

## Repoliticizing diversity work? Exploring the performative potentials of norm-critical activism

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*Published in:*  
Gender, Work and Organization

*DOI:*  
[10.1111/gwao.12771](https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12771)

*Publication date:*  
2022

*Document Version*  
Peer reviewed version

*Citation for published version (APA):*  
Plotnikof, M., Muhr, S. L., Holck, L., & Just, S. N. (2022). Repoliticizing diversity work? Exploring the performative potentials of norm-critical activism. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 29(2), 466-485. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12771>

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## **Re-politicizing Diversity Work:**

### **Exploring the Performative Potentials of Norm-Critical Activism**

#### **Abstract**

Diversity management efforts often turn diversity issues into a business case, thereby depoliticizing such issues and shying away from more political concerns of inequality and discriminating norms of difference. In this paper, we aim to bring attention to the performative potential of activist practices in order to promote the re-politicization of organizational diversity work. To do so, we draw on interviews with three explicitly norm-critical activists, exploring how their work can inspire norm-critical work with diversity issues in formal organizational contexts. The three activists are: 1) a twerk dancer, psychologist, radio host and founder of a popular fourth-wave feminist group; 2) a project manager and founder of a national NGO concerned with the wellbeing of minority ethnic LGBT+ people and 3) an anarchist activist, founder of a gender network and moderator of gender debates, who is also a university college teacher. Showing how activist practices work through discursive tensions of personal↔public issues, safe↔unsafe spaces and creative↔conventional methods, we discuss how these practices may translate to organizational settings, enabling the re-politization of diversity work in and as the constant negotiation of norms of recognition.

**Keywords:** activist practices, diversity management, norm-critical methods, performative potential, re-politicization

#### **Introduction**

Issues of equality and diversity have become central concerns of Human Resource Management (HRM) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) units in many mainstream organizations who seek to enhance competitive advantage by becoming more inclusive (Bendl, et al., 2015; Pullen et al., 2017). HRM practices often focus on issues of representation, taking steps to, for example, increase the percentage of women at various levels, in specific occupational groups or formal positions. Likewise, CSR initiatives are typically framed as projects that promote inclusion; e.g., through targeted training, mentoring or talent programs, designed to enhance the opportunities of minority groups. Such practices and initiatives are likely to be accompanied by increased efforts in branding the organization as inclusive and diverse.

Concurrently, issues of diversity and inclusion are increasingly being handled as a business case and, hence, formalized as diversity management strategies to improve an organization's profile and statistics, often with a financial target (Bleijenbergh, et al., 2010; Herring, 2009; Oswich & Noon, 2014; Robinson & Dechant, 1997; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014). Strategic diversity management efforts often articulate discourses of 'talent', 'merit', 'innovation' or 'inclusion', thereby stressing diversity as a competitive performance indicator and a financial advantage. When the primary concern is performance, however, the more fundamental social, ethical and political questions of *why* and *how* inequality and discrimination continue to shape organizational life are not addressed. Furthermore, the framing of such issues as diversity matters is 'nicer' than that of inequality or discrimination, meaning the issues become depoliticized and simplified, reduced to a matter of increasing minority representation within organizations (Lombardo et al., 2010; Perriton, 2009; Squires, 2005).

Hence, formal organizational HRM or CSR efforts shy away from more political concerns of discriminating and exclusionary norms of gendered, raced, classed and other structural differences, shifting the problem from the structural level to an individual or 'natural' matter of specific minority groups (for critical accounts of this move, see Longman & De Graeve, 2014; Muhr & Plotnikof, 2018; Romani et al., 2020). While HRM and CSR initiatives in this vein may, indeed, improve the working lives of some employees and the bottom lines of their organizations, they rely on discourses that categorize members of minority groups as being in need of 'help' or 'qualification'. Such discourses normalize and legitimize the continued marginalization of minorities who are positioned as 'under-qualified', 'needy' and demanding 'positive discrimination'. As such the depoliticization of diversity management has produced a deadlock; the very strategies applied to include more women (particularly in management positions) and other under-represented groups in organizational life may, in fact, serve to uphold their exclusion (Benschop et al., 2015; Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013; Ortlieb & Sieben, 2014).

Seeking to re-politicize the field, critical diversity scholars have recently called for theoretical and practical developments of norm-critical approaches to diversity issues (Christensen, 2021; Christensen et al., 2020; Holck and Muhr, 2017; Pullen et al., 2017). Contrary to mainstream diversity management, norm-critical approaches insist on asking questions of discrimination and inequality – no matter how difficult or uncomfortable they are. As such, they begin from the fact that workplaces (and other organizations) remain highly segregated, despite (or even because of) the depoliticizing strategic discourses and initiatives of diversity management (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004; Muhr & Plotnikof, 2018; Ortlieb & Sieben, 2014). Norm-critical approaches uncover and challenge existing power relations and norms of difference (Andersson & Amundsdotter, 2012). This includes unpacking the cultural, societal (re-)production and normative function of stereotypical categorizations of individuals and groups, which condition identity and agency – and in so doing destabilizing currently dominant norms and enabling potential alternatives. Shifting the focus from marginalized individuals and groups to the mainstream of organizations, norm-critical approaches aim to alter “organizational structures and routines which reproduce specific norms of difference and inequality and thus normalize the privileges of dominant groups (e.g. whiteness or masculinity)” (Janssens & Zanoni, 2014: 2). While norm-critical engagements fuel theoretical (Acker, 2012; Christensen, 2020; Just et al., 2017; Bleijenbergh, et al. 2010) and methodological discussions (Ashcraft and Muhr, 2018; Christensen et al., 2020; Gilmore et al. 2019; Pullen et al., 2020), analytical and practical approaches are still developing and need further exploration (Pullen et al., 2017).

