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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

In search of the diversity in diversity management: exploring novel practices to manage a diverse workforce

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INTRODUCTION

In the past three decades, the growing socio-demographic heterogeneity of the working population and organizations' personnel has captured the attention of policy makers, managers, practitioners as well as scholars (Prasad, Pringle, & Konrad, 2006). The notion of diversity of the workforce has been introduced by the milestone publication of the 'Workforce 2000' report in 1987 (Johnston & Packer), which casted the advancing heterogeneity of the working population as a compelling challenge for the US economy and companies to maintain their competitiveness. Since, diversity (management) research has grown abundantly, aiming to understand how diversity affects organizations and how a diverse workforce, which is said to bring more diverse competencies, backgrounds, needs and preferences to the work floor, should be properly managed. In this introduction, I will first outline the literature on diversity management (DM) practices, the economic rationale that underpins diversity management and the premised results of DM practices. Next, from a multiple critique on the limitations of DM literature and on the established DM practices, I will outline the contributions this dissertation aims to make. Then I will discuss different research questions derived from this problem outline and how I will address them from different theoretical perspectives.

1. Diversity management practices

The dominant idea within the scholarly and practitioners' diversity literature is the value-in-diversity hypothesis, which posits workforce diversity as a potential source of enhanced business performance and competitive advantage (Shore et

al., 2009). The business case for diversity is based on the idea that a heterogeneous workforce contributes to companies' bottom-line as different perspectives stimulate creativity and problem-solving and different backgrounds provide a superior understanding of diversifying consumer markets and stakeholders (Litvin, 2006; Robinson & Dechant, 1997). Advocates of the business case for diversity assert that the crucial condition for different individuals' potential to be unleashed is that organization's diversity is properly managed and valued (Cox, 1994; Kandola & Fullerton, 1998; Thomas, 1990; Yang & Konrad, 2011). Effective DM is supposed to enhance equality between the majority and minority in organizations and rule out possible downsides of a diverse workforce, such as intergroup conflicts, high turnover costs and loss of performance and competitiveness (Cox, 1994).

The DM literature suggests a range of practices that should enable businesses to do so. In the most prominent original works on DM (Cox, 1994; Kandola & Fullerton, 1998; Thomas, 1990), four types of practices can be discerned that have persistently been disseminated to effectively manage a diverse workforce. A first type of practices entails the screening and rethinking of human resource (HR) systems and procedures in order to remove discrimination, stereotyping and institutional bias in all functional domains of HR management. These practices aim to remove barriers for minority groups in every phase of the HRM cycle – recruitment and selection, training, remuneration, evaluation and promotion – by basing them on objective criteria in order to enhance fairness and meritocracy instead of indirectly favoring majority groups. A second type commits management with organizational responsibility for diversity and addresses managerial actions and attitudes towards diversity. This type of practice includes for example a mission statement

that explicitly mentions the company's favorable attitude towards diversity, a management task force to monitor the diversity strategy or the use of culture audits or survey feedback to raise management's knowledge on organizational diversity issues. These practices aim to create company-wide commitment to diversity and make sure DM does not turn unheeded. A third category includes trainings and education on issues such as discriminatory and racist behavior, as well as on legal matters relating to diversity. Diversity training intends to increase insights on how to avoid discriminatory behavior at work, how to leverage possible benefits of intergroup contact and teamwork and how to avoid legal charges for violating anti-discrimination legislation. A fourth type of practices tackles the social exclusion of minority groups by means of orientation programs, mentoring programs, and networking/support groups. The aim of these practices is to provide minority groups – who are generally disadvantaged in terms of social networks because of their minority status within the workforce and within companies – with social contacts and opportunities for exchanging professional experiences.

Companies engaging in these DM practices are promised a range of positive outcomes. First, the high visibility of DM practices sustains perceptions of businesses' compliance with anti-discrimination law and they thus serve as protection against possible litigation (Konrad & Linnehan, 1995; Kossek & Pichler, 2006). Second, an organization-wide cultural change, getting differences to be embraced throughout the entire organization (Kandola & Fullerton, 1998) reduces discrimination (Kossek & Pichler, 2006), allowing diverse employees to bring their entire set of identities to work (Cox, 1994) and to deploy their demographic and cultural knowledge (Ely & Thomas, 2001). Third, as every employee is enabled to reach its full potential, DM ultimately results in improved

business strategizing and sustained competitive advantage (Thomas, 1990; Kossek & Pichler, 2006).

According to this literature, DM practices are to be implemented because they make a strong business case. Although they formally aim to enhance inter-group equality, they are not grounded in the moral argument that anyone should have the right to participate in the labor market (Noon, 2007) or by the idea that reducing inter-group inequality is a worthy goal in itself (Dickens, 1999). DM is thus clearly distanced from a legal equal opportunity agenda (Linnehan & Konrad, 1999). 'Businesses should invest in creating a more effective diverse workforce not because it is the legal, ethical or moral 'right' thing to do, but because it is the savvy, bottom-line focused, pragmatic, self-interested 'right' thing to do' (Litvin, 2006, p. 83). Substantiated by demographic predictions showing an irreversible diversification of the labor supply (Cox, 1994; Johnston & Packer, 1987; Kandola & Fullerton, 1998; Thomas, 1990), DM has been depicted as a necessity for businesses to remain competitive.

2. Critical challenges to diversity management practices

Today, diversity management has grown to be a well-established functional domain of management bolstered by an enormous body of practitioners' and scholarly literature (Oswick & Noon, 2014). Although diversity scholars have also questioned the assumptions of diversity management and the proposed DM practices, few have engaged in theoretically informed analyses of DM practices (yet see Ely & Thomas, 2001; Yang & Konrad, 2011). This dissertation intends to address some important gaps in the increasing scientific literature on DM by developing in-depth understandings of organizational practices to manage workers from diverse socio-demographic backgrounds, and their outcomes for organizations and minority as well as majority workers through three distinct theoretical lenses. Hereunder, I develop three critiques on the DM literature and on DM practices in particular, which represent the starting point for the three essays that constitute this dissertation.

2.1 DM practices and their effects on workers' subjective experience

The DM literature has generally disregarded minority and majority workers own experiences and engagement with organization's diversity management (cf. Zanoni & Janssens, 2007). Within the broad DM literature, analyses have commonly focused on managerial discourses of and approaches to diversity (e.g. Edelman, 1992; Kelly & Dobbin, 1998; Tatli, 2010; Tomlinson & Schwabenland, 2010; Zanoni & Janssens, 2004) or on DM textbooks aimed at practitioners (e.g. Litvin, 1997; Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000), favoring managerial perspectives over workers' experience of diversity management. Overall, the diversity literature disregards minority as well as majority workers' subjective experience and how

they negatively or positively relate to organizations' DM, despite multiple calls for a better understanding of minority workers' experiences in organizations (Ogbonna & Harris, 2006; Pringle, Konrad & Prasad, 2006; Zanoni et al., 2010).

Exceptions to this neglect are few studies that have drawn attention to possible backlash reactions from majority workers towards diversity initiatives. Majority workers might oppose DM initiatives, experiencing them as a threat to their privileged position, which can possibly thwart organizations' initiatives to manage diversity (Kossek & Zonia, 1993; Linnehan & Konrad, 1999). While there is research evidencing that workers with different socio-demographic backgrounds adopt different attitudes towards diversity initiatives (Kossek & Zonia, 1993), others have contradicted this and pointed to the perception of negative group and personal outcomes of diversity initiatives as predictors of backlash (Kidder, Lankau, Chrobot-Mason, Mollica, & Friedman, 2004).

The lack of studies assessing DM practices' effects on workers' experiences is all the more striking as DM literature has largely relied on social-psychological theory and advanced practices that allegedly improve intergroup and interpersonal relations. The classical DM practices promise to ban discrimination and stereotyping from individuals' behavior so that the 'different' employees can take opportunities available to all according to merit. Empirical studies observed earlier that organizations' traditional networking (Ibarra, 1992, 1995; Mehra, Kilduff & Brass, 1998) and mentoring (Ragins & Cotton, 1991; Ragins & Scandura, 1994) practices favor majority groups and exclude minority group members. Drawing on social psychological perspectives such as social identity theory, self-categorization theory (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and distinctiveness theory (McGuire, 1984), these studies ascribe the disadvantaged position of minority groups to psychological and cognitive

mechanisms that lead individuals and groups to exclude out-group members (Milliken & Martins, 1996; Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). Yet evaluations have generally assessed the efficacy of DM practices in terms of the numerical representation of minorities and work-related outcomes such as compensation and promotion, leaving their effects on workers' affective experiences unaddressed (for exceptions, see: Guillaume, Dawson, Priola, Sacramento, Woods, Higson, Budhwar & West, 2014; Mor Barak & Levin, 2002).

In sum, the diversity literature generally neglects to study the effects of practices on workers' subjective experience. In this dissertation, I will address this gap in the first study, which advances insights on the effects of DM practices by inductively studying a broad range of practices – broader than the classical DM practices – that are consciously implemented by organizations to manage their diverse workforce. Therefore, drawing on the psychological literature on well-being, the first study inductively identifies organizational practices deployed to manage diversity and studies their effects both on minority and majority workers' experiences of well-being.

2.2 DM practices and their contribution to fulfilling business goals

Despite the paradigmatic shift from compliance to equal opportunities and affirmative action legislation to diversity management in the late 1980s, practices did not substantially change. The practices which were already prevailing among (American) companies, such as for instance training and mentoring programs, were recast as DM practices (Edelman, Fuller & Mara Drita, 2001; Kelly & Dobbin, 1998; Liff & Wajcman, 1996). 'Best practices' identified on the basis of testimonials or anecdotes by company managers and

spokespersons from companies with sounding names, such as IBM and Procter & Gamble (Cox, 1994; Dass & Parker, 1999; Kandola & Fullerton, 1998; Thomas, 1990), have been disseminated as universally applicable and genuine ways to manage a diverse workforce without much questioning.

Yet, a review of the scientific diversity literature reveals that the effectiveness of the 'classical' DM practices described above has infrequently been evaluated, and in the few studies that made these practices the object of evaluation, their effectiveness appears to be weak. These few evaluative studies generally focus on minorities' numerical representation and work-related outcomes, such as compensation and promotion (Friedman & Holtom, 2002; Kalev, Dobbin & Kelly, 2006; Rynes & Rosen, 1995) and have not been able to provide consistent support for their effectiveness (Kossek, Lobel & Brown, 2006). In the most renowned and large-scale study linking diversity practices with the proportion of women and ethnic minorities in management, Kalev, Dobbin and Kelly (2006) found that companies establishing organizational responsibility for diversity generated the most convincing effect, reflecting earlier findings on the significant effect of top management commitment to equal opportunities efforts (Konrad & Linnehan, 1995). Practices addressing minority groups' social isolation through networking and mentoring were found to generate only modest effects and practices intended to remove stereotyping through diversity training even showed to have virtually no results. Their research poignantly confirms a lack of effects revealed by earlier research, showing that diversity trainings lead to little or no increases in top management diversity or in general workforce diversity (Rynes & Rosen, 1995) and that networking groups merely succeed in reducing turnover intentions from higher-

ranked minority employees but generate little effects on the workforce as a whole (Friedman & Holtom, 2002).

Others have discussed DM practices in the light of the more classical debate between recognizing different disadvantaged social identities or focusing on equalizing structures and treatment for individuals (Liff, 1997), labeling them as identity-conscious or identity-blind practices (Konrad & Linnehan, 1995). The discussion on the effectiveness of either approach has however not been resolved: while the former were found to yield better result in terms of the representation of women and ethnic minorities in organizations (Konrad & Linnehan, 1995), their limited results and uneasy position within business and economic contexts are difficult to legitimize (Liff, 1997; Linnehan & Konrad, 1999); yet, an identity-blind approach has still not been recognized as sufficiently tackling structural disadvantages for minority groups (Roberson, 2006).

Also not unproblematic is that the relationship between the specific DM practices promoted by DM literature and their contribution to business goals remains highly unclear. DM practices are supposed to contribute to companies' bottom-line through fostering inter-group equality, enabling every individual to contribute to its full potential (Thomas, 1990). Yet, the relevance of these highly specific practices for business is only indirect and hard to substantiate.

A recent strand of diversity research draws attention to the fallacies of the DM literature to universalize the functioning of diverse work groups to any given business context and to naturalize and essentialize people belonging to 'other' socio-demographic categories with a number of fixed, given characteristics (Litvin, 1997), ignoring the multiple, historically specific processes of social construction that inform diversity within organizational

contexts. Through qualitative approaches, research revealed how organizational actors construct their own specific realities of a diverse workforce contingent upon their productive context and how their discourses surrounding diversity shape their organization-specific approaches to DM (Janssens & Zanoni, 2005; Zanoni & Janssens, 2004). Even within organizations, different meanings become attached to what constitutes organizations' diversity (Zanoni & Janssens, in press) and inconsistencies appear of how managers should enact the valuing of individual differences (Foster & Harris, 2005). This type of research reveals how manifold contingencies surrounding businesses influence understandings and approaches to diversity, making it unlikely that one set of best DM practices would be applicable and effective in any given business context .

Along the same lines, traditional DM practices disregard the challenges of actual implementation in companies' productive contexts. Typologies have been put forward that link organizations' competitive strategies with their perspectives on the contribution of diverse socio-demographic groups (Ortlieb & Sieben, 2008) and to organizations' approaches for managing them (Dass & Parker, 1999; Thomas & Ely, 1996). These studies call for empirical investigations of how actual diversity practices are embedded in organizations' specific productive contexts and which business needs they fulfill (cf. Ely & Thomas, 2001; Ortlieb & Sieben, 2008).

In short, DM literature hitherto has long focused on practices which emerged from the specific experience of large U.S. corporations merely assuming their effectiveness and applicability in different organizational and productive contexts. The second study of this dissertation aims to understand how DM practices are developed and implemented in other business contexts.

Specifically, it will try to understand how DM practices accomplish specific organizational goals, how they fit companies' specific productive context and the labor market segment they rely on. To do so, the second study approaches DM practices from a business case perspective.

2.3. DM practices and their role in perpetuating inequality

The critically oriented diversity literature has also developed two more fundamental critiques of the mainstream DM literature. First, it has questioned the possibility of achieving higher levels of equality through DM practices mainly remediating individuals' biased cognitive and psychological processes, disregarding institutionalized unequal power relations pervading organizations (Linnehan & Konrad, 1999; Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; Kelly & Dobbin, 1998; Liff, 1999; Liff & Wajcman, 1996). The key argument is that organizational dynamics of power are shaped along socio-demographic identities, deeply institutionalized in organizational contexts through their structures, cultures and practices privileging the opportunities and experiences of dominant groups (Calás & Smircich, 1999; Liff, 1999; Nkomo, 1992). Although DM's discourse demonstrably ignores the moral and social justice arguments for equality (Linnehan & Konrad, 1999; Tatli, 2010), the management of a diverse personnel remains highly political, exercised through the discourse and actions of the more powerful organizational actors (Noon, 2007).

Second, critically oriented scholars have pointed to the possibility that the business case for diversity rests on inequality rather than equality. Specifically, businesses might have reasonable economic arguments to deploy minority groups as cheap, flexible and readily disposable workers (Dickens,

1999; Noon, 2007). Critical research reveals how managers instrumentally approach different socio-demographic identities functional to their business' interests (Janssens & Zanoni, 2005; Zanoni & Janssens, 2004) and value minority groups insofar as they allow to be exploited, or exclude them when they are considered of little value to the organization (Zanoni, 2011).

While distinct, these two arguments are closely connected. The DM literature ignores that organizational structures and cultures imbued with inequalities along gender and ethnicity can be functional to business success (Acker, 1990, 2006; Smith, 1994). Yet feminist researchers have long revealed how, historically, employers transformed the labor processes (Cockburn, 1981; Crompton & Jones, 1984; Hartmann, 1976; Milkman, 1983) and used ideologies of gender difference (Acker, 1989; Philips & Taylor, 1980; West, 1990) to exploit women and men to different degrees, resulting in the segregation, control and exploitation of women in unskilled, low-paid work with no opportunity for improvement. A vast stream of research on 'gendered organizations' (Acker, 1990, 2006; Martin & Collinson, 2002) has advanced insights on the exploitation of women in organizations by deconstructing gender-biased constructions of skills, gendered organizational cultures, symbols and aesthetics and gendered constructions of professional identities.

Recent organizational literature has started to reveal similar organizational discursive and material practices aimed at recruiting and exploiting ethnic minority groups, and more in particular migrant workers as readily available, cheap labor in low-skilled and low-valued work (Janssens & Zanoni, 2005; MacKenzie & Forde, 2009; Moriarty, Wickham, Krings, Salamonska & Bobek, 2012; Thompson, Newsome & Commander, 2013). Also, organization studies have increasingly adopted intersectional perspectives to

understand inequalities derived from individuals' multiple positioning in different subordinate social identity groups – i.e. gender, ethnicity and class (Adib & Guerrier, 2003; Essers & Benschop, 2007; Essers, Benschop & Doorewaard, 2010; Holvino, 2010).

In sum, as mainstream diversity research has largely neglected the possibility that DM practices reproduce unequal power relations rather than combating them, in the third study of this dissertation I reinterpret the identified DM practices trying to reveal how and to what extent they are conductive to the exploitation of traditionally disadvantaged groups. In order to do so, I adopt a critical sociological lens.

3. Overall purpose of the dissertation

Informed by the three critiques developed above of the DM literature and DM practices in particular, I assume that DM cannot simply be studied as universal off-the-shelf set of 'best practices'. Instead, drawing on three different theoretical perspectives that follow from this multiple critique, this dissertation advances current understandings on DM by focusing on the effects of DM practices on both minority and majority employees, by trying to understand how DM practices are embedded in their specific organizational and business context and by considering the role of DM practices within organizations in challenging or reproducing power relations.

This study rests on an understanding of an organizational practice as an 'organization's routine use of knowledge for conducting a particular function that has evolved over time under the influence of the organization's history, people, interests, and actions' (Kostova & Roth, 2002, p. 216). This broad definition allows identifying DM practices inductively from the perspectives of company owners, management, and even minority and majority employees, tying them into how things are actually done and experienced in the organization. Accordingly, a working definition of DM practices in this dissertation is set as follows: a formal or informal organizational practice to attract and retain an ethnically diverse workforce and/or to influence minority–majority employee relations, management–employee relations and customer–employee relations along ethnic lines.

3.1 Theoretical perspectives of the essays

The essays in this dissertation draw on three fundamentally different theoretical perspectives: a psychological, a managerial, and a critical sociological perspective. Each perspective is adopted to address one of the three gaps in the current literature on DM practices identified above. Juxtaposing these three different theoretical perspectives, the aim is to enhance our understanding of the complexity of diversity and its management by bringing different dimensions of the same subject matter to the fore. Without assuming this dissertation will be able to bridge or integrate the disparate views resulting from three different perspectives, I believe that despite and because of this disparity, understandings will be enhanced because differences between each perspective's underlying assumptions will become more explicit (Gioia & Pitre, 1990). The first study takes on a psychological perspective in order to capture the perspectives of ethnic minority employees and their experience of DM practices. This perspective is important as minorities' voices mostly remain unheard, both in organizational settings as in organizational research (Kirton & Greene, 2010; Syed, 2014; Wilkinson, Gollan, Kalfa & Xu, 2015). This poses significant problems as it reproduces the perspective of the more powerful organizational actors and thus limits the scope for understanding organizational inclusion and equality and for enhancing social change (Zanoni et al., 2010). The second study adopts a managerial perspective in order to reconnect DM practices with the specific business context they are developed and implemented in. This perspective is important as the a-contextual nature of the literature on the business case for diversity - continuously constructed on the same arguments with the same business goals (for exceptions, see: Ely & Thomas, 2001; Ortlieb

& Sieben, 2008) – limits interpretations of DM practices shaped by specific business goals (cf. Murray & Dimick, 1978). The third study takes on a critical sociological perspective to consider the role of DM practices within organizations in challenging or reproducing power relations. This perspective is important as it digs beyond management's and minorities' perspective to more deep-seated structural aspects of power relations, providing a counterpoint to mainstream understandings of DM practices (Alvesson & Willmott, 2003).

The first study 'Diversity Management Practices and Ethnic Minorities' Well-Being: An Explorative Study' is an exploratory study relating companies' DM practices to minority employees' experiences of psychological well-being. Drawing on Ryff's (1989) multi-dimensional psychological concept of well-being, this study investigates how DM practices affect ethnic minorities' well-being in organizations. It thereby addresses the lack of research relating organizations' DM practices to workers, both minority and majority workers, subjective experience. Although the DM literature proposes practices based on the correction of psychological and cognitive mechanisms that exclude minority groups (Milliken & Martins, 1996), the effects of these practices on minorities' experiences in organizations and more specifically on their psychological well-being have rarely been studied (cf. Mor Barak & Levin, 2002). Inductively identifying DM practice as all organizational practices used by the organization to manage a diverse personnel, this study provides a nuanced reconstruction of how companies' DM shapes ethnic minority employees' experiences of well-being, including both positive and negative dimensions.

In the second study 'Diversity management practices in Flemish SMEs: Looking for the business case', I adopt a managerial lens to investigate companies' practices to manage a diverse workforce. The study uses the

business case for diversity to understand DM practices, investigating how (in)formal organizational practices are shaped by a business case strategy. Although the DM literature has often drawn attention to business arguments for employing a diverse personnel (Litvin, 2006; Robinson & Dechant, 1997) and scholarly literature has proposed typologies of business' perspectives to employ minority groups (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Ortlieb & Sieben, 2008), this literature lacks insights on how business needs for managing a diverse personnel are situated within specific organizational and productive contexts and fails to relate these business needs to DM practices that actually fulfill them. By studying what the business case for diversity essentially stands for, this study reconstructs how organizational practices for employing a diverse personnel are anchored in and based on specific business needs and simultaneously fulfill minority workers' needs as well.

The third study 'Getting natural born cleaners in the right jobs: An analysis of the exploitation of minority workers from a dual perspective on skills' draws on both a social constructionist perspective and on labor process theory to interpret the management of a diverse personnel from their exploitation – i.e. the appropriation of the surplus value generated by workers' labor – within the companies under study. The study combines a material approach to minority groups' skill – studying the skills required in their jobs – with an ideological approach to skill – studying employers' constructions on minority workers' skills that systematically value or devalue the labor of these groups – to understand how employers organize the exploitation of traditionally underrepresented groups. By showing how the skill content of jobs and the constructions of minority groups' skills mutually inform each other, I bring to the fore unequal power relations within capitalist organizations which are largely disregarded in

the DM literature. This study inscribes itself in the critical diversity literature (Zanoni, et al., 2010), which highlights unequal power relations between employers and employees and addresses how employers' practices organizing the work of minority groups – e.g. women, ethnic minorities as well as workers with a disability – ensure their exploitation.

3.2 Empirical focus

The empirical material of this dissertation consists of case study material from five companies. The case study material of four companies was collected for a research project on DM practices in SMEs commissioned by the Policy Research Centre on Equal Opportunities and funded by the Flemish Government. The case study material of a fifth case was collected together with a master student for a master's thesis in Business Economics on diversity management in SMEs. Considering the overall goals of this dissertation, case studies are recommended to get in-depth insights (Yin, 2009) on organizations' DM practices, allowing to account for the specific organizational and business context they are embedded in and to understand how they affect workers from minority groups (Myers, 2008). I use a comparative multiple case design because, compared to a single case study, it is better suited to inductively identify a broader variety of DM practices used in Flemish organizational settings. Multiple cases make it possible on the one hand to study ideas, practices, their effects and how these interrelate for each case (within-case analysis) and on the other hand to compare similarities and differences in the data across cases (cross-case analysis) (Creswell, 1998), so that patterns can be identified (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

The companies were selected using purposeful sampling: this means that companies were chosen because I considered them to be likely to be rich in information (Patton, 2002) and therefore to contribute to theory development (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). First, companies were sought employing a high share of women, ethnic minorities and ethnic minority women. In Belgium, women, ethnic minorities and ethnic minority women have lower employment rates and higher unemployment rates compared to Belgian ethnic majority men. Especially ethnic minority women, and mainly those born in non-EU countries without Belgian nationality, have very low employment rates (CGKR & FOD Werkgelegenheid, Arbeid en Sociaal Overleg, 2013). Their careers also appear to be less stable compared to Belgian and ethnic minority men: their labor market position changes more frequently, they hardly succeed in remaining employed uninterruptedly for more than three years and once unemployed, their chances to get re-employed are low (Tielens, 2005). I assumed that companies that are able to attract and retain these groups are relatively more likely to manage diversity. Second, I sought to select companies that are likely to manage diversity out of a business need instead of using DM practices as mere window dressing for image building or protection against lawsuits, or because it is imposed to them by a parent company or larger concern. Therefore, I searched for single-site companies of small or medium size (SMEs). SMEs are known for managing personnel close to their business needs or with a motivation by business case arguments (Barrett & Mayson; 2007; Dex & Scheibl, 2001; Kirton & Read, 2007; Kitching, 2006; Woodhams & Lupton, 2006). By selecting single-site companies, I made sure that organizational practices were decided at the site itself and not at a larger and/ or multinational organization (Dex & Scheibl, 2001; Wilkinson, 1999).

