

Master's Programme in Management and International Business

Examining the D&I Practices in a Finnish Cultural Organization

Interview Study

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the diversity and inclusion (D&I) practices in a Finnish cultural organization from the employee perspective. Previous research on the topic is relatively scarce and has mainly focused on issues regarding equality. More specifically, Finnish cultural organizations have not often been the objective of the studies. Despite growing interest towards diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), understanding D&I practices and their functionality in the culture industry from the employee perspective remains limited. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap by providing an overview on how the existing D&I practices at the Finnish cultural organization are perceived by the employees, and how they are found to be working and affecting the work community.

The theoretical foundation of this study draws from the interdisciplinary field of management and the vast literature on DEI. To gain an extensive understanding of the phenomenon in the culture industry, the research follows a qualitative research design of an interview study. The research data was collected in interviews in November and December 2023. In total, seven employees of the Finnish cultural organization were interviewed for the study. The analysis of the interview data is based on a thematic analysis.

The findings present the D&I practices currently in use at the particular Finnish cultural organization of which the interviewees were aware of. The most significant D&I practices can be divided under communication, training the employees on D&I, recruitment, and representation policy. The D&I practices are regarded as important, but at the same time it is significant that the implemented practices are relevant in terms of the organization's operations. A direct effect of the D&I practices on the work community is challenging to determine. However, most interviewees have observed a positive influence on the work atmosphere. They noted that these practices foster an environment of openness, acceptance, and transparency in the workplace. Additionally, discussions on perceiving diversity and inclusion indicate that the concepts need more clarifying. The practical implications at the end cover, for example, engaging the D&I practices to the organization's strategy. Future research should further explore i.a. the experiences of employees whose first language is not Finnish, as well as the generalizability of D&I practices across various organizations within the culture industry.

Keywords diversity, inclusion, D&I practices, work community, culture industry

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Tiivistelmä

Tämän tutkielman tarkoituksena on tutkia moninaisuus- ja inklusiokäytäntöjä suomalaisessa kulttuuriorganisaatiossa työntekijöiden näkökulmasta. Aiempaa tutkimusta aiheesta on suhteellisen vähän ja se on pääasiassa keskittynyt tasa-arvoon liittyviin kysymyksiin. Erityisesti suomalaiset kulttuuriorganisaatiot eivät ole usein olleet tutkimusten kohteena. Vaikka kiinnostus moninaisuuteen, tasavertaisuuteen ja inklusioon on kasvanut, ymmärrys moninaisuus- ja inklusiokäytännöistä ja niiden toimivuudesta kulttuurialalla työntekijöiden näkökulmasta on edelleen rajallista. Tämä tutkimus pyrkii tarjoamaan yleiskatsauksen siitä, miten nykyiset moninaisuus- ja inklusiokäytännöt kyseisessä suomalaisessa kulttuuriorganisaatiossa toimivat, millaisina työntekijät ne kokevat ja ovatko ne vaikuttaneet työyhteisöön työntekijöiden näkökulmasta.

Tämän tutkimuksen teoreettinen perusta pohjautuu monitieteelliseen johtamisen alaan ja moninaisuutta, tasavertaisuutta ja inklusiota käsittelevään laajaan kirjallisuuteen. Tutkimus toteutettiin laadullisena haastattelututkimuksena, jonka tavoitteena oli tuottaa ilmiöstä kulttuurialalla syvällistä tietoa. Tutkimusaineisto kerättiin haastatteluilla marras- ja joulukuussa 2023. Yhteensä seitsemää suomalaisen kulttuuriorganisaation työntekijää haastateltiin tutkimusta varten. Haastatteluaineiston analyysi perustuu temaattiseen analyysiin.

Tutkimustulokset havainnollistavat suomalaisen kulttuuriorganisaation nykyisin käytössä olevia moninaisuus- ja inklusiokäytäntöjä, joista haastatellut olivat tietoisia. Merkittävimmät moninaisuus- ja inklusiokäytännöt voi jakaa viestintään, työntekijöiden kouluttamiseen, rekrytointiin ja representaatiolinjaukseen. Moninaisuus- ja inklusiokäytäntöjä pidetään tärkeinä, mutta samalla on merkittävää, että valitut käytännöt ovat organisaation toiminnan kannalta olennaisia. Moninaisuus- ja inklusiokäytäntöjen suoraa vaikutusta työyhteisöön on haasteellista määrittää, mutta useimmat haastatelluista ovat kokeneet niiden vaikuttavan positiivisesti työilmapiiriin luomalla avointa, hyväksyvää ja läpinäkyvää kulttuuria työpaikalla. Lisäksi keskustelut siitä, miten työntekijät ymmärtävät moninaisuuden ja inklusion osoittavat, että käsitteet tarvitsevat selkeyttämistä. Tutkielman lopussa olevat käytännön johtopäätelmät käsittelevät esimerkiksi moninaisuus- ja inklusiokäytäntöjen kytkeytymistä organisaation strategiaan. Tulevien tutkimusten suositellaan tutkivan muun muassa niiden työntekijöiden kokemuksia, joiden äidinkieli ei ole suomi, sekä moninaisuus- ja inklusiokäytäntöjen yleistettävyyttä erilaisissa kulttuurialan organisaatioissa.

Avainsanat moninaisuus, inklusio, moninaisuus- ja inklusiokäytännöt, työyhteisö, kulttuuriala

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1 Introduction

“With regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and in particular Articles 11, 21 and 22 thereof, the cultural and creative sectors make an important contribution to the fight against all forms of discrimination, including racism and xenophobia, and are an important platform for freedom of expression and for the promotion of respect for cultural and linguistic diversity”. (Regulation No. 1295/2013, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union)

The culture industry is known for being diverse and taking sometimes even a vocal stand on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) related issues. Still, the industry itself is suffering from lack of research regarding DEI issues (for exceptions, see e.g., Eikhof, 2020, 2017; Newsinger & Eikhof, 2020; Eikhof & Warhurst, 2013) and if the different diversity and inclusion (D&I) practices that are being implemented are working. The industry is also in need of a better understanding on how to increase inclusivity from the employees’ perspective. (Cuyler, 2017a.) Some previous research has been conducted in the culture industry in the recent years, especially regarding issues with inequality (see e.g., Vincent et al., 2022; Hennekam, 2022; Hennekam & Bennett, 2017). Still, the focus has not often been on D&I practices specifically in the culture industry.

The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union define the culture and creative industry as follows in Regulation No. 1295/2013: *”Cultural and creative sectors’ means all sectors whose activities are based on cultural values and/or artistic and other creative expressions, whether those activities are market- or non-market-oriented, whatever the type of structure that carries them out, and irrespective of how that structure is financed. Those activities include the development, the creation, the production, the dissemination and the preservation of goods and services which embody cultural, artistic or other creative expressions, as well as related functions such*

as education or management.” In the context of this thesis, cultural organizations mean the organizations that are operating in the performing arts field of culture (e.g., music, opera, theatre).

More specifically, in cultural organizations in Finland the topics of DEI or D&I practices have not yet been much in the focus of research thus far, at least publicly. In 2022, a study on the state of equality in the Finnish music industry was conducted by the Finnish Musician’s Union and Inklusiiv (a global DEI consultancy). The study found that experiencing inappropriate behaviour in the Finnish music industry is common. (muusikkojenliitto.fi.) Hennekam and Bennet (2017) had similar findings in their study, arguing that in the culture industry, also at international level, especially women have suffered from sexual harassment. Furthermore, the study by the Finnish Musician’s Union and Inklusiiv focused on only one part of the DEI matters and left the broader questions relating to inclusion and diversity out of scope. Otherwise, when looking for previous research on the D&I practices or initiatives in organizations operating in the culture industry in Finland, there is not a lot to be found. This calls for a better understanding of the organizations operating in the culture industry and their D&I practices that could help improve the situation in the field. Especially managing diversity and inclusion has been found difficult at times and has led to the practices not always working but instead leading to discriminatory outcomes even with the organizations’ best intentions and efforts (Romani et al., 2019). Similarly, diversity in some cases has not necessarily resulted in equity and inclusion as expected although that would have been the aim of the organization (Chaudhry, 2023).

The concepts of DEI are evolving fast within discussions in and outside of organizations across industries. There is a growing acknowledgment that organizations must approach DEI with a strategic mindset, understand the D&I related practices that are at use in their organizations and leverage their diverse workforce. For a long time, DEI matters were not considered important by organizations although their workforce might have felt so. It is likely that

management has often thought that DEI matters are hard to measure and therefore it has been difficult to prove that including D&I practices into the company's strategy would actually advance the company. For D&I practices to succeed, commitment from management is essential (Romani et al., 2019). This concerns also cultural institutions and the cultural field.

1.1 Research Objectives and Questions

Organizations also need to be able to manage workforces that are becoming more and more diverse. D&I practices are no longer something that an organization might have but rather something they should have to be seen as a credible organization. D&I practices encompass the strategies adopted within organizations to nurture and capitalize on their diverse workforce. These initiatives are often geared towards gaining business advantages while also fostering a secure and inclusive workplace environment. (Derven, 2014.) In fact, previous academic research on DEI also suggests that both people belonging to minorities and non-minorities often consider organizations that highlight diversity in their values more positively (Roberson, 2019). Accordingly, Chaudhry (2023) argues that DEI forms the basis for managing people which again affects the sustainability of organizations today.

The broader purpose of the thesis is to further examine the D&I practices and their current state, specifically in a cultural organizational setting. More specifically, I will study how the existing D&I practices at the Finnish cultural organization are working, how they are perceived by the employees and if they are found to be affecting the work community. There is also a lack of understanding of the concepts of DEI and, more specifically, a lack of a shared understanding of the meanings in the culture industry (Cuyler, 2017a) which is where this study also aims at providing further information. Farn-dale et al. (2015) suggests that future research on these topics should focus on taking an employee-centred approach to explain how perceptions and attitudes toward various aspects of diversity and inclusion are understood.

Furthermore, Nishii and Wright (2008) suggest future research would take a look on how employees perceive these kinds of D&I related HR practices. Shore et al. (2011) also encourage future research to consider diversity and inclusion with their early-stage model which describes the contextual antecedents' effect on how the employees perceive inclusion in their work group. In addition, more research to understand effective strategies regarding D&I practices and their functionality in the culture industry is suggested (Hennekam, 2022). Thus, the aim of this thesis is to examine the D&I practices in a Finnish cultural organization from the employee perspective to gain an overview of the current situation in the particular organization, from which other organizations and people interested in the topic can possibly draw insights.

The research problem is addressed with three research questions:

RQ1: What kinds of D&I practices does the cultural organization currently have?

RQ2: How do the employees experience the D&I practices in the cultural organization?

RQ3: How do the employees perceive that the D&I practices affect the work community?

The research is conducted as an interview study with semi-structured questions. Although the focus of the thesis is on D&I practices, building on the interview materials these are examined through the lived experiences of the employees and their subjective understandings. Interviews were chosen as the appropriate data collection method as the aim of the study is to get close to people's – the employees' – lived experiences, their opinions, and interpretations of this phenomena. In addition, since the topics of diversity and inclusion are sometimes found sensitive by some individuals, having

interviews may allow a more relaxed and confidential situation to discuss such matters.

1.2 The Structure of the Thesis

This thesis presents an interview study on D&I practices in a Finnish cultural organization. The study is divided into five chapters and is structured as follows: Following the introduction, chapter 2 will cover the previous literature relevant to the study, laying a theoretical background for the themes of DEI and the D&I practices. The intention is to create the connection between these themes and the culture industry. Chapter 3 presents the research design and methodology in more detail. In this chapter I also describe the interviews, data analysis, and possible limitations and ethical considerations of the study. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the data analysis based on the interview data. Findings are also discussed in relation to the literature presented earlier. Chapter 5 concludes the thesis and discusses the main findings of the study, answers the research questions with theoretical contributions, and presents practical implications with additional insights on the future and development of the D&I practices as well. Lastly, recommendations for future research are given.

2 Literature Review

This section of the thesis introduces the literature and scholarly discussion related to the concepts of DEI, managing D&I, DEI in the culture industry, D&I practices in organizations and their implementation. The section also aims to discuss and define the key concepts of DEI as the discussions around them are complex and the concepts themselves are multifaceted and interrelated. These concepts are usually found functioning together in diverse and inclusive organizations as equity promotes diversity and then again inclusion is needed to benefit from that diversity, or at least the organizations should aim at that (Nishii, 2013).

2.1 Diversity

Diversity is used to describe the differences among people in a group and over the years the term has had differing interpretations, which is a challenge with almost any term. This has led to a situation where not only regular people but also researchers find it difficult to understand the term and its meaning. According to Yadav and Lenka (2020), diversity management has been a part of the management and organization studies since the 1990s. Prior to this, managing diversity specifically did not receive a lot of attention, but since the 1960s, corporations have focused on addressing diversity among their employees and ensuring equal opportunities through the implementation of various programs and initiatives (Nørholm Just et al., 2021). Understanding and leveraging diversity is becoming increasingly important not only due to organizations' own workforce turning more international but also since the global markets are interconnecting more and more, which leads to organizations having to deal with a variety of cultural norms and languages. Within business organizations, the concept of diversity has evolved to encompass two main approaches of which the first one is broad, encompassing all differences, and the other one more focused on specific characteristics, commonly gender, age, and nationality. (Roberson, 2019.)

According to Roberson (2019), in an organizational setting diversity means differences among employees, some easier to observe than others. Some examples of not easily observable differences can include e.g. education or other acquired attributes whereas more visible or surface-level diversity can be characteristics such as race, age or gender. Deeper level diversity includes attributes such as beliefs, values, and personality (Harrison et al. 2002). It can be assumed that in diverse employee groups there are both visible and invisible differences (Ely & Thomas, 2001).

Mensi-Klarbach & Hanappi-Egger (2019) describe diversity to be more of a flexible term which can be defined quite freely by the common norms dominating in the organization. According to Roberson (2019), diversity can affect the organization both inside and out and it has been an on-going process to understand the strategies to manage diversity effectively.

It is common that researchers (see e.g., Chaudhry, 2023; Ely & Thomas, 2020; Robinson & Dechant, 1997) emphasize diversity as a strength for organizations. With a diverse team an organization can utilize many perspectives and a variety of capabilities to deal with different challenges. A diverse team can also benefit from having team members with varying experiences. Innovation is often associated with diversity, since especially innovation and idea generation are promoted more within a diverse team. (Chaudhry, 2023.)

Specifically for organizations operating in the cultural field innovation is crucial (Cuyler, 2017b) which is why diverse teams are needed and should be embraced in such organizations. More specifically, Cuyler (2013) emphasizes that the arts community should acknowledge and utilize diversity in a positive way to benefit from it. According to Robinson and Dechant (1997), diversity is known for increasing innovation and creativity in teams. Although nowadays most organizations are aware of the importance and usefulness of diverse teams, it is still often not a top priority. It can also be difficult to achieve the necessary commitment from leadership on diversity since the

benefits of diversity are hard to measure. But actually, diverse teams have been discovered to be cost saving and driving business growth. (Robinson & Dechant, 1997.)

Contrary to Robinson and Dechant's (1997) arguments, Ely and Thomas (2020) argue that diversity alone does not drive business growth. Instead, utilizing diversity to gain better effectiveness is more dependent on how the diverse employees are being included in the organization's important decisions – whether they have power, and also feel that they have a possibility to affect things in the organization. This connects diversity closely to inclusion. Remodelling the power structures of the organization is thus necessary to truly benefit from diverse teams (Ely & Thomas, 2020).

