CHAPTER 8

A POSTCOLONIAL DECONSTRUCTION OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT AND MULTICULTURALISM

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INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I offer an analysis of multiculturalism in diversity management (DM) research. I consider DM research as a practice that relies on an underlying multiculturalist discourse, and I highlight the problematic nature of this connection. Within studies of cultural diversity, the deep complexity of multiculturalism is rarely articulated. I suggest that the postcolonial integration of the two perspectives, multiculturalism and DM, has important implications for theory building and research on workplace diversity. Appropriating Saidian critique and Bhabha's conceptual resources, this chapter demonstrates how postcolonial insights can be used to deconstruct the ontological and epistemological character of DM and to create new key concepts for understanding workplace diversity.

Although the introduction of postcolonialism as a theoretical location for interrogating management and organization studies (MOS) is often traced back to Prasad's (1997) well-known analysis of the diversity industry (Jack et al. 2011), the scarceness of diversity research informed by postcolonial thought underscores the idea that the full potential of postcolonial theory has not yet been explored within diversity scholarship itself. Apart from Prasad's (1997, 2006) and Prasad and Prasad's (2002) influential works, few studies have specifically addressed diversity issues through the postcolonial lens, the most recent examples being the studies of Schwabenland and Tomlinson (2008), Kalonaityte (2010), and Leonard (2010). According to Prasad (2006: 125), postcolonial insights are

useful for diversity researchers because the colonial encounter has significantly shaped Western perceptions of its 'others' (other races, ethnicities, and cultures). Helping to think how hierarchies have been articulated and negotiated, postcolonialism has come to touch on the social differentiations that constitute the modernity of everyday life, not just the specific classes, peoples, or regions to which colonial discourses are most obviously tied (Bhabha 1995). Therefore, it can be used as a framework to explore power relations in wider contexts, as in this chapter.

Using Said's (1978) idea of fixed cultural essence and representations, in this chapter I develop a particular argument to describe how the current multicultural approach of DM is saturated with neocolonial assumptions of individual's and culture's natural positions as stable parts of a society. The tendency to oversimplify culture and to see representations of difference through binary lenses as mirroring some sort of authentic cultural character that sets one apart from the other is criticized. What I suggest, is that, through the celebrated discourse of multiculturalism, managing cultural diversity comes to intervene in the reproduction of inequalities and the established social order in organizations. The main argument is that, based on multiculturalism, organizational diversity becomes represented through simplistic, historically bounded, and fixed categorizations of identity and culture that reinforce cultural and racial otherness.

To go beyond mere critique and offer a way forward, I introduce Bhabha's (1994, 2007) notion of the third space as an attempt to rethink the concepts of culture and cultural identities within DM. Through the non-essentialist starting point that the concept of the third space offers, I sketch an alternative approach to the largely US-based research tradition that derives from a business-oriented social psychological paradigm of diversity research. I demonstrate how, through the outlined third space, there is a new way to theorize culture and the individual's relation to it, provided that we are able to tolerate the passing of a social value system based on grand oppositions (Bhabha 1996). This requires a form of cultural value recognized by cultural difference, not by cultural diversity. What is emphasized is that culture cannot be represented by single definitions because it is constantly in the process of 'becoming'—being negotiated, (re)interpreted, and challenged by the agency produced in language and interaction through the hybrid third space.

Proposing a postcolonial understanding of the construction of subjectivity, otherness, and the experience of culture in agency, the analysis I present contributes to the research stream of critically informed diversity studies and the emergent discussions on negotiated and flux notions of culture within diversity scholarship. In critical diversity scholarship, the controversial and even oppressive nature of the concept of DM has been articulated on many occasions since the 1990s (e.g. Nkomo and Cox 1996; Litvin 1997; Prasad and Mills 1997; Blommaert and Verschueren 1998) and the early 2000s (e.g. Lorbiecki and Jack 2000; Lorbiecki 2001; Zanoni and Janssens 2004, 2007; Litvin 2006; Prasad 2006). These interventions have led to a serious questioning of 'diversity' and its 'management', through which a need to move beyond

the current articulations of the dilemmas surrounding the theme has been emphasized by Calás, Holgersson, and Smirich (2009). The publication of special issues (see Calás, Holgersson, and Smirich 2009) dedicated to critically informed diversity research in journals such as *Gender in Management* (vol. 23/2008), *Scandinavian Journal of Management* (vol. 25/2009), *Gender, Work and Organization* (vol. 17/2010), and *Organization* (vol. 17/2010), serves as an accurate example of the fervency with which controversies related to diversity have been explored in recent organizational scholarship.

While exploring various questions of diversity in organizations, the critical research tradition has produced a comprehensive mapping of: the US-based origins of the concept of diversity (e.g. Risberg and Soderberg 2008; Holvino and Kamp 2009; Omanovic 2009); the traditional conceptualization of diversity within the mainstream literature (e.g. Litvin 1997; Konrad 2003; Zanoni and Janssens 2004; Janssens and Zanoni 2014); the juxtaposition of the managerial business rationale and social justice approaches to diversity (e.g. Holvino and Kamp 2009; Tomlinson and Schwabenland 2010); the evolution of the concept over the past two decades (e.g. Lorbiecki and Jack 2000); and the transformation and the mobility of the complex global phenomenon to local contexts (e.g. Risberg and Soderberg 2008; Klarsfeld 2009; Lauring 2009; Omanovic 2009; Ostendorp and Steyaert 2009). As this recent research interest proves, the critical research stream of organizational diversity is currently well established, but the discourse has not yet come to include issues of multiculturalism.