Viewing de-politicization as an obstacle for progressive diversity work and research, this paper explores the performative potential of norm-critical activism to re-politicize diversity issues in formal organizational practices. Here, feminist activist practices are particularly interesting, as efforts to nuance and resist dominant gender norms are inherently political (Just & Muhr, 2018; Just et al., 2018; Thomas & Davies, 2005a; Staunæs & Søndergaard, 2008). Bringing feminist activist practices into work organizations may hold the potential to readdress diversity issues in such formal organizational contexts more radically than business case imperatives. Drawing on feminist theory of discursive tension and performativity as forms of resistance (Butler, 2004; Thomas & Davies, 2005b), we explore the (discursive) practices of three norm-critical activists who raise gender and diversity issues in relation to various formal organizational settings within the sociopolitical context of Denmark. The three activists are: 1) a twerk dancer, psychologist, radio host and founder of a popular fourth-wave feminist group; 2) a project manager and founder of a national NGO concerned with the wellbeing of minority ethnic LGBT+ people and 3) an anarchist activist, founder of a gender network and moderator of gender debates, who is also a university college teacher. The three activists all work explicitly with norm-critical approaches, but favor different

activist practices for re-politicizing diversity issues in formal organizational settings. They have all gained considerable traction at their organizational, local and/or national levels of political engagement, thereby indicating the progressive potential of norm-critical re-politicization. The interviews were conducted in 2017-2018, using both individual and group interviews, with supplementary data collection from observations, websites, policy documents and public statements.

Focusing on diversity work, we explore how activist practices become performative through discursive tensions of personal↔public issues, safe↔unsafe spaces and creative↔conventional methods, thereby realizing their potential to re-politicize organizational and societal issues of discrimination and exclusion. Identifying and detailing the discursive tensions and performative potential of norm-critical activism, we argue, may inspire scholarly and practical diversity work, enhancing our ability to challenge, counter and bypass norms of difference in organizational settings and to destabilize normative constructions and categorizations that marginalize/stigmatize the subjects of which they speak. Promoting such developments implies scholarly activism of mediating between activist practices and formal organizational settings (Contu, 2020). Seeking to advance norm-critical approaches within diversity studies and to lay the ground for their organizational implementation, we explore the conceptual and practical implications of situating norm-critique at the intersection of activism and formal organizations.

## **From depoliticizing to re-politicizing diversity work**

Critical diversity research identifies how the ‘shadows of power’ continue to shape organizational diversity work (Ahmed, 2014; Ortlieb & Sieben, 2014; Pullen et al., 2017). Thus, mainstream diversity management has been criticized for its discursive production of difference (Bleijenbergh, 2018; Zanoni & Janssens, 2004) that fosters essentialism (Janssens & Zanoni, 2005; Swan & Fox, 2010) and heteronormativity (Bendl et al., 2008; Heiskanen et al., 2015) and assimilates or marginalizes difference (Holck & Muhr, 2017). Diversity management initiatives are ‘unmasked’ as power dynamics, showing how they become managerial practices of control by positioning minority employees in fixed categories with negative connotations (Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007). Indeed, even though diversity management emerged to challenge inequalities within organizations, measures that promote diversity do not, in general, question the hierarchical structures of formal organizations or the norms of difference that shape organizational cultures. Recent studies suggest that alternative diversity practices within capitalist for-profit organization, on the one hand, enable the re-valuation of diverse competencies and the

expression of multiple identities (Janssens & Zanoni, 2014) but, on the other hand, also foster persistent ‘unequal opportunity structures’ despite diversity management efforts (Holck, 2016).

Critical diversity scholars link the deadlock of diversity management to the depoliticization of diversity issues (Lui, 2018; Lombardo et al., 2010; Perriton, 2009; Romani et al., 2020; Squires, 2005; Swan & Fox, 2010), leading to ‘rhetorical entrapment’: “once accepted as a norm that resonates with dominant policy frame, mainstreaming will be adopted as a *technocratic tool* in policy making, depoliticizing the issue of gender inequality in itself” (Squires, 2005: 374). Here, the discursive invocation of diversity renders diversity work non-performative, as Ahmed (2012) shows in her study of Anglo-Saxon universities. Drawing on Butler’s concept of performativity, Ahmed concludes that diversity management within formal organizations does not produce ‘the effects that it names’ (117); the focus on ‘excellence’ (with its correlations of ‘competitiveness’, ‘marketability’ and ‘profitability’) fosters ‘diversity pride’ instead of fundamental change. Similarly, Perriton (2009: 220) argues that:

Gender is commonly framed in a way that removes any potential for challenge of the dominant values and behaviors of business. Depoliticization is achieved by combining the effects of (deliberate) restrictions in language and a whole raft of other (unacknowledged) discursive modifications.

Depoliticization, in sum, is a counter-productive effect of organizational responses to gender and diversity issues, which appear to be taken seriously, but without necessarily enabling any practical change.

What is at stake, here, is the distraction of both diversity management actors and other organizational members from fundamental diversity issues. That is, normative constructions of difference are left unaltered, even as positively-connoted diversity discourses are incorporated in dominant organizational business strategies. The legitimizing discourses of diversity management initiatives leave ideological power hierarchies in place – reifying the norms of difference that in- and exclude individual subjects and assign them to more or less (dis-)advantaged positions within organizations (Ahmed, 2012; Akom, 2011; Ghorashi & Ponzoni, 2014; Staunæs & Søndergaard, 2008).