Having a diverse team can also bring challenges that affect both the team and the whole organization. As a diverse team has members with varying backgrounds, problems with communication and just simply functioning as a team may occur. (Ely & Thomas, 2020; Robinson & Dechant, 1997.) But, while heterogeneous teams may initially face greater challenges in reaching consensus and collaborating effectively due to e.g., differing priorities, they ultimately excel in recognizing various problem viewpoints and producing varying options for solutions compared to homogeneous groups. Although effectively managing diversity typically entails a sustained cultural transformation that demands a substantial investment of time, and focused leadership commitment, it still often is worth it. (Robinson & Dechant, 1997.)

In this study, diversity and diverse teams are recognized as multifaceted concepts mostly in line with Roberson's (2019) definition concerning characteristics that are both easily and not easily observable. Having adequate practices to foster the diversity that is present in work groups is beneficial for organizations. Research is not needed to recognize that work groups have diverse people in them anymore. Thus, it is more relevant to gain understanding of how to make the different people work together, to cooperate, in order

to benefit the organization they are working in. Diversity alone is not the root cause for possible business growth (Ely & Thomas, 2020) but businesses may benefit from it when it is managed to leverage sustainably (Robinson & Dechant, 1997).

2.2 Inclusion

Inclusion is one of the newest concepts of the DEI research and literature that researchers have been trying to define more precisely only for the last decade or so (Shore et al., 2011). For a long time, the inclusion of diverse employees into organizations was presumed by research which led to even ignoring the concept of inclusion in organizational literature (Roberson, 2006). The literature on diversity has previously focused more on the problems associated with diversity but has lately progressed more towards the enhancing effects on work processes that diversity can have (Shore et al., 2011). With this shift in the last several years, according to Nishii in 2013, the focus of the discussion and research on diversity management began to shift towards inclusion – having an inclusive workplace and managing the inclusive atmosphere in organizations. It can be assumed that this is due to the workforce becoming increasingly diverse, as fostering an inclusive work environment becomes critical in order to make the most of diverse teams. Inclusive environments are described as places where people and individuals with differing backgrounds are treated with fairness, experience being valued for themselves and are central in decision-making in the organization. In addition, to effectively address both the potential challenges and advantages linked to diversity, organizations must establish environments that embrace and include all their employees. (Nishii, 2013.) Nishii's (2013) arguments are in line with Ely and Thomas' (2020), who suggested that the diverse employees must also be included in the decision-making to be able to gain better effectiveness from having diverse teams.

As diversity, inclusion also has multiple definitions from different researchers – it can be interpreted both from the employees' individualistic experiences within an organization as well as from the organizations' perspective. Additionally, some definitions look at inclusion with a focus on the employees' perceptions of inclusion while others focus on organizational practices related to inclusion. (Otten & Jansen, 2014.) From the employee perspective some researchers define inclusion by how included to important organizational processes the individual employees feel (Roberson, 2006), whereas others define it more from the perspective of individual perception, the degree to which an employee perceives that they are a valued member of the work group (Shore et al., 2011.)

According to Chaudhry (2023), inclusion signifies that employees experience a sense of belonging within the organization, which is determined by the extent to which the organization respects and cares for them, irrespective of their diverse backgrounds. Accordingly, Otten and Jansen (2014) argue that inclusion comprises of belongingness to the organization and team and the value that is given to their authenticity, perceived by the employee. This is slightly different from the definition that Shore et al. (2011) give which emphasizes value in uniqueness instead of authenticity. More specifically, Shore et al. (2011) argue that an individual brings unique value to the work group thus possibly increasing the chances of enhancing the group performance. In general, when assessing inclusion, it frequently involves evaluating how individuals perceive their level of involvement in work groups, their access to information and resources, and participation in decision-making.

When from the employees' point of view there is a lot of talk about feelings and perceptions, what then makes an organization inclusive? According to Nishii (2013), the most inclusive organizations are characterized by their adoption of a "learning and integration" approach. This implies that organizational strategies should evolve and adapt based on the valuable insights provided by diverse employees. Employees are also expected to commit to

educating each other and learning about their differences. To achieve an inclusive organization, climate for inclusion is needed.

Nishii (2013) gives three dimensions that constitute climate for inclusion. These dimensions evolve from a foundation of equitable employment practices and diversity practices removing bias to changing the way employees interact with each other. More specifically, not only is it enough to have a diverse representation of people within the workforce, but also a more profound change of pattern of interaction between the employees is needed. Finally, to create climate for inclusion organizations should actively seek and integrate the versatile viewpoints of diverse employees, even when their expressed ideas may disrupt the current norms. In addition to climate for inclusion, Dobusch et al. (2021, pp. 328) suggest “dimensions of hybrid inclusion” that consists of the target of inclusion efforts (first dimension) and how organizing for inclusivity is done (second dimension). The first dimension focuses on the form of relationship between minority and majority groups, as Dobusch et al. (2021) argue that inclusion measures should be targeted towards this form of relationship and not individuals. At the core of the second dimension is the necessity of drawing boundaries between inclusion and exclusion and accepting that they co-exist. They conclude that organizing for inclusivity in a workplace will always depend on some preconditions or barriers of entrances, e.g., language requirements, which is why exclusion should not be eliminated when inclusion is talked about but the boundaries between them should be considered carefully.

Inclusive climate is also mentioned in the research by Shore et al. (2011) where they introduce antecedents and outcomes of inclusion, some contextual factors that might advance and effect the perceptions of inclusion. The contextual antecedents include inclusive climate, inclusive leadership and practices related to inclusion. These antecedents act as preconditions for inclusion and affect and enable each other as well. Inclusive leadership emphasizes the importance of top management’s involvement in enhancing

inclusion in organizations by valuing all employees in the work group. Without top management's involvement it is difficult to create a climate for inclusion or foster that climate with necessary D&I practices. The contextual antecedents affect how the employees perceive inclusion in their work group and might lead to positive outcomes such as increased creativity, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction.

2.2.1 Inclusion and Exclusion

The literature and research on inclusion in organizational context has also provoked discussion about the way inclusion is being discussed and some of the challenges that may occur when inclusion is made an objective within an organization. For example, Kangas-Müller et al. (2023) have taken a more critical stance towards inclusion and more specifically 'doing' inclusion. In their research they brought forward the possible ambivalence of inclusion practices in organizations. As was discovered with diversity initiatives, organizations may similarly with inclusion initiatives suffer from issues of good intentions failing or resulting in inequality or exclusion instead of inclusion when inclusion practices are implemented. By not categorizing the employees to included or not included some of these challenges may be avoided.

Similarly, Dobusch (2014) has researched the relationship between inclusion and exclusion and argues that having inclusion also means exclusion. So, not only does inclusion enable someone previously excluded to be included but also the other way around. For example, some people who would have previously been included in an organization may end up excluded as a by-product of inclusion practices. Shore et al. (2011) also suggest that if employees perceive low belongingness to their work group or that they are not valued as unique team members compared to others within the organization it may lead to exclusion. This is also illustrated in their inclusion framework in *Figure 1*.

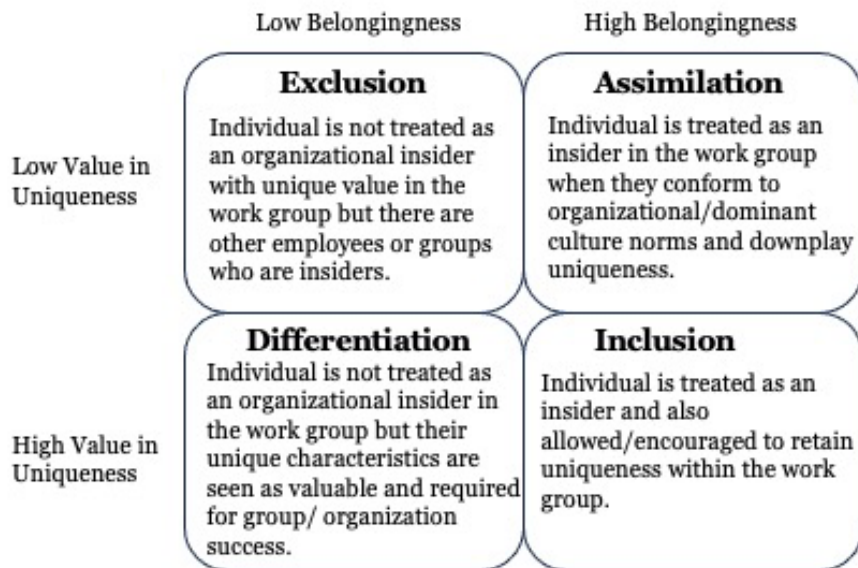


Figure 1. *Inclusion Framework (adapted from Shore et al., 2011)*

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between inclusion and exclusion and belongingness and value in uniqueness in work groups and how an individual employee perceives that they are being treated. According to Shore et al. (2011), low value in uniqueness and belongingness may result in exclusion whereas low value in uniqueness but high belongingness may result in assimilation, which means that the employees should adjust themselves to the organization's cultural norms minimizing uniqueness. At the same time, high value in uniqueness but low belongingness may lead to differentiation. This might happen when the employees have unique characteristics that are valued and required for the work group to succeed but they are not being treated as organizational insiders in the work group. Lastly, inclusion is achieved by having both high value in uniqueness and high belongingness.

According to Dobusch (2014), inclusive organizations refer to organizations that are susceptible to power relations instilled in historical inequalities but at the same time are marked by efforts of making a change in the

organization. Aiming at, for example, recruiting people whose values align with the organization's diversity and inclusion principles, as well as individuals from diverse backgrounds, may unintentionally result in the exclusion of candidates who would have been hired previously. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect resistance against the diversity and inclusion related measures from the people who have historically been in a more powerful position. This also emphasizes the importance and necessity of sufficient change management practices and communication towards the employees when making these changes in the organization, to avoid good intentions transforming to the opposite. (Dobusch, 2014.)

Furthermore, in their research Dobusch et al. (2021) discuss the inclusion measures in organizations that overlook the historically important relations related to inequality when characteristics such as uniqueness are emphasized. They particularly criticize the "Western ideal" of a unique organizational member which, according to them, fails to promote greater inclusion or equal opportunities for historically disadvantaged groups within the organization, as power relations often underlie the implementation of inclusion measures (Dobusch et al., 2021, pp. 315). Dobusch et al. (2021) also note the importance of examining the researcher's own position compared to the research object when studying e.g., inclusion and diversity related matters, to avoid the researchers from being carried along by what is described as white people's yearning to make a difference by Ahmed (2006).

2.3 Equity

To gain a deeper understanding of DEI, this thesis will briefly delve into the literature and discussion surrounding equity and/or organizational equity, as the concepts are often interrelated and discussed together. Since DEI acts as the umbrella term for the whole phenomenon, it is relevant to introduce and discuss equity as well. However, the primary focus of the thesis will be on diversity and inclusion and the corresponding practices.

An interesting point in the discussion and literature regarding equity is the interchangeable use of the terms equality and equity, despite their slightly different meanings. In DEI literature, equality typically refers to the equal treatment of all individuals, irrespective of their background or other characteristics, whereas equity considers the unique needs of each individual and aims to provide fair treatment based on these differences (French, 2002). As we can see, the concepts can be ambiguous, and it often depends on the literature referred to in the research which of the concepts is at use. For the purpose of the thesis, the concept of equity will be used, as it is essential to consider individuals' needs and not assume that everyone has the same premises when examining D&I practices and their perception by employees.

Contrary to diversity, equity is concerned with emotions and perceptions rather than facts. Equity illustrates how employees perceive fairness in their outcomes compared to their diverse peers concerning their inputs, which include e.g., skills, time, and cognitive investments. If there is perceived fairness, employees are more likely to be motivated and satisfied with their job. (Chaudhry, 2023.) At the same time some researchers see equity more as an outcome that results from diversity, but only when diversity is being managed efficiently (see e.g., Kangas-Müller et al., 2023; Hennekam, 2022).

According to Romani et al. (2019), organizations consist of D&I related management practices that are clearly expressed and promote equity, but also more subtle actions and practices that result in and maintain inequities related to e.g., gender and race in the organizations. To have equity, organizations should view diversity and inclusion as key issues and include D&I practices and goals in their strategy (Hennekam, 2022).

2.4 Managing Diversity and Inclusion

It is not only the diverse teams that suffer from the challenges that diversity brings but also the departments in the organizations that are responsible for

initiating the D&I practices and the management team that is expected to lead the diverse teams. Management practices related to managing diversity and inclusion in organizations are often mentioned in the DEI literature, as without them it would be hard for the organizations to have any success with launching and implementing D&I practices. Managing diversity often begins with recognizing the need for change and then ends with a review of how the diversity management was implemented. (Mensi-Klarbach & Hanappi-Egger, 2019.)

Dass and Parker (1999) offer four different perspectives for managing diversity that include the resistance perspective, the anti-discrimination perspective, the access and legitimacy perspective and the learning perspective. The perspectives evolve from not seeing diversity as having any significant value to understanding the pros and cons of diversity and how to leverage it in the organization. The authors are expecting the organizations to develop from perspective to perspective. In addition, the external and internal pressures as well as how management prioritizes diversity related issues affect how the D&I practices are implemented and how the organization evolves around these aforementioned perspectives.

Romani et al. (2019) suggest a critical approach to diversity management in their research. They detected that the HR responsible for initiating diversity practices at the organization have to be very careful of not accidentally contributing to regenerating discrimination within the organization by not being aware of societal norms. This may lead to well-meant actions causing discriminatory outcomes, which is a phenomenon happening similarly with inclusion practices. Regardless, the organizations need the management and HR departments to be committed to the D&I practices, as the outcomes of these practices are then more likely to be successful. (Romani et al., 2019.)

Committed and effective management of diversity is also mentioned by Roberson (2006), according to whom effective management will directly affect

the organization's competitiveness. Committed and effective management of diversity may sound a bit lightweight and be hard to grasp but essentially it is closely connected to connecting diversity management to the organization's strategy, making it an issue that concerns the whole organization (Mason, 2020). How organizations manage diversity also varies, as some focus on recruitment of a diverse workforce or educating the current workforce whereas others have included diversity in their communication strategies and are having more employee participation in creating the diversity practices. These organizations are often putting more effort on fostering inclusion as well. (Roberson, 2006.)

Creating diversity is often in the centre of organizations' diversity practices, meaning that the organizations are aiming to generate a diverse workforce. But, even with the organization's best intentions and efforts, diversity may not necessarily result in equity and inclusion. (Chaudhry, 2023.) Thus, it is additionally necessary to look more into the themes of inclusion and equity in organizational contexts and the discussion around them to understand the overall phenomenon and its effects on organizations better.

Managing diversity is closely intertwined with implementing D&I practices within the organization, as these practices often serve as the primary means of diversity management. This can include initiatives such as increasing the recruitment of minority groups or women. (Roberson, 2006.) The management in an organization are commonly responsible for how the employees are directed, making the initiation of D&I practices jointly a concern of the management and also the HR department (Sparkman, 2019).

Implementing practices that address both diversity and inclusion can alleviate some of the challenges that can arise when relying solely on diversity management practices. These challenges include, for example, targeting historically disadvantaged groups with diversity management which can unintentionally turn into dissatisfaction from the side of the people who are not

immediately benefitting from the diversity initiatives. Additionally, although these diversity practices are meant to reduce discrimination in the workplace, they mostly affect the decision-making moments between key personnel rather than the daily encounters the employees may experience. But fostering an inclusive climate in organizations should be worth it as it is likely to lead to having less biases based on cultural identities, since there are no longer any specific identities that would lead to a more favourable outcome than another one would. Conflicts are also less likely to emerge and if there is a conflict, it is seen more as a possibility for interpersonal learning. (Nishii, 2013.)

