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Intersectionality in DEI Policies: Challenges and Best Practices



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Table of contents

Abstract	3
I. Introduction	4
II. Literature review	10
A. Understanding Intersectionality in DEI Policies.....	10
B. <i>Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Definitions and Core Principles</i>	12
C. Challenges of Implementing Intersectional Approaches	14
D. Best Practices in DEI Policies	20
III. Theoretical framework.....	22
A. Critical Race Theory	22
1. Tenets of Critical Race Theory	23
2. Connecting CTR to Intersectionality.....	24
B. Feminism	25
C. Intersectionality as theory	28
IV. Methodology	31
A. Ethical considerations	31
B. Limitations	31
C. Philosophy of science.....	32
D. Research approach	33
1. Fairclough's Framework for CDA	36
2. CDA as a Methodological Framework for Reflection	38
E. Data collection.....	38
F. Data Analysis	40
V. Findings	42
VI. Conclusion	74
VII. Bibliography.....	78

Abstract

Despite the increasing focus on DEI policies in corporate settings, numerous frameworks neglect to consider intersectionality, failing to recognize how various identity factors—such as ethnicity, gender, disability, and socioeconomic status—interact to influence workplace disparities. This research aimed to evaluate the efficacy of DEI policies in addressing the intricacies of disadvantaged identities and to investigate potential enhancements for achieving more inclusive and equitable results.

The research used a social constructivist framework, which emphasizes the role of social context and shared meanings in shaping individual experiences and identities, to analyze the formulation of corporate policy DEI. This framework was chosen for its ability to incorporate intersectionality theory, CRT, and neoliberal criticisms of DEI, and it also utilized CDA and qualitative content analysis to examine the DEI policies of Unilever, EU, European Energy, and BE-IT, concentrating on policy language, institutional transparency, and organizational commitments.

The study indicates that existing DEI policies emphasize gender diversity while offering less consideration to ethnic, disability, and socioeconomic inequalities. Diversity is frequently characterized as a business advantage associated with innovation and efficiency rather than a fundamental commitment to social justice. Although policies articulate official pledges to inclusion, they lack precise enforcement mechanisms, management accountability, and quantifiable diversity goals, depending instead on volunteer efforts and symbolic actions like Employee Resource Groups (ERGs).

This study significantly advances the field of DEI and organizational policy analysis by demonstrating that many corporate DEI initiatives are more about appearance than actual change. It underscores the practical implications of intersectional, enforceable DEI frameworks that include explicit accountability mechanisms, data-driven progress assessment, and structural reforms. By addressing these deficiencies, businesses can move beyond mere promises and implement inclusive policies that actively dismantle fundamental obstacles in the workplace.

I. Introduction

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) management is deeply rooted in the fields of organizational behavior and psychology, with the concepts of diversity, equality, and inclusion forming its foundational pillars. Each of these concepts has multiple definitions, reflecting their evolving significance across time. However, the term diversity management originated in the 1960s US Civil Rights Movement, which aimed to achieve societal equality as well as economic and educational opportunities for racial and ethnic minorities, mostly via the promotion of tolerance. (Beavers, 2018)

During this period, various affirmative action laws and guidelines were based on various ideologies which have taken shape during the struggle for equality. One such ideology, known as color blindness, contends that racial identities are irrelevant and should be accordingly ignored or downplayed. However, research has demonstrated that this method has a detrimental impact on crucial conclusions, especially for ethnic minorities (Wasieleski & Weber, 2024). These include decreased well-being, disrupted intergroup relationships, and worse career and academic achievements.

A further quintessential approach to societal integration is multiculturalism. Unlike tolerance-based models, multiculturalism stresses the importance of respecting, celebrating, and normalizing everyone's culture and identity. This strategy encourages inclusiveness and recognizes the importance of diversity. Research supports that multiculturalism leads to desirable results such as social cohesiveness, reciprocal understanding, and equal opportunity for all societal members.

In advancing diversity management research, Harrison and Klein (2007) conceptualized three types of diversity: variety, separation, and disparity (Wasieleski & Weber, 2024). *Variety diversity* is defined as differences in type or category, such as "race, gender, or religion", and is best quantified with classification scales such as Blau's index (Wasieleski & Weber, 2024). *Separation diversity* refers to variations in "values, attitudes, or beliefs", such as biases or

convictions, and should be evaluated with interval scales, usually standard deviation. Finally, *disparity diversity* measures variations in valued resources, such as prestige, position, or money, and is best assessed using ratio scales like the Gini coefficient (Wasioleski & Weber, 2024).

This diversity framework, which is based on both contemporary research and historical ideology, provides an organized method for managing and evaluating diversity in businesses and society at large.

In order to promote inclusive workplaces, it is essential to investigate how DEI policies and management tools have been applied within organizations, building on the fundamental theories of diversity management. The development of DEI projects has been influenced by a number of ideas, including multiculturalism and color blindness, but an organization can use other methods as well. To address diversity, equity, and inclusion, DEI management includes a broad range of tactics, from formal policies to unofficial practices (Wasioleski & Weber, 2024). In addition to examining the importance of DEI policies, this study will discuss various management tools such as mentorship programs, resource groups, and training programs. One can comprehend how organizations can fully address DEI difficulties by investigating a range of tools. By exploring policies and other management techniques, I hope to show how they work in conjunction to bring about significant change in organizations (Wasioleski & Weber, 2024).

Diversity policies, often known as DEI policies, are usually high-profile declarations outlining an organization's DEI goals. They can take many different shapes, ranging from general policies that express an organization's dedication to DEI to more specialized ones that control recruiting, training, or diversity objectives. Although DEI policies are frequently hailed as comparatively low-effort best practices for businesses, different demographic groups within businesses have differing opinions about them, and even the same policy, presented differently, may receive varying degrees of support from various groups (Cerullo, 2025).

But to what extent do these policies work? Regardless of the actual degree of prejudice, members of privileged groups are much more unlikely to recognize unfair treatment of disadvantaged groups in organizations with diversity policies (Berwick, 2025). These policies have a risk to simply mask the injustice of the status quo rather than elevate it when they are implemented in isolation as simple "fix-alls" without any additional systems for accountability (Berwick, 2025). This is especially true if they are seen as passive HR regulations rather than

commitments that call for proactive leadership effort to fulfill. Even the best-written DEI policies, crafted by knowledgeable DEI practitioners, have the potential—and frequently do—to cause more harm than good when implemented alone (Cerullo, 2025). Therefore, to explore these concerns, the research question guiding this study is: ***To what extent do current DEI policies recognize and address the complex realities of individuals with intersecting marginalized identities?***

In addition to DEI policies facing various challenges, DEI training also has implementation issues. DEI training seeks to promote a better knowledge of identity and inequality concerns through formats such as "Courageous Conversations," "Sensitivity Training," "Allyship Training," and "Unconscious Bias Training." For instance, "Unconscious Bias Training" assists participants in identifying prejudices, especially those they are not aware of, whereas "Allyship Training" encourages people with socially privileged identities to assist their colleagues with socially disadvantaged identities (Kinne, 2025). Ineffective training can create bitterness among participants, simplify complicated, centuries-old topics into categories of "good" and "bad" behaviors, and even result in emotionally upsetting or verbally abusive discussions (Propper, 2024). In one extreme instance of a badly done training, a participant branded another "a white supremacist bigot," which resulted in a heated altercation without the facilitator intervening (Heterodox Academy, 2024). This draws attention to the possible dangers of poorly planned and executed DEI training. These difficulties highlight the need for a more deliberate and methodical approach to DEI training, making sure that it successfully supports DEI policy.

As a result, whereas DEI policies and training initiatives are important parts of diversity management, their effectiveness primarily rests on how well they work together and whether accountability mechanisms are in place (Heterodox Academy, 2024). Organizations must use an integrative strategy that brings together training, policy, and additional management tools in a way that promotes long-lasting, significant change if they are to effectively address DEI concerns.

Discrimination in work environments is a worldwide occurrence, even though the precise aspects of identity and social standing impacted by injustice and discrimination vary from country to country (Miller, 2023). A more concrete example is the #Metoo movement, which was launched in 2006 by activist Tarana Burke and gained global traction in 2017 after Harvey

Weinstein, a prominent film producer, was accused of sexual harassment. With tens of millions of tweets and hundreds of articles, #MeToo was a social media-driven movement that brought sexual assault, harassment, The movement's impacts are beginning to show five years later (Miller, 2023). By enabling victims to tell their tales, the #MeToo movement unquestionably increased the reporting of sexual assault and abuse. Arrests also increased, albeit little. However, opinions on the movement's advantages are divided; in a US research, 61% of women felt that the current spotlight on sexual assault had a beneficial effect, but just 25% of men agreed. Following the #MeToo movement, a 2019 study revealed that 60% of male managers felt uncomfortable socializing, working alone with, or mentoring women (Miller, 2023). This represents a 32% increase in discomfort compared to the previous year, and 36% of managers said that their discomfort is due to concerns that any interaction with women would be viewed negatively. Senior-level males are more likely than ever to be hesitant to meet one-on-one with junior-level women, which exacerbates this tendency (Miller, 2023).

At the same time, gender-related harassment rose during the peak of the movement, whereas more overt forms of sexual harassment, such as unwelcome sexual attention and sexual coercion, declined between 2016 and 2018. The #MeToo backlash, as the phenomenon came to be known, only got worse in 2019 (Miller, 2023). Women's worries that men would just keep intimidating them more covertly and men's fears of unjust accusations both grew, which had a terrible effect on men's desire to engage with women in mentoring, recruiting, and travelling.

Even if this is only one instance, there are some grim lessons that could be learned from it. We are not anywhere near where we should be as a society and our attempts to be good could have unanticipated repercussions and cause harm that we are not equipped to deal with. It is naive to suppose that the world's trajectory will lead us naturally towards equity and that all we need to do is follow the tide to finally reach it, even if DEI work is done on a daily basis. There is no such thing; if DEI is attained, it has been achieved because everyone has made the deliberate, careful effort to do what they can and do it correctly place (Heterodox Academy, 2024). Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum says it well when she uses the metaphor of a moving airport walkway, or a conveyor belt, to describe racism. I believe the metaphor applies effectively to other systemic inequities, too.

“ Active racist behavior is equivalent to walking fast on the conveyor belt. The person engaged in active racist behavior has identifies with the ideology of white supremacy and is

moving with it. Passive racist behavior is equivalent to standing still on the walkway.'' (Tatum, 2021)

Too many of us believe that we are already effective antiracists, advocates for women, LGBTQ+ individuals, persons with disabilities, and others just by turning around and fighting against the injustice. However, as this analogy effectively demonstrates, no matter what one goals are, they must make a certain amount of progress—possibly even objective progress—in order to claim that they are truly making a difference (Miller, 2023).

There is no denying in the existence and continued relevance of racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, and other types of prejudice and discrimination. Diversity should not be completely disregarded for this reason; there is not an option to overlook valuable aspects while eliminating flaws (Miller, 2023). It is crucial to refrain from depriving people of their agency by promoting the idea that marginalized groups will always and inevitably be treated as second-class citizens (Ruffaner, 2024). I believe that these viewpoints reveal a more profound kind of discrimination. The transformative power of diversity and inclusion is overlooked by initiatives that imply people are incapable of overcoming stigmas associated with their gender, ethnicity, or physical limitations. The values of empowerment and equity are more important than ever in these fields.

Additionally, a narrative has been developed around identity, which holds that it is the only duty of an organization to assure it is doing all within its ability to make employees feel like they belong. It is worth noting that they are travelling on a six-lane highway, not a one-way or a bi-directional one. To effectively tackle this problem, a change in viewpoint is necessary, which is why this conversation presents the idea of "iversity''(Miller, 2023). The word "diversity" and its linguistic origins are worth considering. The first three letters, "div," are found in terms like "divide," "division," and "divorce," all of which imply separation. (Heterodox Academy, 2024). Nevertheless, it is frequently assumed that variety will promote unity. This is not because diversity is inherently bad, but rather because its existing connotations may restrict its ability to incorporate more expansive, inclusive objectives. This raises significant considerations about how diversity is viewed and how it may be reinterpreted. (Heterodox Academy, 2024). Iniversity places a strong emphasis on appreciating and respecting people for who they are, their identities, and the distinctive contributions they make. Its main goal is to promote genuine inclusion for all

people by emphasizing their similarities and shared values rather than their differences (Miller, 2023).

Perhaps DEI efforts should have been approached from within rather than from an external perspective. This shift requires self-reflection and a deeper examination of individual behaviors and beliefs. Many people, in their desire to fit in and avoid exclusion from their communities, often act in ways that contradict their own inner convictions. This dynamic is well illustrated by Solomon Asch's 1950s conformity experiments, which revealed the extent to which an individual's personal beliefs can be influenced by the opinions of a group.

Asch discovered that in order to fit in with the group, people were prepared to overlook reality and provide a false response. In the conformity trials, about 75% of the subjects at least once followed the group's lead. When the trials were combined, the findings showed that about one-third of the time, individuals gave the wrong group response (Solomon, 1952). To find out what factors affected whether and how people conformed, Asch carried out more studies. He discovered that when there are more individuals around, conformity tends to rise. Likewise, the raise is present when other group members have a greater social standing or when the task grows more challenging. However, when individuals might respond in private, conformity tends to decline (Solomon, 1952).

More general institutional environments, like DEI projects, where organizational constraints and dominant narratives may affect ideas of justice and inclusiveness, clearly show this inclination to fit the dominant group. Under the cover of progress, Ruffaner (2024) explores how DEI language may sometimes support exclusionary actions instead of promoting actual diversity, equality, and inclusion. Institutions may embrace DEI frameworks without critically evaluating their impact, sometimes favoring conformity above tangible equity, much as people in Asch's experiments changed their responses to match group expectations.

II. Literature review

A. Understanding Intersectionality in DEI Policies

Because human identity is intrinsically complex and multidimensional, each person has dimensions of identity that influence their own viewpoints and life experiences. Gender, race, ethnicity, physical ability, social status, religion, sexual orientation, and many more traits are covered by these layers. Every layer of identity has its own advantages and disadvantages that affect how people conduct both their professional and personal lives (Intersectionality: What It Is and How It Fits Into DEI | WorkTango, n.d.). Women may have different experiences at work than males, for example, just as people of color, transgender people, individuals with disabilities, and people who follow certain religious practices may have quite different experiences at work. In a similar vein, people from a lower socioeconomic strata who use public transit, single parents who balance work and parental duties, immigrants adjusting to new cultural norms, veterans returning to civilian life, new hires adjusting to company culture, and long-term employees all contribute unique perspectives influenced by their particular situations (Intersectionality: What It Is and How It Fits Into DEI | WorkTango, n.d.).

American law scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the word "intersectionality" in 1989 to draw attention to the ways in which race, class, gender, and other personal traits overlap and interact to shape people's lives. Crenshaw criticized the 1965 Civil Rights Act's ability to combat racism, claiming that the legal system's interpretation of discrimination exposed the "conceptual limitations... of single-issue analysis."

Moving forward to 2015, the term "intersectionality" was included in the the Oxford English Dictionary, which gained mainstream recognition (Coaston, 2019). Following President Donald Trump's inauguration in 2017, it attracted even more international notice during the Women's March. The demonstrations showed how several types of oppression cross and intensify one another in the lives of underprivileged people, highlighting the interconnectedness of issues like sexism, racism, ableism, and ageism (Coaston, 2019).

Intersectionality now includes a broad spectrum of human rights, social challenges, and identities. It captures the intricacy of personal experiences molded by multiple identities, duties, and situations. For example, a person could be an IT director, a Harvard graduate, a member of the Latin diaspora, and somebody with a handicap from sports-related injuries all at the same time (Coaston, 2019). Depending on the situation and the degree of confidence in their surroundings, these complex identities may come to light or stay hidden. As a result, intersectionality is an essential foundation for tackling the challenges of inclusion and developing work environments that respect the entire spectrum of human variation.