In many countries, societal debates on diversity have been going on for some time now under the label of the 'rise and fall of multiculturalism', and the need for alternative and more sustainable ways to accommodate diversity has been identified (Kymlicka 2010). Given that it has been the same state-sponsored concept of multiculturalism, aiming at preserving different cultures without interfering with the smooth functioning of society, that has formed the basis for corporate multiculturalism and diversity (Banerjee and Linstead 2001: 702), it is no surprise that the concepts have also been confronted by severe challenges at the organizational level. According to Prasad, Pringle, and Konrad (2006), cultural pluralism, a built-in feature of multiculturalism, has been shown to lead to struggles over cultural spaces in organizations as well as in societies. From the point of view of this chapter, the concept of multiculturalism, and cultural diversity itself, can be seen as problematic, because it merely means recognizing pre-given cultural contents and customs and representing the rhetoric of a separation of totalized cultures that remain untouched by the interrelations of their historical locations, guarding the myth of a unique collective identity (Bhabha 2007: 50). In light of this interpretation, a new form of understanding, if not a dismissal, of the concepts of multiculturalism and diversity is needed. Before engaging in the presented agenda of the chapter, I provide a short description of the connection between DM and multiculturalism, because this is necessary for providing the context out of which my argument emerges. I also give a brief account of the identified connection and its relation to critical diversity studies and to the aims of this chapter.

Diversity Management
as Multiculturalist Discourse

Despite the obvious resemblance of the connotations associated with the terms 'diversity' and 'multiculturalism', DM and multiculturalism have not been extensively linked (exceptions being Banerjee and Linstead 2001; Shimoni and Bergmann 2006; Nkomo and Hoobler 2014). Although without explicit connection, since the late 1980s, multiculturalism and DM have merged together as integrated paradigms of workplace diversity research. Whereas the term multiculturalism has been more frequently applied in sociology and public policy, given the same pressure exerted by major demographic changes, the management literature came to adopt the slightly broader term of diversity (Nkomo and Hoobler 2014). Cox and Blake's (1991) highly influential (see citation index of Oswick and Noon 2014: 33) publication on managing cultural diversity, which provides a clear connection between effective DM and the creation of a multicultural organization for achieving competitive advantage (see also Cox 1991), stands as an example of, and an incentive for, the complementary development of these discourses. Also exemplary of the research that relies on the business rationale behind diversity, Cox and Blake (1991: 52) state that 'Organizations wishing to maximize the benefits and minimize the drawbacks of diversity . . . must create "multicultural" organizations.' Furthermore, the text establishes a connection between national competitiveness and multiculturalism (Cox and Blake 1991: 50), bringing together the societal and corporate discourses of multiculturalism.

Omanovic (2009) states that, in past decades, the concept of DM has been advocated especially by US-based scholars (e.g. Thomas 1990, 1991; Cox 1994; Thomas and Ely 1996). In the context of the global economy, this approach has proposed managing diversity as a company initiative motivated by economic imperatives of productivity, competitive advantage, and profitability (e.g. Risberg and Soderberg 2008; Holvino and Kamp 2009; Lauring 2009; Omanovic 2009). For Banerjee and Linstead (2001), this traditional business case for diversity functions as an example of how diversity, in terms of race, ethnicities, and nationalities, has been reduced to something that must be 'managed' for the sake of pursuing the market opportunity. This emphasis on the economic benefit of DM has guided its development into a somewhat rigid, essentialist, and procedure-driven issue (Ghorashi and Sabelis 2013), affecting the way cultural diversity and its implications for organizations became understood through multiculturalism.

Thus, a particular connection can be found between the business-oriented social psychological paradigms of diversity and multiculturalism that are now discussed as interlocking discourses. The reductionist view of cultural diversity that this chapter challenges has its basis in this research tradition, which understands multiculturalism as consisting of fixed, observable, and measurable categories. Despite its important and still effective role in the development of workplace diversity research, it has been observed that this research tradition has resulted in a limited understanding of diversity

and the processes leading to inequalities (Zanoni et al. 2010). Nkomo and Hoobler's (2014) findings, which indicate that diversity research from the present era exhibits strong inertia (particularly in its epistemology, which seems to lag behind recent onto-logical developments of the field), support the continuing influence of the business case and the multiculturalist approach to diversity. Nkomo and Hoobler (2014: 254) suggest that even when the terminology may be new, for example, inclusion instead of equal opportunity (EO) or DM (as in Shore et al. 2011, see also Oswick and Noon 2014), the focus on the business case and firm practices has remained the same—research contin-ues to focus on trying to link the presence of persons with certain demographic char-acteristics to performance, and answering the question of how persons from various racioethnic groups can best work together towards efficiency and productivity.