Interestingly, although in inclusion literature and discussions inclusion is often connected to having positive outcomes for individual employees and organizations, there is little knowledge on the causes and grounds for why and how this occurs. The D&I practices have also received less attention in prior research. (Shore et al., 2011.) This calls for better understanding on the D&I practices and their effectiveness.

2.5 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Culture Industry

Typically, creative work is linked with non-traditional and project-based employment arrangements, which continually reproduce instilled inequalities if they are not intervened in. The usually intense creative process preceding a performance has implications for DEI, as the artistic product is often prioritized over other aspects. This can result in individuals involved in the processes being treated unfairly to achieve the artistically best end result. (Vincent et al., 2022; Hennekam & Bennett, 2017.) Thus, organizations operating in the culture industry are no different from other organizations with regards to the necessity of relevant and functional D&I practices. In fact, cultural organizations often are very diverse in terms of their employee background which is why a good understanding of D&I practices that are found functional by the employees is significant.

Previous research on the culture industry has focused more on gender inequalities (see e.g., Vincent et al., 2022; Hennekam & Bennett, 2017, MacArthur, 2015). Although women's representation in creative roles has increased, Vincent et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of having women in the role of stage directors, as their presence often results in increased representation of women in other key creative positions. This is because stage directors typically are responsible for choosing the rest of the key creative team. Hennekam and Bennett (2017) argue that, among other things, the uncertain nature of the culture industry and the work itself causes inequalities. According to MacArthur (2015), there is a loss of stories and ideas from underrepresented groups of women and minorities that affects the culture industry which leads to cultures and societies to lose their richness and diversity.

While inequalities matter and the root causes for that should be studied carefully, the culture industry is suffering from lack of research related to DEI issues more broadly (for exceptions, see e.g., Eikhof, 2020, 2017; Newsinger & Eikhof, 2020; Eikhof & Warhurst, 2013) and whether the implemented D&I practices are working or not. There is an urgent need for research to gain better understanding of how to increase inclusivity from the employees' perspective. In addition, there's a lack of understanding of the concepts of DEI and, more specifically, a lack of a shared understanding of the meanings in the culture industry. (Cuyler, 2017a.) As noted, the lack of understanding the concepts is not only restricted to the culture industry but is common in general, regardless of industry, due to the novelty of the concepts in the literature.

Organizations operating in the culture industry are somewhat different from other organizations operating in some "more regular" industries. Some distinctions typical of cultural organization include e.g. the number of short-term employments in the cultural organizations and the differences in the working hours between the administrative employees and the employees who are doing the artistic work within the same organization. According to

Hennekam (2022), it is common in the culture industry to have people working with short-term contracts or project-based which leads to many self-employed people and often a changing work environment. Thus, having an organization with clear D&I practices should enhance the sense of togetherness and lead to a work environment that is diverse and inclusive. It is also easier for new employees to adapt to the organization if the message regarding D&I is explicit. Hennekam (2022) also emphasizes the need for more research regarding understanding effective strategies related to D&I practices and their functionality in the culture industry. Other specificities for cultural organizations include the strong competitive atmosphere prevalent in the industry and the relevance of informal networks. Furthermore, many people in the industry do it for their love of the “sport”, meaning that there is a lot of personal, inner passion that directs the people and turns a job more into a way of life than just a job. (Hennekam & Bennett, 2017.)

Although there are apparent power dimensions in every industry, the ones in the culture industry often relate to the artistic powers of different individuals. Power structures inherent in the culture industry often influence its dynamics, as there is constant balancing between the artistic vision, a sense of superiority it may give, and the employees’ well-being in the work community. Power in cultural organizations is often distributed unequally to few individuals who hold most of the decision-making power. Especially in the past these individuals have often been men which, again, may have led to an increase in sexual harassment and unequal and unfair power distribution. Thus, the power structures connect to the DEI issues in cultural organizations, since particular attention should be given to ensuring that the artistic visions do not overpower how diversity and inclusion are implemented, for example. (Hennekam & Bennett, 2017.) Managers in the culture industry also often struggle with having to deal with a lot of innovation that causes both possibilities and riskiness. They need to bring together artistic and economic considerations, striving to embrace both novelty and tradition concurrently. They aim to introduce innovations that maintain a certain familiarity with

past offerings while occasionally venturing beyond established boundaries. Additionally, it is often difficult to try and predict the audiences' reactions which adds on external pressures. (Sgourev, 2013.)

Previously there have been different kinds of suggestions on how to incorporate DEI matters better into the cultural organizations. Some researchers argue that the large employers and organizations in the culture industry are responsible for acting as pioneers for smaller players. Feder and McGill (2021) have researched DEI and racial injustice in the field of classical music. In their study they emphasize the responsibility of the large employers in the field who should act as an example for everyone else by how they incorporate the themes of diversity and inclusion in their working principles. In addition, these matters should not be left out of scope of research due to the reality of the situation maybe being even somewhat shameful. On the contrary, it is not reasonable to try and make something vanish by simply pretending that there are not any issues. (Feder & McGill, 2021.)

To enable having more diversity and inclusion in the culture industry Cuyler (2013) emphasizes the significance of including the themes of DEI already into the education of the future decision-makers and workforce of the culture industry. Moreover, examining the entrance barriers to these schools and ensuring diversity among the students should be considered. Similarly, Heidelberg (2017) argues that there is currently a lack of representation of the local communities in cultural organizations which could be enhanced by paying more attention to diversity and inclusion. Currently these organizations often do not reflect their local population or the audiences they hope to have as versatilely as they maybe should to reach broader audiences.

Lack of available research material specifically on the current situation regarding diversity and inclusion matters in Finland indicates that in Finnish cultural organizations this topic has not yet been much in the focus of research thus far. When looking for previous research on the D&I practices or

initiatives in organizations operating in the culture industry, most search results are listings from the company websites of the initiatives and practices the organizations have at use but no actual research on examining the practices and their functionality. Therefore, more knowledge about D&I practices in the cultural organizations in Finland is needed. In 2022, a study on the state of equality in the Finnish music industry was conducted by the Finnish Musician's Union and Inklusiiv (a global DEI consultancy). The study found that experiencing inappropriate behaviour in the Finnish music industry is common. (muusikkojenliitto.fi.) This is in line with Hennekam and Bennett (2017), who argue that also internationally especially women have viewed sexual harassment as a part of their professional environment and a factor in their career progression.

Heidelberg (2017) broadens the perspective also on the audience's side and delves into the inclusivity of various art forms. Heidelberg (2017) poses the question of whether art forms, such as opera, can be deemed inclusive, given their historical association with a wealthier audience. While the focus of the thesis is primarily on the workforce working behind the scenes in the culture industry, it is important to acknowledge that such biases may also influence the diversity and inclusion perceived within the workforce. Another significant theme worth discussing is representation, encompassing diversity on the stage and challenges such as cultural appropriation. Addressing how these challenges are navigated, ensuring diversity on stage, and adapting artistic works to reflect the world we live in today are topics for another study, but important to acknowledge in discussions surrounding diversity and inclusion in the culture industry.

2.6 D&I Practices

The D&I practices refer to the courses of action that are implemented in organizations to support and make the most out of their diverse workforce, often to achieve business advantages but also to promote a safe and accepting

atmosphere in the workplace. The D&I practices in organizations require effort and thinking from the side of the initiators since diversity is somewhat different around the world and every organization is struggling with differing challenges. Deciding which D&I related practices are at use in an organization is suggested to be based on local needs to carry out actions based on local relevance. This concerns especially global organizations. (Derven, 2014.)

Accordingly, Farndale et al. (2015) argue that some of the most critical challenges for organizations are to establish the meaning of diversity and inclusion within a specific national framework. This is in line with da Fonseca and Kogut (2023), according to whom each country possesses distinctive demographic compositions regarding minority populations and cultural diversity patterns. Thus, organizations should consider their local needs and maybe experiment if the practices suit their organization's needs and be careful when benchmarking another organization's D&I practices.

How employees perceive the D&I practices is affected by many things, including employee's personalities, values, and social roles. In addition, past experiences with D&I practices in different organizations may influence how the employees perceive the D&I practices in their current organization. This means that the perceived functionality and effectiveness of the D&I practices often depends on if the employee considers it relevant for them, possibly resulting in significant variation in how employees react to D&I practices. Additionally, previous studies indicate that individuals tend to experience increased satisfaction and commitment when their values and personality align with the characteristics of their organizations. This makes it reasonable for organizations to try and better understand how specifically their employees perceive their D&I practices and the overall discussions around these themes. The attitudes and perceptions of employees towards D&I practices are frequently shaped by the leaders of their work groups, who act as the primary implementers of such practices. Moreover, fellow employees within the work group play a significant role in influencing these perceptions, as they

collectively construct shared meanings through social interactions and shared experiences. (Nishii & Wright, 2008.)

Sparkman (2019) argues that superiors and the initiators of D&I practices in organizations may be influenced by unquestioned assumptions and unconscious bias related to visible diversity. This can lead to, for example, career development and training being affected by unconscious bias. Thus, the initiators of D&I practices, usually the management and/or the HR department of the organization, should make diversity and inclusion an ongoing priority that responds to the concerns of those within the organization. Exploring the employees' backgrounds and experiences is also encouraged to enhance tailoring the D&I practices to better meet their needs. (Sparkman, 2019.)

As said, organizations should consider the diversity inherent in their specific context, whether characteristic of their industry, country, or internal structure. Additionally, they should examine how the principles of diversity and inclusion are currently or should be integrated into their organizational culture. There exists a range of strategies and approaches for embedding diversity and inclusion into everyday practices, thus ensuring these issues remain at the forefront. When employees perceive these topics as integral to the organization's values and actively discussed, they tend to be more motivated in their roles (Chaudhry, 2023).

2.6.1 Implementation of D&I practices

Mensi-Klarbach and Hanappi-Egger (2019) suggest the following (see *Figure 2*) steps for the implementation process of D&I practices. The implementation process starts from identifying the need for change which can depend on internal and external pressures for diversity and inclusion. Next, the present state of the organization is clarified through an organizational analysis and by gathering information, based on which future goals that align with the organizational vision are set. Then implementation is planned and prepared for

by figuring out the needed resources, assessing the need for diversity management, motivating the employees for change, and shaping the strategies. Next, the concrete D&I measures are implemented, and lastly the whole process is continually reviewed and changed when needed. The process for implementation suggested by Mensi-Klarbach and Hanappi-Egger (2019) is quite straightforward and adaptable to the needs of differing organizations and industries, such as the culture industry.

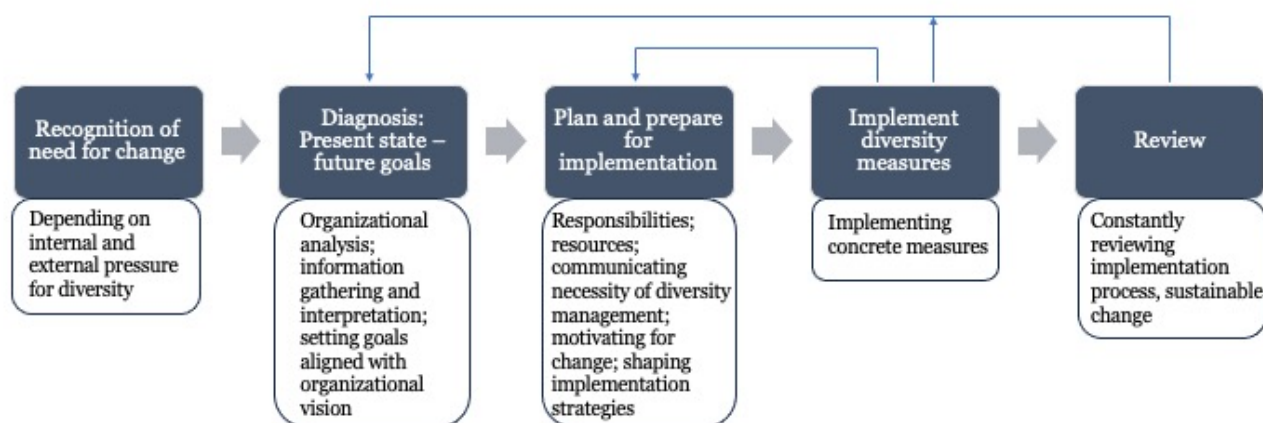


Figure 2. *The implementation process of D&I practices (adapted from Mensi-Klarbach & Hanappi-Egger, 2019)*

Sometimes there are D&I practices implemented in an organization but without integration to the organization’s strategy and regular follow-ups the situation might not improve as planned. To affect the origins of the D&I issues a societal change would be needed as well, for everyone to have equal opportunities to get an education in the cultural field regardless of their background. (Feder & McGill, 2021.) This objective may be more attainable in certain countries compared to others. For instance, in Finland, education is

universally accessible, potentially reducing barriers to entry for individuals. However, pursuing music as a hobby, often the initial path for many musically talented individuals, can cause significant expenses, particularly when approached with career aspirations in mind.

There are different kinds of D&I practices that organizations can implement. An example of a D&I practice is having employee resource groups (ERGs) in the organization. These networks were originally created to foster an inclusive environment for minority or underrepresented groups, including e.g., employees with disabilities, women, and people of colour. Research has further shown that such groups can contribute positively to employee engagement and retention. If wanted, ERGs can be utilized more broadly by leveraging them for customer insights or employee development. ERGs do not necessarily suit every organization which is why one suggestion instead is to purposefully comprise groups of employees who come together to serve as a resource regarding diversity and inclusion related matters. To be effective, diversity and inclusion matters should also be embedded in the on-boarding processes of organizations and educating the employees should be continuous to ensure that everyone in the organization is aware of the matters. (Derven, 2014.)

Some researchers emphasize the measurability of the D&I practices to ensure their long-term viability. Measuring D&I to make sure that it stays sustainable over the years requires trackable metrics. These metrics could include, for example, regular feedback from ERGs, specific and quantifiable targets such as increasing the representation of women in leadership roles or hiring individuals with disabilities or examining turnover rates from a D&I perspective. Providing data to organizational management facilitates deeper engagement with D&I practices. (Derven, 2014.) Chaudhry (2023) also suggests measuring diversity and inclusion by, for example, gathering objective and quantitative data from employee records regarding the diversity of the workforce (e.g., gender, age, nationality) and studying the belongingness based on basic

indicators of inclusion (e.g., respect and participation in decision-making). Furthermore, based on the measurements Chaudhry (2023) gives recommendations for areas where D&I practices could be implemented to facilitate diversity and inclusion, such as recruitment, training, and communication.

2.6.2 D&I Practices in Cultural Organizations

According to Flagg (2020), dedicated funding aimed at enhancing diversity and inclusion within the culture industry can foster increased commitment and focus from cultural organizations on these issues. Such funds can also support the development of strategies incorporating D&I practices. In addition to funding, Flagg (2020) mentions the importance of prioritizing the perspectives of those affected by discrimination, understanding the historical context of systemic injustices, and increasing awareness of diversity and inclusion. Flagg (2020) also highlights the need for proactive steps to confront racism or other diversity issues, advocating for change, and being an ally to marginalized groups. Embracing discomfort and demonstrating commitment to inclusion, along with establishing mechanisms for personal accountability and continuous education, are essential for fostering a more inclusive society and work community.

