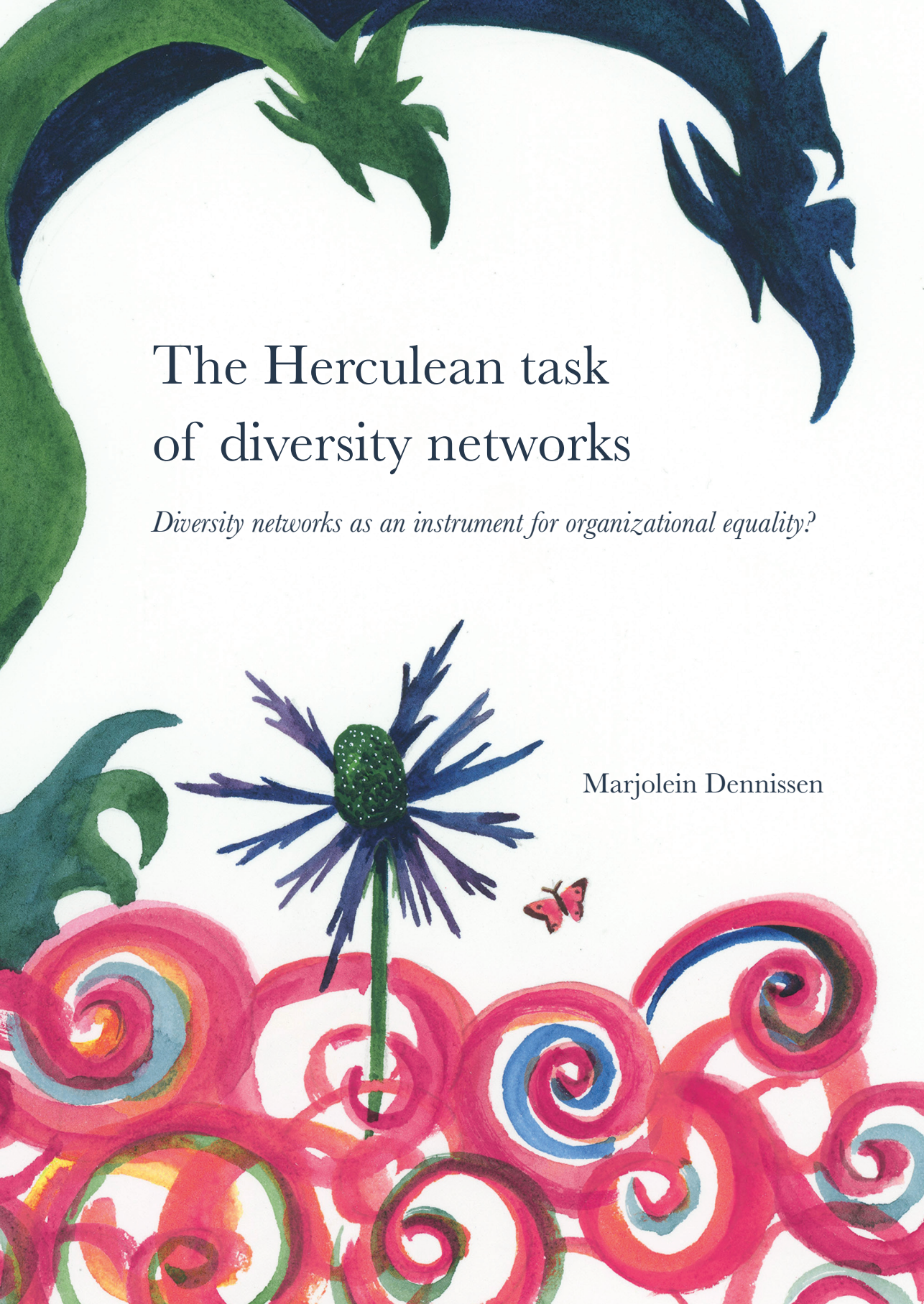

The Herculean task of diversity networks

Diversity networks as an instrument for organizational equality?

Marjolein Dennissen

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Diversity networks as an instrument for organizational equality?

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Paranimfen
Joke Leenders
Handan Sen-Üsten

Je kunt niet gaan,
tenzij je jezelf de plaats wijst,
waar je voet kan staan.
Kijk naar je hand,
luister naar hoofd en hart,
en zie het spoor dat naar de toekomst leidt,
dan loop je snel.

Opa Jan

Voor Tinus

Contents

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Introduction

> *"In my opinion all those diversity clubs are nonsense. I fear the day I turn 35 and fall out of the target group of the [young employee network]. As a non-disabled, white, heterosexual man you sometimes feel like an intruder in this organization."*
>
> (Anonymous respondent)

The *diversity clubs* this man is referring to are the key focus of this dissertation: diversity networks. Diversity networks, also referred to as *employee network groups* (Friedman, 1996; Scully, 2009), *employee resource groups* (Foldy, 2019; Githens, 2012; Welbourne, Rolf & Schlachter, 2017), or *affinity groups* (Briscoe & Safford, 2010; Douglas, 2008), are specific social identity-based networks within the workplace that are initiated to inform, support, and advance employees of historically marginalized groups (Foldy, 2002). Many different types of diversity networks exist, focusing on, for example, gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, religion, age, class, or disability. Thus, organizations can have a wide range of diversity networks, such as women's networks, ethnic minority networks, networks for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) employees, disability networks, young employee networks, Christian networks, and Moroccan networks.

Diversity networks are an increasingly popular practice to promote diversity, equality, and inclusion, and many present-day organizations introduce them as part of their diversity management. Although the man in the aforementioned quote believes that diversity networks are "nonsense", these diversity networks are considered valuable to provide employees who are historically excluded and marginalized in organizations with support (Green, 2018; Pini, Brown & Ryan, 2004), career advice (Friedman, 1996; O'Neil, Hopkins & Sullivan, 2011), and voice (Bell, Özbilgin, Beauregard & Sürgevil, 2011; Creed, 2003; McNulty, McPhail, Inversi, Dundon & Nechanska, 2018). Diversity networks have been referred to as catalysts for inclusive organizations (Douglas, 2008), the missing link in employee involvement (Van Aken, Monetta & Sink, 1994), and the holy grail of human resource management (McDevitt-Pugh, 2010). The idea that diversity networks are a valuable diversity management instrument that helps to advance (career) opportunities of women and other historically marginalized groups in organizations is widespread.

Yet, despite the proliferation of diversity networks in organizations, scientific knowledge about their functioning remains hitherto limited. Although there is an emerging stream of literature on diversity networks in organizations (cf. Foldy, 2019; Colgan, 2016; Greene, 2018; Welbourne et al., 2017), the studies present a fragmented field and are inconclusive about whether these networks that supposedly promote marginalized employees' voices achieve their intended effects (Benschop, Holgersson, Van den Brink & Wahl, 2015; Bierema, 2005; Foldy, 2019). While diversity networks are initiated in various organizations and uncritically applied to all types of employee groups (Foldy, 2002), the claim that diversity networks are a best practice of diversity management remains unsubstantiated.

In this dissertation, I set out to build a more comprehensive understanding of how diversity networks are actually functioning as a diversity management instrument. My specific focus was on the implications of diversity networks for equality in organizations, which I defined as the systematic parities in power and control over goals, resources, behaviors, agendas, cultures, and outcomes (Acker, 2006). To do so, I adopted a critical diversity perspective on diversity networks, which calls attention to issues of inequality and power in organizations and management. Within critical diversity studies, research has yielded valuable insight into how organizational processes, discourses, and practices foster or counteract equality (Dick & Cassell, 2002; Prasad & Mills, 1997; Zanoni, Janssens, Benschop & Nkomo, 2010). A critical diversity perspective provides theoretical tools to analyze equality in organizations and uncover organizational practices that (re)produce inequality. Hence, drawing on critical diversity studies, the aim of my dissertation was to study how diversity networks contribute to equality in organizations.

In this chapter, I further introduce critical diversity studies. I review the state-of-the-art research on diversity networks and explicate the theoretical relevance of a critical diversity perspective. I elaborate on the main perspectives that are central in this dissertation. Furthermore, I outline my methodology and introduce the diversity networks studied. The chapter ends with a short outline of the dissertation.

Point of departure: Critical diversity studies

In today's globalized world, having and dealing with a diverse workforce has become increasingly important. In many organizations, diversity policies make up an integral part of human resource management. In addition, in the field of management and organization, studies on diversity management has gained considerable attention. Yet, despite four decades of diversity management research, there is still little knowledge about which diversity management practices are most effective and in which organizational settings and contexts (Bendl, Bleijenbergh, Henttonen & Mills, 2015; Nishii, Khattab, Shemla & Paluch, 2018; Zanoni et al., 2010). Below, I provide a brief overview of the development of diversity management in organizations and the emergence of critical diversity studies.

The Herculean task of diversity management

Since the 1990s, diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, religion, age, class, and disability has become a prime concern in many contemporary organizations. Major global changes – including legal developments related to disability, sexual orientation, and religion, altered family and parental roles, and an aging workforce – have resulted in diverse workforces in both the public and private sectors throughout various industries (Bendl et al., 2015; Nishii et al., 2018). Consequently, organizations

have started to organize their formal commitment to manage their diverse workforce effectively (Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014; Prasad & Mills, 1997). Diversity management refers to a variety of programs, policies, activities, practices, and other processes or efforts designed, developed, implemented, and employed by organizations to deal with the widespread, enormously varied effects of multiple identities in the workplace (Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014; Yang & Konrad, 2011). With a focus on the removal of barriers to employment and career development, the objectives of diversity management was initially intended to attract, recruit, hire, and retain employees from diverse demographic backgrounds (Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014; Prasad & Mills, 1997; Yang & Konrad, 2011), as well as counter discrimination and inequalities to promote change toward a more inclusive culture (Benschop, 2011; Hoobler 2005).

Nowadays, diversity management has become an umbrella term that encompasses a broad notion of diversity. Although the term *diversity* was first used to indicate differences and inequalities between social groups based on categories such as gender, race, and class, the broad notion shifted the emphasis to include a wide variety of individual differences between employees (Benschop, 2011; Prasad & Mills, 1997). Due to the broadening of the concept of diversity, a less threatening and less controversial dominant diversity paradigm emerged in organizations. The main idea of this paradigm is that organizations can benefit from having a diverse workforce. A diverse workforce would allegedly enhance business performance, provide competitive advantage and contribute to the bottom line. As a result, an instrumental, *business case* perspective on diversity in organizations prevails (Litvin, 2006; Zanoni et al., 2010).

As a consequence of this shift, the practice of diversity management in organizations has become detached from the histories of the struggles for equality (Nkomo & Hoobler, 2015). While the positive effects of a diverse workforce and the value of individual differences are emphasized, disadvantages, exclusion and disparities are downplayed. Diversity management has become an apolitical, strategic enterprise in many organizations, leaving inequality as the elephant in the room (Benschop, 2011; Nkomo & Hoobler, 2015; Prasad & Mills, 1997). Diversity management is criticized for its "dilution of diversity" (Linnehan & Konrad, 1999, p. 400) and "upbeat naivité" (Prasad & Mills, 1997, p. 5) due to the way tensions, conflicts, and dilemmas are eschewed. In doing so, it is no longer clear that organizational diversity management is a complex endeavor, a Herculean task that requires much more than "managerial enthusiasm, optimism, and good intentions" (Prasad & Mills, 1997, p. 5). As Prasad and Mills (1997, p. 18) point out:

> *"Any framing of the notion of diversity needs to take into account the demographic characteristics of those in positions of power (white males), the often silenced voices of the Other (i.e., women, people of color, the aged, etc.) and the multitude of political interactions between dominant and non-dominant groups within organizations."*

Diversity, as well as its management, is inextricably linked to power and every day micropolitics. This means that unequal power relations, marginalized organizational voices, and organizational practices and processes have to be taken into account to understand diversity and equality in organizations. A stream of critical diversity studies (e.g., Benschop, 2011; Kirton & Greene, 2000; Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; Prasad & Mills, 1997; Zanoni et al., 2010) emerged in the mid-1990s to draw attention to issues of inequality and power in organizations and management.

Critical diversity studies: Theorizing diversity and inequality

Critical diversity studies are part of the larger field of critical management studies. Although it is difficult to demarcate critical management studies, critical approaches to management all share the assumption that "dominant theories and practices of management and organization systematically favor some (elite) groups and/or interests at the expense of those who are disadvantaged by them" (Alvesson, Bridgman & Willmott, 2009, p. 7). Critical management studies question managerial ways of organizing that normalize and reinforce oppression and subordination, demand conformism, and reproduce and legitimize inequalities (Alvesson et al., 2009). By doing so, critical management scholars aim to "unmask" unequal power structures that have been institutionalized in the status quo of management and organizations (Alvesson et al., 2009; Fournier & Grey, 2000, p. 19). The field of critical diversity studies focuses particularly on these aspects of power and inequalities related to diversity and its management in organizations.

In line with critical management studies, critical diversity scholars question the moral defensibility of current managerial policies and practices (Adler, Forbes & Willmott, 2007). They critique the dominant business paradigm and the instrumental view of diversity in organizations and argue that the emphasis on the positive effects of diversity for corporate benefits and organizational performance has informed noncritical, functionalistic research (Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Zanoni et al., 2010). Considering diversity as a strategic asset and promoting a diversity management that is "palatable" (Hoobler, 2005, p. 55), the mainstream literature presents an overly optimistic view of diversity and underlines "feel-good ways of diversity management" (Hoobler, 2005, p. 55; Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014). This has implications for how organizational equality is studied. Critical diversity studies take issue with the way these studies make diversity too easily "doable" (Prasad & Mills, 1997, p. 11) because the focus on palatable, feel-good diversity management leaves little room for analysis of the processes of power. In doing so, studies tend to overlook structural, context-specific elements and everyday micropolitics that foster inequalities in organizations (Prasad & Mills, 1997; Zanoni et al., 2010). Critical diversity studies do incorporate a power perspective that addresses the power relations in which organizational inequalities are embedded. Since their emergence, critical diversity studies have uncovered how power processes contribute to shaping, maintaining, and reproducing inequalities related to diversity (Dick & Cassell, 2002; Litvin, 2006; Prasad & Mills, 1997; Zanoni et al., 2010).

Next to the inadequate theorization of power and power processes, critical diversity scholars have criticized the mainstream diversity literature for making a number of rather naïve assumptions about why particular social groups are marginalized in organizations (Dick & Cassell, 2002; Zanoni et al., 2010). Relying heavily on social psychological theories, organizational diversity management largely draws on the psychological mechanisms behind discrimination and exclusion. As a consequence, there is a prime focus on the role of the individual, and diversity management practices remain firmly entrenched in identity-based initiatives, such as training, mentoring, and networks (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; Nkomo & Hoobler, 2015). Critical diversity scholars have articulated their concern that organizational inequality is not exclusively the result of individual discriminatory acts (Kirton & Greene, 2000; Zanoni et al., 2010). Particular social groups may already be disadvantaged by wider social inequalities as a result of "historically determined, structurally unequal access to and distribution of resources between socio-demographic groups" (Zanoni et al., 2010, p. 14). Thus, the role of organizational and societal processes is important and should not be downplayed in organizational diversity management.

A related point of critique is that diversity management practices are predominantly aimed at increasing the numerical representation of historically marginalized social groups (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; Nkomo & Hoobler, 2015). As such, these historically marginalized social groups are juxtaposed with the dominant majority group, or the *ideal worker*, which is often the white, able-bodied, heterosexual man (Acker, 2006; Kirton & Greene, 2000). Consequently, white, able-bodied, heterosexual male models of employment and career success are taken for granted and implicitly serve as the norm for all employees (Benschop, 2011; Hoobler, 2005). This means that historically marginalized social groups are assessed against this invisible norm and constructed as lacking (Benschop, 2011; Zanoni & Janssens, 2004). To get them on par with the majority, diversity management practices focus on providing minority employees with the proper tools to equip them to do so. Thus, the onus is placed on the individuals themselves to succeed. Critical diversity scholars challenge these practices for their emphasis on "fixing" individuals, rather than changing organizational processes that contribute to complex patterns of inequalities in organizations.

Critical diversity studies call for attention to organizational equality as a key goal for diversity management that goes beyond individual approaches and numerical diversity. Although helpful to a certain extent, these individual approaches do not address the organizational practices that maintain and (re)produce inequalities (Benschop et al., 2015; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000; Zanoni et al., 2010). By leaving organizational power processes intact, organizational practices may even reinforce the disadvantaged position of historically marginalized social groups and militate against organizational equality.

Drawing on critical diversity studies, my dissertation contributes to the literature on diversity management studies by analyzing diversity networks as instruments for greater organizational equality conceptualized as the absence of systematic disparities in power and

control over goals, resources, behaviors, agendas, cultures, and outcomes (Acker, 2006). With their key focus on organizational power processes, critical diversity studies provide "unique and important ways to understand organizations and their [diversity] management" (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p. 10). Scholars have highlighted that diversity management practices, such as diversity networks, do not live up to their potential and even reproduce the very same inequalities they are meant to counter (Nkomo & Hoobler, 2015; Zanoni & Janssens, 2015). Although diversity networks are a widely popular practice in organizations, it remains unclear whether they work and, if so, how. By taking into account the underlying organizational processes, practices, and discourses that maintain and reproduce organizational inequalities, this work contributes to the diversity management literature by building a more comprehensive understanding of how diversity networks are actually functioning as a diversity management instrument. In the following section, I review the current literature on diversity networks and consider how these studies frame the effects of diversity networks in organizations.

Diversity networks: State-of-the-art

The popularity of diversity networks in organizations is based on the widespread idea that participating in networks is an important career management strategy. Ample studies have shown that successful networking is associated with positive career outcomes such as job opportunities, promotions, higher wages, influence, and status (e.g., Borgatti & Foster, 2003; Granovetter, 1973; Kilduff & Brass, 2010; Mehra, Kilduff & Brass, 1998). Networks are considered to enhance and strengthen social ties, which increase satisfaction, build social support and embeddedness, and lower the risk of isolation (Bagilhole & Goode, 2001; Forret & Dougherty, 2004).

Although involvement in networks is overall seen as beneficial, research has shown that networks can also generate inequalities (Ibarra, 1997; Kalev, Dobbin & Kelly, 2006; Konrad, 2007). Women and ethnic minorities were often excluded from white, male dominated networks, the so-called *old boys networks* (McDonald, 2011; Van den Brink & Benschop, 2014), and were not able to tap into the same resources, such as strategic network relations, powerful sponsors, and higher status connections (Burt, 1998; Forret & Dougherty, 2004; Rothstein, Burke & Bristor, 2001). This resulted in inequalities in job opportunities, information access, status, and support. Diversity networks for historically excluded social groups would present a strategy to counteract these inequalities and advance the positions of these groups within organizations (Foldy, 2002; Tomlinson, 1987).

Emanating from the US, the first diversity networks were initiated grassroots-style by women and ethnic minorities advocating for equal opportunities and equal wages (Friedman, 1996). Currently, diversity networks exist for a much wider range of employee groups aiming to provide social inclusion and increase their numerical representation in the higher

organizational echelons (Benschop et al., 2015; Kaplan, Sabin & Smaller-Swift, 2009). Since the 1970s, diversity networks have proliferated in organizations as a popular instrument for diversity management, initiated both top-down by managers and bottom-up by employees themselves. Many different types of diversity networks exist in organizations, including gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, religion, age, or disability. However, the existent literature mainly focuses on women's networks, ethnic minority networks, and LGBT networks. To my knowledge, no literature is currently available on diversity networks related to other diversity categories. In this section, I present the state-of-the-art in the existing literature.

Women's networks

Most studies on organizational diversity networks are (qualitative) case studies of women's networks, predominantly conducted in Western countries. The study of Pini, Brown and Ryan (2004) on an Australian women's network for local government leaders highlighted the benefits for women as a group. This women's network was shown to contribute to gaining support, fostering a collective identity, and decreasing feelings of isolation. Likewise, in their study on 20 women managers in Ireland, Cross and Armstrong (2008) found that women's networks are perceived as offering women access to information, professional learning strategies, and opportunities for upward career development. O'Neil, Hopkins and Sullivan (2011) studied the perceptions of 21 members of a women´s network of a multinational company in the US. The majority of network members expected the network to have positive effects on their career opportunities and advancement because a women's network would allegedly enhance the visibility of women in the organization, as well as stimulate members' leadership skills and confidence (O'Neil et al., 2011). In addition, research by Gremmen and Benschop (2013) on women's networks in eight Dutch organizations suggest that a women's network could fulfill a consultancy function by advising their organization about diversity-related issues.

However, the literature on women's networks also points to the negative effects of those networks. Opponents see women's networks as detrimental for women's career development. Women who join a women's network are seen as complainers who need help or are unable "to make it on their own" (Bierema, 2005; Gremmen & Benschop, 2011; Vinnicombe, Singh & Kumra, 2004). In Pini et al.'s study (2004), respondents who disapproved women's networks were keen on claiming a gender-neutral standpoint. According to these critics, a women's network would conflict with equality as it excludes men. In her research of a women's network at a US Fortune 500 company, Bierema (2005) found that the women's network was often the object of ridicule, resulting in women's reluctance to actively participate in activities. Moreover, it caused members to eschew addressing structural inequality issues such as male privilege in the organization. In doing so, the members (re)produced the male-dominated power structures instead of countering them. This eventually led to the disbandment of the network.

Overall, the current research on women's networks and their effects presents a fragmented field with ambiguous results. No agreement currently exists on whether women's networks are beneficial or detrimental and for whom: individual members, women as a group, or the organizations facilitating these networks. Nevertheless, the literature emphasizes the effects of women's networks on the career development of individual women. Additionally, women's networks provide members with support, and the possibility to fulfill a consultancy function advising organizations on diversity- or gender-related issues.

Ethnic minority networks

Few studies have focused on in-company ethnic minority networks. These studies are largely based on surveys carried out in a US context. The emphasis is on the importance of networks for ethnic minority employees as a group. Based on the survey results of a study of 13 different ethnic minority networks within a large US company (N = 1583), Friedman and Craig (2004) identified several reasons why employees join ethnic minority networks. The main reasons for joining are based on their social identity; that is, employees join because they identify with this particular social identity group and want the expected benefits such as career development. Contrary to the fear of managers that these networks would become oppositional, Friedman and Craig found that membership is not driven by radical activism or workplace dissatisfaction. Based on a survey of HR managers at 209 US Fortune 500 companies, Friedman (1996, 1999) stated that ethnic minority networks provide a safe space for ethnic minority employees to meet each other without having to conform to the dominant culture of the organization.

In addition, a few studies have focused on the effects of ethnic minority networks on career development. Based on a survey of 397 members of the National Black MBA Association in the US, Friedman, Kane and Cornfield (1998) showed that ethnic minority networks have a positive effect on the perceived career advancement of ethnic minority employees due to, for example, mentoring opportunities.

Studies are more ambiguous about the possible effects of ethnic minority networks for the organization at large. According to aforementioned research, these networks do not diminish discrimination or provide members with much opportunities to foster organizational change. However, networks do provide voice and critical mass and provide the network with a possible advisory and informative function (Friedman, 1996). Furthermore, these networks lead to reduced turnover intentions and more social embeddedness for ethnic minority managers (Friedman & Holtom, 2002).

Studies on ethnic minority networks and their effects are even fewer in number, as well as geographically narrower, than those on women's networks. Overall, ethnic minority networks are predominantly viewed as beneficial for ethnic minorities as a group by establishing and strengthening the contacts between ethnic minority employees within their organizations. These contacts would be valuable not only for decreasing social isolation but also for mentoring opportunities, which in turn leads to perceived career advancement. Similar to women's

networks, ethnic minority networks can also fulfill a consultancy and information function. Most studies agree on the positive effects of ethnic minority networks for organizational relationships and community building. Although ethnic minority networks are seen to provide members with voice and opportunities to advise management, no significant impact on discrimination was reported.

LGBT networks

Along with the rise of societal gay rights movements, LGBT networks emerged in organizations in the 1970s. Studies on LGBT networks in organizations have emphasized how these networks can play a role in increasing inclusion by providing LGBT employees with voice and visibility (Bell et al., 2011; McNulty et al., 2018). For example, in their study on the evolvement of 111 LGBT networks in the US, Briscoe and Safford (2008, 2010) showed that while LGBT networks were initially set up to provide a welcoming, open environment for LGBT employees, these networks gradually developed a more activist agenda, advocating for LGBT rights by, for example, proposing policy changes for equal partner benefits, and maneuvering between employee-driven and employer-driven objectives (Briscoe & Safford, 2010).

Likewise, Colgan and McKearney (2012) showed that an LGBT network can be seen as an "agency for change" (p. 368) by shaping and driving the organizational sexual orientation equality agenda. They explored the perceptions of 149 LGBT employees in 14 UK organizations and demonstrated that networks enabled them to raise their concerns about LGBT-related issues to managers. Respondents pointed to the network's function to influence and evaluate policy development and implementation. LGBT networks were considered valuable for providing LGBT employees with a safe community to share their experiences and struggles, such as coming out in the workplace (Colgan & McKearney, 2012).

Other authors have been more ambivalent about the function of LGBT networks as agencies for change. For example, Githens and Aragon (2009) distinguished between more activist-oriented networks that work explicitly for organizational change toward inclusion and acceptance and networks that focus more on creating a safe space, social support, and networking opportunities for members. The authors questioned whether LGBT networks can establish actual inclusion and acceptance in their organizations when they are also expected to contribute to the competitive advantage of organizations. They conclude that while LGBT networks can offer a safe space for LGBT employees, unions may be better equipped to pursue organizational change (Githens & Aragon, 2009). Furthermore, recent research by McFadden and Crowley-Henry (2017) on LGBT networks in Ireland showed some negative effects of LGBT networks in the workplace. Active involvement in LGBT networks heightens the visibility of LGBT members and could, therefore, increase perceived stigma and isolation of LGBT employees in heteronormative organizations (McFadden & Crowley-Henry, 2017). As such, LGBT networks and membership of these networks are seen as detrimental rather than helpful.

Overall, LGBT networks are considered to be valuable instruments in providing safe spaces for LGBT employees. LGBT networks are seen as important employee voice mechanisms that offer opportunities to influence organizational practices and contribute to more LGBT-inclusive workplaces. However, a few studies have questioned their beneficial effects. In addition, embedded in an organizational context, LGBT networks are expected to be effective with regard to the organizations' bottom line. This expectation may also hamper their effectiveness to contribute to equality.

From this review of the literature, I learned that it is certainly not self-evident that diversity networks contribute to organizational equality. Although applauded in many organizations, diversity networks have no consensus of benefits in the literature and are not without criticism. The core of this critique is that diversity networks are organized around a certain social identity and, thus, merely emphasize and increase isolation (Friedman, 1996; Gremmen & Benschop, 2012; McFadden & Crowley-Henry, 2017) rather than diminish inequalities as intended. Moreover, diversity networks lack power to actually challenge the status quo in organizations (Foldy, 2002). Although the field of diversity network studies is increasing (cf. Foldy, 2019; Greene, 2018; Welbourne et al., 2017), critical diversity perspectives on diversity networks that specifically focus on power and inequality are rare. Apart from a few notable exceptions (e.g., Bierema, 2005; Colgan, 2016; Foldy, 2002, 2019), studies on diversity networks tend to mirror the "feel-good" view (i.e., "If your company doesn't have a (…) network, it should", Catalyst, 1999, p. 1) that has been ascribed to mainstream diversity management research in general (Hoobler, 2005; Prasad & Mills, 1997). The problem with this celebratory rhetoric of diversity networks is that conflicts, tensions, and ambiguities are overlooked. As argued earlier, organizational diversity management is a complex, contextual, and power-laden endeavor (Ahmed & Swan, 2006; Bendl et al., 2015; Prasad & Mills, 1997), and as I show in this dissertation, accomplishing organizational equality by means of diversity networks is more complicated than simply starting a network (Bierema, 2005). Taking a critical diversity perspective on diversity networks, I shed new light on previously underexplored areas of diversity networks as diversity management instruments. In the next section, I explain these areas in further detail.

A critical diversity perspective on diversity networks

The aim of my dissertation was to study how diversity networks contribute to equality in organizations in order to come to a better understanding of the functioning of diversity networks as diversity management instruments. To date, the implications of diversity networks for organizational equality remained an understudied terrain. To understand these implications, it is essential to develop a notion of diversity, equality, and inequality as socially constructed. As explicated in the previous section, within critical diversity studies, scholars

have developed an understanding of power and inequality as sustained through organizational discourses and practices (Dick & Cassell, 2002; Prasad & Mills, 1997; Zanoni et al., 2010). Thus, critical diversity scholars emphasize a "nonpositivistic, nonessentialist understanding of diversity – as well as the sociodemographic identities subsumed under this term – as socially (re)produced in ongoing, context-specific processes" (Zanoni et al., 2010, p. 10). This means that organizational discourses and practices have to be taken into account when studying diversity and inequality in organizations (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; Prasad & Mills, 1997; Zanoni et al., 2010). Using critical diversity studies, this study contributes to new theoretical insights about diversity networks by answering the following main research question:

How do diversity networks contribute to equality in organizations?

Building alternative understandings of diversity and diversity management in organizations, critical diversity studies draw on a broad variety of critical perspectives (Zanoni et al., 2010). Three perspectives were central to my dissertation: discourse analysis (Dick & Cassell, 2002; Philips & Hardy, 2002; Zanoni & Janssens, 2004), intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; Holvino, 2010; Verloo, 2006), and practice-based studies (Gherardi, 2009; Janssens & Steyaert, 2019; Nicolini, 2009). Each of these perspectives presents an opportunity for exploring how diversity networks contribute to equality in organizations. These perspectives were translated into three subquestions that are addressed in each of the subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

1. *How do diversity network board members discursively construct the value of their networks?*

The first subquestion concerned the discursive constructions of the *de facto* leaders of diversity networks: the diversity network board members. As network leaders, board members primarily determine the course of action of their diversity networks and, thus, are responsible for network goals and organized network activities. By communicating the value of their diversity networks to potential members and the organization for resources and support, board members legitimize the existence and functioning of their networks in their organization. I analyze how these diversity network board members discursively construct the value of their networks against the backdrop of discourses on diversity and equality. Capturing board members' constructions of the value of their diversity networks can demonstrate whether and how organizational inequalities are addressed and how these constructions vary across different networks. Insight into the contradictory discursive practices of diversity network board members can explicate how diversity networks may simultaneously produce and counteract organizational equality.

2. *How does the complexity of different identity categories and their intersections impact diversity networks?*

The second subquestion addressed diversity networks through an intersectionality lens. Diversity networks are typical exemplars of present-day single category diversity management practices. Currently, most diversity management practices focus on single identity categories (i.e., women, ethnic minorities, LGBTs) without paying attention to the heterogeneity within these categories (Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). Although research on intersectionality has flourished (Rodriguez, Holvino, Fletcher & Nkomo, 2016), this is not reflected in the literature on diversity management practices. Taking an intersectionality perspective on diversity networks, I examine how diversity networks, as single category diversity management practices, deal with the complex reality of multiple categories of difference. In this study, I drew on the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991) and distinguished between structural intersectionality and political intersectionality. While structural intersectionality addresses the individual experiences of people at the intersections of multiple categories of difference, political intersectionality addresses the way how social identity groups organize themselves between two or more political agendas or movements (Crenshaw, 1991). I used the concept of structural intersectionality to analyze how individual network members deal with the single category structure of diversity networks. In addition, I used the concept of political intersectionality to explore the political strategies of diversity networks to build coalitions across single identity categories.

3. *Which collective networking practices occur in diversity networks and how do these specific diversity networking practices potentially contribute to equality in organizations?*

The third and last subquestion focused on the processes of networking that diversity networks engage in: what are diversity networks actually doing and how do they network to advance organizational equality. The majority of studies on diversity networks have focused on the outcomes and benefits of these networks. How these outcomes materialize has received less attention. Networks are the result of the actual network behavior of people, or people's networking (Berger, 2015; Ibarra, Kilduff, & Tsai, 2005; Manning, 2010). This means that the actions of people and the interactions between them influence and change both their networks and their organizations (Berger, 2015; Ibarra et al., 2005). Therefore, I adopted a practice-based approach (Gherardi, 2009; Janssens & Steyaert, 2019; Nicolini, 2009) that allowed me to specifically focus on what people actually say and do within diversity networks. Studying practices helps to uncover the unreflexive and taken-for-granted patterns of activities and underlying norms that constitute social and organizational realities (Geiger, 2009; Nicolini, 2009). Drawing on practice-based studies, I developed the notion of diversity networking practices, which I defined as the collective sociopolitical actions of building, maintaining, and using relations in the workplace to advance organizational equality. Analyzing the diversity networking practices that occur in diversity networks can show how diversity networks are used, what diversity networks actually do when they do diversity work, and how processes of collective networking potentially contribute to equality in organizations.

Methodological approach

"Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted"
(Einstein, as quoted in Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2013, p. 2)

In line with a critical diversity perspective, this dissertation focuses on organizational processes, discourses, and practices and how organizational members construct and understand these organizational processes, rather than on numerical outcomes. Thus, I relied on a qualitative research strategy that is "typically oriented to the study of socially constructed reality… questioning either the wider context of it or the processes forming it" (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p. 1). Attention to asymmetrical relations of power, taken-for-granted assumptions and beliefs, and silenced or marginalized voices necessitates a qualitative approach. Qualitative data allow for studying diversity networks in a wider cultural, economic, political, and organizational context (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000) and exploring the *how* of social phenomena (Bluhm, Harman, Lee & Mitchell, 2010). Therefore, a qualitative research approach is expected to yield a deeper understanding of equality in organizations and how it can materialize.

I collected my empirical material by means of multiple cases (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009). The cases were different diversity networks, which I further describe in the next section. A case study facilitates the analysis of complex and little understood phenomena and is well suited to examine the *how* and *why* of dynamic processes in real-life organizational contexts (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2009). Moreover, multiple cases allow for a broader elaboration of the research questions (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Thus, a case study of multiple diversity networks supports the explorative character of my research and enables a fine-grained and in-depth analysis of how diversity networks contribute to equality in organizations. To this end, I have selected two organizations in the Netherlands with multiple diversity networks.

Cases

During a period of two years (2014–2016), I collected my empirical material of ten diversity networks at two large Dutch organizations: a for-profit organization in the financial sector and a nonprofit governmental organization. These organizations were selected first and foremost because they accommodate different diversity networks. As indicated above, studying multiple diversity networks would provide a broader exploration of the research questions. Collecting data in two different organizations presents the opportunity to investigate different organizational contexts in which diversity networks maneuver. Below, I briefly introduce the two organizations and the ten networks studied. The data provided on the composition of the board and the total number of members was based on the situation at the time of my data collection.

Finance

The first organization is a financial service organization, from here on referred to as Finance. Finance is situated throughout the Netherlands and has six different diversity networks: a network for women in senior management positions (*Women at the Top*), a network for women in middle management positions (*Ladies with Ambition*), an ethnic minority network, an LGBT network, a disability network and a young employee network for employees from 18-35 years of age. The networks are organized nationally, are officially acknowledged by the organization, and receive financial support. All networks are set up by employees themselves. An overview of the main characteristics of the different diversity networks is presented in Appendix 4.

Women at the Top. The women's network Women at the Top is a network exclusively for women in senior management positions. Women at the Top was initiated informally by several women who wanted to organize something for women in the higher organizational echelons. The idea was to start a women's network by and for women in top and subtop level positions. Women at the Top started as an informal network and has been maintained as such. The network board is organized informally without functions as chair or secretary, and there is no particular structure. Although it is common practice in the organization to make use of specified goals, plans, and key performance indicators to measure success, Women at the Top has specifically chosen not to formalize any goals, plans, or performance indicators. There are approximately 450 women in senior management positions, and all of these women are automatically seen as members of the network. Women at the Top supports the network from their own resources and receives additional support of a sponsor from the board of directors.

Ladies with Ambition. Ladies with Ambition is a women's network that aims to support women in middle management positions specifically. This means that only women who are in middle management salary scales are eligible for membership. Board members could not recall when or how the network was initiated, but they believe it must have started in 2007/2008 after a fusion with a company holding that already had a women's network. Currently, the network consists of approximately 700 members and is led by one chairwoman and four general board members. Ladies with Ambition is financially supported by the organization by means of a yearly budget.

Ethnic minority network. The ethnic minority network started as an interpersonal network of one employee with an ethnic minority background. As a job coach, she organized meetings where ethnic minority employees were brought together and could exchange experiences. Participants expressed their enthusiasm and said these meetings were valuable for their own network. The employees themselves requested to make this network an official network, and in 2010, an official ethnic minority network was launched for the entire organization. The ethnic minority network board consists of a chair, a treasurer, a secretary, and two other members. The network has approximately 500 members, and membership is open to all employees

supportive of ethnic diversity. The ethnic minority network is financially supported by means of a yearly budget and can request additional funds from an individual sponsor who is part of the organizational board of directors.

LGBT network. The LGBT network was initiated by LGBT employees within the organization. Following an initiative to organize informal drinks, the network was formalized into an official diversity network in 2006. The network board consists of a chair and four general members. The network has approximately 300 members, and membership is not solely for LGBT employees but also open to straight allies. The LGBT network is financially supported by the organization by means of a yearly budget.

Disability network. The disability network is the youngest network of the organization and was initiated in 2014 by two employees with a disability. The network board consists of a chair, a secretary, a treasurer, and a general member. This general member does not have a disability himself but was asked to be a board member because he holds a managerial position. The disability network has approximately 101 members: 38 employees with a disability and 63 managers and colleagues without a disability. The disability network is financially supported by the organization by means of a yearly budget with possible addition funds from the organization's occupational health service.

Young employee network. The young employee network was initiated by several young employees in the organization. It is the largest network of the organization and comprises approximately 1300 members. Membership is solely for employees aged between 18 and 35 years. The network board consists of a chair, a treasurer, a stakeholder manager, a region coordinator, an activity coordinator, a coordinator for special projects, and a communication coordinator. The young employee network is the only network that charges a membership fee: €25 per year. Besides these funds, the young employee network receives a yearly budget from the board of directors.

Govt

The second organization is a large governmental service organization, which is subsequently referred to as Govt. The diversity networks of Govt are organized on a national level, as well as on local levels. In this research, I focused on four diversity networks that are organized nationally: a women's network, an LGBT network, a network for employees with a disability or chronical illness, and a network for "young" employees, where "young" refers to a progressive mind rather than age.

Women's network. The Govt women's network was initiated in 2015 as a spin-off of a women's department within one particular labor union. As not all women within Govt are a member of this union, a few women decided to broaden their scope to all Govt employees (union and nonunion members) and started the Govt women's network. The network board is organized informally without functions, and there is no particular structure. The network works with a mailing list with approximately 100 members. Organizing activities at either the

union's location or Govt's, the women's network was able to make use of the facilities available to them without extremely high costs. Although they have organized multiple events in the past (e.g., keynotes on feminism, anti-stress workshops, eco-coaching and *guerilla-gardening*), the network is inactive at the moment. Two reasons exist for this inactivity. First, because Govt announced its work on a proposal to facilitate their diversity networks, the women's network is awaiting the results. Second, the board members indicated that they are too occupied by their regular jobs to do voluntary network-related work.

