Three Faces of Diversity Rhetoric
Managerialization, marketing and ambiguity

Alejandro Leiva

Abstract

Over the past decades, the language of diversity management has spread from the US to many parts of the world, including Sweden, where it emerged in the mid 1990's. Consisting of three papers, this thesis contributes to the field of critical diversity studies by examining the multifaceted character of diversity rhetoric among Swedish diversity consultants. A central point of debate in previous research has been the relationship between, on one hand, diversity management rhetoric, and on the other hand, equal opportunities and antidiscrimination law. Scholars suggest that Scandinavian and Swedish "diversity" are strongly associated with ideals of equality, antidiscrimination and corporate social responsibility. This thesis gives nuance to this picture by focusing on the views of consultants.

Paper 1 tries to answer this question: Do Swedish diversity consultants managerialize antidiscrimination law? Research on the US and the UK asserts a conflict between legal equality and the instrumental rhetoric of diversity management. However, studies on continental Europe and Scandinavia tend to posit diversity rhetoric as linked to ethnicity and tempered by legal and social equality. Building on interviews with diversity consultants, this paper shows that their diversity constructions conform to the managerialization thesis.

Paper 2 argues that diversity's three common rhetorical moves—its broad scope, its business case, and its dissociation from legal frames—are more open to interpretation than typically portrayed in the critical diversity research. While scholars tend to interpret this rhetoric as managerial dilution of legal and equality ideals, findings indicate that consultants may use the same rhetorical moves to incorporate an equality logic and extend legal ideas beyond the limits of the law. These interpretative discrepancies are conceptualized as ambiguity—i.e., the same rhetorical moves may support more than one interpretation.

Paper 3 examines the ongoing institutional work of diversity consultants as they rhetorically try to build a business case for "ethnic marketing" in Sweden. Extant literature suggests that ethnic marketing relies on making differences between "them" (ethnic minority consumers) and "us" (majority consumers). This paper asserts that while making differences is crucial when creating "ethnic" consumers ("different from us"), another rhetorical strategy, "making similarities," is used to construct already otherized people as "consumers" ("similar to us"). Further, findings show that Sweden's lack of official statistics on ethnicity and general reluctance towards highlighting ethnicity may function as institutional obstacles that hamper the legitimacy and spread of ethnic marketing.

Keywords: *Diversity, diversity rhetoric, consultants, law, managerialization, ambiguity, marketing.*

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Thank you ...

Contents

Introduction

Scholars have noted that "diversity" has become a global discourse—indeed, "[t]he term 'diversity' is probably the buzzword of the century" (Minowitz, 2016, p. 147). A term with predominantly positive connotations, "diversity" has a range of meanings and applications. In Sweden, we talk about biological diversity, diversity in ecosystems, housing, city planning, healthcare, product supply, and mass media ownership structures. Regardless of domain, "diversity" is the ideal to be supported. Consequently, everybody seeks to ascribe their own meanings to it. For antiracists, diversity signifies a situation in which everyone is included and represented regardless of race and ethnic background. Diversity is the situation in which ethnically heterogeneous people meet, interact, and cooperate. For sophisticated racists (e.g., "ethnopluralists"), "diversity" is allegedly so valuable that we ought to preserve it precisely by keeping ethnic groups apart.

As with "freedom" or "love," "diversity" is such a positively charged word that all parties in a debate do right in allying with it. In political discussions about housing or private-public ownership, marketization and privatization are termed "increased diversity" by proponents and "decreased diversity" by opponents. In Swedish, there is a play on words that says it all: the term *mångfald* (i.e., diversity) is often contrasted with the word *enfald*, which connotes "simplicity" and also happens to be the word for "stupidity." Naturally, no one wants to defend simple stupidity before *mångfald*.

This dissertation is about that word—diversity. More specifically, it is about diversity consultants' ideas of diversity within and around organizations. For a long time, "diversity" in Sweden was mainly associated with heterogeneity among animals, plants, mass media, and healthcare (Rönnqvist, 2008, p. 88). At the beginning of the 1990's, a few scholars began to use the term in discussions on immigration and multicultural society. However, soon the word "diversity" acquired additional meanings: it became associated with a "positive" and instrumental view of ethnic diversity as an organizational resource—and a term commonly used to denote active measures against discrimination.

The idea that employee diversity is organizationally beneficial stems from the 1980's diversity management discourse in the US. This philosophy argues that a well-managed heterogeneous workforce—particularly in terms of race/ethnicity—enhances competitive performance by leading to more creative, productive, and flexible organizations. Diversity management arguably revolutionized the understanding of ethnic and

other "differences" in organizations as it portrayed these as central strategic assets for the first time in the history of management (Zanoni, Janssens, Benschop, Nkomo, 2010).

At the same time, research suggests that "diversity" often functions as a replacement term taking the place of terms such as equal rights or antiracism (Ahmed, 2012, p. 52). The happy talk of "diversity" may downplay and hide inequality, power, and discrimination by marginalizing and supplanting the very vocabularies that allow such issues to be addressed (Bell & Hartman, 2007; see also Berrey, 2015; Edelman, Riggs Fuller, Mara-Drita, 2001; de los Reyes, 2000). As argued by Blommaert and Verschueren (1998, p. 11), discussions about ethnic diversity tend to ambivalently submit to a "management paradigm." While diversity is framed as positive and desirable, it is simultaneously cast as problematic and rather abnormal; thus it must be managed, handled, and rendered useful. Diversity is often portrayed as something completely new that has dramatically changed the presumed harmonious homogeneity of past times. "In other words, a major part of the problem consists in viewing diversity as a problem" (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998, p. 3). Further, the management paradigm axiomatically predicates which subjects are the carriers of "diversity" (minorities, immigrants, "they") and which subjects are supposed to "manage" it (the tolerant majority, "we").

In a whole different sense, diversity was a central problem for the classical sociologists. Durkheim (1984), Simmel (1971), Tönnies (2002), and Weber (1987) all wrote about modernity's increasing differentiation and individualism. For instance, Weber wrote of "communal" and "associative" relationships, Durkheim contrasted "mechanistic" with "organic" solidarity, and Tönnies used "Gemeinschaft" and "Gesellschaft." Despite significant differences, these pairs of concepts largely point to the same developments. Industrialization and urbanization led to juxtaposition of two general social orders. Modernity signified an increasing heterogeneity as societies moved from one type of relationship ("communal," "mechanistic," "Gemeinschaft") to another ("associative," "organic," "Gesellschaft"). In the first type, people share common identities, values, or traditions, which contrasts with the competitive, calculative self-interest associated with the second types of relationships.

This dissertation is not about diversity as such or how to manage it. Rather, it is about the ideas and rhetoric of diversity. In organizational contexts, this rhetoric is commonly associated with the emergence of diversity consultants. Although important players in the diversity discourse, consultants remain understudied (Mease, 2012, 2016; Kalonaityte, Prasad, & Tedros, 2010). The overarching aim of the dissertation is to explore

diversity talk among Swedish consultants. By specifically focusing on these actors, the papers in this dissertation add to our understanding of the complexity and ambiguity of their rhetoric.

Diversity rhetoric is sociologically interesting for two main reasons. First, the idea that diversity (ethnic or otherwise) is beneficial and useful has become a widespread organizational discourse. As myth and ceremony (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), diversity has become something of a Durkheimian social fact exercising a certain cohesive power. Publicly, organizations are expected to be diverse or at least describe themselves as working towards diversity (in one way or another). This portrays them as modern, rational, and legitimate. The opposite is almost unthinkable: an organization describing itself as "anti-diversity" or even *not* diverse is likely to be questioned or punished. Second, diversity rhetoric is sociologically interesting because it is directly or indirectly connected to legal discourse, ideas of equality, and notions of difference. Thus, ideas and arguments about diversity may either challenge or reproduce social norms, beliefs, and institutions. Because diversity rhetoric is concerned with social categories and identities, it is a vehicle for the construction of borders and differences between people, and between majorities and minorities.

As organizational outsiders and private actors commissioned by both public and private organizations, diversity consultants may frame "diversity" in more varied and idiosyncratic ways—either challenging or supporting established notions. At the same time, they need to negotiate "diversity" between different organizational logics. In order to get and maintain commissions, they must adapt their views and language to the needs of clients and other actors inside organizations. Thus, consultants' views on diversity both shape and are shaped by various interests and values. As this dissertation suggests, this makes for a complex and malleable rhetoric.

The papers in this dissertation are stand-alone pieces, each aiming to examine a distinct aspect of the consultancy rhetoric on diversity. At the same time, they complement and give nuance to each other. Together they point to the multifaceted and ambiguous character of "diversity" among consultants. This introductory chapter gives background to the dissertation's general theme and discusses its theoretical and methodological approaches. I begin by sketching a history of the diversity discourse as it emerged in the US in the late 1980's and how it was later introduced and re-interpreted in the Swedish context.

Diversity management from the US to Sweden

This chapter paints a broad picture of diversity management as it emerged in the US and, later, in Sweden. The aim is not to cover this theme extensively, but to offer a contextual background to the papers in this dissertation.

Diversity as a management model

Diversity management is usually traced back to the 1980's, and the Reagan administration's backlash against Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) and Affirmative Action (AA) civil rights laws. Because this backlash threatened the legitimacy of already established antidiscrimination programs and its administrators, EEO/AA specialists and human resource managers began to advocate these programs with new arguments. While EEO/AA measures were usually thought of as ways to rectify social injustices and institutional discrimination—specifically regarding race—now they began to be framed as managerial and business imperatives to attract and make use of valuable talent (Kelly & Dobbin, 1998). The 1987 publication of *Workforce 2000,* an influential report published by the conservative Hudson Institute, was an important impetus for the rise of diversity discourse (Johnston & Packer, 1987; Kelly & Dobbin, 1998; Edelman et al., 2001; Rönnqvist, 2008). This report seems to have been crucial in the shift from affirmative action to "diversity." *Workforce 2000* depicted a future of demographic changes and globalized markets that stressed the need for organizations to attract and keep a diverse workforce. According to Kelly and Dobbin (1998), diversity management proponents typically put forward two main arguments. First is the idea that demographic changes—particularly the allegedly shrinking group of white male workers—would force organizations to welcome higher proportions of workers from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds. Organizations should therefore make these workers feel appreciated in order to attract them and benefit from their cultural expertise. The second argument focused on the increasing diversity in the consumer market. To reach new immigrants and minority groups, organizations would have to develop new products and new marketing strategies. Arguably, the best way to do this was to hire employees from the same ethnic minority groups.

This so-called "business case" for diversity (Robinson & Dechant, 1997) soon developed to include several recurrent arguments. In their influential paper, Cox and Blake (1991) argued that managing employee diversity gives six (6) competitive advantages: (1) cost reduction. As organizations become more diverse, failure to integrate all workers may result in increasing costs from turnover, absenteeism, and lack of productivity. Thus, organizations that successfully manage diversity have an advantage over those that do not. (2) social reputation. By managing diversity, companies acquire favorable reputations as prospective employers for women and ethnic/racial minorities. Organizations with the best reputations for managing diversity win the competition for the most talented personnel. (3) enhanced marketing abilities. Because markets are becoming as diverse as the general workforce, managing diversity provides organizations with a key tool to meet diverse consumer demands. Women and ethnic minority employees possess increased understanding about how to approach various diverse market segments. Thus, companies that recruit women and minorities can gain and sustain a competitive advantage by tapping into additional markets. (4) organizational creativity. Because minority viewpoints are important for enhancing the quality of thought, performance, and decision-making, an organization with a diversity of perspectives has more to draw on and is more creative and innovative. (5) problem-solving. Diverse work groups produce better decisions through a wider range of perspectives and more thorough critical analysis of issues. Competitive advantage accrues because several points of view are needed to solve the complex problems facing organizations today. (6) organizational flexibility. Organizations that overcome resistance to change regarding diversity will also be well positioned to handle other types of change. Such flexibility provides a competitive advantage in an increasingly changing environment.