The five companies included in this dissertation are a cleaning company, a gas stations company, a floriculture company, a laundry services company and a meat processing company. Selection criteria based on personnel's demographics resulted in a selection of companies from the secondary segment of the labor market, offering low-skill, low-wage employment. This is hardly surprising as – comparable to other European countries (OECD, 2008) – the Belgian labor market is highly ethnically stratified (CGKR & FOD Werkgelegenheid, Arbeid en Sociaal Overleg, 2013; Tielens, 2005; Verhoeven, Anthierens, Neudt, & Martens, 2003). Immigrant workers and Belgian workers of foreign descent can be more frequently found in the occupational areas dominant in the secondary segment of the labor market (Ouali & Rea, 1999): jobs that feature heavy and unhealthy work, unfavorable working conditions and/or under less favorable working conditions in terms of status, wage and working hours (CGKR & FOD Werkgelegenheid, Arbeid en Sociaal Overleg, 2013). The Belgian labor market is also characterized by sectoral and occupational gender segregation (Van Hove, Reymenants, Bailly & Decuyper, 2011) and a persistent gender pay gap with an average of 14% (Delmotte, Sels, Vandekerckhove & Vandenbrande, 2010; Theunissen & Sels, 2006). Table 1 provides an overview of the companies under study and the socio-demographic profile of their personnel. Table 2 provides an overview of the case study material used for each essay.

Table 1: Overview of the case study companies and the socio-demographic profile of personnel

Company	Sector	Number of employees	% of female employees	% of ethnic minority employees	% of female ethnic minority employees
Cleaning company (CleanCo)	Services	67	79%	37%	30%
Gas stations company (GasCo)	Retail	138	63%	44%	25%
Floriculture company (GreenCo)	Horticulture	112	88%	29%	25%
Laundry services company	Services	86	70%	41%	22%
Meat processing company	Wholesale trade	21	45%	64%	39%

Table 2: Overview of the applied case study material per study

Company	DM practices and ethnic minorities' well-being	Looking for the business case	Getting natural born cleaners in the right jobs
Cleaning company (CleanCo)	X	X	X
Gas stations company (GasCo)	X	X	X
Floriculture company (GreenCo)	X	X	X
Laundry services company		X	
Meat processing company		X	

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DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND ETHNIC MINORITIES' WELL-BEING: AN EXPLORATIVE STUDY

Abstract

This explorative study aims to investigate organizational practices deployed to manage diversity and their effects on ethnic minority employees' well-being. Drawing on a qualitative, multiple-case study in three small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), we inductively identify practices that manage diversity by fundamentally shaping the organizational culture and work system. We then show how they foster specific dimensions of ethnic minority employees' well-being yet curbing other ones. The study empirically contributes to the existing literature by documenting organizational practices to manage diversity that are more mainstreamed than 'classical' diversity management (DM) practices (i.e. bias-screened HR practices, diversity training, networking and mentoring programs). Theoretically, the study enhances insights on the distinct effects of practices to manage diversity through organizational cultures and work systems on ethnic minorities' well-being. It further shows that, although specific combinations of such practices effectively manage diversity, they present trade-offs for their well-being.

Introduction

Ethnically diverse organizations face the difficult task of creating organizational contexts in which their employees experience well-being. Personnel's well-being is necessary for organizational functioning and performance, as it enhances job performance, lower absenteeism, reduced turnover intentions, and more discretionary work behaviors (for a review, see Warr, 1999). However, a substantial body of literature has consistently found a negative relation between employees' ethnic minority status and their well-being at work (for a review on well-being at work, see: Sparks, Faragher, & Cooper, 2001).

Some studies have explained ethnic minorities' lower well-being by addressing the social-psychological processes shaping intergroup and interpersonal relations, including stereotyping (Konrad, Winter & Gutek, 1992), discrimination (Goldman, Gutek, Stein, & Lewis, 2006), bullying related to workers' race/ethnicity (Fox & Stallworth, 2005), perceived segmentation in jobs (Forman, 2003) and exclusion from professional and informal networks (Mor Barak & Levin, 2002). Other studies have examined organizations' social structures, considering their share of ethnic minorities as a determinant of minorities' well-being. Ethnic minorities who are a numerical rarity at work have been found to experience lower well-being, higher depression, anxiety and stress (De Vries & Pettigrew, 1998; Jackson, Thoits, & Taylor, 1995; Reskin, McBrier, & Kmec, 1999). Minority employees working among a large proportion of co-ethnics might experience higher well-being (Brass, 1985; Ibarra, 1995; Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 1998), yet this is not always the case (Enchautegui-de-Jesús, Hughes, Johnston, & Oh, 2006; Forman, 2003).

Despite the extensive, consistent evidence on minorities' lower levels of

well-being, not much is today known on how practices deployed to manage a diverse personnel affect ethnic minority employees' well-being. The effects on minorities' well-being of dedicated DM practices commonly advanced in the scientific and practitioner literature – i.e. bias-screened HR procedures, diversity training, networking and mentoring programs – have rarely been studied (e.g. Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Not only, there is even indirect evidence that such practices might thwart minorities' well-being, as they might reinforce stereotyping and trigger majority employees' 'backlash' (Bond & Pyle, 1988; Kidder, Lankau, Chrobot-Mason, Mollica & Friedman, 2004; Linnehan & Konrad, 1999). Current literature draws attention to the idea that organizational contexts are important for creating diversity-friendly environments, and more specifically, that practices to manage diversity should be studied from the organizational logic and the organizational sense-making they are embedded in, which is key to understanding minority and majority workers' well-being (Guillaume, Dawson, Priola, Sacramento, Woods, Higson, Budhwar & West, 2014; Mor Barak & Levin, 2002). Therefore, explorative research is warranted on organizational practices to manage a diverse workforce and their effects on ethnic minorities' experiences of well-being.

This qualitative multiple-case study extends existing DM literature by examining ethnic minority employees' experiences of well-being and relating such experiences to the organizational practices deployed by the organization to manage a diverse workforce. Theoretically, we draw on Carol Ryff's (1989) conceptualization of psychological well-being, comprising six dimensions (self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth) of positive functioning and on Kostova and Roth's definition of an organizational practice as 'an organization's routine use of

knowledge for conducting a particular function that has evolved over time under the influence of the organization's history, people, interests, and actions' (2002: 216). Empirically, we investigate three ethnically diverse Belgian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) – a gas stations company, a cleaning company and a floriculture company. SMEs are suitable to investigate organizational practices to manage diversity because, as they have relatively limited financial resources (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Marlow, 2002), they are less likely than bigger firms to replicate widespread DM practices solely for legal compliance or reputation building (cf. Edelman, 1992). This is particularly true for SMEs in Belgium, as this country lacks a tradition of strong equal opportunities/affirmative action legislation (Cornet & Zanoni, 2010). As SMEs are known to manage their personnel in informal ways and are less likely to adopt practices that do not contribute to their bottom-line, we expect these organizations to resort to different sorts of practices to manage a diverse workforce (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Marlow, 1997).

Our analysis shows that the SMEs under study address diversity through a variety of practices that can be categorized by two main types: practices creating a specific organizational culture and practices shaping the work system. Each organization used a distinct combination of these two types of practices, mainstreaming them into key organizational processes. The study theoretically contributes to diversity management literature through advancing insights on the effects of these practices on distinct dimensions of ethnic minority employees' psychological well-being. We conclude with the limitations of our study and avenues for future research.

Theoretical background

Understanding ethnic minorities' lower well-being in organizations

Over the years, diversity studies have cogently shown ethnic minorities to experience lower levels of well-being in the workplace (Sparks, Faragher, & Cooper, 2001). The dominant approach in diversity research is to understand ethnic minorities' well-being in organizations from social-psychological perspectives. Studies have drawn on theories such as the similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971), social identity theory (Tajfel, 1972; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and social categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987) to explain discrimination (e.g. Goldman, Gutek, Stein, & Lewis, 2006; Hughes & Dodge, 1997) stereotyping (e.g. Pettigrew & Martin, 1987; Konrad, Winter & Gutek, 1992), bullying (Fox & Stallworth, 2005; Zapf & Einarsen, 2011), exclusion from social and informal networks (Ibarra, 1995; Mor-Barak & Levin, 2002) and segmentation (Forman, 2003); all of which have been related to lower ethnic minorities' well-being at work.

A second prominent stream in diversity studies focusing on minority groups' well-being at work has sought explanations in the social structure of organizations: this line of research sees the relative proportion of demographic groups (mostly based on gender or ethnicity/race) within an organization lying at the basis of positive/negative intergroup and interpersonal relations, which explain different experiences of well-being, job satisfaction and stress among minority and majority workers. They are inspired by relational demography (Tsui, Egan & O'Reilly, 1992; Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989), an approach that analyzes organizations from the demographic similarity or dissimilarity of individuals to

other members of the organization. This approach dates back to the seminal works of Blalock (1967), Blau (1977) and Kanter (1977). While Blalock suggests that intergroup relations get threatened when the representation of a traditional minority group is increasing, Blau alternatively suggests that intergroup relations would improve when the proportion of minority and majority groups gets more balanced. Kanter's token theory implies that the number of minorities in an organization should exceed a certain 'token level' to undo the adverse conditions (such as being stereotyped or excluded) of minority status. These theories lie at the origin of numerous empirical studies trying to explain ethnic minorities' levels of well-being and job satisfaction in the workplace and other professional contexts by their relative proportion.

The results in this literature are contradictory: some tend to be consistent with Kanter's token theory, showing that ethnic minorities who are a numerical rarity at work experience lower well-being, higher depression, anxiety and stress (De Vries & Pettigrew, 1998; Jackson, Thoits, & Taylor, 1995; Reskin, McBrier, & Kmec, 1999) or stating that minority groups should reach a critical mass in order for the presence of similar others to positively contribute to their well-being (Brass, 1985; Ibarra, 1995; Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 1998); others highlight that being part of a highly represented minority group at work, to the extent that it gets perceived as racial or ethnic segmentation, is negatively associated with well-being (Forman, 2003; Riordan & Shore, 1997); and yet other ones suggest a nonlinear, inverted relationship between the proportion of ethnic minorities and their well-being (Enchautegui-de-Jesús, Hughes, Johnston, & Oh, 2006).

Limitations of social-psychological and social structure perspectives for understanding ethnic minorities' well-being at work

Besides the often contradictory results, the social-psychological and social structure perspectives throw only a partial light on minorities' well-being at work. A first limitation is that, by reducing the explanation for well-being in organizations to an effect from a uni-dimensional perspective (such as the numerical proportion between minority and majority workers or individuals' identification with a demographic group), it narrows down understandings of well-being at work. This is inconsistent with current conceptualizations of well-being which indicate a person's overall experience of well-being is multi-faceted; by over-emphasizing intergroup and interpersonal relations, relating to whether or not employees are able to develop positive relations with others, this type of research disproportionally highlights just one dimension of well-being at work.

Second, this research a priori locates the main cause of ethnic minority employees' well-being in social and intergroup dynamics along ethnic majority-minority lines. Rather than providing empirical evidence on how and to what extent these social and intergroup dynamics affect minorities' well-being, it just assumes that ethnicity functions as a primary determinant of ethnic minorities' well-being. It thus reduces the concept of well-being for ethnic minorities to an effect from the interaction between different demographic groups, which downplays other determinants of well-being at work. Literature on well-being at work has outlined a wide range of antecedents influencing well-being at work (for a review, see Danna & Griffin, 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2001), which tend to be overseen by a mere focus on intergroup and interpersonal relations.

Third, these explanations largely neglect the organizational contexts in which these groups and individuals interact (cfr. Guillaume et al., 2014; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Mor Barak & Levin, 2002). We do not suggest that social-psychological dynamics and the social structure in an organization do not affect workers' well-being – studies indeed have generated valuable insights into the effects of intergroup and interpersonal relations – but rather argue that these approaches fail to capture how a full range of organization-specific practices affect workers' well-being in all its dimensions. Void from their organizational contexts, these studies tend to reduce organizations' ability to foster or thwart well-being in the workplace by adjusting minority-majority proportions to a sort of pre-defined optimum (Ely & Thomas, 2001), over-emphasizing the importance of employment decisions for minorities' well-being. On other commonly suggested organizational interventions to adjust stereotypes and prejudice and foster intergroup relations at work, such as diversity trainings or networking initiatives, little or no empirical evidence has been found (e.g. Friedman & Holtom, 2002; Rynes & Rosen, 1995). On the contrary, it has even been highlighted that these types of practices are in risk of exacerbating intergroup tensions by inciting backlash among majority workers (Linnehan & Konrad, 1999; Kidder, Lankau, Chrobot-Mason, Mollica & Friedman, 2004; Bond & Pyle, 1988) or by reinforcing stereotypes on minority group workers (Ellis & Sonnenfeld, 1994).

Adopting a broader understanding of ethnic minorities' well-being at work

To get a better understanding of ethnic minorities' well-being in organizations, we rely on the psychological well-being literature. More specifically, we draw on Ryff's concept of psychological well-being (1989) in

which well-being comprises six dimensions that are deemed essential to understand the broad range of experiences affecting well-being: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth. Table 3 provides an overview of the six dimensions and a description of each of them.

Table 3: Ryff's (1989) six dimensions of well-being

Dimension	Description
Self-acceptance	Positive attitudes toward oneself.
Positive relations with others	Ability to love, having strong feelings of empathy and affection for all human beings and the capacity of love, deep friendship, and identification with others.
Autonomy	Self-determination and the regulation of behavior from within, resistance to enculturation and an internal locus of evaluation, whereby one does not look to others for approval, but evaluates oneself by personal standards; deliverance from convention, in which the person no longer clings to the collective fears, beliefs, and laws of the masses.
Environmental mastery	Ability to choose or create environments suitable to one's psychic conditions, participation in activity outside of the self and the ability to advance in the world and change it creatively through physical or mental activities.
Purpose in life	Beliefs that give one the feeling there is purpose in and meaning to life, a sense of directedness and intentionality, such as being productive and creative.

Personal growth	Ability to continue to develop one's potential, to grow and expand as a person, the need to actualize oneself and realize one's potentialities, openness to experience.

Ryff's conceptualization of psychological (or eudaimonic) well-being is both a theory as well as a widely-used and validated measurement scale. Her concept is situated within the broader field of positive psychology, a field that seeks to empirically substantiate the underlying conditions for positive emotions, positive character and positive institutions (Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi, 2000). Well-being is one of the central concepts studied in this field and broadly defined as 'referring to optimal psychological functioning and experience' (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Ryff's concept of well-being is based on eudaimonic philosophy, which is generally opposed to hedonic philosophy: while hedonic philosophy sees well-being as the presence of pleasure and the absence of pain (Diener, Lucas & Scollon, 2006; Kahneman, Diener & Schwarz, 1999), eudaimonic philosophy sees well-being as a result from the fulfillment of a person's potentialities, in accordance with their daimon, or true self (Ryff, 1989), which contains other notions than short-term pleasure such as growth and self-actualization.

Ryff's six-dimensional concept comprises well-being as self-actualization of human potential, which can be associated with pleasant feelings when successfully engaged in, but might include the acceptance of short-term negative emotions to pursue higher levels of well-being in the longer run, and thus is considered to be conceptually independent of pleasure as such (Ryan & Huta, 2009). It is a validated concept for studying differences in well-being along different socio-demographic axes as age, gender, socioeconomic status,

and ethnic/minority status (e.g. Ryff, Keyes, & Hughes, 2003) and to study well-being in the workplace (Russell, 2008; Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009). Ryff's conceptualization entails well-being to be influenced by more than just experiences embedded in intergroup and interpersonal relations (which is reflected in the dimension of positive relations with others), but also adopts dimensions that require individuals to evaluate well-being against their own standards, values and goals in life.

Organizational practices and their effects on ethnic minorities' well-being

The idea that organizational contexts are important in managing a diverse personnel and the need for empirical studies taking an organizational approach to understand how organizational practices to manage diversity are actively made sense of by different organizational actors is not new anymore (Glastra, Meerman, Schedler, & de Vries, 2000; Janssens & Zanoni, 2005; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007; Zanoni, Janssens, Benschop & Nkomo, 2010). The same idea has also, albeit more rare, resonated in studies on minority and majority groups' well-being in organizations: Mor Barak and Levin's study (2002) highlighted that how workers feel about and perceive organizational policies and practices affects different affective outcomes including their well-being; more recently, Guillaume et al. (2014) theoretically elaborated the idea that organizational cultures and work systems are crucial factors that harness diverse employees' well-being.

However, and despite the attention for ethnic minorities' lower levels of well-being in the workplace, little diversity research has been conducted on how

organizational practices possibly foster or thwart ethnic minority workers' well-being. The scientific and practitioner literature on diversity management has proposed managerial practices that are supposed to create diversity-friendly organizations; practices such as removing bias from HR-procedures and –practices, diversity trainings, and networking and mentoring initiatives. Few studies however have looked at the impact of these typically suggested DM practices and they do not unambiguously demonstrate their effectiveness for turning organizations into diversity-friendly ones. A large-scale study by Kalev, Dobbin and Kelly (2006) of private sector firms provides practically no support for these diversity practices in terms of increasing managerial diversity and demonstrates only modest effects when organizations establish managerial responsibility for these practices. Other empirical studies have casted doubt on the contribution of diversity trainings (Rynes & Rosen, 1995; Hite & McDonald, 2006) and networking initiatives (Friedman & Holtom, 2002) in creating more diversity among the workforce or among managers, or have questioned the results of mentoring programs in terms of career benefits for minorities (Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

Importantly, the above-mentioned evaluation studies tend to favor efficacy in terms of demographic and work-related outcomes (diversification of the workforce and career attainments of minorities), leaving minority groups' affective experiences unquestioned. This stands in stark contrast with the grandiose ambitions for organizations resounding in the scientific and practitioner literature on diversity management, such as low levels of intergroup conflict (Cox, 1991) or enabling every individual to contribute to its full potential (Thomas, 1991). These ambitions entail more qualitative goals touching upon

workers' affective experiences, which have largely been left underexposed in (evaluation) studies of DM practices. This oversight is even more striking considering that practices such as diversity training or mentoring and networking initiatives are informed by the same social-psychological perspectives explaining minorities' feelings of exclusion or lower levels of well-being and aim to enhance positive intergroup relations (Ibarra, 1995; Cox, 1991). As mentioned above, they might even turn out counter-effective by inciting backlash or reinforcing stereotypes.

In sum, a manifest absence of evidence that the DM practices most commonly advanced in the diversity management literature are effective in fostering minority workers' well-being maintains and, even on the contrary, counterevidence suggests these practices might reinforce ingroup favoritism and intergroup conflict, which detracts from constituting positive relations and thus risks to even hamper workers' well-being. Given multiple calls to study the organizational context of diversity management (Glastra, et al., 2000; Guillaume et al., 2014), we opt for explorative research on organizational practices to manage diversity and their effects on ethnic minorities' experiences of well-being. More specifically, we suggest to inductively explore organizational practices used to manage diversity following Kostova and Roth who define an organizational practice as: 'an organization's routine use of knowledge for conducting a particular function that has evolved over time under the influence of the organization's history, people, interests, and actions' (2002: 216). Their definition draws on institutional theory, prioritizing the social meaning given to organizational practices by their institutional context, rather than limiting organizational practices to those that are prescribed by management textbooks

or laws. This conceptualization allows us to investigate the influence of a broader range of practices on minorities' well-being, such as informal practices, practices that are produced through the interaction of organizational members, as well as formal practices, including those typically disseminated by diversity management literature.

Methodology

As this study aims to explore organizational practices deployed to manage diversity and investigate how they affect ethnic minority employees' well-being, we opted for qualitative, multiple-case studies. Explorative multiple-case studies are suitable to address how and why questions in a 'real-life' research settings (Yin, 2009) and to build theory from empirical data through the identification of converging and diverging patterns within and across cases (Eisenhardt, 1989).

The study

The three case studies were conducted within a larger government-funded research project on DM practices in Belgian SMEs – companies with maximum 250 employees. SMEs are important as they employ 67 percent of European employees (Muller et al., 2014). We specifically selected companies with a substantial share of ethnic minority employees – 29% to 44% of the total personnel – as such companies are rather exceptional within the Belgian context, particularly likely to implement DM practices (cf. Eisenhardt, 1989). Most (ethnic minority) employees were employed in low-skill jobs, which is as a

specific type of company, reflecting the weak position of ethnic minorities in the strongly ethno-stratified labor market in Belgium (CGKR & FOD Werkgelegenheid, Arbeid en Sociaal Overleg, 2013; Tielens, 2005; Verhoeven, 2000).

Data sources

The main data source are 46 semi-structured interviews conducted by the first author with the owner(s), managers, supervisors and employees in various jobs and with both ethnic majority and minority backgrounds (see Table 4). In each company, between 12% and 21% of the total personnel was interviewed. Respondents were autonomously selected from a list of employees in different jobs provided by a contact person to maximize socio-demographic heterogeneity.

Table 4: Overview of the interviewees

	Gender	Ethnicity	Function
Gas stations company			
Interview 1	Male	Italy	General manager
Interview 2	Female	Belgium	Shop manager
Interview 3	Male	Turkey	Shop manager
Interview 4	Male	Belgium	Shop manager
Interview 5	Female	Belgium	Shop employee
Interview 6	Female	Belgium	Shop employee
Interview 7	Female	Belgium	Shop employee
Interview 8	Male	Belgium	Shop employee
Interview 9	Male	Turkey	Shop manager
Interview 10	Female	The Philippines	Staff employee
Interview 11	Female	Turkey	Shop employee
Interview 12	Female	Italy	Shop employee
Interview 13	Female	Greece	Shop employee
Interview 14	Female	Turkey	Shop employee
Interview 15	Female	Uzbekistan	Shop employee
Interview 16	Female	Belgium	Shop employee
Interview 17	Male	Italy	General manager

Table 4 *(continued)*

	Gender	**Ethnicity**	**Function**
Cleaning services company			
Interview 1	Male	Belgium	General manager
Interview 2	Male	Belgium	Middle-manager
Interview 3	Female	Algeria	Worker
Interview 4	Female	Belgium	Worker
Interview 5	Female	Cameroon	Worker
Interview 6	Female	Nigeria	Worker
Interview 7	Female	Belgium	Worker
Interview 8	Male	Greece	Worker
Interview 9	Female	Belgium	Worker
Interview 10	Female	Poland	Worker
Interview 11	Male	Belgium	Middle-manager
Interview 12	Male	Belgium	Middle-manager
Interview 13	Male	Belgium	Worker
Interview 14	Male	Belgium	Worker

Table 4 *(continued)*

	Gender	**Ethnicity**	**Function**
Floriculture company			
Interview 1	Female	Belgium	Middle-manager
Interview 2	Female	Turkey	Worker
Interview 3	Female	The Netherlands	Worker
Interview 4	Female	Belgium	Worker
Interview 5	Female	Nigeria	Worker
Interview 6	Female	Belgium	Supervisor
Interview 7	Female	Cuba	Worker
Interview 8	Male	Belgium	Director
Interview 9	Female	Belgium	Worker
Interview 10	Female	The Philippines	Worker
Interview 11	Female	Belgium	Worker
Interview 12	Male	Nigeria	Worker
Interview 13	Female	Mexico	Worker
Interview 14	Female	Turkey	Worker
Interview 15	Male	Belgium	General manager

The questionnaires consisted of open-ended questions on the respondent's own background, experience of working in the company, interpersonal relations, human resource management (HRM) and diversity. In interviewing ethnic minority employees, particular attention was paid to formulating questions in a simple, concrete language, as many would not be speaking in their mother tongue. Interviews took place at the workplace during working hours, lasted between one and two hours, and were recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. To complement the interview data and triangulate it (Myers, 2008; Yin, 2009), in each company we further collected documents on the HRM and DM policies, job vacancy ads, the website, the by-laws, newspaper articles, etc. Finally, unstructured observations during company visits were noted in a logbook and used to further support the data interpretation.