MacArthur (2015) implies that implementing effective D&I practices within an organization requires a strategic approach. This may include, for example, conducting thorough internal audits of administrative practices to identify any areas of weakness or bias that may hinder inclusivity. Additionally, creating flexible work environments that can adapt to accommodate the diverse needs of employees, promoting inclusivity and accommodating different lifestyles and preferences. Other D&I practices include encouraging reporting of incidents, establishing clear procedures for resolution, proactively implementing supportive policies of D&I practices, and providing ongoing education within the organization. These steps collectively foster an inclusive organizational culture that values diversity and promotes equity for all

employees. Moreover, specifically for cultural organizations that often work project-based it is important to draw attention to these D&I practices at the beginning of each production and make sure they are accessible to all personnel, particularly to new employees or visiting freelancers. (MacArthur, 2015.)

The D&I practices do not have to be complicated, and in some cases, simplicity is the key to success. In line with this, Ely and Thomas (2020) advocate for building trust and leveraging cultural differences as valuable learning resources, whereas Shore et al. (2011) emphasize facilitating communication and avoiding stereotyping. Including diversity statements in different documents and job advertisements to emphasize the organization's values for diversity and inclusion is also considered as a valuable D&I practice (Shaw, 2017). These D&I practices are all relevant specifically in a cultural context and in a cultural organization to which this study is also focusing on.

2.7 Concluding the Literature Review

To conclude, the descriptions of diversity focus mainly on the heterogeneity of the employees, covering both visible and invisible attributes while the descriptions of inclusion centre around the involvement of the employees and the ways of integrating diversity into the systems and procedures of the organizations. Although sometimes used interchangeably, we can see that there are clear distinctions between the concepts. By emphasizing the distinctions between diversity and inclusion within organizational contexts, researchers and practitioners can enhance their ability to develop, comprehend, and facilitate the necessary changes to foster equality for historically disadvantaged groups and establish workplaces where all employees can fully utilize their diverse skill sets and talents. (Roberson, 2006.)

Similarly, inclusion also has multiple definitions and can be interpreted both from the employees' as well as from the organizations' perspective. It

typically involves evaluating how individuals perceive their level of involvement in work groups, their access to information and resources, and participation in decision-making. (Otten & Jansen, 2014.)

In the thesis the concepts are studied in the cultural organization based on these definitions. The theoretical framework offers important theoretical background in order to be able to understand the experiences of the employees in the cultural organization regarding diversity and inclusion and the concrete actions related to them. Furthermore, the theoretical framework includes several important aspects in terms of the study, which are DEI, with additional focus on the relationship between inclusion and exclusion, managing D&I, DEI in the culture industry, D&I practices and their implementation, and D&I practices typical in cultural organization. The section has also discussed and covered the challenges of multifaceted concepts that are sometimes hard to understand, as they have no single definitions.

Next, Chapter 4 will present the findings from the interviews regarding how the employees of the particular Finnish cultural organization perceive the D&I practices and their functionality in their organization, and if they have found the D&I practices affecting the work community. Additionally, the chapter will discuss how the employees view diversity and inclusion and how their answers illustrate the versatility of the concepts, also discussed in the past literature.

3 Research Design and Methodology

In this chapter the research design and methodology of the study are introduced. First, the research design is described and presented with the objectives of the study. Second, the specifics of an interview study and how the interviews were conducted will be discussed. The chapter will also describe the method used in the data analysis. Finally, the limitations and ethical concerns of the study and the research process are discussed.

3.1 Research Design

This study aims to examine the D&I practices in the Finnish cultural organization and to study the employees' perceptions about the D&I practices. More specifically, the study examines how the existing D&I practices at the Finnish cultural organization are perceived by the employees, and how they are found to be working and affecting the work community, especially from the employees' perspective. To understand the employees' lived experiences, interpretations, and perceptions of diversity and inclusion and the D&I practices, a qualitative research design was chosen.

The research questions of the study were:

RQ1: What kinds of D&I practices does the cultural organization currently have?

RQ2: How do the employees experience the D&I practices in the cultural organization?

RQ3: How do the employees perceive that the D&I practices affect the work community?

These questions were chosen to facilitate the understanding of the themes of diversity and inclusion in a cultural organizational setting from the

employees' perspective. The study also aims to offer an overview of the current state of the D&I practices and how these themes are understood and managed in the cultural organization, to give ground for possible further studies in the future.

The research process began by identifying qualitative research design as the most suited option. To study and comprehend a subject that has received limited prior attention, a qualitative research design has been identified to be the most fitting option, making it the ideal fit for this study as well. As the objective of the thesis is to gain better understanding of how the D&I practices actually are initiated in the organization and how they are perceived by the employees, a qualitative study was found to fit these requirements best. It is typical of a qualitative study to aim at gathering data to gain a holistic understanding of the issue and to gain better understanding of something that a quantitative study maybe would not be able to explain. (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008.) As noted, there is a lack of research concerning how employees perceive D&I practices (see e.g., Nishii & Wright, 2008) and more specifically, concerning effective strategies regarding D&I practices and their functionality in the culture industry (Hennekam, 2022). Additionally, this topic has not yet received much attention by researchers in Finland. Thus, this study demonstrates characteristics of an abductive research as the aim is to offer new theoretical and practical implications that start from the empirical materials and develop into theoretical propositions but refer and find support in existing theory. As is typical of abductive research, during different phases of the research I have switched between induction and deduction. (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008.) Research on organizational diversity has evolved from two distinct motivations: addressing the practical necessities of diversity management and critiquing managerial practices in this regard. With demographic shifts in society and the entry of various demographic groups into the workforce, organizations were required to think about enhancing organizational diversity and managing it effectively to prevent discrimination while harnessing it as a valuable asset. Consequently,

organizations began to strive for fostering inclusivity, shifting the attention towards aspects of inclusion as well. (Nørholm Just et al., 2021.) This shift towards inclusion seems to also represent characteristics typical for abductive research, as the theoretical background of diversity in organizations has been widened to cover the aspect of inclusion as well, based on experience and knowledge that has been gathered in action in different organizations while referring to existing theory.

The research context of this study will not be exposed in a more detailed manner than stating that all the interviewees are employees at a relatively large cultural organization in Finland. This is due to securing the anonymity of the interviewees and the organization. As the cultural field in Finland is fairly small, there is a high risk of recognition if the research context was to be exposed in more detail. The theoretical background of the study provides an overview of the operations and possible challenges of similar organizations that can be applicable in the particular Finnish cultural organization as well. According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008), the top priority in research should be ensuring the anonymity of individuals participating and this should be fully respected throughout the research process. They continue that research should not cause any disadvantages for the participants and that this should be considered carefully by the researcher when handling the research material and publishing results. The participants should also be aware of their rights related to the research and how the research material is being handled and stored. (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008.) In this thesis, before each interview a privacy notice containing information about, for example, processing the personal data of the interviewees, storing, and deleting the data after the thesis has been accepted, as well as the rights of the research participant according to the GDPR was sent to the interviewees who signed the privacy notice before the interview began. At the start of each interview, I also checked once more with the interviewee that they had read and understood the privacy notice and accepted that I would record the interview and utilize the material from the interview in the study.

3.1.1 Interview Study and Semi-Structured Interviews

This thesis is an interview study. This means that the data is collected by conducting interviews to understand the experiences of the employees better and the data is then analyzed with a thematic analysis. A thematic analysis is typical of qualitative research and primarily it entails concentrating on identifying, organizing, and interpreting themes within textual data (King & Brooks, 2018).

Interviews were chosen as the appropriate data collection method as the aim of the study is to get close to the employees' lived experiences, their opinions, and interpretations of this phenomena. In addition, the possible sensitivity of the topic was considered when choosing interviews as the suitable data collection method. The topics of diversity and inclusion are at times found sensitive by some individuals, and thus interviewing was chosen to possibly allow a more relaxed and confidential situation between the researcher and the interviewees to discuss such matters. Nørholm Just et al. (2021) argue that specifically in diversity research, regardless of the method used, researchers must recognize that their perspectives are influenced by their positions in relation to their research topics. Moreover, they should contemplate how their methodological decisions shape the process of knowledge creation, maintenance, and transformation, thus influencing the resulting situated knowledge. Therefore, conducting diversity research requires thoughtful reflection on the researcher's own positionality. Frequently, researchers speak from a standpoint of privilege, representing the studied minority group. Despite efforts to design research that is well-intentioned, inclusive, and possibly participatory, the inherent situatedness of knowledge production poses challenges. (Nørholm Just et al., 2021.) According to Brinkmann (2014), semi-structured interviews represent one of the most prevalent interview formats in the human sciences. When compared to structured interviews, semi-structured interviews offer greater flexibility in exploring various angles deemed significant by the interviewee, thereby maximizing the

potential for knowledge generation through dialogue. Additionally, the interviewer is more likely to be perceived as an active participant in knowledge production, rather than simply as adhering to a predetermined interview guide. In contrast to unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews provide the interviewer with more control over steering the conversation towards topics deemed relevant to the research project. (Brinkmann, 2014.)

Interviews as a method for data collection are not unproblematic and have also received some criticism (see e.g., Schaefer & Alvesson, 2020; Alvesson, 2003). Using interviews as the primary method for accessing subjects' knowledge about their experiences and social practices overlooks the intricacies of the interview setting, which is socially and linguistically complex. It is essential not to oversimplify or idealize interviews by assuming that interviewees are inherently truthful and objective contributors to the scientific inquiry, providing data that unveils their inner experiences or organizational facts. (Alvesson, 2003.) Furthermore, interviewing has received criticism towards its possible lack of source critique, meaning, for example, carefully evaluating, questioning, and rejecting the potential interviewees. While different interviewing approaches have distinct philosophies and techniques, they all aim to disclose informative and genuine statements from interviewees. However, scholars should be cautious about granting interview statements unquestionable validity. While interviews may reveal authentic experiences and meanings, they are not solely reflective of interviewees' subjective views. Various factors, such as adaptations to the interview setting and alignment with the researcher's interests, can influence interview dialogue. Therefore, interview data should be interpreted with careful consideration of these complexities. (Schaefer & Alvesson, 2020.) While interviewing for this thesis, most of the participants acknowledged their ability to speak only from their own perspective, rather than representing others, and voiced this during the interview. This acknowledgment is particularly crucial when discussing topics like diversity and inclusion, which rely heavily on personal experiences. As a researcher, I have recognized the possibility that an interviewee

may express that everything is functioning well from their own perspective, even though this viewpoint might not align with the experiences or perspective of someone representing a minority or historically discriminated group. In my study the voluntary interviewees could be deemed as privileged, since for the most part they represented a Finnish majority group and had grown up in Finland.

3.1.2 Data Collection

As this thesis is an interview study, the main source for all data were the semi-structured interviews held in November and December 2023. I started the process of gathering data by sending an invitation to participate in the study and a brief description of the study to the HR manager of the Finnish cultural organization and asked them to share the invitation to their employees. This meant that the participants of the interviews were selected randomly, based on their willingness and voluntariness. Overall, seven employees from the Finnish cultural organization signed up for the interview. One interviewee suggested some of their colleagues for me to contact directly, which I did, but it was still up for them to sign up for the interview if they were interested. Perhaps employing, for example, a survey to collect data instead of interviewing could have reached more participants. However, I opted for interviews as the aim was to gain a deeper understanding of the subject than what a survey alone might have provided. Also, a survey would not have been suitable for addressing this potentially sensitive topic, as mentioned earlier. As the interviews were based on voluntariness and willingness, I was not able to affect the diversity of the interviewees, despite sending invitations to participate in the study along with the brief description in both Finnish and English. Thus, the data, findings and conclusions based on the interviews only represent the views of a limited section of the employees of the cultural organization and the cultural field overall. All of the interviews were held in Finnish as all of the people that were interviewed were Finnish-speaking. For the purpose of the study, I had hoped to interview someone who was, for example, non-

Finnish-speaking, but unfortunately this did not come true. One of the interviewees told me in the interview that English was their second language at home, but the interview was still held in Finnish. Since the study aims to offer an overview of the current state of the D&I practices and how these themes are understood and managed in the Finnish cultural organization, I wanted to make sure that all participants were randomly chosen and not handpicked by me. This lack of diversity within the interviewees leaves room for future research, for example, to focus specifically on some minorities that are represented in a cultural organization. But it is worth noting that each of the seven interviewees represented different departments and held different roles within the organization. Furthermore, there was diversity in terms of their ages and tenure within the company. This diversity among the interviewees led to a presentation of varied interpretations and viewpoints on diversity, inclusion, and the corresponding organizational practices.

All of the seven interviews were conducted online in Microsoft Teams to facilitate scheduling for both the interviewees and me, and to ease the participation, i.e., to maximize the number of participants which I knew could be a challenge. I was positively surprised by how quickly the first interviewees volunteered to discuss with me, as I had worried that it could be difficult to get people to participate voluntarily. The length of each interview depended on the interviewee, and as the interviews were semi-structured, there was variability in how long each interview took. On average the interviews lasted from 40 minutes to little bit over an hour. Additionally, some of the interviewees knew more about the topic than others which also affected the length of the interview. Moreover, conducting interviews is quite a personal method, and the researcher will get very different answers depending on who they interview, gaining insight into the individual's thoughts and feelings regarding a particular phenomenon. It is likely that most of the people who volunteered for an interview were people who had an interest in the diversity and inclusion related matters. Thus, their perception of things might be affected by how much they personally have familiarized themselves with the topic

previously and the degree to which they value the matters. I do not believe this to be an issue since my study aims to provide an overview of the current situation, leaving room for possible future studies to focus on the views and experiences of a more specific group of people. It was also important to me to create an atmosphere of trust between me and the interviewees during the interviews. Therefore, I began all the interviews by introducing myself and the motivation to study this topic specifically. Prior to conducting the interviews, I considered how the interviewees might perceive me as a student and how this could influence our interactions. However, I did not encounter any situations where I felt belittled or questioned as a researcher by the older and more experienced employees in the field.

All interviews were recorded and automatically transcribed in Microsoft Teams. This meant that real-time, during the interviews, the app transcribed the whole conversation between me and the interviewee and formulated it into a ready document after the interview ended. Thus, a lot of work and time was saved, as after each interview I already had the first version of the transcribed interview ready. To ensure that the materials from the interviews would definitely be recorded, in addition to the transcription on Microsoft Teams, a voice recording on a mobile phone was taken. Luckily, all went smoothly in terms of internet connection, and I did not face any technical challenges during the interviews. In addition to the transcription that was formulated by Microsoft Teams, I took some notes about the interviewees, mainly regarding any longer pauses when the interviewee had to think about their answer more or some things that the interviewee mentioned during the interview that at that point felt important to me.

3.2 Data Analysis

There is no specific or common way, or guidelines for analysing qualitative data that one should follow (Trent & Cho, 2014) and as a researcher I had to decide what would suit this study best. Thematic analysis, commonly

employed in interview studies as mentioned, seemed to be the most logical approach for me as well, as some of the themes formed quite naturally already when planning the interview guide. This meant that the process of data analysis began already before the actual analysis phase. While planning the interview guide, I recognized that my own assumptions regarding the topics of diversity and inclusion could affect the initial division to the themes. The literature review also influenced the formulation of the interview guide. The interview guide was divided into five categories or themes and each of them contained a different number of questions. These categories were *the introduction of the interviewee*, *the concepts of D&I*, *D&I practices*, *work community*, and *future/development*. As the interviews were semi-structured, some additional questions were added depending on the interview and what kinds of answers the interviewee gave. The categorization was only used to help with the structure of the interviews and with the initial steps in the data analysis process. Accordingly with Trent and Cho (2014), analysis is understood as summarizing and organizing the data, whereas interpretation is understood as the sense-making process, which will be covered in the findings and discussion sections of the thesis.