LGBT network. The national LGBT network within Govt is a collective network of all regional LGBT networks. In 1994, the first regional LGBT network was initiated by LGBT employees to foster LGBT emancipation in the organization. The LGBT network has a chairman who chairs the network meetings, but decisions are made collaboratively. The network has several committees for organizing various actions, including events such as the national Pride parade, secretary and communication, internal safety and inclusion, and contact with the organizational management. The goals of the LGBT network are twofold: ensuring internal safety for LGBT colleagues and connecting to the LGBT community outside the organization. The national network consists of approximately 20 active members, whereas regional networks consist of approximately 25 members. Regionally, the networks used to receive a budget per year, but the organization is working on a proposal to facilitate their diversity networks and provide a future budget on a national level.

Disability network. The disability network is the initiative of one employee with a chronical illness. Getting diagnosed with cancer, he noticed that the organization tended to write him off. Then, he heard other stories about managers who ignored sick employees and applied policy measures incorrectly. In 2014, he organized a meeting with 15 colleagues with a chronic illness, and his suspicion of sick employees being maltreated by the organization was confirmed. After the meeting, he formed a small group of five people to set up a network and explore possible counteractions. Since then, they have organized several meetings and a small symposium to exchange experiences and knowledge. The goals of the network are to support, help, and advise colleagues and the organization, as well as to challenge the organization to treat sick employees as full and worthy employees and recognize what can be done rather than disregarding them. The first meetings were organized with the (financial) support of an independent foundation that advocates for a more inclusive culture within Govt, tailored to employees' needs. Currently, the network is officially acknowledged by the organizational HR department and subsequently time and resources has been allotted to them.

Young employee network. In 2012, a fusion of several regional young employee networks resulted in the young employee network of Govt on a national level. The goals of the network are fourfold: to present a community for (young) colleagues, to stimulate personal development, to contribute to organizational innovation, and to function as sounding board. Underlying the latter two goals is the objective to change and improve the organizational culture within Govt. Working practices are taken for granted and young (new) employees have no voice. The

young employee network believes that although young employees may be inexperienced, they have good, innovative ideas how work can be organized more efficiently and effectively and, therefore, should be given a voice. The network consists of a core team of approximately 12 members, including a chairman, a vice-chairman, a secretary, and a treasurer. Within this team, the age limit is 35 years, but other members are not restricted to an age limit as long as they support the progressive ideas of the network. The network is financially supported by a member of the organizational board of directors.

Data collection

In this dissertation, I used different methods of data collection that fit the different perspectives: discourse, intersectionality, and practices. For instance, the most suitable method for studying networking practices is participant observation to capture the actions of people and the interactions between them; that is, actually seeing what people say and do (Nicolini, 2009; Yanow, 2006). In line with the qualitative approach, I collected my empirical material through interviews, observations, and documents. In this section, I briefly discuss my data collection methods. Extended explanations of the data collection are particular for each chapter and, therefore, are further elaborated on in each separate chapter. Table 1 provides an overview of the material collected.

Interviews

I conducted 51 in-depth semi-structured interviews with active network members: 33 interviews from members at Finance and 18 from members at Govt. The interviews took place at a location agreed upon by the interviewee, which was usually at work. The interviews were guided by an interview guide (see Appendix 2) with questions about the network's history, goals, meetings, activities and events, member motivations to join diversity networks, and any collaborations with other networks. In addition, the semi-structured, open-ended nature of the interviews allowed for a detailed reflection of network members on observed network meetings or other meetings that I as a researcher could not attend for observation. The interviews were conducted in Dutch, lasted between 45 minutes and two hours, and were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim for the analyses.

Observations

In situ observations formed an important part of my data collection as they allowed me to examine what happens in diversity networks. Organizations are described as political sites (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000), and observations allow taking political organizational processes into account when they unfold. For example, by means of observation, I was able to witness how diversity networks network, what happens during meetings with organizational management, or how equality is addressed during network events. Examples of observed network meetings include network board meetings, activities, or events that were organized by diversity networks,

meetings with the organizational management and *cross-network* meetings between multiple networks. I endeavored to attend a variety of aforementioned network meetings. With regard to network events, I observed small-scale events such as workshops or masterclasses, as well as larger events such as organization-wide conferences. I was able to attend most of the network meetings when asked if I could, with the exception of five particular meetings. Although I provided extensive information beforehand why I wanted to attend a meeting, why observations were important in my research, what my role as observer would look like, and that I would respect and ensure confidentiality of both network members and the organization, I could not attend these meetings. The reasons varied from content that was too sensitive to have a researcher present, meetings that did not take place anymore due to changing network boards, or board members forgot to notify me of their meeting. In total, I observed 46 network meetings that comprised 145 hours of observation.

Depending on the nature of the meeting, I could be either an anonymous spectator or a visible participant (Bleijenbergh, 2013). During large-scale conferences, I was less visible and could have been seen as an employee. However, during smaller meetings such as board meetings, I often sat at the same table as the network members and was also included in a round of questions at the beginning or end of the meeting. This also allowed me to introduce myself and explain my presence and the goal of my research when I was present for the first time. I used either a laptop or a notebook to take field notes on as many details as possible.

Documents

Lastly, I collected and analyzed available documents for each diversity network. These documents contained annual plans, newsletters, and meeting minutes, as well as policy documents, PowerPoint presentations, websites, blogs, and emails. These documents provided valuable information about the network's goals and activities (annual plans, newsletters), how the board presented their network to the organizational management (PowerPoint presentations), how the network envisioned organizational policy with regard to their target group (policy documents), and how they communicated with each other with regard to their ideas about the future of their network or collaboration between different networks (various emails). In addition, documents such as meeting minutes provided information about meetings that were not included in observations and any follow-ups of previously made agreements.

Data analysis

Due to the different perspectives and research questions in this dissertation, the used data sets and data analyses differ per chapter. Although a discourse analysis differs from a practice analysis, several steps in the data analysis were similar for all studies. All data analyses rely on an abductive approach, going back and forth between theory and empirical material (Van Maanen, Sørensen & Mitchell, 2007). In Chapter 2 and 3, the focal data consists of the interview material; in Chapter 4, the most important data were the observation material (see Table 1).

However, the observations, interviews, and documents complemented each other to provide a more fine-grained analysis of the phenomenon under study. For example, in Chapter 3, the observation material complemented the interviews and allowed me to build a more accurate account of political intersectionality. In Chapter 4, the interview material and documents complemented the observation material to connect what happened during network events and meetings to what was said in the interviews.

I started every analysis by reading through all empirical material that was relevant for the analysis. The coding process was conducted either by hand (Chapter 3 and 4) or with the help of Atlas-ti coding software (Chapter 2). Additional rounds of coding differed per analysis. When possible, I formulated analytical questions that guided my data analysis. For example, conducting a discourse analysis, I explored what was said, how it was said, what was not said, and the patterns of variation within the texts. Analyzing structural and political intersectionality in Chapter 3, I asked questions about the data such as where do individual network members talk about their multiple identities, how do they talk about their multiple identities in relation to diversity network membership, where do diversity networks collaborate or talk about collaborating, what does this collaboration entail and what hampers collaboration. These analytical questions helped to identify fragments that were central to answering the research question of each chapter.

During the data analysis, I engaged in mutual discussions with my supervisors to develop a consensual understanding of the data (cf. Gioia et al, 2013; Nemeth, Brown & Rogers, 2001). In addition, comments and feedback from other diversity scholars during conferences and seminars helped deepen and sharpen my analysis and crystalize my theoretical contributions.

In each of the subsequent chapters, I present a selection of the material that is central to the particular research question. These empirical fragments were chosen due to "their evocative content, their ability to highlight the complexity and richness of experience" rather than their statistical representativeness (Poggio, 2006, p. 230). In addition, I used fictitious names to secure anonymity of my respondents throughout this dissertation.

Outline of the dissertation

This dissertation consists of three main chapters. In each chapter, I take a different critical perspective to study diversity networks. Chapter 2 starts with exploring what the histories, goals, and activities of diversity networks are as described by the diversity network board members. I develop a theoretical framework to reconceptualize organizational equality. Subsequently, I use this framework to show how the board members of diversity networks discursively construct the value of their networks against the backdrop of discourses on diversity and equality. In Chapter 3, intersectionality is the central concept. By theorizing both structural and political intersectionality, insight is given into how the complex reality

of multiple identities works out in single category diversity management practices. Chapter 4 elaborates on the practice-based approach and focuses on the actual networking practices in diversity networks. This processual approach yields insight in the real-time sayings and doings that occur in diversity networks. I further explore the collective action and political dynamics that take place in diversity networks and show how processes of networking potentially contribute to equality in organizations. In the final chapter of this dissertation, I discuss the theoretical implications and contributions of my research. Bringing the insights from previous chapters together, I am able to shed light on how diversity networks work in organizations, how they contribute to equality in organizations, and moreover, what hampers their effectiveness. I conclude my dissertation with some final reflections on the research process and potential avenues for future research.

Table 1. Overview data dissertation

Network	*Organization*	*Interviewees*	*Used in chapter*	*Observations*	*Used in chapter*
Women at the top	Finance	3 board members Initiator	3, 4	2 board meetings (with LwA) 2 organized events	3, 4
Ladies with ambition	Finance	3 board members 2 former chairs	2, 3, 4	2 board meetings (with WatT) 2 organized events 1 event together with WatT	3, 4
Ethnic minority network	Finance	4 board members 2 former chairs Initiator	2, 3, 4	Board meeting Meeting with management 2 network events (workshops)	3, 4
LGBT network	Finance	5 board members 2 initiators	2, 3, 4	2 board meetings 2 network events Intercompany BLT lunch	3, 4
Disability network	Finance	4 board members Committee member	2, 3, 4	2 network meetings	3, 4
Young employee network	Finance	4 board members 2 initiators (1 interview)	2, 3	4 board meetings 3 network events Meeting with management	3
Various	Finance			Cross network meeting 2 D&I conferences	3, 4
Subtotal Finance		*33 interviews*		*29 observations*	
Women's network	Govt	5 board members	3, 4	Lunch meeting	3, 4
LGBT network	Govt	3 board members Initiator	3, 4	5 board meetings Network event	3, 4
Disability network	Govt	4 board members	3, 4	4 board meetings 2 network meetings Cross network meeting	3, 4

Table 1. Continued

Network	*Organization*	*Interviewees*	*Used in chapter*	*Observations*	*Used in chapter*
Young employee network	Govt	4 board members Initiator	3	2 network events	3
Various	Govt			Cross network meeting	3, 4
Subtotal Govt		*18 interviews*		*17 observations*	
TOTAL		51 interviews		46 observations	

** The number of interviews and observations between the chapters may differ, as the chapters were written in various stages of ongoing data collection.*

CHAPTER 2

Diversity networks: networking for equality?

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In this chapter, I aim to come to a better understanding of how diversity networks contribute to equality by examining how diversity network leaders discursively construct the value of their networks against the backdrop of discourses on diversity and equality. I have conducted a multiple case study of five different diversity networks in a financial service organization in the Netherlands. My analysis shows that network leaders tend to construct the value of their networks primarily in terms of individual career development and community building to prevent their members' isolation. However, they are much less articulate about removing the barriers to inclusion in the organization as a core value of their networks. I conclude that the value of diversity networks is limited when these networks only address the individual and group levels of equality and leave inequalities at the organizational level unchallenged.

Introduction

Diversity networks are a widely popular practice in current organizations to promote organizational equality (Benschop et al., 2015; Kaplan et al., 2009). As part of the larger diversity management agenda, these in-company networks are initiated to inform, support and advance employees with historically marginalized social identities (Foldy, 2002). Hitherto, research has provided some insights into the value of diversity networks for women, ethnic minorities and LGBT employees. For instance, diversity networks are perceived to have a positive effect on members' career advancement (Cross & Armstrong, 2008; O'Neil et al., 2011), facilitate a safe space for members to share experiences (Friedman, 1996, 1999; Pini et al., 2004), and provide possibilities to advise management about diversity- and equality-related issues (Colgan & McKearney, 2012; Gremmen & Benschop, 2013).

Despite their contribution to the field of diversity management research, these studies present several important limitations. First, the majority of these studies seem to make diversity too easily "doable" (Prasad & Mills, 1997, p. 11). Diversity networks have met scholarly critique for their lack of power to challenge organizations as they would have no choice but to follow the managerial agenda (Foldy, 2002). Yet, there is little dispute about the value of diversity networks as a popular diversity management instrument. Much of the diversity network literature emphasizes the beneficial effects for diversity and equality in organizations and ignores tensions, conflicts and contradictions (with Bierema, 2005; Colgan, 2016; Foldy, 2002 as notable exceptions). Managing diversity is power-laden, contextual, and ambivalent (Ahmed & Swan, 2006; Prasad & Mills, 1997; Tatli, 2011), and accomplishing organizational equality by means of diversity networks is more complicated than simply creating a network (Bierema, 2005). Addressing diversity networks in a "feel-good way" (Hoobler, 2005, p. 55) overlooks asymmetrical power relations that foster inequalities in organizations.

Second, studies are ambiguous about whether diversity networks achieve their intended results (Bierema, 2005; Kalev et al., 2006). Diversity networks possibly benefit both marginalized groups and the organization as a whole, but it remains unclear if and how networks fulfill this potential. Diversity network research presents a scattered field and the implications of diversity networks for organizational equality remain an understudied terrain. Hitherto, an overarching theoretical framework on the function of diversity networks as diversity management instrument is lacking. Hence, there is a need for better theoretical insights into the potential of diversity networks to diminish organizational inequalities.

To address these limitations, I turn to critical diversity studies (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; Oswick & Noon, 2014; Prasad & Mills, 1997; Zanoni et al., 2010) that specifically focus on inequalities in organizations and the underlying processes, practices and discourses that maintain and reproduce it. Taking into account inequalities and marginalized organizational voices, critical diversity studies provide "unique and important ways to

understand organizations and their [diversity] management" (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p. 10). A critical diversity perspective allows an analysis of the value of diversity networks for organizational equality as a key goal for diversity management that goes beyond numerical diversity.

In line with critical diversity studies, I study diversity networks as a vehicle for greater organizational equality conceptualized as the systematic parities in power and control over goals, resources, behaviors, agendas, cultures and outcomes (Acker, 2006). The aim of this study is to gain a better understanding of how diversity networks contribute to equality by examining how diversity network board members discursively construct the value of their networks against the backdrop of discourses on diversity and equality. Capturing the board members' constructions of the value of their diversity networks demonstrates how they legitimize the existence and functioning of their networks in their organization. I provide a fine-grained analysis of the contradictory discursive practices and show whether and how the networks address organizational inequalities, and how their constructions vary across different networks. These insights will provide a more comprehensive understanding of how diversity networks help or hinder organizational equality.

I contribute to the theory and practice of diversity network studies in two ways. First, I show the ambiguities and contradictions in the legitimating discourses that simultaneously produce and counteract equality. This means that diversity networks sometimes tame diversity instead of changing the status quo. Second, drawing on theories from network studies, diversity studies and gender studies, I develop a three-level framework to theorize the value of different diversity networks for equality in organizations. By doing so, I show that the contribution of diversity networks is limited when these networks only address the individual and group levels of equality and leave inequalities at the organizational level unchallenged.

Theoretical framework

Networks in organizations

The popularity of diversity networks in organizations is based on the widespread idea that involvement in networks presents an important career management strategy. Ample studies have shown that successful networking is associated with positive career outcomes such as job opportunities, promotions, higher wages, influence and status (e.g., Borgatti & Foster, 2003; Granovetter, 1973; Kilduff & Brass, 2010; Mehra et al., 1998). Networks are considered to enhance and strengthen social ties which increases satisfaction, social support and embeddedness, and lowers the risk of isolation (Bagilhole & Goode, 2001; Forret & Dougherty, 2004). As such, networks are seen as valuable on both a resource level (i.e., access to information, other networks and decision-makers) as well as a relational level (i.e., support, trust and solidarity) (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

Although networks are overall seen as beneficial, studies also highlighted that networks can generate inequalities (Konrad, 2007; Ibarra 1997; Rothstein, Burke & Bristor, 2001). For example, Rothstein, Burke and Bristor (2001) found that women have fewer links to senior managers in the organization, who were predominantly men. In addition, Konrad (2007) found that black women have limited access to informal networks. Likewise, Kalev, Dobbin and Kelly (2006) showed that black women and black men do not benefit from networks in the same way that white women do. Thus, networks can create inequalities in job opportunities, access to information, status, and support when social groups such as women and ethnic minorities are excluded from white, male dominated networks and cannot tap into the same resources, such as strategic network relations, powerful sponsors, and higher status connections (Burt, 1998; Forret & Dougherty, 2004; Ibarra, 1997; McDonald, 2011). Diversity networks were initiated to counteract these inequalities.

Diversity networks in organizations

Based on the beneficial effects of networks in general, diversity networks would present a strategy for advancing the positions of historically excluded groups within organizations (Foldy, 2002; Tomlinson, 1987). Emanating from the US, the first diversity networks in organizations addressed women and ethnic minorities, aiming for their social inclusion and increasing their numerical representation in the higher organizational echelons (Friedman, 1996; Gremmen & Benschop, 2011; Pini et al., 2004). Currently, different diversity networks exist for a much wider range of employee groups, focusing for instance on sexualities, disabilities, religion, or age (Kaplan et al., 2009). The existent literature mainly focuses on women's networks, ethnic minority networks and LGBT networks. To my knowledge, there is no literature available on networks for disabled or young employees[1].

The dominant discourse about diversity networks lauds these networks for being an effective instrument in promoting organizational equality. Although organizations initiate diversity networks to manage their diverse workforce (Bierema, 2005; Kaplan et al., 2009), research has yielded ambiguous results. On the one hand, studies show that women's networks are effective in fostering a collective identity and decreasing feelings of isolation (Pini et al., 2004), offering access to information and opportunities for upward career development (Cross & Armstrong, 2008), and enhancing member's visibility, leadership skills and confidence (O'Neil et al., 2011). Likewise, ethnic minority networks can have a positive effect on members' perceived career advancement (Friedman, Kane & Cornfield, 1998), reduced turnover intentions and social embeddedness (Friedman & Craig, 2004; Friedman & Holtom, 2002), and provide a safe space without the need to conform to the dominant organizational culture (Friedman, 1996, 1999). On the other hand, studies showed counterproductive effects (Kalev et al., 2006). For

1 Even though the young do not constitute a marginalized group, networks for young employees are diversity networks in the sense that they are organized on the social category of age.

example, research refutes that ethnic minority networks would provide members with much opportunities to diminish inequalities (Friedman, 1996). Also, women's networks are often object of ridicule (Gremmen & Benschop, 2011; Vinnicombe, Singh & Kumra, 2004), affecting their legitimacy and resulting in women's reluctance to actively participate (Bierema, 2005). In order to elaborate on these contrasting findings, I briefly turn to theories on organizational equality from the field of gender studies.

Paradigms of diversity and equality in organizations

As for most diversity management practices, inequality theories lie at the root of the implementation of diversity networks (Kalev et al., 2006). Theoretical insights and conceptualizations from gender equality research have largely influenced and shaped the theory and practice of in/equality at work and in organizations (Benschop, 2006). Organizational equality is a difficult and challenging concept; it is not formulaic, there is no identifiable endpoint and every organization is unique (Ely & Meyerson, 2000b; Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000). Kolb et al. (1998) introduced a framework to summarize how organizations possibly approach organizational (gender) equality. In this framework, they distinguish between traditional approaches geared towards minority employees to get them on a par with majority employees, and non-traditional approaches that focus on changing organizational processes, work practices, and everyday interactions that contribute to the (re)production of inequalities in organizations (Acker, 2006; Ely & Meyerson, 2000a; Zanoni et al., 2010).

Diversity networks are predominantly seen as an instrument to increase the number of historically marginalized employees, focusing on their numerical representation in management ranks. Diversity networks meet scholarly critique for their emphasis on *fixing* organizational minorities. Although this may help individual minority employees in their career advancement, organizational processes (re)producing inequalities go unchallenged (Benschop et al., 2015; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000; Zanoni et al., 2010). Some authors argue that diversity networks should focus exclusively on supporting and connecting their members, and not on broader organizational changes (Friedman, 1996). However, other authors argue that diversity networks can play a role in increasing equality (Briscoe & Safford, 2008, 2010; Githens & Aragon, 2009; McFadden & Crowley-Henry, 2017). For example, Colgan and McKearney (2012) show that an LGBT network can become an *agency for change* by shaping and driving the organizational sexual orientation equality agenda. Bell et al. (2011) propose that LGBT networks create opportunities to challenge the organization by providing LGBT employees with voice and visibility. Similarly, Meyerson and Fletcher (2000) propose that groups of employees can meet and discuss common problems and underlying factors which "opens up the possibility of change" (p. 135), not only for individual employees, but also for the overall organization.

To understand the value of diversity networks for organizational equality, I develop a theoretical framework that can take into account the contribution of diversity networks to organizational equality on multiple levels. In the following section, I present such a framework.

Towards a framework of diversity networks and equality

Based on theories from network studies, diversity studies and gender studies, I distinguish networks' effects on equality on three main levels: network members individually, members as a group, and the organization as a whole. I conceptualize equality effects at the individual level as the contribution of networks to individual career development. Equality effects at the group level are conceptualized as the contribution of networks to community building. Networks can bring their members together to reduce their isolation in majority groups: members can connect, share experiences, and build social support and cohesion between them (Friedman 1996, 1999; Colgan & McKearney, 2012). Equality at the organization level is conceptualized as a contribution of networks to inclusion, that is, the full participation of all employees in all formal and informal organization processes (Mor Barak, 2015). Figure 1 shows my three-level framework of organizational equality.

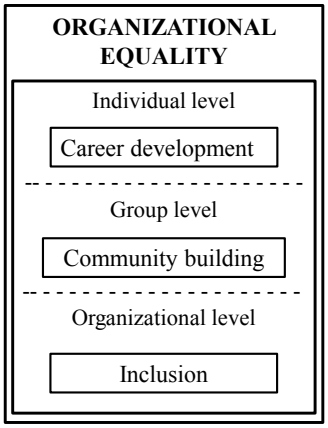

Figure 1. A three-level framework of organizational equality

My literature review shows that it is not self-evident that diversity networks contribute to equality on all levels: some networks are more career oriented, while others aim to combat group isolation, or focus on changing policies. To gain a better understanding of diversity networks' contributions to equality, I now turn to the key figures of diversity networks, the network board members. Diversity network board members play a crucial role in making strategic network decisions, defining the network goals and organizing network activities for members. My theoretical framework provides me with the conceptual tools to analyze the goals and values board members construct for their diversity networks in relation to the different levels of organizational equality.

Methodology

To examine how diversity network board members discursively construct the value of their diversity networks, I use a qualitative research strategy. I conducted a multiple case study of five different diversity networks within a financial service organization in the Netherlands (Finance). A multiple case study supports the analysis of complex and little understood phenomena within real-life, organizational contexts (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2009). A multiple case study allows for multiple methods of data collection, which can be compared and contrasted in order to identify ambiguities and contradictions in the data. This provides in-depth insights in different networks, including networks that have not been studied before. I selected this organization as it accommodates different diversity networks, a women's network, an ethnic minority network, an LGBT network, a network for disabled employees and a network for young employees (age 18-35), which allows a comparison of these networks.

Case description and data collection

I collected my data in an organization located in a large Dutch city, employing 20,000 people. In Table 2, an overview is presented of the composition of the workforce in terms of diversity[2].

Table 2. Composition of the workforce in Finance

Group	*Percentage*
Women (overall)	48,0%
Women (top)	30,0%
Ethnic minorities	16,0%
LGBTs	6,0%
Disabled employees	1,4%
Age 20-29	7,5%
Age 30-34	14,5%

This chapter is based on 30 in-depth interviews with former and current diversity network board members (18 women and 12 men between 26 and 59 years old). An overview of the respondents can be found in Appendix 1. I selected network board members for two reasons: as board members they communicate the value of their diversity networks both to potential members and to the organization for resources and support, and they are responsible for the actions and activities of their diversity networks. As such, the board members are the de facto leaders of their networks.

2 Source: Diversity magazine of Finance (2014).

The conducted interviews took place at a location agreed with the interviewee, usually at the interviewees' workplace. The interviews were conducted in Dutch, lasted between 45 minutes and two hours, were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interviews were guided by a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix 2) with questions about how and why the networks were initiated, the networks' structure, membership, goals and activities, and organizational support. In addition, I collected and analyzed the annual plans and newsletters of the diversity networks. These documents provided information about formal mission statements, objectives and activities, offering additional insight into how diversity network board members legitimize their networks to gain support and budget from the organization.

The quotes in this chapter are translations of the original Dutch interview excerpts. I stayed as close as possible to the original expressions and idiom. To secure anonymity and confidentiality, I have anonymized the respondents using fictitious names.

Data analysis

My data analysis was an iterative process of going back and forth between the literature and the empirical material. I used the qualitative software package Atlas-ti to systemize and code my empirical material. I first coded the data in terms of content, using codes derived from the interview guide (Silverman, 2006) such as goals, activities, support and legitimation. This resulted in an overview of the goals, structure and activities of each network. In a second step, I compared these findings over the networks and reread the material searching for how interviewees talked about the value of their networks. In the findings section, I present a selection of excerpts, Appendix 3 provides additional data.

To further analyze these excerpts, I used discourse analysis delving deeper into both what was said, how it was said, what was not said and the patterns of variation within the texts (Potter & Wetherell, 1994). Discourse analysis provided an entrance into the board members' "dialogical struggle(s)" (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p. 25) that represent a two-way process: diversity network board members can either shape or be shaped by organizational, or broader societal, discourses representing familiar combinations of arguments and characterizations about equality and diversity in the workplace. I question which discourses feature in board members' constructions of the value of their networks and how interviewees' discursive constructions relate to a broader set of discursive practices around diversity and equality. Comparing the discursive constructions of the value of diversity networks across the different networks sheds light on how equality and inequality can be challenged or reproduced.

Findings

For every diversity network, I explore how board members frame their goals and the activities they organize in order to realize these goals. I analyze different discourses that the board members draw on in their constructions of the value of their networks. An overview of the main characteristics of the different diversity networks can be found in Appendix 4.

Women's network

The women's network is organized explicitly for women in middle management positions. According to the network's annual plan, the network is an "informal network for ambitious women". The board members primarily construct the notion of gender equality as numerical, aiming for more women in higher managerial positions. For this purpose, the network wants to support the career development of what they refer to as "ambitious women".

In order to facilitate women's career advancement, the board members organize several events and activities, such as a mentoring program, round table sessions, and an annual event in cooperation with women in senior management positions. The main thread throughout these events is to provide members with the necessary tools for career advancement and professional empowerment. The board members emphasize "professional" activities and assert that women themselves are responsible for their own career:

> *We have to stop whining about the glass ceiling. And tut-tut, we are so pitiable. (...) You can do a lot yourself. You can make it open to discussion, you can make it visible, you know. (Kate)*

Board member Kate takes issue with the concept of the "glass ceiling". Instead of addressing organizational barriers, she states that women are not "pitiable" but agentic. I distinguish a discourse of individual career responsibility which frames career development as a choice and constructs women as responsible for their career advancement by learning the rules of the game (see Appendix 3 for more illustrative quotes). The board members adopt hegemonic male models of success and networking:

> *You really want to apply for [a higher managerial position] because you want to grow, then you have to start thinking about how to put that in your network: call out what you can do. Men do that too. (Betty)*

According to Betty, women have to "really know what [they] want, and what [they] can do" if they want to further their careers in the way men do. In line with the *equip the women approach* (Meyerson and Kolb, 2000), women are the ones who should assimilate and become

as assertive, political and strategic as men if they want to be successful. With their activities, the women's network strives to empower their members professionally and enable them to follow the male models of career success.

Although the main focus of the board members is on individual women, they argue that it is important to involve men in their activities.

> *We involve men, absolutely, absolutely. (...) I am not saying that it starts with that, but it is a combination. The women have to work on it themselves, we [women, eds.] have to really do something instead of whining. And second, there are the men, who have to be aware of what they are doing. That they indeed hire a lookalike. (Kate)*

As such, Kate does not solely focus on the empowerment of individual women, but also on awareness among men. She questions the behavior of men, for instance in recruitment and selection processes. By involving men, she wants to raise awareness that male managers tend to hire "lookalikes". The board members believe men to be instrumental in bringing about change. Individual men need to be *equipped* too, but men need a different kind of intervention geared to awareness of their hiring preferences, not the behavioral assimilation required of women.

Drawing on a discourse of individual career responsibility, the board members highlight the empowerment of individual women. This discourse corresponds to "equip the woman" or "liberal individualism" (Meyerson & Kolb, 2000, p. 560). Although the board members do attempt to involve men and to raise awareness about recruitment and selection processes, the male models of career success and networking are never challenged but taken for granted as the standard for all employees.

Ethnic minority network

The ethnic minority network started as an interpersonal network of one employee with an ethnic minority background and has gradually developed into an official employee network. There are different, overlapping goals mentioned by various board members during the interviews and formulated in the network's annual plan. The overarching goal of this network is to connect employees throughout the organization. This entails both connections among employees with an ethnic minority background as well as between all employees, regardless of their background. I distinguish several subgoals: career development, for employees to "feel at home within [the organization]", and to increase visibility and create awareness for ethnic diversity.

First, the career development of employees with an ethnic minority background stagnates at middle management positions. To support the career development of members, the network organizes discussions, workshops and professional training sessions. For example, a training about body language, where participants learned how to "sell" themselves. This emphasizes

individual responsibility for one's career. "Feeling at home" is a second subgoal. One of the board members explains that he had to "turn some switches" in his behavior to fit in when he just started to work in Finance. He therefore considers it is important that ethnic minority employees have to "turn as little switches" as possible to feel at home within the organization. For employees to feel at home and to facilitate the exchange of experiences, the network organizes monthly drinks. A third subgoal is to increase visibility and create awareness of ethnic diversity through an ongoing dialogue between members and senior management. The network wants to serve as a "collective voice" to influence the agenda of the board of directors on diversity-related matters. The network organizes regular lunches and drinks for network members, managers and members of the board of directors.

I note that the board members emphasize the importance of awareness, calling attention to ethnic diversity and the struggles ethnic minority employees may encounter. Yet, in my interviews I observe ambivalence towards being visible as a network that spotlights ethnic diversity.

> *We do not want to give the impression that it is only for foreigners or something... The impression is just, we want to bond and connect, so then you want to include everybody. But that is a difficult task. (Hassan)*

> *It sounds a bit contradictory, but you have... I think you need it on the long term to show that actually you just belong to the [organization]. (...) To show that it is just something very normal. (...) And what is needed not to have it on the map any more, is to first put it on the map. (Glenn)*

Hassan explicitly states that the network should not become or be labeled as a network exclusively for ethnic minorities. Glenn voices similar feelings when he presents the ethnic minority network as a means to an end, the end being belongingness. Employees with a cultural diverse background are not different from any other employee, they are "normal". Glenn constructs *equality* in the sense of *sameness*, avoiding any reference to inequality. This is "a bit contradictory", as he also notes himself, because the network is legitimate exactly because of its focus on ethnic diversity. On the one hand, the board members state that it is important to increase the visibility of ethnic diversity, so that ethnic minority employees fit in without the need to assimilate. On the other hand, ethnic diversity should be "normal". Increasing the importance of ethnic diversity implicates more visibility of ethnic diversity, but that goes against the wishes of the board members for belongingness and blending in with the majority. In doing so, they are losing difference for equality.

Board members invoke discourses of belongingness and visibility, in line with what Ghorashi and Sabelis (2013) call "a struggle in relation to sameness and difference" (p. 79). This struggle is affected by a larger societal discourse on ethnic minorities, in which ethnic minorities are constructed as a deviation from the norm, and therefore as lacking (Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013; Siebers, 2010). This is illustrated by existing tensions between the network and

potential members, especially those in high positions who do not want to identify with or be labeled as "cultural diverse" as they link it to disadvantage and inequality. The board members believe the ethnic minority network is a temporary necessity to change the organization, yet they are reluctant to emphasize ethnic diversity too much, in fear of stigmatization and disadvantage. As such, differences are dismissed and the prevailing norms remain unchallenged.

LGBT network

The LGBT network was initiated by LGBT employees within the organization. Following an initiative to organize informal drinks, the network was formalized into an official diversity network. In my interviews, the board members mention two main goals. The first goal is to support and advance the visibility of homosexuality, tolerance and acceptance of LGBT employees. According to the board members, LGBT employees who are *out* would perform better at work compared to LGBT employees who hide their homosexuality. Second, the board members want to create a safe space where LGBT employees can "feel at home".

In order to advance the visibility of homosexuality and provide a safe space, the LGBT network organizes "feel-good activities", mainly seminars with drinks afterwards. Network members are encouraged to bring a straight colleague to activities. Reaching out rather than withdrawing among network members is seen as facilitating the visibility of the network and of homosexuality in the organization. Instigated by the LGBT network, the organization also participated in the national Gay Pride Parade.

Although the board members want to advance the visibility of homosexuality throughout the organization, they are ambiguous about the kind of visibility:

> *The most important is that we... uh... advance the visibility of homosexuality. And with that I do not mean that we... uh... have to parade through the building like Gerard Joling. (...) That is not the visibility that I mean. That visibility can be there as well, but in general it is just.. uh.. that it is normal. So to speak, eh. That it, uh... so then you have a Gerard Joling, but there are also... uh... types like me, who are not immediately recognizable when you are straight, so to speak. It is about allowing the visibility in all its variety. (Anna)*

In this excerpt, I observe a discourse of visibility, as Anna wants homosexuality to be visible, but she is ambivalent about the type of visibility. Reference is made to the Dutch singer Gerard Joling, who is open about his homosexuality. Although this open type of homosexuality should be acceptable as well, and Anna refers to visibility in various ways, she speaks of "normal" in reference to a homosexuality that is almost invisible, at least to straight eyes. In line with Anna, other board members are also careful not to confirm gay stereotypes. For example, about their participation in the national Gay Pride Parade, a board member states that "it had to look professional", not "too much nudity", and to "make a statement that we are just normal people". Another board member wants to challenge the stereotypical perception of "partying

gays (...) in pink underwear" by exemplifying that LGBTs are "just employees and professional" (see also Appendix 3). As such, a stereotypical gay image is constructed as out of line with the professionalism of the organization.

> *It is there but... it is no part of the work. You are just a good professional and, oh yes, gay, but that is not relevant to your work, to your position, to your performance (...) the best thing is that it is no explicit part of my... how people evaluate me as professional. And it has to be like that. Also that flamboyant young man is not evaluated on the fact that he is flamboyant, he is evaluated on how he does his job. (Anna)*

In this quote, Anna explicitly separates sexuality from professionalism, arguing that being gay is irrelevant for work performance, and in keeping with meritocracy, should not matter in professional assessment. As such, she draws on a discourse of professionalism that is supposed to be identity-blind. Board members assert that homosexuality should be considered as normal as heterosexuality, and LGBT employees are "just normal people", invoking a discourse of normalization, and a distinction is made between "normal, invisible types" and "flamboyant stereotypes". This distinction could possibly create a "hierarchy between honorable and unrespectable homosexuals" (Gusmano, 2010, p. 36). Moreover, openly claiming to be different from "flamboyant" types, presents a commitment and alignment to the heteronormative structure of the organization, where "practices and institutions legitimatize and privilege heterosexuality" (Gusmano, 2010, p. 33).

Thus, I observe tensions and contradictions in the representation of the LGBT network as an instrument for the visibility and inclusion of homosexuality in the organization. On the one hand, in an organization where sexuality used to be rendered invisible and heterosexuality is considered the norm, the existence of a LGBT network calls into question taken for granted notions about sexuality. On the other hand, the privileging of the "normal, professional gay type" and its contrast to the "flamboyant homosexual" renders homosexuality invisible again, and implies compliance to the organization's heteronormative order.

Disability network

The disability network was initated by two employees with a disability. Being the youngest network in the organization, I note that the goals are not yet crystallized. Different, overlapping network goals are formulated in the network's development plan, in official network newsletters, and by the board members themselves. I distill three core goals. First, the network aims to create visibility and awareness of disability in the organization. Second, the network provides a space of support for disabled employees. Third, the network aims to support and advise the organization by becoming a unit of expertise on disability-related issues.

The first goal is creating more visibility and awareness of the capabilities of disabled employees. Increasing visibility entails that the board members make sure that members of the network are involved in organizational events, such as including disability in organizational sports tournaments. However, the board members of the disability network are careful not to emphasize a particular visibility:

> *Naturally, [the network] stands for ability. Often people think about disability as lacking competency or lacking knowledge or lacking skills. Where [the network] somewhat stands for is that is should not become a separate network for disabled but it has to be a network that has a connecting factor within [the organization]. (Tim)*

This quote illustrates how board member Tim calls attention to the *abilities* of disabled employees. Drawing on a discourse of ability and empowerment, Tim endeavors to stress the strengths and qualities of disabled people instead of highlighting their deficiencies. Therefore, the network is open to both disabled and able-bodied employees. The board members attempt to prevent stigmatization by arguing "that [the network] is not a club of deficient people". Moreover, by focusing on positive, humorous and playful actions, such as taking part in assault courses, they want to emphasize the capabilities of disabled employees.

The second goal is providing support for disabled employees, by offering a space where disabled employees can meet and discuss their struggles and experiences. Activities are, for example, open coffee hours and workshops about balancing energy and self-promotion.

The third goal is to support and advise the organization about disability-related issues. The network aims to become a unit of expertise, stimulating learning and development for their members and the organization. This is linked to the open membership of the network and in particular the involvement of managers. The board members explain that the involvement of managers is important because they are responsible for hiring, evaluating and including disabled employees. The following quote illustrates that board members criticize manager's mindsets about career development:

> *Look, if I came to work for somebody else and I am going to say, I want to work sixteen hours divided over three days. Well, I think that HR will look rather strange if I am going to say that. Because they do not have that mindset. And especially a knowledge-intensive organization, so career, career, career. But you do not have to work 60 hours to make a career. That is also such a mindset that people have in their heads (...) the manager and HR too. (Sarah)*

Sarah invokes a discourse of possibilities and organizational change by arguing that employees with a disability are able to have a career as well, if the narrow notion of a career changes. She calls for organizational changes in both mindset and organizational practices in order to include employees with disabilities as full organizational members.

Board members of the disability network call for an adaptation of the organization to accomodate the needs of the disabled employees who are literally not able to adapt themselves to the organization. However, their emphasis on mainly positive, uncritical interventions, the discourses of ability, empowerment, possibilities and change convey an impression of a naïve positivity that resembles the early happy diversity discourses (cf. Prasad & Mills, 1997).