The term "workplace identity" refers to the unique characteristics and life experiences that people bring to their jobs, including socioeconomic status, gender, race, and ethnicity. It is essential to recognize and value such identities as they have a big influence on a person's sense of involvement, belonging, and general work satisfaction (Bashin, n.d). Employees are more inclined to cooperate effectively, make significant contributions, and stay deeply committed to their company when they believe their identities are acknowledged and cherished. Additionally, a diverse workforce encourages improved decision-making, increased creativity, and more efficient problem-solving, all of which stimulate innovation and organizational success. In addition to being morally right, businesses may gain a competitive edge by embracing identity diversity (Bashin, n.d).

A major benefit of implementing intersectionality into DEI efforts is the designing of more complex policies and practices. Employers may better meet the varied demands of their employees by embracing the intricate nature of crossing identities. Programs aimed at fostering gender diversity, for instance, could not be successful if they fail to take into consideration the amassed obstacles women of color or those from a lower socioeconomic background experience.

Additionally, intersectional understanding improves visibility and representation in enterprises. It guarantees that under-represented views are respected and included at all stages, from entry-level jobs to managerial positions (Cuadra, 2023). Staff retention and contentment may rise as a result of this strategy's promotion of a culture where people feel valued, heard, and seen. Thus, recognizing intersectionality fosters empathy, while it lessens prejudice and discrimination against people with overlapping oppressed identities (Cuadra, 2023).

B. *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Definitions and Core Principles*

The fundamental ideas of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are essential for creating inclusive work environments and advancing justice in businesses. By valuing the diversity of viewpoints and experiences, these guidelines not only encourage the creation of fair workplaces but also foster creativity, employee engagement, and organizational success.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are terms commonly used across multiple domains, usually eliciting both negative and positive reactions. Despite being widely used, these ideas are still up for controversy and lack consensus definitions (Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). Researchers have taken a variety of approaches to the idea of diversity in organizational contexts. Biemann and Kearney (2010), for instance, expanded upon Harrison and Klein's (2007) framework by categorizing workgroup diversity into three dimensions: disparity, separation, and variety.

In recent years, the abbreviation DEI has become more well-known for combining diversity, equity, and inclusion. Although the word was not created by a single person, its usage indicates a growing understanding of the necessity to go beyond diversity alone. DEI highlights the need of creating an inclusive atmosphere, guaranteeing opportunity equity, and diversifying the workforce. Enhancing workers' quality of life, allowing them to progress in their professions, and optimizing their potential inside organizations all depend on these factors.

Karl Weick (1979), an organizational theorist, offers an alternative viewpoint on diversity. According to Weick, a company has to reflect the variety of its external environment in order to operate well. This concept focuses how crucial it is to match internal variety with the larger environment in which the company functions in order to guarantee its success, relevance, and flexibility.

After the Hudson Institute's Workforce 2000 study for the U.S. Department of Labor was released in the 1980s, the term "diversity" became an increasingly prevalent buzzword and attracted a lot of interest. According to this seminal analysis, which predicted shortages in labor by the year 2000, women, African Americans/Blacks, Latinos/as, and immigrants would make up five-sixths of the U.S. workforce (Johnston & Packer, 1987). Many years later, writer Pamela

Newkirk (n.d.) pointed out that workplace diversity programs have mostly fallen short of achieving true equality in the United States' largest corporations and sectors.

In order to eliminate structural impediments that have traditionally led to uneven outcomes, equity focuses on ensuring every individual is treated fairly and has access to chances for growth (Luberisse, 2003). Equity acknowledges that every person has unique requirements and difficulties, in contrast to equality, which places a strong emphasis on treating everyone equally (Luberisse, 2003). By offering chances and resources that are specifically designed to help everyone thrive, it seeks to level the playing field. In order to ensure that opportunities and resources are allocated in ways that take into consideration different needs and situations, equity is especially important for resolving inequities in historically marginalized groups (Luberisse, 2003).

The process of creating spaces where people and groups feel appreciated, supported, respected, and accepted is known as inclusion (Sabharwal et al., 2024). It places a strong emphasis on proactive measures to foster a feeling of community and guarantees that every voice is respected and heard. Beyond symbolic representation, inclusive workplaces encourage enabling everyone to participate completely, irrespective of their identity or background. Inclusion improves teamwork and collaboration, which eventually leads to a more positive and effective corporate culture (Sabharwal et al., 2024).

The basis of DEI is a set of fundamental ideas that direct its application and practice in businesses. These guidelines highlight the need of taking a proactive, diversified approach to resolving structural injustices and fostering inclusive environments:

- *Devotion to Continuous Learning:* Companies are urged to foster an environment that values continuing education and introspection about diversity, equity, and inclusion. To guarantee relevance and efficacy, this entails consistently updating information, comprehending changing issues, and incorporating new tactics into organizational procedures. (Roberson, 2013)
- *Active Advocacy:* In order for DEI initiatives to be successful, active involvement is necessary in place of passive acknowledgement. In order to be an advocate, one must support minority groups, fight structural barriers, and stand by programs that promote

representation and equal opportunity. In order to bring about significant change, this active participation is essential. (Roberson, 2013)

- *Intersectionality*: To create truly inclusive places, it is crucial to acknowledge and address how people's identities—such as race, gender, socioeconomic position, and more—are interrelated and overlap. This approach places a strong emphasis on comprehending the particular difficulties experienced by people who are straddling many marginalized identities and adjusting remedies appropriately. (Dobbin, 2009)
- *Accountability and Transparency*: Open communication and quantifiable results are essential for successful DEI initiatives. Building trust and exhibiting a sincere commitment to diversity and inclusion need establishing precise criteria to assess projects and guaranteeing openness in procedures and advancement. (Dobbin, 2009)

These guidelines illustrate how important it is for firms to have a thorough and coordinated approach to DEI. Organizations may help create inclusive and equitable environments by tackling the issues of diversity, equality, and inclusion via advocacy, education, intersectionality, and accountability. In the end, these initiatives are crucial components in the construction of a society that is more equitable and just.

C. Challenges of Implementing Intersectional Approaches

There are several obstacles to overcome when implementing intersectional methods in organizations, and success depends on how well these obstacles are handled. The intricacy of addressing several aspects of identity at once may be difficult for many people to understand, which might hinder the successful implementation of intersectional frameworks. This understanding gap is frequently caused by a lack of exposure to the idea and inadequate instruction on its real-world applications.

However, Nevertheless, the difficulties in using intersectional approaches not only reduce their efficacy but also fuel more general problems in DEI initiatives, undermining the core values

of equity in corporate environments. The literature on organizational psychology has long recognized the importance of these concepts, which are referred to as the four forms of organizational justice: distributive justice, informational justice, procedural justice, and interpersonal justice, in upholding equity and confidence in institutions (Colquitt, 2001)..

In terms of procedural justice, DEI efforts can be seen as a violation because they often create and promote policies that are inherently unjust. These regulations usually rely on unchangeable, job-irrelevant traits like race, gender, and ethnicity, which are discriminatory in addition to being unrelated to a person's skills or credentials (Volodzko, 2024). By putting such regulations into place, companies run the risk of developing a system in which people are treated unfairly since decisions are made based on characteristics that shouldn't be taken into account, from hiring to promotions. Additionally, DEI programs frequently develop and support structures that result in an unfair allocation of benefits and resources. This strategy puts superficial traits ahead of merit, which might result in unequal opportunities, acknowledgement, and distribution of resources (Volodzko, 2024).

In terms of distributive justice, DEI policies have the potential to distort the allocation of benefits, chances, and assets in a way that prioritizes some groups over others on the basis of superficial characteristics, so compromising equity (Volodzko, 2024). When workers believe that choices are being made based on criteria extraneous to their actual performance or ability, these regulations may also make them feel unfairly treated.

DEI efforts may also be lacking in the domain of informational justice. The purpose and consequences of DEI policies are frequently not transparent (Ruffaner, 2024a).. Although the justification for these programs is occasionally offered as being for the benefit of society as a whole and the welfare of workers, the actual ramifications and repercussions of these policies are rarely made explicit (Volodzko, 2024). False claims on the efficacy of DEI initiatives frequently mask the fact that these regulations may inadvertently reinforce prejudice and inequality. Organizational trust and fairness are undermined when promises are not met and results are not achieved.

Lastly, the very way that DEI programs are implemented may jeopardize interpersonal justice. Policies that value group traits over individual talent may cause employees to feel excluded or disenfranchised, which might lead to animosity and division (Volodzko, 2024).

These programs may result in situations where some workers receive special consideration while others are left out, which might undermine respect and equitable treatment in interpersonal relationships at work.

The fundamental tenets of organizational justice are frequently at odds with DEI activities. Despite their potential to advance equity and inclusivity, their implementation may result in prejudice, animosity, and disunity (Ruffaner, 2024a)... DEI policies in their current form run the danger of fostering a climate of inequality where justice and openness are endangered, rather than improving the welfare of all employees.

A study conducted by Epps and Kendall (1995) that aimed to determine the strongest arguments for DEI programs and investigate the best ways to implement them found three well-known theories that could be used as believable explanations for the well-meaning endeavors behind DEI. Even these arguments, however, fall short in defending DEI procedures as they are widely used, exposing serious flaws. In actuality, it seems that DEI efforts frequently contradict or ignore these notions in addition to failing to adequately substantiate them (Epps and Kendall, 1995). The similarity attraction paradigm, which holds that people are more drawn to others they think are similar to themselves, is one such example. This is sometimes taken to suggest that people are more attracted to those that superficially resemble them, such as in terms of gender or color, from the standpoint of DEI. This approach, however, distorts the fundamental nature of the similarity attraction paradigm. In fact, according to the idea, individuals are more drawn to others who have comparable deep-level qualities—like values, beliefs, interests, and personality traits—than to those who only have superficial similarities (Epps and Kendall, 1995). This assertion is supported by decades of psychological research, which shows that shared values and interests are significantly more effective in creating enduring bonds than physical similarities like gender or ethnicity (Epps and Kendall, 1995).

An extensive study was carried out by Harrison et al. (1998) to compare the impact of deep-level diversity against surface-level diversity on a number of workplace outcomes, including organizational commitment, coworker and supervisor satisfaction, and overall job satisfaction. Within the field of DEI, it is commonly believed that representation—the ability to see oneself mirrored among coworkers or in leadership roles—is essential to employee retention. It is commonly believed that seeing people who are similar to them in leadership roles or on their

teams creates a feeling of community and encourages them to stick around (Heterodox Academy, 2024). However, the outcomes of this investigation undermine that view. The investigation showed that deep-level diversity has a far higher link with favorable workplace outcomes (Harrison et al., 1998)

The researchers found that shared beliefs, interests, and personality traits had a major impact on group cohesiveness, a crucial component of professional satisfaction (Harrison et al., 1998). With a stronger effect on work contentment, supervisor satisfaction, and overall organizational commitment, deep-level diversity grew in significance with time. This research emphasizes that while people may first form opinions based on superficial traits or preconceived notions, these opinions are frequently changed or altered as people get to know one another better and more intimately. This is especially true in professional contexts when extended encounters convey a more thorough comprehension of coworkers' personalities, abilities, and work ethics.

The study also dwelled on the value of encouraging interdependent work activities, in which team members depend on one another's knowledge and input to be successful. Better cohesiveness and productivity result from this strategy, which promotes cooperation and fortifies ties among teams (Harrison et al., 1998). In contrast, the notion that diversity centered around surface-level traits is the key to enhancing team dynamics and workplace happiness is not entirely supported by the similarity-attraction paradigm, which is at the heart of many DEI programs. As outlined in the research, a more successful approach to attaining long-term organizational success and advancing inclusion is to cultivate strong, meaningful relationships among employees (Harrison et al., 1998).

Furthermore, based on the social identity theory, people frequently classify other people as either similar to or distinct from themselves using social categories that they find important or prominent (Islam, 2014). In social interactions, these categories are seen as noteworthy or significant, frequently impacting how people view and engage with others. This hypothesis would suggest that individuals are classified either immediately or over time according to surface-level features like gender, race, and other obvious attributes under the framework of DEI (Islam, 2014). In turn, these superficial differences influence how individuals are viewed and handled in organizations or groups. Researchers looked at the connection between social

category salience and "fault lines," which are possible divides within a varied population that might result in relatively homogeneous subgroups (Hofhuis et al., 2011).

Additionally, the study showed that individuals who believe that social categories correspond to more profound, inherent traits face real repercussions. For example, people were less willing to provide information or have cooperative conversations when they thought that the actions of their colleagues were related to these social categories (Islam, 2014). This decrease in exchange of knowledge resulted in less "information elaboration," which can hinder team creativity and problem-solving.

On the other side, information elaboration rose when disparities were recognized but not always connected to certain social groups, like gender or ethnicity. Derived from the inquiry, it might be helpful to acknowledge and value individual differences without presuming that these variations are inevitably linked to certain traits or behaviors associated with specific social categories (Hofhuis et al., 2011).

The contact hypothesis is another pertinent idea that may be used in DEI initiatives, however it is frequently misinterpreted and misused (Heterodox Academy, 2024). According to this notion, meaningful and productive relationships between two groups might lessen bias between them (Lang & Maki, 2023). The premise is that people's biases and prejudices are reduced when they interact with one another in a constructive, social setting. Four essential requirements must be fulfilled, though, in order for the contact hypothesis to be successful: first, people must be treated equally during the interaction; second, there must be collaboration and a common objective; third, the interaction must have institutional support; and fourth, the interactions must be significant and not surface-level (Lang & Maki, 2023).

In addition, DEI's emphasis on identity-based divisions also poses a challenge to the idea of shared objectives. Rather than encouraging collaboration around a common goal, DEI departments frequently turn their attention to advancing identity politics, which can occasionally resemble an ideological advocacy or "identity-based crusade". (Hofhuis et al., 2011) Although crucial, this focus on fostering individual identities and a sense of belonging might take focus away from group objectives that could bring disparate groups together around common ideals and aspirations, including resolving global issues or improving societal well-being (Lang & Maki, 2023). DEI may unintentionally split initiatives that may otherwise unite people to solve

more general challenges by giving priority to these contentious agendas (Heterodox Academy, 2024).

Furthermore, the DEI framework often undermines the foundation of collaboration by creating an environment that complicates the achievement of shared objectives. Under DEI, people or organizations may be classified as "enemies," depending on their beliefs, deeds, or even innate traits (Verwijs & Russo, 2023). They may be accused as having "internalized" biases, beliefs, or prejudices, which makes real debate and compromise all but impossible, regardless of their motivations, arguments, or value (Verwijs & Russo, 2023). In an environment where the focus is on ideological purity and the division of people into "oppressed" and "privileged" groups, it is difficult to promote respect or understanding between people.

In addition, how can real collaboration flourish when people are made to believe that certain people are born with an edge—an advantage that is not dependent on life circumstances, human decisions, upbringing, or other material characteristics like family structure or economic background? (Walton et al., 2015). Instead, the DEI narrative attributes systemic advantages or disadvantages based only on unchangeable, surface-level qualities. The intricacy of human experiences and the wide range of variables that influence a person's social standing are not taken into consideration by this framework (Walton et al., 2015). The foundation of collaboration is undermined by this dynamic, which depends on respect for one another, common objectives, and the capacity to resolve disagreements in order to grow as a group. In the end, DEI in its current form promotes division rather than unity, erecting obstacles to collaboration that impede societal advancement (Walton et al., 2015).