With specific regard to the study of cultural, racial, or ethnic diversity in organizations, in addition to Cox and Blake (1991), other foundational works in the described tradi-tion include the studies of Gomez-Mejia and Palich (1997), Richard (2000), and Richard and colleagues (2004). In Oswick and Noon's (2014) extensive bibliometric analysis of management publications on diversity, equality, and inclusion over a forty-year period, from 1970 to 2010, all these studies are ranked within the top twenty of the most popular works on diversity. The distinct and lasting popularity of the four studies mentioned, which are pinpointed with the amount of total citations, the average citations per year, and the patterns of citation (Oswick and Noon 2014), can be seen as indicative of the col-lective research interest in the field of cultural diversity. As exemplified in the works of Cox and Blake (1991), Gomez-Mejia and Palich (1997), Richard (2000), and Richard and colleagues (2004), the continuous meta-level trend of academic interest in the study of cultural diversity through multiculturalism has been in: (1) emphasizing cross-cultural differences through cross-national comparisons and ethnic group differences through intra-national comparisons; (2) using particular surface level or observable characteris-tics to identify cultural diversity; (3) and then tautologically using these characteristics as a proxy for persons' perspectives, belief systems, networks, and affiliations.

The research tradition that derives from the four studies has made significant contri-butions to the way culture and cultural identities have become understood within the field. The nature of this tradition has evoked a very narrow understanding of culture as a stable coherent entity often tied to a place with an essential connection to people's identities in that location. Based on the identified connection with the business case for diversity, the language of multiculturalism, by necessity, has been coloured by cultural categorizations, generalizations, and distances—because diversity needed to be deter-mined by the used measurement scales to provide the objective evidence of its effects on the bottom-line performance of the company (e.g. Richard 2000).

In the critical diversity literature, particular attention has been paid to express-ing the paradigmatic pitfalls of the dominant research practice described—a practice that derives from a positivist ontology of naturalized and fixed identities and that has largely ignored the role of specific contexts and theorizations of power in addressing diversity (Zanoni et al. 2010: 13–14). For this chapter, being rooted in this tradition of critical diversity scholarship means understanding diversity and difference as culturally,

socially, and historically (re)produced phenomena that, therefore, need to be examined within specific socio-political and geographic regions as well as within specific organizational contexts and processes that reflect and enact structural power relations (e.g. Metcalfe and Woodhams 2008; Zanoni et al. 2010; Janssens and Zanoni 2014). However, to establish the interconnection between the multiculturalist paradigm and its implications for managing diversity, I address multiculturalism by concentrating specifically on the inescapable, underlying essential assumptions embedded in the notion at the conceptual level, prior to its local interpretations and enactments in social contexts. It should be noted that, for the purposes of this chapter, this approach has been intentional, and the chapter recognizes that the interconnection and its implications take various forms of operation that depend on organizational and national contexts.

In critical diversity research, the idea of discursive, emergent, and relational identities is firmly accepted. Drawing on different theoretical positions, many recent studies (e.g. Jack and Lorbiecki 2007; Bendl, Fleischmann, and Walenta 2008; Boogaard and Roggeband 2010; Essers, Benschop, and Doorewaard 2010; Holvino 2010; Kalonaityte 2010; Leonard 2010; Tomlinson 2010; Van Laer and Janssens 2014) have approached organizational diversity and difference from a perspective that acknowledges the multiple and shifting nature of identities and denies the existence of a fully constituted, distinct identity, an authentic self. Identities are recognized not as matters of 'having' but instead as discursive processes of 'becoming' (Zanoni et al. 2010). By adopting the underlying ontology, it should be clear that a similar understanding of culture not as 'being' but as something diffuse, heterogeneous, and negotiated, infused with contestation and power relations (Jack et al. 2008: 875), would be adopted. Yet, to be able to discuss, in terms of 'multicultural', whether in a critical vein or not, the concept of multiculturalism itself, determines the use of an essentializing vocabulary that unavoidably fixes cultural positions. As elaborated, this is mainly due to the historical baggage of the research tradition that the term has come to carry. Having identified this discontinuation, and hoping to break the scholarly silence on the fluid notions of culture in the discussions of organizational diversity, I concentrate on analysing the organizational implications of this omission.

Postcolonial Critique of Diversity Management and Multiculturalism

My theoretical argumentation builds on the assumption that the current diversity discourse, in its devotion to the idea of multiculturalism, is still based on essentialist ontological assumptions (Litvin 1997) that echo representationalist and universalizing categorizations and the desire to 'know the other' raised in the analysis of colonial discourse (Said 1978). In his analysis, Said (1978) highlights the role of power relations in constructing postcolonial subjectivity, in which the notion of the Other is inseparable

from the Self. Said's paradigmatic work *Orientalism* (1978) examines how non-Western otherness is constructed through a set of representations that are commonly circulated within the written work of the Western intellectual, aesthetic, scholarly, and cultural tradition. These texts, and the accompanying categories, classifications, and images that were utilized in producing accounts of the West's others, are addressed as ontological assumptions, epistemological practices, and cultural constructions that serve to create the texts' object of study, not as neutral descriptions of reality as they most often became understood to be (Jack and Westwood 2009: 21–2). In his exploration, Said (1978) emphasizes the questionability of objective and non-political (Western) knowledge in general and, in particular, in the case of producing a veridical discourse of the Orient/Other. In Said's analysis, the discourse of Orientalism and the cultural dominance of the West are tightly intertwined with Euro-Atlantic material and political interests, and the maintenance of asymmetrical power relations between the Orient and Occident, the non-West and West.