Having identified the causes and consequences of depoliticization, critical diversity scholars are increasingly turning to the task of re-politicization (Swan & Fox, 2010; Pullen et al., 2017b). Since “the specificities and the politics of the occupational micro-practices that racialized minorities and white women mobilize, have been less well researched” (Swan & Fox, 2010: 568), scholars seek to push critical diversity research beyond critique and towards activist engagement with such specificities (Bell et al., 2019; Christensen & Muhr, 2018; Contu, 2020; Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013;

Ortlieb & Sieben, 2014; Schwabenland & Tomlinson, 2015; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007). Thus, the performative potential of progressive change that a critical perspective otherwise only expounds may be enhanced through a turn to activist practices (Amrouche et al., 2018; Akom, 2011; Bleijenbergh, 2018; Ghorashi & Ponzoni, 2014; Heiskanen et al., 2015; Staunæs & Søndergaard, 2008; Vachhani & Pullen, 2019). Accordingly, some scholars propose that critical diversity research should apply a “more proactive, performative perspective that is not afraid to consider alternative approaches and solutions to the practice of diversity management” (Schwabenland & Tomlinson, 2015: 3) in order to gain better insight into “how organizations can achieve greater equality despite their capitalist nature” (Janssens & Zanoni, 2014: 311). In what follows, we seek to contribute to this shift, exploring how the ‘critical’ dimension of current diversity studies may come to more fully realize the performative potential that is so deeply ingrained in the self-perception of critical scholarship (Pullen et al., 2017b).

### **Towards norm-critique: Approaching discursive tensions in feminist activism**

To develop this agenda further, we explore norm-critical approaches as a path to troubling strategic diversity management solutions and the norms of difference they imply (Just et al., 2017; Parker, 2016; Pullen et al., 2017b). In so doing, we, first, unfold the emerging interest in norm-critique in feminist organization studies (Christensen, 2018; Holck & Muhr, 2017; Staunæs & Søndergaard, 2008) and, second, explore the discursive tensions of norm-critical activist practices. Finally, we discuss the performative potential of such practices for scholarly endeavors to re-politicize organizational diversity work.

Feminist organization studies unpack how dominant norms of difference are produced through formal organizational discourses and scrutinize their performativity in relation to subjectivities, agencies, power and resistance at work (Ashcraft & Muhr, 2018; Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004; Benschop, 2021; Pullen et al., 2017; Just & Muhr, 2020; Thomas & Davies, 2005a). By studying discursive struggles through which normative constructions of difference are contested and maintained, such studies elucidate the power-resistance relations at play in the gendering of organizational life. Inspired by Butler’s (e.g., 1990, 1997, 2004) theory of performativity, such studies move towards re-politicizing diversity by shifting focus from the characteristics of individuals and groups to the ways in which organizational discourses of diversity, difference, otherness and/or sameness produce individual and collective subjectivities (Ashcraft & Trethewey, 2004; Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013; Pullen & Knights, 2007). Feminist organization studies have also shown how feminist discourses and acts of resistance have changed over time in terms of reformation, revolution or re-inscription of gender issues in organizations and society (Harding,

Ford & Fotaki, 2013; Thomas & Davies, 2005b). In this context, Thomas & Davies (2005b: 720) advocate poststructuralist feminism as:

a form of feminist activism and struggle that may not result in radical rupture or apocalyptic change but may, nevertheless, be effective. Rather than focusing on revolution, the forms of resistance portrayed in poststructuralist feminisms are of a more localized and small-scale nature, centering on the destabilizing of truths, challenging subjectivities and normalizing discourses.

Such poststructuralist feminist organization studies push the agenda of resistance and activism beyond analytical deconstruction, seeking to queer and co-create new norm-critical approaches in theory and practice (Amrouche et al., 2018; Just et al., 2017; Parker, 2016; Rhodes et al., 2018).

Introducing norm-critique, Holck and Muhr (2017: 10) argue:

A norm-critical approach seeks to move beyond and transcend both diversity management's praise of differences and the critical stance advocating the pre-imposed hierarchical relationship between ethnicities, sexes, etc. [...] It is a constant challenge, which cannot be completed, but remains a continuous act of norm-critical resistance.

Norm-critical approaches, then, seek to make diversity categories and norms of difference visible and tangible while simultaneously transgressing and challenging them (Christensen, 2018; Staunæs & Søndergaard, 2008). That is, they identify and explicate dominant norms of difference in order to queer them. By unpacking how norms work, attention shifts from the problems of the norm-breakers (or the norm-breakers as problems) to how norms structure (discriminating) sameness and difference as well as how they can be challenged. As such, the ambition is to acknowledge differences without fixing or essentializing them to the detriment of the skills and experiences, which various employees bring to an organization (Bromseth & Darj, 2010).

In what follows, we build on existing conceptualizations of norm-critique and explore how norm-critical approaches are being employed in and as activist practice. We work with three examples of norm-critical feminist activism and discuss the potential performativity of such norm-critique in relation to formal organizations' diversity management efforts. As a form of resistance, such norm-critical activism seeks to destabilize powerful, more established and dominant discourses, and we focus our analytical attention on the discursive tensions and communicative practices that saturate this norm-critical work. Here, we follow Ashcraft and Mumby (2004: xxvii) who identify three discursive dimensions:



First, communication arises in response to (perceived) political and material exigencies. Second, communication takes the material world as its material. Thus, discursive formations are inscribed on the body and performed in concrete practices; as such, discourse and communication generate ways of being, seeing, feeling, and acting in the world. Third, [...] discourse and communication can literally create lasting institutional and economic arrangements.

Thus, we begin the study of norm-critical activism by identifying the activists' exigencies – that which they seek to change. Second, we focus on the interrelations of discursive practices and material spaces. Third, we locate the performative potential in the activists' efforts to counter, destabilize and potentially re-politicize existing norms of difference. Identifying norm-critical activist practices and the discursive tensions they work through may enlighten us as to how informally emerging norm-critique can trouble the dominant depoliticization of diversity management and create new possibilities for the repoliticization of diversity work (Holck and Muhr, 2017; Bleijenbergh, 2018; Rhodes et al., 2018).