The data analysis began by going through each interview's automatically transcribed version and correcting possible incorrections in text as Microsoft Teams did not recognize all the words used during the interviews. The transcription also included repetitions and filler words used by the interviewees. As these are not significant in the analysis of this research, these repetitions and filler words were removed to ease the analysis and understanding of the actual contents. Consequently, these filler words and repetitions are not in the excerpts of the findings chapter to improve the clarity of the texts for the reader. Furthermore, as the interviews were held in Finnish, I have translated the excerpts from the interviews into English for the thesis. Thus, the quotes are not exactly as heard in the interviews, but I have strived for translating them as accurately as possible. During the first revision of the automatically created transcription I also gave pseudonyms to all of the interviewees to

ensure their anonymity. The pseudonyms were based on their interview-number, e.g., “*Interviewee 1*”.

The analysis process mainly followed Braun and Clarke’s (2006) style of thematic analysis. After polishing the interview material by removing filler words and repetitions, the next step of the data analysis was to print out all the transcribed material from the interviews on paper. This way I had all the data in front of me and could easily build connections between different interviews. I then familiarized myself with the data by reading through each interview again. After that I started to code the material with different colours, associating the colours with the initial themes I had created in the interview guide, and started to organize the coded parts into groups. After coding, I highlighted parts from each interview onto separate papers under different themes, ensuring I had the material from different interviews concerning similar themes in one place. Lastly, I went through the material now divided under each theme once more and highlighted shorter parts, e.g., words or short phrases, that seemed to come up multiple times in different interviews. Following these steps in the analysis process guided me to ensure I was answering all my research questions and to also link the findings with past literature which is typical of abductive studies (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). The past literature is also associated with the findings presented later in Chapter 4.

3.3 Limitations of the Study and Ethical Considerations

There are different kinds of novel frameworks for assessing the quality of qualitative research that researchers have formulated (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). The one that I will follow in my thesis is Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) criteria for trustworthiness. Their criteria include four aspects that are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Next, I will discuss each aspect in relation to my thesis. The section will be finished with the ethical considerations of the study.

Credibility means confidence in the “truth” of the findings in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility can be demonstrated by e.g., prolonged engagement (familiarizing oneself with the research context, building trust between the researcher and the researched individuals, discerning, and reducing bias), triangulation (using varying methods, theoretical perspectives, and sources to foster more profound understanding), and persistent observation (pinpointing the key characteristics from inessential ones, and examining them in depth). In my thesis, I sought especially to build trust between me and the individuals I interviewed to ensure that they felt comfortable to talk about topics that could feel sensitive. As I aimed to understand the interviewees’ personal experiences it was significant to acknowledge that some individuals could find the topic more sensitive or personal than others. Regarding triangulation in Lincoln and Guba’s criteria, some could argue that my number of interviews is too small to gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic. I recognize this challenge and am aware of the fact that I did not manage to interview individuals representing some other nationalities than Finnish which can affect the results of the study. Still, I believe that the sample in my study is diverse enough to enable a basic understanding of the current state of the researched topic. I have not used varying methods in the study as it would be too challenging in a thesis, but I do have multiple sources and utilize multiple theoretical perspectives to understand the data from various perspectives. The literature review also presents viewpoints from scholars that may not agree with the majority of past research and examines the theory in a critical manner. I also believe that other researchers could concur with my arguments based on my materials, which is what Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) emphasize as well.

Transferability refers to the capability of showing the connection of the new research to past research and literature (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008) and the applicability to different research contexts, and not so much on replication (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As the topic of D&I practices in cultural organizations, and more specifically in Finnish cultural organizations, has not yet

received much attention in previous research, this was somewhat challenging for me in my study. However, I have comprised an extensive literature review to provide an understanding of diversity, inclusion, cultural organizations, and D&I practices in general, and refer to this literature to my findings in Chapter 4 to ensure a clear connection between the findings and the literature. An additional way of ensuring transferability is thick description which means that the researcher provides adequate details of the phenomenon for the reader to fully understand the situation. By providing a comprehensive description of a phenomenon, one can assess the degree to which the conclusions drawn can be applied to different times, settings, situations, and individuals. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985.) I begin my thesis with the literature about the key concepts – diversity, inclusion, and equity – to ensure that the reader is able to understand the topic before later presenting the findings of my study. I find it important that the reader has an adequate understanding of the discussed topics since, as explained, the concepts are multifaceted and sometimes hard to understand. In Chapter 4, in addition to discussing the findings with references to past literature, excerpts and quotes from the interviews will be provided for the reader to offer examples of the analysed materials and possibilities for insights based on direct quotations from the interviews.

Dependability, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) refers to demonstrating that the findings of the study are coherent and replicable, i.e., to the consistent, logical, and traceable documentation of research. In addition, Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) add that it is the researcher's responsibility to provide the reader this information and that these efforts collectively enhance the trustworthiness of the research. In my thesis, I have aimed to provide a transparent and detailed description of the research process and its different phases and especially the data collection and analysis to ensure dependability. Additionally, the literature review entails past research that also takes a more critical stance towards the topics, to present different point of

views concerning the matter and offer a broader understanding for the reader.

Confirmability emphasizes that data and interpretations of a study are grounded in reality rather than mere speculation. Confirmability involves aligning findings and interpretations with the data in a manner that is readily comprehensible to others. (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008.) Similarly, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that the study's findings should reflect the influence of respondents, as well as the researcher's objectivity and impartiality rather than bias or motivation. Reflexivity is one way of expressing confirmability in a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and is in a key role in a qualitative study. It means that the researcher should continuously question their own stand in comparison to their empirical material to improve the reliability of their work (Gabriel, 2018). Regarding reflexivity in qualitative research, Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) also emphasize that it is important for the researcher to reflect on their ways of generating knowledge and how that knowledge can be associated with other knowledge the researcher may previously have. In my thesis I have aimed to pursue reflexivity by describing the motivations for the study and by recognizing my own assumptions and knowledge of the topic before beginning the research process. I also acknowledge that my personal motivations and enthusiasm towards the topic of diversity and inclusion and the cultural field have affected the selection of this specific topic but not the results of the study.

Studying fairly sensitive topics such as diversity and inclusion bring important ethical considerations that had to be taken into account already when beginning the research process. Accordingly with Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008), the participation to my study was fully based on voluntariness and the purpose of the study was clearly outlined to the participants already when sending the invitations to interviews and again in the beginning of the actual interview.

Before the interviews, the interviewees read the privacy notice concerning my study and signed it. This was confirmed again before beginning the interview. At the start of the interview, I asked for a permission to record the interview and explained how the collected data would be handled during the analysis process and destroyed after finishing the thesis. During the interview process I had to consider my position as a researcher against the researched topic and the interviewees. In addition, I had to ensure that there was an atmosphere of trust between me and the interviewees as the topics could entail sensitive information and sensitive, even emotional, experiences. At the end of each interview, I asked if the interviewee had anything else they would like to add regarding the discussed topics and if they felt that the interview had been a comfortable and nice situation.

The possible sensitivity of the topic was also considered when planning the interview guide. I made it clear to the interviewees that all of the data would be anonymised to ensure that no harm would be caused to the participants, especially after publishing the finished thesis. Due to this, I have ensured that I have anonymised also the organization from where the participants are. Additionally, I promised to send the finished thesis to the interviewees so that they could also see the end result. These ethical concerns are significant throughout the whole thesis as I want to do justice to the interviewees' lived experiences. Thus, the ethical considerations of my thesis are associated especially to my responsibilities towards the participants of my research. I have also followed the ethical research principles issued by the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK) throughout my research, and referred and credited other researchers' work correctly to avoid silencing or dismissing the past research of others.

4 Findings

This chapter of the thesis presents the empirical findings of this interview study. The chapter is divided into four subchapters and is structured as follows: First, I will discuss how the employees perceive diversity and inclusion overall, as well as in their workplace, to illustrate the complexity of the themes and to give an introduction about the subject of the interviews. In the subsequent subchapters I will discuss the D&I practices at the Finnish cultural organization and their functionality from the perspectives of the interviewed employees. Lastly, I will share the employees' experiences on whether the D&I practices are perceived to affect the work community or not.

4.1 Perceiving Diversity and Inclusion

I began each of the seven interviews by asking the interviewees to tell me how they perceived diversity and, after that, how they perceived inclusion. By asking this, I aspired to gain insight on if the interviewees found it easy or challenging to describe each concept and how they perceive it, as it was discussed in the literature review that in the past there have been difficulties with formulating a definition for both diversity and inclusion. While asking this I did not specify if the interviewees should associate their impressions about the concepts to their workplace, but most interviewees did connect their answer to the specific context of the cultural organization. Straight away it became clear that all of the interviewees felt quite uncertain about their answers, even though most of them had familiarized themselves with the topics before, some even quite extensively, either due to their work or due to personal interests towards the matters. Interviewee 7 said:

"But this also kind of describes the challenges of those terms, I think. I believe I'm quite interested in the topic and knowledgeable about it, but when you are asked about it, you notice this uncertainty, like, what should I

answer to make it precise enough. Even though, in a way, it's about something rather simple, I'd say, ultimately." – Interviewee 7

Many of the interviewees spoke about diversity and inclusion as if they were interchangeable or mentioned characteristics of diversity when talking about inclusion and vice versa. For example, Interviewee 7 described actions maybe associated more with inclusion when asked how they perceive diversity:

"Perhaps for me, it's somehow related to how we encounter people, how we interact with them, and in a way, how we can create a feeling for everyone that they are accepted or can be part of communities." – Interviewee 7

This emphasized the extent, richness and ambiguity of both diversity and inclusion and how they are often found functioning together. Overall, it is obvious that there have been discussions around these topics and concepts at the organization, as at least the interviewed employees indicated that they have previous knowledge about both diversity and inclusion and comments about how they are visible in the organization. Some interviewees implied that the topics have been more visible in the organization not only because they are important for the organization but also because the topics are currently visible in the everyday life and receive attention continuously around the world. And no wonder, especially due to social media and access to information, people around the world are more and more aware about the relevance of diversity and inclusion, both in business and in general.

"Things are clearly more prominent in a positive way than perhaps they have been before." – Interviewee 3

"I think that diversity and inclusion are being talked about a lot now because they are generally being discussed more." – Interviewee 5

There was some variety in the answers on how explicitly the interviewees understood diversity and inclusion which could be associated with their position in the organization, i.e., in some cases the nature of the work had affected how much the employee had had to learn about the topic in the past. Additionally, there was a little indication that their educational background could affect their comprehension as well. Naturally, educational background affects also the nature of the work the interviewed employees do at the organization. For example, a higher academic education is often needed to work in the administration of a cultural organization, compared to more musically oriented employees working in more artistically oriented positions. And, getting a higher education may more likely expose individuals to research and discussions around current topics, such as the DEI issues.

In the beginning of the interviews, we also discussed working in teams that include different kinds of people. Such diverse work teams are also typical of cultural organizations. More specifically, we discussed whether the interviewees had had positive or negative experiences of working in teams that consist of diverse people and people with differing backgrounds, and if they had found this to facilitate their work. Some mentioned that they especially enjoy working with people from different countries as it broadens one's worldview, raises awareness, and challenges and even makes one question their ways of acting. These experiences are in line with Chaudhry's (2023) who argues that diverse teams can benefit from having a team consist of varying capabilities to deal with different challenges, and team members with differing backgrounds. One mentioned that although working with different kinds of people has been self-evident to them throughout their career, it is a fortune to be able to learn how to communicate and adjust your own working methods due to constantly working with different people. Some of the interviewees thought that the culture industry may be naturally quite diverse but that there are certain requirements depending on the organization that can affect the diversity. As an example, they said that some positions have language requirements, e.g., singers have to sing a song in Finnish in the

auditions although the working languages are Finnish and English. Interviewee 6 emphasized the added richness in interactions that having diverse co-workers brings:

"Without a doubt, it facilitates it. – And it brings forth the aspect that even though there is a common organizational culture and ways of doing things, then at the same time, on the interactions between individuals - that's where the richness comes in, precisely because people come from different backgrounds and have different upbringing." – Interviewee 6

Some of the interviewees initially said that they had never thought about if working with people with differing backgrounds would facilitate their work. However, while talking about it they realized that they actually had felt the effect of having a team consist of diverse members who each have their own strengths. Interviewee 5 said:

"I've never really thought about whether it facilitates in any way. Or actually, I have thought about it. If I think about myself and my colleagues, I think it's incredibly important that we're all different, that we have different strengths and weaknesses. Because when a performer comes to work with us, we all aim for the performer to shine on stage. So, the more different perspectives and starting points we have to look at a certain situation, the more the performer can shine, and the more feedback and comments they can get from as many angles as possible, which hopefully helps them. So, in that sense, I think it's definitely a richness." – Interviewee 5

Some negative experiences regarding working in diverse teams also occurred, mainly related to incidents caused by cultural differences and more specifically, if the other party of the incident had been in an authoritative position compared to the other, without knowing the local courses of action, i.e., what is allowable or typical behavior in Finland. Although, it could be assumed that regardless of the country you are working in, basic manners are the

same. Some mentioned that rather than finding working in diverse teams negative, they found it negative if the organization did not know how to acknowledge the diversity within their organization.

Discussing working in diverse teams was to facilitate the following discussion about diversity and inclusion and make the interviewees to think about the topic from multiple sides, not only by how these topics are visible in the organization in practice but also in the interviewees' daily lives. I was also hoping that this discussion would illustrate how diversity can be visible in work communities in varying ways, e.g., in the age of co-workers or in different strengths and weaknesses visible in the work. Later in the interviews we talked about the possible effect of the D&I practices on the work community that will be covered later in this chapter. These questions about working in diverse teams were added to the interview guide around halfway through the interview process, as I felt then that I needed to hear more about the experiences from the interviewees regarding this.

4.1.1 Understanding Diversity – Insights and Perceptions

When discussing how the interviewees perceived diversity, most of the interviewees mentioned that they find the concept to be very broad and thus hard to explain, even if they indicated during the interview that they understood the topics we were talking about and had previous knowledge about them.

“I understand diversity as an extremely broad concept initially.” – Interviewee 3

“Diversity and inclusion are really broad concepts, and there's been a lot of discussion about them in our organization over the last, let's say, three years.” – Interviewee 6

Some other characteristics of diversity that frequently came up in different interviews were languages, age, gender, sexual identity, ethnicity or race, nationality, education, religion, occupation, minorities, and disabilities. In addition, diversity was overall found as being a positive thing. On the one hand, while the internationality of the organization was mentioned as a key aspect of diversity by a few of the interviewees, on the other hand some criticized that being international does not directly lead to the organization being diverse as well.

"Diversity can be examined from many different perspectives, and in my opinion, internationality isn't a checkmark for diversity. It doesn't necessarily mean the same thing; being international doesn't automatically mean being diverse." – Interviewee 6

"It means that there are many different dimensions to it. So, it's not just about, for example, internationality, although many views it so." – Interviewee 2

Some interviewees also addressed the concept of uniqueness as a component of diversity. In the past literature (see e.g., Shore et al., 2011), uniqueness has been more commonly associated with inclusion, particularly related to the added value an individual's unique attributes bring to the work group, potentially improving group performance. Once again, diversity and inclusion are found closely interrelated.