According to Said (1978: 7), the discourse of Orientalism constantly reifies the asymmetry of power by means of its strategy of positional superiority, 'which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand'. Said (1978: 2) describes how the distinction between the Occident and the Orient is seen as an ontological and epistemological difference that relies on the idea of essential and fixed identities. Throughout Said's analysis, examples are given of the binary opposites and historical generalizations that were used to justify the colonial dominance of the non-West. Prasad (1997) has done an extensive listing of these colonial binaries (e.g. civilized/primitive, masculine/feminine, scientific/superstitious, nation/tribe, developed/backward) through which the non-West became portrayed around the theme of inferiority with fixed essence.

It is important to note that Said's interpretation of the constructed binaries concerns not only the Other but also the self-image of the West itself. Orientalism has been described as a process of othering in which the construction of the self is dialectically achieved through the simultaneous construction of the Other (Jack and Westwood 2009: 22). The mutually constitutive role that representations play can be understood through the circularity that surrounds the concept of difference as something that mediates between the binaries and, in doing so, holds apart while holding together (Kwek 2003: 126). As Prasad (1997: 289) asserts, the colonial discourse, therefore, not only naturalized or essentialized the subjectivities of the colonized but also of the colonizers—'the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience' (Said 1978: 1–2). Jack and Westwood (2009: 22) explain how, in the process of naturalization, the ideological practices required to produce the representations of the Other are erased and the knowledge of the Other that is produced is made to appear as a form of truth. Hall (1997: 245) understands naturalization as a representational strategy designed to stop the inevitable 'slide' of meaning and secure so-called discursive closure to fix difference, to secure it in its place.

It is exactly this attempt to fix difference, to 'contain everyone in their place, easily identifiable, and attached to the specificity' (Calás, Holgersson, and Smircich

2009: 351) for which I see the discourse of multiculturalism, and cultural diversity, as responsible. Enabling the objectification, reduction, and displacement of ideas and understandings, the feature of containment, which is inherent in the mutually defining role of representations, creates the precise borders that include/exclude one from the other (Kwek 2003: 126). Containment is inseparably linked to the essentializing logic of representations and Orientalist processes of othering. Building on the established connection between Western management discourses and colonialism, and especially the way that the binaries have been used to construct the static historicity and dichotomy of subjectivities, it can be stated that culture has been reified as a fixity of ideas and values that simply exist (Kwek 2003) and define the behaviour of people within certain national or ethnic borders. Therefore, I suggest that the discourse of multiculturalism, acknowledging and advancing the idea of separate and pure cultures, is yet another legacy of the colonial mindset.

To illustrate the connections between the representationalist and universalizing tendencies of DM and multiculturalism, we need to pay attention to the location of the emergence of these discourses and to their way of confronting difference. As identified, DM was established mainly as a result of US-based economic concerns for productivity, competitive advantage, and profitability in the name of national and corporate competitiveness. The business rhetoric was soon adopted by international companies (Van Dijk, Van Engen, and Paauwe 2012), through which the discourse spread to other Western countries where it was seen as somewhat universal, until the critical problematizations of this development (see, e.g., Jones, Pringle, and Shepherd 2000; Metcalfe and Woodhams 2008; Calás, Holgersson, and Smircich 2009; Holvino and Kamp 2009; Calás et al. 2010). The universalizing tendency of management discourses in general has been brought forward and linked to the position of the West's strength and the politicization of knowledge by postcolonial organizational scholars (e.g. Kwek 2003; Ibarra-Colado 2006; Westwood 2006; Nkomo 2011). Regarding this tendency, the discourse of diversity makes no exception. As Said (1978) has elaborated with regard to the concept of positional superiority, colonial discourse strongly advocated the superiority of Western thoughts and practices (cultural, scientific, and other) that were universalized as a common norm against which others became compared. Thus, despite the fact that DM can be quite precisely located in a particular geographical, historical, and ideological context (e.g. Risberg and Soderberg 2008; Holvino and Kamp 2009; Omanovic 2009), in its devotion to universal applicability a resemblance to colonial discourse can be observed.

It should be emphasized that DM research, due to its origins, is based on a practice of comparison, on a deviation from the (Western) norm (see also Zanoni et al. 2010: 13). As a specifically Western discourse, DM can be seen to be effective in controlling its others to gain various types of information—information deriving from diversity, which, as a matter of course, has meant deviation—to support the management decisions to increase corporate financial performance (Richard 2000). Drawing on Calás (1992), Zanoni and colleagues (2010) have noted that, in the act of comparison, the other is constructed as the object of study and discursively constituted as marginal. Thus, the

comparative nature of DM and multiculturalism contributes to the creation of its others, silencing the others, and more broadly, politics of knowledge (Said 1978) through the representational strategies by which the comparison is made possible.