### **Showcasing norm-critical activism**

To unfold our argument, we explore three individual activists' work with norm-critical methods for addressing diversity issues. The three activists are: 1) a twerk dancer, psychologist, radio host and founder of a popular fourth-wave feminist group; 2) a project manager and founder of a national NGO concerned with the wellbeing of minority ethnic LGBT+ people and 3) an anarchist activist, founder of a gender network and moderator of gender debates, who is also a university college teacher. The three activists were chosen for their explicit use of norm-critical approaches and high degree of reflexivity. As scholars, we are already inspired by these activists and have worked with them in various contexts. This study seeks to systematize their practices to enhance our learning from them. In the following, we will introduce the three activists, focusing on how they each seek to re-politicize diversity issues at the intersection of different forms of activism and more formal organizational settings.

The first activist is Louise, a feminist twerk dancer and psychologist who is co-founder of the group Girl Squad, a social movement for fourth-wave feminism. Girl Squad was a collaboration between three women who are all successful bloggers and social media influencers and have achieved wide coverage in the broader national news media over the past couple of years. Because of their increasing popularity, Girl Squad was invited to host a national radio show, for which they developed a so-called 'hooker manifesto' in order to reclaim female sexuality in a non-shaming, body-positive and empowering way. The manifesto was later published as a book (Kjølsen et al.

2017). After the data collection ended, Girl Squad has been dissolved, and Louise continues her feminist activism individually under the name Twerk Queen. Louise develops norm-critical methods for addressing diversity issues, focusing on the norms of popular culture such as sexual appearance, fashion clothes, contemporary dance acts and performances at various cultural events.

The second activist, Fahad, is a co-founder and spokesperson of the NGO Sabaah and Chief of Projects in MINO Denmark. Sabaah was formed in 2006 by a group of members of the nationwide organization LGBT Denmark who felt that their needs and problems as minority ethnic LGBT people were not being recognized. Sabaah is by now a large national organization that promotes the political rights of minority ethnic LGBT subjects and educates the public on diversity issues, mainly targeting primary school children. In this work, Fahad and Sabaah use norm-critical methods to bring awareness to and legitimize LGBT+ persons in minority ethnic communities. In addition to the political activist agenda, Sabaah provides a very important safe space for its members to meet and socialize. While still active in Sabaah, Fahad has also founded a new organization, MINO Denmark, which targets (potential) university students. Through network, mentoring and ‘business hackathons’ in collaboration with large formal organizations, it is the purpose of MINO Denmark to encourage minority ethnic persons in Denmark to pursue a business career.

Jacob, the third activist, was involved in the 1990’s anarchist movement of house squatters and was, for years, a spokes-person of the occupied space ‘the Youth House’ in Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark. Jacob now works as a university college teacher; he teaches ‘Gender, sexuality and equality’, a mandatory course in the Danish teacher education, and also organizes a network for the development of norm-critical gender education and moderates public debates. The gender network is populated by different university college teachers with norm-critical agendas, and Jacob brings in his history of anarchistic activism. Thus, he combines anarchism with queer feminism in a drive to push the agenda of gender and diversity in education policy and practice. The aim is to further norm-critical methods for addressing diversity issues in both political settings – e.g., in relation to local government elections – and in educational contexts.

### **Exploring tensions in norm-critical activism**

Inspired by organizational ethnography (Plotnikof & Zandee, 2016; Ybema, Yanow, Wels & Kamsteeg, 2009), we applied qualitative methods to collect data that is sensitive to the activists’ different local embedding and the diverse tensions at play in their norm-critical work. The methods included participatory observations of the activists in various public appearances; e.g., at cultural events, political debates or in educational networks and classes. Further, we conducted single interviews with the three activists and brought them together for a group interview, seeking to bring

out the differences and similarities in their practices, their discursive strategies in communicating about norm-critique, their positioning of themselves as activists and the discursive tensions emerging along the way. We did not aim at a comparative analysis in any formal sense, but were, instead, interested in the nuances and details of their (discursive) practices. Finally, we included a document collection of activist practices on websites, policy documents and public statements in different kinds of media, among these also social media posts, photographs and video footage.

Data sources thus count field notes from observations, audio recordings of interviews, video footage, photographs and screenshots of social media appearances on Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook. The data was collected in 2017 and 2018, and after transcription we ordered it in a chronological timeline to enable the analytical process. The data analysis was developed through iterations between: 1) our timeline of events that showed what happened when, where, between whom, through which discursive practices and norm-critical methods and 2) a thematic coding of norm-critical practices of resistance and the discursive tensions they work through. Thus, we sought to learn from the activists, identifying their norm-critical practices along the lines of exigencies, material spaces and methods for the establishment of alternative norms (see Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004, as introduced above).

## **Exploring tensions in norm-critical activist practices**

Our findings are presented in three parts demonstrating the discursive tensions that emerged as central to norm-critical activist practices in terms of exigency, materiality and possibility for change. The discursive tensions are: 1) personal↔public issues, 2) safe↔unsafe spaces, and 3) creative↔conventional methods (see table 1). As will be evident, norm-critical activist practices of resistance become performative by means of such tensions. Thus, the tensions are vital to norm-critical work.

*Insert Table 1 (Analytical findings of discursive practices and tensions) about here*

### **Personal experiences ↔ public issues**

In the activists' (discursive) practices of norm-critical work that addresses diversity issues, they unfold a tension between personal experiences of such issues and a need to call public attention to

the issues. In all three cases, the discursive tension between personal and public appears to be pivotal to their activist practices – and to the ways in which they perform norm-critique. Further, they do not just struggle with this tension, but also legitimize their activism through it, insisting that personal experiences of diversity issues need to be shared publicly to question and destabilize norms of difference. Yet the activists articulate and work the tension in very different ways. To illustrate the activists' different understandings and uses of the tension, we unfold examples through vignettes, encompassing different data types and quotes from our dataset.