Data analysis

The data analysis occurred in four steps. We began by reconstructing each case to get a sense of the company, its history and vision on diversity. We then analyzed ethnic minority and majority employees' accounts of their well-being experiences. To do so, we deployed Ryff's (1989) six dimensions of well-being: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth (cf. table 3).

Ryff's dimensions of well-being were used in our analysis as sensitizing concepts: different from definitive concepts, sensitizing concepts give general guidance in approaching empirical instances (Blumer, 1954), offering starting points for building analysis, "ways of seeing, organizing, and understanding experience" (Charmaz, 2003: 259). Ryff's conceptualization of well-being thus provided an analytic framework in which the dimensions served as points of reference to compare the empirical material.

Initially, the first author coded the transcribed interview material along the six dimensions of well-being. This coding was verified by the second author to enhance the quality of the analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), and points of disagreement discussed until agreement was reached. Although our focus was on ethnic minorities' well-being, in the analysis we compared ethnic minority and majority employees' accounts to exclude the possibility of opposing effects of DM practices on the two groups.

References to well-being dimensions retrieved from the interviews with workers are presented here in order of frequency of occurrence. First, interview excerpts describing how the interviewee likes or dislikes to work together with colleagues, feels or does not feel supported by colleagues professionally as well as for personal matters and trusts or does not trust colleagues were coded as the presence or absence of the well-being dimension 'positive relations with others'. Also fragments where the interviewee describes (not) feeling supported professionally and for personal matters by superiors, (not) to experience superiors to be open, approachable and present within the company and (not) feeling treated in a fair way by the company were coded as 'positive relations with others', or the absence thereof. Feelings of having or not having positive

relations with others was most often discussed by minority workers, both in relation to ethnic majority workers as well as minority workers.

Second, interview fragments where workers described their (in)ability to self-determine the sequence, the timing and the pace of the tasks at hand, as well as their (in)ability to evaluate the output of their work were coded as the dimension 'autonomy' or the absence thereof. The dimension of autonomy or a lack thereof in relation to management or the organizing of their job was almost equally often talked about by ethnic minorities during the interviews. Third, interview fragments describing the feeling, or the absence thereof, of mastering the combination of professional activities within their current work environment with activities outside of their professional life, whether related to family, cultural background, leisure, education or other, and to maintain, or not to maintain, control over this combination in the future were coded as the dimension 'environmental mastery'. This dimension was also quite often talked about by minority workers, especially by women.

Fourth, interview fragments referring to the (in)ability to grow in professional life, to expand professional competences, to take more professional responsibility and to gain more professional experience likely to be valuable in the labor market were coded as the 'personal growth' dimension of well-being. This dimension was much less frequently mentioned by respondents - both ethnic majority and ethnic minority – than the previous ones. Fifth, interview excerpts where interviewees reflected on the long-term perspectives and meaning of their job in their lives, or the absence thereof, were coded as purpose in life. It was talked about in the sense of positive but mostly negative experiences on the labor market before, such as repeated experiences of exclusion, disappointment or purposelessness. Finally, text fragments where

interviewees referred to their work as being a positive or negative part of who they are were coded as the dimension 'self-acceptance'. These last two dimensions, purpose in life and self-acceptance, were remarkably less referred to by interviewees; only two interview excerpts were codes as self-acceptance.

In each company, ethnic minorities' accounts were rather consistent, often pointing to the same dimensions, either positively or negatively. For parsimony, we only included in the findings those dimensions mentioned by more than one respondent. In the comparison of accounts from ethnic minority and majority employees, we found little discrepancy between them as accounts largely converged. The cross-case comparison showed on the contrary distinct experiences of well-being along the six dimensions in each company.

In a following step, the first author inductively identified the organizational practices within each case, following Kostova and Roth's definition, from the interview material, the internal documentation and the notes on participant observation. She included only practices that were mentioned by interviewees as relevant to managing an ethnically diverse workforce or as influencing minority and majority employees' experiences. The identified practices and relative excerpts were then thoroughly discussed with the second author, first to reconstruct the set of practices within each case and then the similarities and differences across the cases. From the within- and cross-case analysis, we could distinguish between two types of practices, which respondents related to ethnic diversity: 1) practices shaping the work system and 'fitting' individuals into it –i.e. job design, the degree of interdependence between employees, training policies and work-life balance arrangements (Sparks et al., 2001), and 2) practices shaping the organizational culture, which created and enforced norms and values, the perception of and interaction with

one another, approaches to decision making and problem solving (Chatman, Polzer, Barsade, & Neale, 1998). Within each case, we could triangulate nearly all identified practices across types of interviewees and data sources, and excluded from the analysis those we could not verify (e.g. the recruitment of employees from the local integration service, mentioned by the general manager, was a practice which could not be verified at the gas stations company).

In a final step, we reconstructed the relation between the well-being dimensions in ethnic minorities' accounts and the companies' practices. We did so by comparing the cases to check for similarities and differences in both experiences of well-being and sets of practices. An overview of the overall results is presented in Table 5. In the first row, the dimensions of well-being that were more or less present in the narratives are indicated. Dimensions that were positively mentioned are indicated by one or more plus-signs (+), according to the frequency of occurrences; conversely, dimensions that were negatively mentioned are indicated by one or more minus-signs (-), also according to the number of occurrences in the interviews. Dimensions that occurred equally in positive or negative sense are indicated by a plus-minus sign (+/-); dimensions that were completely absent in that case are indicated with a zero. In the second row of the table, we provide an overview of the sets of organizational practices shaping the specific organizational cultures, to which we assigned three distinctive labels: integrative, differentiating and non-discriminating organizational culture. In the third row, we provide a typology and an overview of the organizational practices shaping the work systems, to which we assigned three distinctive labels: interdependent, separated and standardized work systems.

Table 5: Overview of the findings

	Gas stations company	**Cleaning services company**	**Floriculture company**
Dimensions of well-being	Positive relations with others (+++++) Personal growth (++) Autonomy (-----) Environmental mastery (+/-) Purpose in life (+) Self-acceptance (0)	Autonomy (+++) Environmental mastery (+++++) Positive relations with others (-----) Self-acceptance (+) Personal growth (+) Purpose in life (+/-)	Environmental mastery (+++++) Positive relations with others (++++/----) Autonomy (-----) Purpose in life (+) Self-acceptance (0) Personal growth (0)
Organizational culture/	Integration: • Non-hierarchical management	Differentiation: • Supervisor's informal,	Non-discrimination: • Management style adapted to

Practices	style showing personal commitment • Social activities supporting informal integration of all employees • Enforcement of anti-discriminatory norms towards employees and customers • Menu adapted to religious and non-religious food requirements of diverse personnel and customers	supportive management style • Work adaptations for private and cultural needs are negotiated on a one-to-one basis between supervisor and individual employees • Job guidance for new minority employees outsourced to external coaches	employees with limited language skills • Social activities adapted to employees' childcare responsibilities • Enforcement of anti-discriminatory norms towards employees • Menu adapted to religious and non-religious food requirements of diverse personnel
Work system/ **Practices**	Interdependence: • Personnel deployment adapted	Separation: • Personnel deployed at	Standardization: • Personnel deployed in

	to minorities' additional or lacking language skills • Personnel deployment adapted to minorities' additional cultural skills • Personnel deployment adapted to low ability workers • Flexible deployment of personnel in various jobs • Flexible arrangements of shift work among workers • On-the-job training for new employees and managers • Training to enhance occupation-specific skills • Training to enhance minorities'	different work sites and different work processes • Work organization adapted to individual employees' private and cultural needs • Work organization adapted to minorities' language skills • Work instructions adapted to diverse personnel's different levels of language proficiency • Supervisor compensates employees' limited language skills in relations with customers • Sustainable workload over time	standardized jobs • Close surveillance of workers • Flexible work arrangements to meet employees' private and cultural needs • Training to enhance occupation-specific skills • Training to enhance interpersonal and intercultural skills • Training to enhance minorities' language skills • Personnel deployment adapted to minorities' additional or lacking language skills

	language skills • Custom training and career guidance for employees with managerial aspirations		• Working conditions adapted to low ability workers

Findings

The gas stations company: well-being through cultural integration and work interdependence

Founded in 1988 by two brothers of Italian origins, the gas stations company started with exploiting one gas station for a multinational gasoline supplier and grew to a middle-sized company. The shops offer, next to a wide range of products such as food, drinks, magazines and car supplies, also car rental and carwash. In every shop there is also a food corner serving sandwiches, pizzas and drinks, and a coffee bar. All are open 24/7 every day of the year. The company includes two general managers (both ethnic minorities), 6 staff personnel in the main office (1 ethnic minority), 19 shop managers running the gas stations (13 ethnic minorities), and 132 employees in the shops (60 ethnic minorities). Forty-four percent of the personnel has a foreign background from Morocco, Turkey, Italy, and other European Union and eastern European countries. Jobs are not segregated: both ethnic minority and majority employees work as cashiers and in the food corners. The company considers personnel diversity an asset to serve its ethnically diverse customers.

In their accounts, minority employees expressed a sense of well-being by referring very often to the extremely positive relations with co-workers, supervisors and management. They mentioned being treated in a fair, non-discriminatory way, mutual attention for each other's professional and private concerns, and working together on an equal footing regardless of one's position. An employee of Philippine origin told us:

> *"[This company] is yeah, so good for me. […] there is a nice atmosphere, actually. Yeah, it's different, I feel different. I'm accepted*

and I'm a non-native speaker. You're part of the family, so to speak. You know… that feeling, and yes, that's good."

Various interviewees used the metaphor of the family, describing manifestations of solidarity beyond mere professional relations:

"[The general managers] are a sort of father figure for their personnel. Yeah, that also gives you a warmer feeling, huh. For example, if you told the foreman: 'I've got financial problems, can you lend me some money'? They won't do that [in another company], huh. […] That bond, it's close, it's warmer, it's like a family."(employee of Turkish origin)

In some cases, respondents recounted opportunities for personal growth in the company. A shop manager with Turkish background told us:

"In 2006 they suggested that I become a shop manager. And then I said: 'No, I can't see myself doing that'. Because at that time I couldn't rely on myself one hundred percent. So then I continued working. After a year, they told me I would be capable of doing this. Then I felt more ready, I took the challenge and now I've been doing this for three years."

Yet at the same time, interviewees experienced a strong social pressure to always be available and having little autonomy in such a very cohesive work environment:

"I always say to them that they can call me first to stand in. So when someone calls in sick, yeah, there is much extra pressure for me to stand in. When at that moment I'm somewhere visiting, then I say: 'Sorry, I need to go to work'. Then I feel obliged to come to work." (employee of Turkish origin)

Along the same lines, others mentioned feeling exhausted or missing out on their social and family life because they were constantly being scheduled extra work shifts to stand in for absent colleagues or received all late night work shifts. These accounts indicate limited employees' autonomy, rendering them highly reliant on other company members for approval.

These experiences of well-being axed on positive relations with others and opportunities of personal growth yet a low sense of autonomy were fostered by the unique combination of practices which the gas stations company deployed to manage a diverse personnel, and which created an integrative organizational culture and organized work interdependently to make maximal use of skill complementarities.

Various practices encouraged the integration of all employees, independent of their ethnic background, into a strong company culture and supporting informal relations among employees and between them and managers. They included a non-hierarchical management style showing personal commitment towards employees, social activities supporting informal integration of all employees (i.e. parties, drinks and teambuilding activities), the enforcement of anti-discriminatory norms towards employees and customers, and providing food adapted to religious and non-religious requirements and customers. A worker of Turkish origins stated:

> *"[Shop managers] pay very much attention to [discrimination]. Also towards the customers. If they behave inappropriately or reprimand the personnel, then the manager will address them 'You'd better take it down a peg or two, this is my staff!'."*

At the same time, the company organized work in a highly interdependent way. Employees were assigned to work teams to complement each other's competencies. For instance, personnel were allocated so that individual employees with specific lower language knowledge or disability could be helped by their colleagues. This policy enabled the company to flexibly deploy personnel in multiple jobs, a common way to deal with small and irregular work volume in SMEs (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Marlow, 1997). A shop manager of Turkish origin explained:

> *"For example, I've got two or three people for maintenance who also work as a second cashier at peak times. These people have limitations […] For example, there's somebody who has a short memory and who is short-sighted, you name it. Usually I schedule him with a capable person he can always fall back on whenever he has a tough time."*

Yet the focus was not solely on individuals' lack of competencies but also on additional ones. A general manager explained to us:

> *"[Ethnic minority employees] can solve many things within these cultures. Both positive and negative situations. I'm thinking about conflicts sometimes, about aggression and racism. […] So, for example, on a Saturday or Sunday morning, when you pass this station, many young people are returning from a night out. If you have a number of employees with the same ethnic background as those youngsters, then there is little aggression and few fights."*

The complementary, flexible allocation of personnel in the work system was supported by a well-developed training policy ensuring that individuals learned up to their potential. The company offered language and technical training as well as on-the-job training for new recruits. An employee of Uzbekistan origin confirmed this:

> *"Sometimes you very much get assessed on the job interview, and on which answers you give. And imagine if I couldn't find the right words just at that moment and would be assessed based on that. […] And they said: 'Just come and try, we'll see'."*

Furthermore, tailor-made career guidance enabled capable and motivated individuals to grow into a managerial job at their own pace, offering them maximal professional chances.

Taken together, the practices fostering cultural integration and organizing work interdependently deployed by the gas stations company to manage its diverse personnel appeared to create an organizational context fostering employees' well-being, independent of their ethnic background, in terms of positive relations with others and personal growth at the expense of

their autonomy. These findings echo the existing research on the positive relationship between strong, diversity-friendly organizational cultures (Chatman, Polzer, Barsade, & Neale, 1998; Findler, Wind & Mor Barak, 2007; McMillan-Capehart, 2005), developmental HR approaches (Janssens & Zanoni, 2014), and cooperative work arrangements (Allport, 1954) on minority employees' well-being. However, they also nuance this literature by pointing to the trade-off such organizational contexts present in terms of limiting (ethnic minority) employees' experience of autonomy, due to the strong normative control exerted by the organizational culture and by peers (cf. Ikuko, 2002; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007), simultaneously negatively affecting their well-being.

The cleaning services company: well-being through cultural differentiation and work separation

The cleaning services company is a middle-sized family company founded by two brothers in 1976. Today owned by one of the founders and his wife, it offers regular cleaning services and window cleaning as well as specialized services for polishing natural stone floors and aluminum joineries. The business is run with a focus on establishing long-term cleaning contracts with clients – mainly SMEs, non-profit organizations and private homes. The company includes the general managers (both Belgian majority); 3 middle-managers in managerial support and supervisory functions (Belgian majority); and 62 workers (25 ethnic minorities). Thirty-seven percent of the employees are ethnic minorities with backgrounds from Turkey (both first and second-generation), Greece, Poland, Thailand and several African countries (mostly first-generation migrants). All are

employed in cleaning jobs. The company had a non-discriminatory vision on diversity, stressing workers' ability to meet the company's expectations independent of their ethnic background.

In the interviews with us, many ethnic minority employees expressed feeling well at work by referring to a strong autonomy and ownership of their jobs. The following excerpts are illustrative:

> *"I'm used to this. And I've got my own, uhm… the ground floor and first flour are mine. And that makes me feel stronger. They're mine and they need to stay clean." (employee of Polish origin)*

> *"Sometimes, for example, here I do the two classrooms and then I go down here. But when I come to school and the children are still there, then I have to change and maybe start in the classrooms and then come back here. And that's my own decision. So, nobody tells me: 'you must start here, or you must be there'. (employee of Cameroon origin)*

At the same time, respondents stressed environmental mastery over their work by talking about their ability to arrange work hours. For instance, an employee with an Algerian background recounted:

> *"So last Tuesday was the Feast of Sacrifice. So I said to [middle-manager]: 'I won't come to work. Because everyone is at home, I'm not coming to work'. And [middle-manager] understood. […]And those hours I divided them over the other days of the week. I worked an hour extra every day, so no problem."*

Others mentioned being able to adapt their working hours to important family transitions, such as a newborn or children starting to go to school, or to combine work and a Dutch language course.

Yet respondents' experiences were not entirely positive. Some mentioned negative aspects of their work, such as a lack of opportunities to develop relationships with co-workers and management's inattentive style:

> *"I once asked [my supervisor]:'Why is that they never even give chocolate or a card for Christmas or… (laughs)?' […] I did business administration, and it said if your worker is doing well, you have to send*

> *a card to show appreciation, or to compliment, but they don't do that. No (laughs). (employee of Cameroon origin)*

Along the same lines, other respondents, including majority ones, told us they never saw the general managers, or that management did not even contact them when they were on a long sick leave due to an occupational injury. Negative feelings were sometimes attenuated by the positive relation to their direct supervisor and, in some cases, with the client's personnel.

Ethnic minorities' experiences of well-being highlighting autonomy and environmental mastery yet also a lack of opportunity to develop positive relations with others appeared to be stimulated by the unique combination of practices creating an organizational culture of individually negotiated support and practices organizing work by strictly separating individual workers.

The cleaning services company implemented a number of practices discouraging interaction among cleaners and between them and general management. Cleaners hardly ever came to the company premises, job coaching was outsourced, and no social activity was organized. Employees only interacted on a regular basis with their supervisor, who had an informal, supportive management style:

> *"I've got [the supervisor's] telephone number. When I need something, I call him, he always helps me. When my husband was ill and had to go through surgery, he helped me to go on leave." (employee of Algerian origin)*

This differentiated, one-to-one culture was enabled by an organization of work not only organizing work independently but even separating individual cleaners by assigning them to different work sites or parts of them (i.e. different floors). This work organization enhanced individuals' sense of ownership and responsibility for their work and enabled the company to tailor support and work

schedules to individuals' competencies and needs. For instance, management provided visual instructions to cleaners with limited language knowledge to ensure that they understood their jobs. Or the supervisor provided extra support to find transportation to the cleaning site or to facilitate the communication with the client:

> *"When employees are just starting to learn Dutch and they only speak English, I tell the customer to ask to contact me whenever there's a problem. I also go on site and double check if the cleaning lady has understood everything that needs to be done."*

The company was also extremely flexible in function of individuals' personal and cultural needs:

> *"When there are holidays for certain religions, then they often take up leave days, or something like that. […] Or they work a few hours more each day and divide these over the other days. And I don't bother about that."(supervisor with Belgian background)*

Special requests were however negotiated on an individual basis, based on employees' own commitment and flexibility towards the company rather than on general rules. The general manager explained:

> *"You give and you take. To somebody who works at its best, you easily grant favors which are usually not given, arrangements which are not on paper. But if someone brings in a two-week sick leave certificate five times a year and that person asks to go to Turkey for three months during the summer holidays, then uhm… then we don't allow it. […] If people worked together on cleaning sites, I would prefer not to give [them any flexibility], because then you favor someone over someone else and that creates conflicts. Then I would prefer to give them just the days off they are entitled to by law. Now people work alone on site, that's much easier: you can replace them [when you give them extra days off] and then you don't have to manage any conflicts [among personnel]."*

Interestingly, the company had a general explicit policy of keeping cleaners' workload within acceptable limits, in order to foster long-term employment relations and increase service quality:

> *"If you really want to go under the market price, then you need to reduce working hours […]. If you give them too much work, this implies they will much easier quit, that they will go elsewhere to find a job. This is because the work rhythm gets too high, they get injuries, more stress… We want to keep working hours reasonable to get the work done."(general manager)*

Taken together, cultural differentiation and work separation at the cleaning services company seemed to foster ethnic minority employees' well-being in terms of autonomy and environmental mastery yet at the expense of positive relations with others. Work separation and a differentiated culture echo pre-industrial, informal, one-to-one employment relations (cf. Thompson, 1967), eliminating the possibility not only of (inter-cultural) conflict but also of social relations between employees and limiting those with management to a minimum. The 'sustainable workload' approach (under pressure of shortage on the labor market) and the informal line management style, however, do appear to attenuate its negative effects on employees' well-being.

The floriculture company: well-being through cultural non-discrimination and work standardization

Founded in the 1980's, the floriculture company grew from a small family business to a middle-sized company. The company grows different sorts of houseplants, and breeds varieties of one specific ornamental plant. The company is structured as follows: a board of four directors among whom the company founder (all Belgian majority); a general manager (1, Belgian majority); 6 middle-managers (all Belgian majority); 19 production administrators and accounting clerks (all Belgian majority); 3 supervisors (all Belgian majority); and 90 workers (32 ethnic minorities). Twenty-nine percent of the 112 employees

has a foreign background, most of them from Turkey, Bulgaria, former Yugoslavia, and several African and Asian countries. The company is vertically segregated along ethnicity, as minorities were all in operative jobs in the company's laboratory and in the greenhouse. The company had a non-discriminatory vision on diversity, stressing the need to find personnel and the irrelevance of ethnicity.

In their accounts, minorities stressed above all feeling positively about being able to flexibly combine their work with their private life. Workers mentioned for instance being able to change their work schedule along with transitions in their life and unforeseen circumstances, such as caring for a family member falling ill or needs deriving from their foreign background. An employee of Turkish origin told us:

> *"On Wednesdays I usually don't work. My kids are at home then, and they don't like being alone. […] And sometimes on Wednesdays I work overtime, to be able to go on holiday. So I work a little more for a few weeks. Because Turkey is so far away huh, a month would be too little to visit my family over there."*

At the same time, many respondents – both ethnic minority and majority ones -- mentioned feeling exceedingly controlled in their jobs:

> *"The negative thing I feel is uhm, I would say [a lack of] trust. They don't trust us. […] There should be more autonomy. But here they just want to control you. Even after ten years they have to control you." (employee of Nigerian origin)*

Although nobody mentioned conflicts, minority interviewees described inter-group relations as rather superficial. The following quote is revealing:

> *"Actually, I would have contacts with everybody, but not everybody is as open to have contacts with others. Mostly with the Belgians, yeah, having contact is a little difficult. […] I don't know why, I think they really distinguish between the foreigners and the Belgians. I saw it in the cafeteria. The Turkish sit together. And us, we don't belong here." (employee of Mexican origin)*

Majority respondents confirmed this, and when in between interviews the first author shared lunch breaks with the workers, s/he noticed that majority and minority workers sat at separate tables and had minimal contact. These accounts portray experiences of well-being with high environmental mastery through work-life balance but low autonomy in one's job and weak relations between minority and majority employees.

Such experiences were fostered by a unique set of practices deployed by the floriculture company to manage its diverse personnel through a culture of non-discrimination and a work system centered on standardized jobs. A number of practices aimed at minimizing discrimination: enforcing anti-discriminatory norms, a menu adapted to religious and non-religious food requirements, and ensuring that social activities were accessible to employees with childcare responsibilities. Moreover, managers adapted communication to employees' language knowledge:

> *"If we need to discuss administrative matters with them, we ask another employee [who can translate] to clarify what we want to explain to our employees, so that they certainly understand. […] But of course, there are also a few Asians here, and they speak English. So then eventually, you start talking in English." (manager with Belgian background)*

Although these practices effectively avoided conflict between ethnic groups, they appeared inadequate to foster positive majority-minority relations among co-workers as well as between workers and management, as shown above.