Young employee network

The young employee network was initiated by several young employees in the organization. With 1300 members, it is the largest network of the organization. According to their annual plan, the goals of the young employee network are threefold. First, they want to bring young employees throughout the organization together for social activities, personal development and inspiration. Second, the young employee network wants to "build bridges", meaning building relationships within the organization as well as between their own organization and other organizations. And third, the young employee network wants to "contribute to the development of the [organization] and its image".

Although these three goals are the formalized goals on paper, the network board members highlight that their "core business" is socializing:

> *We just think it is cozy to get together for drinks and to learn from each other, to hear what everybody is doing. (Jenny)*

> *We are an informal network, where you get to know each other by being there and have a beer together and attend an activity. That is how we come to the fore. (Michael)*

These and the illustrative quotes in Appendix 3 show that board members use terms as "cozy", "informal" and "having a beer" to describe the essence of their network. Drawing on a discourse of socializing, the network is presented as a place where it is just nice to meet, have drinks and talk to other young people. Organized social activities are for example monthly drinks, a gala, a bowling event, and a ski or sailing trip. These activities are not paid for by the network, but require an individual contribution.

According to the initiators of the network, young employees in 1995 felt like the "lowest servants". They established the young employee network to change the organization, because the ideas of the "new generation" about leadership differed from the "grey" management. Today young employees are regarded as talented employees who "determine the future of [the organization]" (Company website, 2014). The network is invited by top management to represent the point of view of the young employees, and they are involved in recruitment activities. Moreover, the network's organizational problem solving committee advises the board of directors.

I observe that the status of young employees in the organization has changed over time from "lowest servants" without power to "ambitious talents" valuable for the future of the

organization. Where young employees were once regarded as "others", they are now included. As such, I observe that the young employee network is co-opted into the organization. This can be related to a broader organizational, and possibly societal, shift in discourse about young employees. I have labelled this as the discourse of the glorification of the young. Within this discourse, young employees are considered to be young professionals and unique selling points, valuable in making a contribution to organizational performance (cf. Kelan, 2014). Involvement of young employees in critical organizational processes such as decision making is not a matter of acceptance of diversity, but a token of their self-evident importance to the organization.

Compared to the other diversity networks, the young employee network is less restricted due to the taken-for-granted status of young employees in the organization. The power that is inherent to this status provides the board members with the opportunity to draw on a discourse of socializing. This contrasts with other diversity networks that have to engage in more professionalism-related discourses to legitimate their existence. However, the young employee network needs the discourse of the glorification of the young, that is directed to the organization, in order to be able to uphold a discourse of socializing, that is directed to the network's (potential) members.

Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this study was to gain a better understanding of how diversity networks contribute to equality by examining how diversity network leaders discursively construct the value of their networks against the backdrop of discourses on diversity and equality. Thus far, the implications of diversity networks for organizational equality remained an understudied terrain. Tensions, conflicts and contradictions are ignored, and an overarching theoretical framework on the function of diversity networks in diversity management is hitherto lacking. Analyzing five different diversity networks with a critical diversity perspective, I fill the gap in the literature and contribute to the theory on diversity networks in two ways. First, I identified the discourses by which network board members legitimize the existence and functioning of their networks. This allowed me to uncover the tensions and dilemmas network board members are struggling with. Second, by further developing the framework on levels of equality, I theorize the value of diversity networks for equality in organizations. My empirical study of five diversity networks has helped to further elaborate the framework. Analyzing the ambiguities and contradictions in the legitimating discourses, I showed when and how diversity networks simultaneously produce and counteract equality on the individual, group and organizational level. I conclude this chapter with theoretical and practical implications.

Individual level: individual career responsibility

First, in line with the literature (Bierema, 2005; Vinnicombe et al., 2004), my findings show that network leaders see diversity networks as valuable for the career advancement of their

members. Invoking a discourse of individual career responsibility, they emphasize that networks offer members useful tools for their careers. I have seen how the board members of the women's network predominantly construct the value of their network along these lines as they see the network as a way to stimulate ambitious women to take responsibility for their professional career success. The ethnic minority network, and the LGBT network also refer to career development for their members, but they construct this in terms of the structural and cultural barriers that impede the upward mobility of members of these networks, not so much as individual responsibilities. Yet, I observed ambiguity in the struggle of the board members of the ethnic minority network and the LGBT network with the discourse of professionalism. They want to stretch the meaning to normalize the professionalism of culturally and sexually diverse employees, but do so without critically questioning the underlying white and heteronormative conceptions of that professionalism (Bell et al., 2011). In contrast, the board members of the disability network emphasize the responsibility of the organization to change the notion of career to incorporate a wider array of work hours and work practices. The disability network strives for individual network members with disabilities to change or develop the organization, whereas it is the other way around for the women's network that seems to accept the organization and strives to change or develop the women. The emphasis on individual responsibility limits the contribution to equality and the individual level of equality becomes problematic when discourses of professionalism and individual choice prevail, without problematizing the gendered, classed and racialized connotations of career.

Group level: visibility and normalization

The second level of equality is the group level. Here the contribution of diversity networks lies in community building between employees with similar social identities. When networks bring their members together so that they can connect (Friedman, 1996, 1999), share experiences, and build social support and cohesion between them without having to conform to the majority culture (Colgan & McKearney, 2012), I see the contribution to equality at the group level. My findings show how community building is particularly valued by the board members of the ethnic minority network, the LGBT network and the disability network, as their members may be isolated in work environments dominated by white, heterosexual and able-bodied colleagues. Yet, I observe that network leaders fear isolation when they are perceived as exclusive communities for ethnic minority, LGBT or disabled employees only. This reveals a tension between the discourse of visibility that the networks want to claim for their members and their discourses of normalization of their membership. Board members feel the need to increase the visibility of ethnic diversity, sexual diversity or disability in the organization, but fear the visibility of difference constructed as stigma, inequality and disadvantage at the same time. For example, the ethnic minority network does not want to give "the impression that it is only for foreigners", and the LGBT network are cautious not to confirm stereotypes of "gays in pink underwear". Young employees on the other hand, are not a traditional category of diversity and they are not *othered*

and marginalized like women, ethnic minorities, LGBTs and disabled employees. The discourses of the young employee network do not construct a young age as a dimension of inequality. This is reflected in the discursive celebration of the young as the future glory of the organization, that is unparalleled by any other diversity network. For the other networks their minority status is obvious (Kelan, 2014) and to escape the disadvantages of this minority status and facilitate a wider belongingness to the organization, network board members include supportive majority members. Opening up membership implies a more legitimate position for these networks in the organization and serves to de-emphasize the relevance of difference, toning it down to something more palatable to the wider organization (Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014). Simultaneously, the contribution of the networks to group level equality is counteracted, when conformation to the majority culture prevails over challenging the lower status of minorities.

Organizational level: inclusion, abilities and possibilities

The third and last level of equality is the organizational level. The contribution of diversity networks at this level pertains to inclusion, i.e., the removal of obstacles to the full participation and contribution of employees to all formal and informal processes in the organization (Mor Barak, 2015; Roberson, 2006). Inclusive organizations give all employees a voice, a sense of belonging, access to information, have them take part in decision making, value their competencies and have them express multiple identities at work (Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Mor Barak & Cherin, 1998). My findings show that the board members of the disability network are the most vocal about inclusion as a value of their network. Drawing on a discourse of ability and possibilities, they challenge restrictive work practices and the narrow notion of a career. They construct their network as a center of expertise on disability issues, providing the organization with opportunities to learn how disabled people are able to contribute, focusing on strengths and qualities instead of deficiencies, and showing how the organization should adapt to disabled people rather than the other way around. My analysis shows how the discourse of normalization also refers to inclusion: by stressing it should be normal for their members to be hired and do their work, the board members of the ethnic minority network, the LGBT network and the disability network all see their networks to contribute to the inclusion of their social groups. Yet, as indicated by the tensions around visibility, the network board members of the ethnic minority network and the LGBT network seem to restrict inclusion to belongingness only and shy away from too strong claims to the difference and uniqueness of their members. Only when networks also address difference and the unique contributions of their members and foster their sense of belongingness to the organization (Shore et al., 2011), diversity networks contribute to inclusion on the organizational level.

Overall, the presentation of diversity networks as valuable instruments for equality can only be partially supported by this study of five different diversity networks in a Dutch financial service organization. My findings show that diversity network board members tend to construct the value of their networks primarily in terms of individual career responsibility

and community building to prevent their members' isolation. While these represent the individual and group levels of equality and are valuable for equality as such, the organizational level of inclusion remains underplayed. This has profound implications for the contribution that diversity networks can possibly make to equality. When inequalities in organizations go unchallenged, and no calls for substantial change of the organizational processes and practices (re)producing those inequalities occur, diversity networks are tamed and their value for equality will remain limited.

Limitations, future research and practical implications

When it comes to the limitations of this study, one limitation concerns the sample selection of the interviewees. I focused on board members as the shapers and drivers of diversity networks goals and activities. Yet, regular members of the diversity networks may have other attitudes towards the activities and outcomes at the individual, group and organizational levels. Future studies could include a broader range of members and non-members to sketch a fuller picture of the tensions and contradictions in the effects of the networks. A second limitation is the limited number of five networks in one organization. For a fuller comparative study of diversity networks, more organizations and more networks should be included.

My three-level framework provides avenues for further research with regard to other diversity management practices. Despite the increasing attention to diversity management in organizations, our current knowledge about which practices are most effective in which organizational settings and contexts remains limited (Bendl et al., 2015; Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014). My framework encourages a critical analysis that distinguishes between multiple levels of organizational equality, and allows to go beyond effects on the numerical representation of marginalized employees.

A practical implication of this study is that simply establishing diversity networks in organizations does not suffice to bring about substantial change towards equality. Diversity networks can contribute to equality when they challenge inequalities in organizational processes, when minority cultures can be legitimate and visible within the organization, and when a wide array of individual career trajectories and unique contributions are valued. Furthermore, diversity networks are diversity management practices that focus on one single identity category. Current studies on diversity management practices, such as diversity networks, fail to theorize the heterogeneity within these identity categories. Researchers and practitioners alike could benefit from taking an intersectionality approach (Crenshaw, 1989; Rodriguez et al., 2016) to take into account multiple intersecting identities and how this impacts diversity networks.

CHAPTER 3

Rethinking diversity management: An intersectional analysis of diversity networks

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In this chapter, I adopt an intersectionality lens to study diversity networks. With a focus on single identity categories, diversity networks are exemplars of current diversity management practices. I shed light on the strategies of network members to deal with their multiple identities vis-a-vis their network membership (structural intersectionality) and on the processes that hamper collaboration and coalition building between diversity networks (political intersectionality). My intersectional analysis shows how the single category structure of diversity networks marginalizes members with multiple disadvantaged identities and reveals how collaborations between diversity networks are hindered by processes of preserving privilege rather than interrogating it. I contribute to the literature on diversity management practices by highlighting how dynamic processes of privilege and disadvantage play a role in sustaining intersectional inequalities in organizations.

Introduction

In the last decades diversity management has become a burgeoning field of research in management and organization studies (Bendl et al., 2015; Zanoni et al., 2010). Diversity management refers to the specific programs, policies and practices that organizations have developed and implemented to manage a diverse workforce effectively and promote organizational equality (Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014; Prasad & Mills, 1997). Despite the popularity of diversity management, the effects of these practices are understudied, except for the numerical representation of marginalized groups in management ranks (Kalev et al., 2006; Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014). Organizations tend to implement similar practices such as mentoring programs, diversity training and networks without much situational specificity. This suggests that there is little variation in diversity management practices as if "one size fits all" (Benschop et al., 2015; Foldy, 2002; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014). Additionally, most diversity management practices are focusing on single identity categories (i.e., women, ethnic minorities, LGBTs) without questioning the heterogeneity within these categories (Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012).

Critical diversity studies have called attention to the theoretical concept of intersectionality to consider multiple intersecting identities and to study them as complex and mutually reinforcing or contradicting processes (Acker, 2006; Holvino, 2010; Rodriguez et al., 2016; Zanoni et al., 2010). Yet, few of these insights have found their way into the research on diversity management practices in organizations. Most studies consider diversity categories as stand-alone phenomena, overlooking the role of intersectionality (Holvino, 2010; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). Hitherto, the theoretical implications of intersectionality for the practices of diversity management in organizations remain an uncharted terrain. This means that we lack knowledge on how the complexity of different identity categories, inequalities and their intersections impact diversity management practices.

To address this gap, I focus on diversity networks as exemplars of present-day single category diversity management. Diversity networks are in-company networks intending to inform and support employees with similar social identities (Foldy, 2002) and a widely popular practice in organizations (Benschop et al., 2015; Kaplan et al., 2009). I will focus on answering the research question: *how does the complexity of different identity categories and their intersections impact diversity networks?* Diversity networks represent the existing structures of single identity categories and provide a unique context to study processes of intersectionality in organizations. To answer aforementioned research question, I draw on the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991), who distinguishes between structural intersectionality and political intersectionality. While structural intersectionality addresses the individual experiences of people at the intersections of multiple categories of difference, political intersectionality addresses the way how social identity groups organize themselves between two or more political agendas or movements (Crenshaw, 1991). In particular, there is a lack of theoretical consideration of

the concept of political intersectionality (Verloo, 2009). Theorizing political intersectionality allows to take into account how intersectionality is important for organizational policies and political strategies of disadvantaged groups.

This chapter is based on a multiple case study in two Dutch organizations, a financial service organization and a governmental service organization. These organizations accommodate different diversity networks, i.e., women's networks, ethnic minority networks, LGBT networks, disability networks and young employee networks. I use the concept of structural intersectionality to analyze how network members negotiate their multiple identities vis-à-vis their membership of diversity networks. The concept of political intersectionality enables the exploration of the political strategies of diversity networks to build coalitions across identity categories.

With my intersectional analysis of diversity networks, I contribute to the literature on diversity management practices by highlighting how dynamic processes of privilege and disadvantage play a role in the preservation of single identity categories. Organizational inequalities cannot be dismantled separately because they entail multiple intersecting identities that mutually reinforce each other. I argue that the notion of structural intersectionality challenges inequalities in single category diversity networks by revealing subordination as well as hitherto silenced privileges. By introducing political intersectionality, I reveal a politics of preserving privilege in diversity networks that obscures the intersection of different forms of inequality.

Theoretical background

Diversity management practices: one size fits all?

Despite the proliferation of diversity management, we still know little about which diversity management practices are most effective, and moreover in which organizational settings and contexts (Bendl et al., 2015; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Zanoni et al., 2010). Scholars have highlighted that many organizations retain their diversity management practices from the previous century without much reflection on how little progress has been made (Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014). One possible explanation for the limited progress might be that diversity management practices remain firmly entrenched in identity-based initiatives aimed at increasing the number of historically marginalized social groups in organizations (Kalev et al., 2006; Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014). Consequently, the majority of the research on diversity management practices typically concentrates on the effectiveness in terms of numerical outcomes of these identity-based practices such as diversity training, mentoring programs and networks. This predominant focus on single identity categories (i.e., gender, race, ethnicity) as stand-alone phenomenon (Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012) is underpinned by an inaccurate assumption of a certain similarity of various categories of difference (Zanoni et al., 2010). For

example, in research addressing gender inequality and the advancement of women, women are often considered as a single, homogeneous group. As such, current studies on diversity management practices fail to theorize the heterogeneity within identity categories. Single identity approaches ignore the complex reality of multiple differences and inequalities (Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). For example, Kalev et al. (2006) showed that diversity management practices work out differently for various groups of employees in US organizations: while white women significantly benefitted from networking programs, black women do not, and black men are even disadvantaged by these programs.

Since the mid-1990s, studies with a more critical perspective on organizational diversity management have emerged (Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014; Prasad & Mills, 1997; Zanoni et al., 2010). Critical diversity scholars took issue with the fixed, predefined, essentialist notions of identity categories and developed an understanding of diversity and identities as "socially (re)produced in on-going, context-specific processes" (Zanoni et al., 2010, p. 10). Individuals always have multiple identities that intersect in various ways through time and space. Yet, thus far, intersectionality has not been studied in relation to diversity management practices in organizations. Apart from critical diversity studies, the diversity management literature has been "almost deaf" to the realities of multiple identities and their intersections (Nkomo & Hoobler, 2015, p. 255). In this chapter, I will take into account multiple identity categories by applying an intersectionality lens to study single category diversity networks.

Intersectionality in organizations

Intersectionality can be defined as the interaction between multiple categories of difference (Davis, 2008; Holvino, 2010). Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) first coined the term *intersectionality* in her law study on discrimination against black women. According to Crenshaw (1989), these women were not discriminated against because they were women, nor were they discriminated against because they were black, they were discriminated against because they were black women. Crenshaw (1989) used the concept of intersectionality to help scholars think about different identities and how these identities possibly collide in ways that are not understood by focusing on single identity categories. Within black feminist scholarship, intersectionality was used to critique feminist research for a lack of consciousness of the experiences of women of color, who unlike white women are neither white nor economically privileged (Crenshaw, 1991; Holvino, 2010). Feminists of color criticized the essentialism inherent in the dominant liberal white feminist paradigm that defined women as a homogeneous group (Holvino, 2010; McCall, 2005). Counterbalancing this paradigm, the introduction of intersectionality made way for the recognition of differences among women and, moreover, for a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of other identity categories on women's identities, experiences and struggles (Holvino, 2010).

Since Crenshaw (1989) introduced the term, intersectionality has become a thriving concept (see, inter alia, Collins & Bilge, 2016; Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013; Davis, 2008; Hancock, 2007; Holvino, 2010; McCall, 2005; Nash, 2008; Rodriguez et al., 2016; Yuval-Davis, 2006; Zanoni &

Janssens, 2015). While it was first used to pinpoint and explore the intersections between gender, race and related processes of disadvantage, intersectionality today is used in a broader sense considering the intersections between various other categories, i.e., class, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability and occupational status (e.g., Atewologun & Sealy, 2014; Boogaard & Roggeband, 2010; Bowleg, 2008; Essers & Benschop, 2007; Kelan, 2014; Mik-Meyer, 2015).

Although the importance of intersectionality is widely recognized, intersectionality remains at the margins in management and organization studies and does not live up to its full potential to explore structures of inequality in organizations (Rodriguez et al., 2016). The majority of organizational scholarship adopts a structural intersectionality perspective and focuses on the individual experiences of people with multiple (mostly disadvantaged) intersecting identities (e.g., Adib & Guerrier, 2003; Essers & Benschop, 2007). A political intersectionality perspective on the other hand is less prevalent. Responding to the call by Rodriguez, Holvino, Fletcher and Nkomo (2016) for more systemic analyses of intersectionality in management and organization studies, my study draws on both structural intersectionality and political intersectionality to gain insight into how diversity networks and their members deal with multiple intersecting identities.

Structural intersectionality

Structural intersectionality refers to how the experiences of people within a particular identity category are qualitatively different from each other depending on their other intersecting identities (Cole, 2008; Crenshaw, 1991). Structural intersectionality thus focuses on the *individual* experiences of people at the intersections of multiple identities. Both positive and negative deployment of identity categories is possible. A person can be advantaged belonging to certain social categories as a source of social and political empowerment, while simultaneously be disadvantaged belonging to other social categories as a source of powerlessness and subordination (Boogaard & Roggeband, 2010). For example, in their study in the Dutch police force, Boogaard and Roggeband (2010) demonstrated how individuals as agents reflect on and engage with their intersecting gender, ethnic and organizational identities. They reveal the *paradoxes of intersectionality* by showing how privileged identity categories are used to gain advantage over other identities that relate more to disadvantage. By doing so, people end up reproducing structures that generate inequalities along both identity categories.

In this study, I use the concept of structural intersectionality to analyze how diversity network members negotiate their multiple identities vis-à-vis their membership of diversity networks.

Political intersectionality

Crenshaw (1991) also introduced the concept of political intersectionality to indicate how inequalities and their intersections are relevant to policies and political strategies of groups of people who occupy multiple subordinate identities. As strategies on one axis of inequality are almost never neutral towards other axes, political differences are most relevant (Verloo,

2006). Political intersectionality allows to move away from the individual level of analysis and to theorize about identity categories as "axes of multiple inequalities" (Cole, 2008, p. 450) that mutually define, shape, and reinforce one other. For example, using political intersectionality, Crenshaw (1991) shows the political struggles of women of color whose concerns were neither addressed by feminist movements nor by antiracist movements. Crenshaw (1991) argues that "the failure of feminism to interrogate race (...) will often replicate and reinforce the subordination of people of color, and the failure of antiracism to interrogate patriarchy means that antiracism will frequently reproduce the subordination of women" (p. 1252).

Especially in the field of management and organization studies, there is a lack of theoretical consideration of political intersectionality (Verloo, 2009). Intersectionality scholars such as Carastathis (2013), Cole (2008) and Verloo (2006) have demonstrated the potential of this dimension of intersectionality. Political intersectionality allows to take into account how intersectionality is important for organizational policies and how social identity groups organize themselves between two or more political agendas or movements. According to Crenshaw (1995), "any attempt to mobilize identity is a negotiation, a discussion among those in identity groups to put forth an agenda that fully recognizes the various political interests, conflicting though they may be, that exist within identity categories" (p. 12). She proposes to reconceptualize social identity groups as "potential coalitions waiting to be formed" (p. 1299). This requires an emphasis on common experiences and political strategies, highlighting the possibilities of working together across multiple categories of difference (Carastathis, 2013; Cole, 2008). Cole (2008) uses political intersectionality to illustrate how different social identity groups succeed in building successful coalitions based on their shared marginalized positions. An example of such a coalition is the organization of the 2004 March for Women's Lives in the US. The initial idea of the March was to demonstrate in favor of (predominantly white) women's rights to abortion. Alternatively, the focus of the March was broadened beyond abortion rights, including the reproductive concerns of women of color as well (Cole, 2008).

Thus, the concept of political intersectionality offers a unique opportunity to study diversity networks as "potential coalitions waiting to be formed". By conceptualizing diversity networks as possible coalitions, I analyze the political strategies of diversity networks to build coalitions for equality across single identity categories.

Methodology

Research design

Studying intersectionality empirically is challenging. A proper intersectional methodology should be able to take into account "the methodological murkiness" (Nash, 2008, p. 5) and "the complexity that arises when the subject of analysis expands to include multiple (...) categories of analysis" (McCall, 2005, p. 1772). McCall (2005) addresses these methodological

challenges by introducing three approaches to study intersectionality. First, the anticategorical approach that completely rejects the use of categories. Second, the intracategorical approach that focuses on one single identity category and analytically unravels the influences of other categories. And third, the intercategorical approach that focuses on the relationships between multiple categories (Kelan, 2014; McCall, 2005).

Previous studies of structural intersectionality predominantly take an intracategorical approach. Most studies use narratives and interviews to explore the lived experiences of individuals at the intersection of multiple identities (e.g., Adib & Guerrier, 2003; Essers & Benschop, 2007). Empirical studies on political intersectionality are few and rely mainly on historical case studies and documents (e.g., Carastathis, 2013; Cole, 2008; Verloo, 2006). As political intersectionality focuses on the dynamics of both difference and sameness, it allows analyzing *intra*group and *inter*group differences simultaneously (Cho et al., 2013). In my exploration of structural and political intersectionality in diversity networks, I thus adopt an intracategorical as well as an intercategorical approach.

In this study, I relied on a qualitative methodology to thoroughly investigate structural and political intersectionality. I conducted a multiple case study with different diversity networks as cases (see below). A case study facilitates the analysis of complex and little understood phenomena (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2009) and is well suited to examine the *how* and *why* of intersectional dynamics in real-life organizational contexts. Compared to a single case study, a multiple case study yields a broader and more comprehensive exploration (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007) of intersectionality in diversity networks.

Cases and data collection

I collected my empirical material in ten diversity networks in two Dutch organizations, a financial service organization (Finance) and a governmental service organization (Govt). I selected these organizations because they are well known for their diversity management, and because they accommodate various diversity networks. I briefly introduce the two organizations and the ten networks studied.

The first organization is a financial service organization (Finance), situated throughout the Netherlands. Finance has six different diversity networks: a network for women in senior management positions (*Women at the top*), a network for women in middle management positions (*Ladies with ambition*), an ethnic minority network, an LGBT network, a disability network and a young employee network (age 18-35). The networks are organized nationally, are officially acknowledged by the organization and receive financial support. The second organization is a large governmental service organization (Govt). The diversity networks of Govt are organized on a national level as well as on local levels. I focus on four diversity networks that are organized nationally: a women's network, an LGBT network, a disability network and a network for "young" employees (all ages; employees can join if they support the ideas of this network).

I have conducted 51 in-depth semi-structured interviews with active network members, 33 interviews in Finance and 18 in Govt (see Table 3). Interview questions dealt with topics such as the network's history, goals and activities, members' motivations to join a particular diversity network, whether and why they joined multiple networks, and if and how their networks collaborated with other networks. The interviews were conducted in Dutch, lasted between 45 minutes and two hours, were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. Next to interviews, I have observed 46 network meetings that presented a total of 145 hours of observation. These observations yielded additional insight into the negotiations and coalition-building between diversity networks. Examples of network meetings are: board meetings where network leaders discuss their course of action, *cross-network* meetings between multiple networks, and collaborative network events. Lastly, I analyzed documents such as annual plans and meeting minutes which contained information about the collaboration between different networks and the network's perspective on multiple identities (or the lack thereof).

Table 3. Overview respondents

Network	*Interviewees Finance*	*Interviewees Govt*
Women	5 (Ladies with ambition) 4 (Women at the top)	5 women
Ethnic minority	1 woman 5 men	-
LGBT	3 women 4 men	1 woman 3 men
Disability	3 women 2 men	4 men
Young	3 women 3 men	2 women 3 men

Data analysis

My data analysis relies on an abductive approach, going back and forth between theory and empirical material (Van Maanen et al., 2007). My focal data consisted of the interview material, as interviewees are able to thoroughly reflect on their identities, their network membership and the interaction between networks. Observation notes and documents not only allowed for triangulation, but also complemented the interviews to build a more accurate account of political intersectionality. By attending network meetings, I was able to observe how members talked about coalition-building and collaborating with other networks, and how their collaboration worked out in actual events. The documents provided information about whether networks plan to work together and whether members discuss collaboration and coalition-building during meetings that were not attended by me.

Table 4. Additional data and supporting quotes

Structural intersectionality	*Supporting quotes*
Complying with the single category structure	*The first network that I came across, was the [young employee network]. When I started, it was not like 'yeah, you have a Moroccan background.' [...] So that is why I never looked at the [ethnic minority network], because I did not feel diverse. (Marvin, ethnic minority network and young employee network Finance)*
	The only connecting aspect is that you are all employees, not that you all have a disability. When you look at the women's network, or [the ethnic minority network], then you see that they connect more often on the basis of their shared [...] gender or culture. (Tim, disability network Finance)
	With women, there are very different problems, that is related more to home.. work-life balance. [...] I am not saying that this is not the case with ethnic minorities, but that is a different problem, it is more about acceptance and to be allowed to be different. (Sonya, women's network and ethnic minority network Finance)
Problematizing the single category structure as individual problem	*I like to meet lesbian women. With straight women not so much. [...] So... then I feel... it does not matter, but it does not appeal to me [I: And how do you feel?] Well, left out. No recognition. (Emma, LGBT network Finance)*
	Our network does of course [...] people are not only homosexual, but also have different ethnicities and those are also in our network. So we are a very diverse network. (William, LGBT network Govt)
	So in being different you are all the same, and that is what I mean. [...] That feels like coming home [in the ethnic minority network] and that is.. with women that is less so, that just not occur. That homey feeling. [...] [I]f you are not careful, the [women's network] will be, to speak frankly, blond, white, blue eyes, eh. (Sonya, women's network and ethnic minority network Finance)
Challenging the single category structure	*We do have a many Whites in the network. That is nice on the one hand, because they support the subject. But on the other hand, it is also a bottleneck: why do people not think about being diverse? (Marvin, ethnic minority network and young employee network Finance)*
	Compared to the number in the overall organization, [LGBT] women are frequently underrepresented in [LGBT] networks. Within this [lunch]group of [LGBT] women, the L [of Lesbians] is dominating. *Goals [of this lunch meeting]:* - *to discuss women and networks: how diverse are we?* - *create visibility for [LBT] women and support diverse involvement in the workplace, in our networks and organizations.* *(Document: Agenda lunch meeting LGBT women, Finance)*

Table 4. Continued

Political intersectionality	*Supporting quotes*
Collaboration between diversity networks	*I have talked to the initiators of the [religious] network. So there are some connections, but we do not have a very active operational connection, no. (William, LGBT network Govt)*
	The young employee network is presenting their annual plan to the board of directors. The interaction between diversity networks within Finance is discussed. The chair explains to the CEO: 'Also with other networks within [Finance], like the [LGBT network], and the diversity-uh... diversity... [network]. We regularly have drinks together, so... it all mingles exceptionally well.' (Observation notes Young employee network Finance)
	The disability network is discussing their collaboration with other disability networks in Govt. One of the board members remarks: 'We do not only sit here for our own little [network], but we also have been in contact with [disability network X], and they have had contact with [disability network Z].'(Observation notes Disability network Govt)
	[I: Do you meet with other networks?] No. Not at all. And I think that is a pity. I believe we can only reinforce one another. We can learn from them, in particular in arranging sponsorships, for example. (Anna, LGBT network Finance)
Reversed Oppression Olympics	*In the long run I want to hold a dialogue with [the young employee network]. You have to get to know people so they might be able to help you. Look, [the young employee network] might be a good partner. I believe our ambitions do not bite each other.. (Marvin, ethnic minority network and young employee network Finance)*
	I would like it a lot if I knew that 80 percent of all people who are a member of [the ethnic minority network] are also a member of [the young employee network]. [...] It starts there, mingling on that level, having drinks and whatever [...] It should be as normal as that, right? [...][Y]you also decrease the difference, eh? (Glenn, ethnic minority network and young employee network Finance)
	At present, there is a completely different generation within [Govt] and that is of course something that we represent. [...] I think that is a very specific voice from [the young employee network]. Because if you consider for example [the LGBT network], or a women's... uh... I do not know a women's club within [Govt], but if there would be one, then I think that that would be a different voice. (Dean, young employee network Govt)
Identity politics	*During our last joint meeting [...] we have confirmed the lacuna and we have decided upon the following: There are three independent [disability networks] that all represent their own interests. [...]Every network is able to manage their own problems in their own pace and when needed address them. (Meeting notes of joint meeting between different disability networks Govt)*
	During a meeting of the LGBT network, the board members discuss the content of one of their upcoming events. One of the board members asks me if I might be willing to tell something about women's networks. The chair interrupts and reject this idea, because 'women's networks have nothing to do with [the LGBT network]'(Observation notes LGBT network Finance)

I started my data analysis by reading through all my empirical material. I identified the fragments that made some reference to multiple identity categories. In doing so, the data were reduced to those fragments that involved multiple identities in networks. This selection resulted in the material that is central to this chapter. I noted how little awareness there is with regard to multiple identities in networks. Only a minority of fragments referred to the intersections of multiple identity categories explicitly.

Next, I made a distinction between fragments that related to structural intersectionality and fragments that related to political intersectionality. The following analytical questions guided the analysis: 1) with regard to structural intersectionality: where do individual network members talk about their multiple identities; how do they talk about their multiple identities in relation to diversity network membership; and 2) with regard to political intersectionality: where do diversity networks collaborate or talk about collaborating; what does this collaboration entail; what hampers collaboration? This helped to identify patterns in identity negotiations related to membership of multiple networks (structural intersectionality) and in collaboration and coalition-building between different diversity networks (political intersectionality).

The patterns related to structural intersectionality involved three different strategies how individual network members dealt with the single category structure: complying to the single category structure, problematizing the single category structure as an individual problem, and challenging the single category structure. By categorizing these strategies, I noted how the single category structure of diversity networks was linked to processes of privilege and disadvantage. I therefore turned to the literature on privilege and derived the analytical concept of intersectional marginalization; i.e., the marginalization of people with multiple subordinate identities relative to those with a single subordinate identity (Crenshaw, 1989). By looking at the role of privilege and intersectional marginalization in diversity networks, I noted a pattern of systematic exclusion of members with multiple disadvantaged identities and analyzed this as the dynamics of structural intersectionality in diversity networks.

Analyzing the patterns related to political intersectionality, I noted how interviewees mentioned that collaboration between diversity networks was desirable, yet actual collaboration did not occur or remained limited. The observation material and documents allowed me to connect what was said in the interviews to what actually happened during network events and meetings. I observed that also during events multiple identity categories and their intersections were not addressed. When collaboration did occur, this was limited to categories that are similar, such as a collaborative event organized by two women's networks. Even during meetings between different diversity networks, the focus was largely on sharing information rather than actual collaboration and coalition building. Due to this realization I delved deeper into why collaboration remained limited. My attention was drawn again to the single category structure and the processes of privilege and disadvantage. To understand these dynamics, I returned to the literature on privilege and political intersectionality. Going back and forth between the theory and the data, I identified a business case rationale for

diversity networks and a politics of identity. To understand this business case, I invoked the concept of the *Oppression Olympics*; i.e., a competition between disadvantaged groups to prove themselves as the most oppressed (Hancock, 2007). My analysis of political intersectionality revealed a *reversed Oppression Olympics*, where diversity networks tend to ignore disadvantage and oppression by emphasizing their added value to the organization.

In the findings section, I present a selection of instances of structural and political intersectionality. These instances were not chosen because of their statistical representativeness, but rather "in light of their evocative content, their ability to highlight the complexity and richness of experience" (Poggio, 2006, p. 230). To secure anonymity, fictitious names are used to depict the respondents. Table 4 provides additional data.

Reflection

As qualitative researcher, I am aware that me being present as a white, heterosexual, able-bodied woman, may have influenced the data obtained through both the observations and the interviews. For example, as observer, I would blend in during an event of the women's network or the young employee network. Also, during interviews with LGBT network members, my own sexual orientation became salient when interviewees reflected on their lived experiences in a heteronormative society. As my interpretation of the empirical material is influenced by my own intersectional identity, extensive discussions with my supervisors helped me to nuance certain interpretations and made me aware of processes of privilege and disadvantage.

Findings

In this section, I explore various ways in which structural and political intersectionality shed light on the complex reality of multiple identity categories in relation to diversity networks. I analyzed how network members talk about their multiple identities, collaboration with other diversity networks and the tensions that arise when doing so.

Structural intersectionality: identity negotiations of individual network members

Identity negotiations take shape in the decision to join one or multiple diversity networks. Although all respondents are potential members of multiple networks, only a minority actually joins multiple networks. To elaborate on structural intersectionality, I have selected three interview fragments that represent three different strategies of how individual network members negotiate their multiple intersecting identities in relation to diversity networks.

Complying with the single category structure

I introduce the first fragment from Sonya. Sonya is an ethnic minority woman and both a member of the ethnic minority network and the women's network *Ladies with ambition* in Finance:

> *The [ethnic minority network] is very much to empower and to connect and uh, well network uh, to create a network and coming together and talking about it and just... (...) That is important too, you know... a safe haven, because there is diversity, but that you belong somewhere (...) Because then you have the support of like-minded [people], it is about that. That you feel part of a larger whole and feeling supported by that. That you do not feel like a Don Quichot, fighting against the evil outside world, no there are others that also feel the same as you do and so maybe have the same struggles as you have. (...) I get a lot of support from that... (...) [The women's network] is more concrete. So a women's network, we have a more concrete goal. That is just more women at the top. So it looks the same: more cultural diverse colleagues at the top, but it is not one-on-one translatable, because cultural diverse does still have to win a whole terrain of uh, support. Uh, in acceptance.*

Sonya is one of the few respondents who joined multiple networks and she explicitly distinguishes between the importance of membership of the ethnic minority network on the one hand, and the importance of membership of the women's network on the other hand. According to Sonya, next to developing a network and making social connections, membership of the ethnic minority network is especially important for the support of "like-minded" people, a safe space ("haven") that gives people a sense of belongingness. Sonya says that she received much support by sharing her struggles, that she compares to the struggles of "Don Quichot against the evil outside world". Membership of the women's network, on the other hand, is important for career purposes: getting more women in higher organizational positions. Although Sonya acknowledges that the same holds true for ethnic minority employees in higher organizational positions, she states that it is not the same issue.

As an ethnic minority woman, Sonya negotiates her multiple identities by joining two different networks, but without mentioning possible intersectional dynamics between them. She talks of "struggles" but refers to the struggles of ethnic minority employees as a category, without mentioning the struggles of ethnic minority women specifically. For women issues one joins the women's network, and for ethnic minority aspects one joins the ethnic minority network. As such, Sonya goes along with the categorization created by diversity networks and complies with the single category structure.

Problematizing the single category structure as individual issue

The second fragment is from Alice. Alice is also a member of multiple networks: the disability network and the LGBT network in Finance.

> *I have to say that at a certain moment (...) that I thought I go to the [disability network], (...) and we indeed have a gay network... that I thought at a certain moment, do I have to choose now in which group I fall? (...) Let's say that I enter the Moroccan network, and*

> *I enter with my wheelchair, I am the exception there again. And if I enter the gay group with my wheelchair, then I have the same. And that is quite difficult sometimes, because I think... you go in because you are gay, but in the meantime, I am also that disabled that enters there. And well... you cannot prevent it, but you do have the feeling a little bit that you have to choose.*

In contrast to Sonya, Alice problematizes the network's structure and displays a personal discomfort with regard to the focus on single categories. Reflecting on which network to join, Alice feels that she has to choose between diversity networks. Alice's account illustrates that the single category networks leave little room for the intersection of multiple subordinate identities. As diversity networks revolve around one subordinate identity category, other identity categories and their intersections are overlooked. For instance, the central category within the LGBT network is LGBT, and the subordinate position of LGBT employees is their key focus. LGBT employees are regarded as a homogeneous category and possible differences within this particular category are neglected. Due to the network's focus on one single identity, Alice feels the odd one out and an exception by being *the disabled* in the LGBT network, or *the lesbian* in the disability network.

Alice's quote exemplifies that the single category structure has implications particularly for network members with multiple subordinate identities, such as for example disabled lesbian women. This resonates with what Crenshaw (1989) has termed *intersectional marginalization*, i.e., the marginalization of multiple subordinate identities. Network members with multiple subordinate identities are marginalized relative to members with a single subordinate identity, and as a result, possible tensions arise. Instead of questioning the single category structure of diversity networks, Alice takes the structure for granted and makes her discomfort a personal issue rather than a network issue.