### ***From sexual harassment to #metoo blogposts***

*Louise had for some time been in contact with a guy that she found interesting. One night, while she was out clubbing with a few friends, they started texting and decided to meet up for the first time. She was drunk, but she did not think of it as a hook up – more like a late-night date. The guy had not been drinking, so he offered to pick her up at the club and drive her home. Upon arrival, they ended up chatting in the car for a while, until he asked if he could use her bathroom. She agreed and they went into her apartment and sat on the couch to chat further. Then he tried to kiss her a few times, which she turned down by turning her face away and told him that she liked him but did not feel like kissing him right now. Their chatting went on until he suddenly dragged her onto his knees and tried kissing her again. She moved away and told him to stop, but he moved closer and said “when women say no, they mean yes” while touching her intimately and trying to kiss her again. Louise pushed the guy away and told him that no means no. She asked him to leave and got up and walked him to the front door where he, once again, tried to kiss her. She became very angry and told him off while shutting the door. Over the next few days they continued texting, and he apologized for the situation going ‘out of control’, but still called her ‘dramatic’. After contemplating the matter alone and with friends, Louise wrote a blogpost about the incident along with other personal experiences of having her boundaries crossed by others. She hashtagged the post #metoo.<sup>1</sup>*

During an interview, Louise explains:

I think that people's individual stories have a much bigger role today, in the way we perform activism, than in the 1970s, because back then they had a totally different, more collective community spirit. Today, we live in a society that is much more individualized. In many ways, this is our starting point. For me it's often about a certain personal experience, which I then blog about. [...] I think, there is a strong authenticity in communicating a message of emotional meaning. The mode it's told through reflects and spurs something in others that they may recognize.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://twerkqueenlouise.dk/2017/09/13/jeg-tog-en-fremmed-mand-med-hjem-kl-4-om-natten-hvad-havde-jeg-forventet/>; <http://twerkqueenlouise.dk/2017/10/17/metoo-til-ham-som-forgreb-sig-paa-min-krop/>.

For Louise, then, personal stories and individualized communication are means of using the constraints of the current social media landscape to the advantage of her activism. By using examples from her own very personal experiences of having her boundaries crossed, she engages in the debate about gender relations and consent in a way that reaches the audience at an emotional level as well as rationally. Louise works on the assumption that to reach her audience – and be noticed and heard in the massive stream of opinions – she needs to tell personal stories. Paradoxically, making gender and diversity issues personal and individual, legitimizes them to a broader group of people and makes them relevant for a broader public audience. Although Louise contends that the present situation is different from that forming earlier feminist efforts, her practice of bringing personal experiences into the public domain confirms the old dictum that ‘the personal is political’.

### ***From everyday racism to new projects and funding applications***

*It was a normal weekend and Fahad was going with his partner to a dinner party with some friends and family. As people gathered around the table, they talked about an ongoing case of gang shootings taking place in Copenhagen, focusing on the recent death of a 16-year-old boy who was – apparently by accident – shot by a gang member. One of the kids who were present at the dinner said that he heard that the victim was a nice boy, but that he had seen a picture of him wearing a hoodie and a cap and that he looked like a criminal. Fahad noted this stereotypical description of a minority ethnic youth, but then the conversation went on to other topics. During the dinner, however, the same boy brought up the issue of ethnicity again, as he told everyone of a visit to a public pool earlier that day. He described a group of young minority ethnic boys who had been very loud, jumping into the pool where people were swimming, not showering properly, etc. and said that the lifeguard couldn't make them conform to the rules of the pool. He concluded that the situation had made him feel very unsafe and ended by saying: “it seems like people with dark skin just make more trouble.” Neither the boy's parents nor any other guest questioned this statement, leaving Fahad frustrated and with a feeling of being trapped as a visitor in someone else's home. Wanting to behave nicely and not make a scene, Fahad ended up excusing himself to go to the bathroom where he swallowed his anger.*

Returning to the incident in one of our interviews with him, Fahad says:

To me the issues I address also come from my personal life. In our NGO, we use that a lot, as tangible examples along with other data. Data is a big part of what we do, but then there's all those experiences from my private life. One thing is all the lunches with NGOs, another is the personal experiences that make you realize... here in Denmark our perception of racism, it's like we almost don't dare saying it out loud. I'm afraid of saying it because I'm afraid of being considered angry or illegitimate, because we have this idea that Denmark is this super safe and great country. And it is a super safe and great country [...], but that also

blinds us to racism and inequality. One of the places where I really see this is in my personal life, for example at this dinner party [...] Those things make me realize how others experience everyday life, and how much we need to solve these things [...] I actually wrote this [the story of the dinner party] down and documented it, and now we use it as a case. It's even been used in a funding application to explain a diversity issue and some of the things our organization seeks to solve.

In this and many other examples, Fahad explains how he, as a dark-skinned, homosexual, Muslim man, often experiences intersecting racist, gendered and homophobic discrimination in both his private and professional life. Fahad legitimizes his activist practices by communicating his experiences with everyday racism, sexism and homophobia. By talking about his own experiences, he displays others' blindness and neglect of diversity issues in everyday life, thereby repoliticizing the issues.