The representational nature of DM research is observable in its way of confronting difference through categorizations that rely on essential identities (e.g. Litvin 1997, 2002; Zanoni and Janssens 2004; Zanoni et al. 2010; Ghorashi and Sabelis 2013). I argue that the essentialist perception of difference present in the studies that derive from the positivist social psychological approach to diversity can be seen to derive from similar representational practices used in colonial discourse, where the difference of the West's others became reduced to a set of fixed historical generalizations (Said 1978). As exemplified in the beginning of the chapter through the foundational works on cultural diversity in organizations, the common practice of utilizing particular fixed characteristics to identify diversity and then applying these reduced characteristics as a group essence, explanatory variables for the study in question, is an illustration of this tendency. In addition, the representational practices apparent in DM connect to the field's universalizing impulse that is made possible through homogenizing difference (Westwood 2006). Westwood (2006: 96–7) has offered an explanation of how Western practice, while claiming to examine and report on difference, actually avoids and reduces it into sameness by subjugating encountered differences to the West's pre-existing codes and categories, that is, stereotypes. Additionally, Kwek (2003: 135) has criticized the way representations subjugate, homogenize, and essentialize difference simply because it threatens boundaries. According to Prasad (1997: 294), in the discourse of colonialism, reducing the difference of the Other into a sameness was an attempt to reduce the threat of the Other by constituting it in terms of images that were already familiar to the colonizing consciousness (see also Kwek 2003; Westwood 2006).

To clarify, I see the discourses of diversity and multiculturalism intertwined in the process of producing otherness and stereotypes through the way their theories categorize difference by means of essentialized identities tied to a stable cultural heritage. With the stagnant cultural essence, an idea deriving from 1950s cultural anthropology (e.g. Bjerregaard et al. 2009), positivist and functionalist approaches have persisted up to this day in the research on organizational diversity (e.g. Nkomo and Hoobler 2014; Oswick and Noon 2014). Through these approaches, the multiculturalist diversity discourse supports a language based on binary categorizations that were created in colonial representations. In specific relation to the study of cultural diversity, the use of cultural dimensioning and measurements of cultural distances (e.g. Hofstede 1980, 1991) illustrate the linkage between colonial representational strategies and stereotyping that is present in the research practice of the field. Gomez-Mejia and Palich's (1997) study, in which, typical of the tradition, cultural polarity is expected to be the prevailing condition between universalized categories of difference (West and East/North and South), stands as an early archetype of this tendency within the business paradigm.

One of the drawbacks of the current discourse of multiculturalism—questions of inclusion are largely overshadowed by the question of recognizing difference and managing it—follows from the expectation of fixed binary differences between cultures.

With its representational and ethnocentric practice, the idea of multiculturalism has proven to be excellent at containing everyone in their place and facilitating the reproduction of dominant categories that reify the global hierarchy within approaches to diversity in organizations. It has been demonstrated that there is a considerable gap between the ideal of multiculturalism and the actual ideology of cultural pluralism that often ends up reinforcing the stereotypes and the marginalizing tendencies it is designed to counteract (Huggan 2001). In this analysis, I have aimed to illustrate how this actually happens by showing how, despite the celebratory rhetoric of multiculturalism with its mosaics, rainbows, and quilts (Prasad and Mills 1997), the discourse can be highly effective in circulating stereotypical views of different cultures and their members. Thus, the analysis offers one explanation for the counterproductivity of classical DM practices that build on the social psychological research paradigm, which aims to correct individuals' stereotypes and prejudices (e.g. Janssens and Zanoni 2014).

Having said that, the explanation is incomplete without clarifying that I regard the stereotypes and prejudices encountered in organizations not as the problem but as the easily detected consequence of the actual problem—the emphasis that multiculturalism and its static view of culture place on cultural purity and historic heritage (Bhabha 2007). Prasad (1997: 304) has emphasized how discourses saturate us—they provide us the everyday language, the idioms, and the vocabulary for speaking and thinking. As postcolonialism suggests, the West's language, idioms, and vocabulary for addressing difference are deeply rooted in the colonial encounter. The way that everything non-Western (people, civilizations, cultures) became conceptualized as not just something different from but less than the Western ideal (e.g. Said 1978; Prasad 1997, 2006; Jack and Westwood 2009) has affected the way otherness is perceived. Thus, genuinely valuing differences and working towards the equalization of organizational power relations can only begin when we relinquish our ideas not only of authentic selves, but also of the authenticity of cultures and constructed cultural polarities.

From Multiculturalism to Cultural Difference through the Third Space

The idea of the border between self and other is pivotal in postcolonial studies (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2007), in terms of its totalizing and essentializing nature. To go beyond the essentialism present in the dominant multicultural approach in diversity studies, I am taking advantage of how borders can also be seen as liminal and ambivalent spaces that challenge the fixities and binary systems from within the spatial boundary itself (Bhabha 2007). Similarly, within the critical DM discourse, Bendl, Fleischmann, and Walenta (2008) have proposed how dimensions or categories seen as permanent and static can be opposed by the constitutive dynamics that define them. The implication is that borders can actually function as inclusive as much as exclusive factors

between individuals and cultures within organizations, which opens up a space for the shattering of the foundations of the hierarchical power positions of self and other as the fundamental entities of organizational life, as identified by Ghorashi and Sabelis (2013).