Plainly, the problem goes beyond critical theories and so-called "woke" ideologies; this is not only a criticism of them. DEI's own activities invalidate even the most well-meaning and rational beliefs that may theoretically explain DEI (Volodzko, 2024). DEI programs unintentionally undermine their declared objectives by accentuating identification and ideological conformity above merit and competence, perhaps establishing institutions that perpetuate inequality rather than eliminate it (Volodzko, 2024). For this reason, these methods need to be fundamentally rethought.

D. Best Practices in DEI Policies

Diverse tactics are used in best practices for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies in order to promote inclusive workplaces, eliminate structural injustices, and create settings where all workers may succeed. These methods, which have their roots in research, have been successful in bringing about significant organizational transformation. Important tactics include of the following:

- *Adopt Inclusive Policies and Practices:* Companies need to develop policies that address the various requirements of their employees. This entails adopting inclusive recruiting procedures, offering flexible work schedules, making acceptable accommodations for workers with disabilities, and guaranteeing fair access to chances for career progression. For policies to be effective and current, they should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis (Stephenson, 2024).
- *Encourage Positive Attitudes Towards Diversity:* Addressing prejudices and preconceptions via instruction and training is the first step in creating an inclusive culture. DEI initiatives have the power to dispel unconscious prejudice, increase knowledge of the advantages of diversity, and promote tolerance and acceptance of individual differences. This proactive strategy promotes an environment at work where different viewpoints are respected (Stephenson, 2024).
- *Offer Equal Career Growth Opportunities:* Companies should put in place programs like sponsorship opportunities, mentorship programs, and specialized leadership training for staff members from under-represented groups in order to guarantee parity in career growth. These initiatives enable people to realize their greatest potential and make a positive impact on a more equal workplace (Stephenson, 2024).
- *Promote Open Communication and Feedback:* It's critical to create secure, encouraging environments where staff members may freely express their experiences, worries, and suggestions. Open lines of communication foster openness, respect for one another, and trust, which helps businesses successfully

handle the particular difficulties that their employees encounter(Stephenson, 2024).

- *Interact with External Stakeholders:* Collaborating with community organisations, advocacy groups, and business executives offers important insights into contemporary DEI practices and trends. Working together with external stakeholders guarantees alignment with larger social objectives and aids businesses in improving their plans (Stephenson, 2024).
- *Establish and support Employee Resource Groups (ERGs):* ERGs provide a forum for workers from under-represented groups to interact, exchange stories, and promote change inside the company. These organizations are essential for creating a feeling of community and promoting laws that take into account the various demands of workers (Stephenson, 2024).
- *Demand Leadership Involvement:* The success of DEI projects depends on the active participation of organizational leaders. In addition to supporting DEI initiatives, leaders should provide an example of inclusivity, incorporate DEI values into their decision-making, and take responsibility for their own advancement (Stephenson, 2024).
- *Monitor and Evaluate DEI Efforts:* It is essential to routinely gather and analyze data in order to evaluate the effectiveness of DEI initiatives. Corporations may pinpoint areas for development and guarantee ongoing growth by using metrics like pay equality audits, diversity representation at all organizational levels, and employee satisfaction surveys (Stephenson, 2024).

Firms may create a work environment that values inclusion, guarantees equity, and celebrates diversity by putting these best practices into practice. By encouraging creativity, teamwork, and a closer bond with various groups, this all-encompassing strategy not only improves employee well-being but also helps the organization succeed.

III. Theoretical framework

The conceptual framework of this research is based on feminist theory, which investigates gender-based oppression, and critical race theory, which looks at the systematic basis of racial inequality. In this larger framework, Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality framework offers a critical perspective through which to examine how several interlocking identities, including race, gender, and class, influence personal experiences. By understanding that people encounter prejudice in ways that are influenced by the intersection of multiple identities, intersectionality transcends single core theories of oppression. This paradigm is especially useful for assessing DEI policies because it identifies areas in which they might not adequately address the particular circumstances of people who are straddling many marginalized identities.

A. Critical Race Theory

Scholars and activists dedicated to examining and transforming the intricate relationships among race, racism, and power have established the Critical Race Theory (CRT) movement. While CRT addresses many of the same topics as traditional civil rights and ethnic studies, it takes a more comprehensive approach by incorporating economics, history, social context, collective interests, individual perspectives, and even the unconscious (Delgado, Stefancic, & Harris, n.d.). Unlike traditional civil rights approaches, which often advocate for gradual progress, CRT challenges the core principles of the liberal system, including equality theory, legal reasoning, enlightenment rationality, and the supposed impartiality of constitutional law (Delgado, Stefancic, & Harris, n.d.).

Despite its roots in legal studies, CRT has expanded into other disciplines. In education, CRT is utilized to examine topics such as curriculum disputes, tracking, school discipline, and standardized testing (Delgado, Stefancic, & Harris, n.d.). Ethnic studies and American studies departments explore CRT's perspectives on race and privilege, particularly through critical white

studies, while political scientists apply its principles to analyze voting strategies (Delgado, Stefancic, & Harris, n.d.). What sets CRT apart is its activist stance, aiming not only to understand how society is structured along racial lines and hierarchies but also to drive transformative social change (Delgado, Stefancic, & Harris, n.d.).

1. Tenets of Critical Race Theory

1. Racism is pervasive, not unusual

According to critical race theory, racism is a common occurrence in society rather than an anomalous or exceptional occurrence. It is characterized as "normal science," the norm for society, and what most people of color encounter on a daily basis. Racism is hard to confront or eradicate because it is so ingrained in social systems. Color-blind or "formal" ideas of equality, which treat everyone equally, are insufficient to solve systemic problems and can only address the most obvious kinds of prejudice (Delgado, Stefancic, & Harris, n.d.).

2. Contextual racialization

In the view of CDA, racial justice only progresses when it serves the interests of the dominant group, especially white elites. Pursuant to this argument, racism helps white working-class people psychologically as well as materially, which reduces the motivation for more significant social change. The concept of "interest convergence" draws attention to the dominant groups' self-interest in upholding racial hierarchies. For instance, it's possible that white elites' self-interest drove the advancement of civil rights triumphs than a sincere desire to assist Black people (Delgado, Stefancic, & Harris, n.d.).

3. Alignment of interests

In the context of CRT, race is a social construct that society developed and shaped rather than a biological or genetic reality. Racial classifications are the result of social interactions and ideas; they are neither intrinsic, unchangeable, nor objective. Even though people from similar backgrounds might have certain physical qualities in common, such as pigmentation or hair texture, these attributes only make up a small percentage of genetic variations and are not very

related to other important human traits like morality, intellect, or personality. CRT highlights how society has the ability to establish, maintain, and change racial categories as it sees suitable (Delgado, Stefancic, & Harris, n.d.).

4. Race as a Construct of Society

Additionally, CRT accentuates the concept of differential racialization, which describes the evolving manner in which various racial groups are racialized at various points in time in response to social pressures, including demands from the job market. Based on the demands of the prevailing society, many racial groups have been excluded and condemned at different times throughout history. For example, society could have needed Black manpower at one point, but at another, it might have been more interested in other groups, such immigration from Mexico or Japan. Stereotypical views of race and how groups are portrayed and treated evolve along with the times (Delgado, Stefancic, & Harris, n.d.)

2. Connecting CTR to Intersectionality

The theoretical framework of this thesis readily flows into Kimberlé Crenshaw's approach to intersectionality, which adds a nuanced dimension to the examination of systemic oppression, while building upon the fundamental ideas of Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT examines how racial categories are socially formed and managed, how widespread racism is, and the sociopolitical environment in which it functions. However, CRT does not always take into consideration the various and overlapping identities that people may possess because it focuses largely on the experiences of marginalized racial groups. It is in this gap that intersectionality theory becomes relevant.

Intersectionality theory is appropriate for this study because it broadens the critical examination of race offered by CRT to include the complex reality of humanity with identities influenced by a variety of circumstances (race, gender, class, etc.). As previously mentioned, in accordance with Crenshaw's (1989) concept of intersectionality, disadvantaged populations are not subjected to discrimination on the basis of a single axis of identification.

Intersectionality and Critical Race Theory are closely related. Though critical race theory (CRT) accentuates how racism is ingrained in social institutions and how race and power are socially produced, intersectionality provides a more nuanced perspective on how these concerns are perceived differently based on how other identities interconnect. Both theories focus on systemic oppression and seek to understand how prevailing ideologies and social institutions devalue particular populations. Therefore, intersectionality is a crucial framework for examining DEI policies and their inadequacies in addressing the many and complex realities of marginalized groups. It enhances CRT by broadening its focus to include the interconnectivity of different types of inequality.

B. Feminism

Carol Hanisch, a second-wave feminist, is credited with coining the phrase "the personal is political." This statement, which captures the movement's daring challenge to established intellectual frameworks that had long restricted politics to the public domain, is still among the most well-known in feminist philosophy (Feminism: The Personal Is Political, n.d.). This phrase reinforces the feminist claim that the personal sphere is not neutral but a place where political fights over power, gender roles, and autonomy occur by highlighting the profoundly ingrained power structures inside private life (Feminism: The Personal Is Political, n.d.).

Fundamentally, feminism aims to politicize the private realm by revealing how larger power structures influence and uphold individual experiences, including domestic work, reproductive rights, and cultural norms around femininity (Satz, 2017). Feminist thinkers have challenged the conventional dominance of males in family structures and beyond by addressing women's historically disadvantaged position in the home and society (Satz, 2017). Significant ramifications have resulted from this reinterpretation, especially in fields like reproductive rights, where choices regarding one's body and medical treatment are intricately linked to political, legal, and cultural factors (Satz, 2017).

One of the feminist movement's most persistent effects is reinterpreting what is deemed 'political.' Hanisch's claim has to be interpreted in light of a more significant movement for social

change that has pushed back against the artificial division of public and private life and broadened the parameters of political debate (Onwuachi-Saunders, Dang, & Murray, 2019). By challenging and removing strict societal conventions, especially those related to maternity, domesticity, and mandated gender roles, this change has liberated women, demonstrating the transformative power of the feminist movement.

The platform for future investigations exploring how various oppressions interact and exacerbate one another was established by this seminal feminist critique of power (Onwuachi-Saunders, Dang, & Murray, 2019). Recent viewpoints emphasize that manifestations of oppression vary and are influenced by race, class, disability, sexual orientation, and other social factors. In contrast, the early feminist movement frequently focused on gender as the central location of inequity (Veenstra, 2011). This realization prioritized how discriminatory systems overlap, providing a more intricate and comprehensive method of examining inequality.

This viewpoint is especially pertinent for analyzing policies related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Similar to early feminist theories, traditional DEI frameworks have occasionally concentrated on single identities, like gender or race, without adequately addressing how several types of discrimination function concurrently (Veenstra, 2011). A more sophisticated DEI approach recognizes that people are marginalized through overlapping and interconnected systems of exclusion rather than in isolation.

For example, workplace gender equality standards may ignore the particular obstacles faced by women of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people with disabilities. By acknowledging and addressing these overlapping forms of marginalization, an intersectional DEI strategy ensures more equitable and prosperous efforts (Veenstra, 2011). Similarly, just as second-wave feminists sought to expand the definition of "political," intersectionality compels us to broaden our conceptions of justice, inclusion, and representation in modern government.

Therefore, "the personal is the political" continues to be a legacy in feminist action and in developing DEI policies that aim to identify and eliminate intricate, interconnected systems of inequality and discrimination.

Notably, feminist standpoint theory is a particular interpretation of the overarching viewpoint theory. All interpretations of viewpoint theory assert that a stance emerges when a person identifies and contests cultural beliefs and power dynamics that perpetuate the

subordination or oppression of specific groups (Wood, 2005). For example, an individual could comprehend and reject racist ideologies and power imbalances among races, seeing that these underpin the subjugation of minorities. The primary focuses of feminist standpoint theory are - recognizing cultural norms and power structures that contribute to the subjugation of girls and women and - emphasizing the unique knowledge developed via activities traditionally associated with females (Wood, 2005).

According to feminist standpoint theory, information is socially situated, which means that people from marginalized groups get insights that are frequently unavailable to members of dominant groups due to their position within social hierarchies (Hartsock, 1983). According to this epistemological assertion, those who are oppressed are able to critically examine power institutions in a manner that others who enjoy privilege frequently cannot. However, standpoint theory's original focus on gender as the primary analytical axis runs the risk of essentializing women's experiences and ignoring the various ways that sexuality, ethnicity, class, and other elements influence lived reality and knowledge (Hartsock, 1983). By highlighting how many oppressive regimes interact to produce distinct positional viewpoints that affect how people see and feel the world, intersectionality builds on standpoint theory.

This epistemic change has essential ramifications for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policy assessment.

Conventional DEI strategies frequently depend on top-down knowledge generation, in which the definition of inclusion is set by those in positions of leadership, who are often people from affluent backgrounds. This strategy ignores the lived realities of marginalized people while running the danger of reiterating dominant viewpoints. The information and perspectives of those most impacted by systemic barriers are given priority in an intersectional, standpoint-informed approach (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016). This viewpoint guarantees that policies are influenced by the realities of people traversing numerous layers of oppression rather than enforcing abstract, one-size-fits-all paradigms.

The construction of "neutral" knowledge by dominant groups, which frequently conceals systemic biases, is highlighted by feminist standpoint theory (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016). Furthermore, intersectionality shows that if DEI policies ignore the interactions between various social positions, even well-meaning policies can perpetuate exclusion. For instance, workplace

diversity programs that address gender issues can ignore how Black women differ from white women in their experiences of racial and gendered discrimination (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016). DEI policies may inadvertently perpetuate inequality by neglecting to address the compounding impacts of numerous types of marginalization if they do not adopt an intersectional viewpoint approach.

The way that hegemonic institutions govern knowledge and decision-making is also criticized by standpoint theory. If power structures stay the same, merely expanding representation inside organizations—for example, by hiring more women or people of color—does not often address structural disparities (Ahmed, 2012). This criticism is broadened by intersectionality, highlighting the need for marginalized perspectives to influence policy frameworks rather than only being included actively. An intersectional viewpoint approach aims to eliminate systemic power disparities rather than merely accommodate diversity, securing DEI initiatives expanding beyond token inclusion and making a significant structural impact (Ahmed, 2012).

C. Intersectionality as theory

As a critical framework for theory, intersectionality allows academics, decision-makers, and practitioners to analyze the intricate relationships and interdependencies among different social groups and power structures. Intersectionality offers an analytical prism through which one may comprehend how characteristics like gender, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation interplay to form people's lived experiences, especially in respect to oppression and privilege, rather than considering these categories in solitude (Atewologun, 2018). Intersectionality is an indispensable instrument for researchers and practitioners as it deepens analysis and provides complex theoretical justifications for the various ways people—particularly those belonging to historically marginalized groups—navigate organizations including the workplace. This approach accentuates that people encounter privilege and discrimination differently, even within a certain social category, like women (Atewologun, 2018). Rather, a variety of overlapping identities, such as socioeconomic class, immigrant status, handicap status, sexual orientation, and

ethnicity, influence their experiences. A more accurate and nuanced understanding of inequality and the ways that structural obstacles function differently in different social places is made possible by acknowledging these intersections.

When embracing an intersectional viewpoint researchers and practitioners may acquire a more thorough understanding of social justice issues—particularly in institutional structures and organizational settings. This increased consciousness not only aids in locating covert forms of discrimination and exclusion but also guides the development of more potent laws and programs that deal with the underlying causes of inequality (Atewologun, 2018). In the end, intersectionality is not just a theoretical idea; it is a transformational and practical strategy that optimizes the possibility of significant social change by making sure that initiatives for inclusion and equity are really sensitive to the varied realities of disadvantaged populations (Atewologun, 2018).