When discussing diversity from the perspective of minorities in a cultural organizational setting, one interviewee highlighted a common tendency to primarily focus on comparisons between men and women, not only overlooking other important dimensions of the topic, such as disabilities and disabled people in the minority positions as well but also risking reproducing heteronormativity. This is likely since, as already mentioned, the previous research on DEI matters in the culture industry has focused mainly on gender

inequalities (see e.g., Vincent et al., 2022; Hennekam & Bennett, 2017; MacArthur, 2015). Additionally, the interviewee also emphasized the stereotypes and how male-dominated the industry and its typical occupations are, but how they find it great that in their organization some of the maybe typically male-dominated superior positions are held by women. Interviewee 3 said:

"Actually, very often, when we talk about minorities and so on, we tend to first think about the male-female dynamic, or then some issues concerning the atmosphere etc. But these aspects like physical disabilities and all that, easily we dismiss how much they're present in all of this." – Interviewee 3

One of the interviewees mentioned diversity as context dependent, meaning that diversity can mean different things in different places. Additionally, some emphasized diversity from the perspective of having different habits and ways of acting or working, not necessarily having any visible differences. This is a similar observation with Roberson's (2019), who argues that in an organizational setting diversity means differences among employees, some of which are easier to observe than others. Nevertheless, most of the interviewees did mainly focus on describing visible attributes.

"Diversity, as I understand it, is about having people from as diverse backgrounds as possible in a certain context, such as the workplace. Different genders, sexual orientations, languages, cultural heritages, strengths, weaknesses – as diverse a group as possible." – Interviewee 5

"It also means all sorts of diverse characteristics and ways of being and acting and coming from different backgrounds. We have different religious or ethnic backgrounds. And all of this together, it's quite a broad concept." – Interviewee 2

Interestingly, some mentioned diversity as being part of the responsibility of the organization with other environmental aspects. This illustrates the

significance of diversity and how profoundly it can affect an organization if its relevance is recognized. This profound effect is needed in order to support diversity. Interviewee 7 said:

"Diversity is such a broad concept, like a huge umbrella covering many aspects. I see it as part of responsibility, that there are the environmental factors, but it's also about diversity and supporting it." – Interviewee 7

One of the interviewees pointed out that although significant, diversity should not be made someone's sole identity or personality but more importantly we should see the people as individuals, not only for the possible diverse characteristics they might have. This is in accordance with Feder and McGill (2021), who argue that often the diverse individuals in organizations are assumed to act as representatives for all diverse people, for example, in educational activities or internal discussions concerning DEI, and are involuntarily put into uncomfortable positions.

"In my opinion, it's still important that even though we focus on diversity and inclusion and so on, we don't just base a person's personality solely on one aspect." – Interviewee 4

Still, most of the interviewees feel that diversity brings added value that is necessary in a creative industry. Interviewee 1 said:

"For us, it's everyday life and the starting point that people are different. But that's what we consider, or at least I do, as a tremendous richness. And it adds value to our work, especially in a creative field. You can never have too much of it." – Interviewee 1

4.1.2 Understanding Inclusion – Insights and Perceptions

Discussing inclusion with the interviewees caused a similar reaction as with diversity regarding it feeling difficult to explain and a bit hard to grasp, but it seemed that inclusion was vaguer and maybe a bit unfamiliar for the interviewees. Many clearly felt uncertain about their answers and some mixed it up with diversity. The topic itself and the idea behind it seemed fairly clear and the interviewees could name things typical of inclusion but maybe connecting them to a concept called inclusion caused unclarity. As the interviews were held in Finnish, I started to think that maybe the concept of inclusion (or “inkluisio” in Finnish) or the word is too new or difficult in the Finnish language. Regardless, the interviewees had thoughts about how they perceive inclusion.

Some of the interviewees mentioned the activation of the employees regarding D&I in the organization and encouragement of voicing their opinions as key aspects of inclusion. Similarly, one interviewee said that for them inclusion means how much say the diverse employees have in the organization and how they are being treated. Having an integral part in decision-making and having a say in the organization is in line with previous literature concerning inclusion (see e.g., Ely & Thomas, 2020; Otten & Jansen, 2014; Nishii, 2013).

“I could imagine that the goal of inclusion is firstly to get people involved and actively participating, and to encourage them to voice their opinions.”
– Interviewee 1

Some mentioned the integration of the diverse employees into the organization as significant for inclusion. Similarly, also previous literature on inclusion (see e.g., Chaudhry, 2023; Otten & Jansen, 2014) emphasizes belongingness to the organization as integral to inclusion. Interviewee 2 said:

"We should incorporate all these different types of people from different backgrounds into our organization. That way, we can be inclusive if we succeed in doing so." – Interviewee 2

A common factor in the answers of many interviewees was emphasizing the responsibility of the organization regarding inclusion. Many felt that focal to inclusion was how the organization treats different kinds of employees and responds to the diverse work community and additionally to diverse customers. This could include e.g., responding to the varying needs that different employees may have, for example, if they are neurodivergent, or acknowledging that not all of the employees speak the same language, and acting accordingly. One interviewee underlined that the organization needs to act accordingly to be inclusive, that simply acknowledging diversity and inclusion or aiming at being international in terms of employees does not automatically lead to the organization actually being either of those things.

"Many at our organization also consider that because we are an international organization, it automatically means we are diverse or inclusive, but that's not necessarily the case." – Interviewee 2

One of the interviewees mentioned that they think inclusion can help the superiors and managers of the organization by giving them directions and tools, some sort of guidelines on how to manage a diverse workforce and how to acknowledge the aspect of inclusion adequately at the same time.

To conclude, it is clear that both diversity and inclusion are present in the organization, but the concepts need more clarifying for the employees to truly understand them, and furthermore feel confident when talking about them. I do not think it is wrong for people to have their own point of views on what diversity and inclusion mean but I do think it is important for the organization to communicate their viewpoint clearly to help the employees. When discussing how the interviewees perceive inclusion, one of them mentioned that

the particular Finnish cultural organization had arranged some training sessions regarding diversity and inclusion related matters and there they had heard a quote about diversity and inclusion that in their opinion explained both concepts well. The quote went approximately as follows: diversity is creating an opportunity for everyone to dance but inclusion is asking the people to come and dance. This is a good example of what D&I practices such as educating the workforce with training sessions can be at best and why they are needed also for these topics, they clarify the complex concepts and facilitate the understanding of the employees. In the next subchapter I will talk more about the D&I practices that the interviewed employees were aware of at the time of the interviews.

4.2 D&I practices

The main focus of this study was to gain insight on the D&I practices that are at use in the particular cultural organization and how the D&I practices are perceived by the employees. While I anticipated some level of attention to this topic within the cultural organization, I was pleasantly surprised by the extent to which both diversity and inclusion and the corresponding practices had already received attention based on what the interviewed employees had noticed. The interviewees mentioned several different D&I practices and I have divided them under subheadings for clarity. The subheadings will cover communication, employees' D&I training and education, recruitment, and representation policy.

One of the interviewees said that they view that the D&I practices and who they are targeted towards in their organization are divided into three parts: work community, performances, and the customer interface. Although this study and the interviews were focused on the D&I practices internally at the organization, due to the nature of the work, which is producing and performing cultural performances, some of the interviews also discussed D&I

practices and aspects related to their customers and the performances they produce.

4.2.1 Communication

When asked about the current D&I practices implemented at the organization most interviewees mentioned first that their organization has bilingual communication, meaning that all internal information from the organization is available in Finnish and in English to ensure that all employees can equally receive all information. Interviewee 6 said:

"I would say that a significant aspect is that all our communication is bilingual. We actually have many employees who don't speak Finnish, it's not required of them, and in this organization, it's possible to operate fully in both languages. In my opinion, that's a very important aspect of communication. Of course, it's also a matter of resources to translate texts and write messages in both Finnish and English, but it enables our very diverse workforce to be equal in communication and receiving information." – Interviewee 6

As this was mentioned as a significant D&I practice by many, especially for this reason I would have hoped for an opportunity to interview an employee whose first language is not Finnish to gain insight on if they feel like the bilingual communication truly reaches everyone, including those who do not understand Finnish at all. This is important information as there are, for example, matters regarding safety at work that should reach every employee equally. Interestingly, I noticed that the job advertisements at this particular organization are posted in Finnish and English but to find the job advertisement in English, the applicant has to switch the language of the whole website to English. To enhance the bilingualism even more, maybe considering posting the job advertisements in both languages on the same page would be a good idea.

Marketing as a D&I practice was also highlighted by many of the interviewees. Although it is primarily a way of communicating to the customers, the employees also feel affected by the marketing as they too follow how the organization communicates externally about diversity and inclusion. Interviewee 2 said as follows:

"Our communications department, for example, has done really good work in opening up these diversity-related issues in marketing, but also communicating them to our audiences. And that's important to me and we do a lot of it, and I'm satisfied with that. And even though we're mainly communicating with customers, as employees we also follow our own communication. And in that way, we see what image we want to portray outwardly, which is that everyone is welcome here and that we take diversity-related issues into account, and that's important to us. It's like all those things together, probably just one thing won't help, but it needs to be kept in the spotlight all the time." – Interviewee 2

Additionally, some of the interviewees felt that it is important for the organization to communicate and acknowledge, for example, possible difficult themes emerging in the performances also in their marketing. That way the organization can demonstrate that they have considered the matters and is also able to anticipate and prepare for possibly challenging discussions, not only in public but also internally, while also expressing their stand on the discussed matters.

"And especially what our communications department does in terms of engaging in the conversation about why these performances are performed, I think that's super important. For example, well, I'm not working in the communications department, but I know they're trying to address certain issues or challenges related to certain themes of performances and go through the backgrounds, explaining what it has meant, and how we're trying to

engage in that conversation. So, I think it's been nice to follow along or somehow be involved." – Interviewee 7

"And then there are, for example, the traditional and/or older performances, where there may be elements that don't really fit into today's context anymore, and then they either need to be changed or actively discussed. So that's exactly what our communications department does, they bring up those difficult or problematic themes and talk about them in advance, so that it doesn't happen that these issues are brought up publicly later on, like "this wasn't thought through again". We try to be proactive about it." – Interviewee 2

In addition to marketing, interestingly another thing that was mentioned in one of the interviews was the workwear that is visible to external audience and may also act as a means of communication. The organization had recently made a change in how their workwear is being determined, meaning that every employee who has to wear a certain workwear at work can choose a suitable one according to their own identity. Moreover, they highlighted that this change prompted an external stakeholder, in this case the supplier of the workwear, to consider how they could develop a line of gender-neutral work attire.

"And for that order, our workwear supplier provided a lot of feedback, that they had to rethink the workwear collection a bit, and how they talk about it. For example, is it a women's/men's collection or a collection for assumed women/men, or could they create a collection that would someday be unisex or somehow less gendered? It gave me that kind of a feeling, that if our workwear project can influence someone's thinking about what they do professionally, then we're dealing with something a bit nicer than just an Excel spreadsheet." – Interviewee 7

As Interviewee 7 mentions, I also think that D&I practices at best can influence the surrounding operators and make them think about their ways of operating from a more diverse and inclusive perspective. Internally this can communicate to the employees that they are free to be individuals and valued by the employer, while externally this also shows the audiences that the employees are allowed to express themselves freely.

Another D&I practice mentioned by many was an internal discussion forum for diversity that had been launched a few years ago at the organization to facilitate having internal discussions regarding diversity and D&I practices. Interviewee 2 described it as follows:

"Then we have what we call a discussion forum for diversity, which is a group consisting of volunteers. There are about 15 employees from different job roles and departments, where we discuss these issues together, so that we would constantly be aware of what we need to consider. It doesn't necessarily mean that we always make significant progress on concrete issues there, but we keep those themes alive. And we also engage our management in this. So, if we have questions, concerns, or ideas on those themes, we also bring them to the attention of the management." – Interviewee 2

Reviewing and understanding how the employees are feeling at work is done by e.g., surveys regarding work atmosphere, which was also mentioned by one of the interviewees as a D&I practice. According to the interviewee, the themes of diversity and inclusion were briefly touched on in the survey but did not have their own section in the survey. The interviewee expressed that DEI should receive more attention in the surveys.

4.2.2 Training the Employees on D&I

Educating the employees on DEI matters and activating and involving the employees in the discussions came up in several interviews. Different kinds

of training sessions were said to be useful if they are targeted towards everyone in the organization and utilize the involvement of the employees as well as are connected to the industry, bringing the topics closer to the targeted people. Interviewee 6 said:

"In my opinion, training sessions are good activation, but if they are delivered in a lecture-style format without any interactive elements, they may come across as distant and uninteresting to some. So, there needs to be an angle that resonates with the individual or the work community's activities and ways of operating. It has to, in my opinion, be connected to our world."
– Interviewee 6

Educating the employees together with providing e.g., instructions or codes of conduct regarding good behaviour were said to help with keeping the topics relevant and visible in the daily life of the particular organization. Additionally, one of the interviewees emphasized the importance of hearing experts and involving minorities and experts by experience in the training sessions and in the development of the D&I practices:

"It's about knowing who to ask. I think that diversity in that aspect, hearing from people and experts, and actually implementing concrete actions, is what results in change." – Interviewee 7

Some of the interviewees felt that there is a lot of information coming from the organization, sometimes even too much information and on topics that should be self-evident.

"Well, we do get quite a bit of information. We receive all sorts of emails, so we are definitely encouraged by our superiors to be tolerant, if I could use that word, and to be open-minded. -- But sometimes it feels like there's a lot of information coming at us, and sometimes it feels like, are we all adults

here? You'd think people would understand some things on their own, that we wouldn't need to be told by higher-ups all the time.” – Interviewee 1

"There's always some kind of training going on. Sometimes I wonder, am I in high school or in a workplace for adults, or what's going on here?" – Interviewee 3

This may be a common reaction to educating about DEI matters, and thus it would be crucial for the organization to communicate why it is important and relevant in the particular organization to continuously talk about these matters. Furthermore, with adequate and clear communication the organization can more likely avoid bad attitudes, or causing irritation among people who may think that these topics do not concern them. In addition, engaging the D&I practices with the organization's strategy may help with concretizing the D&I practices more distinctly to all, in addition to communicating to all that this is an organization-wide goal. Integration to the organization's strategy with related objectives makes the D&I practices an issue that concerns the whole organization (Hennekam, 2022; Feder & McGill, 2021; Mason, 2020).

4.2.3 Recruitment

Recruitment as a D&I practice was also something that was mentioned in a couple of interviews. One of the interviewees said that in the organization they have already moved towards a gender-neutral recruiting when recruiting for different kinds of performers. I believe this demonstrates that the organization is actively implementing what they are saying and exemplifying their values in diversity and inclusion and not only saying things to make them look better. At the same time, in a few of the interviews it was mentioned that the organization had not yet broadly adopted anonymous recruitment, but this was recognized as something that they could invest into in the future, at least in some positions. In some positions anonymous recruitment was already used. In addition, this organization has added a diversity

statement to their job advertisements. Previous research on D&I practices has also recognized diversity statements as valuable (see e.g., Shaw, 2017). Regarding the statement Interviewee 2 said:

"One concrete action that comes to mind, which improved things, was the recent addition we made to our job postings. We added a clause at the end stating that we are a diverse workplace. It reads that we encourage people from different backgrounds, gender identities, religious beliefs, and so on, to apply to work with us. We've made it clear there in plain language what we want. And of course, we also have to be the kind of workplace that reflects that. It can't just be words on paper; it has to be evident within the organization that we truly value diversity and want people from different backgrounds here." – Interviewee 2

4.2.4 Representation Policy

Since the cultural organization's operations are centred around producing and performing cultural performances, the D&I practices are also connected to the performances and the process of preparing the performances. In some of the interviews it was emphasized that quite recently the organization had introduced some policies for representation in their performances as well as hired an intimacy coordinator to help with some productions.