For Barth (1982: 15), border-construction processes function as cultural markers between groups, and it is the boundary itself that defines the group, not the actual culture that it encloses. Bhabha (2007: 50) has also drawn attention to the frequent way in which the emergence of problems in cultural interaction are only recognized at the significatory boundaries of cultures, where meanings and values are (mis)read. For Bhabha, culture only emerges as problematic when there is a loss of meaning in the contestation and articulation of everyday life between group (class, gender, race, nation) boundaries—yet, the limit of culture is rarely theorized as a problem of the enunciation of cultural difference. Theorizing multiculturalism more closely from the liminal and ambivalent spaces of boundary-crossings, an implicit shift of focus from cultural diversity to cultural difference occurs. The shift is enforced because the Bhabhaian view (2007: 49–50) conceptualizes cultural diversity as an epistemological object, an object of empirical knowledge that represents culture through the language of universality and social generalization, whereas cultural difference can be seen as a process of signification through which statements on culture form culture as knowledgeable and differential, bringing cultural authority into existence only at the ambivalent moment of its enunciation.

Instead of holding on to the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, I emphasize respecting cultural difference, which restores the ontological principles of this chapter to the indeterminacy of meanings constructed through difference and deferral. Through the examination of cultural difference, the Bhabhaian perspective brings into focus the ambivalence of cultural authority, the attempt to dominate in the name of a cultural supremacy even though it is produced only at the moment of differentiation (Bhabha 2007: 51). Thus, the concept of cultural difference underscores the ambivalence of cultural authority, weakening 'the homogenizing effects of cultural symbols and icons by questioning our sense of the authority of cultural synthesis in general' (Bhabha 2007: 52). In Bhabha's approach, the ambivalence of colonial discourse appears in the cultural interpretation itself, in which the production of meaning occurs through a hybrid third space: because the interpretation is never simply an act of communication between the I and You present in the statement, the production of meaning requires that these two places are mobilized through an unconscious relation that the third space introduces (Bhabha 2007: 53). It is the third space of enunciation that, therefore, challenges the structure of meaning and reference, destroying the form of representation through which culture is seen as a unifying force authenticated and kept alive by the shared history and national tradition of the people (Bhabha 2007: 54).

Leaning on the presented understanding of culture and the formation of the third space interrogates the traditional concept of culture advocated by multiculturalism. Culture and its relation to the homogenizing historical past as the main source of one's cultural identity, as 'being' something, is clearly incompatible with these ideas, which focus on the processes produced in the articulation of cultural differences and the need

to think beyond narratives of originary subjectivities. Through conceptualizations of the third space, we have the opportunity to understand why hierarchical claims of the inherent originality or purity of cultures are untenable, as we come to acknowledge that all cultural statements and systems are contracted in this ambivalent space of enunciation (Bhabha 2007: 55). The fluctuation and fragmentation of cultural meanings and symbols is ensured by the third space, which constitutes the discursive conditions for articulating cultural differences, demonstrating 'that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew' (Bhabha 2007: 55).

Acknowledging the 'newness' and unknown present in the third space triggers a clarification of the problematic analytical logic of multiculturalism in diversity scholarship that enforces hegemonic social structures based on the clear-cut division between self and other, and the fixed assumptions of the representatives of different cultural groups. Achieving an alternative starting point for theorizing cultural diversity in organizations requires an approach that is willing to accept and engage in the unknown present in cultural interaction and organizational structures that allow the legitimacy of hybrid (cultural) subject positions to exist and develop through the interaction of individuals in the in-between spaces of different discursive fields. This highlights the theorizations of the transverse linkages and interrelations of the subject positions available for individuals to identify themselves with, to shatter the one-dimensional power relations and dominant patterns of othering. Foundational prerequisites for this type of approach can be found in the third space, thus leading us to see the concept of liminality as the main tool for challenging organizational boundaries by rethinking them as in-between spaces that function as the conditions of existence for altering the fixed subject positions of the organizational actors of today.

As noted earlier in this section, Bhabha's (2007: 56) view on the subjectivities formed in the in-between spaces of difference—where it is *neither the one nor the other* that carries the meaning of culture but rather the area of 'inter', of translation and negotiation—reminds us of poststructuralist understanding of meanings, which are always deferred (e.g. Hall 1993; Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2007). Elaborating the idea of deferral, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2007) note that, in the third space, as a space of hybridity itself, cultural meanings and identities always contain the traces of other meanings and identities. The third space can therefore be compared to this space of deferral and endless possibilities for interpretation, which proves that cultural difference should never be treated as simple and static, but rather as an ever-changing, ambivalent process of interpretation (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2007: 53). For Bhabha (2007: 56), it is the fragmented space of enunciation that holds the potential to understand culture free from the essentializing logic of multiculturalism, which turns our attention to our willingness to acknowledge this instability and the unknown present in the production of hybrid cultural meanings.