Challenging the single category structure

The third fragment is from Selma, a member of both the women's network *Ladies with ambition* and the ethnic minority network in Finance. Whereas Alice's strategy is to take up the experienced tension with the single category structure as a personal issue, Selma questions the network itself. Instead of internalizing the problem, Selma challenges the single category structure of the women's network:

> *I have a bicultural background myself too, so I think that is very important as well (...) I once started with the [ethnic minority] network (...) and I noticed that when I moved to gender, that my purpose was also... not only to support women and to help them in their ambition, but also cultural, with a cultural background. (...) And I think I fulfill a double role. If you have a women's network, an event, then you have more biculturals as well. So how can you have both, let's say striking down two flies with one swing.*

Selma calls attention to the intersection of gender and ethnicity within the women's network. Instead of joining multiple networks and complying with the single category structure, she points at how ethnicity is relevant for members of the women's network. As seen with Alice, focusing on one single identity category, networks overlook the differences within that particular category. Within the women's network the main focus is on the category *gender*:

> *We have very consciously, have said there is still so much to do about only the piece of gender, let's focus on that. (…) [W]e [women] still have to go a long way. (…) [P]eople coming from foreign countries, with foreign backgrounds, since they have, do have other problems.* (Ruth, women's network Finance)

Ruth is an ethnic majority woman and a member of the women's network *Ladies with ambition*. This quote from Ruth illustrates that the women's network is focusing on gender issues only. Referring to ethnic minorities as "people", Ruth ignores ethnic minority women within the women's network. As such, Ruth's account reflects underlying notions of white privilege, centralizing ethnic majority women in the women's network. A significant aspect of privilege is that it is unmarked; privilege is so universally normalized that it literally goes without saying for those who are privileged (Ferber, 2012; McIntosh, 2012). The power of whiteness is so embedded in organizations (Puwar, 2004), that consequently, white privilege is difficult to name and denaturalize (Liu & Baker 2016). Because of her privileged ethnic majority identity, Ruth is not able to see beyond the single category of *women*. In contrast, Selma, with multiple subordinate identities, is able to vocalize the need for an intersectional perspective within the women's network. Instead of taking the single category structure for granted, Selma challenges the women's network to pay attention to multiple intersecting identities (ethnic minority women).

My analyses of structural intersectionality have provided insight into the strategies of individual network members to negotiate multiple intersecting identities in relation to their membership of diversity networks. Whereas Sonya seemingly complies with the single category structure of diversity networks, Alice and Selma problematize the network's focus on single identity categories. While Alice feels her distress is an individual struggle, Selma makes her intersectional identity struggle a political endeavor and challenges the structure of the network to take multiple intersecting identities into account. My analyses showed how these identity negotiations are intertwined with positions of privilege and disadvantage. Within diversity networks, privileged categories such as maleness, whiteness, heterosexuality, able-bodiedness are silenced and assumed as the self-evident norm. Thus, by ignoring intragroup differences, the single category structure of diversity networks reinforces privilege. Network members with single subordinated identities and intersecting privileged identities are normalized, whereas members with multiple subordinate identities are intersectionally marginalized.

Political intersectionality: coalition building between diversity networks

Using the concept of political intersectionality, I shed light on how diversity networks attempt to build coalitions between multiple identity categories. My analysis shows, however, that coalition building is challenging and actual collaboration between diversity networks remains limited in both organizations. Despite the low level of actual collaboration, networks articulate a strong rhetoric of wanting to work together: collaboration between different diversity networks is desirable and something to strive for. My data suggest that the networks' rhetoric of "we should collaborate" is predominantly motivated by instrumental objectives.

> *[The LGBT network] have been active much longer, they are pretty well organized nationally, so they have a subsidiary too, so annually they can organize [events]. I did some networking with them, (...) you have to be clever like that. Look, they do have some money.* (Fran, women's network and LGBT network Govt)

> *So you have different [disability networks] (...) who are all individually kicking towards the organization. That is not really organized, coordinated. Sometimes you have the same interests. Of course, sometimes you do not. It would be nice actually if you could let those [disability networks] exist, all with their own issues, because all have their own problems, but with for example a meeting with all chairs, so there is a representative nationally for the HR side and management. Because (...) management will go crazy if we all going to do that individually.* (John, disability network Govt)

The accounts of Fran and John illustrate that collaborations between diversity networks are important in gaining resources. Fran realizes that her own women's network and the LGBT network maintain different positions. She thinks strategically about the collaboration with other networks and taking advantage of their financial resources. Additionally, according to John, building coalitions is valuable in order to have a better chance of receiving organizational support: allegedly, a coalition of different disability networks would have a stronger claim on getting the desired attention from the management.

Next to instrumental objectives, diversity networks also refer to possible coalitions that are valuable for mutual learning experiences.

> *I think that we as networks within [Finance] should gang together much more. In the sense of, you can learn so much from each other. There have been so many battles. That for example the women, the gays and the disabled have had as well.* (Mo, ethnic minority network and young employee network Finance)

According to Mo, different diversity networks within Finance should collaborate more. He sees the potential for possible coalitions and considers these coalitions to be valuable for mutual

learning experiences, particularly with regard to inequality. He compares the battles of the ethnic minority employees to the battles of the women, the LGBTs and the disabled, who are all disadvantaged groups.

I observe that diversity networks draw on the rhetoric of collaboration, yet, actual collaboration remains limited. My observation material shows that in the very few cases that collaboration does occur, it concerns similar networks, like a joint event organized by two women's networks, or recurrent meetings between various disability networks. I observe that the level of ambition is low and coalitions largely revolve around instrumental issues. When diversity networks attempt to collaborate across multiple identity categories, or focus on more fundamental issues such as organizational inequalities, coalition building turns out to be challenging and complex.

Reversed Oppression Olympics

My analysis of structural intersectionality revealed processes of privilege. Privileged categories are taken for granted and considered as the self-evident norm, while members with multiple subordinate identities are marginalized. My analysis of political intersectionality shows that these processes of privilege also impact the coalition building between diversity networks.

> *In my opinion, from the organizational [perspective], the [young employee network] is the most important: the future of the [organization]. The other networks are there, but less important.* (Michelle, women's network and LGBT network Finance)

According to Michelle, the young employee network is considered as the most important network within Finance. Young employees are constructed as talented employees that make a valuable contribution to the organization (Dennissen, Benschop & Van den Brink, 2018). The prominent status of the young employee network points at a certain hierarchy or "pecking order" (Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012, p. 185). The first place in this implicit pecking order is assigned to the young employee network, which provides them with a privileged position. Both in Finance and in Govt, they appear the preferred coalition partner for other diversity networks. However, the young employee networks are hesitant to build coalitions with diversity networks that represent more disadvantaged groups.

> *In general, networks were [like], we are disadvantaged and we want... we want to put ourselves more onto the map. (...) They [other networks] wanted something from the [organization], while we were like we want to contribute to the [organization]. And that is the big difference between [the young employee network] and other networks. Except that... I think the [LGBT network] also really contribute. (...) Imagine you [have an LGBT-related issue] (...) Then you really have a contribution, added value to the [organization] and I think that is important within a network. You should not only disadv-, or not only saying that... hold out your hand [for money], [because]*

> *'we [disadvantaged networks] want to do something nice with our club because we are already disadvantaged'.* (Tim, young employee network Govt)

> *[There] were multiple moments when those other clubs with us, uh... wanted to sit together and then make some sort of statement together. We never felt really... [their] approach was more about complaining and we did not want that. We saw ourselves more as a change-club, that was doing positive, creative things.* (Hannah, young employee network Govt)

The accounts of Tim and Hannah illustrate that the young employee network is not very willing to collaborate with other diversity networks that represent disadvantaged groups. According to Tim and Hannah, the goals of the young employee network and the goals of the other diversity networks differ. They state that the young employee network wants to make a positive contribution to the organization. With the exception of the LGBT network, the other diversity networks are seen as complaining and trying to gain something (e.g., financial resources, facilities) from the organization. By doing so, Tim and Hannah construct a dichotomy between diversity networks that are adding value to the organization versus diversity networks that are disadvantage-centred. Only diversity networks that are making a contribution to the organization are considered valuable and worthwhile, a line of reasoning well known as the business case (Zanoni et al., 2010). Previous intersectionality research highlighted a competition between disadvantaged groups to prove themselves as the most oppressed. Hancock (2007) has termed this competition the *Oppression Olympics*. However, I observe that diversity networks tone down oppression in order to be considered as a valuable coalition-partner to the organization as if they are partaking in a *reversed Oppression Olympics*.

> *We are not a crybaby-club, so it should not be about, 'jeez what are we piteous and you have to help us', no: we are a club that says, well, we can mean something to the organization.* (John, disability network Govt)

> *I want to initiate a [network] based on strength, a network-club, a knowledge-club, rather than 'we have a few pathetic boys that sit in the corner and we need to get them out of there'.* (Peter, LGBT network Finance)

These quotes illustrate the networks' emphasis on strength, knowledge and their positive contribution to the organization, rather than on pity and disadvantage. Diversity networks that are critical towards the organization, that want to make a statement or ask for facilities, are considered as complaining and whining. In the reversed Oppression Olympics, diversity networks emphasize their added value to the organization and tend to deflect attention to any kind of oppression. As such, organizational critique with regard to the inequalities that

disadvantaged groups have to deal with, is constructed as a complaint and downplayed. By means of the reversed Oppression Olympics of diversity networks, organizational inequalities, disadvantage and privilege are silenced.

Identity politics

Besides the revelation of a reversed Oppression Olympics, my analysis of political intersectionality has also drawn attention to the impact of identity politics. *Identity politics* refers to the articulation of political beliefs in the name of a particular social group, claiming a certain political stance (Bickford, 1997). Being organized around a single social identity, diversity networks exercise identity politics in organizations. I illustrate the impact of these identity politics by presenting my analysis of an attempt towards collaboration and coalition building between the LGBT network and the ethnic minority network in Finance.

> *A possible topic could be homosexuality and being an allochthone [migrant], that is of course a sensitive topic, especially in the Muslim world. Uh, for example, how do Muslims [within the organization] deal with uh- if they see people that are openly gay or... that sort of things. How do you- or if you are gay yourself and you are Muslim, what kind of problems are there? Do they not dare to- uh... come out of the closet? Because, what if a family member would find out, that sort of thing. Maybe we could have made a theme about that. But that has not happened thus far.* (Evan, LGBT network Finance)

Evan addresses the disadvantaged positions of both ethnic minorities and LGBTs and makes the connection across diversity networks by mentioning possible interests they would have in common. Although Evan attempts to find a common ground among members of the LGBT network and the ethnic minority network, tensions arise when a potential collaboration between the LGBT network and the ethnic minority network is getting more explicit:

> *With the [ethnic minority network] we looked into a joint theme for organizing an [ethnic minority]-LGBT event. The [ethnic minority network] was not that enthusiastic about choosing a gay theme specifically for the whole event. It could be more general and meant to network, like drinks. For them, networking is their main goal, not questioning themes. Next year we as [network] board want to sit around the table with the [ethnic minority network] to see how we can organize a joint event. Even if it would be drinks, it enhances the acceptance of LGBTs among members of the [ethnic minority network] in a way that is without obligations, without dedicating a theme with a keynote speaker to it.* (Annual plan LGBT network Finance)

> *If you look at the gaybian and [ethnic minority] network, then actually that is an interesting combination, because in certain cultures it is even harder to be open about your sexual*

> *orientation, so we have been brainstorming about that; what could you do with that? But I am afraid that if we organize a joint event that it will especially involve the gaybian-members and a large part of our members to a lesser extent. So that is a bit difficult.* (Joe, ethnic minority network Finance)

Although the LGBT network would like to address the struggles of ethnic minority LGBT employees, the ethnic minority network is portrayed as less enthusiastic. Joe's excerpt shows that a coalition between the ethnic minority network and the LGBT network is seen as relevant and interesting. According to Joe, there are similar issues that members of both networks struggle with, especially members with intersecting ethnic minority-LGBT identities. Nevertheless, Joe also displays his doubts about a joint event that would only cater to the ethnic minority-LGBT members, and not for the "majority" of non-LGBT members of the ethnic minority network. Hence, a broader, less controversial theme, just drinks or networking are suggested as alternatives for a joint event.

Narrowing down the relevance of an LGBT-related theme to only those members with LGBT-ethnic identities, homosexuality is reduced to an issue of a small minority of network members rather than a matter of the organization at large. Instead of challenging organizational heteronormativity – i.e., the portrayed norm of heterosexuality within organizations and society (Wildman & Davis, 1994) – the ethnic minority network enacts heterosexual privilege by choosing to remain silent about LGBT-issues. Interestingly, they are silent about whiteness as well. An LGBT-related theme is the only theme that emerges when discussing a possible collaboration between the LGBT network and the ethnic minority network. Whiteness, either in relation to the LGBT network or to the organization, is not addressed. This reflects an identity politics that is preserving the privileged identities, in this case, the ethnic majority in the LGBT network and the heterosexual majority in the ethnic minority network. It is the privileged majority of the network who sets the agenda according to their interests. This does not include interrogating processes of privilege, heteronormativity and whiteness in the organization.

My analysis of political intersectionality highlighted how diversity networks deal with the complex reality of multiple identities and their intersections. In theory, all diversity networks agree that "they should collaborate". However, in practice, actual collaboration and coalition building shows to be difficult and challenging. I showed how a politics of privilege, i.e., a reversed Oppression Olympics and identity politics, create tensions between diversity networks that hamper collaboration and coalition building. Moreover, due to these politics of privilege, diversity networks fail to address the dynamics of multiple inequalities in organizations.

Discussion

The aim of this chapter has been to further our knowledge on diversity management practices by applying an intersectionality lens to single category diversity networks. Thus far, the theoretical implications of intersectionality for organization's diversity management practices have remained an uncharted terrain. Current studies on diversity management practices fail to theorize the heterogeneity within identity categories. Analyzing diversity networks as exemplars of current single category diversity management practices through an intersectionality lens, I developed a better understanding of how single category diversity networks sustain intersectional inequalities in organizations. This allowed me to contribute to the theory on diversity management practices in two ways. First, I identified the dynamics of structural intersectionality in diversity networks, theorizing how these single category networks are inextricably linked with processes of privilege and disadvantage. Second, by introducing the notion of political intersectionality, I gained a better understanding of how diversity networks are hindered by a politics of preserving privilege rather than interrogating it. I conclude this chapter with the implications for diversity management practices in organizations.

Dynamics of structural intersectionality in diversity networks

My first contribution pertains to the identification of the dynamics of structural intersectionality in single category diversity networks. I showed three possible strategies how individual network members dealt with the single category structure of diversity networks. These strategies illustrate how single identity categories are taken for granted and almost hegemonically accepted. It becomes difficult to question the single category structure, and the vast majority of network members goes along with the categorical organization of diversity networks. Even though some members display their concern with how diversity networks are organized, this is constructed as an individual issue rather than a structural problem. Very few network members try to make room for their multiple identities within diversity networks and actually challenge the single category structure. When single category networks go as unchallenged as they do, multiple intersecting identities remain obscured. This is a dynamic that normalizes the idea of separate identity categories and facilitates the continuous avoidance of the complexity of intersectionality in diversity networks.

With the dynamics of structural intersectionality, I showed how single category diversity networks are inextricably linked with processes of privilege and disadvantage. Hitherto, the single category structure of diversity networks has informed research that only examines the impact on disadvantaged identity groups. The predominant focus on disadvantage and oppression leaves the role of privilege underexposed and unmarked (Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012; Verloo, 2009). In line with privilege studies (Ferber, 2012; McIntosh, 2012), my study shows that

network members with multiple subordinate identities vocalize the need for intersectional perspectives, whereas network members with single subordinate identities tend to remain unaware of the privileges that go with their other identities. Network members with single subordinate identities eschew issues relating to other identity categories because they believe that these issues fall within the scope of other networks. Ethnic majority women of the women's network, for example, suggested that issues relating to ethnicity "belong" with the ethnic minority network, further reducing their responsibility and involvement in this issue.

Theorizing the simultaneous processes of privilege and disadvantage in diversity networks, helps to explain the ambiguous results from previous studies. The single category structure of diversity networks obscures the role of unmarked categories of privilege and reinforces the exclusionary effects of intersectional marginalization: the marginalization of people with multiple subordinate identities relative to those with single subordinate identities (Crenshaw, 1989). This sustains the taken-for-grantedness of privileged categories as well as the fixed and essentialist notions of disadvantaged categories (Pratto & Stewart, 2012; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). As Grillo (1995) pointed out, "in every set of [identity] categories there is not only subordination, but also its counterpart, privilege" (p. 18). My contribution to these insights is that the notion of structural intersectionality can challenge inequalities in single category diversity management practices by revealing subordination as well as hitherto silenced privileges.

Political intersectionality: revealing the politics of preserving privilege

Concerning my second contribution about the introduction of political intersectionality in diversity networks, I showed how diversity networks are hindered by a politics of preserving privilege rather than interrogating it. The intersectionality literature has used the notion of political intersectionality to examine the policies and political strategies of disadvantaged groups and social movements (Carastathis, 2013; Crenshaw, 1991; Verloo, 2006), but the theoretical elaboration in diversity management practices lags behind. It may seem that diversity networks are potential allies in combatting inequalities in organizations, yet their collaboration has been seriously understudied, with the exception of Scully (2009) and Colgan (2016) who highlight a few examples of networks working together. The concept of political intersectionality allows to highlight the rhetoric of beneficial collaboration and shows how actual collaboration between diversity networks is fraught with problems.

I argue that the single category design of networks hinders collaboration to address diversity and inequality in organizations. My study has provided the first theoretical insights into how diversity networks take part in a *reversed* Oppression Olympics; instead of competing for the title of "most oppressed" (Hancock, 2007), networks emphasize that they have "added value" for their organizations. This illustrates the dominance of the business case rhetoric (Zanoni et al., 2010), that is invoked by each network separately. Political intersectionality reveals how the need to make a positive contribution to the organization forecloses the possibility to challenge systems of inequality in the organization.

Theorizing political intersectionality in the study of diversity networks helps to further unpack the identity politics of diversity networks and to understand how their political standpoints and actions promote their network's interests. I highlighted how network's identity politics shape which inequalities are and are not addressed within the networks. Collaboration between networks would entail prioritizing interests of a minority of the network members at the alleged expense of majority members. An example was the failed collaboration between the ethnic minority and the LGBT networks, because of the perceived limited appeal of an event to the non-LGBT ethnic minority members. This corroborates Crenshaw's point that "identity politics tend to give privilege to the narratives of those in dominant categories (...) and the ways those narratives construct [the] primary agendas about what first to deal with" (1995, p. 5). Various scholars have criticized identity politics for its adverse effects in fostering exclusion (Bendl, Fleischmann & Walenta, 2008; Verloo, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006) and I also observe this in diversity networks. The politics of preserving privilege in diversity networks obscures the intersection of different forms of inequality and leaves the inequalities along other axes of difference intact. I contributed to the literature on diversity management practices by highlighting how business politics and identity politics play a role in the preservation of single category structures. Organizational inequalities cannot be dismantled separately because they entail multiple intersecting identities that mutually reinforce each other. This means that, as long as diversity networks remain single category-focused, they cannot incorporate structural and political intersectionality and do not work successfully to change the status quo in organizations.

Implications for future research and diversity management practices

In this chapter, I showed how the focus of diversity management practices on disadvantage and single categories has failed to capture the role of privilege in maintaining and (re) producing the status quo. The implications of structural and political intersectionality require new ways of studying and practicing diversity management. Diversity is not a single category issue and diversity is not only about disadvantage. Both scholars and practitioners have overlooked the political dimension of diversity management in organizations. Due to the focus on the business case, disadvantage and inequality have become the elephant in the room in many organizations. My analysis of single category diversity networks may serve as a starting point to challenge how diversity management is organized and to address the role of hitherto silenced privileges. Here, I offer some final reflections for future research and practice.

In the light of the political nature of diversity management, it is essential that practitioners gain an understanding of organizational processes of power and privilege. Addressing diversity as a business case might legitimize organizational diversity management but obscures the social justice side of diversity and in the long run inequalities persist. To (re)design diversity management practices that can take into account intersectionality and multiple inequalities,

a close collaboration between scholars and practitioners is needed. This collaboration helps to develop diversity management practices that go beyond the business case (Tomlinson & Schwabenland, 2010) and to better assess how diversity management practices impact processes of power and privilege that sustain and (re)produce inequalities. As Verloo (2006) notes, practices on one axis of inequality are almost never neutral to other axes. A close examination and awareness of the simultaneous processes of disadvantage and privilege would enable diversity researchers and practitioners to explicitly address and interrogate them.

Furthermore, my findings suggest that it is also important to involve privileged members of historically marginalized groups in diversity management practices. Although addressing privilege will not be an easy task, starting these conversations is indispensable to advance awareness of intersectionality, intersectional marginalization and the implications for equality and social justice (Atewologun & Sealy, 2014). Drawing on Scully, Rothenberg, Beaton and Tang (2017), the concept of *privilege work* might be helpful. Privilege work entails an ongoing reflection on one's privileged status as well as the relationship to the underprivileged (Scully et al., 2017). Such reflections may raise the awareness of privilege, the acceptance of being privileged, and, moreover, the process of owning up to privilege (Scully et al., 2017). For example, engaging in privilege work, ethnic minority networks and LGBT networks might be able to organize a collaborative event that addresses both white and heterosexual privilege in the organization. A refocus on privilege may not only reduce the tendency to assign diversity management practices to historically marginalized groups, but also challenge the heterogeneity within these groups.

Lastly, the politics of privilege might also reflect wider sociopolitical structures. Social norms of the privileged have become generalized normative expectations for marginalized groups (McIntosh, 2012), not only in organizations, but also in society at large. As Rodriquez et al. (2016) noted, "intersectional analyses should not be confined to organizational practices (…) but also identify transnational practices and processes that construct and reconstruct marginalization and privilege in other societal spaces" (p. 211). As this study has been conducted in the Dutch context, a comparative study on intersectionality in relation to diversity networks in different national contexts would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the importance of the wider sociopolitical structures within those contexts.

Putting intersectionality into practice will be "long-term thorny endeavor" (Benschop et al., 2015, p. 569; Rodriguez et al., 2016). My study on structural and political intersectionality in single category diversity networks suggest that the complexity of multiple identity categories, inequalities and their intersections require ongoing reflection processes. Especially the introduction of political intersectionality is promising in this respect, as it addresses how inequalities and their intersections are relevant to organizational policies. Rethinking diversity management to build on reflective and critical perspectives with attention to structural and political intersectionality will open up possibilities towards more effective diversity management practices that foster organizational equality.

CHAPTER 4

Diversity killjoys? Unpacking the collective networking practices in diversity networks

A paper, co-authored with Yvonne Benschop and Marieke van den Brink, based on this chapter is currently in a first round of review at Journal of Management Studies. A previous version of this chapter was presented at the 2018 European Group for Organizational Studies in Tallinn, Estonia, where it was nominated for Best Student Paper Award.

In this chapter, I adopt a practice-based approach to explore the collective diversity networking practices that occur in diversity networks. I define diversity networking practices as the collective sociopolitical actions of building, maintaining, and using relations in the workplace to advance organizational equality. Focusing on diversity networking practices allows me to explore the collective action and political dynamics that take place in diversity networks, and how their networking potentially contributes to equality in organizations. I identified five diversity networking practices: undoing otherness, building alternative structures, organizing events, appealing to organizational responsibility, and shaping organizational policies. My analysis shows that diversity networks fulfill a twofold function. As collectives, they are able to create structures of support, solidarity and belongingness, and it allows them to appeal to managerial responsibility for diversity- and inequality-related issues and to influence managerial decisions on organizational policies. However, by emphasizing feel-good notions of diversity, diversity networking practices can (re)produce organizational and societal norms and discourses, contributing to organizational processes that perpetuate inequalities rather than challenging them.

Introduction

Organizations are important sites where collective action to face the struggles for social justice and equality can be realized (Briscoe & Safford, 2008; Spicer & Böhm, 2007). An increasingly popular way to work towards organizational equality is the formation of collective in-company diversity networks (Benschop et al., 2015; Kaplan et al., 2009). In general, involvement in networks is associated with beneficial effects on one's career, such as job opportunities (Burt, 2004; Granovetter, 1973), influence and status attainment (Mehra et al., 1998), resources (Bagilhole & Goode, 2001), and friendship and support (Gould & Penley, 1984; Ibarra, 1997). Based on these assumptions, diversity networks would present a strategy for more equality in organizations, focusing on the inclusion of historically marginalized employees with similar social identities (Foldy, 2002). However, the difference between the general networks to which aforementioned effects are attributed to and diversity networks is that the former are largely ego-networks leading to individual benefits, whereas the latter are *diversity* networks working as a collective for the diversity and inclusion of marginalized employees. The focus of this chapter is on these particular in-company diversity networks and how they, as networks, collectively advance equality in organizations.

Previous studies on diversity networks provided some insights into their effects. Diversity networks are perceived to have a positive effect on the career advancement of members (Cross & Armstrong, 2008; O'Neil et al., 2011), diversity networks would provide their members with a safe space to share and exchange experiences (Friedman, 1996, 1999; Pini et al., 2004), and diversity networks would provide possibilities to drive the managerial agenda and advise about diversity-related issues (Colgan & McKearney, 2012; Gremmen & Benschop, 2013).

Despite their contribution to knowledge about and insights into diversity networks, these studies present several important limitations. First, the majority of these studies seem to make diversity too easily "doable" (Prasad & Mills, 1997, p. 11). The politics of diversity within workplaces is complex, contextual and power-laden (Ahmed & Swan, 2006; Prasad & Mills, 1997), and accomplishing organizational equality by means of diversity networks is more complicated than simply creating a network (Bierema, 2005). Most studies tend to overlook that networking for equality in organizations is a complex, political endeavor (Nicolini, 2009; Scully & Segal, 2002) that involves power processes and micropolitics to further marginalized groups' interests.

Second, studies on diversity networks do not do justice to diversity networks as *networks*. Networks are dynamic, socially accomplished and maintained due to the actual networking behavior of people (Benschop 2009; Berger, 2015). Networks are the result of members' network*ing*. This means that it is the actions of people and the interactions between them that influence and change both their networks and their organizations (Berger, 2015; Ibarra et al., 2005). Thus, there is a need to develop better insights into the processes of collective networking in diversity networks.

To address these limitations, I adopt a practice-based approach (Gherardi, 2009; Janssens & Steyaert, 2019; Nicolini, 2009) and focus on the actual networking practices that diversity networks engage in. Central to a practice-based approach is the orientation towards practices, that is, what people actually say and do in action (Nicolini, 2012; Yanow, 2006). By engaging in practices, people can either reproduce or challenge organizational, diversity-related phenomena (Janssens & Steyaert, 2019; Nicolini, 2009, 2012). Drawing on Van den Brink and Benschop (2014), I define diversity networking practices as the *collective* sociopolitical actions of building, maintaining, and using relations in the workplace to advance organizational equality. Focusing on diversity networking practices allows me to explore how diversity networks are used, how diversity networks (net)work as collectives, and what diversity networks actually do to advance equality in the workplace.

The aim of this chapter is to come to a better understanding of how in-company diversity networks as collectives (net)work to advance equality in organizations. I will focus on the following research questions: 1) which collective networking practices occur in diversity networks; and 2) how do these specific diversity networking practices potentially contribute to equality in organizations? This allows me to make two important contributions to diversity management studies. First, I identify and analyze diversity networking practices that diversity networks engage in to stimulate organizational equality. Second, analyzing diversity networking practices, I shed light on the sociopolitical processes that diversity networks collectively engage in when they network for equality. As such, this study extends previous literature by providing an in-depth understanding of how diversity networks either sustain or counteract inequality in organizations.

This chapter is organized in five sections. I start with outlining my theoretical framework in which I connect the literature on collective action in the workplace with a networking-as-a-practice perspective. After the description of the methodology, I continue with the findings of the particular diversity networking practices that are illustrative of diversity networks in my study. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the contributions to diversity management studies.

Theoretical framework

Collective action in organizations

Diversity networks entail collective action against inequality-related issues in the workplace. As such, they can be seen as the organizational equivalent of social movements, which address inequality-related issues in society at large. Social movements can be broadly defined as "collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities" (Tarrow, 1994 as cited in Spicer & Böhm, 2007, p. 1673). Theories of social movement address "how groups mobilize to challenge inequalities in

resources and status that are systematically reinforced by power relations" (Scully & Segal, 2002, p. 128). Several scholars have used social movement perspectives to study the collective action of social identity groups, such as diversity networks, in the workplace, analyzing who becomes involved in collective action, why and what tactics they use to contest and change organizational power relations (e.g., Creed & Scully, 2000; Githens & Aragon, 2009; Savenije, 2015; Scully, 2009; Scully & Segal, 2002). These studies show for example how these particular groups are formed and mobilized (Scully & Segal, 2002), and how employees as workplace activists use individual encounters to address organizational norms or create awareness about equality issues (Creed & Scully, 2000; Meyerson & Scully, 1995). Other studies have shed light on the efforts of an LGBT lobby to collectively advocate policy changes with regard to domestic partner benefits (Githens, 2012), or how a group of women employees, by the act of coming together and share experiences, discovered structural gender inequality in staff meetings. In case of the latter, the women were able to open up discussion about the tenor of the meetings and press for specific changes (Scully & Segal, 2002).

Drawing on insights from social movement studies, previous studies have explored what diversity networks do to influence organizational management and to pursue organizational change (Creed & Scully, 2000; Scully & Segal, 2002). Yet, relying on surveys, (historical) documents and interviews as main methods to collect data about diversity networks, these studies do not show what exactly happens *in* network meetings and *how* diversity networks influence organizational management. Embedded in organizations, diversity networks have to maneuver between their own objectives in striving for organizational equality, and the goals of the organizations' management (Colgan & McKearney, 2012; Foldy, 2002; Scully & Segal, 2002). Working, and moreover networking, for equality in organizations is complex because of the very closeness of the power that is contested (Scully & Segal, 2002). Although diversity networks offer a semi-autonomous space to identify commonalities based on shared social identities and provide possible openings for change, these commonalities may be harnessed to the goals of the organization (Foldy, 2002). For instance, previous research has shown that to gain support from their management, diversity networks often have to moderate their tone to get their message across (Scully & Segal, 2002). As such, diversity networks have to perform a "complex balancing act" (Colgan & McKearney, 2012, p. 362) between representing marginalized employees pursuing an equality agenda, and the risk of being coopted by the organization.

In line with Berger (2015), I argue that a focus on individual perceptions alone (solely obtained from interview and survey data) is limited when examining the actual networking practices that diversity networks engage in. For instance, earlier studies did not allow for the exploration of how collective networking is done in actual space and time (Benschop, 2009; Berger, 2015). In addition to insight into "how groups mobilize to challenge inequalities", we also need insight into how mobilized groups actually challenge inequalities. This necessitates more in-depth knowledge about how diversity networks perform their balancing act, how they bring their message across, how they moderate and negotiate, how they build coalitions,

and how they collectively use their network to advance equality in organizations. To come to a better understanding of these dynamic processes of collective action in organizations, I turn to a practice approach towards networking to study what this collective networking in diversity networks entails, and how these networking practices further organizational equality.

A practice approach to networking

In general, practice-based studies share the notion that social structures are continuously (re)produced and emerge through people's recurrent actions (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011). Practices can be defined as nexuses of the actual sayings and doings of people (Nicolini, 2012; Schatzki, 1996; Yanow, 2006). Practices are always rooted in a context of interaction, constantly reproduced and negotiated, and thus always dynamic and provisional (Nicolini, Gherardi & Yanow, 2003). By engaging in practices, people either reproduce or challenge social structures (Nicolini, 2009, 2012). As such, practices are considered to be key to the (re)production and transformation of social and organizational matters (Nicolini, 2012; Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina & Von Savigny, 2001). Studying practices helps to uncover the unreflexive and taken-for-granted patterns of activities and underlying norms that constitute social reality (Berger, 2015; Geiger, 2009; Nicolini, 2009).

In 1984, Gould and Penley already referred to the practice of networking: "the practice of developing a system or 'network' of contacts inside and/or outside the organization, thereby providing relevant career information and support for the individual" (p. 246). Several scholars have taken up a practice approach to networking in organizations (e.g., Benschop, 2009; Berger, 2015; Manning, 2010; Van den Brink & Benschop, 2014). A practice approach to networking allows for the examination of the actual activities and strategies of network agents in particular organizational contexts (Berger, 2015; Manning, 2010; Van den Brink & Benschop, 2014). By studying the actual networking practices of people, previous studies have shed light on how people use their networks at work and what people actually do when they enter, build, maintain, use, and exit their network (Benschop, 2009; Berger, 2015; Manning, 2010; Shaw, 2006). Examples of networking practices are: maintaining contacts, socializing, forming coalitions, negotiating, and sharing or withholding information (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2014). A focus on networking practices allows insight into the subtle behaviors and dynamic processes that maintain, (re)produce and change organizational structures (Nicolini, 2009, 2012). For example, studies by Benschop (2009) and Van den Brink and Benschop (2014) show that networking practices contribute to the reinforcement of inequalities, but also open up possibilities to change them. Furthermore, Manning (2010) shows that by engaging in networking practices, actors do not only help to (re)produce network relationships, but also the norms, rules, and resources they refer to when constituting and coordinating these relationships.

Thus, a practice approach towards networking has proven to be an excellent way to provide a more accurate description and richer theoretical understanding of the *processes of networking* (Parkhe, Wasserman & Ralston, 2006; Van den Brink & Benschop, 2014). It emphasizes the interrelation of agency and structure, and thereby the process-relational core of networking

(Nicolini, Gherardi & Yanow, 2003). From these studies I learn that processes of networking are political processes: they reproduce and constitute power in interaction in everyday organizational life and make an important contribution to the perpetuation of inequalities in organizations (Benschop, 2009; Janssens & Steyaert, 2019). With its focus on the actual sayings and doings of people, a practice approach accounts for what is tacit, normative, familiar and taken for granted (Nicolini, 2012), and helps to gain better insights in the dynamics that shape, (re)produce or counter inequalities in organizations. In this study on diversity networks, I am particularly interested in the specific networking practices that occur in diversity networks, and how they as collective network for equality in organizations.

Theorizing diversity networking practices

Overall, I observe that the diversity network literature hitherto does not look at the real-time doings and sayings of diversity networks in organizations. Thus far, little is known about how diversity networks collectively come to action. Previous studies predominantly focus on the networking practices of individual actors, and how they as individual agents (re)produce or challenge organizational structures. Collective networking practices and how the networking practices of collective agents contribute to equality in organizations remains understudied. To fill this gap and to better understand the processes of collective action in organizations, I take a practice-based approach to study the *diversity networking practices* that occur in diversity networks. Drawing on Van den Brink and Benschop (2014), I define diversity networking practices as the collective sociopolitical actions of building, maintaining, and using relations in the workplace to advance organizational equality. Focusing on diversity networking practices, enables the examination of the actual activities and strategies of diversity networks in an organizational context. Thus, with this study, I contribute to the diversity management literature by taking practices as the unit of analysis and explore what diversity networks actually *do* to make a contribution to organizational equality.

Methodology

Research design and cases

Studying practices requires a methodology that is committed to the processual nature that underpins a practice approach (Nicolini, 2012). I therefore rely on a qualitative methodology to study diversity networking practices in their real-life, organizational context (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2009). A qualitative approach enables the appreciation of the *how* of processes of collective networking, and provides insight into practices that are unreflexive and taken for granted (Benschop, 2009; Manning, 2010; Nicolini, 2009). Studying networking practices implies a focus on the collective sayings and doings of the networks and the network members in their capacity as network leaders, rather than the number of frequency of measurable occurrences (Gioia et al., 2013).

To examine the diversity networking practices that occur in diversity networks, I have carried out a multiple case study with different diversity networks as my cases. I selected two organizations in the Netherlands, a financial service organization (Finance) and a governmental service organization (Govt), that accommodate different diversity networks. Additionally, this enables the exploration of diversity networking practices in different organizational contexts. I included the following diversity networks: an ethnic minority network, a network for women in middle management positions (*Ladies with ambition*) and a network for women in senior management positions (*Women at the Top*), an LGBT network and a disability network in Finance; and a women's network, an LGBT network and a disability network in Govt.

Data collection

The examination of real-time practices requires data collection methods that are faithful to an observational orientation and allows an exploration of practice as it happens (Nicolini, 2012). To be able to witness what people actually say and do in a specific place and time, in situ observations are an indispensable way of collecting data (Carlile, 2002; Nicolini, 2012). Thus, my main data collection method was participant observation, accompanied by in-depth, semi-structured interviews and documents.

Observations

Research into practices has to make visible the "unspoken and scarcely notable background of everyday life" (Nicolini, 2009, p. 1392). By means of observations, I am able to capture the actual activities of collective networking when they unfold. Diversity networking practices happen in many places and different times (Czarniawska, 2007), for instance in network board meetings, *cross-network* meetings, network organized events, workshops, informal drinks and during meetings with other organizational stakeholders. I attended a variety of network meetings during a period of two years (2014-2016). Examples of the attended network meetings are: board meetings in which the course of actions is discussed, *cross-network* meetings of different diversity networks, meetings between diversity networks and the organizational management, and events or activities organized by diversity networks. In total, I have observed 36 network meetings that presented 116 hours of observation.

Depending on the nature of the meeting, I was either an anonymous spectator or a visible participant (Bleijenbergh, 2013). During large-scale conferences, being present was less noticeable than for example during small meeting with the network board. During the latter meetings, I often sat at the same table as the network members and was included in a round of questions at the beginning or end of the meeting. When present for the first time, I was also invited to explain my presence and the goal of my research. I took field notes on as many details during the meeting as possible, such as what was said and done during the meeting and by whom, who attended the meeting, seating arrangements, food and drink arrangements, informal socializing moments and which additional documents or audiovisual materials were used.

Interviews

Complementary to the observations, I conducted 41 in-depth semi-structured interviews with various network members. Due to the spatial and temporal dispersed nature of diversity network meetings, the study of networking practices is complicated (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2014). It was impossible to attend every network meeting or to be present during small informal network moments (e.g., phone calls, conversations at the coffee machine). Sometimes network meetings occurred on the same time and I had to choose which meetings to observe. So interviews provided a second suitable method to capture accounts of diversity networking practices (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2014). The semi-structured, open-ended nature of the interviews allowed for a detailed reflection of network members on observed networking practices during network meetings, or networking practices of meetings/interactions that I could not attend for observation. Respondents were asked about the goals of the network, how and why they got involved, the network meetings, activities and events, with whom they were networking (other diversity networks, organizational management) and what their diversity network was doing to achieve their goals. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and two hours and were transcribed verbatim.

Documents

Lastly, I have analyzed documents such as annual plans and meeting minutes, that possibly provide information about meetings that were not included in observations and about the follow up of previously made agreements.

Data analysis

In analyzing my data I aimed at identifying collective diversity networking practices that occur in the diversity networks in my study. My focal data consisted of the observation material. The observation notes were analyzed to build an account of diversity networks' collective networking practices. In my analysis, I combined the empirical material from observations, interviews and documents to build an accurate account and understanding of diversity networking practices. I relied on an abductive approach (Van Maanen et al., 2007), going back and forth between theory and empirical material. An overview of the steps in building the data structure is provided in Table 5.