Intersectionality can be perceived as a critical theory which indicates how political and economic power systems impact knowledge by framing it as "situated, contextual, and relational". It disputes the concept of universal, objective knowledge by addressing the methods in which various social situations shape our understanding of the world (Atewologun, 2018).

More recently, intersectionality has gained traction within quantitative and statistical methods, broadening its applicability beyond qualitative research (Dhamoon, 2011). In this context, it contributes to a deeper understanding of how social categories interact in complex ways, whether through additive, multiplicative, or interaction effects. Quantitative approaches help researchers measure and interpret the compounded effects of privilege and disadvantage in various contexts, providing empirical evidence of intersecting inequalities (Dhamoon, 2011). By integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods, intersectionality enhances multi-dimensional analyses, making it a robust and adaptable framework for examining social stratification and systemic disparities (Dhamoon, 2011).

Theory is essential to expanding one's knowledge of the universe since it serves as the basis that distinguishes serious academic proof and data from merely seeing a phenomena, which can then be used to build new knowledge (Atewologun, 2011). Theorizing intersectionality in this context necessitates examining how one conceptualizes and evaluates the intricacies of numerous positionalities and interconnected oppressive regimes. Additionally, it entails

developing social explanations and tactics to meaningfully and transformatively overcome these layered inequities (Clarke & McCall, 2013).

According to Else-Quest and Hyde (2016), intersectionality is most compatible with social constructionist and feminist viewpoint epistemologies owing to its focus on power, identity, and lived experience. These epistemological stances deny the notion of an objective, universal viewpoint and highlight how knowledge is influenced by social location and experienced reality (Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016). Rather, they stress that marginalized people and groups have special and important perspectives on social structures because their experiences provide a critical lens through which oppressive and privileged institutions may be examined. In addition to highlighting disparities, intersectionality offers a framework for theorizing resistance, agency, and transformational change in a variety of social, political, and institutional contexts by referencing these epistemic traditions (Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016).

In social inquiry, constructionist methods essentially question the notion that meaning and interpretation can be viewed objectively (Atewologun, 2011). Social constructionism, on the other hand, contends that people's lived experiences are influenced by historical and cultural factors, which are ingrained in the social environment in which they are born. This viewpoint emphasizes how knowledge develops via social interactions and cooperative interpretation rather than being static or universal. In the words of Young and Collin (2004), social processes and interactions are what constructed the social and psychological worlds to be apparent. It also implies that reality is a socially and historically placed construct which is constantly modified by human interaction rather than an objective fact awaiting to be uncovered.

Standpoint theory offers a comparable point of view, which stresses that knowledge is situated and relational rather than merely objective (Clarke & McCall, 2013). Proponents of standpoint theory argue that people's experiences and social standing shape their viewpoints, influencing how they see and interact with the outside world. Such belief implies that knowledge depends on one's positionality within social hierarchies and power systems rather than being created independently (Clarke & McCall, 2013). Therefore, understanding that knowledge is subjective and indicative of larger political and economic power systems is necessary for theorizing via an intersectional lens (De Vries, 2015). Intersectionality draws attention to how

prevailing knowledge systems frequently favor some points of view while marginalizing others, perpetuating inequality in institutional and academic contexts.

IV. Methodology

A. Ethical considerations

This study complies with ethical research standards, guaranteeing a transparent, equitable, and respectful examination of DEI policy. This research rigorously analyzes deficiencies and obstacles in corporate diversity programs, considering the following ethical implications:

Although the study highlights the shortcomings of DEI policies, it is crucial to have a balanced viewpoint and recognize the advancements and initiatives taken by businesses to advance diversity, equality, and inclusion.

Moreover, the research is based on publicly accessible DEI policies, so no private or internal firm information is used. The report properly cites business policy, preserving the original meanings and context of the remarks.

The findings may affect organizations' approaches to DEI initiatives. To prevent inadvertent injury or misinterpretation, the research situates its critiques within wider structural and institutional structures rather than assigning faults to specific groups.

B. Limitations

Several constraints are recognized in this investigation that may influence the extent and validity of its conclusions. Initially, examining only three DEI policies may constrain the research's generalizability, as these policies, although providing insights into prevalent difficulties and deficiencies, may not comprehensively reflect all sectors or geographical

locations. A larger sample might yield a more thorough comprehension of systemic DEI concerns. The study relies exclusively on textual analysis, omitting interviews, employee experiences, or internal organizational data, which may result in an incomplete understanding of the practical implementation of these policies and their impact on work environments beyond official records. Additionally, interpretation is a fundamental component of CDA, which adds subjectivity to analyzing language, discourse, and gaps. To address this, the research employs a systematic coding methodology and utilizes known theoretical frameworks to guarantee analytical consistency. A further drawback arises from the dynamic character of DEI policies, as organizations consistently revise their frameworks in reaction to legal, social, and institutional developments. Thus, the results represent a specific moment and may not include future changes or alterations in DEI priorities. While DEI policies frequently enhance company image and reputation, the language employed may highlight inclusion while minimizing underlying obstacles, resulting in possible bias in corporate communication. This research can only evaluate the rhetoric around policies, lacking access to internal organizational data, or employee viewpoints. It so cannot assess their actual influence on workplace inclusion and diversity.

C. Philosophy of science

The subsequent chapters will explore the epistemological and ontological dimensions essential for comprehensive research. This encompasses factors influencing the execution of the chosen procedures and data based on an ontological comprehension of the essence of social entities (Bryman, 2012). These factors include but are not limited to cultural norms, historical events, and social structures. Additionally, there will be an epistemological emphasis on the qualifiers and limitations of our understanding of knowing. This study is grounded in a research paradigm of social constructivism. The social constructivist approach perceives "reality" as a construct produced by societal influences, highlighting that people are intrinsically social beings affected by their interactions. Constructivism asserts that individuals form society, which then influences individuals, indicating that we shape the world as it exists (Onuf, 2013).

This notion also corresponds with Kenneth J. Gergen's four essential principles of social constructivism (Akakpo, 2022). The terminology employed to characterize the universe may not accurately correspond to the actual world, as language is a social construct and fails to offer a flawless depiction of reality. Secondly, our co-created social ties profoundly affect our experience of reality. Thus, the general conception of the universe is influenced by social interactions and constantly develops, rendering one's reality dynamic rather than static. This stress on the role of social interactions in shaping reality makes one feel connected and part of a larger social fabric. Third, a person's worldview shapes their future. Ultimately, based on the idea that the understanding of reality is collaboratively constructed and dynamic, existing knowledge of the world must be evaluated to enhance future well-being. (Akakpo, 2022).

Expanding on this understanding, it is essential to acknowledge the distinctions between constructivism and many materialist perspectives, including positivism, empiricism, Marxism, and behaviorism. These viewpoints frequently downplay the importance of language, the interpretive structures of science, the conceptual bias of observation, and the cognitive engagement in constructing knowledge. Instead of following strict procedures and pursuing complete objectivity, constructivism asserts that knowledge is dynamic and formed through ongoing reinterpretation and social interaction. Constructivism prioritizes a dynamic process of functional adaptation above a fixed alignment between learning and the external environment. New information is perpetually absorbed and redefined based on previous experiences and changing situations. This approach emphasizes the mind's active participation in shaping and interpreting reality, empowering the audience as co-creators of knowledge rather than passive recipients of externally imposed realities. Constructivism promotes an active and reflective audience by underscoring the participatory aspect of knowledge building, stressing the collaborative character of meaning-making in research and broader societal contexts.

D. Research approach

The analysis section of this thesis aims to examine and assess the degree of intersectionality found in three business companies' DEI policies. In particular, the study

examines how various social identities, including race, gender, socioeconomic status, and disability, interact to produce distinct experiences of privilege and oppression. It will analyze these policies' language, structure, and inclusiveness to accomplish this. This study will utilize a qualitative content analysis technique, concentrating on the textual components of the policies to discern themes about inclusion, representation, and the acknowledgment of intersecting social identities.

The analysis will look at several important questions which will provide important input for solving the research question “ *To what extent do current DEI policies recognize and address the complex realities of individuals with intersecting marginalized identities, and how can they be improved to ensure more effective inclusion?* ”.

Thus, some of these questions are: “ *In what manner are intersectional problems articulated within the policies?* ” “ *Do DEI projects encompass numerous aspects of identity, or do they concentrate on solitary categories such as race or gender?* ” The research will also examine concerns stemming from the policies' inadequacies, such as tokenism, which refers to making only a symbolic effort to include members of underrepresented groups, simplifying intricate social issues, and inadequate engagement with the complete range of intersectional identities.

This study adopts an abductive research technique to assess DEI policies that balance theoretical reflection and data-driven investigation. In contrast to purely inductive approaches that extract patterns exclusively from empirical observations, abduction facilitates an iterative process wherein discoveries enrich and enhance theoretical views (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). This methodology is especially pertinent for policy study, as DEI policies frequently encompass implicit and explicit depictions of social classifications, power dynamics, and institutional objectives (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). This study uses abduction to stay receptive to unforeseen ideas while also considering established frameworks that elucidate how DEI policies formulate and convey essential concepts (Reichert, 2007). This adaptability guarantees that analysis is directed by empirical patterns, free from preconceived notions or inflexible theoretical obligations (Reichert, 2007).

As previously mentioned, conceptually, there will be wild application of social constructivism, a lense that serves as a framework for interpreting emergent themes. Social

constructivism asserts that social realities are not stable nor objective; instead, they are molded by speech, institutional practices, and communal meaning-making practices (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Within the framework of this research, DEI policies are regarded as discursive artifacts that facilitate the social formation of identity classifications, power dynamics, and organizational pledges to diversity. This study uses social constructivism to understand how the policies express, stress, or omit social conceptions, thereby enriching the analysis with a critical and interpretative lens (Phillips et al., 2004).

The analytical process adopts an exploratory and iterative methodology. Initially, policy texts are analyzed to discern repeating themes, essential terminology, and foundational diversity, equity, and inclusion assumptions. Qualitative content analysis is undertaken, focusing on the policies' explicit statements and the discursive patterns, omissions, and inconsistencies present within them (Schreier, 2012). The process is iterative, meaning that as new themes or patterns emerge, they are revisited and reanalyzed in the context of the entire dataset. This ensures a comprehensive analysis and a deeper understanding of the policies' implications (Schreier, 2012).

After identifying themes, they are further analyzed through social constructivist viewpoints. This reflective phase entails establishing links between the facts and theoretical concepts and examining how the policies influence broader discussions like identity, power, and institutional transformation (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Instead of regarding social constructivism as a theory subject to empirical testing, it is employed as an interpretative instrument that enriches analytical depth (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). For example, suppose policies primarily characterize diversity in rigid categorical terms (e.g., gender, ethnicity, disability) without recognizing intersectionality or fluidity. This may indicate a constrained or essentialist conception of identity, which can be critically analyzed through a constructivist perspective (Phillips et al., 2004). If policies prioritize individual accountability for inclusion instead of tackling structural obstacles, this may indicate a neoliberal interpretation of DEI that corresponds with more expansive institutional narratives.

Lastly, by applying CDA, this study seeks to reveal how DEI policies formulate and disseminate concepts of diversity. Since policies are not neutral or simply descriptive documents but rather discursive tools that influence and mirror institutional and societal power structures,

CDA offers a method for elucidating the ideological assumptions, power dynamics, and social ramifications inherent in policy language (Fairclough, 1989). This research uses CDA to transcend a superficial analysis of DEI policies, critically examining their meaning construction, the interests they represent, and the power dynamics they either uphold or contest (Fairclough, 1992).

1. Fairclough's Framework for CDA

Norman Fairclough (1989) established a systematic framework for CDA that conceptualizes discourse as a social activity that mirrors and influences social reality. His paradigm is especially significant for policy research as it highlights the dialectical interplay between language, power, and ideology, illustrating how speech shapes and is shaped by larger institutional and cultural frameworks. Fairclough's methodology is grounded in Critical Theory, namely the concepts of hegemony articulated by Antonio Gramsci (Gramsci, 1971) and symbolic power proposed by Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 2009), which underscore the mechanisms by which dominant groups sustain power via discourse.

Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis has three interconnected levels of examination:

- Textual study (Micro-level): This study concentrates on the linguistic characteristics of the policy papers, encompassing vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, and rhetorical techniques. This entails analyzing how specific word selections and discursive techniques shape diversity, equity, and inclusion interpretations. For instance, examining the usage of passive vs active speech in policy ("Inclusion is encouraged" versus "We actively promote inclusion") can elucidate the dynamics of agency and responsibility. Likewise, recognizing euphemisms, abstractions, and presuppositions can reveal underlying ideological stances. Policies may employ ambiguous terminology like "striving for equity" instead of committing to specific activities, indicating a perhaps performative posture on diversity rather than meaningfully. (Fairclough, 1992)

- Discursive Practices (Meso-level): This level analyzes DEI policies' production, distribution, and consumption within institutional contexts. This entails examining the intertextuality of policy documents—specifically, their references to or alignment with other texts, frameworks, or institutional discourses. Policies may integrate wording from international diversity charters, business best practices, or government rules, reflecting their congruence with more significant discursive trends. This level examines the entities that can influence policy discourse, including marginalized groups, legislative mandates, and corporate branding factors. The Meso-level study examines the interpretation and implementation of these policies in practice, highlighting any discrepancies between rhetoric and institutional action. (Fairclough, 1992)
- Social Practices (Macro-level): At the macro-level, Critical Discourse Analysis contextualizes the findings within extensive socio-political and historical frameworks, investigating how Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policies perpetuate or contest dominant power systems. This phase examines the broader ideological influences that inform policy discourse, including neoliberalism, postcolonialism, and intersectionality (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Suppose policies conceptualize diversity mainly as an economic advantage that boosts production rather than a moral or social justice necessity. In that case, this indicates a neoliberal narrative that commodifies diversity instead of confronting fundamental injustices. Likewise, if policies primarily prioritize gender representation while overlooking racial or disability inclusion, this may indicate the Eurocentric and discriminatory characteristics of conventional diversity rhetoric. Through a critical examination of these expansive discursive frameworks, CDA elucidates the types of inequality that are highlighted and those that are obscured within policy terminology (Fairclough, 1992).

2. CDA as a Methodological Framework for Reflection

A core tenet of CDA is its overtly critical perspective; it describes discourse and scrutinizes its function in upholding or contesting power dynamics (Fairclough, 1992). This corresponds with this study's constructivist and abductive approach since the analysis stays receptive to emergent themes while sustaining a critical perspective on how language shapes reality. A key advantage of CDA is its capacity to reveal concealed ideologies and inconsistencies within DEI policies, shown by cases where such regulations appear progressive while covertly perpetuating discriminatory norms (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). This critical perspective is a challenge to question the status quo and strive for more equitable policies.

Furthermore, CDA is based on the notion that discourse is not static but rather dynamic, indicating that policy language adapts in reaction to social pressures, activism, and institutional agendas. This study enhances how DEI commitments are influenced by internal institutional politics and external sociocultural pressures by analyzing the engaging and evolving discourse of diversity policies across time (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 2021).

This study integrates CDA with an abductive, social constructivist methodology, ensuring that the analysis is both data-driven and theoretically informed, so providing a critical and nuanced perspective on the functioning of DEI policies as discursive tools of power. This method identifies themes within policy texts and examines how these themes are utilized in institutional narratives, the interests they represent, and the social repercussions they generate (Van Dijk, 1993). This approach finally elucidates the latent ideological frameworks underpinning DEI discourse, exposing diversity policies' potential and constraints in promoting substantive institutional transformation (Gramsci, 1971).