The presented indeterminacy of hybrid and ambivalent cultures erodes the ground under the current multicultural paradigm of DM. As stated, identities can be understood as processes of 'becoming', as multiple and shifting, not as something that already exists, but instead as something that belongs to the future as much as to the past (Hall

1993: 225). According to Bhabha (2007: 10), this same newness is always present in the borderline work of culture where the encountered new is not part of the continuum of the past and present, simply repeating the already known and articulated past, but instead is the product of a cultural translation that recreates the past as an unpredictable liminal space that both initiates and temporarily pauses the act of the present. Thus, it should be noted that the newness created in cultural encounters, as it is understood here, is not a merger or a combination of the old perspectives but rather something totally new, produced in the moment. In the field of management, culture is rarely conceptualized as an ongoing process of interpretation, although the similar logic behind how culture and identities could both be understood as processes of the future and 'becoming' is apparent.

Why are these presented conceptualizations of culture, cultural meanings, and subjectivity and otherness meaningful for DM? According to Shimoni and Bergmann (2006), those researchers, practitioners, and organizations that base their work on coherent definitions of culture presented by the multicultural approach are unable to recognize the instances of cultural interpretation and hybridization, resulting in an insufficient ability to understand and work with cultures. Bhabha (2007) suggests that the process of hybridization destabilizes the difference and binary division of identities and cultures in liminal spaces, thereby overturning the current homogenizing cultural order and focusing our attention on the actual cultural encounter and its interpretation, which has the potential to bring out the complexity of cultural meanings in organizations without essentializing or estranging them from the context in which they were produced. Therefore, this alternative way of theorizing cultural positions enables an opportunity to engage in cultural interaction from an approach that can offer more realistic explanations of how cultural meanings come to guide the decisions and sense-making of organizational actors and, consequently, organizational thinking and processes.

Towards a Reconstructed Research Practice of Diversity

In the presented analysis, I have exposed the complexities of theorizing DM and its specific relation to multiculturalism through the postcolonial lens. I have made explicit the problematic relationship between representations, the presumptions of difference, and locating cultural identities in geopolitical places, compelling a reconsideration of the ontological and epistemological premises of DM. I used the concept of subjectivity as an entrance point to explain exclusion, inequalities, and institutionalized power relations in organizations. As shown in the previous section, in Bhabha's perspective, subjects are formed in-between the sum of the parts of difference (Bhabha 2007: 2). These parts of difference, such as race, gender, or class, affect the way otherness is perceived in encountering difference in organizations because, in that process, one must face the

ambivalence of his or her own identifications. The ambivalence in the structure of iden-
tification is to be found in the in-between, 'where the shadow of the other falls upon the
self', creating the categories of cultural difference that we enunciate (Bhabha 2007: 85).
Thus, it is to be emphasized that, although subjectivity is constructed in relation to the
Other, neither one can exist as pure, free from the shadow of its oppositional counter-
part. The interplay between the two is never total because they are both present in one
another, which challenges all claims of fixed polarities and originary pasts and, there-
fore, the basic principles of multiculturalism.

From theorizations of the third space, it is possible to go beyond the dominant dis-
courses of othering in addressing cultural difference in organizations, but because the
acceptance of the unstable and unknown aspects of cultural production actually poses
a threat to one's comfortable and stabilized worldview and sense of self, it becomes a
matter of whether we are willing to encounter the other in ourselves and rethink our
own position within the play of power. Janssens and Zanoni (2014: 327) have stated that
organizations tend to copy social structures, including unequal categorical relations,
from other locations, such as broader societal discourses, because they are familiar and
thus decrease individuals' transaction costs of learning them. As no organization is an
island (Holvino and Kamp 2009), the prominent neocolonial societal discourses that
strongly dictate the construction of otherness and subjectivity through binaries and bor-
ders are firmly intertwined with organizational discourses that encourage the majority
of organizational actors to protect the so-called purity of their cultural identities. This
subsequently works to prevent members of certain cultural groups from achieving 'full
subjectivity' (concept of Zanoni and Janssens 2004; Janssens and Zanoni 2014).

I should note that I do not use theorizations of the third space to propose a starting
point where one would intentionally try to create this liminal space for better under-
standing other perspectives or position oneself 'in someone else's shoes'. Instead, my
intention has been to give a description of the alteration of cultural positions and mean-
ings that occurs in interaction. The presented perspective, starting from the premises of
cultural difference, brings us to the third space, which can be understood as creating a
bridge between seeming opposites and enabling encounters between individuals—not
representatives of certain groups—who are free from preset cultural interpretations,
thus producing cultural (subject) positions outside the normalizing order of mul-
ticulturalism and, therefore, opening equal access to full subjectivity for all members
of organizations. With the approach's ability to question fixed cultural positions and
revise the hegemonic discourses that we enact, the development of more inclusive
forms of organizing is possible, with the emphasis on the agency of an individual in
an in-the-moment interaction in which cultural hierarchies and social norms can be
challenged through the continuous (re)production of our own subjectivity and cultural
meanings.