"At the initiative of our discussion forum for diversity, we've developed what we call a representation policy, which means that we consider all aspects of diversity early on in the production process. We have a production model that follows a certain pattern, and there are checkpoints where we assess whether there's anything in the work that could raise questions or concerns, either from the audience's perspective or from our own employees' perspective. If they, for example, feel there's something uncomfortable or if there's a topic that needs to be addressed or explained, such as issues

related to women, race, or similar topics. So, we want to maintain an open and transparent atmosphere." – Interviewee 2

"After the launch of the discussion forum for diversity, we've established this representation policy for both our existing and upcoming works. It's about how diversity matters function within our production environment and model when we're commissioning new productions. Yet, I feel that the representation policy is also tied to the organization's diversity because we have a very diverse workforce. Therefore, it's about how our core activities represent those values in our performances. It's definitely a significant aspect of it all." – Interviewee 6

"I feel good working in a place that considers the content of the performance before putting it on stage." – Interviewee 7

I believe these excerpts from the interviews demonstrate well why the process of preparing the performances and performing them are closely connected to the D&I practices within the organization, although the end product is targeted towards external audience. It is easy to think that the performances would in a way solely be external communication towards the audience, but actually, it is communication internally as well. Overall, aiming to act as a pioneer regarding D&I practices and the DEI matters in general in the industry and staying active emerged as a connecting theme in the interviews.

4.3 Functionality of the D&I practices

Regarding how the employees experience and perceive the D&I practices, many recognized that they are quite new and still developing. Many feel that it brings relevance to their work if the organization they work in acknowledges diversity and inclusion and invests in related practices. This is in line with previous findings by e.g., Nishii and Wright (2008), who argue that there is increased commitment and satisfaction when the employees consider

their values to align with the organization's. The way these matters are talked about nowadays in the organization was mentioned in a few of the interviews. Conversations that were once had privately between co-workers, as they were deemed maybe as conversations that should not be publicly had, are now talked at the organizational level. Supervisors and management intervene in difficult situations more often which is also something that did not always happen in the past. Generally, the interviewed employees consider the D&I practices to be important and necessary, but they emphasize the need for support, constant evolvement, and shared targets.

"I think the direction is right. But it needs a lot of support and especially some common goals, so that everyone recognizes the importance of this. Perhaps my hope for the future is that it doesn't just remain as some sort of casual conversation, like "nice, well done with that one thing back then", but rather that we focus on what we do next." – Interviewee 7

There are different kinds of teams and committees dedicated for diversity, equality and inclusion in the organization that develop, track, and actively discuss the D&I practices and the overall discussion around these topics within the organization. They were said to be needed to ensure that there are constant targets and plans regarding the D&I practices. Interviewee 6 said:

"Having these internal organizational committees or bodies dedicated to monitoring, discussing, and making improvements, I think those are practices that reinforce the idea that it's not just talk for the sake of it, but that there's actually a plan and a desired outcome. And then it's about communicating how those things are being examined." – Interviewee 6

The D&I practices in the particular organization are fairly new but in the past couple of years they have been developed rapidly, receiving more and more attention in the organization constantly.

"This issue is still quite fresh. I think the initial spark for this happened a few years ago when our entire workforce underwent training. We covered various topics related to diversity and inclusion in many ways. It sparked a lot of discussion back then, and I remember it being somewhat of a new topic. That was probably about three years ago." – Interviewee 2

"The tremendous change during the last couple of years in how certain issues are perceived, such as cultural appropriation, is remarkable. It's evident in costume design, makeup, and all aspects of production, and it has advanced significantly in the last three years. And it's visible in everyday life. I'm genuinely very pleased with this change because it feels like it may have been a bit behind earlier." – Interviewee 6

"I do feel that these D&I practices are still quite new for us. But when I look back at my decades-long career, I definitely see that we're heading in a better direction." – Interviewee 1

4.3.1 Communicating the D&I Practices and Their Applicability

As said, clear and consistent communication about diversity and inclusion as well as the related practices are critical to ensure that everyone in the organization is aware of the matters. This also concerns communication towards new employees or freelancers which are common in cultural organizations. There was some variability in the interviewees' answers when asking about if they felt that the D&I practices were communicated to them or to new employees generally when joining the organization. Some felt that when they had joined the organization, all the D&I practices, expected behaviour, and the themes in general were brought forward from the very beginning. On the other hand, some mentioned the opposite, that the practices are not concretely visible and not everyone is made aware of them. Interviewee 6 said:

"I'm not entirely sure, but what I think or understand is that after one incident, for instance, there has been a more active effort to send the 'code of conduct' document to all performers who join the organization either as freelancers/visitors or more permanently. But then again, when I ask the performers, they've never even heard of it, so likely it's been sent and then it's there as an attachment, expecting them to read it, but they don't." – Interviewee 5

"But maybe either I'm blind to it, or there isn't much concrete happening in terms of inclusion, so it's hard to say if something is working if it's not really there." – Interviewee 3

So, it seems that there are some differences regarding who are made aware of the D&I practices and at what point. Of course, it may depend on who we are asking as well. It is likely that someone who does not personally feel affected by the D&I practices (e.g., because they are from Finland, speak Finnish or represent a majority in the work community) may not have paid as much attention to the D&I practices around them at work as someone else. For this reason, organizations would benefit from having planned implementation processes for their D&I practices, such as the one Mensi-Klarbach and Hanappi-Egger (2019) suggest. The diversity and inclusion matters should also be embedded in the on-boarding processes of organizations to ensure effectiveness (Derven, 2014) and help with voicing why they are important for the organization.

Several interviewees expressed concerns and observations about who the D&I practices and the ground rules regarding diversity, inclusion, and the consideration of others in general apply to. While some acknowledged the clarity these practices bring to processes, such as addressing inappropriate behaviour in a relatively large organization like this one, they also perceived a disparity in how individuals are assumed to adhere to these practices based on their position within the organization.

"I haven't really noticed any bad behaviour from anyone, but I've heard some stories that some artists may not have always behaved well. So maybe there should be more sensitivity to addressing it if a performer or an artist behaves poorly." – Interviewee 4

"Those D&I practices look really good on paper, but they don't seem to manifest in practice. And then it feels like, depending on your position, either the rules apply to you, or they don't." – Interviewee 5

I believe this is a common experience not exclusive to the culture industry or similar organizations. Given that the D&I practices in this particular organization are still fairly new and in the developmental stage, in the future efforts can be made to establish a clearer expectation of consistent behaviour for all employees, irrespective of their position within the organization.

Typical of cultural organizations are people working with short-term contracts or project-based (Hennekam, 2022) and the power dimensions that relate to the artistic powers of different individuals (Hennekam & Bennett, 2017). Some interviewees brought forward the possible effect of the length of one's career or type of employment on whether individuals have the courage to get involved in difficult situations or voice their concerns or not. Thus, the organization should be transparent about the consequences of intervening, that is, it will not cause trouble for the individual who voiced their concerns.

"These D&I practices are beneficial when some kind of an incident arises between two roughly equal employees. I believe many would dare to approach their immediate supervisor, but then it means they're here in a kind of employment relationship. In a way, with the security of my own position, I also dare to be more proactive and speak up. But there are a lot of freelancers here, who I think would never publicly say anything bad about this place as a workplace due to the fear of not getting hired again. And I don't

think they would specifically know who to tell about any incidents and if they could trust that it wouldn't cause them any problems." – Interviewee 5

At the same time, the D&I practices are found to be helping with resisting attitudes and with communicating internally to the employees that no inappropriate behaviour of any kind at least should not be accepted, bringing a sense of security. Additionally, the D&I practices were said to help with people who think that "it has always been done this way" and no changes are needed. In the future, if there are situations that cause similar discussions, the D&I practices and the guidelines they provide should help.

"Quite a lot of comments I've received are that "this industry just is like this"." – Interviewee 5

"Doing things with the excuse that "well, this is how it was done 10 years ago, so let's do it the same way now", even though we're living in a completely different time, there have been cases like this. I wasn't present there myself, but perhaps next time now that these things are known, such situations won't arise anymore." – Interviewee 3

On the other hand, while the discussions surrounding these themes have succeeded in changing some attitudes, they have also raised some concerns. Some of the interviewees mentioned that the increasing discussions around diversity may have caused some insecurities regarding what people can talk about from their positions and if they can do their job as they used to. Certain roles, such as those in costume or makeup departments, may require more sensitivity than before. I believe the organization currently possesses valuable tools to assist individuals in various roles, especially considering that the employees have participated in training sessions on DEI matters. It is crucial to sustain this knowledge and keep these topics alive in ongoing discussions.

"Training all departments was a good thing, as we were able to spread awareness throughout the entire workforce. But just one training session isn't really enough; the issue needs to be maintained. But perhaps it worked as an eye-opening training." – Interviewee 2

4.3.2 Follow-ups and Anticipation

Although it was established in the interviews that there are D&I practices at use in the organization, many felt that either they are not always carried out as said or that there is a lack of adequate follow-ups. As said, the D&I practices can bring a sense of security, but it is likely not enough to just have the practices, the organization is expected to prove that they follow them, while also communicating how that is done. It was clear that currently the interviewed employees did not think that there were enough follow-ups done by the organization. It is common that without regular follow-ups the situation in an organization may not improve as planned after implementing D&I practices (Feder & McGill, 2021).

"The top management does not necessarily do the monitoring. This is quite common, and not just a problem in our organization, that sometimes no one is necessarily monitoring whether the people are acting as agreed upon. Then, over time, it might be noticed that "hey, this didn't go as we collectively agreed." So, I would call for the monitoring of those collectively agreed D&I practices as well." – Interviewee 1

"And then, sort of the follow-up to where all of this leads, it's left somewhat to people's own interpretation. You might pay attention to something, thinking, "this is probably getting fixed because we have this D&I practice". But it's never really dissected in detail." – Interviewee 3

Something that emerged in various interviews was anticipation, meaning sufficient preparation to avoid difficult situations related to D&I. It seems that

D&I practices were found to help with acknowledging and cooperating with different kinds of colleagues. Furthermore, the D&I practices were said to help with sufficiently preparing for accurate costs and avoiding unexpected additional costs in the production phase that relate to, for example, representation on stage and considering what kinds of productions are deemed appropriate to take into the repertoire nowadays.

"Having already thought in advance that we don't want to create anything in today's context that could be interpreted as racist because it goes against our values. It's open, it's been considered, rather than planning for three years and then looking at some artist's interpretation and saying we can't do this because it's racist. From a process perspective, it's unpleasant, and it usually brings a lot of additional costs. So, in a way, there are clear rules about what can also be done and what is in line with our values." – Interviewee 6

"It's about creating structures for the right things and doing things at the right time. It's a bit silly if we start explaining afterwards, and then it's also a bit too late. We should anticipate and see some of those mega-trend-like things happening in the world." – Interviewee 7

The anticipation and preparation also align with the aspiration to lead as pioneers in D&I practices and broader DEI issues within the industry. Interviewee 6 said:

"I feel that we can also be pioneers in these themes, and I think that's really great." – Interviewee 6

4.3.3 Challenges with Participation and Development

Of course, as is typical of many organizations, there is a lack of resources as well as a lack of time available to use for the D&I practices and their

implementation. Some interviewees mentioned the effect of working hours that may enable or prevent one's availability to participate in e.g., training sessions during the working hours. As said, typical of cultural organizations is that there are differences in the working hours between the administrative employees and the employees who are doing the artistic work. This may cause an over-representation of employees whose working hours allow participation to e.g., offered training sessions or generally to activities that develop the D&I practices.

"Well, the resource shortage is what troubles us here, and the lack of time. We might not be able to dedicate as much time to this as would be necessary because there's so much other work to be done. That's probably something we could improve upon." – Interviewee 2

"What has sometimes crossed my mind is that since I work in a specialist role and I have office hours by default, I can manage my calendar in a way that allows me to participate in all these discussion forum activities and meetings and so on. So, how to put it... Even though theoretically anyone is welcome, there may be an overrepresentation of those who are somehow in specialist roles and have working hours accordingly." – Interviewee 6

Furthermore, the D&I practices require continuous developing from the organization to keep the practices relevant and up to date with the surrounding society. Several interviewees commented on the slowness of change that a relatively large organization such as this one suffers from, and how then it is even more essential to put effort into utilizing D&I practices that are relevant and significant from the organization's point of view. At least one of the interviewees emphasized the significance of actively making change.

"But as mentioned, the work is such a vast entity that it's ongoing, and we have to keep thinking about it all the time." – Interviewee 2

"And change doesn't just happen on its own, it needs to be actively pursued. Perhaps some sort of training for the supervisors so that everyone would approach those issues in a similar manner, rather than based on their personal experiences. I feel like that could move things forward in some way."
– Interviewee 5

4.3.4 Inclusion and Exclusion

Interestingly, one of the interviewees mentioned inclusion and exclusion when discussing about the used languages in the organization. They contemplated on if it is inclusive to use English as the working language or would it after all be more inclusive to create a working culture around speaking Finnish and allowing everyone in the organization to learn Finnish. They also compared their organization to other similar organizations in the same industry around the world, where it is common to use the language of the country at work as well instead of English. Interviewee 6 said:

"This is just a reflection on whether it's more inclusive to speak English or if it would be more inclusive to create a work culture where we all speak Finnish and then everyone learns it. Language is so interesting from this inclusion perspective because it includes but also leaves out." – Interviewee 6

As said, inclusion, and more specifically doing inclusion in organizations has received attention and some criticism in previous research (see e.g., Kangas-Müller et al., 2023; Dobusch, 2014; Shore et al., 2011). For example, Dobusch (2014) argues that inclusion and exclusion exist at the same time. Another interviewee raised a similar concern that relates to the exclusion perspective. They mentioned that someone in the organization had emphasized the difference in tone depending on whether they use “non-Finnish-speaking” or “foreigner” at the organization when talking about colleagues who come from outside Finland. They felt that it can lead to unintended grouping of people

within the organization when the whole point is to be one solid work community. Interviewee 3 said:

"About using the term 'non-Finnish-speaking' or 'foreigner,' one of our non-Finnish-speaking colleagues brought up the point that we should be careful about which term we are using. After all, we are one work community here, and this person who raised the issue has been living in Finland for 15 years and is a Finnish citizen. So, it might feel upsetting to talk about foreigners in a 'us and them' style." – Interviewee 3

All in all, the interviewees expressed that it is better to have the D&I practices than to have no D&I practices at all, even though they are still developing and finding their place in the organization. Interviewee 6 said:

"I've been in situations with productions where I would have appreciated some guidance or help from D&I practices, but they weren't available back then. This was several years ago, before I felt like this was being actively addressed within our organization, so back then, it felt like we were a bit on our own." – Interviewee 6

4.4 D&I Practices Affecting the Work Community

I was also interested in hearing if the interviewed employees perceived that the D&I practices, and their implementation had affected the work community and the employees' job satisfaction. In general, most interviewees agreed. One of the interviewees said that they are not sure if the D&I practices have affected the work community but that at the very least the D&I practices have sparked discussion within the work community. I believe this to be an understandable answer, as it might be difficult to see a direct effect caused by the D&I practices, although some causalities can be expected. Interviewee 5 said:

"I'm not quite sure how it could impact or not impact. The only thought that comes to mind is that whether it did or didn't, at least it has sparked discussion and people are talking about it. And that's always good. When people talk, it certainly triggers something. Just the fact that even if we're stating the obvious out loud, that can be important too." – Interviewee 5

Some interviewees also recognized their own position to express their opinion regarding the possible effect of the D&I practices on the work community and its functionality. Interviewee 2 said:

"Maybe that should rather be asked from employees who, for example, come from different backgrounds, whether they feel that way because it's hard for me to say about that. But I would hope so." – Interviewee 2

As the particular cultural organization is relatively large and thus includes lots of people with differing backgrounds and is perceived to be very international, the D&I practices were found to be important in terms of acknowledging the differences. For example, several interviewees mentioned that having bilingual communication is a significant signal for welcoming employees who do not speak Finnish into the work community as equal members. Interviewee 2 said:

"We, for example, always communicate in Finnish and English, so we strive to ensure that our international employees have access to the same information as our Finnish employees." – Interviewee 2

When talking about the work community, many of the interviewees described the work community as close-knit, supporting, versatile, interesting, almost “family-like” but sometimes exhausting. Typical of culture industry, some interviewees mentioned that it is sometimes difficult to separate work and free time. Additionally, many do the job with great passion which also causes intensity that can at times feel exhaustive. Especially in such organizations the

interviewees found that the D&I practices can help with creating boundaries and a space where the employees can feel valued and supported as individuals. One interviewee highlighted a positive outcome of the D&I practices, noting an overall atmosphere of striving for improvement in diversity and inclusion.