As argued elsewhere (Edelman et al., 2001), the idea that diversity furthers organizational outcomes is not totally specific to diversity management. This idea had been common, although not central, to other management theories for several decades. The suggestion that employees perform better when their cultural backgrounds are valued has its roots in the human relations school. Similarly, research on the effects of team diversity on problem-solving or other organizational outcomes has been around for decades, although it was not usually called "diversity" but, for instance, group member "heterogeneity."

However, diversity management seems to be the first management model that makes personnel diversity—and specifically racial/ethnic diversity—its central theme (Litvin, 1997). Analyzing management textbooks in the US, Litvin (1997) points out three dis-

tinct features of this new take on diversity. First, the heterogeneity of employees is presented as something essentially new and different from the presumed homogeneity of the past. Second, this heterogeneity is presented as constituting a *problem* that organizations and managers must handle through the development of new strategies. And third, diversity management stresses the need to shift from "treating everyone alike" to recognizing, valuing, and adapting to people's differences.

Although "diversity" is mostly associated with organizational utility and business arguments, it is not alien to other ideas, ideals, and arguments (Ahmed, 2012; Mease, 2012). Diversity management is not a coherent or monolithic idea, but a malleable term with multiple associations and connotations (Berrey, 2015). Paper 2 in this dissertation shows that even business case arguments may be formulated in ways that premise business success on equality measures, and posit equal opportunities as a necessary condition for increased efficiency.

Yet as noted above, one of the frequent arguments for managing diversity is the need to understand and address diverse consumer/customer preferences (Cox & Blake, 1991). Marketing is a central theme in the diversity management discourse. According to its proponents, employee diversity is to be leveraged to serve customers and particularly to gain access to ethnically and racially diverse markets. Thus, diversity management is closely connected to marketing approaches known as "diversity marketing," "multicultural marketing," and "ethnic marketing"[1] (Skrentny, 2016, pp. 61–71). While these terms are relatively new, the practice of tailoring marketing campaigns to target consumers based on their race or ethnicity is particularly widespread in the US, and it has been for decades (Skrentny, 2016, pp. 61–71). However, such practices are less common and talked about in Europe (Koeman, Jaubin, & Stesman, 2010), partly due to a more assimi-

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[1] The terms ethnic and multicultural marketing are established in marketing research (e.g., Carter, 2009; Cui, 2001), and are also used in critical research commenting on these (e.g., Skrentny, 2014; Rousseau, 2015). Among other related terms are "diversity marketing," "cross-cultural marketing," and "intercultural marketing." While some terms may designate approaches to marketing that go beyond ethnicity—including gender, age, sexual orientation, etc.—all of these terms are also frequently used as euphemisms for ethnic and/or racial targeting in marketing. Swedish practitioners talk about "ethnic marketing" (*etnisk marknadsföring*), "multicultural marketing" (*mångkulturell marknadsföring*), and "diversity marketing" (*mångfaldsmarknadsföring*). The interviewees in this dissertation mostly used the term "multicultural marketing," but their sole interest was in immigrants and ethnicity (not cultures, age, sexual orientation, gender, etc.). In paper 3, I prefer to use "ethnic" marketing throughout the paper: first, it points out the subject in a more precise way, and second, by using another term than the interviewees' preferred one, I hope to create some clarifying distance between my talk ("ethnic marketing") and theirs ("multicultural marketing").

lative view on immigrants and ethnic minorities (Johnson & Grier, 2011). Yet, judging by the increasing amount of prescriptive (and, to a much lesser extent, critical) literature, it may be assumed that ethnic marketing practices and research are growing in Europe also (e.g., Erdem & Schmidt, 2008; Johnson & Grier, 2011; Koeman et al., 2010; Kulinna, 2008).

Common to diversity management and ethnic marketing is the idea that marketing or selling strategies are improved by ethnically or racially "matching" sellers to customers. Further, organizations benefit from the cultural expertise of ethnic minority employees, because such employees are supposed to have insights into the needs and preferences of ethnic minority consumers. Diversity consultants are important promoters of these ideas in the US (Skrentny, 2014, p. 66). In Sweden, ethnic marketing was introduced in 2004 with the publishing of "The Multicultural Market" (Fahimi & Fridholm, 2004), a report from the Stockholm-based free market think tank Timbro. The writers encourage companies to view "immigrants as consumers" with considerable "purchasing power" and ethnicity is presented as an important variable affecting consumer behavior amongst both first and second generation immigrants. The idea that employee ethnic diversity may be used to reach ethnic minority markets was common in the initial launching of "diversity" in Sweden—a process driven by the Social Democratic Government (see below). This idea is also present in the 2004 report from Timbro: "Selling to immigrants requires cultural and linguistic competence. Companies can partly get this competence by hiring immigrants. And employment is undoubtedly the best way towards integration" (Fahimi & Fridholm, 2004, p. 5).

Despite its centrality to diversity management, ethnic or multicultural marketing has received little empirical attention in the critical literature. This literature mostly revolves around employee diversity/equality rather than diversity among consumers, or practitioners' market segmentation rhetoric. Paper 3 in this dissertation examines, from a sociological perspective, the interviewees' rhetorical strategies as they try to make a case for ethnic marketing in Sweden.

Ethnic marketing may be viewed as part of a "cultural turn" in advertising—an increased interest in how consumer behavior is shaped by specific sub- and minority cultures. Yet as Rousseau (2015) notes, one may wonder why there should be an increased interest in ethnically targeted marketing in this era of big data and the possible forthcoming of cognitive neuromarketing. While individualized and personalized data should be

the penultimate target for advertising, such methods are still too expensive and otherwise non-viable options for most advertising agencies and their clients (Rousseau, 2015).

For John D. Skrentny (2014), diversity management and ethnic marketing illustrate "racial realism"—i.e., the notion that people's race or ethnicity entails special abilities that employers may leverage to gain different benefits. Similarly, "immigrant realism" (Skrentny, 2014, p. 12) is the idea that people's status as immigrants is useful and should be considered in hiring or task assignment. According to Skrentny, racial realism differs sharply from two other views on race (and immigrant status) in employment: (1) the "classical liberal strategy," which advances a color-blind vision where race/ethnicity simply has no meaning or relevance in employment and (2) "affirmative action liberalism," an alternative view which grants significance to race, but only to ensure the goal of justice and equal opportunity. In this view, equality cannot be reached by treating everyone equally. Individuals belong to groups that vary in power and wealth, and institutional structures often maintain or worsen the situation of subordinate groups. However, beyond this, race should have no usefulness for organizations.

Both the classical liberal view and the affirmative action liberal view are institutionalized in civil rights law. However, racial realism goes further than this: it assumes that ethnicity, race, or immigrant status may and should be utilized in employment, either by using "racial abilities" (the supposed competencies that follow with race) or by "racial signaling" (the strategic deployment of employees' race to gain favorable responses from audiences) (Skrentny, 2014, pp. 10–14). Despite little to no legal support for these practices—and although politicians rhetorically support the classical liberal view—Skrentny shows that racial realism is pervasive not only in marketing but also in government, policing, education, journalism, medicine, and low-skilled employment.

I do not make use of Skrentny's work in the three papers, but it can be said that although diversity rhetoric is commonly associated with a "racial realist" view, it is not *intrinsically* attached to any of the views mentioned. The rhetoric of the interviewees in this thesis typically alternated between "affirmative action liberalism" and "racial realism" (or "immigrant realism"). However, one consultant adopted a classical liberal view. In this framing, "diversity" was about disregarding ethnicity and other legally covered categories. Ethnicity was something employers should not use or even take into consideration. Thus, this interviewees' concept of "diversity" did not include any of the typical categories (ethnicity, gender, etc.) but only "individual diversity" (i.e., personal skills and qualifications).

Does diversity pay?

Whether or not diversity enhances organizational performance is not really relevant to this dissertation, which is concerned with the rhetoric of diversity. However, research has found little support for the idea that diversity enhances performance; findings are highly mixed and inconclusive (for overviews see Mannix & Neale, 2005; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Schoobridge, 2006; van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). One problem is that both the independent variable ("diversity") and the dependent variables (various outcomes) are operationalized in countless ways, making comparisons across studies very difficult—and few studies address the exclusive impact of *ethnic* diversity on *financial* outcomes (Shoobridge, 2006). Positive associations between diversity and work performance are found under very narrow conditions; they are contingent on a series of contextual factors, such as time and group size, task at hand, group integration, and many other psychological, social, and organizational factors. Thus, the impact of diversity on working outcomes is often beyond organizational control (Mannix & Neale, 2005; Wise & Pitts, 2010). Among the variables said to mediate the positive effects of diversity is the degree of belief in the value of diversity; hence, some researchers recommend employers to promote pro-diversity beliefs (van Dick, van Knippenberg, Hägele, Guillaume, & Brodbeck, 2008; van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). In 2003, a network of authors summing up their research concluded that "the business case rhetoric has run its course" and that "there is virtually no evidence to support the simple assertion that diversity is inevitably either good or bad for business" (Kochan et al., 2003, pp. 17–18).

Similarly, support for the economic value in ethnic marketing is mostly weak or indirect (Skrentny, 2014, pp. 70-71). Studies show that different ethnic and racial groups have different product preferences, buying habits, and media usage habits. While this would suggest that targeted marketing campaigns should be more effective than a one-size-fits-all strategy, the economic returns of ethnic targeting should also depend on, among other things, the specific consumer group size, people's identification with their ethnicity/race, and their attitude towards being addressed in such terms. Sometimes ethnic marketing may backfire by being stereotypical or simply not being well received by minorities. Further, research shows that while ethnic minorities may react positively towards marketing that targets them, ethnic majorities react negatively towards marketing *not* targeted to them, thus alienating them as consumers (Johnson & Grier, 2011). Finally, support for the idea that ethnic/racial minorities are more willing to buy from sellers of the same groups is inconclusive (Skrentny, pp. 70–71). Ethnic affiliation itself is not a

selling skill. However, research suggests that the practice of ethnically "matching" employees to customers tends to create ethnic divisions of labor and generally has negative effects on ethnic minorities' earnings and advancement possibilities (e.g., Bendick, Egan, & Lanier, 2010; Collins, 1993; Grodsky & Pager, 2001; Skrentny, 2014, p. 69; Subeliani & Tsogas, 2005).

Of course, regardless of the research support for diversity's positive effects on organizational performance, there are many other good reasons for supporting equality and/or diversity.

Diversity management in Sweden

In order to understand the introduction of "diversity" in Sweden in the mid-1990's, this section clarifies the societal and legislative context at the time.

Economic crisis and the rise of xenophobic sentiment

In the 1990's, Sweden was hit by an economic crisis of a magnitude not seen since the 1930's (Bergmark & Palme, 2003). A deep economic recession, a massive increase in unemployment, and a growing budget deficit affected the welfare of immigrants, young people, and single mothers. Because Sweden had experienced full employment for more than half a century, this crisis had severe repercussions. Although the economic downturn affected most Western European countries, Sweden was hit particularly hard: "Employment fell more dramatically than in other advanced industrial nations with the exception of Finland, and unemployment rose to levels that had previously been considered almost unconceivable" (Bergmark & Palme, 2003, p. 109). Another trend during the 1990's was increased ethnic and socio-economic segregation (Bergmark & Palme, 2003) and the growing salience of xenophobic and anti-immigrant sentiment. Signs already began to show in the 1970's and 1980's as a number of new racist organizations and anti-immigrant movements were founded, among them Keep Sweden Swedish (*Bevara Sveri-*

ge svenskt) and the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*).[2]

   The consensus in public opinion and among established political parties was that ethnic discrimination and racism were peripheral phenomena, but this began to change somewhat at the beginning of the 1990's. At that time, several refugee camps and Muslim holy places became the targets of racist attacks. The neo-Nazi network White Ayrian Resistance (*Vitt ariskt motstånd*) received much attention after several bombings and bank robberies (Bjørgo, 1993). The newly formed party New Democracy (*Ny Demokrati*) managed to enter the Swedish parliament with an explicit anti-immigrant message. Partly inspired by this discourse, a serial killer known in Swedish media as the "Laser Man" (*Lasermannen*) spread horror among the immigrant population from August 1991 to February 1992. Later known as John Ausonius, the "Laser Man" shot eleven people in Stockholm and Uppsala with a rifle equipped with a laser sight. Killing one and seriously injuring ten other people, the victims had all been chosen for being, in this man's view, "immigrants" (i.e., for their dark hair or dark skin).