This organizational culture went together with a work system based on independent, standardized jobs under strict surveillance, enabling the company to employ low-skill workers and easily replace them at different stages of the plant breeding:

> *"Everyone gets trained so they can be deployed everywhere. These tasks are actually not that difficult. So when everybody can be deployed everywhere, they're also easily replaceable. For example, we're now making up work schedules for the holidays […], then you can much easier shift people if they're able to do all tasks." (manager with Belgian background)*

Conversely, this work organization allowed workers themselves to flexibly arrange their work schedule.

Complementary practices ensured that workers with limited skills could optimally function in the work process. For instance, minority workers with a limited knowledge of Dutch were put next to other minority workers who could translate work instructions to them:

> *"There are different tasks that need to be done in pairs. And then we look at who we schedule together. If there's someone who lacks language skills, who can't properly fill in the forms… then it becomes perfectly possible just by working together with someone else." (supervisor with Belgian background)*

In-sourced language coaches occasionally also provided on-the-job language training. To stimulate employees' personal development, the floriculture company offered a wide range of trainings, including floriculture training but also IT and cross-cultural training. The general manager explained:

> *"I think that at least half of our workers have participated in one of the IT courses we offer. There are only very few workers in our company who really need IT for their work, four I think. They have taken these trainings, but for the others it's more about developing general knowledge."*

The broad training policy was seen by the HR manager as a way to foster social cohesion among workers. Yet the general manager expressed doubts about its effectiveness to this end:

> *"Also [the training on] working together with people from different cultures, mostly minority workers register for this. This might seem logic*

at first sight, but actually it isn't. It should rather be the Belgian workers who follow the training (laughs)."

Taken together, the practices implemented at the floriculture company created an organizational context in which (ethnic minority) employees' experienced well-being in terms of environmental mastery, yet scarcely experiencing positive inter-group relations and very low autonomy. High standardization – the strong disciplining of people's time-space paths to be the same as one another' (Glennie & Thrift, 1996) – maximized workers' substitutability enabling flexible work-life arrangements. Yet, together with high surveillance and a minimal anti-discriminatory organizational culture, it decreased individuals' sense of autonomy and barely engendered feelings of positive relations with others.

Discussion

This explorative multiple-case study of Belgian SMEs employing an ethnically diverse personnel allowed us to analyze in-depth how specific sets of organizational practices relate to minority employees' experiences of well-being. We found two main types of organizational practices deployed by the companies to manage their diverse personnel: practices shaping specific organizational cultures and practices shaping the organization's work systems. Through intra- and cross-case analysis, we could reconstruct unique combinations of these two types of practices shaping distinct ethnic minority employees' experiences of well-being, including both positive and negative dimensions (cf. Ryff's, 1989).

The companies included in this study all managed their ethnically diverse personnel by means of various related practices which shaped key organizational processes (cf. Roberson, 2006). Both the multiplicity of these practices and their

mainstreamed nature stand in stark contrast with the focus of the existing DM literature on single designated HR practices. Whereas the 'classical' DM practices attempt to correct individuals' cognitions and behaviors negatively affecting minorities in the workplace, the practices we found fundamentally organize the workplace in ways that are compatible with diversity (cf. Glastra, et al., 2013; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Scott, Heathcote, & Gruman, 2011), mainstreaming it into key organizational processes.

The idea that organizational cultures are important to create diversity-friendly organizations is well established (cfr. Guillaume et al., 2014). Some scholars have stressed that organizational cultures should allow employees to bring their entire set of identities into the workplace rather than requiring them to assimilate to majority norms (Cox, 1993; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Linnehan & Konrad, 1999; Shore et al., 2011). Others have rather argued that specific types of organizational cultures, namely collectively oriented ones, foster positive outcomes in diverse organizations both at the individual and team levels (Chatman, Polzer, Barsade, & Neale, 1998; McMillan-Capehart, 2005). Our three organizations are however characterized by quite distinct organizational cultures, only sharing a basic non-discriminatory character. Possibly, such an organizational culture represents a minimal condition for managing diversity; yet diversity-friendly organizational cultures might further be quite heterogeneous, ranging from encompassing, strong cultures – as in the gas stations company – to minimalistic, 'transactional' ones – as in the cleaning company. In combination with distinctive work systems, these cultures seem to shape (ethnic minority) employees' well-being in distinct ways, fostering some of its dimensions and thwarting other ones.

A second important type of practices in our cases organized work

compatibly with and/or valorizing the competencies of an ethnically diverse personnel and, conversely, enhancing this latter's competencies and/or compensating for their lack thereof. Altogether, these practices attempt to dynamically enhance the fit between personnel and work in a dynamic way. The importance of the fit between individual workers' needs and work systems to enhance well-being and performance is not new (cf. Mumford 1983; 1991), although it has infrequently been applied to diversity (yet see Kalleberg, 2008; Powell, 1998). More generally, diversity scholars have pointed to the need to organize work in ways that are better suitable to make the best of the greater heterogeneity of competencies, expectations and needs deriving from an ever more diverse workforce (Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Sparks et al., 2001; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007). The three organizations we studied achieved this through quite different work system configurations, with distinct effects on different dimensions of employees' well-being.

The identified mainstreamed practices fundamentally adapt organizational structures and processes to a diverse personnel, reducing the effort ethnic minority employees' generally have to make – by virtue of their minority status – to function as expected in the workplace. This might explain why the accounts of well-being of respondents belonging to majority and minority groups largely converge, in se a sign of structural integration of minorities (cf. Cox, 1991). The simultaneous intra-case inter-group convergence and across-case divergence of well-being of majority and minority employees suggests that well-being experiences reflected more the tradeoffs inherent to the companies' specific combinations of cultures and work systems than employees' own ethnic background. These results prompt us to consider organizational factors in explanations of minorities' well-being other than

majority-minority intergroup relations in organizations (Reskin, et al., 1999) and minorities' relative number in organizations, which are so central in the extant literature (Enchautegui-de-Jesús, Hughes, Johnston, & Oh, 2006; Forman, 2003; Jackson, Thoits, & Taylor, 1995).

The nuanced picture of well-being we could draw by relying on Ryff's (1989) six dimensions points to the advantages of differentiating between dimensions of well-being in the workplace to capture not only majority employees' experiences (cf. de Jonge & Schaufeli, 1998), but also to fully capture the experiences of ethnic minorities. The nuanced results in terms of well-being experienced in organizational contexts shaped by specific combinations of organizational culture and work system calls into question the concept of 'best DM practices' (Cox, 1994), pointing to the tradeoffs inherent to any set of practices.

Although we tend to see the mainstreamed nature of practices as a possible explanation for both minority and majority groups' well-being experiences advanced in the same direction, nevertheless, we are aware that a focus on ethnic-minorities' well-being might cast a too one-sided image of their employment. Although in terms of well-being, minority workers are seemingly not worse off than their majority co-workers in the companies under study, our perspective only allows relating these experiences of well-being to the organization's work system and the organizational culture. The study did not consider the effects of the identified DM practices on ethnic minorities' career outcomes, unable to assess the effects of working in the companies compared to previous work experiences or other organizations they've worked for as well as the effects on their careers in the longer run. A one-sided focus on ethnic minorities' well-being obscures the underlying ambivalence between their

functioning in the job and their structurally subordinate professional position, within the companies we studied but also in the labor market (Anderson & Ruhs, 2010). Moreover, we cannot exclude that minority workers' experiences of well-being turn out relatively positive because of their own downward adjusted expectations within an exclusive labor market (CGKR & FOD Werkgelegenheid, Arbeid en Sociaal Overleg, 2013; Tielens, 2005; Verhoeven, 2000).

Our multiple-case research design enabled us to generate new theoretical insights (Eisenhardt, 1989) from the rich empirical data capturing key features of the organizational context (Myers, 2008), yet we should remain cautious about extrapolating these insights to other organizational settings for a number of reasons. First, our research design does not enable to isolate the relative role of single DM practices on shaping specific organizational contexts and minority employees' well-being, something that further research might also want to investigate.

Second, the identified practices might possibly be difficult to extrapolate to larger organizations with more complex organizational structures. SMEs are known for their more centralized decision-making on HR issues in the person of the owner-manager (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Hornsby & Kuratko, 2003), and the use of informal practices to substitute for or complement formal ones (Bacon & Hoque, 2005; Harney & Dundon, 2006). Larger organizations might possibly face greater challenges to implement similar practices, as personnel is managed more through formal structures and practices, yet the implementation of these latter across more hierarchical levels is likely to be less consistent. Further research could evaluate the role of formality and informality of DM practices for their effectiveness.

Finally, our companies employed (ethnic minority) individuals mainly in low-

skill jobs. Although more research on the well-being of employees in more subordinate positions is needed (Sparks et al., 2001), we should remain aware of this specificity when attempting to apply these insights to companies employing minorities in higher ranks. Further research addressing well-being of minorities in other types of jobs is warranted.

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DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN FLEMISH SMEs: LOOKING FOR THE BUSINESS CASE

Abstract

This explorative multiple-case study investigates a wide array of formal and informal organizational practices used by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to employ an ethnically diverse workforce. Empirically, we examine the practices used by five Flemish SMEs which have been able to attract and retain a substantial share of ethnic minority employees, an exceptional achievement in the Flemish labor market dominated by monocultural organizations. Relying on the business case for diversity, we argue their practices enable the employment of a more ethnically diverse workforce by redefining work arrangements and organizational cultures in ways that fulfill at the same time an ethnically diverse personnel's needs and business goals. We conclude with a critical reflection on the merits and the limitations of the SMEs' business case for diversity. Our study contributes to diversity management literature by revealing practices that are both conceivable and implementable to manage an ethnically diverse workforce and which structurally transform organizations to employ ethnically diverse workers.

Introduction

Although small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) make up 99 percent of all enterprises in the EU and account for 66 percent of total employment in the EU private sector (Muller et al., 2014), surprisingly little is known on how they manage an increasingly diverse workforce (for exceptions, see Kirton & Read, 2007; Kitching, 2006; Woodhams & Lupton, 2006). The diversity management literature has to date largely focused on formal, designated human resource (HR) practices implemented in large organizations: diversity task forces, the screening of HR procedures to remove bias, diversity training, and networking and mentoring (Cox & Blake, 1991; Kandola & Fullerton, 1998; Kossek & Lobel, 1996). These practices aim to enhance inter-group equality along ethnic lines, on the assumption that valuing diverse employees will leverage multiple business benefits (Cox, 1991): attracting talent from a broader labor pool, competing in a globalizing market with more diverse customers and more diverse business relations and increasing workers' productivity through enhanced creativity and problem-solving ability (Cox & Blake, 1991; Kelly & Dobbin, 1998). Yet these widespread DM practices are arguably less suited for SMEs. Due to their relatively limited HR expertise and financial means, these latter are likely to manage their personnel informally and, more generally, are less likely to adopt practices whose effects on business results are only indirect (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Marlow, 1997).

In this article, we examine organizational practices used by SMEs to employ and manage an ethnically diverse workforce. Following Kostova and Roth, we define an organizational practice as any 'organization's routine use of knowledge for conducting a particular function that has evolved over time under

the influence of the organization's history, people, interests, and actions' (2002: 216). This definition is suitable to examining organizational practices in SMEs because it includes both formal and informal practices. While informal practices are 'based mainly on unwritten customs and the tacit understandings that arise out of the interaction of the parties at work' (Ram, Edwards, Gilman, & Arrowsmith, 2001), formal practices – conversely - are those practices that are written or defined by organization's policies or procedures or by formal agreements with other organizations. Drawing on a multiple case study, we investigate the organizational practices of five Flemish SMEs employing a substantial share of ethnic minorities – between 29% and 64% of their personnel belong to ethnic minorities. These companies stand out by their exceptional demographic composition in Flanders, a Belgian region which has historically been characterized by a protective yet exclusive labor market (CGKR & FOD Werkgelegenheid, Arbeid en Sociaal Overleg, 2013) and in which most organizations, especially SMEs, employ no or very few ethnic minorities (Lamberts & Eeman, 2011).

The current exclusion of (especially low-skilled) ethnic minorities from the labor market results from the unique combination of low-skilled historical migration (Bousetta, 2009), a protective labor legislation and high labor costs, and a generous welfare system (e.g. long-term unemployment benefits, health coverage, low-cost schooling, social housing) (Hemerijck & Marx, 2010) on top of a resurgent regional Flemish identity centered on the Dutch language and secularism (Blommaert, 2011; Bousetta & Jacobs, 2006; Kanmaz, 2002; Van Laer & Janssens, 2011) fuelling labor market discrimination (Arrijn, Feld & Nayer, 1998; Lenaers, 2009, Capéau, Eeman, Groenez & Lamberts, 2011). As a result of these multiple dynamics, ethnic minorities have today low activity rates

and are strongly overrepresented in unemployment (Ouali and Rea, 1999; Tielens, 2005; Verhoeven, 2000). Despite recent labor market reforms under European impulse including the introduction of stricter anti-discrimination legislation and activation policies (Cornet and Zanoni, 2010; Hemerijck & Marx, 2010), organizational change is generally slow.

Against this backdrop, the SMEs under study can be considered 'exceptional cases' of diversity management in the Flemish context, in the sense that they employ a number of ethnic minorities considerably above average (between one to two third of their total personnel has an ethnic minority background) and that they have been able to change their organizational structures and processes and cultures to create employment opportunities for (low-skilled) ethnic minorities, notwithstanding multiple institutional and politico-ideological pressures to exclude ethnic minorities (Bousetta, 2009).

In this article, we examine formal and informal organizational practices enabling the employment of an ethnically diverse workforce dealing with seven aspects of organizing: recruitment and introduction, work-life policies, the regulation of intergroup relations, job redesign and allocation, competence development, management style and customer management. These practices largely rest on a business case for diversity, as their adoption is justified referring to companies' competitive business reasons to employ a diverse workforce (Robinson & Dechant, 1997). We maintain that they are effective in attracting and retaining an ethnically diverse workforce because they fulfill ethnic minorities' specific needs in the workplace.

The business case for diversity as a rationale for managing diversity

In essence, the business case for diversity premises diversity management as an economic necessity for companies. Business case arguments for diversity management have been substantiated by the idea that through enhancing inter-group equality the advantages of a diverse workforce will be leveraged and diversity will contribute to a company's bottom-line (Litvin, 2006). In the business case literature, this rationale of combining business goals with minorities' interests is often portrayed as the better alternative by contrasting it with mere window-dressing or legal compliance (e.g. Kandola & Fullerton, 1998; Mor Barak, 1999)

Overall, the line of arguments used to substantiate the business case strategy of diversity management is very straightforward across the literature. First, demographic figures showing an irreversibly diversifying workforce are provided as a proof that employing a diverse workforce is inevitable for companies (Thomas, 1990; Cox, 1994; Kandola & Fullerton, 1998). Second, three types of economic benefits of a diverse workforce for organizations are mentioned: 1) organizations profit from attracting and keeping employees from a more diverse labor market (where the proportion of white men has vastly declined), 2) companies are able to reach a more diverse consumer market and to deal with more international business relations (in both cases, employees from minority groups are assumed to hold relevant knowledge), and 3) organizations benefit from enhanced organizational creativity and problem-solving ability deriving from diverse employees' wider range of perspectives (Cox & Blake, 1991; Kelly & Dobbin, 1998). Sometimes other advantages of a good diversity management are also mentioned as it

should enable organizations to rule out possible downsides of a diverse workforce, such as intergroup conflicts, high turnover costs, high absenteeism and loss of competitiveness and profitability (Cox, 1994).

Four types of formal HR-practices have been advanced in the literature that premise to enhance inter-group equality in order to unleash the value of a diverse workforce (Cox, 1994; Kandola & Fullerton, 1998; Thomas, 1990): practices altering human resource (HR) systems and procedures to eliminate bias and indirect discrimination; practices committing management with organizational responsibility to monitor and steer implementation of diversity initiatives and their results; diversity training and education to increase knowledge of stereotypes and unconscious bias and reduce discriminatory and racist behavior in a company context; and practices such as orientation programs, mentoring programs, and networking/support groups to tackle the social exclusion of minority groups.

Critically oriented scholars of diversity have however warned about the risks of embracing a business rationale to diversity for workplace equality. They argue that such rationale obscures power relations and legitimizes the exclusion of employees belonging to historically subordinated groups when they are not functional to making profit (Dickens, 1999; Noon, 2007; Zanoni and Janssens, 2004). They have pleaded for compliance with equal opportunities legislation and for social regulation as more desirable alternatives to guarantee overall improvement in the position of disadvantaged groups (Dickens, 1999; Noon, 2007).

Diversity management in SMEs

Little is known however on how SMEs attract, retain and employ a diverse workforce. Literature on HR management in SMEs indicates that SMEs' HR-approach is generally characterized by less formalized or informal practices (Bacon, Ackers, Storey, & Coates, 1996; Marlow, 2002), the absence of HR personnel (Barrett & Mayson, 2007; Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Hornsby & Kuratko, 2003; McEvoy, 1984), and the centralization of HR decision-making in the person of the owner-manager (Barrett & Mayson, 2007; Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Hornsby & Kuratko, 2003). In line with these widespread characteristics, the few studies investigating diversity management in SMEs suggest that SMEs resort to varied and more informal ways of managing a diverse workforce than larger organizations including informal recruitment methods (Kirton & Read, 2007; Kitching, 2006), informal flexible work arrangements (Kirton & Read, 2007) and individually granted family-friendly arrangements (Dex & Scheibl, 2007) or paid maternity leave (Barrett & Mayson, 2008).

It has been argued that the lack of formal diversity management practices in SMEs should not hastily be interpreted as a sign that SMEs are totally unaware of equality issues or that they do not manage diversity (Kirton & Read, 2007; Kitching, 2006; Woodhams & Lupton, 2006). Rather, as their limited financial means make them more sensitive to the cost-benefits of employing disadvantaged groups (Kitching, 2006; Woodhams & Lupton, 2006), SMEs tend to apply practices that are close to their business needs or that can be motivated by business case arguments (Barrett & Mayson, 2008; Dex & Scheibl, 2007; Kirton & Read, 2007; Kitching, 2006; Woodhams & Lupton, 2006).

Yet, SMEs' informal and more strategically embedded approach to HR-management, drawing less from off-the-shelf and formalized management practices, is difficult to reconcile with the types of formal, designated HR-practices from the business case literature, as discussed above, that are generally based on the practice of few pioneering, image conscious large companies (Barrett & Mayson; 2007; Dex & Scheibl, 2001; Kirton & Read, 2007; Kitching, 2006; Woodhams & Lupton, 2006).

In this article, we analyze diversity management in SMEs along the following two research questions:

1. Through which (in)formal organizational practices do SMEs manage an ethnically diverse workforce?
2. How are these organizational practices informed by the business case for diversity? Which business and diverse personnel's needs do they meet?

The study

We address these questions through a multiple case study in five Flemish SMEs: a gas stations company, a cleaning company, a floriculture company, a laundry services company and a meat processing company. All five companies are small and middle-sized organizations, employing between 33 and 140 people. Between 29% and 64% of their total personnel has an ethnic minority background, including both migrants and second-generation ethnic minorities with backgrounds from Turkey, Morocco, Italy, Poland, Bulgaria, former Yugoslavia and several African and Asian countries. These countries of origin well reflect past and current migratory flows to Belgium and Flanders specifically.

Primary data were gathered by means of semi-structured interviews with

72 managers/owners, supervisors, and ethnic majority and minority employees, autonomously selected from a list of staff with specific socio-demographic profiles and in different jobs. In each company, we interviewed between 12% and 36% of the personnel. The questionnaires consisted of open-ended questions on the interviewee's own background, experience of working in the company or past background of the company, interpersonal relations, human resource management (HRM) and diversity. Questionnaires were adapted depending on the category of respondents: managers/owners, supervisors or employees. Interviews took place at the workplace during working hours, lasted between one and two hours, and were recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Interview data were complemented by limited participant observation during company visits and in between interviews. Documents were also collected to corroborate interview data, providing us additional information on personnel management, work regulations and the company's history.

To analyze the data, we started with identifying organizational practices used to manage diversity, using Kostova and Roth's (2002) definition of an organizational practice. Analysis of organizational practices was primarily based on interview data from managers/owners and supervisors, but we also searched for (counter)evidence from interviews with employees and from the additional case material. Next, to get a better understanding of the different practices, based on a within and cross-case analysis we developed a typology, connecting each practice to a different functional area of the organization. The identified practices and how they were used for different areas of organizing were thoroughly discussed between the authors, to find agreement in the reconstruction of each case's practices and checking for similarities and differences across the cases to define a typology of practices. Finally, we

identified business goals and ethnic minorities' professional and personal needs as expressed during the interviews with respectively management and employees. In order to make sense of the organizational practices, we then analyzed how organizational practices fulfilled business goals as well as professional and personal needs, also accounting for counter evidence and differences between cases.

Practices meeting business goals and ethnic minorities' needs

In this section, we examine the organizational practices used by the five SMEs under study to manage diversity, analyzing them through the lens of the business case for diversity, i.e. exploring how they simultaneously fulfill the interest of a diverse workforce while being beneficial for businesses' bottom line. Specifically, we discuss formal and informal practices dealing with seven areas of organizing: recruitment and introduction, work-life policies, the regulation of intergroup relations, job redesign and allocation, competence development, management style and customer management. Table 6 presents an overview of our analysis, indicating the practices identified for the seven areas, how each facilitates the attainment of business goals as well as meeting the needs of an ethnically diverse workforce.

Table 6: Overview of the findings

Areas and practices	**Business goals**	**Ethnically diverse personnel's needs**
Recruitment and introduction • Broaden recruitment channels • Offer job guidance • Adapt welcome brochure	Attract more candidates in labor shortage	Find employment in discriminatory labor market
Work-life • Offer flexible work arrangements • Negotiate adaptations to work arrangements	Flexibly deploy employees in business operations	Combine work with private and 'cultural' needs that are not mainstreamed in Flemish society
Intergroup relations • Enforce anti-discriminatory norms • Adapt social activities • Adapt menu	Bind an ethnically diverse workforce through social cohesion	Be employed in a non-discriminatory, respectful work environment
Job redesign and allocation • Job design and personnel deployment to fit individuals' heterogeneous sets of competencies	Shape work processes to maintain high quality and respond to fluctuating workloads	Find employment in line with competencies
Competence development • On-the-job training • Tailor-made career guidance • Outsourced training	Enhance employees' employability and flexibility	Increase competencies and employment opportunities

Management style • Non-hierarchical management style • Management support	Bind an ethnically diverse workforce to management	Be employed in a supportive work environment
Customer management • Enforce anti-discriminatory norms • Provide additional support in customer relations	Retain long term customer loyalty on desired terms	Be employed in a non-discriminatory, respectful work environment

Recruitment and introduction

Our five companies introduced new recruitment and introduction practices in order to be able to attract an ethnically more diverse workforce. In all cases, these changes were stimulated by both labor shortage and, specifically, previously experienced difficulties to find workers with suitable profiles at the employment conditions collectively bargained at the sectoral level, as it is the case in Belgium. To enlarge their pool of candidates, the companies started *using different recruitment channels*. Whereas job vacancy ads were earlier spread through traditional local advertising newspapers and/or temporary employment agencies, they are today spread through more heterogeneous channels including a public database reserved for job-seekers belonging to disadvantaged demographic groups on the labor market, such as ethnic minority candidates, 50+ candidates and candidates with a certified disability. Some of the companies further collaborate with (not-for-profit) organizations supporting specific social groups. For instance, one recruits newcomers with the help of the local Flemish integration center, another works together with local social economy enterprises and sheltered workshops to match specific vacancies with employees ready to be employed in the regular economy.

The SMEs further implement practices to facilitate the socialization of new employees with a more heterogeneous profile in their organization. Although these practices were introduced to comply with the Belgian federal law of 2007 imposing to designate at least one person to introduce a new employee, our organizations implement practices that explicitly take into consideration the heterogeneous profile of the newcomers. To facilitate interpersonal relations, the designated tutors are typically experienced colleagues working at the same

organizational level and who do not have a supervisory function. They are assigned to informally guide the newcomer to become acquainted with the organization's rules and customs, and to favor informal integration among the employees. Due to lack of in-house know-how and the spatially dispersed locations of work, one company in our sample outsources job guidance for newcomers' introduction to external coaches or trainers with whom it collaborates on a regular basis. Often, newcomers receive *welcome and introduction documents* that are *adapted to the diverse workforce*'s different levels of language proficiency. For instance, brochures for newcomers dealing with customs, practical arrangements and important work rules and safety and hygiene requirements make use of elementary language(s), pictures and icons.