E. Data collection

The present investigation delves into three DEI policies across various industries, geographical contexts, and organizational sizes. This exploration aims to comprehensively

understand companies' efforts in implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. These policies are selected based on their relevance to DEI, industry diversity, and recent publication dates, ensuring a contemporary analysis. The significant commitment of these companies to DEI initiatives, as evidenced by their comprehensive policies and strategies, is truly inspiring.

The initial policy originates from Unite.EU (n.d), an European-based B2B e-commerce platform links businesses with suppliers via digital procurement solutions (Compliance at Unite, 2025). Unite's presence in many European markets makes its approach to diversity, equality, and inclusion particularly pertinent for examining how technology-driven B2B firms incorporate DEI principles into their corporate governance and workplace culture. Unite's DEI strategy, as a facilitator of business networks, provides a distinctive viewpoint on the engagement of digital platforms with inclusion initiatives outside conventional employment structures (Compliance at Unite, 2025). This is a significant case study for comprehending corporate DEI policies in the e-commerce and technology industries, where inclusion is increasingly regarded as an ethical and operational need.

The second policy originates from European Energy, a Denmark-based renewable energy company. European Energy emphasizes sustainability and innovation; however, similar to numerous companies in the renewable energy sector, it encounters difficulties cultivating a diverse workforce (Mlhs, 2025). The energy sector continues to exhibit a predominance of male representation, especially in technical and leadership positions. This policy selection aims to analyze how companies in the renewable energy sector manage diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) alongside the demands of a technical workforce and environmental objectives. European Energy's proactive approach to these challenges provides valuable insights into the complexities of achieving diversity in the renewable energy sector.

The third policy originates from BE-it (2024), a technology firm focused on digital solutions and innovation. The technology sector has undergone significant examination regarding its insufficient diversity, especially within engineering and leadership positions (Be-IT Resourcing Ltd, 2023). This analysis examines how an emerging technology company addresses industry-wide diversity challenges and modifies its DEI initiatives within a fast-paced, competitive landscape. Technology companies significantly influence global work culture and societal norms, rendering BE-it's policy a critical case for analyzing DEI within this sector.

I selected these three policies to illustrate a range of industries—B2B procurement, renewable energy, and technology—each presenting distinct DEI challenges and strategies. Examining the policies of a multinational corporation, a European energy company, and a developing tech firm offers a comprehensive view of organizations' varied approaches to structuring their DEI initiatives. The recent nature of these policies—Unite.EU's update, European Energy's recent DEI developments, and BE-it's 2024 policy—ensures that this study captures the latest trends and approaches in diversity, equity, and inclusion.

F. Data Analysis

This thesis is built upon a robust and structured coding process rooted in CDA methodologies. This process is the cornerstone of an in-depth analysis of DEI policies, enabling the discovery of how language shapes and reinforces diversity-related meanings (Fairclough, 1992).

Text Analysis (Description):

Each policy will undergo a meticulous line-by-line coding process at the micro-level. This method will help us identify recurring terms, sentences, and discursive tendencies related to inclusion, exclusion, equality, and diversity (Fairclough, 1989).

Furthermore, this section will concentrate on grammatical constructions, lexical selections, and rhetorical techniques. These elements, along with the use of active vs passive voice and modality, can reflect an organization's varying degrees of commitment to DEI principles (e.g., 'should' versus 'must') (Noriega, 2018).

Generally, the analysis will focus on the particularity of policy language, determining whether diversity pledges are articulated in vague, idealistic tones or if they encompass actual, actionable activities.

Processing analysis (Interpretation)

Next, the generated themes in the open coding phase are comprehensively organized into overarching discursive categories, actions based on constructivist grounded theory. Thus, potential categories may encompass:

- **Gender-Centric Policies:** This type of policy emphasizes gender diversity generically, offering minimal consideration of race, disability, or intersectional matters.
- **Neoliberal Conceptualization of Diversity:** This category arises when institutions, through DEI policies, depict diversity as a commercial benefit instead of a social justice need (Kreiter, n.d.).
- **Performative versus Substantive Inclusion:** Such subdivision distinguishes whether policies genuinely advocate for organizational change or only employ symbolic discourse to convey inclusiveness (Ahmed, 2012).
- **Latent Biases and Silences** examines the components of diversity that are emphasized or neglected, such as the marginalization of racial and disability inclusion in favor of gender equality programs (Van Dijk, 1993).

Social analysis (Explanation)

This research will conduct a deep examination of how organizational discourses influence policy terminology at the meso-level, determining if policies correspond with overarching political or private narratives (Fairclough, 1992). This phase of the analysis will examine the entities that possess the authority to shape diversity discourse, determining whether these regulations are influenced by grassroots campaigning, legislative requirements, or corporate branding initiatives.

Lastly, intertextuality will be analyzed by assessing whether policies cite global diversity structures, legal standards, or corporate purpose declarations, which may signify institutional conformity with dominant discourses (Noriega, 2018).

V. Findings

1. *Unite.eu Policy Analysis*

Text analysis

The following analysis examines how meritocracy, compliance, and participatory inclusion influence the company's diversity strategy through important statements and discursive patterns. This section employs CDA to elucidate how DEI is positioned as both a corporate advantage and a moral obligation while scrutinizing the degree of structural change and leadership responsibility within the policy.

1. Lexical Choices (Commitment vs. Ambiguity)

The degree of institutional responsibility incorporated in the language and the clarity of promises depend much on the terms used in a DEI policy. The Unite's DEI policy deliberately uses language choices that oscillate between sturdy pledges and uncertain phraseology, influencing the objective enforcement of diversity and inclusion policies. This nuanced use of language invites the audience to critically evaluate the policy's implications and its potential impact on the perception of DEI.

"Unite is dedicated to fostering an environment of diversity, equity, and inclusion" seems to indicate strong institutional commitment by the linguistic choice "dedicated"—a phrase that communicates a feeling of obligation. Nevertheless, the word "fostering an environment" is purposefully ambiguous, as it does not suggest certain activities or policies to guarantee inclusion. "Fostering" implies an idealistic aim instead of a legally enforced, methodically based process. The statement stays open-ended without clearly referencing responsibility structures, allowing for broad interpretation and maybe superficial application.

Moreover, *"Unite aims to be an inclusive organization committed to providing equal opportunities"* has contradicting linguistic cues. Though it is followed by "aims to be," which lessens its impact, the phrase "committed to providing equal opportunities" conveys institutional devotion. The word "aims" suggests that inclusion is an objective rather than a present habit, so

the organization can assert sincere intentions without always showing precise results. This wording separates policy from behavior so that the language gives the impression of inclusion without ensuring it.

Another instance in which language choices support corporate rhetoric on neutrality and objectivity, therefore neglecting systematic disparities can be observed in the following example: *"Merit-based decision making ensures justice and impartiality"*. The word "merit-based" supposes that everyone has equal chances to opportunities, which runs counter to the very DEI values that acknowledge how social and structural disadvantages produce differences in hiring, promotion, and working experiences. Emphasizing "fairness and impartiality," the approach presents DEI as a matter of personal performance rather than a systemic problem needing active action.

The linguistic patterns in the Unite's DEI policy reveal a significant conflict. While some terms imply institutional commitment, others expose weaknesses, allowing the business to evade direct responsibility. This conflict underscores the need for more precise and enforceable terms in the policy language.

2. Modality: Strength (or weakness) of institutional dedication

Modality is the use of words that convey certainty, duty, or possibility—that is, "must," "should," "aim to." The Unite's DEI policy shows varying modal strength, moving between strong declarations of commitment and less forceful, more flexible language that reduces enforcing its terms.

"Unite offers thorough courses and training initiatives..." employs a strong modal construction over the word "provides," therefore suggesting direct action and a specific institutional duty. The declaration stays symbolic rather than practical, given the absence of specifics on what these training programs entail, how they are assessed, and if participation is required.

In comparison, *"Unite is dedicated to promptly and suitably handle any complaints..."* mixes potent and dubious modalities. "Is committed to" denotes a great degree of commitment, yet "swiftly and appropriately" adds uncertainty. What activity qualifies as "swift"? Who defines "appropriate"? The statement provides no defined deadline or enforcement method without more

definition, allowing the opportunity for arbitrary application instead of a legally enforced procedure.

At last, *"We think ongoing observation and assessment are absolutely necessary..."* uses epistemic modality—that is, statements of belief rather than duty. The statement "We believe" presents DEI monitoring as an internal viewpoint rather than a mandated need from an entity. Rather than saying, "Unite will implement continuous monitoring," the sentence presents inclusion as a guiding concept rather than a clear promise.

The modality patterns indicate a policy favoring aspirational goals over legally enforced responsibilities. Strong and weak modal verbs provide flexibility so that the actual implementation could differ significantly.

3. Agentive Constructions (Active vs. Passive Voice)

Agentive constructs assign responsibility for action. Using both active and passive language, the policy deliberately assigns agency in support of inclusion but diffuses blame in situations of prejudice. For example: *"Unite makes all employment decisions based on merit"* is in the active voice, positioning the corporation as the agent accountable for fair decision-making. But as has already been said, "merit-based" employment treats all people equally, therefore neglecting systematic discrimination.

As it lacks a clear subject act, *"Unite has a whistleblowing system in place"* presents a passive structure. Rather than stating, "Unite actively investigates discrimination," the sentence just notes that the system exists without mentioning who is in charge of administering it, investigating allegations, or implementing disciplinary actions.

"Should a type of discrimination be found in our company's operations, this would be promptly reported..." uses the passive voice ("is identified"), which obscures agency. This arrangement absolves the corporation of accountability, suggesting that prejudice will only be dealt with should it be discovered. This framing risks diminishing proactive initiatives to find and stop workplace prejudice.

The strategy uses passive constructions to distribute DEI responsibility away from the business and onto individual workers, therefore supporting a reactive rather than proactive attitude to DEI. Finally, the policy's language characteristics highlight conflicts between

proclaimed promises and accurate enforcement. Strong and weak language choices, varying modality, and deliberate use of passive voice help the policy to convey institutional devotion while allowing gaps in responsibility.

4. Metaphorical Framing: Building Inclusion as Support, Potential, and Listening

The way DEI is understood inside the policy is much shaped by metaphors. Through which companies show their dedication to diversity, metaphors help build an emotional and cognitive framework. They also affect the degree to which structural inequality, power dynamics, and responsibility are recognized. The metaphors used are connected to listening, harnessing potential, and structural support—all of which foster an idealistic and non-confrontational conversation on diversity. This deliberate use of metaphors can pique the audience's interest and encourage them to explore the deeper meanings within the policy.

"Unite's Culture Circle serves as the ears and voice for every employee"

This metaphor presents inclusion as a matter of communication and representation rather than a result of a structural rearranging of power relations. The policy fosters employee advocacy and sensitivity by characterizing the Culture Circle as the "ears and voice" of staff members. Hearing voices, nevertheless, does not always translate into action. The metaphor implies that although their worries will be heard, it does not mean they will be actively included in decision-making procedures. Moreover, there is no indication of whether Culture Circle members can implement change so that the metaphor could function more as a symbolic gesture than a pledge of power redistribution.

One way in which variety is presented as an economic advantage rather than a social change or fairness question is through the sentence *"Harnessing the full potential of our workforce"*. The verb "harnessing" conjures images of resource management, direction, or use that fit corporate productivity discourses rather than an ethical or structural approach to inclusion. Linking DEI initiatives to maximize staff efficiency suggests that diversity is only essential to the degree that it increases business productivity. This supports a neoliberal view of DEI in which inclusion is used more as a tool for economic benefit than a goal.

DEI is also compared to a "backbone," presenting it as a structural need ("giving staff welfare a backbone of support"). This implies that DEI forms the basis of the company's

activities. Still, the phrase "support for employee welfare" turns the focus from institutional transformation to personal well-being. It implies that workers will be helped through difficulties, but it does not explicitly say that systematic obstacles will be eliminated. Consequently, the metaphor presents DEI as an internal support system instead of a means of systemic change agent.

Process analysis

Dimension	Example		
Gender-Focused Policies	"Prohibits employment discrimination based on sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, and maternity."	"Ensures equality, fairness, and respect for all in our employment, whether for temporary, freelance, internship, part-time, or full-time positions."	"Provides equal training, development, and career advancement opportunities."
Neoliberal Conceptualization of Diversity	"A diverse team strengthens innovation, encourages collaboration, and enhances our ability to serve a global community."	"Unite makes all employment decisions based on merit, ensuring fairness and impartiality in our processes."	"We believe in harnessing the full potential of our workforce and maximizing efficiency through diverse perspectives and talents."
Performative vs. Substantive Inclusion	"Unite is committed to promoting DEI in all operations... aims to exceed legal	"Unite's Culture Circle serves as the ears and voice for every employee,	"Employee resource groups serve as a platform for collaboration, support,

	requirements."	dedicated to promoting and upholding our Unite values."	and advocacy."
Implicit Biases and Omissions	"Prohibits employment discrimination based on various factors including race, gender, disability, and religion."	. "Unite HQ is located in Germany and as a signatory to the German Diversity Charter (Charta der Vielfalt), we demonstrate our dedication to creating an environment where all individuals are valued."	"We have a whistleblowing system in place for reporting discrimination."

1. Gender-Focused Policies

Though the policy mainly addresses gender inclusion, it also covers other diverse aspects like disability, color, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background. It corresponds with the International Bill of Human Rights and the ILO Convention No. 111, which forbid discrimination based on age, disability (physical or mental), race, language, religion, sexual orientation, and financial situation. It demonstrates a general dedication to inclusiveness, but the need for specific actions for certain groups is clear. This engagement is crucial for the success of the policy.

While discrimination is forbidden in the context of disability inclusion, the policy does not mention workplace accommodations such as accessible audits, assistive devices, or flexible work schedules for neurodiverse workers. Though no such promises are included in Unite's

policy, many inclusive companies guarantee interview systems for handicapped applicants and ensure that physical environments allow mobility restrictions.

Likewise, racial and ethnic diversity is valued; nevertheless, affirmative policies to correct structural inequalities in employment, leadership, or corporate culture are not mentioned. Anti-racism training to fight unconscious prejudice, diversity objectives for ethnic minorities in leadership, or culturally tolerant policies allowing religious or linguistic variety are not mentioned. A passive non-discrimination posture is inadequate, as racial prejudice sometimes functions through systematic exclusion rather than blatant bigotry.

Without proactive measures to eliminate barriers for underprivileged groups, the policy risks being compliance-driven rather than transformative. This could perpetuate existing disparities rather than aggressively seeking to eliminate them. Implementing structural interventions would strengthen the policy, ensuring that diversity initiatives are more than just words of dedication, but lead to tangible, measurable change.

2. Neoliberal Conceptualization of Diversity

Emphasizing its contribution to improving creativity, cooperation, and efficiency rather than portraying diversity as a moral obligation or a social justice need, the Unite Holding SE Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Policy positions diversity as a corporate advantage. For instance, the policy could highlight how a diverse team can bring in different perspectives, leading to innovative solutions and increased efficiency.

These remarks capture a neoliberal view of diversity, which is a perspective that sees diversity and inclusion primarily as economic tactics that help businesses by raising productivity, improving decision-making, and boosting competitiveness in the worldwide market. Although this influential approach can help promote organizational support for DEI initiatives, it also risks reducing diversity to a means to achieve profit rather than an ongoing dedication to justice, equity, and fairness.

The policy promotes diversity by presenting it as a means of enhancing creativity and efficiency, implying that inclusion is only valued as it contributes to the business's success. This stands in contrast to a social justice approach, where inclusion initiatives are designed to rectify historical and systematic injustices, and diversity is recognized as a fundamental right. The

instrumental framing of DEI is further reinforced by the absence of terminology that acknowledges social inequity or the ethical responsibility of an organization to create equitable opportunities for all. This highlights the crucial importance of acknowledging social inequity in DEI initiatives.