   Although Sweden had been an immigrant country for quite some time, immigration increased during the 1980's and 1990's, and the "immigrant issue" (Rönnqvist, 2008) became salient at the political level. The economic crisis, unemployment rates among immigrants, and the general anti-immigrant discourse (and violence) all functioned as catalysts for intensified discussions on segregation, integration, discrimination, and racism (Rönnqvist, 2008). All of this arguably contributed to the emergence of Swedish diversity discourse in the mid-1990's. However, another important factor was the ongoing discussions on the need to legislate against discrimination.

The development of antidiscrimination legislation

Another significant factor was the ongoing development of antidiscrimination laws. The first Act against ethnic discrimination was introduced in 1994. In contrast to the situation in the US, where the language of "diversity" succeeded and partly replaced affirmative action and the civil rights movement, Swedish diversity discourse grew in parallel and in

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[2] The Sweden Democrats, a party with strong connections to Nazism and fascism, was founded in 1988. The party made an electoral breakthrough in 2010, gaining 5.7% of the vote and 20 seats in parliament. At the moment, it has around 18% of the vote and oscillates between being the third and second largest political party in parliament.

conjunction with the emergence and expansion of antidiscrimination legislation. From the 1960's onwards, Sweden came under international pressure to satisfy the legal standards set by various international conventions (Banakar, 2004; Carlsson, 2010). Particularly, it received criticism for the lack of legislation prohibiting racial discrimination. Sweden responded by routinely setting up commissions to investigate the need to introduce anti-discrimination laws, and these committees concluded that legislation was not necessary because there was no evidence of ethnic or racial discrimination. The reluctance to meet the standards is partly explained by the Swedish labor law model. Based on the consensu-al dialogue between the social partners (the employers and the labor unions), this model constructed employment legislation as alien and illegitimate. The terms and conditions of work were to be regulated by collective agreements between the social partners. As noted by scholars, "[b]efore becoming a serious object of discourse for the parliamentary political process, any major policy issue has to pass through the 'iron triangle' of the central unions, the central association of employers and concerned state agencies. And neither the unions nor the employers' central association have shown any interest in anti-discrimination legislation" (Schierup, 1991, p. 128). In 1983, the government formed The Commission on Ethnic Prejudice and Discrimination. Although this committee argued in its report that extensive ethnic discrimination was practiced in the labor market and that Sweden had an obliga-tion to legislate against it, the committee's proposals were critically received and turned down by the government (Banakar, 2004).

The issue of whether legislation should be used as a means to promote equality be-tween men and women was the object of intense debate throughout the 1970's, and the Swedish liberal party *Folkpartiet* (nowadays The liberals, *Liberalerna*) raised several motions to the Swedish parliament proposing legislation against discrimination on the grounds of sex and race, modeled on the legislation in the United States. Such proposals were consistently turned down by the social partners (including the Social Democratic government), which saw discrimination as an employment issue that should be regulated by social agreements (Banakar, 2004; Carlson, 2010). But after decades of discussion and debate, the first Swedish Act against sex discrimination gained force in 1980 and was amended three times during that decade. Also, the first Act against ethnic discrimination gained force in 1994, but was heavily criticized. First, it did not cover the whole recruit-ment process, and the Act did not address indirect discrimination. Consequentially, be-tween 1994 and 1999, the Ombudsman against ethnic discrimination (DO) only managed

to bring one case into court, which it lost. [3] The Act was amended in 1999 (Banakar, 2005). The same year, two other Acts were introduced prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and disability. Thus, from 1994 to 2007, Swedish antidiscrimination laws expanded and the Swedish labor law model was confronted and reconciled with the more liberal model of the EU, based on individual employment rights. By the end of this period, Sweden had nine legislative acts covering different grounds of discrimination in different settings. These acts prohibited discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation (see Carlson, 2010, p. 105). In 2008, this piecemeal legislation was replaced by a universal discrimination Act gaining force in 2009. This Act covers seven grounds: sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation, and age. Additionally, two of the former discrimination Acts remain: the 2002 Act prohibiting discrimination on the basis of part-time and fixed-time work, and the 1995 Parental leave Act. Thus, over the past decades, "[d]iscrimination law has progressed in Sweden from being seen as an encroachment on the employer's prerogative and on Swedish labor law model as a whole, to its current status of granting protection of a human right" (Carlson, 2010, p. 108). Other scholars argue that the Swedish development of discrimination legislation, particularly against ethnic discrimination, is hardly the result of a mental or ideological conversion among the social partners, but rather a forced adaption to EU directives and a pragmatic concern in the face of increased social exclusion and "unrest" in disadvantaged urban areas (Banakar, 2004; Schierup, 2010).

"Mångfald"—Swedish diversity management

The word "diversity" (*mångfald*) had been used sporadically in social research in the early 1990's, in connection with discussions on multicultural society and/or discrimination (e.g., Ålund & Schierup, 1991; Rönnqvist, 2008). However, from the mid-1990's, this term adopted new meanings. Influenced by the diversity management discourse in the US—and to counteract unemployment and negative views on immigrants—different ac-

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[3] Ethnic discrimination was forbidden by law in 1986, however, this law did not contain any provisions against discrimination in recruitment or employment, not did it provide sanctions. Instead, it appointed the Ombudsman against ethnic discrimination to counteract discrimination through information (Banakar, 2004).

tors began to frame "diversity" and "ethnic diversity" as economically necessary and beneficial for organizations (Rönnqvist, 2008; Stringfellow, 2018). Another reason for the launching of "diversity" was that it seemed to many as an alternative to legislation. According to Rönnqvist's (2008) investigation, the main actors behind the introduction of diversity management ideas were the Social Democratic government and state agencies, but also labor unions, public organizations, government sponsored institutes, and larger private companies. Numerous reports on "diversity" appeared from 1994 onwards. Sweden's Technical Attachés—an organization that belonged to the Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation—issued two early reports on diversity: "Diversity: How American companies invest in diversity" (Skog, 1996) and "Managing Diversity—strategies for diversity in the USA" (Fägerlind, 1999). Another important actor was "Sweden 2000," a partially state-sponsored institute consisting of various public and private organizations. Also, the former Equality Ombudsman (EO)—the agency appointed to interpret the law and to supervise compliance—started a diversity project in 1995 in cooperation with a range of private companies, public organizations, and labor unions. The EO issued two early reports: the 1996 publication "Diversity pays" (*Mångfald lönar sig*) and the 1997 document "10 small and medium size companies that invest in diversity" (*10 små och medelstora företag som satsar på mångafald*) (Stringfellow, 2018; Rönnqvist, 2008).

The discourse of diversity continued to grow and numerous other reports and publications appeared from the second half of the 1990's onwards. Immigrants and ethnic minorities were constructed as valuable resources bringing cultural competences that could enhance organizational performance and be used to reach new markets. The Social Democratic government, the leading actor behind all this, also issued reports drawing on diversity management ideas, for instance "Count on diversity" from 1997, a report pushing the benefits of diversity in connection with proposals for demanding "active measures" in new legislation against ethnic discrimination. The government actively supported diversity management ideas as a bait to get public and private organizations to voluntarily work for equality. State agencies such as the EO and the (now defunct) Integration Board (*Integrationsverket*) all advocated diversity as profitable *in parallel* with discussions on antidiscrimination legislation and the integration of immigrants. Thus, as research on Sweden has pointed out, diversity management became more associated with state policies of equality and legislation than with a distinct corporate management model (Kalonaityte et al., 2010; Rönnqvist, 2008; Stringfellow, 2018).

The initial enthusiastic reaction of the Social Democrat government and the social

partners to the notion of "diversity" was soon tempered, partly as a consequence of criticisms from academia (e.g., de los Reyes, 2000, 2001) arguing that the Swedish discourse of "diversity" was essentialist and an instrumental vision of ethnic differences. "Mångfald" was charged with sidestepping questions of power and discrimination. In 1998, the social partners[4] had formed the Diversity Council (Rådet för mångfald i arbetslivet), aiming to guide employers on how to work for integration and equal opportunities at work. Part of their publications stressed the idea that "diversity pays." However, as Stringfellow (2018) noted, the scholarly critique led to the renaming of the "Diversity Council" to the "Council for Integration in Working Life" (Rådet för integration i arbetslivet, 2003). Its guide "Diversity in working life" was re-written and re-titled "Integration in working life." The word diversity (*mångfald*) was erased and the section "Diversity pays" was replaced with "Arguments for integration." According to Stringfellow (2018), at the national level, the labor union confederations were now skeptical to diversity/mångfald because its business case seemed to foment ideas of ethnic statistics and positive special treatment (Stringfellow, 2018, p. 11). Instead, they began to use the word "integration" and drop the business arguments. But at the sector level, the unions continued to use "diversity" and business arguments as an antidote to what they considered the problem of viewing immigrants as inferior, and to promote milder forms of positive action through "Diversity Plans" (*mångfaldsplaner*). The state's engagement in economic rationales also decreased over the years, and it progressively came to use the word "diversity" in connection with integration and antidiscrimination law (rather than organizational utility).

In sum, the introduction of "diversity" in Sweden coincided with and contributed to other significant developments, including new equality agendas and discussions (Rönnqvist, 2008; Stringfellow, 2012, 2018; Kalonaityte et al., 2010). Diversity management ideas spurred antidiscrimination legislation and active measures, and created a non-assimilative and positive (although not unproblematic) view on immigrants and difference. The language of diversity or "mångfald" offered a space for at least implicitly recognizing discrimination and inequality without putting the responsibility on anyone. It enabled unions and employers to engage in these discussions without risking their reputations—and to voice the wonders of diversity and demonstrate they were against racism. It is interesting to note that much of this was a "top down" discourse driven by the state;

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[4] That is, both employer organizations and labor union confederations such as Svenskt Näringsliv, Arbetsgivarverket, Landstingsförbundet, Svenska Kommunförbundet, Försäkringskasse-förbundet, LO, TCO, and SACO (Rönnqvist, 2008, p. 110).

immigrants were largely absent in the launching and spreading of diversity except as the subjects of discussion. The talk of diversity lacked diversity.

As noted in the literature, the rise of diversity management is commonly associated with the evolution of the diversity consultant industry (Kalonaityte et al., 2010). This is also true of Sweden, where the first signs of this new profession appeared in the 1990's (Omanovic, 2009). In fact, as the state and labor unions began to temper "diversity" by dropping utilitarian arguments, the business case rhetoric began to be more associated with private diversity consultants. In interviews with union representatives, Stringfellow (2012) recounts how the worker's confederation, LO, saw the "integration" concept as a way of counteracting diversity consultants, which were seen as misleading employers to adopt ethnic measurement strategies: "There were so many consultants … they were selling this stupidity with diversity managing and all that stuff and people were buying it" (Stringfellow, 2012, p. 6). At the turn of the millennium, actors that had contributed to the introduction of "diversity" in the 1990's, such as the government attachés, had become self-labeled diversity consultants, and the institute "Sweden 2000" was reshaped into a diversity consultancy firm (Rönnqvist, 2008).

It is difficult to know the number of diversity consultants in Sweden today; these actors work individually and are not collectively represented by any organization (see below under the section "The interviewees"). Although the expansion of diversity consultancy has never been as explosive as in the US, by searching the web it is clear that consultancy regarding "diversity" has been steadily increasing and will probably continue to do so. In recent years, the universities of Stockholm and Malmö have put together bachelor's programs in diversity studies for students wanting to become, among other things, future diversity consultants.