Despite their mundane character, these practices enable the SMEs to attract a broader, more diverse pool of candidates and to facilitate the integration of newcomers in existing work processes carried out by a diverse workforce. The manager of the cleaning company told us:

> *"The good thing [of employing ethnic minorities] is that I can get the work done. Because I could sell work as much as you want, but I do need the people to carry it out. So the good thing of having [ethnic minorities] at the company is that the work gets done."*

Conversely, these practices make it possible for ethnic minorities to find employment, which is particularly difficult due to varying combinations of their own qualifications, work experience, language skills and widespread discrimination based on ethnic grounds. This is expressed well in the following interview excerpts:

> *"That man told me […] that the chief boss from [a former company] only wanted people who spoke perfectly Dutch. […] So, he actually meant that he only wants people from Belgium or the Netherlands to work there, no foreigners. So yeah, that boss is a racist. That was the last day*

before they sent me home." (female ethnic minority worker at cleaning company)

"I don't think [the management] is racist. I work with a headscarf, huh. I think when someone is racist, then you couldn't work here. With my scarf as well, that wouldn't be possible. I feel so good here." (female ethnic minority worker at laundry services company)

Overall, these practices respond at the same time to the SMEs' need to find employees that are willing and able to fill in available vacancies at given employment conditions and ethnic minorities' need to find employment. Labor supply does not automatically meet labor demand due to skill 'mismatch' (cf. Kalleberg, 2008) at given employment conditions (Anderson & Ruhs, 2010) and discrimination (Arrijn, Feld & Nayer, 1998; Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2003; Bonoli & Hinrichs, 2010; Lenaers, 2009; Riach & Rich, 2002). Different from the classical business case arguments for diversity in management studies, which focus on creativity, problem solving and customer relations, in these SMEs, the stress is on diversity as an answer to labor shortage (Kitching, 2006; Ortlieb & Sieben, 2008). While there clearly is an external business pressure to start doing 'diversity management', most Flemish companies experiencing labor shortage still do not opt for practices that redefine the requirements of what suitable candidates 'look like' and proactively avoid ethnic discrimination. However, as demonstrated above, these practices can structurally change recruitment and introduction processes, creating employment opportunities for a more ethnically diverse pool of candidates, thus countering ethnic exclusion on the Flemish labor market.

Work-life

A second cluster of practices deals with arrangements that meet the broader

array of private and 'cultural' needs of an ethnically diverse workforce. All five SMEs implement practices *providing flexibility in work schedules* to meet a range of personnel's demands to make work compatible with the needs tied to individuals other life roles, regardless of whether these needs are related to family, religion, education, care responsibilities or other. These practices vary from very informally and individually negotiated arrangements to formal policies. In three of our cases, managers deal with employees' requests on an individually negotiated 'give-and-take' basis, in line with informal personnel management in SMEs. In the other two, however, more formal work-life policies are in place providing a variety of work schedules from which employees can choose or defining rules for saving up overtime work hours.

From the business perspective, flexible work-life practices enable the companies to deploy workers flexibly to handle peaks in business' heydays and to provide quality, customized services. The general manager of the laundry services company expressed how this company need is transformed in what he calls 'a win-win situation':

> *"We need to adapt the company in such way that it can match with the people, we need to bend a little bit and yet try to create a win-win situation. This means that we are susceptible to what people want or need to do for their families, or their issues. […]But on the other hand, we do try to create an involvement towards us: we want them to not just countdown the hours from eight till four thirty, but to show a responsiveness towards special situations. Because, indeed, when we want to offer a service that is different from what the big companies offer, then we require more from our personnel."*

From the ethnically diverse personnel's perspective, work-life practices meet a wide array of personal and 'cultural' needs:

> *"On Wednesdays I usually don't work. My kids are at home then, and they don't like being alone. […] And sometimes on Wednesdays I work overtime, to be able to go on holiday. So I work a little more for a few*

weeks. Because Turkey is so far away huh, a month would be too little to visit my family over there." (ethnic minority woman at floriculture company)

"So last Tuesday was the Feast of Sacrifice. So I said to [middle-manager]: 'I won't come to work. Because everyone is at home, I'm not coming to work'. And [middle-manager] understood. And those hours I divided them over the other days of the week. I worked an hour extra every day, so no problem." (ethnic minority woman at cleaning company)

Overall, these practices combine SMEs' own demands to deploy employees flexibly and an ethnically diverse workforce needs to make work and life demands compatible: by opening up possibilities for different work schedules and/or individually adapted flexible arrangements in working time, regardless of the underlying reason, the above work-life practices respond to wide-ranging personal and 'cultural' needs (Janssens and Zanoni, 2014; Kamenou, 2008). Given their limited resources, mutual flexibility is a key characteristic of SMEs' employment relations with all their personnel (Dex & Scheibl, 2001). However, it plays a particularly important role for ethnic minorities as it allows to accommodate for their specific needs in an institutional environment structured to meet those of the ethnic majority. For instance, the work calendar in Flanders is based on Christian holidays and vacation days could in many companies not be taken all at once. Yet ethnic minority workers often request to take days off during their own religious holidays and to concentrate their vacations to travel to their countries of origin. To the extent that flexibility is mutual between the company and the personnel and is negotiated individually or available to all personnel rather than to specific groups, it fosters to fulfill both companies' as well as a diverse personnel's needs.

Intergroup relations

Several practices implemented by the SMEs regulate the relations between workers with different ethnic backgrounds both by discouraging discriminatory behavior and fostering positive interactions. A widespread practice is the strict *enforcement of anti-discriminatory norms* in the organization. This includes formulating clear norms, communicating them and securing management's intervention when discriminatory behavior occurs. A second type of practices entails the organization of *social activities* in ways that make them attractive and accessible for all employees. The companies organize for example activities reflecting and integrating personnel's various cultures. They make sure to provide childcare alongside the activity and adapt the menu to diverse workers religious and non-religious food requirements. These practices foster positive informal relations among the ethnically diverse workforce.

These practices enable the SMEs to create socially and culturally cohesive work environments or, at the very least, to ban inter-ethnic conflict. From the companies' perspective, they foster positive relations among a diverse workforce so that they feel well at work. The following excerpt by a general manager illustrates this well:

> *"It is not something we have adopted in a policy, but the awareness is a fact. For example, when we organize a staff party, we take into account the food and drinks served, we make sure that there is something for [the ethnic minority employees] as well. Also at the production line we try to take care that people are able to keep up and feel good in the company." (general manager at meat processing company)*

Ethnic minority employees, from their side, expressed appreciation for the positive atmosphere and the non-discriminatory, respectful relations at work. Two ethnic minority women told us:

"[This company] is yeah, so good for me. […] there is a nice atmosphere, actually. Yeah, it's different, I feel different. I'm accepted and I'm a non-native speaker. You're part of the family, so to speak. You know… that feeling, and yes, that's good." (ethnic minority woman at gas stations company)

"I mostly have contact with colleagues during breaks. Then we talk with everybody, also people from outside our unit. […] I've got nice colleagues and everyone accepts each other. Everyone feels good, like a family, so yeah, I've got a good feeling as well." (ethnic minority woman at meat processing company)

"They are really strict on that. If somebody bullies, they take the person apart, and you really get the rules. Honestly, here they don't harass you, if I have to be honest." (ethnic minority woman at gas stations company)

Overall, these practices fulfill both the business need to create a socially and culturally cohesive attractive workplace for a diverse workforce as well as this latter's need to function in a non-discriminatory, positive work environment. They do so by establishing and enforcing multicultural organizational norms and values regulating employees' interactions and relations. By setting social norms that do not only reflect a standard, 'white male' employee but rather an ethnically diverse workforce, the companies create work environments in which multiple ethnic identities can be legitimately expressed (Cox, 1991; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Liff, 1999; Linnehan & Konrad, 1999).

Job redesign and employees' allocation

To employ a more diverse workforce, all SMEs in our study have redesigned jobs and make sure to allocate employees in the work process based on their individual competencies. Although the finality of these practices is the same – namely an optimal matching of individuals and jobs – how jobs are designed and workers allocated differs across the organizations. In one company, the cleaning

company, *jobs are designed to include a broad array of simple tasks* and workers are *deployed separately*. They work at the clients' premises where they function in rather autonomous ways and are individually responsible for the service they deliver. Working independently reduces the demands on relational and coordination competencies on the part of the workers. Indeed, depending on workers' linguistic and relational competencies, the supervisor takes over a smaller or more important part of the relations with the clients. In the gas stations company, employees work *in teams composed of workers with complementary competencies*. Individual workers with different cognitive, physical, linguistic and cultural abilities function in a highly mutually interdependent way. In this type of work context, individuals' strengths are utilized and valorized (e.g. organizational, relational and cultural skills) and their weaknesses (e.g. language, cognitive and physical skills) are compensated for by co-workers. Finally, in the remaining three companies, *jobs are highly standardized* and workers are *deployed in a number of different standardized jobs* in such way that they can easily be replaced in the production process by colleagues. This creates a work environment where workers are interchangeable and can be dynamically fitted in the work process to handle peaks or to support colleagues with for example limited knowledge or physical ability.

These practices enable the SMEs to fit individuals' heterogeneous competencies with the jobs needed to carry out business operations. They do not solely target an ethnically more diverse workforce, but rather deal more broadly with an increasing heterogeneity of individuals' sets of skills. This is well expressed by the following quotes by managers:

> *"When employees are just starting to learn Dutch and they only speak English, I tell the customer to ask to contact me whenever there's a problem. I also go on site and double check if the cleaning lady has*

understood everything that needs to be done." (supervisor at the cleaning company with Belgian background)

"For example, I've got two or three people for maintenance who also work as a second cashier at peak times. These people have limitations […] For example, there's somebody who has a short memory and who is short-sighted, you name it. Usually I schedule him with a capable person he can always fall back on whenever he has a tough time." (shop manager at the gas stations company with ethnic minority background)

"[Ethnic minority employees] can solve many things within these cultures. Both positive and negative situations. I'm thinking about conflicts sometimes, about aggression and racism. […] So, for example, on a Saturday or Sunday morning, when you pass this station, many young people are returning from a night out. If you have a number of employees with the same ethnic background as those youngsters, then there is little aggression and few fights." (general manager at the gas stations company with ethnic minority background)

"These tasks are actually not that difficult. So when everybody can be deployed everywhere, they're also easily replaceable. For example, we're now making up work schedules for the holidays […], then you can much easier shift people if they're able to do all tasks." (manager at the floriculture company with Belgian background)

The following quotes by ethnic minority workers conversely suggests that job design and allocation fostered individual workers' sense of competency and motivation:

"[This work]it's good for me. I like to, it's like a hobby to me when I was in Africa. I like to cultivate something. To see seeds growing up. Yeah, like planting something. You see it grow." (ethnic minority man at floriculture company)

"I'm used to this [work]. And I've got my own, uhm… the ground floor and first flour are mine. And that makes me feel stronger. They're mine and they need to stay clean." (ethnic minority woman at cleaning company)

Overall, the practices of job design and workers' allocation ensure both fulfillment of the business need to match individuals' heterogeneous competencies (e.g. different levels of language proficiency or different levels of

work ability) with jobs and ethnic minorities' needs to feel competent and valued for their work. This is achieved indirectly by structuring work processes in ways that individuals with heterogeneous competencies can function rather than expecting them to fit in jobs designed for an ideal 'standard worker', which would highlight the competencies they lack rather than those they have (Janssens & Zanoni, 2014). At the same time, a broader array of competencies, including those related to one's ethnic background, are recognized and utilized along the classical business case rationale (Zanoni & Janssens, 2004; 2007).

Competence development

All companies in our study implement several practices to develop employees' competencies including various types of *training* (e.g. hygiene norms, assertiveness, computer skills), *on-the-job training* and *tailor-made career guidance*. While job design structurally adapts the jobs to a broader variety of profiles, these practices adapt individuals to the work processes by developing their competencies. They aim at increasing personnel's flexible deployment, develop individuals' potential for supervising or managerial tasks and/or strengthen personnel's relational competencies to foster a cohesive workplace. These goals are well explained in the interviews with managers:

> *"At the food corners, we must be rather strict. Why? Because we deal with food there, so with hygiene. This means that there are two trainings, organized at an industrial bakery, they provide a suitable kitchen for that. So twice a year there are specific trainings where we teach how to bake bread, how to make sandwiches, etc." (manager at gas stations company with ethnic minority background)*

> *"I believe these trainings are good for the ambiance here. And also for workers to develop themselves." (manager at floriculture company with Belgian background)*

Ethnic minority employees testify how the opportunities they received to develop their competencies helped them to better function in their job and take on more responsibility:

> *"I had [a training] to be more assertive. I'm a contact person for my unit here. And that was actually a training for contact persons. […]And I think it's good we could attend these trainings. As for me, personally, it was really helpful, because I am not really assertive enough. So in that sense, I did learn something there." (ethnic minority woman working as supervising worker at laundry services company)*

> *"In 2006 they suggested that I become a shop manager. And then I said: „No, I can't see myself doing that". Because at that time I couldn't rely on myself one hundred percent. So then I continued working. After a year, they told me I would be capable of doing this. Then I felt more ready, I took the challenge and now I've been doing this for three years." (shop manager at gas stations company with ethnic minority background)*

Overall, the practices used to develop diverse personnel's competencies attain the company's goal to develop human capital for the business on the one hand and, on the other hand, ethnically diverse employees' need to acquire new skills to grow personally and to enhance their chances in the organization or, more broadly, on the labor market. They reduce mismatches between workers' qualifications, general and job-specific skills and previous work experience and the job-specific skills needed in the company (Powell, 1998) and on the labor market (cf. Kalleberg, 2008). Although some have pointed to the socially constructed nature of skills and the political nature of the debate on migrants' skill mismatch on the labor market (Anderson and Ruhs, 2010; Findlay, McCollum, Shubin, Apsite & Kisjane, 2012), these SMEs' simultaneous redesign of work processes and investment in employees' competence development seem to indicate a certain degree of mutually fulfilling companies' goals as well as personnel's interests.

Management style

All five companies have adapted managerial practices to their increasingly ethnically diverse workforce. First-line and in some cases even higher management *adapts its style* towards specific employees, for example by using simpler language with employees' who have little knowledge of Dutch, providing additional support for administrative matters and allowing flexibility for religious practices. In a few organizations, management exhibits a very *personally committed management style*. By being visibly present and approachable at their company, managers promote a communicative culture between employees, supervisors and management creating room to talk about both professional and personal issues. Consequently, some employees consider their work environment as a second 'family', as was frequently quoted in one of the companies, and employees recounting to feel at ease talking about their culture and country of origin, work and personal needs.

These practices enable management to bind a diverse workforce to the company by providing additional support. Several managers at the SMEs explained how their specific supportive style of management attempts to take an open attitude towards diverse, and often vulnerable, groups of workers:

> *"Some people, if you tell them: 'You have to do that like this', they feel attacked. I think it's because of their culture. […] I try to make it clear in a softer manner, when there is something wrong. I think twice what to say and make sure not to say something wrong. Because I've seen that they take it personally right away." (male manager with Belgian background at cleaning company)*

> *"What we do is just looking for... when they don't understand, we look for somebody that can explain it. A lot ad hoc actually. […] Sometimes we use English words, sometimes Turkish translators help out." (male manager with Belgian background at floriculture company)*

> *"For instance, I have had somebody who wanted to pray five times a day. He asked me whether he was allowed to. And I say: 'Yes, why not? You cannot pray in the shop, but in the storage room. It's only about five minutes." (male shop manager with ethnic minority background at gas stations company)*

Ethnic minorities' own accounts testify that indeed the positive and supportive relationship with management is an important part of the employer-employee relation:

> *"The management is so friendly. (…) Whenever I have a problem, she helps me, she always helps. For example, I once told her I needed a form for my husband's residence permit and she arranged that right away." (ethnic minority woman at laundry services company)*

> *"When something goes wrong, no-one is afraid to tell. No troubles are being made. When something is wrong, or there is a problem, we first talk to solve it." (ethnic minority woman at meat processing company)*

Overall, these practices succeed in meeting the business need to bind personnel to the company as well as fulfilling ethnic minorities' needs to work in environments that are supportive and responsive of their specific expectations and needs. Management's supportive style and commitment to diversity has been identified as a condition for the effectiveness of diversity management (Kalev, Dobbin & Kelly, 2006; Linnehan & Konrad, 1995; Roberson, 2006). Moreover, these practices indicate how management styles in SMEs' context, characterized by closer working relations between (middle-)management and its employees, can be adjusted in such way that they flexibly respond to the needs of diverse workers (Linnehan & Konrad, 1999).

Customer management

Finally, in the two SMEs where employees have direct contact with customers, the gas stations company and the cleaning company, practices were in place

that regulated the relationship between them to prevent conflict. The gas stations company enforced *anti-discriminatory norms* not only between employees but also between employees and customers. Inappropriate behavior by customers can be reported to management and is handled from there onwards. At the time of the study, one of the general managers had contacted a customer that had repeatedly made racist remarks towards a cashier to tell him that his behavior would no longer be tolerated at the shops. In the cleaning company, supervisors paid extra attention to *mediating the relationship* between customers and employees who are non-native speakers. They regularly contact customers to keep a direct communication channel to prevent and solve possible problems in an early stage.

These practices enable the SMEs to build long-term customer relations yet without undermining their relations with employees:

> *"When we have cleaners who only speak English and are only just learning how to speak Dutch, then I discuss this with the customer: 'If there's a problem, you can always mention it to me.' And then I go to the customer's site, and I also pass by the cleaner as well. To make sure she definitely understood."(supervisor with Belgian background at cleaning company)*

For employees, these practices provide a work environment where they feel the employer protects them from abusive behavior and conflicts with customers due to their ethnic background or limited language skills. During the interviews, employees' expressed their needs to be treated by customers in a respectful way, which, as the following excerpt indicates, is not always self-evident:

> *"Sometimes, when they ask you to go clean [at people's home], it's so simple. For example, you don't know me, I don't know you. When I see you, I say I come to clean for you, for example. And then you have some people whose face is full of 'Who is she? Black?'. You know?"(ethnic minority woman at cleaning company)*

> *"It's a difficult job, not easy. For sure if you work with drunk customers, or customers who complain about the bill. You can tell them one hundred times, he still reacts in the same way. You learn with the time, how to deal with that. The friendlier you stay, the more aggressive they get […] We tell them to go to the bosses to tell their story. I have to keep doing my work. And then I close the conversation." (ethnic minority woman at gas stations company)*

Overall, these practices realize SMEs' goal to maintain long-term, conflict-free customer relations while making sure an ethnically diverse workforce can work in a non-discriminatory, respectful work environment. The diversity management literature has indicated that customers' proximity in service companies shapes both the understanding and the management of diversity (Janssens & Zanoni, 2005). The practices we find at the SMEs managing the relationship between companies' customers and their ethnic minority employees show that companies can proactively shape customer relations and that in some cases they even dare to call into question the predominant idea, following a business logic, that 'the customer is always right' (cf. du Gay & Salaman, 1992).

The business case as a strategy for diversity management in SMEs: Potential and critical reflection

This multiple case study of Belgian SMEs employing an ethnically diverse workforce allowed us to identify a wide array of formal and informal organizational practices deployed to manage a diverse workforce. Inspired by the business case for diversity, we have contributed to understanding organizational practices to manage diversity in SMEs by disclosing how they fulfill both business goals and an ethnically diverse workforce's needs. The

business case lens is particularly suitable to theorize SMEs' diversity management, as they are more likely to manage closely to their business needs due to structurally limited resources (Barrett & Mayson, 2008; Dex & Scheibl, 2007; Kirton & Read, 2007; Kitching, 2006; Woodhams & Lupton, 2006).

At the organizational level, we found the identified practices to go much deeper into the structuring of organizations than the HR practices usually advanced in the diversity management literature. Diversity is managed through mainstreamed practices fundamentally adapting organizational structures, processes and norms to a more heterogeneous personnel not only in ethnic terms, but more broadly in terms of individual competencies and needs. By doing so, the practices at the SMEs under study do not merely require individuals to change to 'fit' into the company, but rather also at once adapt the companies' structures and cultures (Liff, 1999). Interestingly, they do so in a way that supersedes the classical debate between diversity as referring to social groups or individuals, focusing on individuals yet clearly acknowledging inequalities (Liff, 1997). The business case for diversity is useful in as far as it helps highlight how these practices attempt to increase the 'fit' between the competencies, preferences and values of a diverse workforce on the one hand, and the work processes and organizational culture on the other hand. In this way, a mutual adjustment between organizations and a more diverse workforce takes place, rather than expecting ethnic minority employees to assimilate to a mono-cultural organization (Cox, 1991).

Nevertheless, because they are closely inspired by SME's business needs, organizational practices to manage diversity tend to be selective and highly specific, favoring a fit for some individuals belonging to disadvantaged groups, but being unable to generalize equality-fostering for all. Although they

advance inter-group equality along ethnic lines among organization's personnel, they only do so within the boundaries of the instrumental relation between management and its workforce. Also, practices' foundation in the business case obviously limits their scope, as for example, business goals substantiating a significant pay rise for those groups at the bottom of the labor market are highly unlikely (Dickens, 1999; Noon, 2007). The idea of a mutual adjustment created by a business case strategy to diversity tends to obscure the structural conflict of interests between the employer and (diverse) employees inherent to employment relations in capitalist economies (Noon, 2007; Zanoni, 2011). Also, to the extent that contemporary economies are characterized by increasing polarization (cf. Sassen, 1991), employees' rights are eroding under global competitive pressures, and diversity is becoming 'super-diversity' (Vertovec, 2007), finding a middle ground by mutually adjusting to each other might become even more challenging in the future.

At the individual level, these practices appear to help fulfill ethnically diverse employees' needs which often remain unfulfilled in most Flemish work organizations as well as in other societal spheres due to both direct and indirect forms of discrimination (Capéau et al., 2011) and the dominance of mono-cultural institutions in Flemish society (Lamberts & Eeman, 2011). Across ethnic backgrounds, employees shared an overall positive experience about being accepted in the companies, being able to combine work with private/'cultural' needs, or feeling competent in their work. Although negative aspects where also shared with the interviewers, employees overall had a favorable attitude towards the companies they work for, expressing appreciation and commitment often by contrasting their current employment experiences with their prior negative experiences with other companies. These positive outcomes clearly do not

exclude that pervasive discrimination in the broader Flemish context might have socialized ethnic minorities into lower professional expectations and satisfaction with jobs in lower ranks and in less protected sectors (cf. Kloosterman, Van der Leun, & Rath, 1999). Still, their own experience can hardly be discounted as 'false consciousness'. Nor can the evidence of investment and support of the workforce by these companies be simply denied on the ground that employment relations are per definition exploitative (Zanoni, 2011).

Indeed, the organizational practices to manage diversity examined in this article should be seen as pioneering within the context of the contemporary Flemish labor market, in which ethnic minorities remain largely excluded. While they do not revolutionize capitalistic employment relations, they do organize in innovative ways that create new opportunities for employing a more heterogeneous workforce, including ethnic minorities. In this sense, our study highlights the importance of accounting for both the broader institutional context (cf. Glastra, Meerman, Schedler, & de Vries, 2000; Syed & Özbilgin, 2009; Zanoni, Janssens, Benschop & Nkomo, 2010) and the organizational context (Janssens & Zanoni, 2005) to understand what diversity is about in specific organizations as well as what approaches to diversity management are conceivable and implementable.