The first round of coding consisted of three steps, which lead to the first order networking practices (Gioia et al, 2013). In this round, I started deductively, drawing on previous studies on networking practices. These studies identified several common networking practices such as negotiating, forming coalitions, socializing and sharing information (Berger, 2015; Van den Brink & Benschop, 2014). I found these individual networking practices useful to identify networking practices that occur in networks as a collective. These networking practices served as a first guide for the coding process. I have read through all empirical material (observations, interview transcripts, and

documents) and identified fragments connected to these practices. This round of coding yielded fragments in which diversity network members collectively shared information, build coalitions, or engaged in negotiations. Then, as a second step in the first round of coding, I went through the data again and open coded (Bleijenbergh, 2013) possible other fragments of (potential) practices of collective networking. This helped to identify additional fragments in which network members collectively organized events, and fragments where members not only share information, but also personal experiences. Finally, I started to seek similarities, patterns and differences among the fragments (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The first round of coding resulted in the identification of several collective networking practices, including negotiations about the course of action of the network, discussions about which stakeholders to involve, meetings and discussions with organizational management, meetings among network members themselves, discussions about which activities to organize and which purpose those activities would serve, and which discussions actually took place during organized events.

In a second round of coding, the data on sharing experiences, building coalitions, engaging in negotiations, socializing and organizing events, were coded again. This round, I particularly looked at how these networking practices were connected to increasing diversity and equality in organizations. Collective networking practices that were not related to stimulating diversity and equality were omitted from the material that is central in this chapter. Recoding the empirical material along these lines, resulted in the second order themes (Gioia et al, 2013) of five predominant diversity networking practices: *undoing otherness, building alternative structures, organizing events, appealing to organizational responsibility*, and *shaping organizational policies*. By categorizing these practices, I noted that they either serve to support network members or challenge the whole organization and management. This led to the aggregate dimensions (Gioia et al., 2013) of supporting network members and challenging the organization. Through these different steps in the analysis, I identified five main diversity networking practices and provided insight into how each practice contributed to (or perhaps hampered) organizational equality.

In the following section, I present the five diversity networking practices that resulted from my data analysis. These diversity networking practices are not meant to be exhaustive, but selected because they most powerfully convey the collective action of the diversity networks in my study and show the various ways in which this collective action can contribute to organizational equality. To secure anonymity, fictitious names are used to depict the respondents.

Table 5. Data analysis structure

First order networking practices	*Second order diversity networking practices*	*Aggregate dimensions*
Sharing information/ experiences	Undoing otherness	Supporting network members
	Building alternative structures	
Organization of events	Organizing events	
Building coalitions	Appealing to organizational responsibility	Challenging the organization
Negotiating	Shaping organizational policies	

Findings

In this section, I present my analysis of five diversity networking practices that were prevalent in the diversity networks under study: undoing otherness, building alternative structures, organizing events, appealing to organizational responsibility, and shaping organizational policies. These diversity networking practices show how diversity networks collectively build, maintain or use their relations at work in order to stimulate organizational equality. I distinguished between diversity networking practices that are geared more towards the support of network members, and diversity networking practices that aim to challenge the organization. For every diversity networking practice I analyzed how this specific collective networking practice contributes to (or hampers) organizational equality.

Supporting diversity network members

My analyses showed that supporting diversity network members is a key focus of diversity networks. Supporting diversity network members can be done by means of three diversity networking practices: first, by *undoing otherness,* which shows that network members can collectively support other members with their identity struggles and related issues they encounter. Second, by *building alternative structures*, in which network members organize themselves collectively in order to support their members as a collective network. And third, by *organizing events* that provide members with information, possibilities to meet each other, and support in their personal (career) development.

Undoing otherness

According to the networks members, diversity networks provide the opportunity to meet each other and exchange experiences in the safe environment of the network. Members are able to discuss issues related to diversity and inequality freely, without fear of negative reactions or possible reprisals. As such, diversity networks allow members to temporarily escape the

organizational culture in which they can be seen as diverging from the (often invisible and taken for granted) white, male, heterosexual and able-bodied organizational norm (Acker, 2006; Prasad & Prasad, 2002). Representations of difference occur within organizations and are sustained through organizational processes and everyday interactions (Hearn, 1996; Prasad & Prasad, 2002; Pullen & Simpson, 2009). Employees with historically marginalized social identities can be made the *other* when they are under-represented, unheard or unnoticed (Hearn, 1996).

Thus, *otherness* refers to the status or experience of being an outsider (Özbilgin & Woodward, 2004; Wekker & Lutz, 2001). I observe that within the context of diversity networks, this otherness of members can be reduced. Therefore, I refer to the reduction of otherness in diversity networks as *undoing otherness*. Undoing otherness is a specific diversity networking practice that is collectively done among network members themselves. This diversity networking practice illustrates how important a diversity network can be for its members. I present an example of undoing otherness as observed in a monthly meeting of the LGBT network in Govt. During these monthly meetings, (board) members of the network discuss organizational developments, events and possibly other issues at hand. These meetings are normally attended by 15-20 members, and start with a round along the attendees how they are doing and whether they have any work-related updates:

> *During the information-round, Ethan tells a personal story about him not feeling safe at work at the moment; he was told for instance that an LGBT network does not fit within his particular work environment. He becomes emotional and starts to cry when telling his story. Another member gets up to give him a hug and asks if the network can do anything for him. Other members react with outrage and disbelief: "that is why we [the network] are here" and "it is the biggest misconception [within this organization] that 'we do not have any problems, because we do not have gays'". Another network member shares a similar experience in which he felt a similar disapproval. Other comments that are made are: "It is not about you, it is about the culture [of the organization]", "many colleagues encounter problems when they are coming out", and "call on our network, for example to give a presentation". Ethan sighs: "it is a lonely battle". Another member reacts with: "..and then again it is not. It must be made clear that much more is wrong, there is something structurally wrong [in the organization]".*
>
> [Observation LGBT network - Govt]

This first part of this excerpt illustrates how otherness is constructed. Ethan gives an account of what occurred in his daily work environment. By specifically addressing that an LGBT network does not fit within the organization, a distinction is made based on sexual identities. Heterosexuality is still seen as the norm in organizations and homosexuality is regarded as disruptive because it flouts the assumptions of heterosexuality (Acker, 2006; Muñoz & Thomas, 2006; Savenije, 2015). Consequently, LGBT employees are constructed as outsiders, as

"others" who do not belong in the organization. The experience of being othered and feelings of exclusion based on having an LGBT identity, result in Ethan becoming emotional and not feeling safe in his work environment.

The diversity networking practice of undoing otherness refers to the social interactions that reduce otherness (Deutsch, 2007). By sharing a personal story with other network members, otherness is reduced in two ways. First, the network members collectively provide support and solidarity with Ethan as individual member. Members offer Ethan their support – "that is why we are here" –, ask if the network can be of any help, and physically support him by giving him a hug. Emotionally engaging with the othering of (individual) members, diversity network members collectively create a sense of belongingness (Özbilgin & Woodward, 2004), thereby reduce feelings of otherness. Second, it is emphasized by other network members that "it" is not about Ethan personally, but "it is about the culture of the organization". By doing so, the members make individual struggles collective and realize a shift from individual focus to a focus on inequality (Meyerson & Scully, 1995; Scully & Segal, 2002). Undoing otherness here involves unsettling the heteronormativity within the organization (Pullen & Knights, 2007). The individual otherness that Ethan encounters in his daily work environment, becomes a collective issue that involves the whole LGBT network and the whole organization.

Building alternative structures

Being organized as a collective network does not only make it possible to support members individually (by undoing otherness), but also to organize support systematically. Drawing on the relations and resources available within their own networks, network members are able to build a support structure among themselves. I refer to this diversity networking practice as *building alternative structures*. An example of building alternative structures, is the so-called buddy system of the disability network in Govt. According to the members of the disability network, the current organizational culture can be hostile towards its disabled and chronically ill employees, such as employees diagnosed with cancer, PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder), diabetes or HIV/AIDS. Network members observe that colleagues and managers who are confronted with a disability or a sudden chronic illness of their colleague/employee, often do not know how to deal with both the employee and the disability/illness. This can result in incomprehension, ignorance, and indifference. An employee diagnosed with cancer, for example, was told to have "cancer in her/his own time". Or an employee with dyslexia, who asked a colleague to check a piece of text, was faced with laughter and ridicule. According to the network members, employees with a disability/illness are apprehensive to tell their colleagues and their managers about their disability/illness. They fear that disclosing their disability/illness would lead to losing their job. Consequently, they are unable to ask for help if needed or to share their emotions and experiences. To offer a means to support disabled and chronically ill employees, members of the disability network launched a buddy-system: a support system in which colleagues can help and support other colleagues with illness- or disability-related issues.

The members of the disability network, Jim and Alan, have a meeting with Fred, a representative of an independent foundation that advocates organizational change towards a more inclusive culture that is tailored to employees' needs. They are discussing the ongoing implementation of their buddy system. During the discussion, Fred argues passionately: "Our goal is a culture intervention [towards] a loving and safe environment. [But] a culture intervention on the strategic level: forget it [sic]! That is not going to happen on a strategic level, that has to come from you [the network]". Fred further elaborates on the current state of the organization where managers are stuck in traditional and outdated ways of working. According to Fred, this leads to cumbersome procedures and endless red tape, at the expense of the employees. Fred: "A culture intervention has to come from the heart [he puts his hand over his heart]. I am not going to wait for the management; although there are some good [managers], they too are trapped in processes and protocols. [HR] wants facts and s. But before you know it, it is reduced to numbers only. It [solutions] has to be tailor-made! And what we [the network] can do, is just do it! Without getting stuck in the structures of the organization". Alan agrees: "We have to be careful that we [as network and as buddies] do not end up in such a system. A tailor-made approach. That is something in terms of the buddy system: to help and support each other, instead of trying to organize everything with documents. Managers are reluctant to take responsibility in choosing a tailor-made solution. While in our organization are ample possibilities to provide a tailor-made solution. But the manager always says, 'if I do not have a [policy] page where this is mentioned, I will not do it' ". Jim then reacts: "That is also my conviction. Some things you need to organize top down but others need to arise bottom up. The bottom up power of the [buddy] program has resulted in enthusiastic sharing. There was a lot of resistance – all the way to the top [of the organization]; and then to let the [people on the] work floor say they benefit from it. If they can get advice here that they do not find in the organization, then it will work".

[Observation disability network - Govt]

This instance shows how the members of the disability network create their own bottom up support structure as an alternative to the experienced lack of support within the organization. Disillusioned by management to offer sufficient support and to establish substantial changes towards a more inclusive organizational culture, the network members rely on the grassroots potential of their own network. They reckon that managers – even those who are willing – are too caught up in the current organizational system of rules and protocols, which makes them reluctant to provide individual "tailor-made" solutions. Moreover, tailor-made support of disabled/ill employees is frustrated by the (hierarchical) structure of the organization which prevent things from being done quickly. So instead of waiting for management to coordinate support of disabled and chronically ill employees on a strategic level, the network members collectively take matters into their own hands. As a network that is not restricted by any organizational rules or protocols, or having to account for them, members are able to

organize themselves outside of the structures of the organization (e.g., a network can "just do it"). By means of the buddy system, the disability network fills a void by creating its own structure of support and solidarity against the perceived negligence, resistance and rigor of the organization.

Engaging in the diversity networking practice of building alternative structures, network members can collectively organize a support structure; something that would be more difficult to do for individuals. In addition, grassroots initiatives can also have a transformative potential (Benschop et al., 2015; Bettencourt, Dillmann, & Wollman, 1996). By means of their buddy-system the disability network endeavors not only to offer disabled and chronically ill employees support that they are unable to find in the organization, but they also see the buddy-system as a starting point to change the organizational culture. According to the network members, a culture change must "come from the heart"; that is, starting bottom up instead of top down. They argue that if their support structure works, it will "spread like an oil slick" throughout the organization, which would lead to a culture that is more supportive towards its employees. Being a collective network that is not institutionalized, allows members to proceed with the implementation of a support structure without official approval of the organization and without having to conform to the organization at the expense of the grassroots change they endeavor.

Organizing events

Organizing events is a particular way how diversity networks are able to support their members. The scope and scale of the organized events varies considerably, which signifies the decision-making process that precedes the actual event. Overall, board members of diversity networks discuss, plan, and structure the events they intend to organize. During meetings in which they plan their events, they discuss the objective, frequency (e.g., how many per month/year), type (workshop, keynote, conference), scale (large or small), duration, course and content, drop-in or registration, whether to invite external speakers and whom, and the practicalities such as time, location, and refreshments. In Table 6, I present an overview of a number of events that the diversity networks have organized during the period 2014-2016.

This overview shows that the choices made by the network members in the organization process (i.e., objective, format, scale, etcetera) result in a multiplicity of events. Organized events range, for example, from small-scale events open to network members only (such as for example workshops or round table discussion sessions), to large events that are open to all employees of the organization (for example annual thematic conferences). Consequently, how diversity and organizational inequalities are being addressed during these events varies considerably. I distinguish between three categories of events: social events, events where organizational norms are questioned, and events where organizational norms are reproduced.

Table 6. Overview network events

Org.	*Network*	*Frequency*	*Events*
Finance	Women at the top (senior management)	~ 4 events per year	- Keynote on how to reach the top by working together (& drinks) - Keynote on organizational developments (& drinks) - Event with Ladies with ambition aimed at addressing gender inequality in the career development of women. - Keynote/workshop on presentation skills (& drinks) - Keynote/workshop on innovation-related issues and development (& drinks) - Keynote/workshop on stress management (& drinks)
	Ladies with ambition (middle management)	~ 4/5 events per year	- Kick off mentoring program (& drinks) - Workshop 'Smart & Sexy' (& drinks) - Event with Women at the top (see above mentioned) - Keynote on how to reach the top by working together (& drinks) - Event titled 'Your talent' - Round table sessions with various topics (& drinks)
	LGBT	No set frequency	- Keynote on innovation-related issues and developments (& drinks) - Conference on sustainability (& drinks) - LGBT-related film festival - Event on Coming Out day - Drinks for LGBT employees & straight allies - Lunches for LGBT employees & straight allies - Art tours in and around the company building - Collaboration to and participation in International LGBT conferences - Participation in National Pride Parade
	Ethnic minority	No set frequency	- Annual conferences on Diversity & Inclusion - Masterclass on working as 'new age' employees - Masterclass on personal branding - Workshop 'Leadership & the rules of the game' - Workshop on leadership by means of horse mirroring - Various other workshops on: applying for jobs/job interviews, business etiquette, how to communicate with impact, to follow one's passion, 'where do you make the difference?', and 'do they notice how good I am' - Annual gala for members and non-members - Monthly and seasonal drinks for members and non-members

Table 6. Continued

Org.	*Network*	*Frequency*	*Events*
	Disability	No set frequency	- Kick off meeting of the disability network - Workshops/trainings on energy balance - Workshop on networking - Workshop on appropriate manners with regard to disabilities and disabled employees - Open coffee meetups for network members - Network meeting on how to get a hold on your own career - Network meeting on the role of managers (& drinks)
Govt	Women	No set frequency	- Keynote on stereotypes and awareness - Various workshops, for example on social media, stress management, and gardening. - Event 'The future is now'
	LGBT	No set frequency	- Keynote on 'Intersex' (& dinner in pub) - Movie 'Pride' - LGBT campaigns on LGBT-related events (i.e., Pink Saturday, Monday or Wednesday) - Collaboration to and participation in International LGBT conferences - Participation in National Pride Parade
	Disability	1 per year	- Annual conferences about themes like trust and empowerment, or self-reliance and independence

Socializing. The first category are events organized with a focus on socializing and community building. These events encourage network members to meet each other in an informal environment and share experiences without the fear of being othered (Hearn, 1996; Prasad & Prasad, 2002). These social events include for example drinks, lunches and open coffees.

Questioning organizational norms. A second category entails events that question the dominant organizational norms that contribute to organizational inequalities. An example of such an event is the keynote organized by the LGBT network in Govt about the topic of intersex; that is a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not seem to fit the normative and typical biological definitions of woman or man (NNID[1], 2017). During the event, the normalization of the binary categorization of women and men is challenged. The keynote speaker discusses the implications of the word *norm* as something that is constructed by society: "We [people with an intersex condition] are also fighting against the norm, we are fighting for social change". This event exemplifies how organizational norms regarding heteronormativity can be addressed and actively discussed among network members. Another example of an event in which organizational

1 Dutch Network Intersex and DSD (Differences of Sex Development).

norms are questioned is the kick-off meeting of the disability network in Finance. During this meeting, one of the speakers talks about the inclusion of employees with a disability in the organization. He uses the metaphor of Finance as a cathedral: "Cathedrals can make people very small. Some people might think: this is not my world, I do not belong here". He states that especially employees with a disability have the perception that they do not fit in Finance: "This [organization] is not for our sort of people". According to the speaker this results in a monoculture where only "a particular kind" is able to work. In doing so, the speaker addresses the implicit organizational norms that benefit the *unencumbered*, able-bodied (Acker, 1990) employees who fit these norms, but lead to the exclusion of those employees who do not.

Reproducing organizational norms. Although there are some events in which organizational norms are questioned, I noted that the majority of events fails to address issues of inequality and the organizational norms that (re)produce them. These events largely revolve around *feel-good ways of diversity* (Ahmed, 2009; Hoobler, 2005; Prasad & Mills, 1997) and the business case for diversity, emphasizing that diversity is an strategic asset that provides organizations with a competitive advantage (Benschop, 2011; Litvin, 2002). For example, during a masterclass organized by the ethnic minority network in Finance, the speaker emphasizes "diversity's impact on the bottom line to understand our clients better". In another workshop organized by the ethnic minority network, participants learn how to perform an elevator pitch. In small groups they have to answer questions about their personalities and their capabilities. The workshop leader instructs participants to focus on the positives and to keep in mind that "talent is about who you are, not about what you do". As a last example, during a workshop titled *Smart & Sexy* organized by the women's network Ladies with ambition in Finance, women are asked to introduce themselves as if they were a pump: "What kind of pump are you? Fabric (soft, stiff), color (black, tiger print, bright pink), are you easy to walk on or not?". Participants are encouraged to "shine", to "think positive", to "boast", and to "enchant men".

These events are but a few examples of workshops and masterclasses organized to support network members. With topics such as presentation skills, stress management, assertiveness, business etiquette, and leadership styles, these workshops and masterclasses predominantly focus on the development of members' individual skills and abilities. On the one hand, the prevalent emphasis on individual skills tends to take organizational norms for granted. Yet, on the other hand, events also allow members to question organizational practices that (re)produce inequalities. As such, the distinction between norm-challenging events and norm-reproducing events is not always as clear-cut as presented in aforementioned examples. To elaborate on this ambiguity, I now zoom in on a joint event organized by two women's networks in Finance.

"Foresight is the essence of management" Annually, Ladies with ambition for women in middle management positions and Women at the top for women in senior management positions, organize a large, conference-like event together. Prior to the event, the network members actively discuss the organization of the event. They decide upon naming their event *Foresight*

is the essence of management and the aim is to further gender equality in the organization by addressing the recruitment and selection and career development of women to higher management positions.

> *The event takes place in the late afternoon and lasts 1,5 hours with drinks afterwards. Approximately 140 women and 20 men are attending. The event starts with two speeches of women speakers, and ends with a panel discussion between one of the women speakers (and member of the board of directors) and two men (both directors of departments within Finance). The first speaker is a member of the board of directors. In her speech, she emphasizes the importance of quotas: "Diversity is easier when you attach percentages to it. We want 20% women in the top of the organization, 25% in the subtop". The second speaker is a former Dutch politician and chair of an organization that supports other organizations in their diversity management. In her speech, she asserts that women need to speak up more: "Men want to be eligible for something, women want to discuss it first at home. Women have to express themselves more." She presents an example of another organization: "Women [in this organization] are challenged to make a plan themselves. And I think that they [the organization] put the responsibility where it belongs: with the individual; with the woman herself."*
>
> *The last part of the event consists of a panel discussion. During the panel discussion, there is also interaction with the audience. One of the comments from the audience: "Vacancy texts should be written differently". The external convener that leads the panel discussion places a remark now and then. She for example states: "Women are being judged on their track record; men are being judged on their potential". Also a workshop on the awareness of gender bias and stereotypes is suggested. The member of the board of directors reacts with: "You are never going to find the sheep with the five legs[2]; they just do not exist. I myself was by far [sic] the sheep when I was asked [for the board of directors]. But I jumped into the deep."*
>
> [Observation women's networks - Finance]

This instance shows that attendees receive ambiguous messages. During the first part of the event, the speakers draw on a neoliberalist rhetoric of individual empowerment and choice: women themselves are responsible for their own career advancement. For example, women are compared to men and "need to speak up more". Women would allegedly lack visibility and some speakers emphasize the individual responsibility for women to become visible. Men are portrayed as explicit about their ambitions, whereas women would be more reluctant and doubtful (cf. Van den Brink & Benschop, 2014). Herewith, male models of career success and achievement are taken for granted and implicitly serve as the norm for all employees (Acker, 1990; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000). Also, these speakers draw on an underlying assumption of meritocracy: promotions are based solely according to individual performance or talent and

2 A sheep with five legs is a Dutch idiom meaning an impossible combination of ideal competencies.

gender does not matter (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2014). As such, there is no reflection on and awareness of gender inequalities embedded in recruitment, selection and evaluation processes.

However, during the panel discussion the convener is able to address gendered processes ("Women are being judged on their track record; men are being judged on their potential") and also creates room for possible actions for change. For example, the remark that vacancy texts should be written differently, or the workshop on gender bias and stereotypes that is suggested. Recruitment and selection processes are key to maintaining or changing the status quo. Criteria that are used in recruitment and selection procedures can play out differently for men and women candidates, to the disadvantage of the latter. Workshops that stimulate the reflection on these criteria and on the process of recruitment and selection can help to counter gender inequalities (Dennissen, Herschberg, Benschop & Van den Brink, 2017). In addition, the member of the board of directors refers to the *sheep with five legs*. The sheep with five legs would be the ideal candidate that managers are looking for. She states that managers who are looking for this *ideal sheep* will not find it because it does not exist. Although she raises awareness about the role of the ideal candidate in recruitment and selection processes, she does not elaborate on how gender is practiced in the evaluation of candidates, resulting in disadvantages for women and privileges for men that accumulate to produce substantial inequalities (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012, 2014).

Thus, by organizing events, diversity networks are able to support their members in various ways. There are also multiple ways to address diversity- and inequality-related issues during events. My analysis showed that the multiplicity in events yields mixed messages regarding organizational equality. On the one hand, events can emphasize individual responsibility for success and reproduce organizational norms, gender stereotypes and masculine models of that success. On the other hand, events create possibilities to address organizational practices and interventions to contribute to equality on a broader organizational level.

In this section, I demonstrated how diversity networks, as collectives, are able to offer their members support by means of undoing otherness, building alternative structures, and by organizing events. My analysis also showed that diversity networks might endeavor stimulating equality on a broader organizational level. In the following section, I explore and analyze diversity networking practices that diversity networks engage in to challenge the organization and its management on organizational inequalities.

Challenging the organization

All diversity networks in my study are maintaining contact to some extent with the management of their organization. This contact varies between standardized meetings that are being held annually or ad hoc meetings in which the initiative lies with the diversity network. My analyses showed that it is a strategic choice of the network members to build and maintain relations with their management. They reckon that involvement and support of the organizational management is important to be able to function as a diversity network.

According to the network members, managerial support means financial resources and legitimacy to invest time in network activities. Without support of the management, they believe it would be (more) difficult to perform network-work next to one's daily job. Next to an instrumental reason, diversity networks also seek to involve the organizational management to call upon their influence on the organizational culture, policies and processes that either help or hinder organizational equality. Changing structures means working with those in power (Wahl & Holgersson, 2003) and diversity networks endeavor to draw the attention of the management in order to challenge them on diversity- and inequality-related issues. In the following, I present two examples of diversity networking practices of diversity networks challenging the organization: appealing to organizational responsibility and shaping organizational policies.

Appealing to organizational responsibility

Appealing to organizational responsibility for equality is one way of how diversity networks can challenge the organization. Appealing to organizational responsibility is particularly practiced in meetings between the network members and the organizational top management, such as the CEO or other members of the Board of Directors. My analysis showed that there can be different ways how diversity networks appeal to the responsibility of the organization, which, in turn, may lead to different reactions from the management. I will first describe two instances of appealing to organizational responsibility consecutively, after which I present my analysis.

"Croquettes anyone?" The first instance in which I have observed appealing to organizational responsibility, is during a meeting of the ethnic minority network in Finance. The ethnic minority network has invited a member of the board of directors to attend a lunch meeting to discuss diversity-related issues within the organization. Network members attending the meeting responded to an announcement and invitation on the organizational intranet that was posted by the network. Although places were subject to availability, basically every network member could attend. During the meeting, the director invites the 16 attending members of the network to give their honest opinion about how they feel about the current state of affairs within the organization with regard to diversity:

> *At some time during the meeting, the director asks the network members whether they are bothered by the public debate about Black Pete* [3]*. A network member responds, but in his answer addresses the Ramadan instead: "During Ramadan, you get these questions whether*

3 Public debate in the Netherlands about the controversial blackface-tradition during Dutch Christmas (Sinterklaas) and whether it should remain because it is a long-lasting tradition, or it should change because it entails racism (Wekker, 2016).

it [fasting] is good for you. This should be common knowledge by now. You do not want to address the same issues over and over again. You try to be short and concise, or ignore it, but you do not want to come across as a closed person". Director: "So you defend yourself about something that you should not have to defend yourself about". Network member: "The advantage of a dialogue is that you also change something about their [colleagues] image. Next time, the conversation will head in another direction. So I think we have to invest in these kind of discussions. A little bit awareness". Director: "But back to the question: does it bother you? And not in the sense that it ruins your life, but more... it is not entirely respectful". A network member responds: "But it is such a grey area". Director: "That is why I am asking about your perception (...) I just want an answer to my question". A network member responds to what is said earlier about discussions with colleagues and having to defend oneself: "That should not be the case every time. For example, we organize many drinks within [Finance] [laughter], and every time you have to explain that you do not drink wine. I do not want to defend myself every time. You can engage in the discussion every time, but it is something that you encounter". At that moment the director interrupts the network member by asking if there is anyone who wants a croquette, "because they are getting cold". The network member continues: "What I want to indicate is that what I find bothering is that I do not advance in my career and that prejudice has its influence: you do your job well, but in the end it is about the likability-factor. And during promotion and selection many prejudices play a role, for example images of a leader: a leader is extrovert. If you look only at the numbers, you never get this problem solved". At the end of the meeting, the director states: "You [the network] should and can hold a mirror [to the management and organization]; it can hurt just a little bit", and additionally, "[today] I have heard some things of which I think 'hmm, we are, by far, not where we want to be as organization. I sincerely invite you [the network] to keep giving suggestions. And if you need me or can use me, then do not hesitate to do so".

[Observation ethnic minority network - Finance]

This instance shows how the members of the ethnic minority voice their bother with incidents they encounter in the organization. They talk about awkward comments from colleagues about the Ramadan or about not drinking alcohol. The members of the ethnic minority network ask for a "little bit awareness", and would like to "invest in these kind of discussions". Also, members of the network mention the management's preoccupation with numbers. They assert that organizational equality is not only about numbers. Key performance indicators, diversity charters and quotas alone will not solve organizational inequalities. Lastly, they draw attention to the image of the ideal leader, thereby confronting the director with the organizational processes that still evolve around and reproduce the ethnic majority (and white male) norm.

Although the appeal to the management and the organizational culture seems to be taken up by the director to some extent at the end of the meeting ("we are, by far, not where we want to be as organization"), I observe that during the meeting the director shuns the substantive

discussion about organizational processes that (re)produce exclusion and inequality. Despite the organizational problems brought up by the network members, the director repeats his specific question about the level of bother with regard to the *Black Pete*-debate. Then, the director interrupts a quite emotional story by a network member on her encountering inequalities at work by asking if, "there is anyone who wants a croquette?". Not only do these statements and interruptions downplay the experiences of ethnic minority employees (cf. Siebers & Dennissen, 2015; Wekker, 2016), they also steer the conversation away from what actually happens in the organization itself. The director has explicitly invited the network members to share their experiences and opinions about the current status quo in their organization ("That is why I am asking about your perception"), but when the conversation touches upon organizational issues, the director either interrupts with an off topic question, or he keeps asking about more general and societal issues. He thereby displaces the attention (Ahmed, 2009) from organizational issues. In doing so, he, as member of the organizational board of directors, evades his responsibility to take up the issues raised by the ethnic minority network and to put change of organizational barriers on the broader organizational agenda.

In the following paragraph, I present another instance of how appealing to organizational responsibility is practiced, yet with an alternative approach.

"I want to be your captain" The second instance of appealing to organizational responsibility occurred during a meeting between the LGBT network and the CEO in Govt. The LGBT network wanted to organize a meeting with the organizational management for two main reasons. On the one hand, they wanted to introduce the LGBT network and demonstrate the importance of an LGBT network, in particular with regard to the organization and organizational practices. On the other hand, they also wanted to get the opportunity to explore the standpoint of the management about LGBT- and diversity-related issues. One of the issues that the network members address during the meeting, is the importance of a safe work environment for LGBT employees:

> *The network shows screenshots retrieved from the organizational intranet with hostile reactions on messages from the LGBT network. The CEO reacts: "I am extremely annoyed by this! It is a small group of trolls who do this. Whatever you do, they always react negatively. (...) But I also call upon you. Why don't we address each other?" Also a message in which the existence of the network is denied is displayed and members state that this is an example of the internal battle they have to fight: "We are tired of fighting. I have already fought that battle at work with my boss who reacted on my coming out with 'that is not possible within this [organization]". Ethan is also present and tells emotionally about his coming-out and the importance of the support of the LGBT network to continue with his battle. The CEO reacts with: "It gives me goosebumps to hear this... It affects me when you say that you were on your own. The formation of a network is urgent, in particular if you are trying to initiate a network for so many colleagues. (...) Look, I want to arrange as little as possible. You are and will remain*

> *the front soldiers, that is certain". A network member responds: "We also notice that there is a difference in who delivers the message. If the LGBT network communicates something, or if the management does that. When the management underscores our importance and joins events, then a whole other image will develop. Now we get a bad evaluation, because we do a lot for the LGBT network, or we are called party-people because we participate in the [Pride Parade]". CEO: "It is important for you to know that you can always fall back on the [middle management of the organization]. On me if they are absent. Most definitely in cases of urgency. I would like to emphasize this. We have to keep having these conversations. I want to be able to say something about this. Feed me with these kind of stories. Help me to say the right things. I want to be your captain. Email me. You can fall back on me day and night. Such as the story of Ethan, that can never happen again. You are the front soldiers who need support of the top [management] of the organization. Regard me as your partner."*
>
> [Meeting minutes LGBT network - Govt]

This fragment illustrates how the members of the LGBT network make the struggles they encounter in their daily work environment clear and tangible. By presenting forthright screenshots, the network members leave little to the imagination and demonstrate the blunt discrimination and exclusion practices that occur in the organization. This makes it almost impossible for the CEO to displace the attention by changing the topic. Nevertheless, I observe that the first inclination of the Govt CEO is to "cop out" (cf. Ahmed, 2009, p. 44) by specifically calling on the network to take responsibility for addressing diversity- and inequality-related issues. The CEO refers to the network members as "front soldiers", making them first and foremost responsible to deal with the organizational inequalities they encounter. However, in this instance I see how the network members redirect responsibility to the organizational management. Members counter that they have been the front soldiers, they have fought their battles, which left them weary with no results. They explicitly argue that the actions of the network would be more effective if they are supported and underlined by the management.

Analyzing the two presented fragments, I note that there is a remarkable difference in preparation prior to the meeting. In contrast to the meeting of the ethnic minority network, the meeting of the LGBT network was thoughtfully organized. While the ethnic minority network stated to only have posted an announcement on the intranet, the LGBT network conveyed how they strategically prepared for their meeting. They invited the CEO to small-scale meeting, in which they were very selective who would attend the meeting. They selected a smaller sized room to create a safe environment that would facilitate trust and a dialogue between the management and the network, instead of a monologue by the network and a passive role of the management. The LGBT network had a clear goal in mind when organizing this meeting. Their endeavor was to get the unequivocal support from the CEO to counter the organizational inequality experienced by LGBT employees. The meeting

of the ethnic minority network did not restrict attendance to particular network members. The intranet announcement resulted in a registration on a first come, first served basis. Due to a difference in preparation, a different course and content of the meeting ensued. The meeting of the ethnic minority network was organized more broadly to discuss diversity-related issues, that was open to the interpretation of both the members and the director. Organizing a meeting this way, leaves more room for freestyling about various wide-ranging topics, rather than discussing inequality in the organization per se. To illustrate the different stance of the ethnic minority network, I present the following account of a conversation that takes place right after the meeting with the director in Finance between board members Ilias and Hassan:

> *Ilias: "... I thought it was a bit regrettable... I want to approach [cultural diversity] more like what we can do to make [cultural diversity] more sexy, that the conversation that arises is more about that than about individual cases. How it was presented here [during the meeting] was a bit too negative for me."*
> *Hassan: "...it was much more in the defense-corner, eh?!"*
> *Ilias: "Yes, a lot of negative, a lot of victim-corner."*
> *Hassan: "But apparently, that is what is going on, so then we have to talk about that. Whether we like it or not. We, as network-board, or network, I still want to exude that it is about opportunities and illuminate the positive side of the story, but if members themselves have particular issues then they have to have the possibility to ventilate these issues. And [the director] was open to it. But we sent an open invitation and it is the people who have issues that want to attend, those who go and fight and bam... You do attract a particular part [of the network members] with these kind of lunches and that is something that we need to take into account."*
>
> [Observation ethnic minority network - Finance]

This account shows how the board member of the ethnic minority network would have liked to emphasize the positive side of diversity during their meeting with the director. Despite the attending members who do address organizational processes that touch upon structural inequality, the board members would rather talk about the "sexiness" of diversity (Ahmed, 2009; Hoobler, 2005; Prasad & Mills, 1997). In contrast, the members of the LGBT network purposefully and outspokenly talk about evident experiences of exclusion and discrimination. In doing so, they do not eschew addressing organizational inequalities with the organizational management.

Next to differences in preparation, course and content, my analysis also sheds light on a double claim to responsibility. In both instances, I see how diversity networks are made responsible for diversity and equality in the workplace (cf. Ahmed & Swan, 2006; Ahmed, 2009). On the one hand, this responsibility is imposed on them by the management by specifically calling on them, asking for their perceptions and suggestions, and appointing them as *front soldiers*. By doing so,

it becomes the responsibility of historically marginalized employees to take care of diversity issues and to educate majority employees in the organization (cf. Ahmed, 2009; Lorde, 1984). On the other hand, I observe that diversity networks also take up this task themselves. This not only provides networks with legitimacy, members of diversity networks also consider it their responsibility to start and stimulate discussions about diversity in organizations. Moreover, their usefulness as *diversity educators* gives diversity networks legitimacy in the organization. This double claim to responsibility, imposed by management as well as taken up by networks themselves, exemplifies the political processes that take place in an organizational context. Engaging in the diversity networking practice of appealing to organizational responsibility shows how diversity networks maneuver in this organizational force field.

By means of appealing to organizational responsibility, network members are able to share their frustrations and experiences of exclusion with organizational management, and call attention to the organizational processes and the organizational culture that causes them. The collective, emotional appeal is a significant aspect of this particular diversity networking practice. Without its collectivity, it would lose impact and voice, and both managers clearly react to this emotional appeal. I showed how appealing to organizational responsibility can be done in different ways and using different arguments. While the ethnic minority network would evade addressing thorny issues and focus on the "sexiness" and positive side of diversity, the LGBT network chooses to make a more confrontational appeal by addressing organizational inequalities with concrete and straightforward examples. In contrast to the feel-good ways of diversity as aspired by the ethnic minority network, I see LGBT network members addressing organizational processes that (re)produce structural inequalities, thereby taking up the role of *diversity killjoys* (cf. Ahmed, 2009). As collective diversity killjoys, diversity networks seem to be more successful in challenging the organization and stimulating organizational equality, then when drawing on a more palatable discourse of doing happy diversity (Ahmed, 2009; Hoobler, 2005; Prasad & Mills, 1997).

Shaping organizational policies

As a collective, diversity networks are able to use their knowledge and expertise to exert influence on the implementation and adaptation of organizational policies. Being a network allows members to gather information about the effects of these policies on employees, diversity and organizational equality, and to detect whether existing policies need adjustment or that other (new) policies are required. As such, diversity networks can fulfill a signaling function by checking whether the organization adheres to the policies they have made or call on the organization to account for it when they neglect to do so. Diversity networks can negotiate with the organization about the implementation or possible alteration of diversity and equality policies. I have called this diversity networking practice *shaping organizational policies*. I present an example of this diversity networking practice as observed in the disability network in Govt.

In order to counter inequality and exclusion of disabled and chronically ill employees, the disability network specifically attempts to influence and change organizational HR policies that contribute to more knowledge and guidelines on how to deal with disabled or chronically ill employees and their disability or illness. One of the key points that the disability network focuses on, is the pay cuts that disabled and chronically ill employees get when their sick leave lasts longer than six months. According to the network, there used to be a *gentlemen's agreement*: a policy document that mentioned that in case of dire circumstances the pay cuts would not apply. The network members have noticed that there is no awareness of this agreement at the managerial level of the organization, and, as a consequence, the agreement is not respected. The disability network is therefore pursuing its reinstatement through actively engaging in negotiations with the HR department, who are in charge of the implementation and possible adaption of personnel policies. In an interview, network member Jim tells about the current status of these negotiations:

> *"At the moment, the HR department wants to specify 'what is a dire case?', to be given in decimal places or so to speak. And terminally ill, for example. And what they [HR] want is: is that one month, two months or three months? Well, I forcefully react on that by saying, that is just bullshit! Terminally ill is terminally ill, and a dire case is for the particular manager to decide and not for the HR department. [...] Our call was taken up by the HR department. Next month we have a meeting with the person in charge, and eh.. he was also present at [our recent network event], he heard and saw a couple of dire cases, and yeah, they understand that they cannot make no bones about that, that they have to do something with that. But we have to allow them some time to organize this properly, and we talk about this with each other [disability network and HR]. So our examples serve as addition to a part of [their] organization and our examples can also serve to tell the organization, 'you really have to change this'."*
>
> [Jim, member of disability network, Govt]

This account demonstrates how the members of the disability network are checking the organization on the development and implementation of policies related to disabilities and chronical illnesses. From the beginning of setting up the disability network, the network members have explicitly invested in building a good relationship with HR by providing them with (solicited and unsolicited) advice about disabilities and chronically ill employees, and by actively involving them in network events. Having established this kind of networking relationship with HR, the disability network gained a position as negotiation partner which allows them to engage in discussions about organizational policies regarding disabilities and chronical illnesses. During the network event that Jim is referring to, I observe that the HR director has taken up the call of the disability network to implement policies that address management of disabled and chronically ill employees:

The disability network has organized an all-day network event. The HR director gives a speech during the morning session. He starts by telling about how the disability network has contacted him and presented examples of chronically ill employees: "I thought: this cannot be true. As a result, we as HR management, sped up with our support and facilitation [of the network]". The HR director states he is very happy with the initiation of the network, "because HR needs to know how to get in touch with employee groups, and what is going on in daily practice". He continues that it is important to gather input from the employees themselves before making and implementing organizational policies: "Considering the size of our organization and the political complexity of a lot of problems, nobody is able to solve them alone. You always have to.. multidisciplinary, different perspectives together at the table and also put the tension on the table: 'you want this, but that does not match with that' – engage in the discussion about that, because that will take you a step further. You [as manager] can maybe think that, after working in this organization for 40 years, you know what is going on, but that is just not the case. Policy proposals are developed by means of collecting information [throughout the whole organization]. We hope to build trust, by working together, collecting information, seeing things your way". The director finishes his speech with mentioning the latest policy developments. He utters that much of the content is literally retrieved from his first conversation with the disability network. He mentions the development of a policy note on disabled and chronically ill employees and "how to deal with that". And finally, he addresses the issue of managers and leadership: "...especially with [disability]: it does not matter what is written in the policy note, it is about what happens in daily practice between colleagues and managers. (..) We are working on a new leadership development course, and due to various input, we explicitly included dealing with the first symptoms of illnesses as well as the assistance of ill employees".