Still, Unite's strategy does not interact with these fundamental structural problems. Instead, it assumes that diversity inevitably results in improved corporate results without realizing that diversity without equality usually preserves current power disparities.

3. Performative vs. Substantive Inclusion

Unite's DEI Policy uses welcoming and progressive language to reaffirm its dedication to DEI. It says clearly:

“Unite's proactive commitment to DEI, aiming to exceed legal criteria and promoting DEI in all operations, reassures stakeholders of the company's dedication to diversity, equity, and inclusion.”

Saying "committed to promoting" helps the business to establish itself as an active actor in supporting DEI by implying that inclusion permeates all facets of the company. Claiming to "exceed legal requirements" presents an upbeat posture, positioning Unite not just as complying with anti-discrimination legislation but also as a business that transcends essential legal duties to support a varied labor force. This language helps DEI to establish ethical leadership, hence strengthening corporate responsibility. Still, the sentence is open-ended; it does not say precisely how or where the business exceeds legal norms, allowing the interpretation to be flexible and adaptable to many situations.

Still, another important project highlighted is the Culture Circle, which is defined as:

“The Culture Circle, as the ears and voice for every employee, is committed to advancing our Unite values, ensuring that every voice is heard and represented within the company.”

Using the metaphor "ears and voice," one suggests a two-way communication process whereby employee complaints are represented inside the business and listened to. By "promoting and upholding" DEI ideals, the Culture Circle is further aligned with corporate ethics and organizational cohesiveness, supporting the notion that inclusion is a shared obligation rather

than a top-down edict. This building fosters a cooperative attitude whereby staff members are positioned as active partners in forming workplace culture rather than as obliging consumers of business rules. The word "values" is especially crucial as it suggests that DEI is not just a need but also a natural component of Unite's identity, therefore changing the emphasis from adherence to outside criteria to an ingrained belief system.

Likewise, the policy outlines Employee Resource Groups' (ERGs') function as:

"Employee resource groups serve as a platform for collaboration, support, and advocacy."

The phrase "platform" suggests empowerment by implying that ERGs create a disciplined environment where staff members can interact and call for change. Three separate but linked purposes are "collaboration, support, and advocacy". Cooperation views ERGs as a group effort instead of a personal one, while support indicates that these organizations provide safe environments where staff members may discuss difficulties and experiences.

Advocacy suggests that ERGs influence policies or increase knowledge of workplace issues, implying more active participation. ERGs advocate for changes in policies and practices that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, thereby contributing to a more inclusive and supportive work environment.

These sentences' wording creates a story of employee empowerment, responsiveness, and inclusion. It presents DEI as both a participatory process and a fundamental principle, supporting the idea that staff members have a voice inside the company rather than only inclusion. Presenting DEI as a cooperative, continuous effort instead of a set of fixed rules helps the policy build an image of a changing, flexible workplace culture sensitive to its staff's requirements.

4. Implicit Biases and Omissions

Using juridical and institutional language, the policy outlines its dedication to diversity and non-discrimination. In the statement: "prohibits employment discrimination based on race, gender, disability, and religion" it can be understood through the term that the company employed a rule-based, imposing DEI approach. This terminology presents the business as a regulator instead of an active agency promoting equality. Legal systems match

the emphasis on classifications of discrimination (ethnicity, gender, disability, and religion) but also depict inclusion in a binary format way—as something that may be either maintained or breached. This supports the view that prejudice manifests personal behavior rather than a structural problem ingrained in corporate culture. The phrase does not use dynamic or transforming language—that is, "actively promotes," "works to dismantle"—which would imply a more involved, systematic method to solve inequalities.

Underlining this institutional tone even more, the strategy emphasizes its connection with a national diversity system:

"Unite HQ is located in Germany, and as a signatory to the German Diversity Charter (Charta der Vielfalt), we demonstrate our dedication to creating an environment where all individuals are valued."

The reference to outside validation (Charta der Vielfalt) serves as a legitimizing tool, indicating that the company's dedication to diversity corresponds with accepted industry and national norms. Emphasizing public-facing devotion rather than an internal transformation process, "demonstrate our dedication" suggests exposure and acknowledgment. Furthermore, lacking an explicit agent is the passive building of "creating an environment where all individuals are valued."—who inside the organization is in charge of preserving this environment, or what systems are in place to support it? Though the rhetoric is broad and symbolic rather than action-oriented, the policy defines diversity as an ethical and organizational objective.

Still, another essential component of the policy is its whistleblower mechanism, presented as follows: *"We have a whistleblowing mechanism set in place to document discrimination."*

The word "we have" emphasizes accountability and ownership, supporting the idea that the business offers a disciplined avenue for complaints. Using "in place" points to a fixed system instead of one that is continually maintained, watched over, or changed depending on input. The phrase "reporting discrimination" suggests a reactive approach—that is, inclusion should be handled personally rather than systematic bias prevention admits could occur.

Compliance's discourse rules this part of the policy. How non-discrimination is framed as a legal and procedural commitment instead of a transforming process implies that inclusion is seen chiefly through prohibitions and rules instead of active cultural transformation. Dependency on outside signifiers of diversity (such as the German Diversity Charter and the whistleblower system) supports an institutionalized approach (a system that is deeply ingrained in the company's culture and operations) whereby inclusion is assessed by policy conformity instead of interaction with fundamental inequities.

In this sense, rather than one that highlights intersectionality, historical injustices (such as slavery, colonialism, and gender discrimination), or systematic transformation, the policy creates a vision of workplace inclusion that is rule-based, externally recognized, and procedurally driven. Although the language fosters security and control, it stays far from the realities of underprivileged workers whose issues might not always be addressed via official complaint channels. The policy promotes DEI as an organizational structure instead of a constant, reactive process of eradicating prejudices and advancing real inclusion.

Social analysis

1. Institutional Discourses and Power

Lastly, Unite's policy portrays the organization as inclusive, meritocratic, and focused on opportunities based on its terminology and presentation. The policy states:

"Unite aims to be an inclusive organization committed to providing equal opportunities throughout all stages of employment—including recruitment, training, and development—and to proactively tackling and eliminating unlawful discrimination."

This assertion corresponds with the rhetoric of formal equality, which highlights equal access to opportunity while neglecting to confront past injustices or structural obstacles that may hinder the progress of excluded groups. The policy's dedication to ensuring equal chances is presented as a universal tenet, emphasizing that equitable treatment alone suffices to attain workplace diversity. Nonetheless, formal equality does not inherently result in genuine equity since it fails to include prevailing imbalances in representation, salary differentials, or access to

leadership. The policy, while it prohibits discrimination, lacks proactive measures such as affirmative action, salary transparency, or targeted leadership initiatives. These measures are essential to rectify structural inequities and promote genuine diversity, equity, and inclusion.

A fundamental element of Unite's institutional rhetoric is its focus on meritocracy as the basis for decision-making. The policy articulates:

"Unite makes all employment decisions based on merit, ensuring fairness and impartiality in our processes."

By promoting a meritocratic framework, the policy attempts to remove political influences from workplace diversity. However, research on workplace discrimination suggests that meritocracy alone is not enough to ensure fairness, as conscious and unconscious biases often influence hiring and promotion processes.

Meritocratic language conceals the fact that excluded groups frequently lack access to equivalent social capital, educational resources, and mentorship opportunities as their privileged peers. The policy's lack of discourse on structural inequities implies that diversity is perceived as an individualistic endeavor rather than a communal advancement toward inclusion.

2. Intertextuality and Hegemonic Influence

Unite's DEI strategy, while establishing its legitimacy by referencing existing diversity guidelines and international labor treaties, notably lacks structural change. The plan conforms to prevailing narratives of corporate diversity by using established legal and regulatory frameworks, but this dependence on external validation suggests that adherence to DEI standards is favored above a thorough reassessment of organizational power disparities or injustices. The absence of accountability measures should raise skepticism about the effectiveness of the policy.

A key intertextual reference in the policy is:

"Unite HQ is located in Germany, and as a signatory to the German Diversity Charter (Charta der Vielfalt), we demonstrate our dedication to creating an environment where all individuals are valued and provided with equal opportunities to thrive."

By endorsing the German Diversity Charter, Unite ties itself with an established European DEI framework, confirming its commitment to institutional conformity rather than innovative transformation. The Charta der Vielfalt is a broadly supported business diversity

effort in Germany, operating primarily as a voluntary pledge rather than a binding legislative obligation. Organizations that endorse the charter indicate their commitment to DEI values; nevertheless, the charter does not impose particular activities, quotas, or quantifiable accountability measures.

This reference is an intertextual indicator of institutional legitimacy, demonstrating that the corporation complies with established diversity norms without explicitly contesting them. The policy fails to elaborate on how its DEI commitments exceed the charter's fundamental principles and does not specify internal measures to guarantee that inclusion results in structural transformation.

Unite's DEI program gains legitimacy from international labor rights accords, as seen in the excerpt below:

"This policy aims to prevent the unlawful discrimination against individuals with protected characteristics as stipulated in the Core Labour Standards of the International Labour Organisation – Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) and the principles laid out in the International Bill of Human Rights."

The policy situates its DEI obligations within a worldwide legal framework by citing ILO Convention No. 111 and the International Bill of Human Rights, emphasizing legal compliance above proactive reform. The ILO Convention No. 111 forbids employment discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, gender, and disability, therefore aligning Unite's policy with globally recognized anti-discrimination standards. Referencing these legal tools does not inherently result in significant institutional transformation. Instead, such a legalistic perspective positions DEI as a means of preventing prejudice rather than actively promoting equality and inclusion. It frames DEI as a precautionary approach—centered on avoiding violations of human rights standards—rather than dispersing power, rectifying workplace inequities, or ensuring intersectional representation. The allusion to global labor norms is mainly a protective measure against reputational hazards rather than a genuine dedication to diversity improvements.

Unite's policy endeavors to establish the organization as a frontrunner in diversity initiatives:

"Unite is committed to promoting DEI in all operations. We aim to exceed legal requirements and actively seek opportunities to create a workplace that celebrates and values DEI."

This declaration establishes Unite's identity as a proactive and progressive body, positioning DEI as a fundamental component of its operational structure. However, the term "exceeds legal requirements" is vague and lacks specificity. The policy fails to specify which acts surpass baseline compliance or the criteria for measuring achievements in exceeding rules, leaving room for interpretation and potential underperformance.

Unlike policies that incorporate explicit targets, quotas, or public DEI reports, Unite's approach to DEI is vague and ambiguous. This vagueness complicates the evaluation of whether its pledges result in meaningful change. Without explicit accountability procedures, transparent reporting, or a comprehensive strategy, such remarks serve a rhetorical purpose rather than an operational one. The group claims to advocate for DEI, although it lacks the institutional means to validate its leadership in this domain.

1. Framing of inclusion and responsibility

Within the policy context, inclusion is framed as a cultural and human obligation rather than a requirement imposed by the organization. A significant shift in the policy is the division of DEI oversight, moving the focus from leadership or organizational structures to employees. This change highlights the role of every individual in cultivating an inclusive environment through participation in resource groups, training programs, and internal initiatives. It positions inclusion as a collaborative procedure, reinforcing the idea that DEI is an inner cultural habit rather than an institutional reform initiative.

A fundamental instrument for fostering inclusiveness within the company is the Culture Circle, delineated in the policy as:

"Championing inclusivity: Unite's Culture Circle serves as the ears and voice for every employee, dedicated to promoting and upholding our Unite values."

This emphasis on promoting and upholding company values makes the audience feel aligned with the organization's mission and integral to its success. The Culture Circle is not just a policy-enforcing body, but a receptive entity that serves as a platform for employees to voice

their concerns. The 'ears and voice' analogy underscores its role in fostering open dialogue, although it does not explicitly confer power or decision-making capacity for implementing DEI-related reforms.

Also, employee involvement fosters inclusiveness, characterizing DEI as a voluntary endeavor and suggesting that diversity and inclusion flourish via discourse and participation rather than through mandatory workplace regulations, leadership efforts, or structural intervention. The lack of transparent processes by which the Culture Circle impacts policy indicates that it operates symbolically, bolstering the company's DEI image without ensuring structural change.

The policy further elaborates on the devolution of responsibilities via Employee Resource Groups (ERGs):

"Employee resource groups serve as a platform for collaboration, support, and advocacy, empowering employees to contribute to a more inclusive workplace and drive meaningful change within our organization."

The policy presents inclusion as an option rather than a systemic requirement, characterizing ERGs as volunteer platforms for advocacy and cooperation. This emphasis on employee-driven involvement underscores the policy's focus on collaboration, support, and advocacy, framing diversity as a process driven by the active participation of employees rather than structural or policy-driven intervention from leadership.

Another significant aspect of Unite's inclusion rhetoric is the prioritization of training as a fundamental DEI strategy:

"Unite provides comprehensive education and training programs to raise employees' awareness and understanding of DEI issues."

This method establishes inclusion as a knowledge-driven practice, positioning awareness and education as the principal catalysts for diversity-related transformation. Training programs can serve as helpful instruments for fostering awareness and personal accountability. Yet, their efficacy is frequently constrained without institutional dedication to policy reform and quantifiable results.

In the policy, inclusiveness is characterized not as a leadership requirement or organizational need but as a collective cultural value maintained via voluntary employee participation. Although the Culture Circle, ERGs, and training programs facilitate involvement, they do not impose corporate accountability. By framing inclusion as a group cultural movement instead of a leadership-driven obligation, the policy diminishes the participation of decision-makers and executives in the active transformation of workplace structures. It positions inclusiveness as an initiative where workers may freely engage, educate themselves, and promote, although it does not guarantee it as a binding policy obligation.

Final assessment

Unite's DEI policy frames diversity as a compliance-oriented and market-driven program devoid of an intersectional perspective on systemic injustices. Although it recognizes gender, ethnicity, disability, and socioeconomic position, it neglects to consider their intersecting impacts. It considers diversity as a collection of discrete categories rather than an integrated framework of privilege and exclusion, which is a more comprehensive approach that is needed.

A social constructivist perspective demonstrates that the policy influences DEI as a malleable discourse rather than a foundational commitment. The vagueness of its obligations significantly impacts DEI, as it can lead to misinterpretation and lack of action. The focus on meritocracy, and the delegation of duty to employees illustrate a business strategy that portrays inclusion as a voluntary cultural aspiration rather than a mandatory institutional requirement. The policy complies with prevailing DEI frameworks by referencing the German Diversity Charter and international labor regulations, although it refrains from implementing structural measures that might disrupt workplace power dynamics.

The absence of intersectionality diminishes the policy's efficacy, perpetuating selective inclusion and overlooking profound systemic obstacles. It's crucial for organizations to address workplace disadvantages to transcend symbolic diversity rather than simply reiterating their commitment to inclusion through rhetoric. This urgency for action is a key takeaway from Unite's DEI policy analysis.

2 . Be-it Policy Analysis

Text analysis

This section analyzes how language elements, such as lexical selections, modality, grammatical constructions, rhetorical methods, and framing approaches, shape the policy discourse. These factors influence the policy's level of commitment, institutional responsibility, and the representation of inclusion and diversity as a business goal.

Linguistic Feature	Example from Policy
Lexical Choices (Commitment vs. Ambiguity)	"We actively seek to promote diversity and inclusion through deliberate strategies in recruitment, promotion, and continuous employee support and training."
	"We pledge to foster a more inclusive workplace and embrace all forms of diversity."
	"Our goal is to create an equitable work environment that values all perspectives."
Modality (Strength of Institutional Commitment)	"Any discriminatory or harassing behavior will meet with decisive disciplinary action, potentially including termination."
	"We are committed to continuously improving our DEI strategies where possible."
	"Employees should strive to be more inclusive in their daily interactions."
Agentive Constructions (Active vs. Passive Voice)	"Ensuring that our policies stay relevant and effective."