Finally, although we have shed light on SMEs' specific characteristics and the implications deriving from their local context, we believe that lessons can be extrapolated from our findings for the broader diversity management literature. With their relatively limited financial resources (cf. Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Marlow, 2002), SMEs are less likely than larger firms to manage diversity solely for legal compliance or reputation building (cf. Edelman, 1992; Edelman, Fuller and Mara-Drita 2001). On the contrary, their business case strategy to

managing diversity structurally transforms their business operations and organizational cultures and, by doing so, shape the experiences of all personnel, both minority and majority employees. Precisely these practices have to date received little attention in the diversity management literature. This latter has focused on 'added on' initiatives which have unsurprisingly been found largely ineffective in fostering equality (Friedman & Holtom, 2002; Kalev, Dobbin & Kelly, 2006; Rynes & Rosen, 1995; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Based on the insights of this study, we invite diversity scholars to consider a broader variety of practices through which organizations manage diversity. We further suggest to look for such practices in organizations that are structurally less likely to 'do diversity' for mere window-dressing, as innovative, diversity-friendly organizing is more likely to emerge there.

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GETTING NATURAL BORN CLEANERS IN THE RIGHT JOBS: AN ANALYSIS OF THE EXPLOITATION OF MINORITY WORKERS FROM A DUAL PERSPECTIVE ON SKILLS

Abstract

This study analyses how employers use skills to exploit workers from diverse socio-demographic groups. The study approaches the concept of skill from a perspective integrating both its material aspect (the skills required from jobs) as well as its ideological aspect (the social construction of diverse groups' skills) to understand diverse workers' perpetuating exploitation in organizations. Different from other critical studies examining these groups' exploitation, this perspective assumes that both aspects of skill inform each other. Based on qualitative data collected in three companies - a floriculture company, a cleaning company and a gas stations company - employing a large share of women and ethnic minorities in low-rank jobs, the study shows how employers shape specific constellations of material skill structures and socially constructed skills in order to maintain bottom wages and increase flexibilization.

Introduction

The exploitation of the labor of women and ethnic minorities in capitalist economies has been well documented since the 1960s. Recent research shows the persistency of their overrepresentation in highly de-skilled, low valued jobs (OECD, 2002; OECD, 2008a; 2008b), the pay gap along workers' gender (e.g. Aláez-Aller, Longás-García, & Ullibarri-Arce, 2011; Millward & Woodland, 1995) and ethnicity (Brynin & Güveli, 2012; Sa'di & Epstein, 2001), unequal employment conditions (Kalleberg, Reskin & Hudson, 2000; Turner, 2010), and differences in the employment of women belonging to different ethnic groups (Holdsworth & Dale, 1997; Phizacklea, 1987).

The exploitation of these social groups – or the relatively high rate of undue appropriation of the surplus value generated by their labor – has historically been explained by two distinct theories of skill devaluation (Grugulis, Warhurst & Keep, 2004). Traditional Marxist accounts theorize the segmentation of labor markets along ethnic and gender lines as the result of the continuous de-skilling and de-valuing of jobs, to be subsequently filled by workers from subordinated groups with the least bargaining power (Braverman, 1974; Marx, 1976). In this approach, skill is conceptualized as a demarcating aspect of the material structure of work – pertaining to job design, the division of tasks at hand and capital's control over labor (Littler, 1982). Alternatively, segmented labor markets have been seen to result from the systematic association of subordinate socio-demographic groups with a lack of skills and, conversely, of the jobs they carry out as unskilled and producing lower economic value. Here, skill is not conceptualized as a characteristic of the labor process but rather as a social construction in social relations within and outside the workplace (Grugulis,

Warhurst & Keep, 2004). This ideological approach to skill was initially developed by feminists to theorize the subordinate position of women in the labor market (e.g. Acker, 1989; Philips & Taylor, 1980; West, 1990) but has increasingly been applied to examine the construction of the skills of other subordinated groups as well, such as ethnic minorities and, to a lesser extent, older workers and workers with a disability (Janssens & Zanoni, 2005; MacKenzie & Forde, 2009; Moriarty, Wickham, Krings, Salamonska & Bobek, 2012; Ogbonna & Harris, 2006; Thompson, Newsome & Commander, 2013; Zanoni, 2011; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007).

Despite the indisputable contribution of this second type of analyses to building a better understanding of the relation between diverse social identities and exploitation at work, their contemporary dominance has led to an overall neglect of the more material aspects of the organization of labor (Zanoni & Janssens, 2007). An exclusive focus on the ideological aspects of exploitation tends to make the material make-up of jobs and skill content taken for granted, as if they were an independent force with an own inherent logic. Ignoring the material skill aspects of work obscures their reliance on existing social constructions of minority groups' skills for their very existence, constructions which are predicated upon existing unequal social relations (Wajcman, 1991). The exploitation of minority groups should rather be conceptualized as resulting at once in their social construction as unskilled (and thus only suitable for de-skilled work) and the skill design of the jobs in which they are allocated (Grugulis, Warhurst & Keep, 2004; Wajcman, 1991).

Following pleas for the integration of the material and ideological dimensions of skill (Grugulis, Warhurst & Keep, 2004; Wajcman, 1991), this study wants to contribute to the literature on the exploitation of minority

workers reproducing their subordination (Cockburn, 1985; Wright, 2001, 2003; Zanoni, 2011). Specifically, we examine how employers' discursive construction of the skills of female ethnic minority workers and shaping of the skill content of jobs mutually inform each other to maximize the extraction of surplus from these groups. Empirically, we analyze three case studies of Belgian small and medium companies - a floriculture company, a cleaning company and a gas stations company - employing a large share of women and ethnic minorities almost exclusively in low-rank jobs.

Our results highlight how employers' social construction of minority workers informs the organization of the labor process and, conversely, how specific labor processes then enable the company to employ labor mainly from minority groups. Their exploitation results from distinct combinations of labor processes and social constructions of minority workers. These combinations shape different modes of control on the labor process, both through embedding control in the material dimensions of skill organization and through ideological modes of control. Taken together, these specific labor processes all enable employment at minimum wages, however they at once seek to uphold it in the longer term by providing them alternative/complementary forms of compensation, mostly through negotiated flexibilization of work both in function of the employer's and the employees' needs.

Theoretical background

Explanations of the higher rates of exploitation of minority groups, resulting in unequal labor market outcomes, have traditionally relied on two distinct conceptualizations of skills. Whereas classical materialist Marxist approaches highlight the role of historical changes in the material organization of work and therefore of skills required from labor, social constructivist approaches draw attention to the ideological dimension of skills and, in particular, of minority workers' ones.

The exploitation of minority groups through the deskilling of the labor process

From a materialist approach, skills refer to workers' abilities which are required to carry out work (Grugulis, Warhurst & Keep, 2004) organized through specific constellations of job design, division of tasks at hand and forms of control of labor (Littler, 1982). This approach relies on Marx's (1976) theorization of skill as crucial in determining capital-labor relations. Marx predicted that to compensate for falling rates of profit, capital would need to continually raise the rates of workers' exploitation. This is achieved by deskilling the labor process, or breaking down jobs in routine and fragmented tasks, in order to bereave workers from deploying their skills in their job, making them an easily substitutable and thus cheap source of labor (Braverman, 1974). In this perspective, women and ethnic minorities come from a reserve army of labor with no other option than to be available for the most de-skilled and cheapest jobs due to their weak bargaining position. The creation of sub-groups along gender and ethnicity is seen as a strategy of capital to divide the working class, which leads to 'dual' or 'segmented' labor markets (Doeringer & Piore, 1971;

Piore, 1986). This segmentation undermines labor class consciousness and its ability to organize and defend its interests (Bonacich, 1972; Reich, Gordon & Edwards, 1973). Indeed, in their attempt to resist increasing exploitation by capital, white, male workers themselves organize against female and ethnic minority workers to consolidate their own privileged position in skilled jobs (Rubery, 1978; Walby, 2001).

Feminists subsequently criticized this approach for overseeing the role of patriarchy in this process, taking women's exclusion for granted. They argue that women's exploitation should rather be conceptualized as resulting from the intersection of patriarchal gender relations and the use of gender ideologies with capitalist organizing (Acker, 1990; Anthias, 1980; Liff, 1986; Smith, 1994; West, 1990). They revealed how the design and transformations of material labor processes were not gender-neutral processes but rather highly gendered, perpetuating and deepening gender inequalities at work (e.g. case of clerical workers: Crompton & Jones, 1984). Others evidenced how capitalists deployed gendered ideologies to create a gendered material division of labor, relegating women to unskilled work and exclude them from skilled work, power and any possibility for upward mobility (Cockburn, 1985; Hartmann, 1979; Milkman, 1983).

The exploitation of minority groups through the social construction of their skills

In the wake of the post-structuralist turn in critical organization studies (Kitay, 1997; O'Doherty & Willmott, 2001), the more recent literature on the exploitation of minority groups has shifted to an ideological approach to skill. Here, skill is conceptualized as a social construction originating in social relations

within and outside the workplace (Grugulis, Warhurst & Keep, 2004). The emphasis is on how seemingly neutral definitions of skill are actually biased to favor powerful societal actors and exploit subordinate groups such as women and ethnic minorities. From this perspective, the gendered segmentation of labor markets derives from the systematic, gender-biased construction of men as skilled and women as unskilled workers, which legitimize the lower value attributed to women's work and their skills (Acker, 1989; Philips & Taylor, 1980; West, 1990).

A vast body of literature on 'gendered organizations' (Martin & Collinson, 2002) accordingly studies the ideological aspects of women's exploitation and exclusion in organizations. It deconstructs how gender-biased constructions of skills (Kelan, 2008; Newsome, 2003; Peterson, 2007; Taylor, 2006), gendered organizational cultures, symbols and aesthetics (Gherardi, 1995; Gottfried & Graham, 1993; Hancock & Tyler, 2007; Witz, Warhurst & Nickson, 2003) and gendered constructions of professional identities (Collinson, 1998; Dick & Hyde, 2006; Haynes & Fearfull, 2008; Katila & Meriläinen, 2002) are imprinted in organizations and maintain unequal relations among men and women. Except for few exceptions (e.g. Newsome, 2003; Taylor, 2006), this research minimizes or ignores the role of the material structures in the reproduction of unequal relations and the exploitation of different segments of the labor class.

The biased social construction of skill has further increasingly been applied to explain capital's exploitation of other minority groups. This literature deconstructs employers' discourses of minority groups' skills, unveiling the instrumental, exploitative rationale informing the employment of ethnic minorities, migrant workers and, to a lesser extent, workers with a disability and older workers (Zanoni & Janssens, 2004). Analyses typically reveal how, similar

to women, other social groups are seen as either having or lacking skills deemed necessary to create economic value in the organization (Janssens & Zanoni, 2005; Ogbonna & Harris, 2006; Zanoni & Janssens, 2004). Employers' positive discourses of minorities are often centered on their 'soft' skills and their superior work ethic compared to majority groups. This essentially reflects their appreciation for minorities' willingness to work for lower wages and in unfavorable working conditions (Holgate, 2005; Janssens & Zanoni, 2005; MacKenzie & Forde, 2009; Moriarty, et al., 2012; Ogbonna & Harris, 2006; Thompson, Newsome & Commander, 2012), allowing higher rates of exploitation and profit. At the same time, minority workers are often constructed as less valuable due to their alleged lack of language skills and lack of majority cultural norms. These discourses are conveniently deployed by employers to justify their exploitation in the lowest valued jobs with little prospect for internal improvement (Janssens & Zanoni, 2005; Ogbonna & Harris, 2006). In this line of reasoning, the exploitation of historically underrepresented groups in the workplace results from a biased skill definition, which highly values the work of powerful groups while devaluing the skills associated with minority groups.

Explaining minority groups' exploitation from an integrated approach to skill

Despite the key, interdependent role of the ideological and material dimensions of skills in the exploitation of historically underrepresented groups' in the workplace (Wajcman, 1991), only few studies have to date combined the two to a diverse workforce along multiple socio-demographic lines (yet see Wright, 2001, 2003; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007; Zanoni, 2011). With this study, we respond to Wajcman's (1991) suggestion that how jobs are designed and

transformed is related to constructions made on the skills of different social identities (see also: Vallas, 1990). Our analysis is guided by three research questions: 1) How does the labor process shape the skill content of jobs? 2) How are minority groups' skills constructed by the employer? 3) How do the skill content of jobs and the constructions of minority groups' skills mutually inform each other?

Background and methodology

This study analyses qualitative material from three in-depth case studies of low-wage companies employing a high number of women and ethnic minorities and, in two companies, a small number of individuals with a disability: a floriculture company, a cleaning company and a gas stations company. The investigation of low-wage companies in typically female sectors of the economy (cf. Van Woensel, 2007) is indicated to gain insights in the exploitation of historically underrepresented groups given the stratified structure of western labor markets. For instance, ethnic minorities have a weaker position than ethnic majorities in European labor markets (OECD, 2008b), including the Belgian one (CGKR & FOD Werkgelegenheid, Arbeid en Sociaal Overleg, 2013; Tielens, 2005; Verhoeven, Anthierens, Neudt, & Martens, 2003; Vertommen & Martens, 2006). Immigrant workers and Belgian workers of foreign descent suffer from higher unemployment rates (Ouali and Rea, 1999; Tielens, 2005) and are overrepresented in the secondary segment of the labor market (Ouali & Rea, 1999) in jobs characterized by heavy and unhealthy work, unfavorable working conditions and/or under less favorable working conditions in terms of status, wage and working hours (VDAB, 2012).

Furthermore, similar to other western labor markets, Belgium is characterized not only by a female activity rate that is 12% lower compared to men (Van Hove, Reymenants, Bailly & Decuyper, 2011), but also by sectorial and occupational gender segregation (Van Hove et al., 2011) and a persistent gender pay gap with an average of 14% (Delmotte, Sels, Vandekerckhove & Vandenbrande, 2010; Theunissen & Sels, 2006). Belgian labor market statistics further show that other socio-demographic groups, such as individuals with a

disability and individuals above 50 years of age, fare particularly bad in comparison with able and younger workers as well as in comparison with the same groups in other western countries (OECD, 2003; OECD, 2013a; OECD, 2013b).

Embedded in a co-ordinated market economy (Hall & Soskice, 2001), characterized by a relatively high unionization rate, protective labor legislation, minimum wages and high labor costs, the companies under study rely on the 'least wanted' employees to fill socially and economically low-valued jobs that the primary segment of the labor supply is no longer willing to do. The companies under study are medium-sized and employ between 63% to 88% women and 29% to 44% ethnic minorities. All organizations employ minority workers in low-rank jobs with very little or limited internal career prospects. The gas stations company employs several individuals with a certified impairment and the floriculture company also employs one. Wages are set according to sectorial collective labor agreements and are in all three cases close to national minimum wage. However, there are wage premiums for extremely dirty work (in case of the cleaning company) and irregular working hours (in case of the gas stations company).

The main data source are 45 semi-structured interviews conducted by the first author with the employees, owners, managers and supervisors of the three companies. Interviewed employees worked in various jobs, were both male and female, were ethnically diverse. At the gas stations company, one worker with a disability was interviewed. The questionnaires consisted of open-ended questions on respondents' own background, the company's history, strategy, product/service and work organization (for company owners) or questions on previous employment, current employment situation, work

conditions and work content (for managers and employees), employee relations, and personnel practices, including practices aimed to manage minority groups. The interview data was complemented by internal documentation, such as work rules, vacancy ads and evaluation forms, and occasional participant observation during hours spent at the companies between interviews.

To analyze our data in function of answering our research questions, we coded it in subsequent phases. First, we identified fragments from all data sources in each case concerning the structure of the labor process (e.g. how jobs are designed, which tasks they comprise, which skills are required, which methods of control are used). Second, we identified interview excerpts in which company owners, managers and supervisors constructed specific skills (e.g. knowledge, technical skills, attitudinal skills, and emotional skills) by association with specific social groups. Third, we identified interview excerpts in which company owners, managers and supervisors justified the organization of the labor process and the allocation of personnel based on their construction of social groups' skills. Finally, we searched in all interviews for excerpts about the perceived pro's and con's in the employment relation between the company and minority workers. For instance, in owners' and managers' interviews, we searched for personnel availability, flexibility, the generation of revenues and profit, yet also the lack of skills leading to organizational constraints. In minority employees' interviews, we looked for their opinion on wages and benefits of all kinds including those deriving from the specific organization of work. Table 7 summarizes our findings for each case.

Table 7: Overview of the findings

	GreenCo	CleanCo	GasCo
Social construction of skills	- availability - female preference for doing fine, dexterous work - ethnic minorities' lack of language and cultural skills - ethnic minorities' doubtful attitudinal skills	- availability - cleaning as a 'natural skill' - ethnic minorities' lack of language and cultural skills	- availability - individualized skills - ethnic minorities' additional language and cultural skills - ethnic minorities' lack of language and cultural skills

Skill content within the labor process	- simplified, repetitive tasks - training on-the-job - interchangeability of workers	- autonomous work - broad cleaning tasks - little/ no training - individual accountability	- team work - individualized tasks with varying, complementary skill content and levels in teams - on-the-job training and professional training
Mechanism of exploitation	De-skilling	Naturalization of skills	Individualization of skills
Mode of control	Surveillance	Client surveillance Separation of workforce Occasional surveillance by supervisor	Peer surveillance Ideological control

Alternative/comple- mentary forms of compensation	Flexibility for personal needs Broad training possibilities	Flexibility for personal needs Long-term employment	Flexibility for personal needs Strong company identity Career possibilities

Findings

GreenCo

GreenCo is a medium-sized floriculture company producing several types of indoor plants and specialized in breeding different variants of one ornamental flower. Its products are sold to a few big auctions and retailers. The company was founded in the 1980s as a family business and grew to become an international business with two branches abroad. In recent years, due to a decrease in annual business turnover, it reduced its workforce in its Belgian premises and is increasing its personnel in China, its fastest growing market. No longer in the hands of the founding family-owners, GreenCo is today led by a board of four directors. In Belgium, it employs 110 employees, of whom twenty are in managerial and administrative functions and 90 are workers in the greenhouse and the laboratory. All four directors and all managers are men with a Belgian background, except for the personnel manager, a woman from the family formerly owning the business. The administrative staff is almost entirely composed by women with a Belgian background, holding at least a bachelor degree. Of the greenhouse and laboratory workers, about ninety percent are women and one in three has an ethnic minority background. Most of the greenhouse and laboratory workers are low-qualified, except for few workers who hold a higher degree from a foreign country that is not officially recognized by the Flemish authorities as equivalent to a Belgian degree. Of the latter, most work in the laboratory.

Today, the labor process at GreenCo is organized in jobs made of highly simplified, repetitive tasks requiring no specialized workforce. Every worker individually gets a number of tasks which are sequentially assigned by

supervisors on a daily changing basis. In the laboratory, workers sit in a sterile environment to cut plants into tiny pieces and prepare them for a plant cloning technique. In the industrial greenhouse, they stand at long planters to pot, sort and wash plants and prepare them for sale. The tasks are divided and controlled by three supervisory workers directed by management: management communicates daily targets and a rough work planning to the supervisors, while these latter pass administrative lists indicating the tasks and time on to each worker.

When the company started as a small family company, division of tasks was highly informal: workers were deployed where needed, at all stages of the labor process on an ad hoc basis, and management often worked alongside workers, combining business administration with working in the greenhouse. With the expansion of the company, work gradually got organized more formally in teams with rotating tasks, under supervision of supervisory workers. However, with recent cutbacks in its Belgian branch, management decided to organize the work more cost-efficiently and with more opportunity to deploy workers flexibly.

The current de-skilled and thus cheap labor process at GreenCo leads the company to employ mainly women and ethnic minority women. Managers associate the dominance of female workers with the reluctance of men to apply for floriculture jobs requiring precision work, because *"you can find men who want to do this, who like to do this, but most men don't"* (personnel manager), and because they are low paid *"as with the low wages defined by the floriculture sector, you automatically attract more women than men"* (CEO). The presence of ethnic minorities is however rather presented as the natural consequence of the company's non-discriminatory recruitment policy, the fact that minorities

have *"always been around in the sector"* (personnel manager), facilitating recruitment through workers' own informal networks, and just because *"there are good people among them"* (managing director).

Despite the discursive construction of female ethnic minority workers as suitable and available to carry out the jobs in the de-skilled labor process, management also elaborates on the skills these workers lack, which hamper their exploitation by the company. For instance, while workers' limited knowledge of Dutch does not pose a problem for their ability to perform work tasks, it is presented as problematic in communicating with supervisors, who themselves are "*unable to express themselves in other languages"* (CEO). Also ethnic minorities' motivation to work is questioned, for example because *"[some] just want to come [to work here] to get their residence permit [...] and then afterwards they go on unemployment benefits"* (CEO). All in all, regardless of managers' general praises of cultural diversity as 'personally fulfilling' and of ethnic minorities' 'societal integration' through their employment in the company, they talk of these workers as possessing few skills generating added value for the company.

GreenCo's construction of female and female ethnic minority workers has informed the company's recent reorganization of the labor process has altered the material skill structure of work, breaking down jobs to entirely de-skilled tasks under close surveillance of management and supervisors. Simplification of jobs' content allowed the company to employ workers with low or no qualifications and little more skills than precision, elementary level literacy and numeracy. Or as the CEO expressed it: *'if you're talking about workers, there's the price [...] that's our reason to not aim high off course'.* It also enables to rule out as much as possible the difficulties associated with a mainly poor

educated and ethnically diverse workforce, lacking language and cultural skills and sometimes also motivation. They are least likely to hamper the organization when the labor process is de-skilled, because *"then it's only their start-up time that creates somewhat difficulties, but once they know what to do..."* (CEO). This deskilled labor process is made up of jobs which are among the lowest paid in horticulture, enabling exploitation through reducing labor costs to a minimum. It also facilitates the optimal, flexible deployment of the labor force from one job to another. The personnel manager explained to us: *"[Now,] everyone gets trained so they can be deployed everywhere. And these tasks are actually not that difficult. So when everybody can be deployed everywhere, they're also easily replaceable"*. When business is slow, working hours can easily be reduced and personnel set on (state-funded) temporary unemployment; when business peaks, personnel works longer.

By fragmenting and simplifying the skills required in operational jobs, GreenCo ensures to find and keep women and ethnic minority women who are seen to be available and to possess the right attitudes to work in flexible working schedules and for low wages. The flexibility embedded in the labor process attracts a predominantly female workforce as it allows balancing paid work with family care, or as the managing director explained: *"I presume women, uh, look for a job they can combine with bringing the kids to school. Possibly, no full-time job. [...] And for certain people that makes it sufficiently attractive to do this work."* Indeed, the de-skilled labor process allows a highly flexible work organization not only to meet production needs but also to accommodate work-life balance needs of the (female) workforce: *"You can come and work here by a half day, so to speak"* (CEO). Workers were outspokenly positive on the various flexibility arrangements, which represented an important

benefit enabling them to meet family needs. One female worker of Belgian origin and middle-qualified explained: *"whenever there's something going on, you suddenly need a day of or something, that's never a problem [...]. They're so flexible here, I don't think I'll ever find a job where they're more flexible than here".* A Nigerian female worker that is low-qualified could combine her job with the upbringing of four kids as *'the only thing you need to say [to the company] is the time [you want to work], so that they know [which shifts] to give you'*. Another low-qualified female worker of Turkish origin explained to us that she arranges to systematically work overtime on Wednesdays so she can take extra days off to take a longer visit to her family in Turkey.

To foster social cohesion at the workplace, management further offers a wide range of trainings, including floriculture trainings but also trainings not directly related to the labor process, such as IT trainings, first aid trainings and cross-cultural trainings. The personnel manager explained: *'I believe these trainings are good for the ambiance here. And also for workers to develop themselves. At first when we provided these trainings, we needed to push people. [...] And now you see that some who were reluctant to participate at these trainings, are now very eager to subscribe'.* Workers were indeed enthusiast about the company's many training possibilities, attesting that they could choose themselves from the trainings that *'would seem very useful to me'* (low-qualified woman with Nigerian background) and that they could even suggest to management which *'trainings would actually work best among workers'* (low-qualified woman with Belgian background).