Remarks on Swedish "diversity", ethnicity and race

In Swedish, there is no real equivalent to the term "diversity management." The word "diversity" (*mångfald*) is alternately used both to denote heterogeneity and the practice of "managing" or striving for diversity/equality. In the latter sense, another commonly used term is "diversity work" (*mångfaldsarbete*), which is virtually synonymous with "diversity management" but without the obvious managerial overtones.

Three things may be said to distinguish Swedish "diversity" or "diversity work" from the US version: its close connection to legal discourse, its close connection to ethnicity or "immigrants," and the lack of official data on ethnicity. I discuss these below.

"Diversity" as concerning ethnicity

Diversity or "mångfald" is a vague concept; it may encompass gender, disability, age, and so on—but it most often refers exclusively to *ethnic* diversity, or simply to "immigrants." However, words like "immigrants" and "ethnic background" are often associated with physical features and thus bound up with notions of race. Yet the word "race" is controversial in Sweden and virtually never used in public. Like many other European countries, Sweden has erased the word "race" from the antidiscrimination law, opting for the discrimination ground "ethnic affiliation." In the law, the term "skin color" is used to specify the meaning of "ethnic affiliation." Thus, it can be argued that by neither including "race" nor clearly separating "skin color" from "ethnic affiliation," Swedish law conflates—or allows for the conflation of—ethnicity and race (Brännström, 2018). Research shows that Swedish courts tend to understand the official discrimination ground "ethnic affiliation" in narrow racial terms (i.e., physical appearance and bloodlines). This partly explains why it is difficult to win cases in which discrimination is explained not with reference to race or skin color but to ethnicity proper, such as assumed cultural differences (Brännström, 2018).

"Diversity" and legal discourse

Whereas diversity management in the US is associated with the Reagan administration's assault on affirmative action and a retreat from legal discourse, "diversity" in Sweden (and in Europe) took form in parallel and in convergence with the increasing awareness of the need to introduce or expand legislation against discrimination. Rather than a distinct corporate management model, "diversity" in Sweden is largely associated with the public sector and mandated active measures, with policies for the integration of immigrants, and with a high degree of state involvement (Kalonaityte et al., 2010, p. 254; Stringfellow, 2018; Rönnqvist, 2008).

The present Discrimination Act (SFS 2008:567) forbids discrimination based on the following seven grounds: *sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation,* and *age*. The Act requires that employers take "active measures" to prevent discrimination and to promote "equal rights and opportunities." Until 2017, the law required that employers kept a plan for equality between men and women (*Jämställdhetsplan*); today there is no such demand; instead, employers have to document their actions for gender equality. Over the years, however, the Equality Ombudsman (EO) has encouraged employers to develop an action plan (*handlingsplan*) specifying their active measures regarding all seven discrimination grounds. These plans have alternately been called "diversity plans" and "plans for equal rights and opportunities." Some EO guides on active measures have been co-written with diversity consultants (e.g., HomO, 2006), and they argue that (ethnic) diversity leads to organizational flexibility, competitiveness, creativeness, profitability, strengthened company brand and better customer adaptation (e.g., Diskrimineringsombudsmannen, 2013). Thus, although not mentioned in the statutes, the words "diversity" (*mångfald*) and "ethnic diversity" (*etnisk mångfald*) have been widely used in connection with discussions about antidiscrimination, legal compliance, and active measures. Many organizations keep a "diversity plan" describing their equality policies, often in conjunction with diversity management ideas. Diversity consultants are often hired for advice on how to draw up and implement such plans or how to fulfill legal requirements (Rönnqvist, 2008; Kalonaityte et al, 2010).

"Diversity" and the lack of data on ethnicity/race

In contrast to the US, there is a lack of data on ethnicity (and race) to assist in mapping and combatting discrimination. While such monitoring is generally a routine part of diversity management in the US (Wrench, 2007), it is a controversial practice in Sweden restricted by both legal and social barriers (Wrench, 2007; Öhberg & Medeiros, 2017). This issue requires a more detailed discussion than the previous ones.

The Swedish population register (*Folkbokföringen*) gathers data on "place of birth" and "citizenship." These categories are registered automatically without individuals' consent. Based on this, Swedish Statistics (*Statistiska Centralbyrån*) makes use of two other classifications: "foreign background" and "Swedish background." The former denotes people born abroad or people born in Sweden to two parents born abroad. "Swedish background" denotes people born in Sweden to at least one parent born in Sweden.

These categories are not the same as ethnicity (cultural self-identification) or race (skin-color, physical features). To begin with, ethnicity is not the same as place of birth, nationality, citizenship, race (skin color), language or religion. While all of these factors shape ethnic identity, ethnicity involves subjective self-identification (see paper 3). For instance, people born outside of Sweden may self-identity (ethnically) as Swedes rather than something else. Conversely, people born in Sweden—and Swedish citizens—may have ethnic identities other than simply "Swedes." Many Swedes self-identify as "Afro-Swedes" or "black" rather than only "Swedes." Immigrants from Iraq or Turkey may self-identify as Assyrians or Kurds rather than Iraqis or Turks. Further, race (skin color) is not the same as ethnicity, nationality or place of birth. Native Swedes and people that self-identify as Swedes may socially be identified as non-Swedes based on their dark skin-color or other physical features. Conversely, immigrants from Latin America may face different discrimination patterns depending on their skin-color, although they share the same "place of birth" and nationality.

The point is that discrimination patterns that are primarily explained by race (skin color), religion (Muslim or Christian) or ethnicity (Iraqi or Assyrian) cannot fully be revealed without data on race, religion and ethnicity. Proxies such as "place of birth," "language" or people's names give some indication, but in many cases they are blunt and may statistically hide important patterns of inequality.

Thus, out of the seven official discrimination grounds, Sweden keeps official statistics on two: biological sex and age. There is no official statistic on ethnicity proper, skin color (race) or religion. Nor does Sweden keep statistics on disability, sexual orientation

and gender identity. A common explanation to Sweden's lack of ethnic/racial data is that such data is illegal. However, this is a matter of controversy.

In 2018, the new EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, in Swedish *Dataskyddsförordningen*) started to apply and replaced the former Swedish Personal Data Act (*Personuppgiftalgen,* PuL 1998:204). GDPR is far more comprehensive and severe than the former PuL, but they share the following. As the former law, GDPR forbids the "[p]rocessing of personal data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership" (Regulation (EU) 2016/679, 2016, p. 38). However, both PuL and GDPR grants various exceptions from this prohibition, notably two: first, personal data (on ethnicity and race) may be handled with the subjects' explicit consent. Two: personal data (on ethnicity and race) may be collected when necessary for reasons of public interest, for instance in order to safeguard the fundamental rights and the interests of the data subject (see § 9, p. 38-39). Further, the European Commission has on multiple occasions encouraged its member-states to gather equality data on ethnicity—and to a less degree, race. It has recently remarked on the "misunderstanding" that such equality data is forbidden and it has commented on the member-states' "reluctance" to officially introduce it (Makkonen, 2016, p. 13; see also Farkas, 2017). Writing on this debate, Patrick Simmons (2017) argues that the production of ethnic statistics in European countries remains contentious and relates to the post-1945 strategy to erase race and ethnicity from legal texts and collective representations. Simmons calls this "colourblindness" and "statistical blindness":

> The national statistical agencies in Europe might be reluctant to go in that direction, but the European statisticians organization (UNECE) and its advisory committee (CEIES) have delivered an unambiguous statement in 2007: "In order to measure and combat ethnic and racial discrimination, ethnicity is an essential background characteristic in every survey, just as age and gender." (Simmons, 2017, p. 2327).

In Sweden, there is a strong and widespread belief that data on ethnicity—even when the purpose is to map inequality and counteract discrimination—is forbidden. In public debates, such measures are often associated with racism and race-biology. In recent years, discussions have emerged on the legality and practicality of equality data on (self-reported) ethnicity (Hübinette, 2015; León Rosales, 2011; Öhberg & Medeiros, 2017). In

2011, the Swedish government commissioned a study concerning the development of national equality data regarding all discrimination grounds. The task was given to the Equality Ombudsman (EO), who concluded that equality data (including ethnicity) was necessary (Al-Zubaidi, 2012). However, it has not been put into practice.

In 2013, it was revealed that Swedish police in southern Sweden kept a database showing family ties between Romani individuals. This ethnic register was deemed to be illegal by the Swedish Commission on Security and Integrity Protection. However, such non-consensual registers are not the same as equality data on self-reported ethnicity. We could say that while *equality data* on ethnicity and race is not strictly forbidden by "law in the books," it is nevertheless forbidden or discouraged by general "living law" (Hertogh, 2009)—i.e., by the norms and ideals that people view *as* the law. In paper 3, I suggest—based on interviews—that this general view on ethnic data as illegal hampers the efforts of ethnic marketing. To be sure, proponents of ethnic marketing are not primarily interested in equality data, but in costumer and consumer data.

So, while ethnic diversity is framed as important and beneficial to organizations, the possibilities to actually assess organizational diversity or diversity strategies are limited. Scholars noted that organizations "do not dare or simply have the right to measure this, due to legislation banning the registration of employees and citizens on the basis of ethnicity and race" (Romani, Holck, Holgersson, & Muhr, 2017). Thus, Swedish organizations refrain from diversity management or marketing strategies that explicitly involve ethnic registration because, as other scholars argue, "in Sweden it is illegal to register or gather information about individuals' ethnic backgrounds. For that reason, it is practically impossible to measure ethnic diversity in organizations by other means than informal evaluations" (Kalonaityte et al., 2010, p. 255). This may be said to contribute to the vague rhetorics of "diversity"—it is talked about, voiced, displayed, and celebrated in general terms, but neither ethnic diversity nor its alleged benefits are supposed to be measured.[5]

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[5] In paper 3, the lack of data on ethnicity is discussed as a factor obstructing the interviewees' efforts to spread ethnic marketing. For clarity, I should say that I am split on the issue of equality data based on (self-ascribed) ethnicity. On one hand, I think such data would be valuable in order to clarify patterns of inequality (in the same way that equality data on gender is used to discover and counteract unjust inequality between men and women). On the other hand, talking about ethnicity and race—even when the intention is to combat discrimination—always takes the risk of confirming stereotypes or perpetuating the social significance and the view of ethnic and racial categories as natural and "real."

Critical diversity studies

This dissertation may be viewed as belonging to the cross-disciplinary research field called "critical diversity studies" (Zanoni et al., 2010). The aim of this section is not to offer an overview of this broad and growing field, but to position the papers of this thesis and suggest how they add to the literature.

Emerging in the 1990's as a reaction to organizational diversity discourse—including the mainstream diversity management literature—, critical diversity research attempts to explore and offer alternative understandings of "diversity" and its management as socially constructed, contextual, and politically charged phenomena. Methodologically, it is mostly qualitative. Theoretically, it draws from numerous approaches such as institutional theory, discourse analysis, rhetorical analysis, labor process theory, intersectional theories, postcolonial theory, etc.

An early and still present theme within critical diversity research addresses the relationship between "diversity" and antidiscrimination laws. This research is mostly based in the US and the UK, where "diversity" arose as a distinct discourse succeeding and arguably replacing former legally based equality programs (Edelman et a., 2001; Kelly & Dobbin, 1998). To some scholars, diversity management is a weakened form of affirmative action that nevertheless retains many of the former antidiscrimination practices. However, other scholars argue that diversity rhetoric offers a significantly different concept and subtly reshapes and "managerializes" the meaning of antidiscrimination law (Edelman et al., 2001). This study shows that diversity proponents in the US tend to a) replace moral/legal rationales with efficiency motives, b) expand the scope of "diversity" to include virtually any group or individual differences, and c) portray the "diversity" model as voluntary and strategic whereas the law is depicted in a negative light. **Paper 1** of this dissertation explores this in the Swedish context: the rhetoric of consultants is analyzed drawing from this "managerialization" theory. This approach may be surprising given that scholars often portray "diversity" in Sweden and Scandinavia as associated with ethnicity, legal measures, and equality. While this is generally true—particularly in the public sector—the views of for-profit diversity consultants have not been empirically examined.