### ***From criminal records to embodied gender diversity***

*From 1982-2007 a group of activists developed an anarchistic community by occupying an old building in the middle of one of Copenhagen's historical working-class neighborhoods. They called it 'the Youth House', and for those 25 years the local government left the building to them. However, every once in a while, politicians, media or the local community took up the question of the future of the Youth House, to which the users of the house responded with demonstrations and small riots as well as different kinds of activist happenings – some peaceful and humorous, others more aggressive and confrontational. This all culminated on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2007 when the police cleared the house, based on a political decision. The clearance resulted in massive confrontations between police and activists, a fight that lasted several days and led to the arrest of more than 700 people. As part of the activist group, Jacob participated in the internal discussions and decision-making within the Youth House for many years, and he also functioned as a spokesperson for the group. Moreover, he was part of numerous happenings, particularly during the 1990's. For instance, he was part of occupying an old famous restaurant in the Tivoli gardens and organized a happening of running naked through the main pedestrian street of Copenhagen city center. The latter got him arrested, and he was convicted for indecent exposure, which remains on his criminal record.<sup>2</sup>*

During an interview, Jacob considers the effects of his experiences:

I use my own story, but I always try to connect it to the related structural issues, so it doesn't just become an individual story. I know that if I tell students that I can't get a job in many organizations because I have this conviction, then they really listen, and we can talk about stigma and structural issues of having a criminal record. It will never be deleted, it is always

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<sup>2</sup> <https://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ungdomshuset>; <https://www.tv2lorry.dk/artikel/tidslinje-faa-hele-historien-om-ungdomshuset>; [https://www.information.dk/debat/1999/05/aktivist-gaar-bekendelse?lst\\_cntrb](https://www.information.dk/debat/1999/05/aktivist-gaar-bekendelse?lst_cntrb)

there, right. Sometimes, I also use my body [points at his multiple piercings] to discuss gendered norms of the ‘right body’ to work in education. For example, how do gendered norms in education, nursing and care-taking define and set boundaries for the ‘right’ masculinity and femininity – e.g., as ‘soft and presentable’, rather than ‘tough and pierced’.

Jacob legitimizes his use of personal experiences by constructing them in relation to relevant structural issues. He fleshes out the tension of personal↔public issues with an example that stresses how gendered norms of the ‘right body’ can affect teachers’ relationship with students:

The first time I was on a trip as a newly educated teacher, we went to a public pool, me and a female teacher and some children. I take the boys to the locker room – a group of young guys and me, and I have to flash all my intimate piercings in this locker-room. What do you think they talked about the rest of that day? Uncomfortable, but then we could talk about diverse body images.

Jacob, then, embraces personal discomfort in order to use his embodied experiences to expose and raise discussion of public issues.

Across the three examples, we see how the activists communicate their norm-critical work through tensions of personal experiences of various forms of gendered and racialized diversity issues, using personal experiences to (re-)address related public issues. Despite the differences in how the three activists articulate and work the tension of personal experiences↔public, they all activate the tension to legitimize norm-critical activist practices as responses to pervasive gender and diversity issues. Here, the tension causes struggles, but also becomes vital to destabilize normative gendered and racialized diversity constructions. Insisting on the prevalence of sexism, racism and stereotyped body images, the activists rearticulate diversity issues as political struggles against dominant societal norms.

### **Safe space ↔ unsafe space**

A second tension, which emerges in the activist practices within our data, centers on the relationship between safe↔unsafe space. Here, the activists articulate concerns about which voices to confront and which battles to fight when, and they negotiate dilemmas in relation to the need to, on the one hand, open up dialogues on vulnerable issues and, on the other hand, to create closed spaces for their ‘communities’. In the group interview, all three activists shared their take on this issue, and we begin this round of analysis with individual quotes from this conversation.

### *For us or for everyone?*

The issue of a safe space is, perhaps, most pressing for members of Sabaah who are often not out to their families and incur even greater risks than other LGBT+ people when being out on the street. In fact, this was a determinant factor in establishing Sabaah as a break-out organization from LGBT Denmark, since minority LGBT+ people did not experience support from the broader community in terms of their special needs. Today, Sabaah is much more politically active in the public domain, but the tension between safe and unsafe spaces remains central. Fahad describes the use of two hashtags to delineate these spaces, #FUBU (For Us By Us), and #FEBU, (For Everyone By Us):

These hashtags are tools we use internally in our organization to help us keep our focus on certain aspects and use a certain language. FUBU is definitely about assuring a level of representing specific groups. For example, when our network talks are FUBU activities, then the panel of speakers need to be representative for the minority group of which they speak. [...] Another example is our cafés, which are for all our members, but these cafés are often happening at night time at a public address. At these events, something happens, which is typical for much activism and LGBT-life, which is that mostly it is cis-gendered homosexual young men showing up. It is because they have easier access, they experience less social control, etc. We have two options, we can say “well this offer is for everyone, they can come if they like.” Or we could make another offer for the ones not showing up, you know, thinking about “what limitations are there in this room?” I’m also involved in arranging a women’s café, which is taking place earlier during daytime and at a non-disclosed location.

In this sense, safe/unsafe is constructed as a matter of creating a physical and communicative space that embodies safety, as Fahad stresses elsewhere: “where you meet others like yourself,” or unsafety because other norms of differences are represented too. Creating events that are safe but exclusive as well as events that are more inclusive, but therefore also less safe remains a central ambition of and a main productive tension in Fahad’s activist work. What is at stake here, is the constant negotiation of norms of recognition.

### *Virtual un-/safety?*

Louise emphasizes how the tensions between safe/unsafe do not just arise in physical space, but also as a virtual relation:

One thing is that I post something, but another thing is the subsequent comments and reactions and how they are picked up. The others in Girl Squad do it more than me, because



I think people are acting crazy online. But when a guy writes to one of the girls “wow, you are hot, you make my dick hard,” then she replies “that is not a compliment, it tells me that you see me as a women, whose only purpose is to make your dick hard.” So, this creates a situation in which you can address this issue – and even in public. And often you can see, when somebody is shaming me and my comments, some of my followers might then pick that up and say “you post pictures of yourself breastfeeding, why can’t she post this then? What’s the difference in the way you show your body?” In that way, it creates an opportunity to discuss the norms for what bodily displays are considered normal or not normal.