The employment of women and ethnic minority women at GreenCo shows how the social construction of these groups' skills and the skill structure of the labor process mutually constitute each other. The recent shift at GreenCo

to de-skill jobs reflects how management got informed by the social construction of women and ethnic minority women as cheap, flexible, low-skilled labor available part-time due to family care responsibilities. In turn, the material de-skilling of jobs makes these specific labor segments even more 'suitable' to work for them, as they became a highly substitutable workforce through various temporal flexibility arrangements, allowing GreenCo to keep relying on a workforce composed mainly by women and ethnic minority women who need to balance paid work with family. The employment of workers with this social profile maximizes exploitation by lowering wages and using work schedule flexibility as part of the compensation package. At the same time, this same flexibility is deployed in function of the company's needs, following fluctuating production.

CleanCo

CleanCo is a medium-sized cleaning company offering regular cleaning services for companies, public services and families as well as a specialized service for window cleaning. The company was founded in the 1970s by the owner and his brother, and is now run by one of the founders and his wife. They employ three middle-managers, all men with a Belgian background, in managerial support and supervisory functions. The company further employs about 70 workers. Ten of them are male window cleaners; all others are women in regular cleaning jobs. Thirty-seven percent of the workers have foreign backgrounds, they are all women employed in regular cleaning jobs. Except for a middle-qualified and high-qualified cleaner, all workers in the cleaning company are low-qualified.

Female cleaners are allocated by management to different clients, organized so that they all work individually at separate, delimited areas. They are expected to independently clean their area from A to Z, conforming to the different standards contractually agreed between the company and the client. This may vary from cleaning offices, class rooms and school yards, hallways and stairs to cleaning sanitary facilities, gyms and stables. These jobs thus comprise a broad range of cleaning tasks to be planned and performed within a given time period. Most female cleaners work part-time with varying working hours in daytime and evening work shifts, according to clients' expectations and workers' availability. Cleaning jobs are as a rule controlled by the client although middle-managers occasionally check on the cleaners when supplying them with products and equipment. Workers are paid close to minimum wage, with some wage premiums for cleaners working in sanitary facilities or extremely dusty or greasy spaces, as defined by sectorial labor agreements.

Earlier, the company owner used to organize work in teams, deploying one team at each cleaning site supervised by a senior cleaner. After years, the company owner doubted supervisory cleaners' added-value to the labor process, especially after he found out some of them performed extra cleaning work as self-employed cleaners during work hours. With the workforce also becoming more ethnically diverse, he found supervisors not enough competent to manage and control intergroup relations within their teams. To regain control on the labor process and avoid problems in intercultural relations between workers, the company owner decided to re-organize all cleaning work on an individual basis.

According to the company owner, the high prevalence of female workers is not a coincidence, but rather the result of societal divisions where women are more likely to combine family and household responsibilities with a part-time

job: *"It is still a little bit part of our culture that a man is the bread winner and that he's the one looking for a full-time job"* (male company owner with Belgian background). He relates the prevalence of ethnic minority women in the company to his own non-discriminatory recruitment strategy, as he assesses candidates' fit with company's expectations rather than recruiting on majority or minority background. Women, with both Belgian and ethnic minority backgrounds, are further discursively constructed as 'natural born cleaners', that is, as having cleaning experience due to their gender and are thus suited to work autonomously as cleaners, or as one of the supervisors told us: *"It's not that necessary to give them training. If we provide them the basics, and we guide them a little bit, that gives us enough positive results"* (male supervisor with Belgian background). At the same time, management did not refrain to stress ethnic minorities' lack of cultural and Dutch language skills, as the company owner mentioned for example: *"workers that don't master our language, that's a problem, it just creates trouble"*. Hence, given the company's constructions on women and ethnic minority women as both available and suitable to independently perform cleaning work, the company owner describes their added value minimally: *"I could sell work as much as you want, but I do need the people to carry it out. So the good thing of having them at the company is that the work gets done"*.

The re-organization of the labor process was informed by these specific constructions on an increasingly diversifying workforce: by broadening the material skill content of jobs and increasing workers' autonomy to make them individually accountable for their performance, the company owner was able to regain control. Constituted by varying tasks depending on the specific client, yet all paid close to minimum wage, this organization of labor facilitates exploitation

by separating workers, who are not aware of disparities between jobs and individuals. The company owner explained his divide-and-rule strategy as follows:

> *"If you put these people [workers] together, they talk about their cleaning sites, that's like rocking the boat. They raise questions. [...] To avoid comparisons - we have to take these sites as they come - we avoid any contact between cleaners, so that I don't get problems." (company owner)*

At the same time, deploying workers separately - instead of working together - avoids workers' associated lack of cultural and language skills to hamper them during work. Applying this divide-and-rule strategy further enables the company to individually approach workers to negotiate their flexible deployment on a one-to-one basis, whenever there are extra work assignments to be divided or an absent colleague needs to be replaced. By making them work separately, the company can individually control temporal flexibility without having to justify these arrangements to other workers.

Besides meeting the company's own flexibility requirements, through dividing the labor process, management is now also able to regulate the high flexibility associated with a workforce made up of women. By strictly separating workers from each other, the company owner now finds it feasible to individually respond to the personal and cultural needs associated with his diverse workforce, or as he explains himself:

> *"If people worked together on cleaning sites, I would prefer not to give [them any flexibility], because then you favor someone over someone else and that creates conflicts. Then I would prefer to give them just the days off they are entitled to by law. Now people work alone on site, that's much easier: you can replace them [when you give them extra days off] and then you don't have to manage any conflicts [among personnel]." (company owner)*

Accordingly, this new organization of work also enables to accommodate female and ethnic minority cleaners' requests in function of work-life balance, fostering long-term employment relationships and thus enabling labor exploitation. A low-qualified cleaner with an Algerian background evidences:

> *"So last Tuesday was the Feast of Sacrifice. So I told to [middle-manager]: 'I won't come to work. Because everyone is at home, I'm not coming to work'. And [middle-manager] understood. […]And those hours I divided them over the other days of the week. I worked an hour extra every day, so no problem."*

Another cleaner explained how she is able to negotiate a change in working hours when her kid starts to attend school: *"When my kid goes to school, I want to start work during daytime shifts. When he comes home, I'll be home as well. That's better for my kid. Now, I would be at work when my son gets home, that's difficult." (low-qualified woman with Cameroon background)*

Overall, social constructions on minority workers' skills appear to stand in a mutually constitutive relation with the re-organizing of skill structures at CleanCo. The company's re-organization of work in broad, autonomous job responsibilities shows how management got informed by skill constructions of women and ethnic minority women available as naturally skilled cleaners to work at low wages. In turn, the changed skill structure making cleaners individually accountable for their work fits their further exploitation as it limits the role of lacking language and cultural skills during their work and enables the company to negotiate workers' flexible deployment on an individual basis. This type of labor process thus facilitates the exploitation of minority groups because it divides workers, bereaving them from any opportunities to connect with colleagues and collectively defend their interests. Yet, precisely this individualized employment relationship makes the employer mutually respond to

workers' demands for flexibility, individually negotiating temporal flexibility for personal reasons.

GasCo

GasCo is a medium-sized company operating thirteen gas stations, which, next to gas, sell a wide range of products such as food, drinks, magazines and car supplies, and offer services such as car rental and carwash. Every station also has a food corner serving sandwiches, pizzas and drinks, and a coffee bar. The gas stations are open 24/7 every day of the year. At the time of our study, the company was expanding with one new gas station and a roadside restaurant. GasCo is a family company founded in the early 1980s. It is owned and lead by two brothers with an Italian background. The company further includes six staff members in the main office, 19 shop managers running the gas stations, and 132 employees in the shops who work as cashiers and/or as servers in the food corners. Sixty-three percent of the personnel are women; forty-four percent has a foreign background. Remarkably, the company is not segregated along gender or ethnic background: women and ethnic minorities are found among staff members, shop managers, cashiers and servers at the food corners. The employees in the shops are mostly low-qualified, few of them are middle-qualified. Among staff members in the main office and among shop mangers, there are low-qualified as well as middle-qualified and high-qualified people working.

In each of the gas stations, work is organized in 8-hour shifts, each of which is staffed by minimally one cashier and one server in the food corner. Depending on the size of the station and on peak hours, more cashiers or

servers are deployed, sometimes flexibly switching from one job to the other. Cashier jobs comprise several tasks, such as handling payments, handling deliveries, filling up shelves, servicing fuel pumps, setting out promotions, maintaining the gas station and helping out at the food corner. Food corner jobs comprise some other tasks, such as preparing food, handling deliveries, preparing stock, setting out promotions, maintaining food corners and helping out at the cash register. Teams of cashiers and servers are supposed to run the station autonomously, although shop managers are around the shops most of the day and regularly help out. In each GasCo station, shop managers are in charge of the organization of work. They schedule shifts, organize workers in teams or in pairs and assign tasks to them.

The material skill structures of jobs in the gas stations are highly individualized, based on a consideration of individual employees' abilities: whereas some are given rather narrow repetitive tasks, others receive a broader range of tasks with varying levels of responsibility. They are subsequently organized in pairs or teams to complement each other, thus relying on their self-steering ability and on peer control to operate the stations. For example, a manager of a highly frequented gas station explained to us how he deploys workers with *"certain shortcomings, who are less able to organize work"* together with workers that can work autonomously: *"There's somebody who has a short memory and who is short-sighted, you name it. Usually I schedule him with a capable person he can always fall back on whenever he has a tough time"* (low-qualified male shop manager with Turkish background). Another shop manager explained us how he scheduled a non-Dutch speaking server in the food corner with colleagues who can communicate in Dutch with customers: *'The Russian girl, for example, we gave her the opportunity to follow Dutch language*

courses. [...] And so, I can't schedule her alone, because that would not work out yet with the customers. So at noon or evening shifts, I basically deploy her as second or third employee.' (middle-qualified male shop manager with Belgian background). The same organizing principle of complementary skills in a team was used to allow new employees or temporary student workers to function in the labor process.

An individually based social construction of workers' skills and the complementary skill structure of jobs combining 'strong profile' and 'weak profile' employees mutually inform each other, enabling the company to attract workers and exploit them by maximally deploying their abilities. Jobs' diversified skill contents allow the company to aim for workers who are perceived to be available for hard work in irregular working hours and at wages close to minimum wage. Recruiting mainly on motivation, GasCo attracts women and ethnic minorities who have a disadvantaged position in the labor market: *"those are the people that ask to come work for us [...] because [they] still need an income"* (male company owner with Italian background).

Employees' skills are not exclusively socially constructed in individual terms but also along socio-demographic lines. Ethnic minorities are seen as naturally possessing additional cultural and language skills that can be of use in the gas stations serving an ethnically diverse clientele. Management told us that their specific cultural skills enable them to *"solve many things within these cultures, both positive and negative situations, […] conflicts about aggression and racism."* (male company owner with Italian background), and that *"if you can use those [different languages] to be helpful or to work more customer oriented, that's fantastic"* (low-qualified male shop manager with Turkish background). In this case, minorities' exploitation is facilitated by their specific

skills which are seen to create additional economic value, yet which are not additionally compensated.

Teamwork and individually constructed skills further enable exploitation by allowing the company to identify individuals with a potential to develop new skills and take over additional tasks and responsibility. This evaluation is not based on formal qualifications or previous work experience but rather on how the individual functions on the job. This policy aims at getting 'the maximum' out of every individual's potential.

Besides the peer control among pairs or teams of workers, GasCo strongly relies on a pervasive family ideology to control workers. Throughout the stations, the mantra of being part of 'one big happy family' is omnipresent. We observed how company owners and managers embodied this ideology by adopting an informal, non-authoritarian leadership style, showing personal commitment to employees and trying to make them feel included. Also, employees often refer to their co-workers as friends or family rather than just colleagues. The family ideology provides the necessary social glue in a labor process in which workers' highly dependent upon each other. It pressures them to be available for example to take on extra work shifts or to stand in for absent colleagues. Not only does it appeal to workers' functional flexibility, it also serves to back up colleagues' lacking skills.

This ideology is clearly reflected in employees' positive experiences about working together with their colleagues and supervisors, as the company's family-sense makes them create close bonds and feel accepted, despite hard work. An older, female employee who had been unemployed over a long time told us how she really feels included in a group of mainly young colleagues. A woman with a Polish background explained to us that the job was really hard as

she had taken over many shifts from absent colleagues, but that she had a fun time at work, laughing a lot with other colleagues and her supervisor: *"We're just a bunch of happy colleagues amongst each other, it all works smoothly. Whether [name of the shop manager] is one level above us, that doesn't matter, I fool around with him too. Actually, we're just 'one big happy family' as [name of a company owner] always tells us"* (middle-qualified female employee with Polish background). Others shared positive experiences of professional development in the company through receiving training, taking on responsibility and getting promoted to shop manager.

Taken together, GasCo's individualized skill content of jobs is informed by their individual assessments of workers' skills, classifying and flexibly organizing them in teams composed by individuals with complementary skills, and controlled through their peers and a strong and pervasive company ideology. Besides workers' skills discursively constructed at the individual level, they are also constructed along socio-demographic lines. In this latter case, minorities' skills are constructed as adding value to the business. This interdependent organizing of workers in turn allows the company to fill jobs with minority workers: it enables their maximum exploitation due to their weak position on the labor market, either because they are available to work for minimum wages or because they are considered individuals with professional potential who lack formal qualifications and are thus not in the position of negotiating high wages. Despite the company's exploitation, workers perceive the pervasive family-ideology as inclusive, appreciate the company's flexibility towards their needs, and recognize the opportunities to advance in the organization– irrespective of formal qualifications. Through this individualized

approach on skills and skills' development, GasCo creates an organization that rearranges traditional skill segregation patterns.

Discussion

This article has sought to expand understanding on employers' exploitation of minority workers. Drawing on three case studies of companies employing a substantial share of women and ethnic minorities in low-paid jobs, we examined how employers' social construction of minorities' skills and the material skill structure of jobs mutually inform each other to maximize value appropriation from these groups (cf. Wajcman, 1991). On the one hand, the material organization of jobs' skills was informed by distinct constructions of specific segments of the labor force whom employers expected to be available to work at their given employment conditions. On the other hand, the organization of the labor processes in flexible jobs were filled by workers from these labor segments as they matched the desired skill profile.

While some studies have shown before that companies' social constructions on minority workers are anchored in the material structures of work, i.e. in the labor processes and in modes of control, complementing each other to organize minorities' exploitation (see Janssens & Zanoni, 2005; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007), our study contributes to these insights, revealing that constructions on diverse workers' skills and the skill structure of the labor process mutually constitute each other (cf. Wajcman, 1991). Accordingly, our study unmistakably confirms earlier insights on employers' use of ideological skill constructions to perpetuate minorities' exploitation in low-paid jobs, it adds to these that they inform employers to shape or transform the material skill structures of these jobs, imbuing social inequalities in the material skill structures of jobs in the first place. In turn, jobs' skill structures and transformations thereof constitute how employers construct minorities' skills to

legitimate their exploitation in these jobs. Therefore, we argue, it is necessary that studies question the material skill structures of jobs and try to analyze how the exploitation of diverse socio-demographic groups is a driver for employers to constitute and transform their labor processes. The studies we just mentioned disregard to do this, yet this questioning of the material bases of exploitation is even more absent within most of the more recent post-structuralist literature on diverse workers' exploitation (Zanoni & Janssens, 2007).

This study further shows that individual employers play a key role in shaping different constellations of minorities' skill constructions and jobs' skill structures. Our dual perspective reveals that although the social construction of minority labor and the organization of work are mutually constitutive, they do not stand in a deterministic relation. Employers develop heterogeneous ways to exploit diverse workers - irrespective of the broad employment trends identified in the literature (Lovering, 1990; Taylor, 2006). They (re-)structure the skills required from jobs, which are, in the cases under study, either highly de-skilled, highly autonomous or highly individualized, complementary jobs. In combination with company-specific ideological constructions, employers create for themselves a coherent organizational model to exploit minority workers, each having different consequences for worker. The labor process at GreenCo reflects a classic Fordist one, forcing minority workers in a highly fragmented and flexible work regime (Ackroyd & Proctor, 1998; Findlay, Marks, McKinlay & Thompson, 2000). For the company, it facilitates an optimal, flexible deployment of minority workers along business demands' fluctuations; for workers, the company matches its various flexibility arrangements to the needs of a female and ethnic minority workforce to combine paid work with family and care responsibilities. The labor process at CleanCo reflects a pre-Fordist one, dividing

workers in autonomous jobs, relying on their independent bargaining power to shape employment conditions (Edwards, 1979; Littler, 1982) and on customers to control their work (Fuller & Smith, 1991). The resulting individualized employment relationship enables an individually negotiated trade-off between the company's demands for flexibility and accommodations for individual cleaners' requests to balance work-life. The labor process at GasCo resembles a post-Fordist one, assigning individual workers to individualized jobs within complementary teams, relying on peer and team control (Sewell, 1998; Sewell & Wilkinson, 1992) and a pervasive family ideology (Ainsworth & Cox, 2003) to keep workers in line and to concede – within teams - to the company's as well as workers' demands for flexibility.

Despite very specific constellations of the ideological and material dimensions of skill, common to all three companies is that they (re-)structure the employment relationship to gain greater numerical and functional flexibility from workers (Atkinson, 1984; Kalleberg, 2003). All three offer no wage premium in return, claiming that they are unable to do so in sectors with tight margins and collectively bargained minimum wages. Yet, while doing so, companies are constrained by their dependency upon minority workers' added value derived from their availability for and compliance with these exploitative conditions, but bringing in their own specific flexibility needs. Consequently, their employment relationships are structured so that flexibility regimes meet minorities' needs too, based either on group identities (as in the floriculture company) or individual negotiations (as in the cleaning company and the gas stations company) (cf. Delbridge, 2007), explaining our observations of minimal mutual gains in the employment relationships.

Thus, different from what latest tendencies in critical diversity studies would suggest, minority groups' exploitation does not solely rest on employers' ideological constructions reflecting their instrumental approach to minorities' availability and compliance, but equally on the material labor processes that inscribe these ideological associations and mutually shape employment relationships. Instead of regarding them as fixed, accounting for how the highly differential labor processes capture value from diverse workers and how they are molded to capture even higher value from these groups allows to anchor the employment of diverse workers in contemporary capital-labor relations (cf. Zanoni, 2011). The complexity of social relations between capitalists and different socio-demographic labor segments (Resnick & Wolff, 2003) however calls for a nuanced understanding of minorities' exploitation. Minority groups, as a collectivity, seem to exert pressure on employers to adapt labor processes, subsequently to alter bargaining powers and accommodate for group and individual needs (cf. Ram, 1991). We suggest future research could verify what role these other than wage benefits play in minorities' exploitation and for their opportunities in the labor market.

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EPILOGUE

Drawing on three different theoretical perspectives and relying on a multiple case study, this dissertation aimed to advance current understandings on DM. It has focused on the effects of DM practices on the well-being of both minority and majority employees, on analyzing how DM practices are embedded in their specific organizational and business context and on considering the role of DM practices within organizations in challenging or reproducing power relations. In the first section of this final chapter, the empirical contribution of this dissertation is presented through an overview of the identified diversity-managing organizational practices. In the second section, the theoretical contribution of this dissertation will be discussed: the three fundamental ways in which the identified organizational practices differ from the 'classical' DM practices and the effects of practices on equality. In the third section, the implications for organizations and management, both for SMEs and for larger organizations are discussed. In the fourth section, I reflect on my own position as a researcher and as a member of society in relation to the dissertation. In the fifth and final section, I present the limitations of this research and some avenues for future research.

1. Empirical contribution: Documenting (sets of) practices deployed to manage diversity

From the five case studies at the core of this dissertation, I was able to identify and document a broad variety of organizational practices that SMEs in Flanders implement to manage a diverse personnel. Table 8 presents an overview of these practices along seven thematic clusters: recruitment and introduction,

work-life balance, the regulation of intergroup relations, job redesign and allocation, competence development, management style and customer management. The table further distinguishes between informal and formal practices.

Table 8 – Overview of diversity-managing organizational practices

Cluster of organizational practices	Informal practices	Formal practices
Recruitment and introduction	• Assign colleagues offering job guidance to introduce and integrate new employees	• Broaden and diversify recruitment channels to reach disadvantaged groups • Adapt welcome and introduction documents to different levels of language proficiency • Offer job guidance by external job coaches to new minority employees
Work-life	• Adapt work organization individually to employees' private and cultural needs • Negotiate work adaptations for private and cultural needs individually between supervisors and employees • Offer flexible arrangements of shift work among workers	• Offer flexible work arrangements to meet employees' private and cultural needs
Intergroup relations	• Enforce anti-discriminatory norms towards employees • Organize social activities supporting informal integration by involving all employees • Organize social activities adapted to employees' childcare responsibilities • Adapt menu to religious and non-religious food requirement	

	of diverse personnel	
Job redesign and allocation	• Adapt personnel deployment to minorities' additional or lacking language skills • Adapt personnel deployment to minorities' additional cultural skills • Adapt work organization to minorities' limited language skills • Deploy personnel flexibly in various jobs • Deploy personnel at separate work sites and separate work processes • Offer sustainable workload over time	• Deploy personnel in standardized jobs • Adapt personnel deployment to low ability workers • Adapt working conditions to low ability workers
Competence development	• Offer on-the-job training for new employees and managers • Offer custom training and career guidance for employees with managerial aspirations	• Offer training to enhance occupation-specific skills • Offer training to enhance interpersonal and intercultural skills • Offer training to enhance ethnic minorities' language skills
Management style	• Manage with a non-hierarchical management style showing personal commitment • Manage with informal management style individually supporting employees • Apply close surveillance of workers	

	• Manage with a management style adapted to employees with limited language skills • Adapt work instructions to diverse personnel's different levels of language proficiency	
Customer management	• Enforce anti-discriminatory norms towards customers • Provide additional support in customers relations • Adapt menu to religious and non-religious food requirement of diverse customers	

The practices presented in Table 8 indicate that SMEs with an ethnically diverse personnel manage diversity through a broader variety of practices than those presented in the DM literature. These organizational practices advance the current knowledge on DM as they are more innovative, have very rarely been documented by the DM literature before (yet see Janssens & Zanoni, 2014) and are clearly different from the best practices found in DM literature and practitioners' textbooks. Both formal and informal practices form coherent sets of organizational practices to manage a diverse workforce, which is different from the DM literature that proposes single, unconnected practices such as diversity trainings and minority networking initiatives. These practices further fundamentally organize the workplace in different ways: they shape organizational cultures and work systems to be compatible with diversity, instead of replicating institutionalized organizational practices which reproduce minorities' disadvantage. They are implemented to achieve business goals, contrary to the practices from DM literature that have a less direct relation with business goals.

2. Theoretical contribution: The nature of organizational practices deployed by SMEs to manage diversity and their effects on equality

2.1. The nature of organizational practices deployed by SMEs to manage diversity

The identified organizational practices differ from the 'classical' DM practices in three fundamental ways: the practices are of both formal and informal nature, they mainstream diversity into key organizational processes and they are directly linked to business results.

First, the DM practices identified in the case studies are of both formal and informal nature, contrary to the DM practices that are commonly disseminated by the diversity management literature which are essentially formal. That Flemish SMEs' approaches to managing a diverse workforce are overall less formalized is in line with the literature on HR management in SMEs (Bacon, Ackers, Storey, & Coates, 1996; Marlow, 2002) and few earlier findings on equal opportunities and DM in SMEs (Dex & Scheibl, 2007; Kirton & Read, 2007; Kitching, 2006). This literature highlights that informal practices are suitable to SMEs because SMEs have a less pressing need to demonstrate their commitment towards equality to key stakeholders (cf. Spence & Lozano, 2000), compared to larger organizations (Edelman, 1992; Yang & Konrad, 2011). Despite their distinct combinations of informal and formal practices, the shorter hierarchical lines in SMEs, where personnel decisions are often centralized in the person of the owner-manager and are implemented in a direct or face-to-face relation with employees (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Hornsby & Kuratko, 2003), make sure they can maintain coherence among practices. This allows SMEs employing a diverse workforce to create a more tailored diversity management – compared to that illustrated by the DM literature – by combining formal and informal practices coherently. Altogether, combinations of informal and formal practices appear to offer SMEs a pertinent approach to manage an ethnically diverse workforce.