Another early and still central theme within this research is the ways in which the language of diversity constructs differences, typically portraying them as ready-made,

discrete, measurable, and natural (e.g., Kalonaityte, 2010; Litvin, 1997; de los Reyes, 2000; Zanoni & Janssens, 2004). Categories such as ethnicity and race are taken to be natural or inherent traits of individuals and groups. Reified and commodified as "assets" and "resources," ethnicity/race is supposed to carry specific values and abilities. In many contexts, though, the diversity discourse may also construct minorities as *lacking* the proper values and abilities. Kalonaityte (2010) examined how "diversity" in a Swedish municipal school maintains a taken-for-granted boundary between "immigrants" and "Swedes," depicting the former as lacking certain "Swedish" democratic values and behaviors. "Diversity" is defined in terms of integration and equality but the operative definition is assimilation: immigrants should become "Swedes."

A third group of research maps the voyage of "diversity" outside the US, showing how it is shaped by different national, local, and organizational contexts. Sometimes drawing on the concept of "translation" (Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996), scholars have examined how diversity ideas have been transposed to suit other settings, such as Sweden (Omanovic, 2009; Rönnqvist, 2008), Denmark (Boxenbaum, 2006; Risberg & Söderberg, 2008), Finland (Meriläinen, Tienari, Katila, & Benschop, 2009), New Zealand (Jones, Pringle, & Shepherd, 2000) and many others countries. This research suggests that diversity management's original focus on business rationales and a broad spectrum of differences is reshaped in the case of Scandinavia, where it is attached to ethnicity and gender and supplemented by other motives such as integration and social justice (Kalonaityte, 2010) or corporate social responsibility (Boxenbaum, 2006). Sometimes scholars are explicitly critical of diversity proponents in the US. Jones, Pringle, and Shepherd (2009) argue that the dominant discourse of diversity management is ethnocentric since it is embedded in unacknowledged assumptions specific to the US context. At other times, however, scholars are more critical of the way in which the "original" US model has been reinterpreted. Writing on Sweden and the city of Malmö, Sofia Rönnqvist (2008) describes the US version of diversity management as a "radical" idea focusing on utility, all differences, voluntariness, and organizational change. In her view, this idea was "watered down" in Sweden as it increasingly became associated with ethnic diversity and issues of antidiscrimination, racism, equality, and the integration of immigrants (Rönnqvist, 2008, p. 122). Interestingly, this view is quite the opposite of the one suggested by the vast majority of research from the US, which instead views "diversity" as the watered-down version of equal employment opportunity and affirmative action (e.g., Edelman et al., 2001).

This underscores the different and, at times, opposing meanings attached to "diversity" (even among scholars).

Foucaldian examinations of "diversity"—based on text analyses—suggest that both the mainstream diversity literature and critical diversity studies are governmental and biopolitical (Ahonen, Tienari, Meriläinen, & Pullen, 2014). Diversity discourse denies and reduces difference by treating human diversity as categorizable and manageable—either for business or equality reasons. Thus, even critical research is an assault on diversity: it revolves around the question of *how* diversity should be governed rather than whether it should be governed at all.

While such "fundamental" critiques (Wrench, 2007) of the diversity discourse are pertinent, they are also quite sweeping, overlooking variation and nuance in the diversity discourse. Still, much research shows that diversity is not a fixed and universal concept. The specific meanings of "diversity" and "diversity management" vary, particularly with the agency, values, and interests of the involved actors in meaning making processes (e.g., Ahmed, 2012; Berrey, 2015). For instance, the term "management" may be interpreted as an indicator of one-sided power and control. Yet, empirically, this term may have other meanings, and it is not always used in discussions on diversity (as mentioned earlier, in Swedish the more common term is "diversity work"). As Wrench (2007) noted, the question of whether diversity work/management operates to preserve or decrease inequality is an empirical question, not one that can be resolved by logic or textual analyses alone. The possibility of alternative interpretations always remains.

Research based on interviews, ethnography, or historiography usually reveals more variety and flexibility in how diversity is or has been perceived, talked about, and used (e.g., Ahmed, 2012; Berrey, 2015; Litvin, 2002; Mease, 2012; 2016; Omanovic, 2009; Rönnqvist, 2008; Tomlinson & Schwabenland, 2010). This research shows, among other things, that while diversity management is commonly associated with the "business case"—as opposed to the moral or legal case—diversity practitioners and other organizational actors do, in practice, combine arguments or shift between efficiency rationales and other kinds of motives for diversity depending on the audience. Yet much critical literature still tends to portray the "business case" itself as quite distinct, univocal, and unflexible. **Paper 2** argues and empirically demonstrates that the business case may be formulated to incorporate and presuppose equal opportunities. The article explores the ambiguity of consultancy rhetoric and shows that the same rhetorical moves that scholars frequently interpret as "managerial" (i.e., business rationales, broadly defined diversity, and

a dissociation from antidiscrimination law) may be used to advance equality ideals that go beyond the legal frame. For instance, some interviewees include social class as an important diversity dimension.

Interestingly, class is largely absent as an explicit issue in the diversity discourse. Scholars have recently noted that class is largely overlooked even in the critical literature (Jonsen, Tatli, Özbilgin, & Bell, 2013). However, two exceptions can be mentioned. In the first, an ethnographic study, Ellen Berrey (2015) addresses the consequences of the frequent neglect of class inequalities in the language of diversity within a university, a housing project, and a multinational firm. For instance, "Starr Corporation" proclaims to advance a proactive diversity strategy, yet the company's diversity discourse mostly functions as a symbolic myth and window dressing. Despite official statements, diversity workshops, and website pictures displaying racial diversity among the employees, the firm's vague diversity notion—including even whether people are "night time" or "day time" persons—dilutes race and class inequalities while simultaneously rendering the firm's social legitimacy. Berrey shows that this diversity discourse often serves to destigmatize white people by providing them with a comfortable and positive role as bearers of openness and tolerance. Further, the firm's diversity initiatives serve to naturalize class hierarchies as it only privileges high-status employees while leaving the problems of the workers "at the bottom" unaddressed.

In the second, Holck (2018) examines the inequalities of opportunities within a municipal center in Denmark. Renowned as a diversity champion, the center applies the municipal policy on diversity and equality, which focuses on recruitment strategies so that staff composition mirrors local demographics. Accordingly, employees differ according to age, gender, ethnicity, language, professional training, and work experience. While superficially exemplary, employees are assigned tasks according to their presumed language skills and ethnic backgrounds. Thus, even high-skilled members of ethnic minorities are assigned customer-oriented, low-status tasks (because they speak the languages of the customers) while members of the ethnic majority (white Danes) are assigned tasks at higher levels of the municipal hierarchy, such as politico-strategic contacts and meetings, assuming they are more "representative" and know the Danish cultural codes. Thus, Holck shows that core ideas of diversity management (that diversity pays and ethnic differences are to be "used") may in practice consolidate divisions and unequal opportunities. This research shows that diversity work and practices are highly rhetorical: more

than a commitment to equality, the "diversity" of employees is used to signal commitment.

While ethnic or multicultural marketing ideas are central to diversity management, this topic is virtually absent in critical diversity studies. However, as illustrated, Holck (2018) and others touch on the subject of "ethnically matching" employees to customers. Yet research has not focused on the rhetoric of ethnic targeting in marketing. **Paper 3** adds to the literature by examining this rhetoric among Swedish diversity consultants.

Theoretical approaches

The dissertation makes use of different theoretical approaches, chosen and developed for their ability to shed light on each paper's specific aim. Paper 1 asks whether the language of diversity may "managerialize" Swedish antidiscrimination law. Thus, this paper makes use of the theory of managerialization (Edelman et al., 2001).

Paper 2 is, in a way, a complementary critique of Paper 1. This paper argues, both through theory building and empirical work, that the "managerial" rhetoric of diversity (in paper 1) is more ambiguous than is commonly portrayed in research. This paper develops its own theoretical framework drawing from previous research, sociolegal research, and theories on ambiguity.

Finally, Paper 3 shifts focus from employee diversity to diversity among customers and consumers. This paper sets out to examine the interviewees' rhetorical efforts to build a business case for ethnic marketing. Focusing on rhetorical strategies and institutional obstacles, the interviewees' efforts are seen as "institutional work" involving both ethnic and market categorizations. Thus, this paper draws on institutional work research and literature on ethnic categorizations and market categorizations.

Institutional managerialization theory (Paper 1)

Paper 1 of this dissertation examines how "diversity" rhetoric among consultants relates to antidiscrimination law. For this purpose, the paper draws from the theory of "managerialization" (Edelman, 2016; Edelman et al., 2001). This theory suggests that laws regulating organizations are not clear and fixed; instead, their meanings are reshaped and constructed by organizational actors. Edelman and colleagues illustrated this in the case of the US by examining diversity rhetoric in professional managerial journals. Paper 1 examines consultants through interviews. Although scholars based in Europe discuss the relationship between diversity discourse and legal frames—and although they occasionally refer to the concept of "managerialization"—there is little empirical work on how diversity rhetoric among specific organizational actors may reshape the meanings of laws. Given that "diversity" in Europe has developed in parallel with antidiscrimination legislation, some scholars argue that "diversity" and antidiscrimination laws have been recon-

ciled (e.g., Klarsfeld, 2009). In contrast to the US, where "diversity" signified an idea-tional shift from previous legal approaches, "diversity" in Europe—and Sweden—is tak-en to be intertwined or largely synonymous with the law. Thus, scholars seem to view managerialization as something specific to the US. The managerialization concept has not been used empirically in research on Europe (or outside the US, to my knowledge). I ar-gue, however, that the interconnectedness between diversity discourse and laws is pre-cisely what makes the study of managerialization interesting in a context such as Sweden. Rather than assuming that diversity and laws always coincide, Paper 1 examines what diversity possibly adds to—or takes away from—antidiscrimination law in the case of consultants.

Edelman et al. (2001) suggest that organizational actors tend to slip their own inter-ests and values into their interpretations of laws. Paper 1 tries to understand the inter-viewees' diversity rhetoric as reflective of their occupational problems and interests. Drawing on Kitay and Wright's (2007) paper on the occupational constraints of manage-ment consultants, paper 1 assumes that consultants face occupational problems that shape their views on "diversity."

I should say that the concept and theory of managerialization in organizational con-texts is only one part of Edelman's "endogeneity theory" (Edelman, 2016). This theory suggests not only that organizations (and organizational actors such as consultants) con-struct the meaning of employment laws, but that these constructions tend to feed back into the legal system over time, thus becoming institutionalized. For the purpose of paper 1, I only examine rhetorical managerialization.

A theoretical approach to ambiguity (paper 2)
While paper 1 establishes that the diversity constructions of consultants largely conform to the theory of rhetorical managerialization, the aim of paper 2 is to examine the ambi-guity of this "managerial" rhetoric. The rhetoric consists of three moves—a broad scope that extends beyond the legal categories, a stress on business rationales, and a dissocia-tion from antidiscrimination laws. First, in paper 2, I develop a theoretical argument showing that these three rhetorical traits are ambiguous—i.e, they allow more than one interpretation. Scholars usually view these three traits as a managerial dilution of antidis-

crimination laws and equality ideals. I draw from sociolegal scholarship on diversity to argue that these rhetorical moves may simultaneously be interpreted in ways that incorporate equality ideals. Second, I show this empirically by juxtaposing the scholarly interpretations with the interpretations of Swedish diversity consultants. Further, drawing from literature on pragmatic ambiguity (Giroux, 2006) and polysemy in rhetorical criticism (Ceccarelli, 1998), I discuss why both sets of interpretations may coexist. I also discuss how ambiguity itself may be interpreted.