[Observation disability network, Govt]

This instance illustrates how the disability network is not only able to feed the organization with information about disability-related issues, it also provides them with the possibilities to intervene. The network members oppose the abstraction of organizational rules and policy regulations by presenting HR with real-life cases of disabled and ill employees. These real-life cases serve as exemplifications to prove HR the need to develop policies based on the experiences of real employees and the actual situations and struggles they have to deal with. By providing these concrete and straightforward examples, the network is challenging the organization on the development of, and strict adherence to general policies. Confronting HR with real-life cases of disabled and ill employees, the network members justify why policy changes are needed. Due to the involvement and negotiation of the disability network, the HR director does not only acknowledge the importance of proper organizational policies on managing disabled and chronically ill employees, but also the value of a bottom-up network for policy development. He asserts that the

involvement and input of employees themselves is essential, and HR should therefore make a continuous effort to work together with employees and employee initiatives such as the disability network.

Being organized as a collective, network members are able to tap into the lived experiences of individual employees and translate their struggles to organizational (HR) management. As a network they are able to collect these experiences and make a collective case. In doing so, a network can detach themselves emotionally from individual cases but without losing the emphasis on the lived experiences of real employees. By engaging in the networking practice of shaping organizational policies, network members can become professional negotiation partners to (HR) management. This allows them to challenge the organization to assess and change failing organizational policies that lead to the exclusion of employees.

In this section, I showed how diversity networks are able to challenge the organization by engaging in the diversity networking practices of appealing to organizational responsibility and shaping organizational policies. Being organized as a collective network, provides network members with an entrance to the organizational management and allows them to discuss issues of organizational inequality. Their collectivity gives them voice and opportunities to negotiate and influence managerial decision making on diversity- and inequality-related topics.

Discussion

The aim of this chapter was to come to a better understanding of how in-company diversity networks as collectives (net)work to advance equality in organizations. Drawing on a practice-based approach (Gherardi, 2009; Janssens & Steyaert, 2019; Nicolini, 2009), I explored the collective diversity networking practices that occur in diversity networks. I extended previous work on diversity networks by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the (subtle) behaviors and dynamic, political processes of collective networking. By doing so, I contributed to the diversity network literature in two ways. First, I identified and analyzed diversity networking practices that diversity networks engage in to stimulate organizational equality. Second, and as a result of the first contribution, I have shed light on the sociopolitical processes that diversity networks collectively engage in when they network for equality. By introducing a practice-based approach as a novel perspective to study diversity networks, attention shifts to how networking is accomplished, analyzing it as a way of networking, rather than focusing on "the substance of a [diversity management] practice" (Janssens & Steyaert, 2019, p. 530). As such, this study extends previous literature by providing an in-depth understanding of how diversity networks can either sustain or counteract inequality in organizations.

Battle is about inches, not about miles

My first contribution is the identification of collective diversity networking practices occurring in diversity networks. By doing so, my study has yielded in-depth insight into how diversity networks are used and what diversity networks actually do when they are networking collectively to advance organizational equality. I have identified five diversity networking practices: undoing otherness, building alternative structures, organizing events, appealing to organizational responsibility and shaping organizational policies. I discussed and analyzed how these diversity networking practices possibly contribute to stimulating equality in organizations. The accounts of diversity networking practices have provided a better understanding of the role of diversity networks as collective agents in addressing, creating or (re)producing structures of inequality in organizations.

Engaging in diversity networking practices, diversity networks fulfill a twofold function in supporting their members and challenging the organization on diversity- and inequality-related issues. As collectives, they are able to create structures of support, solidarity and belongingness for individual network members as well as for network members as a group by diversity networking practices such as undoing otherness and building alternative structures. By means of organizing events members are supported in building and maintaining relations with each other (for example during informal drinks), in developing their skills and abilities to advance their careers, and in providing them with information about organizational processes related to diversity, equality and inequality. Network members can collectively reflect on current organizational practices and question certain tacit rules. By means of their collectivity, diversity networks gain voice and are heard by the organizational management. This allows them to appeal to managerial responsibility for diversity- and inequality-related issues and to influence managerial decisions on organizational policies.

Thus, my exploration of diversity networking practices showed that by using their diversity networks to make a contribution to organizational equality, network members can negotiate, contest, and shape organizational policies and processes. As such, the collective networking practices of diversity networks have three advantages over individual employees pursuing similar goals. First, organizational change towards more equality entails a long-drawn-out process which demands endurance and perseverance. As collectives, diversity networks are better equipped to stand their ground and persist in negotiating with and challenging of the organization. Second, a collective network is able to develop a 'collective memory'. Policies or agreements could be forgotten over time, omitted or simply lost during reorganizations. By means of their collective memory, diversity networks are able to remind organizations about these policies and whether they were beneficial or not. And third, diversity networks are able to create stories (Hemmings, 2011) of (individual) employees' lived experiences of organizational inequality and exclusion. Engaging in diversity networking practices allows network members to share their individual stories. Bundling these stories, diversity networks can make individual struggles collective. Moreover, this study showed that these stories are emotionally charged.

By observing how collective networking is actually done "in the heat of the moment" (Berger, 2015, p. 40), I shed light on the role of emotion in diversity networking practices (such as appealing to organizational responsibility and shaping organizational policies). The collective use of emotion supports network members in bringing their message across.

As collectives, diversity networks can expose and denounce structural inequalities and being grassroots initiatives they can have transformative potential (Benschop et al., 2015; Bettencourt et al., 1996). By engaging in diversity networking practices, diversity networks can contribute to "piecemeal change" (Scully & Segal, 2002, p. 126) in organizations, by supporting their members against the perceived lack of support within the organization, and by challenging the organization to address malpractices of discrimination and exclusion. Within diversity networks members can create a space wherein members can challenge organizational norms, processes of *othering* and exclusion, and hegemonic organizational discourses. Thinking strategically about how to address issues of organizational inequality with the organizational management, diversity networks can gain momentum for change. Providing support, calling upon management to take their responsibility and advocating policy changes, might not lead to radical changes, but can nonetheless lead to small wins (Benschop & Verloo, 2011; Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000), and "local, fragmented changes and opportunistic moments" (Scully & Segal, 2002, p. 161). This means that the "battle" of diversity networks for organizational equality is about inches, not about miles.

Balancing between feel-good diversity and diversity killjoy

The second contribution pertains to a more comprehensive insight in how diversity networks maneuver in a complex and power-laden organizational context. Despite the possibilities of diversity networks to stimulate organizational change, their diversity networking practices do not always live up to their (transformative) potential. My analysis revealed the sociopolitical processes that diversity networks collectively engage in when they network for equality and showed that engaging in diversity networking practices can also perpetuate the status quo. Diversity networking practices can (re)produce organizational and societal norms and discourses, contributing to organizational processes that maintain inequalities rather than challenging them.

Previous studies suggest that diversity networks as collectives are valuable in representing employee voice and to getting organizational equality on the managerial agenda (Bell et al., 2011; Scully & Segal, 2002). However, this study showed that although diversity networks are able to get the attention of management and create opportunities to discuss diversity- and inequality-related issues, presence and voice alone is not enough to stimulate equality. Networking for change is a complex, political endeavor (Nicolini, 2009; Scully & Segal, 2002) and entails problematizing dominant ways of thinking and organizing (Wahl & Holgersson, 2003). In a power-laden organizational context, this involves a meticulous balancing act (Colgan & McKearney, 2012) where diversity networks have to keep an attuned relationship to power to

lever resources and management support, but without coopting the goal of changing power relations (Scully & Segal, 2002). Diversity networks are often obliged to "adopt a strategic pose in the presence of the powerful" (Scott, 1990 as cited in Ybema & Horvers, 2017, p. 1237), because they are made responsible for diversity and equality in the workplace. On the one hand, this task is (subtly) imposed on them by the management. On the other hand, diversity networks take up this task themselves, as it provides them with legitimacy in the organization. My analysis showed that this has consequences for the balancing act that diversity networks have to perform. Being (made) responsible, diversity networks often police themselves and want to show their organizational value and positive contribution. In the short term, it would seem in their best interest to go along with organizational and managerial discourses that uphold a rhetoric of neoliberalism and happy diversity. However, in doing so, diversity networks evade thorny issues and highlight the sexiness and positive side of diversity. As such, diversity becomes a politics of feeling good (Ahmed, 2009). By emphasizing feel-good ways of diversity, discussions about organizational inequalities are eschewed, and, as a consequence, also the possibility to address and change them.

In contrast, I have also seen how diversity networks do address organizational processes that cause inequalities. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's concept of the *feminist killjoy*, I have termed diversity networks who (dare to) address organizational inequalities to be *diversity killjoys*, as they do not follow the happy diversity rhetoric (Ahmed, 2009; Hoobler, 2005; Prasad & Mills, 1997). Although it might seem strategically less appealing, being collective diversity killjoys, allows diversity networks to address structural barriers and the political struggle to change those barriers. Remarkably, it seems that diversity networks in Govt take up the role of diversity killjoys, while the diversity networks in Finance follow the happy diversity rhetoric. In Govt, diversity networks are initiated by employees with the drive to actually change the organization, displaying a willingness to address thorny issues such as discrimination and inequality. In Finance, diversity networks focus more on the importance of making a positive contribution to the organization and emphasizing the added value of their diversity networks. These organizational differences point towards an impact of organizational context on how diversity networks work. A more systematic comparative study in different organizational settings would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of organizational context on diversity management.

I conclude that using a practice lens to the study of diversity networks is a fruitful approach to identify the collective actions of diversity networks. I gained a deeper understanding of the various ways in which diversity networks advance (or hamper) equality in the workplace. Because they occur in a collective, engaging in diversity networking practices provide diversity networks with the possibilities to support network members as well as to challenge the organization and its management on diversity and inequality. Nevertheless, diversity networks also shy away from addressing inequalities and draw on a more palatable discourse of doing happy diversity (Ahmed, 2009; Hoobler, 2005; Prasad & Mills, 1997). Yet, doing happy

diversity obscures inequalities and thus the possibility to address and change them. As collective diversity killjoys, diversity networks seem to be more successful in challenging the organization and stimulating organizational change.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Discussion

The aim of my dissertation was to study how diversity networks contribute to equality in organizations in order to come to a better understanding of the functioning of diversity networks as diversity management instruments. To date, the implications of diversity networks for organizational equality – conceptualized as the systematic parities in power and control over goals, resources, behaviors, agendas, cultures and outcomes (Acker, 2006) – remain an understudied terrain. Diversity management in organizations is a complex, contextual, and power-laden endeavor (Ahmed & Swan, 2006; Bendl et al., 2015; Prasad & Mills, 1997). Developing a critical diversity perspective on diversity networks allowed me to specifically focus on power and inequalities and the underlying processes, practices, and discourses that maintain and reproduce these inequalities (Prasad & Mills, 1997; Zanoni et al., 2010). Drawing on critical diversity studies, I set out to answer the following main research question: *How do diversity networks contribute to equality in organizations?* Each chapter in this dissertation provides unique insights into answering this research question and sheds new light on previously underexplored areas of diversity networks as diversity management instruments. In this final chapter, I provide an answer to this research question and elaborate on the contributions of my study to the literature. I conclude with the contribution to practice and some final reflections on the limitations and directions for future research.

Answering the research question

Contradicting discourses of organizational equality

In Chapter 2, I explore the histories, goals, and activities of five different diversity networks: a women's network, an ethnic minority network, an LGBT network, a disability network and a young employee network. I focused on the de facto leaders of diversity networks, the diversity network board members. These board members are responsible for determining the course of action of their diversity networks, the goals set, and the actions and activities organized. In their capacity as network leaders, these board members legitimize the existence and functioning of their networks in the organization. To gain a better understanding of how diversity networks contribute to equality in organizations, I started by examining how diversity network leaders discursively construct the value of their networks against the backdrop of discourses on diversity and equality. To do so, I developed a theoretical framework of organizational equality and distinguished between networks' contributions on three main levels: network members individually, network members as a group, and the organization as a whole. This theoretical framework allowed me to analyze the discourses by which network board members legitimize the value of their diversity network in relation to multiple levels of organizational equality.

The first level of organizational equality distinguished is the individual level that pertains to the contribution of diversity networks to members' individual career development. My analysis shows that diversity network board members draw on discourses of individual career responsibility and professionalism by emphasizing the value of networks in providing their members with useful tools to advance their careers. The second level of equality is the group level wherein the contribution of diversity networks is the community building between employees with similar social identities. According to the network board members, diversity networks can provide their members with a safe space in which they can share experiences without having to conform to the majority culture. Community building is particularly valued by the board members of the ethnic minority network, the LGBT network, and the disability network because their members may be isolated in organizations dominated by white, heterosexual, and able-bodied colleagues. The third and final level of equality is the organizational level, which pertains to inclusion. Inclusive organizations provide all employees with a voice, a sense of belonging, and access to information; allow participation in decision making; value their competencies; and have them express multiple identities at work (Dobusch, 2014; Mor Barak, 2015; Roberson, 2006; Shore, Cleveland & Sanchez, 2018). For example, the board members of the disability network draw on a discourse of ability and possibilities and challenge restrictive work practices and the narrow notion of a career. In addition, the board members of the ethnic minority network, the LGBT network, and the disability network stress that it should be normal for their members to be hired and do their work, thereby highlighting the network's contribution to the inclusion of their social groups.

By capturing the board members' constructions of the value of their diversity networks on multiple levels of organizational equality, I was able to uncover the ambiguities and contradictions in the legitimating discourses. On the individual level, discourses of professionalism and individual choice prevailed. The emphasis on individual responsibility limits the contribution to equality as the gendered, classed, and racialized connotations of career remain unchallenged. On the group level, the board members fear isolation and stigma when they are perceived as exclusive communities for ethnic minority, LGBT, or disabled employees only. Opening up membership may imply a more legitimate position for these networks in the organization, but it also serves to counteract the safe space for marginalized employees. Thus, the contribution of the networks to group level equality is limited when conformation to the majority culture prevails over challenging the lower status of minority employees. Lastly, on the organizational level, only the board members of the disability network tended to discursively challenge organizational processes and practices. However, together with the board members of the ethnic minority network and the LGBT network, they too shied away from strongly emphasizing difference of their members. Diversity networks can only contribute to equality on the organizational level when they also address issues of difference, as well as organizational processes that sustain these differences.

My analysis showed that the legitimating discourses of diversity network board members simultaneously stimulate and counteract equality on different levels. However, board members tended to construct the value of their networks primarily in terms of individual career responsibility and community building to prevent their members' isolation. The organizational level of inclusion was largely overlooked by board members. The underplaying of the organizational level has profound implications for the value of diversity networks for organizational equality. When the organizational processes and practices that reproduce inequalities are not addressed, the contribution that diversity networks can possibly make to organizational equality will remain limited.

The dynamics of intersectionality in diversity networks: Revealing the complexity of multiple identity categories

In Chapter 3, I took an intersectionality perspective to study diversity networks. Analyzing diversity networks as exemplars of single category diversity management practices through an intersectionality lens, I developed a better understanding of how single category diversity networks sustain intersectional inequalities in organizations. Drawing on the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991), I used the concepts of structural intersectionality and political intersectionality to gain insight into how diversity networks and their members deal with multiple intersecting identities.

Structural intersectionality focuses on the individual experiences of people at the intersections of multiple identities. By means of structural intersectionality, I analyzed how individual diversity network members negotiate their multiple identities in relation to their membership of diversity networks. I distinguished three possible strategies: 1) complying with the single category structure of diversity networks; 2) problematizing the single category structure of diversity networks as an individual problem; and 3) challenging the single category structure of diversity networks. These strategies show how single identity categories are taken for granted and, consequently, how difficult it is to actually challenge the single category structure of diversity networks. Most network members complied with the categorical organization of diversity networks, and only a few network members vocalized the need for intersectional perspectives. Those members that did question the single category structure were network members with multiple subordinate identities; network members with single subordinate identities believed that issues relating to other subordinate identity categories belong to other networks. Moreover, network members with single subordinate identities tended to remain unaware of the privileges that coexist their other identities. Within diversity networks, privileged categories such as maleness, whiteness, heterosexuality, able-bodiedness are silenced and assumed as the self-evident norm. As such, the single category structure of diversity networks obscures the role of unmarked categories of privilege and reinforces the exclusionary effects of intersectional marginalization, that is, the marginalization of people with multiple subordinate identities relative to those with single subordinate identities

(Crenshaw, 1989). For example, due to the network's focus on one single identity, a disabled, lesbian woman felt like the odd one out by being the disabled in the LGBT network or the lesbian in the disability network. Likewise, reflecting underlying notions of white privilege, the focus of the women's network was on gender issues only, thereby prioritizing ethnic majority women and ignoring ethnic minority women within the network.

Thus, my analysis of structural intersectionality revealed the dynamics of structural intersectionality in diversity networks, showing how these single category networks are inextricably linked with processes of privilege and disadvantage. This is a dynamic that normalizes the idea of separate identity categories and facilitates the continuous avoidance of the complexity of intersectionality in diversity networks.

Political intersectionality addresses how social identity groups organize themselves between two or more political agendas or movements. The concept of political intersectionality allowed me to explore the political strategies of diversity networks in order to build coalitions for equality in organizations across single identity categories. By introducing the notion of political intersectionality, I showed how the diversity networks in my study were hindered by a politics of preserving privilege rather than interrogating it. These diversity networks willingly catered to the privileged majority members of their network, which hampered the actual collaboration and coalition building between diversity networks. Due to their focus on a narrow identity politics and the reversed Oppression Olympics, the diversity networks failed to address disadvantage and privilege. For instance, a collaboration between the LGBT network and the ethnic minority network was considered relevant for only those members with LGBT-ethnic minority identities. While heteronormativity was reduced to an issue of a small minority of network members rather than a matter of the organization at large, whiteness or white privilege was not even considered as a common theme. This showed that the privileged majority of the network sets the agenda according to their interests and, as a consequence, organizational processes of privilege, such as heteronormativity, are not questioned. Furthermore, partaking in a reversed Oppression Olympics, the diversity networks emphasized their added value to the organization and tended to deflect attention to any type of oppression, which is constructed as a complaint. Thus, my analysis of political intersectionality revealed how the need to make a positive contribution to the organization forecloses the possibility to actually challenge organizational inequality.

Studying diversity networks with an intersectionality lens shows that organizational inequalities cannot be dismantled separately because they entail multiple intersecting identities that mutually reinforce each other. The politics of preserving privilege in diversity networks obscures the intersection of different forms of inequality and leaves the inequalities along other axes of difference intact. This means that, as long as diversity networks remain focused on single categories, they cannot incorporate structural and political intersectionality and do not contribute successfully to equality in organizations.

Collective diversity networking practices: The key role of diversity killjoys

As presented in Chapter 4, I developed a practice-based perspective (Gherardi, 2009; Nicolini, 2009) to explore the networking practices that occur in diversity networks. I defined diversity networking practices as the collective sociopolitical actions of building, maintaining, and using relations in the workplace to advance organizational equality. Analyzing diversity networking practices, I was able to uncover the political processes of collective action that diversity networks engage in: what are diversity networks doing and how do they network to advance organizational equality. I identified and analyzed five diversity networking practices that were prevalent in the diversity networks in my research: undoing otherness, building alternative structures, organizing events, appealing to organizational responsibility, and shaping organizational policies.

Engaging in diversity networking practices, diversity networks fulfill a twofold function. First, diversity networks are able to create structures of support, solidarity, and belonging for network members. Within diversity networks, members can create a space to challenge organizational norms of work and workers and undo processes of *othering* and exclusion. Second, diversity network members can use their diversity networks to negotiate, contest, and shape organizational policies and processes. By means of their collectivity, diversity networks can gain voice and are able to address inequalities in their organization with the organizational management.

As collectives, diversity networks have the potential to reflect on implicit organizational practices and question certain tacit rules that sustain organizational inequalities. However, this does not necessarily mean that they exercise this potential. Although diversity networks are able to obtain the attention of management and create opportunities to discuss inequality-related issues, presence and voice alone are not enough to stimulate equality. Networking for change is a complex, political endeavor (Nicolini, 2009; Scully & Segal, 2002) that entails problematizing dominant ways of thinking and organizing (Wahl & Holgersson, 2003). My analysis showed that diversity networks shy away from addressing inequalities by drawing on more palatable discourses of *happy diversity* (Ahmed, 2009; Hoobler, 2005; Prasad & Mills, 1997). Omitting discussions about discrimination and exclusion in organizations and only emphasizing feel-good ways of diversity obscures the possibility of addressing and challenging organizational inequalities. By contrast, diversity networks that act as collective diversity killjoys – those that (dare to) address discrimination and exclusion and do not follow the happy diversity rhetoric – seem to be more successful in challenging the organization and, thus, contributing to equality in organizations.

Contributions to literature

In this dissertation, I built a more comprehensive understanding of diversity networks as diversity management instruments by taking a critical diversity perspective. As explicated in the introduction, organizational diversity management is inextricably linked to power processes and every day micropolitics and, therefore, is a complex endeavor that requires more than managerial commitment and good intentions (Ahmed & Swan, 2006; Prasad & Mills, 1997). Thus, when studying diversity and diversity management, it is crucial to take into account unequal power processes, marginalized organizational voices, and context-specific organizational practices. Yet, in the burgeoning field of diversity management research, many studies adopt a noncritical, instrumental view of diversity, representing it as too easily "doable" (Foldy, 2002; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Prasad & Mills, 1997, p. 11). The focus on "doable" and "palatable" diversity management leaves little room for analyzing the processes of power (Hoobler, 2005, p. 55; Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014). As a result, the way that diversity management practices maintain, normalize, and reinforce organizational inequalities are largely overlooked (Alvesson et al., 2009; Zanoni et al., 2010).

Drawing on various critical diversity perspectives, I provided a fine-grained analysis on how diversity networks, as exemplars of present-day diversity management practices, help or hinder equality in organizations. The insights from this analysis present important implications for the diversity management literature. By taking into account power processes and the underlying practices and discourses that maintain and reproduce organizational inequalities, I contributed to the diversity management literature in three ways. First, I reconceptualized the notion of organizational equality, allowing for multiple levels of equality and going beyond instrumental approaches and numerical outcomes. Second, I introduced an intersectionality perspective on single category diversity management practices. Theorizing the heterogeneity within single identity categories, I showed that organizational inequalities cannot be dismantled separately because they entail multiple intersecting identities that mutually reinforce each other. Third, I used a practice-based approach as a novel theoretical perspective to study how diversity networks work by exploring the collective networking practices that occur in diversity networks. Focusing on practices, I was able to shed light on the sociopolitical processes of networking for organizational equality. As such, a practice-based approach can provide an in-depth, processual understanding of how diversity management can either sustain or counteract inequality in organizations.

Reconceptualizing organizational equality

The first contribution to the diversity management literature pertains to the reconceptualization of organizational equality. The majority of the research on diversity management have typically concentrated on the effectiveness of different diversity practices such as mentoring and diversity training in terms of numerical outcomes. Diversity management practices are

seen as effective when they successfully increase the number of historically marginalized social groups in the higher organizational echelons (e.g., Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; Kalysh, Kulik & Perera, 2016; Tonidandel, Avery, & Phillips, 2007; Verbeek & Groeneveld, 2012). Despite their valuable insights in terms of effectiveness, this field of research presents a rather one-sided picture of equality in organizations. Although the emphasis on numbers in management ranks may be an effective strategy to change representation, more is needed to establish equality on a broader organizational level. This requires that organizational practices and discourses that maintain and reproduce inequalities are addressed (Prasad & Mills, 1997; De Vries & Van den Brink, 2016; Zanoni et al., 2010). The effectiveness of diversity management practices is also dependent on the organizational setting and its context-specific processes (Ahonen, Tienari, Meriläinen & Pullen, 2014; Benschop et al., 2015; Zanoni et al., 2010). This means that there is no one-size-fits-all approach, and different practices cannot be implemented in similar ways in different organizational contexts without critical reflection. Due to the narrow focus on the numerical representation of marginalized groups and the inattention to organizational context, the actual contribution of diversity management to organizational equality remains largely uncharted terrain (Benschop et al., 2015). To address these limitations, I developed an overarching theoretical framework for organizational equality, reconceptualizing organizational equality on multiple levels.

In this dissertation, I distinguished three levels of equality in organizations: the individual level, the group level, and the organizational level. In line with the majority of diversity management studies, I first conceptualized equality effects at the individual level, which pertains to the contribution of networks to individual career development. Second, equality effects at the group level were conceptualized as the contribution of networks to community building. Networks can bring their members together to reduce their isolation in majority groups: members can connect, share experiences, and build social support and cohesion between them (Colgan & McKearney, 2012; Friedman, 1996, 1999). Third, equality at the organization level was conceptualized as a contribution of networks to inclusion, that is, the full participation of all employees in all formal and informal organization processes (Dobusch, 2014; Mor Barak, 2015; Roberson, 2006; Shore, Cleveland & Sanchez, 2018).

Based on my study of diversity networks, I further elaborated on the three-level framework by showing on which level(s) diversity networks address organizational inequalities. For example, my analysis of the legitimating discourses of diversity network board members (Chapter 2) illustrated that the board members primarily focus on the individual and group levels of equality. In addition, how organizational inequalities were addressed during the events organized by diversity networks (Chapter 4) varied considerably. Most events were geared toward either socializing (e.g., drinks) or workshops that empower and support members individually in their career development. Although some discourses on the organizational level (i.e., discourses of ability and possibilities) questioned restrictive organizational practices, as well as some events that challenged implicit organizational norms, the predominant focus

remained on the individual and group levels of equality. While some diversity networks were successful in challenging the organizational management on inequality-related issues, other networks shied away from these killjoy topics and instead talked about "sexy" and "feel-good" diversity.

The insufficient attention to organizational processes that influence the preservation and perpetuation of organizational inequalities hampers diversity management practices such as diversity networks in their contribution to organizational equality. My framework encourages a critical analysis that distinguishes between multiple levels of organizational equality and, thus, transcends the focus on the numerical representation of marginalized employees. Moreover, this framework allows for a multilevel analysis that sheds light on how diversity management practices can simultaneously produce and counteract organizational equality. As such, it offers a novel and more sophisticated framework for better theoretical insights into whether and how diversity management contributes to equality in organizations.

Demarginalizing intersectionality in diversity management

My second contribution pertains to the introduction of an intersectionality perspective to theorize diversity management practices. People always have multiple identities that intersect in various ways through time and space. As Audre Lorde (1984) so eloquently pointed out, "there is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives" (p. 138). Although critical diversity studies have called attention to the theoretical concept of intersectionality (Acker, 2006; Holvino, 2010; Rodriguez et al., 2016; Zanoni et al., 2010), few of these insights have found their way into research on diversity management in organizations. It takes an intersectionality perspective to highlight how most diversity management practices focus on single identity categories of disadvantaged social groups, such as women, ethnic minorities, LGBTs, disabled employees, and are also studied as such. The predominant focus on single identity categories contains an inaccurate assumption that these categories of difference consist of homogeneous groups (Holvino, 2010; Zanoni et al., 2010). I contributed to the literature by showing how the notion of intersectionality can uncover intersectional inequalities in single category diversity management practices. Theorizing how inequalities and their intersections are relevant to organizational policies, especially the concept of political intersectionality, is most promising for research on diversity management in organizations. In the following text, I elaborate on the implications of structural intersectionality and political intersectionality.

My analysis of structural intersectionality revealed the normalization of single identity categories: individuals with single subordinate identities (e.g., white, heterosexual, able-bodied women) are favored at the expense of individuals with multiple subordinate identities (e.g., black, lesbian, disabled women). As a consequence, the single category structure of diversity management practices can reinforce the exclusion of individuals with multiple subordinate

identities (intersectional marginalization). This shows that diversity networking practices are inextricably linked to processes of both disadvantage and privilege. Thus far, the single category structure of diversity management practices has informed research that only examines the impact on disadvantaged identity groups. The predominant focus on disadvantage and oppression leaves the role of privilege underexposed and unmarked (McIntosh, 2012; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012; Verloo, 2009). As such, the notion of structural intersectionality is a useful concept when analyzing single category diversity management practices as it can reveal subordination and hitherto silenced privileges.

While intersectionality scholars have applied the concept of political intersectionality to examine the policies and political strategies of disadvantaged groups and social movements (Carastathis, 2013; Cole, 2008; Crenshaw, 1991; Verloo, 2006), this dimension of intersectionality is largely overlooked in management and organization studies (Rodriguez et al., 2016), as well as in policy analysis (Hankivsky & Cormier, 2011; Verloo, 2006). Considering that diversity management is a political endeavor, political strategies of disadvantaged groups are most relevant here. As Verloo (2006) recognized, political strategies on one axis of inequality are almost never neutral toward other axes. My analysis of political intersectionality in single category diversity networks corroborated Verloo's argument. Highlighting a political competition between diversity networks, my analysis revealed how a politics of preserving privilege can leave organizational inequalities intact. As such, the concept of political intersectionality is most promising for diversity management research because it can shed light on the ways that "the interests of social identity groups defined by multiple axes of subordination may be overlooked by organizations that frame their agendas based on the experience of those who, but for one type of disadvantage, are otherwise privileged" (Cole, 2008, p. 450). Theorizing political intersectionality, I showed how the single category focus of diversity management practices, such as diversity networks, obscures the intersection of different forms of inequality and inadvertently contributes to the perpetuation of inequality in organizations.

Overall, very little attention is paid to both structural and political intersectionalities in research on diversity management practices such as diversity networks. As argued before, organizational inequalities cannot be dismantled separately because they entail multiple intersecting identities that mutually reinforce each other. By disregarding intersectionality in research on diversity management, scholars have overlooked, how single identity categories are preserved, how privileged categories remain unmarked and how organizational inequalities are maintained. Applying an intersectionality lens to study diversity networks as exemplars of current single category diversity management practices, I contributed to the literature by showing how such practices that set out to foster diversity can actually sustain intersectional inequalities in organizations. Calling attention to the complex reality of multiple differences and inequalities, an intersectionality perspective supports a fine-grained analysis of the dynamic processes of privilege and disadvantage in organizations.

Rethinking diversity management through a practice-based approach

My third contribution concerns the use of a practice-based approach as a novel perspective to study diversity management. Central to a practice-based approach is the orientation toward practices, that is, what people actually say and do in action and in interaction (Nicolini, 2009; Yanow, 2006). By engaging in practices, people can either reproduce or challenge organizational matters (Nicolini, 2009, 2012). The idea that a diversity management practice consists of a set of real-time sayings and doings provides a processual understanding of diversity management. Instead of focusing on "the substance of a [diversity management] practice", attention shifts to how these practices are accomplished, analyzing it as a way of networking, a way of training, a way of mentoring (Janssens & Steyaert, 2019, p. 530). Moreover, studying practices helps to uncover the unreflexive and taken-for-granted patterns of activities that reproduce, shape, or change organizational matters (Nicolini, 2012; Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina & Von Savigny, 2001), such as equality and inequality. As such, a practice perspective offers a novel approach to diversity management research (cf. Janssens & Steyaert, 2019). With my dissertation, I contributed to the diversity management literature by taking practices as the unit of analysis and showed what diversity networks actually do to make a contribution to organizational equality.

My exploration of diversity networking practices sheds light on the sociopolitical processes that diversity networks, as networks, collectively engage in when they (net)work for equality. As a collective network, network members can negotiate, contest, and shape organizational policies and processes. By engaging in practices such as appealing to organizational responsibility and shaping organizational policies, diversity networks are able to challenge the organization on inequality-related issues. Diversity networks are able to fulfill the role of a sparring partner for management and offer advice on diversity- and equality-related issues, such as work-life arrangements or partner benefits (Githens, 2009; Gremmen & Benschop, 2013). As such, diversity networks have the potential to put diversity and equality issues on the agendas of both HR and the organizational management.

In this dissertation, I showed how the task of working for equality under the umbrella of management is complicated and prone to tensions. Embedded in organizations, diversity networks must maneuver between their own objectives in striving for organizational equality and the goals of the organizations' management (Briscoe & Safford, 2011; Foldy, 2002; Scully & Segal, 2002). Working, and, moreover, networking for equality in organizations is complex due to the closeness of the power that is contested (Scully & Segal, 2002), and equality goals may be harnessed to the goals of the organization (Foldy, 2002). This makes networking for equality with the organizational management more difficult than networking within the confined space of the network, such as undoing otherness. In a power-laden organizational context, this involves a meticulous balancing act (Colgan & McKearney, 2012, p. 362) wherein diversity networks must keep an attuned relationship to management to lever financial resources and support (Scully & Segal, 2002) but without losing the possibility to contribute to organizational equality. Adopting a practice lens allowed me to reveal exactly how diversity networks perform

this balancing act, as well as when their networking practices are helpful and when they are counterproductive. For instance, practices related to feel-good diversity possibly hinder practices related to equality goals. The deliberate choice of diversity networks to emphasize a positive contribution to the organization allows little room for critically questioning organizational practices that produce inequalities. On the other hand, I also highlighted how diversity networks can strategically use their added value to the organization in order to gain legitimacy. Thus, diversity networks can "adopt a strategic pose in the presence of the powerful" (Scott, 1990 as cited in Ybema & Horvers, 2017, p. 1237) and employ their legitimate position to address discrimination and inequality with organizational management.

By means of a practice-based approach toward diversity networks, I was able to shed light on the processes of networking for equality. As a collective, diversity networks have the potential to contribute to organizational equality. However, it is important to grasp how they are doing this because their networking practices can either normalize or dismantle the status quo. Networking practices are never neutral activities and have an impact on power and privilege as they can serve certain interests at the expense of others (Janssens & Steyaert, 2019; Nicolini, 2012). Reconceptualizing diversity management practices as real-time sayings and doings, a practice-based approach can reveal how diversity management practices interact with or are reinforced by other organizational practices, such as decision-making practices, strategy making practices, or leadership practices with either beneficial or detrimental effects for organizational equality (Janssens & Steyaert, 2019). Thus, the emphasis on practices allows for theorizing the dynamics between diversity, equality, inequality, and practicing (Janssens & Steyaert, 2019). As such, it holds the promise of providing a more comprehensive understanding of how diversity management practices that set out to counteract inequalities in organizations end up sustaining these inequalities.

Contributions to practice

This dissertation shows that diversity management is a complex Herculean task that entails much more than managerial enthusiasm and good intentions (Prasad & Mills, 1997). Currently, many organizations tend to see diversity management as an add-on job that requires no additional skills or knowledge other than some affinity with the topic of diversity. Thus, in practice, diversity and its management is too easily seen as "doable" (Prasad & Mills, 1997, p. 11) and quite straightforward to fix. Doable diversity management is also reflected in step-based self-help guides to set up diversity networks in organizations (e.g., Catalyst, 1999; Stonewall, 2005). Diversity networks fit well with the idea of doable diversity management because they are led by employees and are relatively easy for organizations to implement (Benschop et al., 2015). Although these employees are passionate volunteers with much enthusiasm and good intentions, they remain volunteers doing diversity work outside of their regular

jobs. As collective bottom-up initiatives organized by employees of historically marginalized groups, diversity networks have the potential to provide these groups with a voice about their experiences of exclusion, inequality, and discrimination in their organization, as well as influence the managerial agenda on these issues. However, despite their passion and commitment, as volunteers, these members often lack the political knowledge of persistent (re)production of organizational inequalities.

Contributing to a complex phenomenon as organizational equality necessitates not only perseverance and effort but also some understanding about the role of power and strategic expertise to deal with these power relations. As such, outsourcing diversity management to diversity networks becomes a risky endeavor, because these networks might not be properly equipped to execute such a complex and power-laden task. In addition, the responsibility of diversity and organizational equality is placed on historically marginalized social groups themselves. Diversity networks that *embody diversity* can be under pressure not to address organizational inequality (Ahmed, 2009) and tend to adopt the rhetoric of sexy, feel-good diversity during meetings with organizational management. This dissertation showed that if network members are not aware of the role of power, privilege, intersectionality, or other inequality-related processes, they could contribute to the maintenance and reproduction of inequality rather than changing it. This holds true for not only network members but also (HR) managers or diversity officers. In recent research, Romani, Holck and Risberg (2018) showed that, despite their good intentions, HR professionals in a Swedish pharmaceutical company who were in charge of the implementation of diversity management practices contributed to the reproduction of discrimination when they had no further knowledge about power processes and societal, taken-for-granted norms that marginalize particular social groups.

In the light of the political nature of diversity management, it is essential that practitioners gain an understanding of organizational processes of power and privilege. A (re)design and implementation of diversity management practices that build on reflective and critical perspectives are needed. This necessitates collaboration between diversity scholars and practitioners (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2018). A close examination and awareness of multiple levels of organizational equality, acknowledging intersectionality and simultaneous processes of disadvantage and privilege, helps to better assess how diversity management practices impact inequalities in organizations. In the next section, I further explicate the implications of my study for practice.

The Herculean task of diversity networks

> *"...you also have to change your environment. And there are these crusades... Look, you cannot do it alone. And with a diversity network... and that is maybe the strongest feature of a network, you cannot do it alone. You also need your environment. And people who are not a member of the network, you need them too."*
>
> (chair ethnic minority network Finance)

This quote pinpoints four important implications of my study for practice: working for equality as a Herculean task (or a crusade), attention needed on organizational practices (and changing the organizational environment), the power of being organized as a bottom-up collective, and the acknowledgment that other organizational stakeholders must be involved in order to work successfully toward organizational equality.

Crusades and organizational processes

First of all, diversity networks, policy makers, and diversity practitioners should abandon the idea that diversity management is an easy task that is only geared toward numerical representation in management ranks. Diversity management requires more than hoisting rainbow flags on company buildings and *diversity-clubs* organizing *guerilla-gardening* workshops. In order to truly come to more equal and inclusive organizations, organizational practices and taken-for-granted norms have to be addressed.