For Louise, posting explicit picture in a public space is unsafe in the sense that she knows that all kinds of comments that seek to shame and discipline her are likely to occur. But the online space may also support her and make her feel safer, as other people (her ‘followers’) may reply to the shaming and argue on her behalf. Online, a further dimension of uncertainty is added, as it is impossible to know beforehand, let alone control, how the comments will play out. Still, as she argues, the benefit of running the risk of feeling unsafe is that the online space creates opportunities to debate the normative construction of gender in question, which is the main purpose of her activism. Putting herself at risk by insisting on her right to exposure in an unsafe space, then, is a key political ingredient in Louise’s activism.

### ***Destabilizing safe spaces***

Jacob shares how he works with safe spaces in his teaching:

When I meet students the first time, I don’t make them out their own vulnerabilities and non-privileges, but they get an exercise with a made-up person and then they need to imagine this with regard to different gender and diversity norms; e.g., that it can be hard to walk into a bus, because they have a dark full-grown beard and dark eyes.

Once the safe space is established, he can begin pushing the students, as in the following example:

They are planning an event called ‘Gin and Gender’, but then I ask them [...] if they have considered who can be involved in ‘Gin and Gender’ and if it might be possible to rethink the concept more inclusively, ‘Hummus and Having Fun’ or something. They acknowledge it, but of course it’s not just changing the words, because the event is still in the Friday bar, which excludes all the students that do not identify with going to a bar.

Here, Jacob sees an opportunity to destabilize the organization of an event, suggesting that what is safe to some might feel unsafe for others while also raising the question of how inclusive any space

can be. The tension plays out around a physical space and, like Fahad, Jacob relates the creation of safe/unsafe space to the specific words that demarcate the space.

In different ways and by means of various activist practices, the activists work through discursive tensions between safe/unsafe space, as they use themselves and take up others' stories to question dominating norms of difference, whether gendered and/or racialized. In the dialogue that followed the three activists' initial articulations of their struggles with un-/safety they all agreed that the tension, while difficult to navigate, is essential to their activism:

Jacob: ... If it's just me and somebody like me, plus a few other queers, we will just pat each other's backs and agree on how we all agree but have slightly different perspectives in play.

Louise: All really good people.

Jacob: A savior group.

Louise: White saviors

Jacob: Saviors of the gender debate.

Louise: But that's one of the things I find that Girl Squad really destabilizes, because we entered the mainstream media – which is also why we get so much criticism, but it's because we suddenly communicate with people who don't agree.

Fahad: You shake your booty publicly.

Louise: And that's also what is really satisfying to me with this project [Girl Squad], because the point wasn't for everybody to agree with me and dye their hair purple and twerk their booty. But I wanted to make people aware of the automatic pilot [of gender norms] and that we need to stop and think about it and make some choices.

In this conversation, the three agree on the need to question dominant and normative gender constructions, but they also stress the need to challenge themselves in tensions of safe↔unsafe spaces, for example by enacting norm-critical practices in contexts that are defined by the dominant norms. In this regard, the norm-critical practices need to be voiced in both safe spaces among like-minded people, 'patting each other's backs', and in unsafe public spaces, characterized by dissent and even overt aggression. Thereby, the tensions of safe↔unsafe spaces are constructed as a condition of possibility for their activism; if they do not enter unsafe spaces, their own practices are depoliticized, as everyone in the safe spaces already agree. Hence, safe spaces can be places of recognition and celebration, but not of societal transformation.

## **Creative↔Conventional methods**

As the activists communicate about gender and diversity issues through personal stories about public issues in both safe and unsafe environments in order to repoliticize inclusive/exclusive norms of difference in everyday life and in society, a third discursive tension emerges: creative↔conventional methods. All three work this tension in similar ways, as they agree that norm-critique involves both creative and conventional methods to address, resist and alter dominant normative gender constructions and diversity issues.

Even so, they offer slight variations in their definitions of norm-critical work and motivations for doing it:

Jacob: Norm-criticism is interesting to me to make space for the alternative. Both relating to my Youth House activism and to the gender teaching I do today, constantly shaking things up and swapping norms. I really like to approach the world from a queer perspective, but also always questioning how all communities construct norms. Then people think they know ‘the Truth’. And that’s exactly when we need to break down ‘the Truth’ to rupture the established normative constructions.

Louise: My practice has been about raising awareness, it’s been a play with elaborating the grey scales of normativity. E.g., normative femininity that is intersecting with a super normative masculinity. Playing with something super normative and then expanding the norm of difference in that. To me, norm-critique is also a very physical [endeavor of] pushing norms and creating other conditions for acting differently. Like when I’ve been twerking on national TV, then there’s a lot of men who comment on these shows, saying that it isn’t sexy, that it’s vulgar, and I’m like that’s exactly what I’m trying to do, because although some of it is very normative – focusing on the booty and not wearing a lot of clothes – it’s also more than that. It pushes and challenges the idea of female sexuality as just being soft and tender and accommodating and passive, it also has power, which is culturally unrecognizable from such a norm construction. That’s what I find interesting to push – I think that’s my norm-critical approach.