	"Efforts are being made to improve diversity representation across leadership positions."
	"New initiatives are being developed to enhance inclusion strategies."
Metaphorical Framing	"This policy serves as a compass, guiding you toward understanding the critical role of diversity and inclusion within our company."
	"Diversity and inclusion are the foundation upon which we build our success."
	"Our workplace thrives when every employee has a seat at the table."

The terminology of Be-IT policy fluctuates between emphatic assertions of commitment and ambiguous, indeterminate language, influencing perceptions of the organization's accountability for diversity, equality, and inclusion. The phrasing conveys an impression of active involvement while deliberately preserving flexibility and interpretative latitude, enabling the organization to demonstrate commitment without delineating enforceable activities or accountability measures.

1. Strength in Commitment: "We actively seek to promote diversity and inclusion through deliberate strategies in recruitment, promotion, and continuous employee support and training."

This statement uses assertive language to portray the organization as a proactive advocate for diversity and inclusion. "Actively seek to promote" implies deliberate efforts, emphasizing corporate responsibility over passive acknowledgment. Also, "deliberate strategies" denote a systematic, intentional approach rather than an ambiguous commitment.

Nonetheless, although the statement implies institutional commitment, it lacks specificity regarding the nature of these measures. The policy fails to specify the recruiting and promotion

techniques employed, the implementation of "continuous support and training," or the existence of quantitative outcomes for these activities. The lack of specific facts permits extensive interpretation, indicating that although the corporation seems dedicated, its actual degree of involvement remains unclear.

2. Pledging Inclusion Without Specificity: "We pledge to foster a more inclusive workplace and embrace all forms of diversity."

The expression "we pledge to foster" conveys a dual meaning: it indicates an open commitment to DEI, yet it lacks specificity about concrete activities. The verb "foster" implies encouragement and nurturing rather than direct, enforced measures. In contrast to terminology like "implement" or "enforce," which suggest systematic measures, "foster" positions inclusion as an aspirational objective rather than a formal requirement.

The expression "embrace all forms of diversity" is expansive and welcoming yet lacks practical specificity. It fails to delineate the priority forms of diversity, the metrics for measuring inclusion, or the provision of specific support for historically excluded groups. This generalization may foster a false perception of universal inclusion while neglecting intersectional and structural inequalities in the workplace.

3. Framing Equity as an Ideal: "Our goal is to create an equitable work environment that values all perspectives."

The expression "our goal is to create" positions equity as an objective rather than a current state. This phrasing discreetly detaches the corporation from current responsibility, framing equity as a long-term goal rather than a binding criterion. The statement "we are committed to maintaining an equitable work environment" implies an active and continuous obligation, whereas "our goal is to create" positions equity as a prospective aim, allowing for potential postponements in substantial execution.

Furthermore, "values all perspectives" corresponds with corporate inclusion dialogue. However, it maintains a neutral stance on power disparities. This term disregards the historical privileging of specific perspectives, treating all ideas equally valid while overlooking the structural impediments that impact minority employees in distinct ways. This phrasing preserves

an illusion of equity while failing to confront the systemic inequalities that generate occupational disparities.

Processing analysis

1. Gender-Focused Policies

The expression "committed to gender diversity" indicates an organizational commitment to inclusion, yet the absence of detailed information on the active promotion of gender diversity renders the statement ambiguous. Including "fostering a workplace" dilutes the promise, implying a passive promotion of diversity rather than a mandate for action. Without specific measures like gender quotas, pay equality audits, or leadership development programs for women, the policy positions gender inclusion as a guiding concept rather than a systematic undertaking.

The policy further emphasizes gender as a fundamental aspect of diversity with the declaration: *"We recognize the importance of a balanced workforce and continue to support initiatives that empower women in leadership."*

The emphasis on a "balanced workforce" focuses on numerical representation, specifically gender parity in leadership positions. The phrase "continue to support" suggests persistent efforts; nonetheless, the policy lacks details regarding the activities implemented, the criteria for measuring success, or the tracking of female representation over time. The policy fails to specify if leadership positions are equitably available across genders or if there is specialized assistance for non-binary personnel.

A significant term that underscores BE-IT's methodology is: *"Our goal is to create an equitable work environment that values all perspectives."*

The term "goal" frames equity as a prospective ideal instead of an existing condition, permitting varied interpretations. This phrasing implies desire rather than definitive action, unlike a more explicit statement like "we ensure an equitable work environment." Furthermore, although the statement recognizes the significance of different viewpoints, it fails to specify which groups are prioritized or the criteria for measuring inclusion. The expression "values all perspectives" illustrates diversity as an expansive notion, failing to acknowledge the systemic

obstacles that may hinder underrepresented groups from fully engaging in workplace decision-making.

Although BE-IT's policy emphasizes inclusion, the persistent emphasis on gender diversity and women's leadership activities indicates that gender is the predominant diversity issue. At the same time, other identities, including ethnicity, disability, and socioeconomic status, are afforded less consideration. This checks with a trend observed in corporate DEI strategies, wherein gender diversity is frequently more institutionally embraced and emphasized than other politically sensitive aspects of diversity, such as racial fairness or disability inclusion.

2. Neoliberal Conceptualization of Diversity

BE-IT's DEI strategy positions diversity and inclusion as strategic instruments for enhancing company performance, consistent with a neoliberal interpretation of diversity. This perspective highlights DEI projects' economic and competitive benefits instead of presenting them as a moral or social justice obligation.

A notable instance is the assertion: "*Fuel better performance and stronger connections among teams.*"

The term "fuel" implies that variety is an ingredient that boosts production rather than being an inherent asset. The expression "stronger connections among teams" corresponds with an economic efficiency discourse, wherein inclusion is advocated not for justice or fairness but for its capacity to enhance cooperation and workplace cohesiveness. This instrumental framing suggests that diversity is desirable solely for its contribution to organizational performance rather than recognizing the necessity of dismantling systematic injustices inside the workplace.

A further clear illustration of this business-centric framing is shown in: "*Diversity and inclusion drive innovation, allowing us to stay competitive in a global marketplace.*"

In this context, DEI is intrinsically connected to innovation and market competitiveness, underscoring that inclusion serves as a means to a goal rather than an end. The expression "drive innovation" frames diversity as a financial advantage, whereas "stay competitive in a global marketplace" associates DEI initiatives with business sustainability and economic prosperity. This perspective depoliticizes diversity, removing its historical and structural context and transforming it into a market-driven strategy that guarantees the company's ongoing prosperity.

By positioning diversity as a corporate asset, the policy underscores a contingent commitment to DEI, which persists just as it improves business results. This technique poses a danger that DEI initiatives may be deprioritized during economic recessions, organizational reorganization, or changes in business direction. If diversity is mainly perceived as a business aspect, it remains susceptible to eradication when corporations fail to observe a swift economic benefit.

3. Performative versus Substantive Inclusion

The policy's phrasing frequently favors symbolic over structural commitments, as in can be found in one example: *"We actively seek to promote diversity and inclusion through deliberate strategies."*

The phrase "actively seek to promote" indicates a robust institutional commitment; nevertheless, the lack of explicit policies, metrics, or accountability measures renders the statement ambiguous. The term "deliberate strategies" accentuates this ambiguity, suggesting intentional activity without specifying the nature of such strategies. Without explicit references to hiring objectives, retention initiatives, or goals for leadership representation, the policy's language reflects performative rather than meaningful inclusion.

A further key assertion bolsters this conceptual interpretation of inclusivity: *"We foster a culture of belonging and ensure all voices are heard."* The term "foster" suggests an endeavor to promote inclusion rather than a systematic implementation of DEI rules. Likewise, "ensuring all voices are heard" positions inclusion as a cultural ideal rather than a process supported by definitive institutional frameworks. No standard grievance procedures, administration commitments, or quantifiable DEI outcomes are referenced, which would guarantee disenfranchised employees a platform beyond just symbolic acknowledgment. The statement "we actively seek to promote diversity and inclusion" indicates purpose but lacks specific accountability measures. Although disciplinary penalties for discrimination are explicitly defined, proactive inclusion tactics are ambiguous, with phrases such as "deliberate strategies" and "continuous employee support" lacking precise meanings.

This dichotomy corresponds with Ahmed's (2012) critique of performative diversity, where organizations publicly express DEI commitments through rhetoric yet neglect to enact substantive structural improvements, such as implementing diversity training or establishing diversity committees.

The policy outlines recruiting and promotion tactics but lacks specifics on enforcing diverse hiring practices, the potential implementation of quotas or affirmative action regulations, and the measures to mitigate biases in promotion and retention. The lack of defined criteria, diversity audits, or data-driven evaluations undermines the policy's capacity to effect meaningful change. Without quantifiable targets or systems for monitoring DEI achievements, the policy may find it challenging to progress beyond mere verbal inclusion.

4. Implicit Biases and Omission

The DEI policy of BE-IT uses inclusive but ambiguous wording, recognizing diversity issues but leaving out explicit structural pledges to include people of various ethnicities and people with disabilities, for example. A salient illustration of this dispersed accountability is seen in the assertion: *"DEI is a collective responsibility."* This statement promotes cultural involvement in DEI initiatives while diffusing accountability and redirecting emphasis from institutional compliance to individual employees. The strategy diminishes the leadership's responsibility in facilitating systemic transformation by seeing inclusion as a collective endeavor. It implies that diversity can be attained via individual dedication rather than structural reform. This corresponds with Van Dijk's (1993) critique of corporate DEI discourse, wherein corporations employ generic, neutral language to evade recognition of systematic power disparities.

DEI is also characterized as a persistent difficulty, although it fails to delineate the specific challenges or the methods for their resolution *"We are committed to diversity but acknowledge that challenges remain in ensuring equal opportunities for all."* The expression "ensuring equal opportunities for all" corresponds with a formal equality perspective, which posits that granting equal access to opportunities suffices to eradicate workplace inequalities. Nevertheless, in the absence of proactive initiatives like racial equality programs, accessibility pledges, or focused recruitment efforts for marginalized groups, this perspective neglects to

address the historical and institutional obstacles that hinder equitable access to opportunities for particular demographics.

The absence of formal plans for racial and disability inclusion reflects a broader tendency in corporate DEI discourse, wherein race and disability frequently get subordinate emphasis relative to gender diversity (Ahmed, 2012). This selective participation underscores the notion that gender inclusion is more acceptable to corporate frameworks. At the same time, projects centered on race and disability need more profound institutional transformations that organizations may be hesitant to adopt. The lack of phrases like "anti-racism," "accessibility measures," or "inclusive leadership pathways" indicates that these matters are not seen as institutional concerns

Social analysis

1. Institutional Discourses and Authority

Example 1: "We maintain a zero-tolerance policy towards discrimination and harassment."

This statement indicates a firm institutional position against workplace discrimination, underscoring the company's dedication to an inclusive work environment. The term "zero-tolerance" indicates an inflexible regulatory policy, signifying that discrimination will be unequivocally prohibited at all levels. Although the wording seems robust, the policy fails to specify enforcement methods. It lacks clarification, for example, on the process of investigating claims and the entities accountable for conducting investigations or whether employees are safeguarded from reprisal following the reporting of misbehavior.

The declaration lacks specificity about the implementation of zero-tolerance, rendering it mostly rhetorical and promoting an authoritative position without established mechanisms for resolving infractions. This permits subjective interpretation and discretionary enforcement, possibly undermining the efficacy of anti-discrimination legislation.

Example 2: "We use structured interviews and standardized criteria to ensure fair evaluation."

This remark underscores that hiring and promotions are governed by objective, meritocratic criteria. Standardized requirements are established as the principal mechanism to

guarantee equity, implying that all participants compete on an equal basis. Although organized interviews may reduce overt prejudice, they fail to tackle the underlying structural obstacles that minority applicants encounter prior to these assessment phases. Potential obstacles may encompass: inequities in educational access and professional networks or insufficient clarity about the criteria for "structured" evaluation.

The policy characterizes hiring as an impartial and uniform procedure, portraying inclusion as contingent upon individual achievement instead of acknowledging past or structural inequities. It does not consider if supplementary mechanisms are available to mitigate the effects of bias, such as diverse hiring panels, mentorship programs, or targeted career advancement activities.

2. Intertextuality and Hegemonic Influence

Example 1: "We advertise vacancies widely to reach a diverse audience, including partnerships with organizations dedicated to enhancing opportunities for underrepresented groups."

By collaborating with diversity-oriented groups, BE-IT aligns with extensive DEI initiatives while enhancing its corporate reputation as a proponent of workplace inclusion. The expression "advertise widely" implies that the corporation actively pursues a varied talent pool; yet, the policy does not clarify if the outreach initiatives are designed to produce quantifiable enhancements in diversity.

No references to quotas, recruiting objectives, or continuous assessments of the efficacy of these collaborations in achieving fair outcomes are included. Although external collaborations can function as legitimizing instruments, their efficacy remains ambiguous in the absence of definitive procedures to monitor their influence on hiring and retention enhancements. In the absence of this, outreach initiatives may become merely symbolic instead than transformational.

Example 2: We implement AI tools to flag and replace biased language in job descriptions."

This remark emphasizes the application of technology to rectify unconscious prejudices in recruiting, so promoting a technocratic perspective on diversity. AI technologies are presented as impartial instruments designed to eradicate prejudice in job descriptions; nevertheless,

dependence on automated solutions fails to tackle the underlying structural inequities in recruiting procedures. Although AI can aid in eliminating exclusionary language, it does not address: prejudices inherent in the definition and assessment of occupational roles or variations in the interpretation of AI-screened applications by hiring supervisors.

By portraying AI as a pivotal solution for alleviating prejudice, the corporation diverts attention from human decision-making and the necessity for structural reforms. The regulation does not specify if AI-driven recruiting tools are evaluated for precision or if hiring biases are analyzed through actual hiring results. In the absence of a feedback mechanism, automated systems may perpetuate existing biases instead of eliminating them.

3. Framing of Inclusion and Responsibility

Example 1: "We foster a culture that promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of our operations."

The expression "foster a culture" frames inclusion as an ingrained organizational principle rather than a compulsory policy requirement. This form of rhetoric promotes an idealistic perspective on diversity while evading definitive accountability mechanisms. Characterizing inclusion as a "culture" diverts attention from leadership accountability to employees, so perpetuating the notion that DEI is a discretionary initiative rather than a corporate responsibility. This wording suggests that diversity is integral to organizational principles; nevertheless, in the absence of concrete pledges, inclusion initiatives rely on goodwill rather than policy implementation.

Example 2: "Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) provide support and networking opportunities for employees from historically underrepresented groups."

ERGs are established as voluntary assemblies for personnel, offering a secure environment for community engagement and professional advancement.

By characterizing ERGs as support groups instead than structural intervention mechanisms, the policy shifts the responsibility for fostering inclusion onto workers rather than the organization. ERGs may help employees in addressing existing disparities; nevertheless, they do not inherently confront or alter the underlying factors that generate those disparities initially.

Preliminary findings

Although BE-IT's DEI policy lacks intersectional thinking and institutional implementation, it conveys an inclusive company image. Gender diversity is emphasized, but ethnicity, disability, and socioeconomic considerations are mostly overlooked, perpetuating a selective inclusion framework. Characterizing diversity as a corporate asset instead of a social justice imperative situates DEI as dependent on economic outcomes, perhaps leading to its depreciation during fluctuations in market conditions. The terminology "fostering a culture" and "actively seeking to promote diversity" indicates a performative rather than a substantive approach to inclusion, lacking real accountability measures. The exclusion of anti-racism initiatives, disability inclusion tactics, and leadership diversity standards disproportionately transfers accountability to employees instead of institutional leadership. Without quantifiable pledges and an intersectional framework that acknowledges intersecting forms of marginalization, BE-IT's DEI approach is merely a symbolic endeavor rather than a catalyst for workplace fairness.