Second, the practices present in the cases under study are 'diversity-managing' organizational practices rather than DM practices. They are practices that in the first place organize and purposively do so in ways that are diversity-friendly, and thus essentially different from the classical DM practices that are add-on, designated HR practices. The identified practices mainstream diversity

into key organizational processes. Diversity mainstreaming in organizations refers to the systematic attuning of all organizational processes to a diverse workforce, in line with the idea of mainstreaming as a systematic principle of policy making and policy implementation (cf. Pollack & Hefner-Burton, 2000; Council of Europe, 1998). In the organizations I studied, it means that the practices to manage diversity fundamentally (re-)shape work systems and organizational cultures compatibly with a broader diversity of socio-demographic backgrounds, competencies, needs and preferences among the workforce.

The identified practices shaping organizational cultures and work systems resonate with the findings of Janssens and Zanoni's (2014) study on diversity management enhancing ethnic equality at work. Besides showing that similar, multiple practices can organize workers compatibly with diversity, the practices I identified complement the latter study's findings by evidencing how these practices can create highly distinct work systems and organizational cultures. For instance, while a practice such as enforcing a non-discriminatory culture appears to be a recurring practice also identified by Janssens and Zanoni (2014) - possibly a minimal condition to allow the expression of multiple identities – this dissertation showed different combinations of practices creating very different work systems and cultures. This multiplicity of organizational configurations in the organizations under study allowed assessing the use of different sets of practices against each other, showing how they each distinctively affect workers. With Janssens and Zanoni's (2014) study presenting similar practices to manage diversity within a different organizational configuration, it further questions the pertinence of trying to present best practices to manage diversity, as assumed by most of the managerial literature on DM.

While the identified practices are designed with different socio-demographic identity groups in mind, by shaping organizational structures and cultures, they affect all employees. Similar to the practices identified by Janssens and Zanoni (2014), the practices studied here have an identity-conscious rationale, acknowledging and addressing long-lasting, widespread inequalities along socio-demographic lines. However, their structural embeddedness in organizations' productive processes and cultures renders them at face value identity-blind, avoiding the potential problems of identity-conscious interventions. In this sense, the described practices can speak to debates in diversity management and equal opportunities literature on whether identity-conscious or identity-blind approaches are best to achieve workplace equality (Konrad & Linnehan, 1995). Mainstreamed practices enhance heterogeneous employees' fit with these organizational structures and cultures irrespective of minority or majority status, avoiding the risks associated with identity-conscious DM practices of exacerbating stereotypes and prejudices on minority groups (Ellis & Sonnenfeld, 1994; Liff, 1997), possibly inciting majority group members' backlash (Kidder, Lankau, Chrobot-Mason, Mollica, & Friedman, 2004; Kossek & Zonia, 1993).

This mainstreaming of diversity in key organizational processes is in line with the idea of inclusive organizing in which an employee is 'accepted and treated as an insider by others in a work system' (Pelled, Ledford, and Mohrman, 1999: 1014). The notion of inclusion goes farther than mere demographically diverse workforces and inter-group equality, referring to individuals' interpersonal relations within work systems (see also: Mor Barak, 1999; Roberson, 2006). Yet the first essay of this dissertation calls for a more comprehensive understanding of how workers' experiences relate to

organizational practices used to manage diversity – beyond interpersonal relations. Studying the effects of practices on workers' well-being, this essay showed how organizational practices to manage diversity both positively and negatively influence different dimensions of employees' well-being, such as autonomy and environmental mastery which are also crucial for well-being in the workplace. Instead of reducing minorities' and in general workers' inclusion to interpersonal interaction, the inclusion literature - as it still provides little understanding of how work environments might foster individuals' experience of inclusion - might be advanced by taking into account dimensions of psychological experiences other than interpersonal relations.

Third, the sets of organizational practices used to manage diversity in the SMEs under study fulfill their business goals, directly contributing to the bottom-line. These SMEs started employing diverse workers out of necessity to find enough able and available workers. As they come to see minority workers as a critical resource (Ortlieb & Sieben, 2013), they are pushed to fundamentally rethink and adapt organizational cultures, work systems and jobs to better fit a more heterogeneous personnel.

Due to their direct link with business goals, the mainstreamed practices are much more likely to be sustainable within the business context in the longer run. As long as their relation to organizational goals holds, the business case for diversity is met. In this sense, the identified practices clearly reflect SMEs' inclination to implement only those practices that have a clear and direct positive effect on business results (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Marlow, 1997). This is different from DM's classical business case, which rests on inter-group equality as a key condition to leverage the economic value of a diverse workforce, or minimally on the signaling function of DM to show the company's

commitment to equality to avoid lawsuits or to uphold a diversity-friendly image. Classical DM practices which have a less direct relation with organizational goals run the risk of becoming redundant when their contribution to the bottom-line is not demonstrated or of becoming mere window-dressing initiatives (cf. critiques on the business case by Dickens, 1999; Noon, 2007).

2.2. Organizational practices to manage diversity and their effects on equality

The organizational practices identified in the frame of this research aim explicitly and directly at creating organizations that are better able to employ and deploy a heterogeneous workforce to reach business goals. This stands in contrast with the traditional DM practices whose main goal is to enhance inter-group equality, based on the idea that equality represents an essential condition for organizations to reap the benefits of diversity. This different approach to DM leaves the question open concerning the effects of the identified practices on equality. In what follows, I distinguish between the effects of these practices on workplace equality at the inter-group level (between ethnic majority and minority employees) and in the employment relationship (between the employer and ethnic minority employees). The first dimension of equality is drawn from the mainstream literature on diversity, which is preoccupied with the unequal participation and career prospects of disadvantaged groups in organizations and with enhancing equality to leverage diversity's business advantage (Cox, 1994; Thomas, 1990). The second dimension is drawn from the more critically oriented literature on diversity, which has emphasized diversity's instrumental take on differences obscuring and maintaining unequal power relations (Linnehan & Konrad, 1999; Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; Noon, 2007; Zanoni et al., 2010).

The mainstreamed nature of the identified organizational practices to manage diversity generates equality at the inter-group level. Altering the organizational structures and cultures creates a level playing field among minority and majority workers which exempts minority workers from taking the whole charge of adapting to organizations. This is crucial to enhance organizational equality between minority and majority groups, because it counters how organizations traditionally reproduce inequality along majority/minority lines: gender (Acker, 1990; Cockburn, 1985; Milkman, 1983; and more recently e.g. Newsome, 2003; Witz, Warhurst & Nickson, 2003) and ethnicity (Nkomo, 1992; Ogbonna and Harris, 2006; Zanoni, 2011) have extensively been shown to function as organizing principles, disadvantaging and excluding women and ethnic minorities by both relegating them to lower valued work as well as casting them as being less valuable. The identified practices are therefore essentially different from the classical DM practices which leave organizational structures and cultures unchanged, thus reproducing societal relations and privileging white, male identities (cf. Janssens & Zanoni, 2014).

As shown in the first essay, this results in experiences of minority and majority groups that are broadly similar within each organization: instead of magnifying the disadvantaged position of minority groups they affect minority and majority groups in similar ways. Rather than advantaging or disadvantaging one group along ethnic lines, each organization's unique set of practices calls for a dynamic fit between workers and the organization (cf. Kalleberg, 2008): not only minority workers are expected to adapt to majority-dominated structures and cultures, but all workers have to adapt to the organization-specific structures and cultures. The similarity of experiences between groups might also suggest that through their mainstreamed nature, practices are more likely to be

perceived to have equal effects on all employees and less as only advantaging minority workers or contesting majority's privileged position, thus reducing the likelihood of backlash to a minimum (Kidder, Lankau, Chrobot-Mason, Mollica, & Friedman, 2004; Kossek & Zonia, 1993).

I further speculate that mainstreamed practices with a direct relation to business goals might equalize relations between majority and minority workers also in terms of job security offered by the companies. Mainstreamed practices reduce the difference between majority and minority workers in terms of the effort they have to make to fit within the company and additionally, as discussed above, the practices I found are less in risk of becoming redundant as they have a direct relation with business goals. If these two conditions are fulfilled, in case jobs are threatened, this might turn out equally detrimental to the employment of workers belonging to ethnic minority and majority groups, reducing the likelihood that ethnic minority workers be dismissed first.

Whereas the identified organizational practices used to manage diversity appear to enhance equality between minority and majority employees, their effects on the power relation inherent to the employment relationship appear more ambiguous (cf. Janssens & Zanoni, 2014). Clearly, these practices do not escape organizational power relations: company owners and managers, from their more powerful position in the employment relation, construct minority employees' skills, attitudes and lifestyles in terms of their (potential) value or lack to the company (cf. Zanoni & Janssens, 2004; Zanoni, 2011). For management, diverse employees remain human *resources* (Ortlieb & Sieben, 2013) to be managed and managers do not refrain from constructing diversity as value or lack, reproducing existing power relations (Zanoni & Janssens, 2004).

The practices I identified do not revolutionize employment relations within organizations, nor do they provide an antidote to the structural inequality between the workforce and management within it. The identified practices are implemented to employ minority groups in low-skills jobs and at the bottom of the labor market. It is exactly this instrumental approach to diverse workers and the possibility of a 'dark business case' motivated by the exploitation of minority workers instead of equality (Zanoni, 2011), which has been strongly opposed by the more critically oriented diversity literature (Dickens, 1999; Litvin, 2006; Noon, 2007; Zanoni & Janssens, 2004). Yet, at the same time, it should be observed that the instrumental reliance on diverse employees affects power in the employment relationship. Once employees' diverse identities inform how employers shape the labor process in order to appropriate value from them, employers become increasingly dependent on diverse workers for generating value (cf. Ortlieb & Sieben, 2013; Ram, 1991). This mutual dependence, if unequal, leads to gains for the diverse workforce in regard to their own specific flexibility needs.

Although these organizations only offer minimum wages, they do attempt to create workplaces that are more hospitable than usual for workers most suffering from exclusion on the wider labor market by offering them a diversity-friendly work environment. Even if this does not revolutionize capitalist employment relationships, it minimally questions the dominant cultural assumptions underlying the relationship between employer and employees (Janssens & Zanoni, 2014). Also, it is exactly because these types of practices are aligned with the organizations' business and because they remain within the boundaries defined by an instrumental employment relationship, that they are actually likely to be upheld by the SMEs in the future as long as their

contribution to business goals remains maintained (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Marlow, 1997).

All in all, the organizational practices to manage diversity, close to business goals and mainstreamed within organizations appear more effective to foster inter-group equality at the organizational level than the classical DM practices. With their direct added value for business, they also hold more chance to be maintained within SMEs' business contexts. Yet, unsurprisingly perhaps, they provide no alternative for the structural inequality between labor and capital in capitalism.

Furthermore, by applying three disparate theoretical lenses in succession, it becomes clear how each only reveals partial truths in understanding diversity management's effects on equality (Lewis & Grimes, 1999). From the first perspective – focusing on ethnic minority employees and their experience of DM practices – and the second perspective – which focuses on a business rationale - we can draw lessons for diversity management in practice and engage easily in debate with managers and (diverse) employees. Yet, merely seen from these two perspectives, the organizational practices identified and understandings on diversity management come with a price: they hold the risk of diverting attention away from the more deep-seated aspects of inequality and capital's exploitation of minority groups. Unlike the classical DM practices and dominant diversity management literature that minimally make an appeal to inter-group equality, the diversity-managing organizational practices I identified hold no strict purpose of enhancing inter-group equality. Although they appear more effective to foster inter-group equality and are more easily maintained within capitalist employment relationships, they thus hold the risk of further ignoring power relations and reproducing labor market's status quo.

While the third perspective does not allow the same performative stance as the two first perspectives (cf. Spicer, Alvesson, & Kärreman, 2009; Zanoni et al., 2010), it reminds us of the underlying structural aspects shaping the same 'effective' DM practices while reproducing labor market's power relations. The different theoretical lenses applied in succession thus contribute in grasping both the complexities of an effective diversity management and of power in real organizational contexts.

3. Implications for organizations and management

The three essays evidence how companies adopt distinct organizational approaches to diversity management that meet their needs to employ a diverse workforce. The practices I found are embedded in their specific organizational and business context and shape their specific productive processes. Based on these findings, I suggest some new avenues of thought for SMEs and other organizations to shape their diversity management.

2.1 Organizational practices to manage diversity in SMEs

Most of the diversity management practitioners' literature suggests a range of formal personnel practices to manage diversity: diversity trainings, elimination of bias in human resource (HR) procedures, and mentoring and networking programs targeted at minorities. The studies in this dissertation show that SMEs do not only resort to different types of practices – both formal and informal – than those typically disseminated practices, but that they have different motivations and make different reflections upon doing so. I suggest that these practices create a more suitable diversity management for SMEs than the formal, off-the-shelf diversity management practices that are probably not adjusted to SMEs' businesses. This implies that for SMEs, I cannot suggest one set of best practices that will successfully manage their diverse personnel but only some pathways along which they can rethink and reshape their organizational practices to manage diversity.

What the typical diversity management practices do is implementing a formalized diversity policy that discharges the organization of actually managing or deploying different backgrounds, needs and competences within a productive

context. On the contrary, the SMEs I studied are aware of actual mismatches between minority groups' backgrounds, needs and competences and majority-dominated organizations and actively and pragmatically adapt their work systems and jobs in order to avoid, adjust or value workers' differences in the process of value creation. Based on the evidence collected for this dissertation, I plea for a diversity management that fundamentally structures organizations' work systems and jobs in ways that are compatible with diverse backgrounds, needs and competences, and supplemented by formal and informal diversity practices that allow management and workers flexibility in identifying and negotiating shared interests.

The essays further show that management in the organizations under study supports its diverse personnel and its diversity management, which is broadly accepted as prerequisite for a successful diversity management (Cox & Blake, 1991; Gilbert & Ivancevich, 2000; Kandola & Fullerton, 1998). Their face-to-face support of a diversity-friendly organizational culture is particularly suited for SMEs as they are known for their closer relations between management and personnel (Marlow & Patton, 2002; Wilkinson, 1999). But instead of a very explicit and broadly communicated diversity approach, the SMEs under study show how management's commitment to diversity management in subtle, mainstreamed ways serves business interests as well as minorities needs without needlessly magnifying majority-minority group differences along stereotypes and prejudices or inciting majority backlash. Organizations' management creates diversity-friendly organizational cultures minimally by managing workers in non-discriminatory ways and taking firm action against employees' discriminatory behavior at the workplace. But more important, their diversity-friendly cultures are embedded in companies' productive processes and

in the ways managers are reorganizing these, adhering diversity management to organizational goals. Instead of exacerbating or problematizing employees' differences, the organizational practices presented in the dissertation exemplify how productive processes avoid, adjust and/or value ethnic differences along language, culture and religion – the main focal points of discrimination and exclusion of ethnic minorities in the present-day Belgian labor market (Lamberts & Eeman, 2011).

2.2 Lessons for larger organizations

Although these insights are generated from cases of SMEs, I speculate that they might be relevant for DM in larger organizations with more complex structures. First, the studies suggest that through mainstreaming diversity into organizational cultures and structures, companies are able to fulfill minorities' needs by reducing the effort ethnic minority employees' generally have to make – by virtue of their minority status – to function as expected in the workplace. For larger organizations, a similar organizational change might be incited by not treating diversity management like an 'extra issue' or 'extra cost' to deal with by the HR department or a diversity manager somewhere in that department –– but rather like a structural challenge for all productive processes and at every organizational level. This may include for example more structural co-operation between technical engineers and personnel managers to redesign jobs and work systems that create a better fit between companies' and workers' needs for flexibility. It might involve the customers' service department to question discriminatory behavior and inquiries by customers in relation to workers. Supervisors might be addressed to reconsider their management style towards

their diverse workers and adapt it into more culturally suitable ways that complement the productive process of their team or department. While in SMEs, closer and more informal relations between management and employees make it more likely that this organizational change gets realized through informal and negotiated consensus, in larger organizations more formal practices might be needed to stimulate this type of exchange.

Second, larger organizations might consider to devolve diversity management to lower levels of the organization and enhance middle-managers' skills for organizing and valuing diverse workers (cf. Foster & Harris, 2005) to create a diversity-friendly context for their department or division. Their closer bonds with personnel, their personal observations and their thorough knowledge of the productive process can be deployed to create a more diffuse, yet locally embedded diversity management that fulfills companies' and workers' needs better than a rigid top-down diversity management. Such a devolution might enhance diversity management's performance by giving middle-management levels more leeway in judging the appropriateness and practicality of their practices within their specific work contexts.

4. Reflections on my own position as a researcher

In this part, I will elaborate on my own position as a researcher and as a member of society in relation to the research design and the findings of the studies. As a qualitative researcher studying such a highly debated topic as diversity in the workforce and on the work floor from very different theoretical positions, it can be useful to expand on my own identity and position versus the topic and the subjects in the research (Bhopal, 2010; Song & Parker, 1995).

This is not to detract anything from the validity of the research; rather, it provides an extra dimension to contextualizing the research design and the findings.

As a qualitative researcher one inevitably is for a very short time very present, concerned and intruding in the professional life of one's respondents. Reflecting on my multiple different locations in society and my own identity vis-a-vis the respondents, at least two things were salient out there and possibly influencing my field work: first, I come from a white, middle-class Belgian-origin family providing broad opportunities to maintain or improve this privileged position; and second, I started this PhD research after few years of experience as a researcher at university – with a nice starting wage and under comfortable labor conditions. Meeting and interviewing (using semi-structured interviews) majority and minority workers in low-rank low-wage jobs personally confronted me with how deeply segregated not only our labor markets but also our day-to-day social environments are, as I usually interact with friends and family with similar privileged, middle-class backgrounds (Czarniawski, 1998). In each SME I visited as a case study, there was at least one employee who directly confronted me with this privileged position, bouncing back the questions on their satisfaction with the job content or with their wage with (ironic) remarks like the following, or similar: 'Have you ever worked in a gas station?', 'I also have a master's degree and could have been in a better paid job if only it would be recognized in Belgium'. On the one hand, even as my different socio-economic locations in society were not explicitly questioned by respondents, this distance could have problematized the attempts to retrieve genuine information and experiences as we both might have felt alienated in the unnatural setting of the semi-structured interview with another who – in most cases – is in multiple ways

an outsider (Bhopal, 2010). Or, other than seeing me as a total outsider, few of the interviewees explicitly distrusted me for conspiring with management in order to pass information on their work attitudes, efforts and relations with colleagues. On the other hand, this distance needed not to be a shortcoming in every interview situation (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane, & Muhamad, M., 2001), as I often clearly experienced interviewees were eager, proud, curious, or even just thankful for their paid break to provide me with information on their jobs, careers, colleagues and bosses. For some this came from a belief in the possible beneficial effects for minority-majority relations in organizations, as I explained in four of the case studies to respondents that I collected the information for a research project commissioned by the Flemish government. Others just seemed pleased to share information to someone whose naivety about their work and experiences made them to be the ones in control of the interview situation (Limerick et al., 1996; Rhodes, 1994).

Second, focusing on my own position in organizations, although I never felt to be in a position of multiple disadvantages as many of the workers I have interviewed, there are few situations in life where I encountered how as a minority in a majority-dominated organization one's very presence or experience is questioned. As a high school student I've been in a minority position while attending a boys' high school that only since two years had become a mixed school and had a predominantly male teaching staff, and while being member and group leader of an affiliated boy scouts group that also just started to allow girls. More than once, me and the few other girls were confronted with teachers' and students' nostalgic expressions, for example on how easy it used to be to organize gym class around an all-boys group or how the 'hard line' of discipline reigned when there were only boys at the boy scouts. As a scholar, I became for

the first time aware of how an old boys network manifests to maintain its grip on academia and as a PhD student, I was more than once thrown sexist remarks at while doing my job or while discussing gender- and diversity-related topics with a colleague. Nevertheless, I see these experiences as having rather limited impact on my opportunities as a professional and in life in general, and a clear, directional role in how they influence the interpretation of the research results is just impossible to single out (Rhodes, 1994; Zanoni & Van Laer, in press). However, while getting a master's degree in Sociology and developing research interest in societal inequalities, I am at the very least aware that one cannot get rid of these former experiences of a minority-status: they thus inevitably help shape interpretations of theories and findings on disadvantage and opportunities in organizations as I see through these discourses highly similar power mechanisms at play that devalue and disapprove the position of minority groups in organizations.

Finally, I want to reflect on my own scholarly background in relation to the use of three divergent theoretical perspectives to study diversity management in organizations. With a master's degree in Sociology and in Management and some experience in policy-oriented research prior to starting my PhD research, I believe all have a share in positioning the research in very different theoretical perspectives (cf. Trowler & Knight, 2000). The combination of sociology and management studies has found me to be well at ease within Critical Management Studies which I find of vital importance as a counterforce to mainstream management research. Yet, despite this field's challenging critiques on the current social order in organizations and within the capitalist system, with its uneasy position in business schools and business faculties it might have to conform too much to academic publishing standards to provides pathways to

actual transformations of the status quo and to substantial difference for disadvantaged groups (Tatli, 2012). Using other theoretical perspectives that for a critical sociologist might present as only reinforcing the status quo, I adhere to their possibilities in changing the system from within. Possibly from my background as a policy-oriented researcher, translating research to very how-to policy recommendations, I believe substantial transformative outcomes can be explored by applying mainstream theories to explore how management can go off the beaten track, rethinking and transforming institutionalized ways of managing, although essentially unable to escape an inherently exploitative system.

5. Limitations and future research

In this final part, I will present some limitations of the research design and some suggestions for future research.

First, opting to select case study organizations that are of small and medium size and that employ a large share of women, ethnic minorities and ethnic minority women automatically led to a selection of low-skill low-wage companies, which was quite predictable in Belgium's strongly ethno-stratified labor market (CGKR & FOD Werkgelegenheid, Arbeid en Sociaal Overleg, 2013). Although diversity management research has traditionally demonstrated a preference for studying minority groups' opportunities and barriers in top management levels and research in this field seriously lacked insights from organizations employing workers in low-skill low-rank jobs, my studies provide no insights on the experiences and interests of minorities in higher organizational ranks. Future research might look for similar diversity-managing organizational practices and compare how they fulfill or overlook minorities' needs and interests in SMEs' higher ranked jobs.

Second, using cross-sectional case studies, my research design enabled to reconstruct how organizations' diversity management linked with majority and minority workers' experiences and interests. However, due to its cross-sectional nature, it is difficult to reconstruct how the organizations under study are actually influencing worker's opportunities within the organizations and on the labor market on a longer term. A longitudinal research design, following majority and minority workers from the moment they enter the organization and studying their experiences at different points in time when they gain experience within the organization and after they have possibly left it, could enable to

better reconstruct and draw causal relationships between companies' diversity management practices and workers' opportunities.

Third, this dissertation has mainly focused on how organizations manage the diversity of their personnel in terms of ethnicity and – to a lesser extent – gender; and on the experiences of ethnic minorities, women and ethnic minority women with their organizations' diversity management. However, with societal shifts in the proportions between majority and minority groups (Crul, Schneider & Lelie, 2013), increasing super-diversity (Vertovec, 2007) and a growing public and scientific debate around other grounds of disadvantage such as age, sexual orientation, disability and multiple intersecting identities in the workplace (Zanoni et al., 2010), the studies in this dissertation have researched workforce diversity mainly along a single identity axe. Future research might look for organizational approaches and practices that enable companies to employ a workforce characterized by multiple axes of inequality, taking into account the role of intersecting inequalities (Acker, 2006; Holvino, 2010) and probably having to deal with more complex dynamics in finding a trade-off between organizing workers flexibly under unattractive labor conditions while accommodating for their needs.

Fourth, the contextualized approach I adopted in the studies linked SMEs' diversity management to their broader business context and production process and to workers' experiences, thus understanding the practices mainly from their meso- and micro-level. Although I made some more speculative links between organizations' practices and the macro-level, looking at the institutional context in which the practices are embedded, the research design does not allow singling out the effects of the institutional context on the identified practices. It could be interesting for future research to compare similar samples of

organizations within different countries, playing for example particular attention to how countries' labor legislation or collective bargaining processes interplays with organizations' room for maneuver in organizing their diverse personnel.

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