The first step in this process is to foster the knowledge and awareness of the role of power in organizations. Sharing insights from the state-of-the-art research could be a starting point. For example, in a course on gender in organizations, I gave a lecture about informal organizational processes that contribute to inequality in organizations. I highlighted the role of humor and how seemingly innocent jokes can be detrimental for equality and serve to perpetuate the status quo. A member of the LGBT network was present as guest speaker and complemented the theoretical perspective with a personal story about how homophobic jokes at work kept him in the closet for many years. This combination of theoretical knowledge with the lived experiences of employees can make clear how organizational practices possibly sustain inequality and exclusion. In addition, the network member also noted how the lecture made him realize that in his own organization, the diversity officer was not appointed because of his comprehensive knowledge about the topic of diversity. He reckoned that a presentation about these inequality-producing organizational processes would be useful to open up discussion with several organizational stakeholders (e.g., diversity officers, managers) about more effective diversity management.

In this lecture, I also used my three-level framework to emphasize that organizational equality is more than individual career advancement alone. As such, my three-level framework can be used as an assessment tool for practitioners, policy makers and diversity networks to address multiple levels of organizational equality. The framework would enable practitioners and policy makers to make more informed choices in their design and implementation of diversity management. Moreover, it would allow practitioners to explicitly interrogate the current diversity management practices. For instance, do diversity trainings in the organization focus on "fixing" individuals or do they also address the implicit and taken-for-granted organizational norms? In a similar way, diversity networks can use the framework to assess on which level they can possibly contribute to organizational equality. For example, how do the events they intend to organize address organizational practices of inclusion?

Collective bottom-up initiatives

Diversity networks are potentially well-positioned to contribute to organizational equality. Located within organizations, diversity networks are acquainted with the organizational context and diversity discourses, which provides them with contextual knowledge about organizational practices that contribute to organizational inequality. As bottom-up initiatives, diversity networks can gain the support of employees, whereas top-down initiatives may be prone to resistance (Bleijenbergh, 2018; Lombardo & Mergaert, 2013; Van den Brink & Benschop, 2018). Attention to marginalized organizational voices is considered to be a key issue in diversity management and organizational equality (Bell et al., 2011; Benschop & Verloo, 2011; Prasad & Mills, 1997). Representing marginalized organizational voices, diversity networks are a valuable instrument for collecting stories (Hemmings, 2011; Scully & Segal, 2002) of discrimination and exclusion and using these stories as concrete examples to challenge the organization. This would provide "nuanced and nimble ways to mobilize resources and to pick battles" (Scully & Segal, 2002, p. 162). In my study, I have seen diversity networks using these stories to impact the managerial agenda-setting and HR policy-making. My research has shown that thinking and acting strategically about "picking battles" is important as it influences how diversity and inequality are picked up by the management. By properly addressing issues of organizational inequality with the management, as well as during events, diversity networks potentially gain momentum for change. For example, *copping out* becomes more difficult to do if network members make their experiences of discrimination as explicit as possible in meetings with organizational (HR) management.

Shared responsibility

Although diversity networks can represent marginalized organizational voices, challenge the organization, and address and advise on inequality-related issues, they cannot be solely responsible for the solution. To be able to fulfill their potential, diversity networks need the support of the organizational (HR) management. An important reason for this is a practical one: by means of support from the organizational (HR) management, diversity networks are able to negotiate resources such as funds or time to conduct diversity work outside of their regular jobs. Networks can be creative in arranging their own resources or organizing activities on a small budget, but without managerial commitment, their accomplishments remain limited. In my research, I saw two examples of diversity networks who implement changes to make their daily work practices more efficient, and afterwards management is asked for permission. In the one instance, the organization agreed; in the other instance, the organization reversed the implementation because it was organized without permission. As I saw in Govt, some organizations can be stuck in their protocols without a willingness to change. In these organizational contexts, the role of diversity networks becomes even more difficult, and political skills are even more important.

Hercules and the Hydra

Diversity networks can provide historically marginalized employees with voice and a safe space, collect and tell their stories of exclusion, and address diversity- and inequality-related issues with the organizational management. However, as single category diversity management practices, these networks have no attention for intersectionality. In this dissertation, I showed how the focus of diversity management practices on disadvantage and single categories has failed to capture that the role of privilege is equally important in maintaining and reproducing inequalities in organizations. Diversity is not a single category issue nor is it only about disadvantage. As Grillo (1995) pointed out, "in every set of [identity] categories there is not only subordination, but also its counterpart, privilege" (p. 18). She further describes this interrelationship as a "double-headed hydra": disadvantage cannot be dismantled without also eliminating privilege (Grillo, 1995, p. 18-19). Thus, the implications of intersectionality for practice are twofold. First, diversity networks, policy makers, and diversity practitioners need to be aware of multiple identities within diversity categories. Second, and relatedly, a refocus on privilege is needed. Scholars agree that attention to intersectionality is needed to challenge inequality, but they also acknowledge that translating intersectionality research into concrete interventions is mostly problematic and uncharted terrain (Rodriguez et al., 2016). Based on my dissertation, I present a few preliminary suggestions.

My first suggestion is that diversity networks need to reflect on the heterogeneity within their networks. This entails being aware of the multiple identities of members and how these identities intersect with disadvantage and privilege. Grillo (1995) noted that it is important to listen to the lived experiences of those who are less privileged. Diversity networks can facilitate such discussions by providing space or organizing events for intersectional marginalized groups within the networks. For example, I saw how LGBT women wanted to create visibility for LGBT women within their LGBT networks. They took part in so-called *BLT lunches* that were specifically organized for women within LGBT networks, without the G representing gay men who are privileged based on their male identities. During these lunches, women discussed their underrepresentation in LGBT networks, as well as the lack of focus and understanding on bisexuality and transgender issues. As such, diversity networks can open up discussions about intersectionality, intersectional marginalization, and privilege.

My second suggestion is based on political intersectionality. The literature on political intersectionality in social movements has illustrated how several social groups were able to organize themselves around shared issues of oppression and inequality and to successfully address these issues. Although my research has shown that collaboration between different diversity networks is fraught with problems, diversity networks do acknowledge their potential to form coalitions in their struggles for equality. The difficulties that diversity networks encounter in working together also show how collaboration is a Herculean task that requires effort and perseverance. Holvino (2012), for instance, reported about a working meeting of her own women-of-color diversity network in which they first explored their ethnic and class

differences in order to succeed as a network. When members recognized and accepted their differences, they were able to work for a common goal. This example, as well as examples from social movements (see for instance Cole, 2008; Verloo, 2009), presents a promising prospect that diversity networks can work together in order to further organizational equality. A coalition of diversity networks can make a stronger plea to organizations to address organizational norms that uphold the notion of the *ideal worker*, which is often the white, able-bodied, heterosexual man (Acker, 2006; Kirton & Greene, 2000). By challenging the white, able-bodied, heterosexual male models of employment and career success that implicitly serve as the norm for all employees (Benschop, 2011; Hoobler, 2005), networks can collectively call for a broadening of the organizational norm. Collective attempts to contest organizational norms and practices are hitherto rare (Scully & Segal, 2002), and diversity networks are well-positioned to take up this task.

As political intersectionality is relevant to organizational policies, a third and final suggestion is offered here for policy makers and diversity officers in particular but may also be helpful for diversity networks. Drawing on the work of Mari Matsuda (1991), the method of *Ask the other question* may be useful. *Ask the other question* entails a way to understand the intersections between multiple forms of disadvantage (Matsuda, 1991). Matsuda proposed asking "where is the patriarchy?" when something looks racist or "where is the heterosexism?" when something looks sexist (p. 1189). Translating this to organizational diversity management policies, policy makers and diversity officers can ask questions such as how do diversity management practices geared toward gender equality marginalize ethnic minority women? How do diversity management practices geared toward LGBT inclusion marginalize LGBT women? (cf. Verloo, 2006). Likewise, with regard to diversity networks, members could ask themselves: how does a women's network marginalize ethnic minority, LGBT, or disabled women?.

The implications of intersectionality and privilege require new ways of practicing diversity management. Although addressing intersectionality and privilege will not be an easy task, starting these conversations is indispensable for advancing awareness of intersectionality, intersectional marginalization, and the implications for equality and social justice (Atewologun & Sealy, 2014). The design and implementation of diversity management practices that account for these complexities will be a "long-term thorny endeavor" (Benschop et al., 2015, p. 569; Rodriguez et al., 2016). However, diversity management needs to build on reflective and critical perspectives with attention to intersectionality and privilege in order to be effective in fostering organizational equality.

Reflections on limitations and future research avenues

In this section, I offer some final reflections on the research process and my own role as a researcher. I conclude with some promising avenues for future research.

In this dissertation, I set out to build a more comprehensive understanding of how diversity networks are actually functioning as a diversity management instrument. Thus, rather than explain the effectiveness of diversity networks, the aim of this study was to provide an in-depth exploration of different diversity networks and to better understand how these networks can contribute to equality in organizations. Because critical diversity perspectives on diversity networks are particularly rare, the central research question of this dissertation has previously not been adequately addressed. Therefore, I conducted a multiple case study that not only supported a broad exploration of diversity networks but also allowed for a fine-grained analysis of these networks within their real-life, organizational context (cf. Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2009). Although a case study may limit generalizability in the statistical sense, it does allow emergent theorization by recognizing patterns among cases (Bleijenbergh, 2013; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Rather than broad generalizations, my research yielded in-depth theoretical insights about how diversity networks address power, inequality, intersectionality, and privilege. As such, the cases were used to shed new light on diversity networks and make important theoretical contributions to the literature on diversity management.

To study diversity networks and their contribution to organizational equality, I have adopted a critical diversity perspective. As a critical diversity scholar, I take a particular position and epistemological stance, which has implications for the way I see the world. In line with the larger stream of critical management studies, critical diversity studies "offer a range of alternatives to mainstream [diversity] management theory with a view to radically transforming management practice" (Adler, Forbes, & Willmott, 2007, p. 119). Critical scholars share a "deep skepticism regarding the moral defensibility and the social and ecological sustainability of the prevailing forms of management and organization" (Adler et al., 2007, p. 119). Thus, their aim is to show how problematic organizational norms and practices serve to sustain and perpetuate organizational phenomena, such as organizational inequality (Adler et al., 2007). However, being skeptical about organizational diversity management and diversity networks and showing how organizational inequality is sustained by organizational practices seems easier than actually identifying how practices *can* contribute to equality instead.

So, ironically, despite the intentions of critical scholars to change the status quo, a critical view also hampers a contribution to change due to a tendency to see how organizational practices "merely, though accidentally, reproduce the very inequalities they were trying to contest" (Scully & Segal, 2002, p. 161). This tendency has been called "metaphysical pathos" (Gouldner, 1995 as cited in Scully & Segal, 2002, p. 161). Taking a critical diversity perspective to study diversity networks, I experienced this tendency toward metaphysical pathos myself. Inspired by the work of Audre Lorde, I pondered about her idea that "the master's tools will never dismantle the

master's house" (Lorde, 1984, p. 110). Diversity networks could be regarded as a *master's tool*, and this made me question whether they could ever be effective in *dismantling the master's house*. Observing how diversity networks draw on palatable, feel-good ways of diversity management, as well as neoliberal discourses of individual responsibility and choice, made it difficult to see the potential of these networks. I strived to overcome metaphysical pathos by looking for instances where diversity networks do not avoid addressing and discussing their experiences of discrimination and exclusion. Literature on collective activism in organizations (e.g., Meyerson & Scully (2005) on *tempered radicals* and Scully & Segal (2002) on *passion with an umbrella*) has helped me to develop such a lens. I noticed that especially in Govt, diversity networks ventilated their discontent with the organizational culture that was perceived as hostile toward, for example, LGBT or chronically ill employees. Network members were driven by an intrinsic motivation for social justice to really change their organization. Furthermore, I also saw the importance of diversity networks for network members. This importance is probably most clearly illustrated by the example of undoing otherness in Chapter 4, which speaks to the importance of sharing unpleasant experiences to shift them from individual experiences to collective ones. In addition, I frequently consulted with my supervisors about my empirical findings, and they would challenge me on my metaphysical pathos, stimulating me to consider possible alternatives.

Being involved with different diversity networks for two years has influenced my role as a researcher. Especially in diversity networks that had regular board meetings, which I could easily attend as they took place on set dates and times, members became familiar with my presence and even considered me part of the network, remarking "we would miss you when you are not there", or "you now belong to the network too". Network members greeted me as they would greet other network members. This involvement established trust and somehow indicated that my presence did not affect their meetings in the sense that they were politically correct or did not discuss particular issues. My close involvement with these networks made it more difficult for me to articulate critique, such as when they used more palatable, neoliberal, feel-good approaches to organizational diversity. However, I have also witnessed emotional encounters during observations and heard emotional stories during interviews about discrimination and exclusion. The injustice behind these stories affected me emotionally. For example, during an interview with an LGBT network member, I was asked if I ever think about walking hand in hand with my partner. Being in a heterosexual relationship, I do not, but the respondent told me emotionally that as a gay man, he did. Not only did this story affect me personally, but it also made me realize my own heterosexual privilege. This helped me to continuously reflect on my own identity, as well as the role of my identity in the relationships with my respondents (cf. Essers, 2009).

A final point of reflection regarding the comparative aspect of my research. In the current literature on diversity networks, studies have primarily focused on one particular type of diversity networks, that is, women's networks, ethnic minority networks, or LGBT networks. To date, studies on other diversity networks, such as those related to age, religion, or disability,

and comparative analysis between diversity networks is, to my current knowledge, largely absent. The initial idea of this dissertation was to provide an in-depth exploration of various diversity networks in order to allow for a comparison and an analysis of possible differences between different networks. As Foldy (2002) noted, "power and identity are profoundly intertwined in all organizations, (...) this interconnection operates differently depending on organizational context" (p. 93). So, collecting data in two different organizations provided the possibility of considering different organizational contexts, as well as the organizational processes and practices, that could impact diversity networks and their contribution to organizational equality. Although differences exist between diversity networks in their history, goals, activities, support, and financial resources, I did not execute a systematic comparison of different diversity networks nor a comparison of different organizational contexts. However, studying diversity networks in different organizational contexts, I did notice differences between these contexts and how diversity networks maneuver. For example, within Finance, all diversity networks were incorporated in diversity and inclusion policies of the organization and, as a consequence, were supported by the organization in terms of financial resources. In Govt, diversity networks seemed to have more attention on organizational practices that lead to an organizational culture that is exclusive toward historically marginalized social groups, such as LGBT and chronically ill employees. These preliminary ideas indicate that future research should focus on a more systematic comparison. For example, this comparison could focus on organizations in different sectors, such as Govt and Finance, or organizations with different organizing methods for diversity networks, such as those organized from the top down and those that are strictly grassroots.

In addition to a more systematic comparative analysis of diversity networks, my dissertation provides several other promising avenues for future research. First of all, research on diversity networks could be broadened by including networks other than women's networks, ethnic minority networks, and LGBT networks. Many different types of diversity networks exist, such as networks related to religion, age, and disability, but research hitherto has focused primarily on these three network types. In addition, in contrast to a network for all ethnic minorities (as in Finance), different diversity networks exist for various ethnic groups. For example, at Govt, different diversity networks were initiated for employees with a Moroccan background, Turkish background, Suriname background, Antillean background, and Moluccan background; in addition, employees with an Indian background have expressed their ambition for their own network. In the light of a comparative study, it would be fascinating to explore the differences between these networks and the consequences of this fragmentation for the organization.

Secondly, future research on diversity management in general could examine how other diversity management practices contribute to multiple levels of equality. In this dissertation, I developed a three-level framework to analyze the contribution of diversity networks to organizational equality. However, organizations implement other diversity management practices, such as diversity training, mentoring, and task forces. Similar to research on diversity

networks, research on other diversity management practices has a predominant focus on the individual level: how do diversity training, mentoring, and task forces advance the career development of historically marginalized social groups (e.g., Kalysh et al., 2016; Ragins, Cotton & Miller, 2000; Verbeek & Groeneveld, 2012). Accounting for the group and organizational levels would contribute to better insights about whether and how these practices contribute to organizational equality.

Third, it is important to continue research on the (re)design and implementation of diversity management practices that allow for both privilege and multiple intersecting categories. The complexity of multiple categories, inequalities, and their intersections require ongoing reflection processes. Despite the preliminary suggestions, putting intersectionality into practice remains a true challenge for diversity scholars (Benschop et al., 2015; Rodriguez et al., 2016; Verloo, 2006). In particular, addressing privilege will not be an easy task, but starting these conversations is indispensable to advance awareness of intersectionality, intersectional marginalization, and the implications for equality and social justice (Atewologun & Sealy, 2014). In Chapter 3, I suggest that the concept of *privilege work* may be helpful (Scully et al., 2017). Privilege work entails an ongoing reflection on one's privileged status, as well as the relationship to the underprivileged (Scully et al., 2017). Such reflections may raise the awareness of privilege, the acceptance of being privileged, and, moreover, the process of owning up to privilege (Scully et al., 2017). Yet, how privilege work could be implemented in organizational diversity management needs further exploration.

Lastly, the theoretical conception of practices opens up various new avenues for future research (Janssens & Steyaert, 2019). A practice perspective has shown that the social world consists of a nexus, or bundle, of practices: a practice never stands alone and is always related to other practices (Nicolini, 2012; Schatzki, 1996; Yanow, 2006). The focus on standalone diversity management practices overlooks that these practices are implemented in a dynamic organizational environment, possibly with other diversity management practices (training, mentoring, and diversity networks), as well as management practices such as decision making practices, strategy making practices and leadership practices (Janssens & Steyaert, 2019). These organizational practices can be both equality-reinforcing practices and inequality-reinforcing practices. For example, managers displaying happy diversity could be seen as an inequality-reinforcing practice that influences diversity management practices. To date, little is known about these *bundles of practices* and how a specific diversity management practice is connected with other inequality-(re)producing practices (Dobusch, 2014; Holck, 2016; Janssens & Steyaert, 2019). More insight is needed into how different organizational practices mutually reinforce or counteract each other (Van den Brink, 2017). A practice-based approach is a promising new theoretical lens to explore the complexity of diversity and its management in organizations.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Overview respondents Chapter 2

Network	*Interviewees (30)*		*Gender*	*Function within network*
Women (7)	1	Kate	f	board member
	2	Gina	f	former chair
	3	Betty	f	chair
	4	Edith	f	former chair
	5	Sonya	f	board member
	6	Diana	f	board member
	7	Ellen	f	former board member
Ethnic minority (6)	8	Hassan	m	former chair
	9	Marvin	m	board member
	10	Glenn	m	chair
	11	Colin	m	initiator/former chair
	12	Cary	f	board member
	13	Carol	f	initiator
LGBT (7)	14	Anna	f	board member
	15	Peter	m	chair
	16	Amy	f	initiator
	17	Martin	m	initiator
	18	Evan	m	board member
	19	Olivia	f	board member
	20	Rachel	f	member
Disability (5)	21	Tim	m	board member
	22	Sarah	f	chair
	23	Simon	m	board member
	24	Alice	f	former member
	25	Andrea	f	board member
Young (5)	26	Jenny	f	chair
	27	Michael	m	board member
	28	Vincent	m	initiator
	29	Helen	f	initiator
	30	Emily	f	board member

Appendix 2
Interview guide

Introduction

- Could you shortly introduce yourself? (name, function, tenure)
- How did you get involved in the network?
- Why do you participate, what are your goals?
- How much time and effort do you put into the network?
- What is your role and input in the network?
- Why is this network needed?

Network membership, structure and goals

- How is the network organized?
- How many members does the network have?
- How is membership organized?
- Why was the network initiated?
- How was the network initiated? (when?)
- How did the network developed further?
- What are the goals of the network?
- How is the network proceeding so far? Are goals reached, is it going according to expectation?

Activities and collaboration with other networks

- What does the network do?
- Which activities are being organized?
  - When, how often, how, where, with what purpose, and for whom?
- Do you have financial resources available for the network?
- Do you have contact with other diversity networks within the organization?
- Do you work together with other diversity networks?
  - When, how often, about what, with what purpose, and how?

Organizational support and embeddedness

- How is the network (financially) supported within the organization?
- Do you have contact with this person, about the network or otherwise?
  - When, how often, about what, with what purpose, and how?
- What is the role of the network in the organization?
- Do the goals of the network match the goals of the organization?
- How do other employees/managers see the network in the organization?
- How do you see the future of the network?

Appendix 3

Illustrative data of discourses by diversity network board members

Discourse	*Illustrative quotes*
Discourse of individual career responsibility	*We always clearly communicated that we would not engage in those sort of things [chocolate tastings, styling tips, clothing-, color therapy]. We have always deliberately said: 'we are not focusing on that'. We really focus on workshops, to create a network, more the professional.. aiming at work. (Gina)*
	Well, [the women's network] is actually a network for women in salary scale 8 to 11 [middle management positions]. For ambitious women, there is no age limit, but just to stimulate [career] advancement. I want to help stimulating that advancement. So actually, that is predominantly what we do: helping women, advising. I regularly talk to women who, well, issues they encounter, but especially how I can help them further, what they can do themselves. (Betty)
	I want to make sure that the ownership of the issue, of why so few women advance, that that [ownership] comes to lie with every woman. So that you do not only think why you.. because it is a choice, you don't have to. (Sonya)
	In any case, awareness about the possibilities for women. Women are sometimes a little bit different than men, also with regard to networking or handling things.. Uh.. And I have the idea that they [women] have to get even more tools to take that step. (Diana)
	At first we said that we would organize a meeting. One of the ladies (...) had a very nice presentation about, just about the differences between men and women. So about.. uh.. In a meeting, a woman will wait for her turn; a man, when he thinks he is right, yells right through. (..) In order to, to open the eyes of those ladies. (Ellen)
Discourse of belongingness and visibility	*You know, [the young employee network] is well... there are indeed a lot of youngsters, young [employees], but not a lot of color. And what I also hear of for example many employees who have joined [the ethnic minority network] but not [the young employee network], is that they indicate that: you know, at [the ethnic minority network] I feel more at home. (Carol)*
	Unfamiliarity with line managers in recognizing, developing bicultural talent. Uh.. the need to be recognized and acknowledged. So that, in the end, you feel at home. So that you are not forced, or at least that you don't have the feeling of being forced to put on a certain mask, to behave as a frat boy. (Colin)
	It is about bringing people together. And not so much.. uh.. creating a particular box. So we have deliberately chosen to do so. We want to get rid of the label that it is about other people. It is about everybody. (Colin)
	People are not very eager to put a separate target group forward, so to speak... And we do not want that as a network. (Marvin)

Appendix 3: Continued

Discourse	*Illustrative quotes*
	The fact that currently you are still in a box, could be your strength. (..) You have to think about it with each other. How do you take up ambassadorship? (..) I don't know if everybody wants to openly express it like that. Some people would not.. not feel comfortable with that. I think that – while I think we really need them – I think that our more senior members, who are more experienced, have already proven themselves, not because of their background, but because of their performance, because of their quality, we really, really need them. While, I get the feeling, that particularly that group, does not really, because they are in the next fase of their career, directly associated, or the label diversity. In the long term, I do not want to be known as [Glenn] whose parents were born in [foreign country] and a great advocate for diversity, but I just want to be known as [Glenn] who is just doing his job well, and who is just a good person. (Glenn)
	To commit to our ideas and be enthusiastic, well, for me that is a quick win. That is something you can work with. Somebody who does not want to speak up.. Because sometimes that is something as well, right? What you often have, if you commit yourself to a network like [the ethnic minority network], you quickly get a sort of label. (..) There are people who do not want that. I once had a colleague who said: is that the migrant network ['allochtonennetwerk' in Dutch]? Look, then you quickly get those sort of labels. And some people do not want that, so they are less pronounced. (Marvin)
Discourse of visibility	*I think to create an LGBT friendly environment, where it is self-evident that there is diversity, that there are heterosexuals, homosexuals, uh... everything. [Interviewer: And how do you think to accomplish that?] By means of creating visibility, by organizing events as network, presentations, conferences or that sort of things. We then also invite heterosexuals and with that we create some visibility. (Evan)*
	That when two or three years ago on World Coming Out Day the rainbow flag flew for the first time on top of the [building of the organization]. That helps enormously. (..) That helps for the people themselves. Visibility and acknowledgement actually. Acknowledgement. In the sense that everybody.. or, it is completely accepted and normal in all levels within [Finance] and no manager or even no one within the [organization], very rare I think, who dares to make a negative remark about gays and quality. (Martin)
	It has to be a safe environment, where everybody feels at home. And we could only do that by making it visible and to discuss it openly. (Amy)
	We should keep expressing ourselves and show that, look: we are here, we are here to stay, and we are gay. (Rachel)
Discourses of normalization and professionalism	*Because it is, in the media it is very.. uh.. when it is about gays, there is a photo of one of those Pride Parades with all those partying transvestites and those sort of things, but then I think, that is not.. is that always the association with gays? No, it should not be that way. So therefore, I want to be an example that it can be otherwise, the common perception should not be that they [employees] are only confronted those sort of images in the media when it is about gays. (Evan)*

Appendix 3: Continued

Discourse	*Illustrative quotes*
	We should not organize drinks, because I can drink a beer at home, but we should make sure that we create a knowledge sharing platform. We combined this with a second thought: uh.. women within [the organization] are very active with a women's network (..) where women of different levels get together and notify each other of jobs, support... each other... (...), so I thought: we could do that too by making the pink network a sort of network club. So we anticipated on two things very central: knowledge sharing and network, and now we are seen as a professional network. (Peter)
	But the problem does not seem to be that big... And I also think, but that is because I am pragmatic in those things, that if you come to work with a pink feather boa, you do not get that promotion because you wear that pink feather boa, but because you do not behave conformingly. And that is a statement that I proclaim ever since I became chair [of the LGBT network], and because of that there are a few people who do not like this with me, because they think that I howl with the wolves.. but I want to initiate a club out of strength, a network club, a knowledge club, instead of having a few pitiful boys in the corner, we have to get them out of there. (Peter)
Discourses of ability and empowerment	*Learning & development' is the development of skills. Empowerment is to believe in what you are doing. And empowerment is also to surprise, actually it is purely to surprise. To suprise: what are your qualities and 'oh I did not know I could do this'. But also to surprise the organization, by showing what people with a disability are capable of doing. So my empower-aspect is often aimed at 'power', to show that this is something where you can powerfully present yourself. (Tim)*
	And I also think that it is.. uh.. a very good.. uh.. thought to evaluate people on what they can do, so on their work capacity, instead of rejecting people on what they cannot do anymore. I think that is a very good thought. But then you do have to make proper arrangements. So, uh.. I think that some stitches have been dropped [i.e., mistakes are made] in that, or so to speak.(Andrea)
	So we are, 'we', as a group, very frightening to say it like that, but, the people with disabilities have already come out of the woods, so to speak, and are allowed to participate in a, well, worldly existence, but now you actually see the next step. And I have the sense that that is a very gradual emancipation of that group. And now it is expected, well, just participate. But is it also: why would we keep pampering those people [with a disability], that is just not right for those people, it is not right for society, in fact it is not right for nobody. So just let them participate. (..) And there are also people who are already participating, so they are just normal people. (Simon)
Discourses of possibilities and organizational change	*[The Disability Network] The network that focuses on possibilities instead of disabilities. (Mail signature Tim)*

Appendix 3: Continued

Discourse	*Illustrative quotes*
	Open up to who you are. Search for your talents and do your best. Motivation is the key to success. Accept who you are, accept your disability or the fact that you are not 'standard material', but also accept that sometimes others find it difficult to ask questions that they might have. Do not judge beforehand, but provide someone with time and space to express these questions. Unfamiliarity breeds contempt. Search for the connection with colleagues and with your organization and make the best of it together. Keep developing yourself and surprise others and before you know it, the prejudices are gone. (Column Tim - Network Newsletter)
	[About the idea of an employee with Down's syndrome at the reception desk] I very much like that. I know that the plan.. The plan was presented on a higher level, but I know that the plan is shot down. I think that is a pity, I would have liked that. (Alice)
	...you can do job-carving: then you have an existing vacancy, but you are able to cut or change some tasks so the [job] is made suitable for somebody with a disability. (Andrea)
Discourse of socializing	*[The Young Employee Network] was mainly, you are between 25 and 30, and not settled yet, and then it is mainly about, of course also the seminar, but also about the party that is coming afterwards. [The Young Employee Network] organized events with especially a lot of drinks afterwards, ski trips, well that is not the point of view of [the women's network], that really is a serious discussion. (Edith)*
	I have heard a lot of people who said that the [the young employee network] is the only reason to still be working at [Finance].. I have to say that when I was a trainee, and I was orienting for a job, that I too looked at other companies, but I also thought, well yeah, [the young employee network], that was really cosy ['gezellig' in Dutch], there were really nice colleagues there.. (Jenny)
	In the first place it is just an informal, cosy ['gezellig' in Dutch], nice network that also organizes more substantive events. Last year, we distributed a questionnaire among members, and you did notice that especially the social activities are important. (Michael)
Discourse of the glorification of the young	*I really see [the network] as a very.. the backbone of the [organization], I think it is a very important vertebra, to express it as a metaphor. And that is because it is so important. I also really believe in the power of young people, who.. with a fresh perspective.. [Finance] really believes in that, so my vision matches the vision of [Finance] in that sense. Fresh perspective, energy, looking forward to make something of it, looking forward to initiate something. And the fact that [the young employee network] exists to create an assembly point of all those young people, that is just very powerful. (Emily)*
	There once was a meeting of the Top 100 of the [organization] and they needed some young people for that. Well, [the young employee network] was invited for that, to see our view as young employees. So very often, when they need young people, they immediately think about the group of [the young employee network]. So in that sense it [the network] is the most convenient institute. But also for sponsoring requests or for.. as a target group. (Jenny)
	We are actively deployed by recruitment. Uh.. so we are being named.. we are deployed as USP [Unique Selling Points] as well in that sense.. of course also for the current campaign of [Finance] to become top-class employer. (..) [S]o, we are deployed for that, when there are in-house days and the like, there is always a stand of [the young employee network]. (Jenny)

Appendix 4

Overview of characteristics of the diversity networks in Finance

	Women's network	*Ethnic minority network*	*LGBT network*	*Disability network*	*Young employee network*
Initiation	In 2007-2008 Bottom-up	In 2010 Bottom-up	In 2006 Bottom-up	In 2014 Bottom-up	In 1995 Bottom-up
Board composition	5 members: A chairwoman and 4 other women without distinguished functions	5 members: A chairman and 4 members (1f 3m) with distinguished functions (e.g., treasurer and secretary).	6 members: A chairman and 5 other members (2f 3m) without distinguished functions	5 members: A chairwoman and 4 members (4m) with distinguished functions (e.g., treasurer and secretary).	7 members: A chairwoman and 6 members (2f 4m) with distinguished functions (e.g., treasurer and secretary).
Membership	Women in middle management positions only. Around 700 members	Membership open to all interested in diversity. Around 500 members	Membership open to all interested. Around 300 members	Membership open to all interested. Around 101 members (38 disabled, 63 managers + colleagues)	Membership for employees between 18 and 35 years of age. Around 1300 members.
Budget	€10,000 / year	€10,000 / year Additional funds from organizational sponsors	€10,000 / year Additional funds from organizational sponsors	€5,000 / year Additional funds from organization's occupational health service	€10,000 / year Membership fee of €30,000 (€25 per member per year)
Events and activities (estimate)	5 per year: e.g., round-table talks, mentoring program, and an annual event with women in senior positions	4 per year: e.g., workshops, round-table talks, drinks, gala, and seminars	5 per year: conferences, seminars, and drinks	4 per year: e.g., workshops, sport events and events with other organizations	40-50 per year: e.g., seminars, sport events, 'board member for a day', events with other organizations, gala, and drinks

ENGLISH SUMMARY

English summary

*For a non-academic audience**

In recent years, the use of diversity networks in organizations has increased tremendously. Diversity networks are employee networks initiated to advance employees with specific social identities and to counteract their social exclusion in organizations. In many organizations, diversity networks are part of diversity management and a popular practice to promote equality and inclusion of employees with a disadvantaged position in organizations.

The popularity of diversity networks in organizations is based on the widespread idea that involvement in networks is important for successful career development. The first diversity networks were initiated in the US in the 1970s to improve the inclusion and numerical representation of women and ethnic minorities in organizations. Currently, diversity networks also exist for other (often historically excluded) employees, such as networks for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) employees, employees with a disability, or young and older employees.

Despite the proliferation of diversity networks in organizations, it remains unclear how these networks work, and to what effects. In this dissertation, I study how diversity networks are actually functioning as diversity management instrument. Using a broad and critical notion of organizational equality, the aim of my dissertation is to build a better understanding of how diversity networks contribute to equality in organizations.

A critical diversity perspective on equality in organizations

Most studies on diversity networks focus on their effects on the career advancement of members and their numerical representation in organizations. However, organizational equality is not only about diversity in numbers. Organizational equality also involves organizational culture, norms, behaviors, jokes at the coffee machine, and unwritten rules that all contribute to the inclusion of some employees and the exclusion of others. Diversity, as well as its management, is inextricably linked to power and everyday micropolitics. This means that in order to truly understand diversity and equality in organizations, unequal power relations, the experiences of minority employees, and (subtle) organizational processes that create and maintain inequalities, all need to be taken into account. In my dissertation, I therefore draw on critical diversity studies. This is an academic subfield within management and organization studies where the complex patterns of inequality are key. With a critical diversity perspective on diversity networks, I not only focus on numerical outcomes and individual career development, but also on more structural organizational processes and the underlying mechanisms that create inequality in organizations. In doing so, my research shows how diversity networks either help or hinder equality in organizations.

* For an academic summary, please refer to the discussion (Chapter 5).

In my study, I examine ten diversity networks in two large Dutch organizations: a financial service organization (*Finance*) and a governmental service organization (*Govt*). In Finance, I studied six different diversity networks: a network for women in senior management positions, a network for women in middle management positions, an ethnic minority network, an LGBT network, a disability network and a young employee network for employees between 18 and 35 years of age. In Govt, I studied four different diversity networks: a women's network, an LGBT network, a network for employees with a disability or chronical illness, and a network for "young" employees (here, "young" does not refer to a specific age, but to a progressive mind: employees who support the progressive ideas of this network).

My data collection consisted of interviews, observations, and documents. I conducted 51 interviews with active network members, 33 interviews in Finance and 18 in Govt. In addition to interviews, I observed 46 network meetings, including network board meetings, activities and events that were organized by diversity networks, meetings with the organizational management and cross-network meetings of different networks within the organizations. Lastly, I collected and analyzed various documents, such as annual plans, newsletters and meeting minutes.

Networking for equality?

In Chapter 2, I explore the histories, goals and organized activities of five different diversity networks in Finance: the women's network for women in middle management positions, the ethnic minority network, the LGBT network, the disability network and the young employee network. I focused on the diversity network board members, who, as network leaders, play a crucial role in how diversity networks contribute to equality in organizations. These board members determine the network goals, make strategic network decisions, and organize network activities for their members. In this chapter I therefore studied how the board members talk about the contribution of their network to equality. To do so, I developed a theoretical framework of organizational equality and distinguished between the networks' contributions on three main levels: the individual level, the group level, and the organizational level. Figure 1 shows my three-level framework of organizational equality.

The contribution of diversity networks on the individual level pertains to the individual career development of members. Resonating with the idea of networks as an important career management strategy, board members emphasize that diversity networks can support their members in career advancement. On the group level, the contribution of diversity networks lies in community building between employees with similar social identities. According to the network board members, diversity networks can provide their members with a safe space in which they can meet each other, share experiences, and discuss issues related to inequality freely without having to conform to the majority culture. The organizational level of equality pertains to inclusion. Inclusive organizations

provide all employees with a feeling of belongingness, value who they are, and give them a voice in organizational decision making. Board members indicate that diversity networks can function as a sounding board for the organizational management and provide them with solicited and unsolicited advice on diversity-related issues. In doing so, they are able to create the opportunity to address organizational processes that contribute to the exclusion of employees and call upon the organizational management to change these processes.

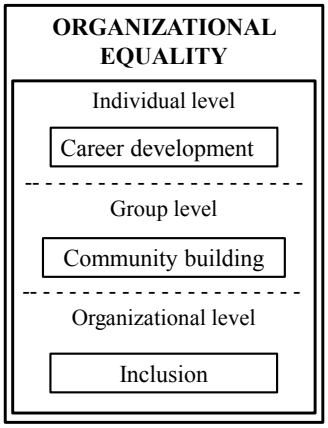


Figure 1. A three-level framework of organizational equality

Although diversity networks can contribute to equality on all three levels, my results also show that these contributions are not without contradictions. First, board members face various dilemmas. For example, on the group level, I observed a clear tension between attention to the exclusion of ethnic minority, LGBT or disabled employees in the organization and fear of the stigmatization that this attention could generate. This makes diversity networks reluctant to emphasize difference and exclusion, choosing to conform to the majority culture, for example by opening up membership to all employees, regardless of their social identity. In doing so, the idea of a safe space is lost and the contribution of a network to group-level equality is counteracted.

Second, it is not self-evident that diversity networks contribute to equality on all levels. The board members under study tended to focus primarily on career development and community building. While these are valuable on individual and group levels, the organizational level is largely overlooked. This has implications for the value of diversity networks for equality in organizations. When structural organizational processes that create inequalities go unnoticed or unaddressed, the contribution of diversity networks to equality in organizations remains limited.

An intersectional analysis of diversity networks

In Chapter 3, I introduce the concept of *intersectionality* to study diversity networks. Intersectionality refers to the interaction between different social categories that can form the bases of inequalities, such as gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and disability. The concept of intersectionality aids in thinking about the complex interplay of multiple social identities related to the aforementioned categories. People always have multiple identities that cannot be understood separately. Yet, the implications of intersectionality for diversity management rarely materializes in organizations. Diversity networks are typical exemplars of present-day diversity management instruments that focus on singular identities as separate, unconnected categories. In this dissertation, I show that this has consequences for the contribution of diversity networks to equality in organizations. I thereby distinguish between two dimensions of intersectionality: structural intersectionality and political intersectionality.

Structural intersectionality focuses on the individual experiences of people with regard to their intersectional identities. From a structural intersectionality perspective, I examine how individual network members deal with multiple identities within diversity networks. Diversity networks are mainly seen as consisting of homogeneous, unconnected categories with no attention to intersectional identities. The members that address the need for intersectional perspectives are members with multiple minority identities. Network members with single minority identities (such as *white, heterosexual* women *without disability*[1]) tend to believe that issues relating to other minority categories, such as ethnicity, sexuality, or disability, belong to other networks that are organized around these categories. Thus, intersectional identities do not fit the neat boxes of diversity networks. For instance, I spoke with a lesbian woman with a disability who did not feel at home in the LGBT network nor in the network for employees with a disability. My analysis of structural intersectionality shows that the single category structure of diversity networks can reinforce the exclusion of members with multiple minority identities.