4. European Energy Policy Analysis

This part employs Fairclough's CDA micro-level textual analysis to scrutinize the language structures and discursive patterns inside the European Energy DEI policy, emphasizing lexical selections, modality, grammatical constructions, and abstraction to evaluate the extent of institutional commitment.

Text analysis

Category	Example from Policy
Strong commitment markers	"We are steadfast in our commitment to fostering a workplace environment that not only respects but thrives on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)."
High modality (strong commitment)	"Our unwavering commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion stems from the conviction that an inclusive and respectful

	workplace is pivotal to our success."
Mixed modality	"Ensuring that our policies stay relevant and effective."
Weaker modality (aspirational framing)	"We actively seek to promote diversity and inclusion through deliberate strategies in recruitment, promotion, and continuous employee support and training."
Binding language (punitive measures)	"Any discriminatory or harassing behavior will meet with decisive disciplinary action, potentially including termination."
Business case framing	"By embracing diversity, we unlock the door to enhanced creativity, innovation, and engagement."
Diffuse responsibility	"DEI is a collective responsibility."

Examining vocabulary selections and modality reveals that although European Energy's DEI policy utilizes robust rhetorical commitment signals, a significant portion of its language is aspirational rather than obligatory. Expressions like "steadfast in our commitment" and "unwavering commitment" imply resolve but fail to provide specific, practical measures, allowing for arbitrary interpretation instead of policy-driven responsibilities.

The application of modality is also inconsistent. For example, disciplinary measures addressing discrimination employ authoritative language (e.g., "will meet with decisive disciplinary action"). In contrast, the proactive aspects of inclusion, such as recruitment and promotion strategies, are articulated in ambiguous terms like "aim to promote" and "considered strategies." This contrast indicates that although the corporation is prepared to address overt discrimination decisively, it is not committed to actively promoting a diverse and inclusive workforce through tangible structural modifications.

The characterization of DEI in economic terms, such as "unlock the door to enhanced creativity, innovation, and engagement," minimizes diversity and inclusion to a mere technical function that caters to the company's financial pursuits rather than presenting it as an ethical or legal imperative. This corresponds with neoliberal corporate rhetoric, wherein DEI efforts are rationalized by their prospective enhancements to productivity and competitiveness rather than their function in mitigating structural disparities.

The statement "DEI is a collective responsibility" disperses accountability by transferring the onus onto all employees instead of delineating explicit institutional measures for guaranteeing compliance. This perspective emphasizes that inclusion is a personal responsibility rather than a systemic duty, thereby diminishing the policy's efficacy in fostering substantial institutional transformation.

Processing analysis

The employment of active voice in certain portions indicates institutional responsibility, however the prevalent use of passive structures and generalization diminishes accountability. The phrase "Ensuring that our policies stay relevant and effective" lacks a definitive topic, rendering the duty for policy enforcement ambiguous. Likewise, abstracted agency, exemplified by phrases like "Our DEI Policy establishes guidelines," diminishes direct institutional accountability by attributing responsibility to the policy rather than leadership.

The transition in accountability is apparent in the expression, "How you, as an integral member of our esteemed team, can aid in fostering a hospitable and inclusive work environment." The responsibility for cultivating an inclusive workplace is assigned to people rather than the organization. This corresponds with overarching tendencies in corporate DEI discourse, wherein systemic challenges like prejudice and discrimination are frequently reinterpreted as individual behaviors necessitating personal awareness instead of organizational reform.

While the policy asserts, "The management team bears the ultimate responsibility for addressing DEI issues effectively," this statement lacks specificity. The absence of defined accountability frameworks or enforcement mechanisms indicates that although management

recognizes its obligations, there is little clarity on how these duties convert into tangible actions or quantifiable results.

Social analysis

This research segment elucidates the interrelations among corporate, governmental, and societal narratives, pinpointing critical places where DEI discourse converges with or diverges from prevailing institutional frameworks. The emphasis is on three primary dimensions: institutional discourses and power, intertextuality, hegemonic influence, and the conceptualization of inclusion and responsibility, which arise from the convergence of corporate policies, regulatory structures, and dominant social discourses regarding DEI.

1. Institutional Discourses and Power

European Energy's DEI policy has a hierarchical framework wherein corporate leadership retains predominant authority over inclusion initiatives. The policy asserts: *"Ensuring that our policies stay relevant and effective."* The term "ensuring" implies continuous institutional supervision, emphasizing that management governs diversity policy development. The lack of explicit methods for policy review, enforcement, or accountability renders this statement ambiguous and reliant on internal judgment.

The hierarchical structure of European Energy's DEI policy is further emphasized by the statement: *"The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee at European Energy plays a crucial role in advising management on DEI-related matters."*

This wording designates the committee as an advisory body instead of a decision-making authority, indicating that DEI initiatives are subject to executive leadership rather than influenced by varied stakeholders. The expression "plays a crucial role" suggests influence but fails to clarify whether the committee possesses regulatory power, contractual authority, or the capacity to effect structural change. The absence of explicit decision-making authority indicates a broader tendency in corporate DEI initiatives, where committees are formed for symbolic purposes rather than to effect meaningful policy changes.

The policy's hierarchical structure is clearly articulated in the following phrase: *"The management team bears the ultimate responsibility for addressing DEI issues effectively."* This phrase characterizes DEI as a duty led by leadership rather than a collective endeavor. Although executive responsibility is crucial, this wording suggests that workers and external stakeholders have a subordinate role in influencing inclusion measures. The lack of mentions of employee-driven initiatives, grassroots campaigning, or external regulatory bodies indicates that European Energy's DEI strategy is predominantly shaped by internal company interests rather than external social issues

2. Intertextuality and Dominant Influence

Intertextuality embodies how texts reference and incorporate other discourses—significantly influences the formulation of institutional policy. Nonetheless, European Energy's DEI strategy does not explicitly mention international diversity frameworks, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), EU legislation, or corporate best practices established by entities such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). The absence of these references prompts inquiries over whether the strategy is shaped by global diversity standards or embodies a more insular corporate viewpoint. Phrases such as "our DEI Policy sets forth guidelines" imply that the organization formulates its standards instead of conforming to external requirements.

The absence of intertextuality prompts inquiries over whether the strategy is shaped by global diversity standards or embodies a more insular corporate viewpoint. The lack of references to external frameworks indicates that the policy is not inherently based on legal requirements or international human rights discussions but instead is formed around internal company branding. This corresponds with Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony, which posits that dominant institutions influence language to sustain existing power structures, possibly constraining corporate DEI initiatives' transformational capacity.

Furthermore, the strategy fails to expressly address histories of exclusion, discrimination, or systematic imbalances. By excluding these allusions, the discourse portrays diversity as a modern economic strategy rather than a reaction to historical injustices. This perspective detaches corporate accountability from historical and current social imbalances, perpetuating a

neutral, depoliticized interpretation of inclusion instead of recognizing the influence of systemic oppression on workplace differences.

3. Conceptualization of Inclusion and Accountability

The policy frames inclusion as a personal obligation instead of a systemic need. Statements like "how you, as a member of our esteemed team, can contribute" prioritize employee activities over institutional responsibility. This perspective corresponds with neoliberal rhetoric, prioritizing individual agency above structural transformation and diminishing the company's responsibilities in promoting substantial inclusion. The strategy characterizes diversity initiatives as voluntary, minimizing the need for enforcing institutional procedures and transferring the responsibility of inclusion from corporate leadership to employees.

The statement "DEI is a collective responsibility" further emphasizes the distribution of accountability. This language may promote involvement but also conceals the functions of leadership and policy enforcement. There are no enforceable commitments, compliance procedures, or institutional repercussions for not achieving DEI objectives. In the absence of specified accountability mechanisms, the policy is likely to be performative rather than substantive, providing verbal pledges devoid of essential structural support.

Furthermore, the policy's focus on cooperation and team-building indicates that diversity and inclusion are cultural rather than structural phenomena. Although cultivating a healthy working atmosphere is crucial, this perspective neglects to recognize structural obstacles such as recruiting bias, salary inequities, and insufficient representation in leadership positions. By positioning inclusion inside a cohesive corporate culture instead of as a structural issue necessitating policy-driven solutions, the strategy conforms to dominant narratives that prefer gradual change over radical institutional changes.

Preliminary Findings

The European Energy DEI strategy uses affirmative language to convey a robust rhetorical commitment to diversity and inclusion; nevertheless, the lack of enforcing procedures diminishes its practical efficacy. The policy underscores shared accountability, promoting team engagement and cooperation to develop an inclusive work environment. Moreover, it delineates disciplinary actions against discrimination, establishing a level of institutional responsibility.

Nevertheless, significant constraints exist. The absence of concrete enforcement mechanisms indicates that the accountability for DEI projects is predominantly delegated to workers instead of being integrated into corporate governance frameworks. The policy is aspirational, with pledges articulated as intents rather than requirements. Furthermore, its rationale for DEI projects is predominantly economic, seeing diversity as a competitive asset rather than a moral or legal obligation. Ultimately, there is a lack of definitive implementation mechanisms for proactive inclusion initiatives, constraining the policy's capacity to effectuate substantial change beyond superficial pledges.

VI. Conclusion

This thesis critically examines the existing DEI policies, emphasizing the urgent need for them to acknowledge and address the complexities of intersectionality. The analysis of the DEI policies of Unite.EU, European Energy, and BE-IT reveals a consistent trend. While these policies advocate for inclusivity through official commitments, they lack substantial mechanisms to address systemic disparities, especially for individuals with intersecting disadvantaged identities. The research indicates that DEI frameworks predominantly focus on individual identity categories, such as gender, whereas ethnicity, disability, and socioeconomic inequities are given less structural consideration. This limited inclusion underscores the ongoing nature of institutional DEI initiatives that prioritize economic interests over revolutionary social justice objectives.

A significant finding of the analysis is the lack of effective integration of intersectionality into the examined policies. While all three policies recognize the importance of diversity, they often treat social identities as separate, isolated categories, failing to acknowledge their cumulative impacts. For instance, the Unite.EU strategy articulates DEI as a comprehensive concept of equity and meritocracy, but overlooks how systemic obstacles hinder equitable access. European Energy's policy similarly views diversity as a compliance-oriented approach, citing regulatory requirements and external frameworks instead of committing to meaningful transformation. BE-IT's strategy, while clear in its diversity goals, adopts a neoliberal framework

for DEI, prioritizing corporate efficiency and performance-oriented inclusion over addressing structural obstacles.

Among the three policies, gender diversity is disproportionately emphasized, particularly in terms of leadership representation. BE-IT and European Energy stress gender-balanced workforces and leadership growth initiatives for women, but do not outline specific measures for other excluded groups. Disability inclusion, ethnic fairness, and socioeconomic inequities are often treated as peripheral issues, expressed as broad pledges without specific remedies. This imbalance in emphasis reflects a broader corporate DEI trend where gender diversity is systematically prioritized due to its greater acceptance and ease of integration into established business frameworks, compared to more contentious concerns such as racial or class-based disparities.

The language used in DEI policies significantly shapes perceptions of inclusion. All three guidelines employ ambiguous, aspirational wording that indicates commitment but lacks enforceability. Terms such as 'actively promote,' 'foster a culture,' and 'ensure all voices are heard' are prevalent in the policies. However, they lack explicit accountability measures, implementation methods, or repercussions for non-compliance. This performative framing allows firms to present themselves as inclusive without fundamentally altering power dynamics, highlighting the need for more substantive changes.

Furthermore, there is a dependence on intertextual allusions to external frameworks, such as the German Diversity Charter in the case of Unilever. EU functions as a mechanism for institutional validation rather than an instrument for systemic transformation. These allusions correspond with dominant DEI discourses that bolster legitimacy without incorporating enforceable accountability mechanisms. BE-IT's use of AI-driven diversity screening exemplifies how organizations may depend on technical solutions instead of addressing ingrained prejudices in recruiting and promotion procedures.

While all three policies include anti-discrimination tools, such as organized recruiting processes and reporting systems, they fall short in terms of proactive structural reforms. European Energy and BE-IT assert 'zero-tolerance' policies on discrimination; however, they do not specify the procedures for investigating discrimination, the punishments imposed, or the protections afforded to employees against retaliation. This shifts the responsibility for fostering

inclusion onto employees instead of corporate leadership. The EU's reliance on organized interviews and standardized employment standards implies impartiality but overlooks the impact of unconscious prejudices and unequal access to job prospects that harm underrepresented groups, highlighting the need for more comprehensive measures.

Moreover, ERGs are identified as the principal mechanism for fostering inclusion across all three policies; nevertheless, these groups lack decision-making power, financial transparency, and incorporation into overarching company-wide DEI initiatives. Although ERGs offer significant networking opportunities, they do not alter institutional power relations or facilitate structural change. This illustrates the gap between performative and substantive inclusion when firms provide voluntary participation options while refraining from enacting transformational policies like leadership diversity mandates, pay transparency, or affirmative action initiatives.

The analysis of these three policies demonstrates that existing DEI policies inadequately address the complexities faced by people with overlapping marginalized identities. Instead, they implement broad diversity promises that do not adequately address the compounding disadvantages experienced by individuals at the confluence of many identity issues. Although gender inclusion is emphasized, ethnic equality and disability inclusion are predominantly implicit, indicating a DEI strategy that is more readily assimilated into corporate objectives without challenging established hierarchies.

By employing CRT and Standpoint Theory, this investigation has uncovered a significant finding. It has shown that contemporary DEI policies, rather than challenging dominant power structures, often reinforce them. The focus on meritocracy and personal responsibility aligns with neoliberal diversity models that prioritize corporate branding over substantial structural change. Furthermore, the absence of intersectional methods in these policies suggests a failure to recognize the influence of interconnected systems of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989) on working experiences.

From a social constructivist perspective, DEI policies are not just theoretical constructs, but descriptive texts and discursive instruments that significantly shape institutional realities. The language of these regulations embodies power relations, determining who is recognized, whose experiences are validated, and whose concerns are marginalized. Fairclough's (1992) CDA illustrates how policy discourse both reflects and perpetuates broader sociocultural beliefs.

The frequent use of aspirational and non-committal phrasing, such as 'aims to promote' or 'seeks to foster', suggests a reluctance to establish enforceable accountability mechanisms.

When addressing the research question, "*To what extent do current DEI policies recognize and address the complex realities of individuals with intersecting marginalized identities?*" the results show that these policies mostly fall short of going beyond cursory recognitions of intersectionality. DEI initiatives are typically disjointed and selective, frequently emphasizing categories that correspond with institutional objectives rather than those necessitating structural transformation.

Lastly, organizations must transcend single-axis methods and include intersectionality into DEI policy models to develop more efficient and inclusive policies, providing a comprehensive address of disparities related to ethnicity, gender, disability, and class. This necessitates a significant shift from performative to substantive promises, where explicit accountability standards, enforced diversity benchmarks, and transparent progress monitoring are integrated into policy execution. Inclusion must be redefined as a structural need rather than a commercial advantage, guaranteeing that DEI initiatives endure beyond financial motivations and remain a fundamental institutional goal. Moreover, Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) should be endowed with genuine decision-making power, financial resources, and structural integration rather than being seen as just symbolic venues for optional involvement. Organizations must improve openness in discrimination reporting and policy enforcement, ensuring that zero-tolerance policies are supported by explicit investigative procedures and strong safeguards for minority employees, making DEI promises actionable and responsible.

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