"Without a doubt, it affects the work community, the employee's experience and the community's experience and the sense of security. Or in a way, the experience of inclusion, that it's okay for us to be different and that it's acknowledged, and the employer accepts that, rather than feeling like there's an attempt to fit everyone into a certain mould." – Interviewee 6

"I think it has a positive impact in that it strives the organization for improvement, but it has certainly created some uncertainty about what these terms mean or whether one can comment on something from their position. -- But then, when there are good discussions where you can just ask questions like, "Has this been taken into account?" then it probably creates ways to pause and think about what we want to do. Of course, in an organization like this, where there's constantly a bit of rush, sometimes pausing has been a bit difficult. But I think it will do good." – Interviewee 7

Maybe one of the wished effects of having D&I practices is to increase the diversity of the workforce and take care of and hold onto the diverse employees already working in the organization by, for example, implementing the D&I practices. Currently, most of the interviewees perceived that their work community is not as diverse as it maybe could be. Some interviewees mentioned that having more diversity within the workforce could also reflect positively on the audience that they have. While this study does not directly investigate the impact on the audience, I believe it is likely that diversity on stage or diverse people in visible positions in the cultural organization could have a positive influence. This may encourage a wider range of people not only to attend performances but also to consider employment opportunities

within the organization. Maybe that is the whole point, not to manually create a diverse workforce or pick employees based on their diverse characteristics, but rather to express that the organization welcomes individuals from all backgrounds to work there. And that this transparent and open atmosphere is fostered with the implementation of the D&I practices. Several interviewees mentioned audience development as a key aspect in fostering diversity and inclusion, and in ensuring that cultural organizations remain as meaningful operators in the industry and society in the future as well. Many seemed to think that what is done in the audience development reflects also on the employees of the organization in the long run.

"Through audience development efforts, we can definitely lower the threshold, so we can get all kinds of people here. In the future, it's our absolute necessity to present ourselves as a meaningful operator to all Finns. That's probably an important goal." – Interviewee 2

4.4.1 Management's Impact

During the interviews we also discussed about the impact and significance of the management regarding diversity, inclusion, and the implementation of the D&I practices. The relevance of the management emerged also in the past literature, as many researchers have emphasized the necessary commitment from management in ensuring that the D&I practices are carried out successfully and creating a climate for inclusion (see e.g., Romani et al., 2019; Dobusch, 2014; Shore et al., 2011; Dass & Parker, 1999).

Several of the interviewees felt that the management acts as an example for everyone else in the organization. How important the management regards these themes and how they approach them were mentioned as key aspects. Furthermore, management's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and implementing the corresponding practices was perceived as significant. Interviewee 6 said:

"I think it starts from the management. They play a really significant role in how diversity is perceived, how important it's considered, and how issues like representation and inclusion are approached. If the management isn't committed to the big picture, it definitely won't permeate throughout the organization." – Interviewee 6

Additionally, although most interviewees emphasized the management's significance as acting as an example, many expressed that making change and taking initiative can work both ways, either from top to bottom from the management's side or from the employees towards the management. Nevertheless, some viewed that as of now it is difficult to make changes without the support from the management. Interviewee 5 said:

"In my opinion, these kinds of things trickle down from the top. It's very difficult to change them from the bottom up, and it always requires someone at the top who is interested in making changes." – Interviewee 5

Especially discussion forums provide a platform for the employees to communicate to the management, the management just needs to be receptive and open to take actions accordingly. Management is also in a focal role and responsible for engaging the D&I practices to the organization's strategy. Many also viewed the management as the face of these topics, representing the organization and its values.

Some interviewees brought forward the length of the tenures at the organization. They thought it signifies that the employees enjoy working at the organization, resulting in careers that may last even decades. At the same time, they mentioned that most positions in the top management are fixed term, meaning that there is constant turnover. Many deemed this as a positive thing, as regular changes in the top management ensure that these topics are developed continuously, and it is not only one individual's vision that is being carried out year after year. One of the interviewees also mentioned, that the

management and its diversity regarding e.g., their viewpoints, visions, age, gender, affects and characterizes the end product and what is seen on stage as well. Interviewee 3 said:

"I firmly believe that increased diversity would impact not only the employees but also the audience and customer base. Additionally, one could parallel this with the age group of the management and the characteristics that define the final product presented to the audience. It definitely has a clear connection." – Interviewee 3

5 Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter discusses the findings and theoretical contribution of the interview study in relation to the research questions and past literature. I will also present some additional outlooks on the possible future development of the D&I practices, practical implications, and suggestions for future research.

5.1 Main Findings and Theoretical Contribution

In my study I was especially interested in understanding how the employees of the Finnish cultural organization perceive both diversity and inclusion and the corresponding practices, and how they experienced the functionality of the D&I practices currently. I was additionally interested to hear if they had noticed an effect on the work community caused by the D&I practices. Thus, I utilized qualitative methods, more specifically semi-structured interviews, to gain insights and better understanding on the experiences of the Finnish cultural organization's employees.

The interviews clarified that the organization had already put effort into ensuring that diversity and inclusion stay relevant and topical in the organization, and they had implemented several D&I practices that the interviewed employees were aware of. However, it seems that the concepts need more clarifying for the employees to truly understand them, and furthermore, feel confident when talking about them. I will next answer to each of my research questions and offer some thoughts on the future and development of the D&I practices.

RQ1: What kinds of D&I practices does the cultural organization currently have?

The interviews revealed several D&I practices that the Finnish cultural organization currently is implementing. Both D&I practices mentioned by the

pervious literature (see e.g., Shaw, 2017; MacArthur, 2015; Derven, 2014; Shore et al., 2011) and new practices introduced by the interviewees emerged. Most interviewees identified the organization's bilingual communication and the internal discussion forum for diversity as significant D&I practices. The discussion forum and its main task is similar to the ERGs mentioned in past literature. ERGs are seen as a reasonable resource for fostering inclusion and connecting employees with similar values, who want to contribute to how diversity and inclusion are dealt with in their organization (Derven, 2014). Activating the employees with training sessions was emphasized also in many interviews. Additionally, the representation policy, which ties considering diversity and inclusion into the production process, had already found its place as an important D&I practice within the short period it has been in use.

It also seems that the D&I practices concerning the different sides of the organization's operations get intertwined, meaning that the D&I practices regarding the work community (internal), the performances, and the customer interface or the audience (external) are perceived equally important and relevant from the employees' perspective. This finding highlights the interconnected nature of D&I practices within the organization's operations, emphasizing their significance both internally with the work community and externally with performances and audience interaction. This understanding aligns with existing DEI literature that emphasizes the holistic approach needed for effective diversity and inclusion initiatives. This finding contributes to the existing theoretical discussion on DEI, providing empirical evidence and insights into how employees perceive the relevance of D&I practices across various aspects of the organization, reinforcing the idea of a comprehensive approach to DEI.

RQ2: How do the employees experience the D&I practices in the cultural organization?

Based on the interviews, it seems that D&I practices are regarded as important, but it is significant that the implemented practices are relevant in terms of the organization's operations. By bringing these topics closer to the employees, the organization can better engage and activate its workforce. For example, the organization's bilingual communication was perceived to be important in ensuring that the international organization can operate and retain its international employees. Interestingly, the relationship between inclusion and exclusion emerged when discussing about the used languages at the organization. This exemplifies, for example, Dobusches' (2014) argument regarding inclusion and exclusion often existing at the same time. Communication has received attention in past literature (see e.g., Chaudhry, 2023; Dobusch, 2014; Roberson, 2006), but the findings of this study also highlight the significance of non-verbal communication through workwear, contributing to the existing literature. Furthermore, other visible signals of D&I, such as the representation policy as a D&I practice, emerged as additional things to existing literature, although representation on stage has received previous attention in the past (see e.g., Heidelberg, 2017). Additionally, the D&I training sessions were found to be useful if they are participatory and connected to the organization's own industry. The training sessions should also acknowledge the turnover of employees and thus be regularly held. Some of the departments in the cultural organization have more turnover than others which is why having a training session every couple of years is most likely not enough. On a larger scale, some interviewees felt that the D&I practices and overall considering the themes at their work could impact the future of the arts industry as well. Their current actions may profoundly shape the industry's trajectory moving forward.

Furthermore, continuous planning and development of the D&I practices are needed to keep the practices relevant. The D&I practices should be communicated more thoroughly to reach the whole organization, to remind that they apply to all, old and new employees, regardless of one's position within the organization. In the past literature, for example, MacArthur (2015) has

emphasized the importance of communicating the D&I practices to all, especially in project-based jobs, such as the ones in the culture industry. In addition, the previous literature (see e.g., Hennekam & Bennett, 2017) has discussed the power dimensions and structures prevalent in the culture industry. This study offers an additional aspect to this, concerning how the D&I practices are found to be affected by the industry's power structures. Overall, the D&I practices need attention from the organization to facilitate and enhance the discussions on these topics and to support the employees at doing their work, while they consider matters related to diversity and inclusion. The motivation behind the D&I practices should stem from within the organization, driven by genuine commitment rather than external mandates. This approach ensures sustainable change.

RQ3: How do the employees perceive that the D&I practices affect the work community?

Overall, most of the interviewees found the D&I practices and that the organization shows interest towards these matters to positively affect the work atmosphere by creating an open, accepting, and transparent culture at work, while bringing a sense of security. The role of management was found important and also affecting the work community, especially concerning how largely they commit to and emphasize diversity, inclusion and the D&I practices.

In general, it is challenging to determine or observe the direct effects of the D&I practices on the work community by simply conducting interviews. As said, many emphasized a lack of follow-ups regarding the implemented D&I practices. Perhaps with adequate follow-ups more direct effects could be easier to observe. Nevertheless, generally it can be said that actively discussing diversity and inclusion can affect the people within the organization and encourage them as individuals to be a part of the work community. This supports the findings of past literature (see e.g., Flagg, 2020; Nishii & Wright,

2008), which also have recognized the increased commitment and job satisfaction experienced by individuals when organizations prioritize diversity and inclusion, and D&I practices are implemented to foster a more inclusive work community.

5.1.1 Future and Development of the D&I Practices

The interviews evoked many thoughts on the future and development of the D&I practices in the particular Finnish cultural organization and also in the culture industry more generally. As an overarching theme, it seems that a key aspect is to diversify with the society and thus remain as a meaningful operator for all Finnish people. Diversity both in skills and in the workforce may invite a more diverse audience as well. Additionally, audience development is seen to play an important role in bringing the culture industry close to everyone, especially those who may have felt it to be distant. A long-term plan regarding the D&I practices with e.g., an annually changing theme or objective, might help with increasing the concreteness and accelerating the development of the D&I practices. Cooperation and networking with external experts and other cultural organizations to further examine and develop the D&I practices of the industry is also recommended.

5.2 Practical Implications

This study presents an overview of the D&I practices at the Finnish cultural organization. As said, the current industry-specific research data to support the work of different D&I related employee groups or D&I practices and policies is relatively scarce. This inadequacy also acted as an initial impulse for the study conducted by the Finnish Musician's Union and Inklusiiv in 2022 (inklusiiv.com).

Based on both the empirical findings from the interviews as well as the previous literature, engaging the D&I practices to the strategy of the organization is suggested. Integration to the organization's strategy with related

objectives makes the D&I practices an issue that concerns the whole organization and may help with having clear targets and timelines for development. Additionally, integration to strategy may facilitate improving the recruitment practices of the organization and encourage the consideration of new perspectives to recruitment when suitable, such as anonymous recruitment or reverse discrimination.

More attention to diversity and inclusion within the organization can also be given by having a separate survey concerning D&I, or at least a larger part in the present survey on work atmosphere concentrated fully on D&I. Furthermore, especially in industries, such as the culture industry where the employees have a lot of variety in their working hours, the organization is urged to consider how they could include as many employees in the training sessions and other D&I related activities as possible. As mentioned in the interviews, there is easily an over-representation of people in certain positions participating due to the conflict of working hours.

Lastly, the findings and the previous literature demonstrate that the management of the organization should familiarize themselves with the challenges of managing diversity and inclusion to facilitate their understanding of a diverse workforce and fostering an inclusive climate in the organization.

5.3 Suggestions for Future Research

As said, the culture industry is suffering from a lack of research concerning DEI issues (for exceptions, see e.g., Eikhof, 2020, 2017; Newsinger & Eikhof, 2020; Eikhof & Warhurst, 2013) and the functionality of the implemented D&I practices. Deeper understanding of specifically Finnish cultural organizations is also needed. Although especially issues regarding equality have received attention in the past research, expansion to other D&I related topics is recommended.

There were many interesting topics that emerged while conducting this research that invite future researchers to delve deeper into them. Reflecting on some of the limitations of my study, I would suggest future research to focus on interviewing also employees whose first language is not Finnish. Secondly, as the objective of this study was to offer an overview of the current state of the D&I practices, narrowing down the research questions and focusing on one topic (diversity or inclusion) at a time is recommended to gain more thorough understanding. Furthermore, exploring various operators within the culture industry to compare their D&I practices and assess their functionality could provide valuable insights. This comparative analysis would aim to determine if similar D&I practices yield comparable outcomes, thereby examining the generalizability of results. However, achieving this objective may present challenges due to the subjective nature of perceptions regarding the functionality of D&I practices, which do not have definitive 'right' or 'wrong' answers.

On an organizational level, if there is a separate D&I survey in the future, further examination of those results is suggested. This would also provide an opportunity to employ additional data collection methods alongside interviews. Other possible methods for data collection in future studies concerning DEI in cultural organizations could be e.g., group interviews or observations. Based on the interviews, I would also encourage further research regarding what word is used when discussing inclusion in Finnish and how the concept is used within the organization to facilitate the employees' understanding about it.

Finally, the findings and previous literature also suggest future research to study the relation between creativity and D&I (see e.g., Shore et al., 2011) and to investigate the inclusivity of different art forms and their effect on the audience as well (see e.g., Heidelberg, 2017). The significance of audience development and its effects on D&I in general is also recommended.

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