Ambiguity is often seen as a failure in communication and, in highlighting ambiguity, paper 2 takes the risk of being ambiguous itself. In *The flight from Ambiguity*, sociologist Donald N. Levine argued that social scientists have a disposition "to *believe* that to be scientific means to be unambiguous" (Levine, 1985, p. 7). While this belief has beneficial consequences—such as the analytical clarification of concepts—the same disposition tends to create a "trained incapacity to observe and to represent ambiguity as an empirical phenomenon" (Levine, 1985, p. 8). According to Levine, the quest for precision and the will to represent dominant trends univocally tends to favor methodologies and categorizations that suppress real-life ambiguities in favor of analytical clarity. Similarly, other authors note that empirical ambiguities are often downplayed in the process of categorizing, coding, interpreting, and presenting data in a univocal way (e.g., Alvesson & Gabriel, 2013; Deener, 2017). Instead, Levine (1987) and Deener (2017) highlight the constructive possibilities of empirical (and conceptual) ambiguity. Rather than seeing it as a problem to avoid or to solve, empirical ambiguity may have significant uses in the process of theorizing and for research cases. Paper 2 sets scholarly interpretations and the interpretations of the interviewees side by side. It tries to examine, clarify, and critically discuss how both interpretations are possible and reasonable. It does so without favoring one or the other set of interpretations (scholarly or non-scholarly), as this would only serve to neutralize the object under study (ambiguity).[6]

Paper 2 is the only paper that specifically and explicitly focuses on ambiguity. But taken together, all three papers in this thesis may be said to shed light on the ambiguity of diversity rhetoric. In the next section, I explain how paper 3 reveals yet another of its "faces."

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[6] As a matter of curiosity, some proponents of diversity management list "tolerance for ambiguity" as a diversity dimension enhancing organizational flexibility (e.g., Cox & Blake, 1991, p. 51).

Institutional work and categorization theories (paper 3)

Diversity management is mostly associated with employee diversity but, as noted above, a central rationale revolves around the diversity among customers/consumers. While this marketing aspect is acknowledged in the critical literature, it is seldom addressed as a research topic in its own right. Paper 3 focuses on so-called "multicultural" or "ethnic" marketing—i.e., the idea that advertising and marketing should be tailored to target consumers'/customers' (presumed) ethnic identities. Specifically, this paper examines the interviewees' rhetorical strategies as they try to build a case for the idea and practice of ethnic marketing.

Paper 3 draws on three theoretical perspectives. First, the interviewees' marketing rhetoric is viewed as "institutional work" involving categorization processes. Institutional work is "the purposive action of individuals and organizations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions" (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006, p. 215). The interviewees are viewed as actors attempting to shape how organizations categorize and relate to consumers/customers. Thus, they are trying to institutionalize the practice of ethnic marketing. Research on institutional work highlights the institutionally embedded (but not determined) purposive action of individuals (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006, p. 219). Central to institutional work research is the notion of "effort" (Lawrence, Suddaby, & Leca, 2009, p. 14). Institutions are seldom changed without struggle or conflict. Ethnic marketing in Sweden is neither a well-known nor widespread marketing strategy, and according to the interviewees, they frequently meet with various kinds of difficulties and obstacles when trying to convince clients of the benefits of ethnic marketing. Accordingly, in studying the institutional work of ethnic marketing proponents, paper 3 also draws attention to the obstacles they face as they try to "sell" their services.

Second, ethnic marketing involves ethnic categorizations. The paper draws on ethnicity research that highlights the centrality of categorization processes (Brubaker, 2002; Jenkins, 1994). Ethnic identities and ethnic groups are created as people categorize others and themselves as members of specific collectivities with a (presumed) shared culture (e.g., language, religion, etc.), shared past, and/or shared physical appearance. Ethnicity is not simply a matter of shared traits or cultural commonalities but a result of categorizations at various levels. An analytical difference may be made between ethnic "groups" and ethnic "categories" (Brubaker, 2002). Ethnic groups are formed through internal definition, while ethnic categories are defined and ascribed externally. While sometimes these two coincide, ethnic categories may be imposed on individuals and groups. Ethnic

groups are thus formed through complex processes of self-ascription in relation to categorizations (Jenkins, 1994; Nagel, 1994). Following this terminology, paper 3 is not concerned with the formation of ethnic *groups* as such. Instead, the paper focuses on how ethnic marketing rhetoric produces ethnic and ethnified *categories*. Thus, the paper highlights how marketing rhetoric may advance "ethnicized ways of seeing (and ignoring)," as well as "ethnically oriented frames, schemas and narratives" (Brubaker, 2002, pp. 174–175). However, categorizing in terms of ethnicity has a performative character that may reproduce, reinforce, and create ethnic boundaries (Kulinna, 2008; Nagel, 1994).

Third, ethnic segmentation in marketing also involves the categorizations of markets, consumers, products, and services. Thus, the paper also draws on research on market categorization. This research explores "the role of actors in changing or challenging existing categories or creating new ones" (Rhee, Lo, Kennedy, & Fiss, 2017, p. 318). Markets are seen here as "systems of socially defined categories" (Pontikes & Kim, 2017, p. 72), and categories are socially constructed partitions "that segregate things into groups and impose coherence" (Lounsbury & Rao, 2004, p. 969). Categories give meaning to organizations, products, and services by positioning them in relation to other categories, thus affecting product familiarity and evaluation among consumers, critics, and analysts. A market category is established when there is consensus—among producers, consumers, and intermediaries such as critics, mass media, and analysts—that a group of products represents a distinct "type" (Grodal & Kahl, 2017). Although there are different kinds of market categories—e.g., the marketplace itself, buyers and sellers, products and services, and different intermediaries—scholars have mostly focused on the development of product categories (i.e., commodities), such as the "minivan," "modern Indian art," or "organic food" (see Durand & Khaire, 2017). However, the categorization of consumers—or what is called in marketing "segmentation"—has received little attention. As Zuckerman (2017, p. 42) recently noted, "the past literature has tended to ignore customer segmentation." Paper 3 adds to this research by concentrating on one example: ethnic segmentation.

While analytically there is a difference between ethnic categorizations and market categorizations, empirically they go hand in hand in the case of ethnic marketing. For instance, the category of the "immigrant consumer" consists of two categorizations—on one hand, the consumer is *ethnified* when constructed as an "ethnic" subject (as an "immigrant," as different, as "other"). On the other hand, already otherized categories ("immigrants") must be marketized—i.e., they must be constructed as legible and profitable

"consumers." As argued in paper 3, critical research on ethnic marketing tends to overlook this double categorization process. This research mostly points to how certain consumers are *ethnified* and constructed as different from "us" (the majority). Yet, paper 3 shows that sometimes another rhetorical strategy is used where already otherized categories (e.g., the "ethnic" immigrant) must be constructed as "consumers," i.e., similar to "us." Paper 3 thus examines how ethnic marketing proponents often have to balance between these two rhetorical strategies.

A note on rhetoric

This thesis is not about diversity as such (i.e., people's differences) nor about how to "manage" diversity. The overarching theme of this dissertation is diversity rhetoric—i.e., ideas and talk *about* diversity and its management. Specifically, it is about diversity rhetoric among Swedish diversity consultants.

The word "rhetoric" often bears negative connotations to manipulation and falseness, to bombastic language with no substance, or to superficial linguistic decoration. This view implies that language can be stripped off its "empty rhetoric" and thus become pure, honest, and true. Thus, the term "rhetoric" is often used to describe ideas, discourses, or linguistic styles that we do not like (forgetting that this is a rhetorical strategy in itself). This is not how the word "rhetoric" is understood in this dissertation. Rather than being a particular kind of language or language use (manipulative and decorative), rhetoric simply denotes the "human use of symbols to communicate" (Foss, 2009, p. 3).[7] Yet communication virtually always involves an argumentative and persuading dimension, and this is the specific domain of rhetoric (Billig, 1996; Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969). Because we make use of symbols almost all the time, we frequently make use of rhetoric—including when we think or argue in silence with ourselves. As a species, "we

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[7] Rhetoric involves the use of symbols, not signs. A sign has an unintentional connection to its referent (smoke as a sign of fire). Symbols (language, images, texts, actions, etc.) are human constructions that only indirectly connect to referents. A tree in the forest is a sign—it simply is. But a tree becomes a symbol and thus rhetorical a soon as someone uses it to communicate an idea (Foss, 2009). Similarly, we could say that diversity, as a fact of life, is a sign; however, in the discourse of diversity, it functions as a symbol. (Similarly, when I just described diversity as a fact of life, it became a symbol: I rhetorically used "diversity" to make the point that it is a sign when not used as a symbol).

are deeply rhetorical" (Billig, 2012, p. 416; see also Billig, 1996). Thus, when the papers in this dissertation talk about "rhetoric," "rhetorical moves," or "rhetorical strategies," they are not suggesting an unusual or particularly malign use of language. While diversity discourse may sometimes be characterized as shallow, manipulative, and exploitative, it is not because it is more "rhetorical" (or always more shallow, etc.) than the discourse of freedom, human rights, legal or social equality, or even the discourse of love.

Why does this dissertation merely deal with diversity rhetoric, as opposed to diversity practices? It is a reasonable question given that talk or "rhetoric" is frequently opposed to "action." However, this dichotomy is too simplistic. The view adopted in this dissertation is that organizational rhetorics are a kind of action, and that organizational actions are often partly or solely rhetorical.

Rhetoric as action

First, to be sure, rhetoric—what people communicate and how they communicate it—is not necessarily reflective of the things people are doing, have done, or may do. We know that organizational actors frequently build discrepancies between daily routines and symbolic structures through "decoupling" (Meyer & Rowan, 1977)—or between talk, decisions, and action through "hypocrisy" (Brunsson, 2002). Yet the same literature points to the importance of rhetoric *as* action in organizational life. Rhetoric is useful; it accomplishes things. Organizational symbols—the communication of practices, decisions, and policies—play a central role in legitimizing organizations. How organizations and their workings are labeled, described, and displayed is a key part of organizations' handling of multiple and conflicting requirements. It is frequently through rhetoric—written, spoken, enacted, manifested through images, policies, *and* practices—that organizations gain and maintain credibility and support. Rhetoric is both a key tool and a key product of organizational life.

This also applies to consultants. Some diversity consultants are self-employed and some work for small consultancy firms. Regardless of which, as organizational actors, they are expected to submit to the same environmental ideals and requirements as other organizations—not the least because consultants are supposed to help client-organizations adapt to these requirements. In research, consultants are frequently associated with rhetoric. Not only is rhetoric assumed to be a crucial working tool, but also a main selling

product. Described as "merchants of meaning" (Czarniawska, 2013), consultants deliver linguistic artifacts and interpretative templates that aid organizations in their sense-making processes. To be seen as legitimate, organizations must portray their actions and decisions as formally rational—that is, as appropriate to their core technical goals. Consultants aid client-organizations in this by formulating and refreshing rationality vocabularies—by offering legitimizing labels, ideas, and stories (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1993). Yet diversity consultants are not management gurus with the authority to impose their constructs on clients. Rather, they may be viewed as "improvisers" (Furusten, 2009) who must adapt their ideas, talk, and services to the wishes of clients.

Second, rhetoric is a significant part of what diversity management or diversity work "is." To begin with, critical scholars show that the language of diversity itself tends to accomplish various important things: it divests antidiscrimination law from its moral component (Edelman et al., 2001), it reifies, instrumentalizes, and essentializes differences (Litvin, 1997; Zanoni & Janssens, 2004), and it re-centers traditional authority (Berrey, 2015; Grimes, 2002). Moreover, this rhetoric is an asset because it helps organizations portray themselves as really committed to equality. Because diversity rhetoric constructs "diversity" as a technical requirement in organizations' *own* interest, it sends the signal that organizations really want and do care about diversity: after all, their efficiency and success depend on it. Even diversity proponents maintain that regardless of diversity's economic benefits—and even in their absence—organizations should actively communicate diversity beliefs and identities as this increases their social legitimacy, which itself is a diversity management benefit (Cole & Salimath, 2013).