Three reasons can be identified that summarize the value of the postcolonial perspec-
tive in advancing the theoretical development of cultural difference in organizations.
First, the presented perspective reveals the multiculturalist agenda as affirming Western
hegemony and capitalist interests in the way it implicitly affects the social order in

organizations. Second, the perspective criticizes the essentialist and fixed notions of culture and cultural identities most often conceptualized through the reductionist dimensions that are most familiar to us. Third, it emphasizes flux cultural meanings produced in the moment. Thus, these postcolonial insights open up new avenues for analysing cultural difference, through which hierarchical social structures can be challenged and all members of organizations, regardless of their cultural, ethnic, or racial background, can be acknowledged through their individuality as full subjects.

The presented approach, which focuses on expanding our understanding of culture and cultural identities in organizational settings, calls for a change in the way that cultural difference is articulated in diversity scholarship. As the main implication of the presented analysis for advancing the study of cultural diversity in organizations, I suggest that future research should concentrate on giving voice to organizational actors as individuals, not as representatives of categories produced by the normalizing force of dominant discourses. To change the way that culture and cultural identities have become conceptualized through the multiculturalist approach, the unheard stories of individuals in the liminal spaces of multiple subject positions across the levels of organizations should be brought forward to elucidate the processes of forming hybrid cultural identities and culture in agency. It is seldom that these stories find their way in through the dominant multiculturalist paradigm of diversity studies, and, consequently, the complexity of cultures and subjectivity formations is downplayed.

The proposed research direction would enable bringing in the excluded others as employees, full subjects, in DM, which is seen as a key condition for equality (Janssens and Zanoni 2014: 12). Highlighting the downside of considering others as members of cultural groups and then associating certain characteristics to the entire group, Ghorashi and Sabelis (2013: 81) note that this 'prevents us from looking at individuals in their context, from accepting different interpretations of culture, from cultures changing over time, and most importantly, from questioning our own repertoires with regard to cultural exchange', which leads to a reinforcement of the hidden hierarchies inherent in categorizations. Thus, the objectives of giving voice to the suggested alternative stories of organizational actors are: (1) to facilitate a change from the multiculturalist paradigm that (re)produces organizational inequalities to transform the understanding of social relations based on binaries; and (2) to bring focus to the interaction taking place in cultural encounters, rather than having it on the generalized representations of the other.

Based on this chapter's analysis, I suggest, most simply, that there is a need to shift the focus of the research on cultural difference in organizations away from the equation of culture with physical place or origin and from pre-given fixed categories of nation, race, and ethnicity, to multiple subject positions produced in language and interaction. It is to be noted that producing cultural meanings in the third space and questioning organizational boundaries from within the very premises of their existence can be understood on many levels of analysis, not just on the individual level. The meaning of group, organizational, and societal levels is important for avoiding the way in which the social psychological paradigm of diversity research explains unsuccessful

diversity initiatives by concentrating on individual cognition (Zanoni et al. 2010; Janssens and Zanoni 2014) and, as frequently suggested within critical diversity scholarship, for avoiding the interpretation that individual-level changes alone could change the institutionalized mechanisms of exclusion without the alteration of broader systemic structures.
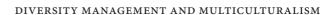
Reflecting on the third space approach, which offers an option for rejecting the institutionalized categorical identity positions offered by neocolonial discourse, I suggest that the understanding of cultural difference and inequalities in organizations will be further enhanced by perspectives that: (1) focus on identifying other (than multiculturalism) institutionalized practices within DM research that create and reify asymmetrical power relations between different cultural groups in organizations; (2) explain how these identified practices are reinforced by consequential organizational processes; and (3) explicate the multiple connections of these organizational processes and dynamics to the broader contemporary societal contexts dictated by globalized capitalism. Of course, if one wished to be more optimistic in mapping the future directions of research on cultural difference in organizations (cf. Holvino and Kamp 2009), one could start from the reversed themes of the presented directions by: (1) focusing on identifying and providing an outline of those practices of diversity research that are seen to advocate cultural equality in organizations; (2) explaining the organizational processes that help to foster those practices; and (3) explicating the multiple connections of those organizational processes and dynamics that can also be seen to generate and foster empowerment and emancipation in the broader context of globalized capitalism.

Concluding Remarks

I would like to conclude this chapter by recalling that all research on cultural difference is necessarily saturated with cultural assumptions. I have written this chapter from the location of a Finnish business school, as a woman who was born, and has lived and been educated mostly in Finland. Therefore, the institutional and societal contexts of my location should be considered as conditions that have enabled and influenced the produced text and the nature of the presented viewpoints. Writing from this position, I have argued that the controversies that have risen from the traditional way of managing diversity become less surprising when we unravel the conceptual foundations of the concept of multiculturalism behind the dominant research paradigm. In contrast to its formal ambition, the celebration of the concept of multiculturalism can be seen to uphold and create the segregation of the privileged and the disempowered, people who are set apart by fixed cultural positions and fictional representations in organizational contexts. Accordingly, if we do not relinquish the categorizing and hierarchical structures the current understanding of multiculturalism leans towards, it is probable that cultural relations will continue to be a source of organizational controversy well into the future.

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