Political intersectionality addresses the way that social identity groups organize themselves around different political agendas to combat inequality together. With a political intersectionality perspective, I explored how diversity networks attempt to collaborate with other networks to build coalitions to stimulate equality in organizations. My findings illustrate that coalition building is challenging and actual collaboration between diversity networks remains limited. Despite the low level of actual collaboration, the networks I studied articulated strong rhetoric around wanting to work together: collaboration between different diversity networks is seen as desirable and something to strive for. However, actual collaboration is fraught with problems. I show how the diversity networks in my study are hindered by a

1 For example, within a women's network, white, heterosexual women without a disability are a minority in the organization with regard to their gender, but privileged on the basis of their other identities that refer to ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability.

politics of preserving privilege. This means that these networks willingly cater to the privileged majority members of their network (i.e. members with single minority identities who are privileged on the basis of their other intersecting identities) and set the agenda according to their alleged interests. For example, a collaboration between the LGBT network and the ethnic minority network was considered relevant for only those members with LGBT-ethnic minority identities, and not for the majority of non-LGBT members of the ethnic minority network. A broader, less controversial theme and a reception were suggested as alternative ideas for a joint event. The board members thereby overlook the opportunity to address the exclusion that these members experience on the basis of their intersectional identities among a broader audience.

Furthermore, my analysis of political intersectionality shows how diversity networks partake in a reversed *Oppression Olympics*. In a so-called *Oppression Olympics*, there is competition between minority groups to prove themselves as the most oppressed, but in this reversed *Oppression Olympics*, diversity networks emphasize their added value and positive contributions to the organization. Attention to discrimination and exclusion is constructed as a complaint. By doing so, the need to make a positive contribution to the organization forecloses the possibility to actually challenge inequality in organizations.

Collective diversity networking practices: the key role of diversity killjoys

Diversity networks are networks, and networks are the result of members' network*ing*. This means that networks are accomplished through the actual networking behavior of their members. In Chapter 4, I therefore apply a so-called *practice-based approach*, wherein the focus is on the analysis of social *practices*. These practices refer to what people actually say and do in interactions. Drawing on a practice-based approach, I explore what diversity networks *do* and how network members are collectively *networking* to advance equality in organizations. I introduce the concept of *diversity networking practices* to characterize the networking practices that occur in diversity networks. Diversity networking practices refer to the collective sociopolitical actions of building, maintaining, and using relations in the workplace to advance equality in organizations.

In my research, I identified five diversity networking practices: undoing otherness, building alternative structures, organizing events, appealing to organizational responsibility, and shaping organizational policies. These diversity networks practices can focus on network members and the organization and its management. For their members, diversity networks are able to create structures of support, solidarity, and belongingness for network members. Within diversity networks, members can create a safe space wherein they are able to challenge organizational norms, share experiences of exclusion, and undo their otherness while in these spaces. In addition, diversity networks are able to provide their members with structures of support, solidarity, and belonging as alternatives to the lack thereof in official organizational schemes. The events and activities organized by diversity networks can support their members in their personal development and facilitate community building.

With regard to the organization and its management, diversity networking practices focus on challenging the organization and questioning organizational processes that create inequality. Diversity networks can organize strategic meetings with organizational management and appeal to their responsibility to foster equality in organizations. In addition, diversity networks can shape organizational policies to stimulate more inclusive policies.

It is important to understand *how* diversity networks actually network because diversity networking practices can contribute to either changing or perpetuating the status quo. Some diversity networks seem to be successful in raising inequality-related issues, but there are also networks that avoid these issues and rather talk about the "sexiness" of diversity. I have termed the diversity networks that dare to address inequality in organizations *diversity killjoys*, based on Sara Ahmed's concept of the *feminist killjoy*. In this sense, people who dare to address issues of discrimination and exclusion in organizations are seen as nagging and negative. Hence, diversity killjoys are diversity networks that do not shy away from addressing discrimination and exclusion, and the processes that cause inequality in organizations. My research shows that diversity networks that act as collective diversity killjoys seem to be more successful in their contribution to enhancing equality in organizations.

The Herculean task of diversity networks

Diversity networks are potentially well-positioned to contribute to further equality in organizations. Located within organizations, diversity networks are acquainted with the organizational culture, behavioral norms, and unwritten rules. They can use this knowledge to identify organizational practices, customs, and habits that create or maintain inequality. In addition, as networks initiated for and led by employees, they can provide a safe space for (socially excluded) employees. Within the confines of the network, experiences of exclusion and discrimination can not only be openly shared and exchanged between members, but these experiences can also be collected to serve as examples to address inequality-related issues with the organizational management.

However, diversity networks can also contribute to the maintenance of inequality in organizations. Due to the predominant attention to single, separate identity categories, the role of privilege and privileged identity categories remains obscured. Although addressing privilege is not an easy task, beginning these discussions is indispensable to counteracting inequality. Diversity networks can amplify the voices of employees who, on the basis of their intersecting identities, are less privileged. For example, I have seen how LGBT women organized so-called *BLT-lunches* (without the G representing gay men who are privileged on the basis of their gender identity) to discuss their underrepresentation in LGBT networks as well as the lack of focus and understanding on bisexuality and transgender issues.

To conclude, my research shows that networking for equality in organizations is a Herculean task that requires much more than simply organizing a diversity network. Contributing to such a complex phenomenon as organizational equality not only necessitates perseverance

and effort, but also some understanding of the role of (subtle) organizational processes and unequal power relations in creating and maintaining inequality. In this dissertation, I show that if diversity networks are not aware of the role of privilege, intersectionality, or other inequality-related processes, they may contribute to the maintenance of inequality rather than counteract it. Attention to multiple levels of organizational equality, acknowledging intersectionality and privilege, and daring to be a diversity killjoy open up possibilities towards more effective diversity networks that foster equality in organizations.

NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING

Nederlandse samenvatting

*Voor een niet-academisch publiek**

In de afgelopen jaren is het aantal diversiteitsnetwerken in organisaties enorm gestegen. Diversiteitsnetwerken zijn medewerkersnetwerken die zijn opgericht om de doorgroei van werknemers met bepaalde sociale identiteiten te stimuleren en hun sociale uitsluiting in organisaties tegen te gaan. In veel organisaties zijn diversiteitsnetwerken onderdeel van diversiteitsmanagement en een populair instrument om de gelijkheid en inclusie van medewerkers met een achterstandspositie in organisaties te bewerkstelligen.

De populariteit van diversiteitsnetwerken is gebaseerd op het wijdverspreide idee dat netwerken bijdragen aan een succesvolle carrièreontwikkeling. In de jaren '70 van de vorige eeuw, werden in de Verenigde Staten de eerste diversiteitsnetwerken opgericht specifiek voor vrouwen en etnische minderheden met als doel hun inclusie en numerieke vertegenwoordiging in organisaties te bevorderen. Tegenwoordig bestaan er ook netwerken voor andere (vaak historisch gezien sociaal uitgesloten) medewerkers, zoals netwerken voor lesbische, homoseksuele, biseksuele en transgender (LHBT) medewerkers, medewerkers met een arbeidsbeperking, jongeren en ouderen.

Ondanks de toename van diversiteitsnetwerken in organisaties, is er nog weinig bekend over hoe deze netwerken precies werken en of ze hun beoogde effecten realiseren. In dit proefschrift wordt het functioneren van diversiteitsnetwerken als diversiteitsmanagementinstrument bestudeerd. Door gebruik te maken van een brede en kritische opvatting van gelijkheid in organisaties, is het doel van mijn proefschrift om beter te begrijpen hoe diversiteitsnetwerken bijdragen aan gelijkheid in organisaties.

Een kritisch diversiteitsperspectief op gelijkheid in organisaties

Het merendeel van de onderzoeken naar diversiteitsnetwerken beschrijft de effecten voor de carrièreontwikkeling van de leden en hun numerieke vertegenwoordiging in organisaties. Echter, gelijkheid in organisaties gaat niet alleen over diversiteit in aantallen. Gelijkheid in organisaties heeft ook betrekking op de organisatiecultuur, organisatienormen, gedrag, grappen bij de koffieautomaat en ongeschreven regels die bijdragen aan de inclusie van sommige medewerkers en de uitsluiting van anderen. Zowel diversiteit als diversiteitsmanagement zijn onlosmakelijk verbonden met macht en alledaagse micropolitiek. Dit betekent dat, om diversiteit en gelijkheid in organisaties goed te kunnen begrijpen, er aandacht moet zijn voor ongelijke machtsrelaties, de ervaringen van minderheidsgroepen en (subtiele) organisatieprocessen die ongelijkheid in organisaties produceren of in stand houden. In mijn proefschrift maak ik daarom gebruik van kritische diversiteitsstudies (*critical diversity studies*). Dit is een wetenschappelijk subgebied binnen de management- en organisatiewetenschappen, waarin de complexe patronen van

* Voor een wetenschappelijk georiënteerde samenvatting, verwijs ik naar de discussie (Hoofdstuk 5)

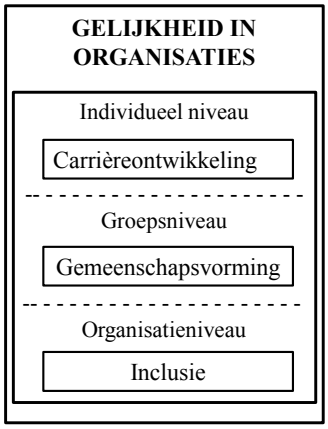
ongelijkheid centraal staan. Met een kritisch diversiteitsperspectief op diversiteitsnetwerken kijk ik niet alleen naar de numerieke uitkomsten en individuele carrièreontwikkeling, maar ook naar de meer structurele organisatieprocessen en de onderliggende mechanismen die ongelijkheid in organisaties veroorzaken. Op deze manier laat mijn onderzoek zien hoe diversiteitsnetwerken gelijkheid in organisaties kunnen helpen of hinderen.

In mijn onderzoek heb ik tien diversiteitsnetwerken in twee grote Nederlandse organisaties bestudeerd: een financiële dienstverlener (*Finance*) en een overheidsinstantie (*Govt*). In Finance heb ik zes verschillende diversiteitsnetwerken bestudeerd: een netwerk voor vrouwen in senior managementposities, een netwerk voor vrouwen in middenmanagementposities, een netwerk voor culturele diversiteit, een LHBT-netwerk, een netwerk voor medewerkers met een arbeidsbeperking en een jongerennetwerk voor medewerkers tussen de 18 en 35 jaar. In Govt heb ik vier verschillende diversiteitsnetwerken bestudeerd: een vrouwennetwerk, een LHBT-netwerk, een netwerk voor medewerkers met een arbeidsbeperking of chronische ziekte en een jongerennetwerk (hier verwijst "jong" niet naar een specifieke leeftijd, maar naar "jong van geest": medewerkers die de progressieve ideeën van het netwerk ondersteunen).

Mijn dataverzameling bestond uit interviews, observaties en documenten. Ik heb 51 interviews afgenomen met actieve netwerkleden, 33 interviews in Finance en 18 interviews in Govt. Naast interviews heb ik 46 netwerkbijeenkomsten geobserveerd, waaronder bestuursvergaderingen, activiteiten of evenementen die georganiseerd zijn door diversiteitsnetwerken, bijeenkomsten met het management van de organisatie of cross-netwerk-vergaderingen van meerdere netwerken binnen een organisatie. Ten slotte heb ik verschillende documenten, zoals jaarplannen, nieuwsbrieven en notulen van vergaderingen verzameld en geanalyseerd.

Netwerken voor gelijkheid?

In hoofdstuk 2 heb ik de ontstaansgeschiedenis, doelen en georganiseerde activiteiten van vijf verschillende diversiteitsnetwerken in Finance bestudeerd: het netwerk voor vrouwen in het middenmanagement, het netwerk voor culturele diversiteit, het LHBT-netwerk, het netwerk voor medewerkers met een arbeidsbeperking en het jongerennetwerk. Hierbij heb ik gefocust op de bestuursleden van de diversiteitsnetwerken die, als netwerkleiders, een cruciale rol spelen in hoe diversiteitsnetwerken bijdragen aan gelijkheid in organisaties. Deze bestuursleden bepalen van namelijk de doelen die ze met hun netwerk willen nastreven, de strategische beslissingen die daarbij horen en de inhoud van de activiteiten die ze voor hun leden organiseren. In dit hoofdstuk heb ik daarom onderzocht hoe de bestuursleden praten over de bijdrage van hun netwerk aan gelijkheid. Ik heb hiervoor een theoretisch raamwerk ontwikkeld dat onderscheid maakt tussen de bijdrage van netwerken op drie centrale niveaus: het individuele niveau, het groepsniveau en het organisatieniveau. Dit raamwerk is te vinden in Figuur 1.



Figuur 1. Een theoretisch raamwerk voor gelijkheid in organisaties

De bijdrage van diversiteitsnetwerken op het individuele niveau heeft betrekking op de individuele carrièreontwikkeling van netwerkleden. In overeenstemming met het idee dat netwerken belangrijk zijn voor een succesvolle carrière, benadrukken ook bestuursleden dat diversiteitsnetwerken hun leden kunnen ondersteunen in hun carrièrevoortgang. Op het groepsniveau van gelijkheid richt de bijdrage van diversiteitsnetwerken zich op gemeenschapsvorming van medewerkers met dezelfde sociale identiteit. Volgens de bestuursleden bieden diversiteitsnetwerken een veilige omgeving voor hun leden waarin zij elkaar kunnen ontmoeten, ervaringen kunnen delen en ongelijkheidsgerelateerde onderwerpen kunnen bespreken zonder zich aan te hoeven passen aan de dominante organisatiecultuur. Het organisatieniveau van gelijkheid heeft betrekking op inclusie. Inclusieve organisaties geven alle medewerkers het gevoel dat ze erbij horen, dat ze gewaardeerd worden om wie ze zijn en dat ze een stem hebben in de besluitvorming in hun organisatie. Bestuursleden geven aan dat diversiteitsnetwerken als klankbord kunnen fungeren voor het management en zowel gevraagd als ongevraagd advies kunnen geven over diversiteitsgerelateerde thema's. Daarmee kunnen ze de mogelijkheid creëren om organisatieprocessen te adresseren die bijdragen aan de uitsluiting van medewerkers en het management oproepen om deze te veranderen.

Hoewel diversiteitsnetwerken dus een bijdrage kunnen leveren aan gelijkheid op drie niveaus, laten mijn resultaten ook zien dat deze bijdrage niet zonder tegenstrijdigheden is. Ten eerste staan bestuursleden voor verschillende dilemma's. Binnen het groepsniveau van gelijkheid heb ik bijvoorbeeld een spanningsveld gezien tussen de aandacht voor de uitsluiting van etnische minderheden, LHBT-medewerkers of medewerkers met een arbeidsbeperking in de organisatie en de angst voor stigmatisering die deze specifieke aandacht met zich mee zou brengen. Hierdoor worden diversiteitsnetwerken terughoudend om verschil en uitsluiting teveel te benadrukken en kiezen ze er eerder voor om zich aan te passen aan de dominante

cultuur door bijvoorbeeld het netwerk open te stellen voor alle medewerkers, ongeacht sociale identiteit. Echter, hierdoor gaat het idee van het netwerk als veilige omgeving verloren en wordt de bijdrage van een netwerk op het groepsniveau tenietgedaan.

Ten tweede is het niet vanzelfsprekend dat diversiteitsnetwerken een bijdrage leveren op alle niveaus van gelijkheid. De bestuursleden in dit onderzoek richten zich met hun netwerken met name op carrièreontwikkeling en gemeenschapsvorming. Hoewel dit waardevol bijdraagt aan gelijkheid op individueel en groepsniveau, wordt het organisatieniveau grotendeels over het hoofd gezien. Dit heeft implicaties voor de waarde die diversiteitsnetwerken voor gelijkheid kunnen hebben. Wanneer structurele organisatieprocessen die ongelijkheid veroorzaken niet worden opgemerkt of bevraagd, blijft de bijdrage van diversiteitsnetwerken om gelijkheid in organisaties te bewerkstelligen beperkt.

Een intersectionele analyse van diversiteitsnetwerken

In hoofdstuk 3 heb ik het concept *intersectionaliteit* geïntroduceerd om diversiteitsnetwerken te bestuderen. Intersectionaliteit, ook wel *kruispuntdenken* genoemd, verwijst naar de interactie tussen verschillende sociale categorieën die de basis kunnen vormen van ongelijkheid, zoals gender, seksuele oriëntatie, etniciteit, leeftijd en arbeidsbeperking. Zo helpt intersectionaliteit bijvoorbeeld om na te denken over het complexe samenspel van multipele sociale identiteiten die gerelateerd zijn aan bovengenoemde categorieën. Iedereen heeft een combinatie van deze identiteiten in zich en deze identiteiten kunnen niet los van elkaar gezien worden. De implicaties van intersectionaliteit zijn tot nu toe nog nauwelijks doorgedrongen tot het diversiteitsmanagement in organisaties. Diversiteitsnetwerken vormen een typisch voorbeeld van diversiteitsmanagementinstrumenten die zich richten op sociale identiteiten als aparte, op zichzelf staande categorieën. In dit proefschrift laat ik zien dat dit consequenties heeft voor de bijdrage van netwerken aan gelijkheid in organisaties. Daarbij heb ik een onderscheid gemaakt tussen twee dimensies van intersectionaliteit: structurele intersectionaliteit en politieke intersectionaliteit.

Structurele intersectionaliteit richt zich op de individuele ervaringen van mensen met betrekking tot hun intersectionele identiteiten. Met een structureel intersectionaliteitsperspectief heb ik onderzocht hoe individuele netwerkleden omgaan met multipele identiteiten in diversiteitsnetwerken. Diversiteitsnetwerken worden veelal gezien als homogene, afzonderlijke categorieën waar geen aandacht is voor intersectionele identiteiten. De weinige netwerkleden die zich uitspreken over de behoefte aan intersectionele perspectieven zijn leden met multipele minderheidsidentiteiten. Netwerkleden met enkelvoudige minderheidsidentiteiten (zoals *witte*, *heteroseksuele* vrouwen *zonder arbeidsbeperking*[1]) geven

1 Bijvoorbeeld: binnen een vrouwennetwerk zijn witte, heteroseksuele vrouwen zonder arbeidsbeperking een minderheid in de organisatie als het gaat om hun vrouw-zijn, maar geprivilegieerd op basis van hun andere identiteiten die betrekking hebben op etniciteit, seksuele oriëntatie en arbeidsbeperking.

aan dat thema's op het gebied van andere minderheidscategorieën, zoals biculturaliteit, seksualiteit en arbeidsbeperking, horen bij diversiteitsnetwerken die georganiseerd zijn rondom deze categorieën. Intersectionele identiteiten passen dus niet in de hokjes van diversiteitsnetwerken. Zo sprak ik met een lesbische vrouw met een arbeidsbeperking die zich niet thuis voelde bij het LHBT-netwerk en ook niet bij het netwerk voor medewerkers met een arbeidsbeperking. Mijn analyse van structurele intersectionaliteit laat zien dat de structuur van diversiteitsnetwerken die zich richt op enkelvoudige, afzonderlijke categorieën, de uitsluiting van leden met multipele minderheidsidentiteiten kan versterken.

Politieke intersectionaliteit heeft betrekking op hoe sociale identiteitsgroeperingen zichzelf organiseren tussen verschillende politieke agenda's om gezamenlijk ongelijkheid te bestrijden. Met een politiek intersectionaliteitsperspectief heb ik onderzocht hoe diversiteitsnetwerken samen proberen te werken met andere diversiteitsnetwerken om zo coalities te vormen om gelijkheid in organisaties te stimuleren. Uit mijn bevindingen blijkt dat coalitievorming moeilijk is en de daadwerkelijke samenwerking beperkt blijft. Ondanks de minimale samenwerking, is er onder de diversiteitsnetwerken in mijn studie wel een sterke retoriek met betrekking tot samenwerking: samenwerking tussen verschillende diversiteitsnetwerken wordt gezien als wenselijk en iets om na te streven. Echter, zodra de samenwerking tussen diversiteitsnetwerken concreter wordt, gaat dit gepaard met problemen. Ik laat zien hoe de diversiteitsnetwerken in mijn onderzoek worden gehinderd door een *politiek van het behoud van privilege*. Dit betekent dat zij zich met name richten op de geprivilegieerde meerderheid binnen hun netwerk (dus de netwerkleden met enkelvoudige minderheidsidentiteiten die geprivilegieerd zijn op basis van hun andere intersectionele identiteiten) en de agenda van het netwerk bepalen volgens de vermeende interesses van deze meerderheid. Bijvoorbeeld: een gezamenlijke activiteit tussen een LHBT-netwerk en een netwerk voor culturele diversiteit wordt alleen relevant geacht voor leden met een gedeelde biculturele-LHBT-identiteit, en niet voor de meerderheid van niet-LGBT-leden binnen het culturele diversiteitsnetwerk. In plaats daarvan werd er een breder, minder controversieel thema met een receptie geopperd als idee voor een gezamenlijke activiteit. Daarbij werd voorbij gegaan aan de mogelijkheid om de uitsluiting die deze leden aan de hand van hun intersectionele identiteiten ervaren, voor een breder publiek te organiseren.

Verder laat mijn analyse van politieke intersectionaliteit een omgekeerde *Oppression Olympics* van diversiteitsnetwerken zien. Waar in de zogenoemde *Oppression Olympics* minderheidsgroeperingen strijden om welke groep het meest onderdrukt wordt, willen diversiteitsnetwerken in deze omgekeerde Oppression Olympics juist zoveel mogelijk hun toegevoegde waarde en positieve bijdrage aan de organisatie benadrukken. Aandacht voor discriminatie en uitsluiting wordt geconstrueerd als klagen. Hierdoor verhindert de noodzaak om een positieve bijdrage te leveren aan de organisatie, de mogelijkheid om ongelijkheid in organisaties te bevragen.

Collectieve diversiteitsnetwerkpraktijken: de rol van diversiteits-killjoys

Een netwerk, en dus ook diversiteitsnetwerk, is het resultaat van het *netwerken* van mensen. Dit betekent dat diversiteitsnetwerken bestaan uit het daadwerkelijke netwerkgedrag van hun leden. In hoofdstuk 4 maak ik daarom gebruik van de zogeheten *praktijkbenadering* (*practice-based approach)* waarin de analyse van sociale *praktijken* (*practices*) centraal staat. Deze praktijken refereren naar wat mensen echt zeggen en doen in interactie met elkaar. Met behulp van deze praktijkbenadering, heb ik onderzocht wat diversiteitsnetwerken *doen* en hoe netwerkleden als collectief *netwerken* om gelijkheid in organisaties te bewerkstelligen. Ik introduceer hier het concept *diversiteitsnetwerkpraktijken* om de netwerkpraktijken die voorkomen in diversiteitsnetwerken te duiden. Diversiteitsnetwerkpraktijken refereren naar de collectieve sociaal-politieke acties van het bouwen, onderhouden en gebruiken van relaties op het werk om gelijkheid in organisaties te bevorderen.

In mijn onderzoek heb ik vijf diversiteitsnetwerkpraktijken geïdentificeerd: het ongedaan maken van het anders-zijn, het bouwen van alternatieve structuren, het organiseren van evenementen, een beroep doen op de verantwoordelijkheid van de organisaties en het vormen van organisatiebeleid. Deze diversiteitsnetwerkpraktijken kunnen zich richten op de leden van het netwerken en op de organisatie en het management. Voor hun leden maken diversiteitsnetwerken het mogelijk om een veilige omgeving te creëren waarin zij organisatienormen ter discussie kunnen stellen, de ervaringen van uitsluiting kunnen delen en het anders-zijn binnen de netwerkomgeving voor even ongedaan kunnen maken. Daarnaast zijn diversiteitsnetwerken in staat om voor hun leden alternatieve structuren van support, solidariteit en saamhorigheid te creëren die zij via de reguliere paden in de organisatie ontberen. De evenementen en activiteiten die diversiteitsnetwerken organiseren kunnen hun leden ondersteunen in hun persoonlijke ontwikkeling alsook gemeenschapsvorming faciliteren.

Met betrekking tot de organisatie en het management kunnen netwerkpraktijken van diversiteitsnetwerken zich richten op het uitdagen van de organisatie en het bevragen van organisatieprocessen die ongelijkheid kunnen bewerkstelligen. Zo kunnen diversiteitsnetwerken, door het beleggen van strategische bijeenkomsten met het management van de organisatie, een beroep doen op het management om hun verantwoordelijkheid te nemen in het bevorderen van gelijkheid in de organisatie. Ook kunnen diversiteitsnetwerken invloed uitoefenen op de beleidsvorming binnen organisaties, om zo een inclusiever beleid te stimuleren.

Het is belangrijk om te begrijpen *hoe* het netwerken van diversiteitsnetwerken precies werkt, omdat diversiteitsnetwerkpraktijken bij kunnen dragen aan het veranderen, maar ook aan het in stand houden van de status quo. Sommige netwerken blijken succesvol te zijn in het aankaarten van ongelijkheidsgerelateerde thema's, maar er zijn ook netwerken zijn die deze thema's uit de weg gaan en het liever hebben over hoe "sexy" diversiteit is. De netwerken die ongelijkheid wel durven te bevragen, heb ik *diversiteits-killjoys* genoemd. Gebaseerd op Sara Ahmed's concept van de *feminist killjoy*, bedoel ik hiermee te zeggen dat

mensen die discriminatie en uitsluiting in organisaties aankaarten al snel gezien worden als zeurkousen of pretbedervers. Diversiteits-killjoys zijn dus netwerken die het ter discussie stellen van discriminatie en uitsluiting in organisaties en de processen die ongelijkheid veroorzaken, niet schuwen. Mijn onderzoek toont aan dat door op te treden als collectieve diversiteitskilljoys, diversiteitsnetwerken meer succes lijken te hebben in hun bijdrage om gelijkheid in organisaties te bevorderen.

De Herculeaanse taak van diversiteitsnetwerken

Diversiteitsnetwerken zijn in principe perfect gepositioneerd om bij te kunnen dragen aan meer gelijkheid in organisaties. Ingebed in organisaties zijn diversiteitsnetwerken bekend met de organisatiecultuur, gedragsnormen en ongeschreven regels. Deze kennis kunnen ze gebruiken om organisatiepraktijken, gebruiken en gewoontes die ongelijkheid creëren of in stand houden te identificeren. Daarnaast kunnen diversiteitsnetwerken, als netwerken opgericht voor en door medewerkers zelf, ook een veilige omgeving bieden voor (sociaal uitgesloten) medewerkers. In de besloten omgeving van het netwerk kunnen ervaringen van exclusie en discriminatie niet alleen in vertrouwen gedeeld worden, maar ook worden gebundeld om als voorbeelden te dienen om ongelijkheid in de organisatie te adresseren bij het management.

Echter, diversiteitsnetwerken kunnen ook bijdragen aan het in stand houden van ongelijkheid in organisaties. Door de overwegende aandacht voor enkelvoudige, op zichzelf staande identiteitscategorieën, blijft de rol van privilege en geprivilegieerde identiteitscategorieën onderbelicht. Hoewel het adresseren van privilege geen gemakkelijke taak is, is het cruciaal dat deze discussies gevoerd worden om ongelijkheid tegen te gaan. Diversiteitsnetwerken kunnen de stemmen van medewerkers die op basis van hun intersectionele identiteiten minder geprivilegieerd zijn versterken. Zo heb ik bijvoorbeeld gezien hoe vrouwen in zogenoemde *BLT-lunches* (zonder de H die de homoseksuele mannen representeren, die op basis van hun man-zijn geprivilegieerd zijn) hun ondervertegenwoordiging in LHBT-netwerken bespraken alsook het gebrek aan aandacht en begrip voor biseksualiteit en transgender-kwesties.

Concluderend laat mijn onderzoek zien dat het netwerken voor gelijkheid in organisaties een Herculeaanse taak is, waar meer bij komt kijken dan alleen een diversiteitsnetwerk organiseren. Een bijdrage leveren aan zoiets complex als gelijkheid vraagt niet alleen om moeite en doorzettingsvermogen, maar ook enige kennis over de rol van (subtiele) organisatieprocessen en ongelijke machtsrelaties in het creëren en in stand houden van ongelijkheid in organisaties. In dit proefschrift heb ik laten zien dat als diversiteitsnetwerken geen aandacht hebben voor de rol van privilege, intersectionaliteit of andere ongelijkheidsgerelateerde processen, ze eerder bijdragen aan het behoud van ongelijkheid dan aan het bestrijden ervan. Aandacht voor verschillende niveaus van gelijkheid, het erkennen van intersectionaliteit en privilege en het aandurven om diversiteits-killjoys te zijn, creëren mogelijkheden voor diversiteitsnetwerken om effectief te zijn in het bewerkstelligen van gelijkheid in organisaties.

DANKWOORD

Dankwoord

*Promotieonderzoek is in 6 jaar tijd 381.437 letters schrijven om er uiteindelijk één te verliezen.**

Van drs. naar dr.. Een betere samenvatting van mijn promotietraject kan ik niet geven. Waarschijnlijk ligt het aantal letters nog vele malen hoger, omdat de herschreven conceptversies, de herschreven conceptversies en de herschreven conceptversies niet zijn meegerekend. Ook de letters van dit dankwoord zijn nog niet meegenomen. Deze letters zijn misschien nog wel veel belangrijker, want ik weet zeker dat dit proefschrift er niet was gekomen zonder de steun, hulp en aanmoediging van de mensen die ik hieronder zal noemen.

Dit proefschrift was er zeer zeker niet gekomen zonder mijn fantastische promotoren: Yvonne en Marieke. Het was namelijk jullie eigen initiatief om een onderzoeksvoorstel te schrijven voor een PhD-project wat destijds nog 'Affinity Networks: Critical Tools for Diversity Management' heette. Jullie waren ook degenen die in 2012 in mij de meest geschikte kandidaat zagen om dit onderzoek uit te gaan voeren. Dat was slechts het begin. In de afgelopen 6 jaar ben ik door jullie begeleiding gegroeid als onderzoeker en als persoon. Jullie wisten de vele beren keer op keer van de weg te jagen en jullie vertrouwen uit te spreken als ik weer eens een 'marjoleintje' deed. Ondanks dat jullie bleven hameren op een pragmatische aanpak als de tijd begon te dringen, is de flop-flop-grote-stappen-snel-thuis-strategie nooit echt wat geworden. Jullie on-the-spot-geïmproviseerde post-it met 'you rock' heeft een prominente plek in mijn agenda gekregen om me er zo af en toe aan te herinneren dat ik het wél kan. Jullie wisten op de juiste momenten te zeggen dat mijn resultaten 'pareltjes' waren die 'opgepoetst' moesten worden. Jullie enthousiasme werkt aanstekelijk en ik ging na onze meetings (bijna) altijd weer vol vertrouwen de deur uit. #hoedan? Zo dus. Yvonne en Marieke: You rock!!

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* Naar stelling van N. Halbach

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gesprekken midden op straat) zijn mij veel waard. Ik wil je bedanken voor je luisterend oor, je gave om altijd de juiste vragen te stellen (ook al wil ik ze soms niet horen) en je eindeloze vertrouwen in mijn kunnen als ik mij weer eens een 'bedrieger' voelde. Lieve Handan, lieve Joki, ik voel me vereerd dat jullie ook op 3 september naast mij zullen staan.

Mijn vriendinnen kunnen natuurlijk niet ontbreken in dit dankwoord. Mijn Lelystad-vriendinnetjes: Anne, Mariska, Nienke, Raquel, Rineke en Tessa, en de Psychaatjes: Alein, Jeanet, Leonie en Maud. Onze vriendschap bestond al lang voordat ik met mijn proefschrift begon; in 2020 zou dat respectievelijk 25 en 19 jaar zijn :) We zien elkaar de laatste jaren niet zo vaak meer, maar gelukkig is mijn PhD daar niet alleen de oorzaak van. Daarom is het des te waardevol als we elkaar toch weer even zien: een high tea, saunabezoek, (inmiddels ook) kraamvisites, escape rooms en het jaarlijkse Psychaatjesweekend (helaas de laatste jaren in wisselende samenstelling). Superfijn om ons wel en wee te kunnen blijven delen. Tijd om weer eens af te spreken: hebben jullie ~~19 maart~~ 3 september toevallig al iets te doen?

Ook wil ik de club van Gang 6 bedanken: Frank & Sandra, Bastiaan & Romy, Sjoerd & Ingrid, Bjorn & Judith, Matthijs & Eva, Simon & Elja. Dr. Nr. 7 van de groep: dus ik heb een paar goede voorbeelden gehad ;) Een speciaal woord van dank (of een aantal letters van dank) wil ik richten tot Frank & Sandra: lieve F&S, ondanks dat jullie het zelf flink voor de kiezen hebben gehad, toch altijd een attent berichtje en altijd even vragen hoe het met mijn proefschrift stond. Dankjulliewel voor jullie steun en meeleven in de afgelopen jaren.

In mijn promotietraject ben ik ook zeker mijn familie veel dank verschuldigd voor hun steun en medeleven in de afgelopen jaren. Helaas heeft niet iedereen mee mogen maken dat ik op 3 september mijn doctorstitel zal behalen. Lieve opa Thé, kleine oma en opa Jan, wat zal ik jullie missen. Dat ik mijn proefschrift begin met een gedichtje van opa Jan is niet zonder reden: lieve opa, wat zou je de promotieplechtigheid prachtig hebben gevonden, en wat zou je trots zijn op je dr. kleindochter! Ik hoop stiekem dat jullie van daarboven toch zullen meekijken.

Lieve paps en mams, zonder jullie was dit proefschrift er niet geweest. Ik ben dankbaar voor het warme nest waar ik in ben opgegroeid. Bij jullie kan ik altijd terecht voor steun, aanmoediging, geruststelling en gezelligheid. Dankjulliewel ❤ Laten we 3 september een dag met sterretje maken. Lieve Annemiek, bedankt voor je lieve appjes zo nu en dan; volgend jaar wel Loenhout voor mij hoor! Sjaak, Carin, Hanneke, Bas, Bryn, Nils, Pieter, Anna, Willem en Emma: bedankt voor de gezellige en ontspannen familieweekenden en -uitjes waar ik weer even afstand kon nemen van het 'leed dat proefschrift schrijven heet'. Extra dank nog aan paps, mams, Sjaak en Bas voor het proeflezen van de Nederlandse samenvatting: dit heeft enorm geholpen om de samenvatting scherper, duidelijker en niet onbelangrijk, grammaticaal correct te krijgen. Sjaak, je had 'slechts' 18 punten, maar als classicus was de mooiste voor jou de 'Herculeaanse taak'. Ik geloof dat je er vrede mee hebt dat het geen 'Herculese taak' is geworden...

Een speciaal woord van dank gaat uit naar Fien en Albert: wat fijn dat ik in 'het waterhuis' terecht kon om te schrijven. Ik weet zeker dat de rustige omgeving en het prachtige uitzicht

over het water het creatieve proces geholpen heeft. Annette en Ben, bedankt voor het meeleven en altijd even vragen hoe het ermee stond. Nu Erik nog ;) En lieve grote oma, waar altijd de thee klaarstaat met een koekske of snoepke. Na 6 jaar promotieonderzoek te hebben uitgevoerd zijn er geen gepastere woorden dan: dat was nog eens koppie-koppie!

Dan is er nog een lieve kleine vrolijkerd die niet mag ontbreken in dit dankwoord. Lieve Merlijn, wat fijn dat je mama zo af en toe hebt 'geholpen' met haar boek. Hoewel jouw suggestie voor een goede Nederlandse vertaling voor 'disadvantage' een interessante keuze was, vind je het vast niet erg dat ik uiteindelijk niet voor *hmmba* ben gegaan. De laatste loodjes wegen altijd het zwaarst en dat is ook zeker waar voor dit proefschrift, maar door jouw knuffels kreeg ik weer de nodige endorfinetjes om toch nog even door te kunnen gaan.

Na inmiddels 390.822 letters, is er nog één iemand die ik nog niet genoemd heb, maar die zonder twijfel wel de allerbelangrijkste persoon is geweest in het mogelijk maken van dit proefschrift. Lieve Tinus, dit boek was er zeker en vast niet geweest zonder jou. Jij kan als geen ander beamen dat dit proefschrift een Herculeaanse taak was. Zelfs in 391.099 letters kan ik niet beschrijven hoeveel jij tijdens mijn promotie voor mij betekend hebt. Deze (inmiddels) 391.197 letters zijn voor jou, en ik voeg er nog 11 aan toe: ik hou van jou.

Tynaarloo, december 2019

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

About the author

Marjolein Dennissen was born in Lelystad on January 5th, 1983. She started studying Psychology at Radboud University in 2001. She wrote her master's thesis on the right-wing attitudes of Dutch youth and obtained her master's degree in Culture- and Personality Psychology in 2007. After finishing her study, Marjolein worked for three years at Lincoln Smitweld in Nijmegen. In 2011, she obtained a second master's degree in Organization Studies in the Organization of Cultural Diversity track at Tilburg University. Her master thesis project focused on the impact of the migrant hostile discourse on the experiences of employees with a Moroccan background, which resulted in a publication in Current Sociology in 2015, co-authored with Dr. Hans Siebers. In 2012, she started as junior researcher at the Behavioral Science Institute at Radboud University. She carried out a NWO funded review study on the impact of teachers on parental involvement together with Prof. Eddie Denessen, Dr. Joep Bakker and Dr. Helma Oolbekkink-Marchand.

In December 2012, Marjolein started her PhD trajectory at the Institute for Management Research at Radboud University. Her project has resulted in two publications (open access) in British Journal of Management and Organization Studies, co-authored with Prof. Yvonne Benschop and Prof. Marieke van den Brink. A third paper is currently in the first round of review at Journal of Management Studies. Marjolein also participated in a number of international conferences and workshops, including the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion International Conference (2014, 2017), the European Group of Organization Studies (2014, 2018), the Copenhagen Business School Workshop on Leadership, Diversity and Inclusion (2016), the Academy of Management Meeting (2016), and the Critical Management Studies Conference (2017). She received a Best Paper Award at the 2014 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion International Conference, and was nominated for the Best Student Paper Award at the 2018 European Group of Organization Studies. In 2015, she was granted the *Frye Stipendium*, which is awarded to promising women researchers to stimulate their academic career.

During her PhD, Marjolein was involved in many other activities. She organized seminars for the Junior Faculty Consortium, and the Hot Spot Gender and Power in Politics and Management, and was part of the organizing committee for the International Doctoral Consortium Critical Management Studies. Furthermore, she participated twice in the Researcher in the classroom-project, talking about her research with primary school pupils.

In 2016, Marjolein worked as a researcher in the European FP 7 GARCIA project. Since 2018, Marjolein is working as an Assistant Professor Strategic Human Resource Management at the Institute for Management Research at Radboud University.