Action as rhetoric

There are few practices specific to "diversity." In Sweden, where "diversity" has developed intertwined with legal discourse, the organizational practices described in terms of "diversity" and "diversity work" are much the same as the legally demanded "active measures"—for instance, formalized recruiting and promotion, training, pay surveys, analyzing discrimination risks, and removing obstacles to equal opportunities. Such practices may be present without being described in terms of "diversity," and diversity rhetoric may be present in the absence of such practices. All of these practices become (partly) rhetorical when they are communicated and documented. Legal and social restrictions on

counting, monitoring, and evaluating ethnic diversity in Sweden contribute to the rhetorical dimension of "diversity work." Evaluation and inspection may reveal discrepancies that undermine legitimacy and decrease ceremony. Thus, lack of evaluation is a central component in decoupling (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

However, specific to the diversity model is that it *reframes* legally based practices by portraying them as voluntary and strategic (Edelman et al., 2001). It shifts attention to the value and usefulness of people's differences. It also offers a customer and market-oriented vision. Organizations are supposed to use diversity—and possibly also work for equality—in order to better serve customers and access new markets. Organizations adopting such practices may describe themselves as working for "diversity" (implicitly, equality). Another practice associated with "diversity" is the hiring of diversity consultants (*mångfaldskonsulter*). By calling in consultants to hold lectures or training sessions, organizations communicate that they are working for diversity. Consultants may help organizations develop and implement equality routines. Several interviewees told me that client-organizations sometimes used them to signal commitment. Commissions mostly involved short-term tasks such as holding half-day lectures or workshops or drawing up diversity/equality plans. Such tasks were viewed as "alibi stuff" and "cosmetics." An interviewee said that for client-organizations, it was often very important that both the consultant and the service (the lecture/workshop) were labeled "diversity" (*mångfald*).

Thus, rhetoric is a large part of what diversity management "is." Even when examining practices, we are frequently dealing with rhetoric. A common methodological problem in research is that organizational "doing" is often accessed through what organizations say they are doing. Much critical research on diversity is about rhetoric although this is not always acknowledged. Scholars may frame their work as studying practices— e.g., the effects of different diversity programs—yet they are not studying these practices directly but by way of interviews, surveys, and analyses of different types of documents (policies, websites, outlets, yearly reports, reports to state agencies, diversity plans, etc.). These practices or objects are rhetorical in the sense that they communicate that the organization is doing the right thing (Brunson, 2002). Thus, the study of diversity practices is frequently the study of what organizations display by way of talk, decisions, *and* actions. This does not mean that "practice research" is not important, but there is a tendency to underestimate the rhetorical aspect of what is seen as practice (as opposed to rhetoric).

In sum, this dissertation views rhetoric as a kind of practice. It is not "mere talk"; on the contrary—and regardless of other practices connected with it—it is an important or-

ganizational practice and output. The papers in this dissertation assume that diversity rhetoric accomplishes things—although not necessarily the kind of things it promises. Each paper examines a specific rhetorical "accomplishment"—in paper 1, it is the managerialization of Swedish antidiscrimination laws. In paper 2, it is a useful ambiguity. And in paper 3, it is ethnized ways of seeing.

Methods

While the methods are presented and discussed in each specific paper, this section complements those sections with a more detailed discussion. This dissertation builds on interview material, and the general analytical approach is thematic analysis.

Data collection

This data collection section is divided into two sub-sections. First, I focus on and discuss the interview method. Then, I discuss and describe the interviewees and how they were contacted.

Interviews

Interviews were chosen as the data collection method for this dissertation. There are two main reasons for this. First, private diversity consultants in Sweden are usually not public figures, and virtually the only way to get to know their ideas is to conduct interviews. During the research period, I visited diversity conferences arranged by consultants, attended speeches by consultants and other actors (managers and representatives from public and private sectors), and read the few books written by Swedish diversity consultants. Further, various kinds of shorter consultant texts and visual material were collected or handed to me by the interviewees. All of this material was useful in one way or another during the research process, for instance by suggesting new interview questions or by inspiring new research topics and interpretations. Yet for the specific purposes of the papers, this material did not compare to the richness of meaning that can be gained from interviews.

The second reason for choosing interviews is that much research on diversity rhetoric and the "business case" builds on analyses of practitioner books, management texts, or company websites (e.g., Edelman et al., 2001; Grimes, 2002; Kirby & Harter, 2001; Litvin, 1997, 2006; Singh & Point, 2004). While there are advantages to text analysis—for instance, the possibility to examine "naturally" occurring data—this method does not allow follow-up questions. In addition, text analyses confine rhetoric to the very specific

contexts in which the analyzed texts occur (management journals, etc.). As argued in paper 2, text analyses tend to narrow down the variability and ambiguity of rhetoric and its "business case" (see also Mease 2012, 2016 for a similar point). I was curious about how the interviewees talked about and explained "diversity" outside such contexts, when they had the chance to elaborate on their views. I was also interested in knowing how they interpreted their own rhetorical strategies, and what kind of occupational obstacles they faced.

The three papers in this thesis build on interviews with 21 diversity consultants. The interviews were semi-structured. This method allowed for follow-up questions and gave the interviewees latitude to frame "diversity" in ways unrestricted by specific managerial contexts (e.g., management journals). I approached each interview with a set of pre-decided questions covering two areas: diversity (what it was, what it entailed, and why) and consulting as an occupation (experience, relation to clients, way of "selling" their services). However, the interview guide was slightly modified along the way, as I became more familiar with the interviewees' views. The semi-structured approach allowed for discovering unforeseen topics during the interviews. For instance, before the first interview, I did not know that marketing and marketing ideas formed such an important part of the interviewees' conceptions of "diversity" and their own consultancy work. Indeed, the vast majority of the interviewees frequently associated employee diversity with consumer diversity and other marketing-oriented rationales. Eleven consultants also worked or had worked specifically with marketing strategies in client-organizations. Thus, the interview guide was complemented in an early stage with questions about marketing and "multicultural" or "ethnic" segmentation (Paper 3 focuses on this).

All interviews were carried out in Stockholm except two, which took place in the nearby cities of Södertälje and Uppsala. Most interviews lasted around 1.5 hours, with a range of 1 to 3 hours. All interviews were carried out face-to-face except one: fourteen took place at the consultants' offices, five at cafés, one at the interviewee's home, and one over the phone. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and translated into English. The interviews were conducted in phases between 2009 and 2013 (14 interviews between late 2009 and early 2010; 2 interviews in 2011; 3 in 2012; and 2 in early 2013). The main reason for this timespan is that time was taken to read the interviews and tentatively analyze them in order to modify the interview guide for upcoming interviews and specify new research questions. Data collection, analysis, and interpretation are usually not entirely separate phases in qualitative research; rather, there is an iterative process

between them. Already during the collection of data (between interviews and during the transcribing of each interview), there was a portion of preliminary analysis and interpretative work, including reading and re-reading the transcripts, listening to the recordings, and reading the relevant research.

The interviewees

While scholars may question the diversity paradigm's effects on equality or organizational performance, no one seems to doubt its efficacy in having "produced" the new occupation of diversity consultants. Diversity management discourse is commonly associated with the establishment of diversity consultants in the US (Edelman et al., 2001; Kelly & Dobbin, 1998). Expressed more cynically, "'[d]iversity' is the buzzword paying the rent of countless consultants" (MacDonald, 1997, cited in Wrench, 2007, p. 95). Consultants have also been key in launching diversity management in Sweden (Kalonaityte, 2010; Rönnqvist, 2008; Stringfellow, 2018). Already at the end of the 1990's, "we find the first evidence of a new profession in Sweden: the diversity consultant" (Omanovic, 2009, p. 356; see also Rönnqvist, 2008).

Despite their centrality to diversity discourse, consultants remain understudied (Mease, 2016). When consultants appear in the critical literature, they are often used as *informants* on the spread of diversity ideas and equality programs. Rönnqvist (2008), Gutiérrez, Kruzich, Jones, and Coronado (2000), and Kalonaityte et al. (2010) interview 5, 13, and 2 diversity consultants, respectively. Wrench (2007) interviews 8 diversity experts, but the number of consultants is not clear.

At other times, diversity consultants are collapsed with other actors into "diversity professionals" or "diversity practitioners" (Kirton, Greene, & Dean, 2007; Prasad, Prasad, & Mir, 2011; Tatli, 2010). Prasad et al. (2011) conduct interviews with different organizational actors, among them 11 diversity consultants**.** Kirton et al. (2007) conduct 39 interviews with a variety of diversity actors in the UK, but the number of consultants is unclear. Similarly, Tatli (2010) interviews 19 "diversity practitioners," but the number of consultants is unclear.

Research focusing on consultants as subjects in their own right is scarce. Kirby & Harter (2003) examine 9 diversity consultants' websites, and only a few studies examine

consultants through interviews. These studies are based in the US (Litvin, 2002; Mease, 2012, 2016) and the UK (Hamaz, 2008), where Litvin (2002) interviews 3 diversity consultants, Hamaz (2008) 6, and Mease (2012, 2016) 19. These studies suggest that consultants use different coping strategies when doing diversity training (Hamaz, 2008), that they feel forced to use "the business case" because it allows them to get and maintain commissions (Litvin, 2002), and that consultants combine or sometimes supplant business arguments with other types of rationales (Mease, 2012). Consultants may also alternate between "broad" and "narrow" definitions of diversity depending on context (Mease, 2016).

The papers in this dissertation are based on interviews with 21 Swedish diversity consultants. Diversity consultancy in Sweden is unregulated, as is generally the case with the occupation of organizational consultants, described by research as "rule-resisters" due to the numerous unsuccessful attempts at standardizing their trade (Alexius, 2007). To be sure, the occupation of diversity consultants does not constitute a full profession in the sociological sense (Abbott, 1988). It lacks a recognized body of knowledge and there are no institutionalized criteria specifying the activity or content of diversity consultancy. In principle, anyone may become a diversity consultant by simply taking that label and offering their services. There are no formal authorizations, no trade associations, and no specific educational requirements. The label "diversity consultant" (*mångfaldskonsult*) is optional, and although the interviewees in this dissertation use it, they sometimes combine it with other labels, such as "change agent" or "organizational strategist" or "organizational consultant," with "diversity" as one among other specializations.

This lack of professionalization gives rise to the question, who are "diversity consultants"? In this dissertation, diversity consultants are persons who so label themselves or who offer consultancy concerning "diversity." These persons are regularly hired externally and *as* consultants by organizations. This working definition thus excludes people that occasionally may be called in to hold lectures on "diversity" (e.g., ethnic relations, multicultural society) but who do not work as consultants on a regular basis—such as researchers, celebrities, entertainers, artists, writers, and others. It also excludes internal diversity responsible employees.

In practice, the interviewees offer their services through their consultancy firm websites. They were contacted by combining the search terms "diversity consultant" (mångfaldskonsult), "diversity" (mångfald), "consultant" (konsult), and "consultancy" (konsultation). After visiting their websites, an email was sent that described the research topic

and my interest in diversity and in the work and views of consultants. All but two consultants accepted to be interviewed (two consultants lacked the time). The interviewees decided the time and place for the interviews. I asked for permission to record the interviews and they all agreed.

The interviewees—8 men, 13 women—were between 30 and 50 years old. They were commissioned by both private and public sectors to hold lectures or workshops, do "diversity training," or assist organizations with specific tasks such as recruitment, compensation, and employee surveys, or create equality and/or diversity plans. The interviewees had also been hired to handle tensions or conflicts and assist in developing products and services as well as marketing or branding strategies. While most interviewees were self-employed, five worked for small consultancy firms. They all had several years of experience as consultants, and many of them also participated in or arranged diversity conferences addressing audiences of managers and HR specialists from different fields. In this diversity context, it is interesting to note that most interviewees were native-born and white; only six had some kind of immigrant background. The interviewees were of different educational backgrounds; most of them had some kind of academic education or degree (in engineering, technology, business, various social sciences, and psychology) and two had PhDs (in the social sciences). In one important sense it was easy to interview them: the interviewees were forthcoming, articulate, and engaged in the topic, and they often gave long and detailed answers to interview questions. Though on a few occasions, some interviewees started to interview me about the research project: How was I going to analyze the interviewees? What was my argument? Was I going to use discourse analysis and Foucault? I tried to answer such questions honestly but briefly in order to continue the interview—and the honest truth was that I, during the interview period, was undecided. Thus the answer varied between "I'm not sure" and "I don't know."

