ask respondents to produce personal documents for the purpose of the study. Sometimes the use of quantitative research strategies such as surveys is particularly relevant in revealing how particular groups or perspectives have been ignored in theorizing or policymaking.

Examining diversity from critical perspectives calls for an active reflection upon the role of the researchers in producing knowledge, both in performing interviews and observations and in analysing and reporting upon empirical material. With such an approach the agency of both the researcher and the examined is taken into consideration. The knowledge contribution of research is, for example, found in understanding about how organizational norms are reproduced and adapted in specific organizational contexts and what the interplay is between agency and structure for specific groups in specific places at specific times.

This chapter shows a considerable amount of research on diversity in organizations from critical perspectives. Nevertheless, this line of research is of limited size compared with mainstream research on (diversity in) organizations. The future research agenda in this field would be to explore further on an empirical basis areas such as the intersection of different categories of identity in particular contexts and the agency of outsiders in changing organizational structures. In particular, the intersection of (dis)ability, sexual orientation, and class with other identity categories is relatively underexplored (Chapters 9 and 22, this volume). More research would be needed on the position of non-Western organizations in a Western context, or diversity in organizations in the upcoming economies such as those of the BRICS countries (Chapter 20, this volume).

The ultimate aim of this chapter is to contribute to the validity of research about diversity in organizations, by discussing how methodological decisions in different phases of the research process influence the knowledge that is derived and the theoretical contribution that can be made. Scholars in organization studies need to define explicitly what they

consider valid knowledge about diversity in organizations and how they think this knowledge should be produced. They should not reproduce hierarchical organized dichotomies in organizations by taking them for granted, but rather reveal the implicit norms that prevail and question them from different perspectives. Using a (p. 550) critical empirical perspective not only potentially influences the whole research process, but ultimately has consequences for the position of the researcher within this process as well. With the discussion and overview in this chapter we hope to support the further development of a critical research practice, in which the researcher recognizes and actively reflects upon her or his role in producing knowledge about diversity in organizations, considering the active role of the ones that are examined in this process as well. Being part of this practice calls for the researcher to reflect upon what the research results mean for making organizations more inclusive.

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Notes:

(¹) In line with Chapter 8, this volume, diverse identities are recognized not as matters of ‘having’, but as discursive processes of ‘becoming’ (Zanoni et al. 2010).

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