Today, thirteen of the interviewees continue to work as consultants and two others have moved on to positions as diversity strategists inside large private companies. Although some of the rest interviewees still occasionally lecture on diversity, they are mainly engaged in other projects—in advertising agencies, in non-profit organizations for equality/diversity, and in cultural and artistic work (both privately and within public organizations). Since the interviews, many other consultants have emerged and the number of consultants offering services through webpages has increased. Not only are there more consultants now than at the time of the interviews but, as mentioned earlier, another significant trend is that universities have begun to offer bachelor's programs in "diversity

studies" for students aspiring to become diversity experts and consultants. This may be a sign of a growing demand for diversity consultants, and it may contribute to a certain institutionalization and professionalization in the future.

Data analysis

While the papers in this dissertation build on the same interview material, each paper asks different questions. Thus each paper analyzes the material in different ways and for distinct purposes. Overall, however, the analytic method is thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Thematic analysis is widely used in all forms of qualitative research. Despite its commonality—or maybe because of it—thematic analysis is usually discussed not as an approach in its own right but as a foundational analytical tool that may be applied *across* and *within* other qualitative methods (such as grounded theory or discourse analysis). Because thematic analysis is not always named and explicitly acknowledged as the analytical method in use, it has been "poorly branded" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 15). Only recently has it begun to be demarcated as a distinct method in its own right (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013; Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012).

Thematic analysis has the benefit of being a flexible approach. In contrast to other analytical approaches that search for themes and meaning patterns—such as grounded theory, narrative analysis, discourse analysis, or phenomenological analysis—thematic analysis is not intrinsically attached to a set of epistemological assumptions or traditions (or scholarly authorities). This means that thematic analysis is compatible with and applicable across a range of theoretical approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Guest et al., 2012). In the view of Guest et al. (2012, p. 15), thematic analysis "borrows" some useful analytical techniques from other methodological camps (e.g., grounded theory, discourse analysis) and synthesizes these into one methodological framework that can be adapted to different research contexts. For this dissertation, thematic analysis was chosen for its flexibility and pragmatism: it is a useful analytical method that serves the papers' research purposes and combines with their specific theoretical approaches.

Thematic analysis focuses on identifying and describing "both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is, themes" (Guest et al., 2012, p. 10). There is no established

definition of what exactly constitutes a "theme," partly because this has to be decided in the research context, in relation to the material and the research question. However, generally, themes refer to (research relevant) explicit or implicit words in context, ideas, concepts, or arguments in the data. Thus, themes "come in all shapes and sizes" (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 87), some are broad and general while others focus and link very specific expressions. A theme may answer the question: "What is this expression an example of?" (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 87). Themes may emerge from both the data (an inductive approach) or be derived from the researcher's prior theoretical understanding (a deductive or a priori approach) (Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

Paper 1 in this dissertation is mostly deductive while papers 2 and 3 are mostly inductive (see below in this section). However, this divide is not clear-cut; in practice, the research and analytical process combines inductive and deductive reasoning. Strictly speaking, even when the approach is mostly inductive, as in papers 2 and 3, themes are not simply "discovered" and they do not "emerge" from the data itself (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 225). Yet these terms are frequently used (including by me), probably because they seem to accurately describe the sensation of "finding" a theme in the data as opposed to deriving it from previous research/theory. However, themes are not objective features already residing in the data; they are actively constructed by the researcher through interacting with and interpreting the material—that is, by reading and re-reading the interviews in the light of a research interest. In fact, formulating a research interest (and interview questions) is already an act of inducing possible themes. As Rosenthal argues (2018, p. 44), "[a]ll empirical studies are driven by a particular interest, and by questions based on hypotheses, however vague and implicit these may be." In this view, even inductive, interpretative approaches in which hypotheses are set aside (or "bracketed") cannot fully suspend previously learned interpretations, biases, expectations, etc. Yet as Rosenthal also argues—and this is the view in this dissertation—suspending hypotheses does not mean (or should not mean) that the researcher is somehow free of preconceptions (whether everyday assumptions or sociological knowledge). Rather, to suspend pre-understandings means that research is guided by a principle of openness (Rosenthal, 2018) in which conscious hypotheses are seen as only one among other possible ways of interpreting the data. This implies trying to be aware as far as possible of one's preconceptions in order to not let them determine interpretations. It also implies a willingness to go through a learning process that modifies and changes one's previous knowledge

(Rosenthal, 2018, pp. 43-44). In the following, I briefly describe the analytical approach in the three papers.

Paper 1 sets out to examine managerialization among Swedish diversity consultants. The interviews were analyzed using mainly theoretical or "top down" thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83), which means that codes and themes were derived from previous research (i.e., Edelman, 2016; Edelman et al., 2001). Paper 1 concludes that the rhetoric of Swedish diversity consultants largely conforms to the picture of managerialization. However, previous research on managerialization (Edelman, 2016; Edelman et al., 2001) is based on quantitative and qualitative content analysis of managerial literature. The unit of observation in content analysis is individual words and verbatim phrases, which are counted and (statistically) related to each other. In contrast, paper 1 builds on interviews and thematic analysis. Thematic analysis focuses on text passages that exemplify concepts or themes (Guest et al., 2012, p. 108) and is thus more sensitive to the context in which words are being used. As a consequence, this change in methods reveals that the interviewees' "managerial" rhetoric is more complex than the concept of "managerialization" seems to capture. However, this complexity is thoroughly analyzed and discussed in paper 2.

Paper 2 is mainly inductive. This paper analyzes three of diversity's common rhetorical moves—its broad scope, its business case, and its dissociation from discrimination laws. While these rhetorical moves are derived from previous critical research, the analysis in this paper focuses on the interviewees' own interpretations, which are juxtaposed to the ones usually forwarded by critical scholars. Thus, for as long as possible, the interpretations in the critical literature were suspended or "bracketed" in favor of detecting alternative meanings. While the interviewees' vocabulary is largely managerial, this rhetoric may at times be infused with concerns and values that do not seem managerial at all. To analyze this, I drew from discourse analysis or what is known as discursive psychology (Winther, Jørgensen, & Phillips, 2000), especially its rhetorical approach (Billig, 1996). Importantly, I drew on these ideas as sensitizing concepts (Bryman, 1988, p. 68) rather than to conduct an orthodox discourse analysis. Yet this analytical approach serves to highlight variation and ambiguity, thus underscoring how the same rhetorical moves can have different meanings depending on the rhetorical context.

Paper 3 shifts attention to the interviewees' rhetoric of ethnic marketing. Thematic analysis is used to answer these three research questions: 1) what is ethnicity and ethnic marketing? 2) How do the interviewees make a case for it? 3) What kinds of difficulties

do they face when "doing" ethnic marketing or "selling" the idea to potential clients? Codes and themes were not derived from previous research or theories, but from the process of reading and re-reading the interviews. However, my pre-understanding included a general constructionist view and a familiarity with institutional work research. In addition, because ethnic marketing rhetoric involves the construction of market categories, I integrated and related my interpretations to market categorization research.

These theoretical approaches highlight rhetoric and categorization processes, and they assisted in the final phases of the analysis. Thus, the codes and themes already developed were sometimes grouped into themes informed by these theories. As an exploratory study, this paper's main interest is to understand and critically examine what consultants mean by ethnic marketing, how they rhetorically build a business case for it, and what kind of obstacles they face.

Summary of the papers

Paper 1 draws on the theory of rhetorical managerialization (Edelman et al., 2001) to answer this question: Do Swedish diversity consultants managerialize antidiscrimination law? Research on the US and the UK asserts a conflict between legal equality and the instrumental rhetoric of diversity management. However, studies on continental Europe and Scandinavia tend to posit diversity rhetoric as linked to ethnicity and tempered by legal and social equality concerns. Building on interviews with diversity consultants, this paper shows that their diversity constructions conform to the managerialization thesis. That is, the interviewees tend to define diversity broadly, stress efficiency, and dissociate "diversity" from the law. This finding gives nuance to the theory's often-assumed pre-conditions, as well as the assumption that diversity discourse in Europe and Scandinavia is strongly associated with integration and antidiscrimination legislation.

Paper 2 argues that diversity's three common rhetorical moves—its broad scope, its business case, and its dissociation from legal frames—are more flexible than typically portrayed in the critical diversity research. Drawing on interviews with Swedish diversity consultants, this study shows that each rhetorical move may be interpreted in more than one way. While scholars tend to interpret this rhetoric as managerial dilution of legal and equality ideals, findings indicate that the same rhetorical moves may incorporate an equality logic and extend legal ideals beyond the limits of the law. These interpretative discrepancies are conceptualized as ambiguity—i.e., the possibility for the same rhetorical move to support more than one interpretation.

Paper 3 shifts focus from employee diversity to diversity among consumers. Despite the centrality of marketing rationales to diversity management's "business case," marketing is virtually absent in critical diversity research. Drawing from research on ethnicity and market categorizations, this paper examines the institutional work of diversity consultants as they rhetorically build a business case for "ethnic marketing" in Sweden. Previous literature suggests that ethnic marketing relies on making differences between "them" (ethnic minority consumers) and "us" (majority consumers). This paper asserts that while making differences is crucial when creating "ethnic" consumers ("different from us"), another rhetorical strategy, "making similarities," is used to construct already otherized people as "consumers" ("similar to us"). However, findings show that Sweden's lack of statistics on ethnicity and general reluctance towards highlighting ethnicity may function as institutional obstacles that hamper the spread of ethnic marketing.

Sammanfattning

Under de senaste decennierna har talet om mångfald i organisationer spridit sig från USA till praktiskt taget hela världen, även till Sverige där det uppstod i mitten av 1990-talet. Denna avhandling består av tre studier som tillsammans bidrar till fältet kritiska mångfaldsstudier (critical diversity studies) genom att studera varsin aspekt av månfaldsretoriken bland svenska mångfaldskonsulter. Artikel 1 försöker svara på frågan: innebär konsulternas retorik en "ledarskapifiering" (managerialization) av lagen? Forskning från USA och Storbritannien visar att talet om "mångfald" skiljer sig avsevärt från ländernas diskrimineringslagar. Forskning om Europa och Skandinavien pekar dock på att "mångfald" generellt är starkt sammankopplad med lagen och ideal om lika rättigheter och möjligheter. Studien, som bygger på intervjuer, visar att konsultretoriken överensstämmer med bilden av en ledarskapifiering. Artikel 2 undersöker tvetydigheten i denna retorik. Studien utvecklar ett teoretiskt resonemang och visar genom intervjuer att mångfaldsretorikens tre typiska drag — ett brett mångfaldsbegrepp, betoning på effektivitet och ett avståndstagande från lagen — är mer öppna för tolkning än forskningen vanligtvis gör gällande. Medan kritiska forskare tolkar dessa retoriska drag i termer av ledarskapifiering, visar denna studie att intervjupersonerna tolkar samma drag i riktningar som möjliggör utsträckandet av rättviseideal till omständigheter bortom lagen. Dessa skilda tolkningsmöjligheter begreppsliggörs i termer av tvetydighet: ett och samma retoriska drag kan ge stöd åt fler än en tolkning. Artikel 3 i denna avhandling fokuserar konsulters retorik om etnisk mångfald bland kunder och konsumenter. Studien undersöker intervjupersonernas retoriska strategier i försöket att skapa intresse för, och legitimitet åt, etnisk marknadsföring i Sverige. Tidigare forskning visar att etnisk marknadsföring bygger på skillnadsskapande mellan "vi" (majoriteten) och "dem" (minoriteter). Studien visar att medan denna strategi är central i konstruktionen av konsumenter som annorlunda och "etniska", har intervjupersonerna även nytta av en något motsatt strategi för att konstruera redan andrefierade subjekt som "konsumenter" och således liknande "oss". Studien indikerar att flera faktorer i den institutionella omgivningen — såsom bristen på etniskt uppdelad konsumtionsdata — försvårar intervjupersonernas ambition att ge spridning åt etnisk marknadsföring.

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