Fahad: Norm-critique to me is like a pair of glasses that I found rather late in my activist life. Like many other concepts and tools, it’s been really useful for me to try and ‘wear’ them to see the world differently. I keep on finding areas where people don’t see their own bias and prejudice, and they end up (re-)producing the dominant norms. For example, within queer academia and queer activism there’s this elite whiteness that ends up being demarcated by certain music, looks, behaviors. To me, it is a big issue that some activists get really good at calling out other people’s bias, but not their own. I also experience this in

many other relations, because the community I represent in Sabaah is a minority in a minority in a minority. And some people make that a battle of ‘who’s most oppressed’, but that’s not what it’s about! When we develop policies and practices there’s always biased blinding that we don’t see. So, that [seeing bias] is what I constantly try to do in my work.

Across the activists’ norm-critical work, they all stress some of the same defining aspects: questioning and raising awareness of dominant norm constructions and seeking to alter and expand the conditions of normativity. Their practices become performative in and through the methods of awareness raising – in the clash or the overlap between conventional and creative methods: This is what Louise conceptualizes as playing with or elaborating on the ‘grey scales of normativity’. The constant moving in and out of normative positions, both challenging societal hegemony and personal norms and conventions of behavior. Even challenging the ‘bias that has blinded us’, as Fahad puts it. This is done physically, using the body to push the norm, when Louise twerks on national TV, challenging the ‘ideal of female sexuality’, or when Jacob uses nudity in political happenings as well as gender education – and in debates about the normative expectations of the intersectionalities between gendered bodies and professional subjectivities. And it is performed through speech acts of disrupting social conventions of ‘cozy, polite conversations’ when Fahad uses the story of everyday racism at a dinner party as case material for his activist teaching or when the Girl Squad ‘reclaims’ female sexuality in a non-shaming, positive and empowering way.

Sometimes norm-critical approaches incur conventional methods of information and education, but communicating and embodying resistance that destabilizes and expands gender norms also involves informal, radical and/or untraditional creative methods. This tension plays out as a struggle of being recognized as norm-critical within the alternative community, yet being understood by members of the broader society. Negotiation of the tension is facilitated by the use of different methods, as these may help reach different audiences, may stress a norm-critical concern or alter traditional norms through multimodal expressions such as academic arguments, humor, dancing, fashion, social media and bodily experiences:

Louise: The strength of our approach is its access to an audience that doesn’t usually think about these issues. I have around 70.000 followers on Instagram, mostly Danes, and about 68% male, 32 % female. Many that don’t normally think about gender, norm-critique and feminism. There’s a balance between working with the system while trying to change it. I now feel a reward of working with the system, but it’s a balance to assure that it’s not just my reward, but that it trickles down to others who do not necessarily have the same platform or airtime.

Fahad: I try to use my activist experience to find methods that can communicate these norm-critical points in established communities. It is an interesting process in itself, because it shows that communicating doesn't mean understanding. Sometimes it's misunderstood, sometimes the point is diluted. So, there's also something about picking the right battles and just focusing on getting one single point out to make a small change. The small steps on the way.

As such, the norm-critical practices of the activists negotiate a tension between the radical, creative and the conventional. The tension becomes productive by insisting on – and not being able to escape – the simultaneity of the presence of both in every situation. The activists cannot erase past experiences and situations, which have been inscribed on their bodies even though they are currently inhabiting a more conventional space like education, TV or policy-making. However, combining various methods to reach different audiences is one thing; insisting on the legitimacy and performativity of creative, untraditional multimodal methods is something else altogether. It is the insistence on alternative methods that lends norm-critical expressions their potential performativity, but also risks making them unintelligible. Re-politicizing gendered diversity cannot be done from within the existing sociopolitical arrangements, but it cannot be completely detached from them either. Thus, the struggle to expand the possible expressions, modes and methods of norm-critical activism is itself a central part of norm-critique. It is a delicate balance of insisting on the legitimacy and performativity of creative, radical and provocative methods, yet being recognized as relevant in institutionalized organizational contexts.

## **Concluding discussion**

Having analyzed how Louise, Fahad and Jacob construct their norm-critical practices by working through the tensions of personal↔public issues, safe↔unsafe spaces and creative↔conventional methods, we now turn to the issue of the performative potential of these activist practices in order to discuss how they may inspire new ways to re-politicize organizational diversity practices. One of the strongest aspects of the three activists' methods is their ability to navigate the intersections of conventional and radical norm-critical methods. This ability is explicitly expressed in their use of personal experiences to address social problems of inequality and performed more profoundly in and through their embodiments: Fahad, the minority ethnic LGBT person who speaks up against racism and homophobia; Louise, the feminist activist who explicitly pursues extreme feminine attributes of sexuality in dress and behavior; Jacob, the hyper-masculine anarchist activist with the many body piercings who practices feminist care in a teaching environment. The transformative tensions of such 'differences that matter' (Ahmed, 2009) are brought to the fore when, for instance,

navigating the conventional discursive spaces of consultancy for ministries while organizing activist rallies that target the same authorities or when participating in ‘serious’ debate programs while insisting on the title ‘twerk queen’. Thus, the activists push the boundaries of recognition from within normative spaces, performatively stretching what can be done and by whom.

As such, norm-critical activist practices become boundary spanning exercises of constant oscillation between private and public issues; making general political claims on the basis of specific personal experiences. Daring to occupy unsafe spaces of dissent and social ruptures to test the borderland for what is socially and politically permissible, Louise, Fahad and Jacob perform a kind of activism that is similar to what Ashcraft (2017) calls ‘embodied critique’. Ashcraft (2017) highlights how critical scholars predominantly apply detached critique as disembodied realist tales “seeking relief through a rational mind... by retreating to a safe-room of abstraction and quasi-objectivity” (p. 41). Instead, she recommends shifting to embodied apprehensions of everyday performance by actually inhabiting them: writing or acting from *within* organizations instead of writing or talking *about* them. The activists embody change by placing themselves on the organizational margin while critically questioning and problematizing organizational practices. Working at the very boundary of intelligibility (Butler, 2005), they are in constant danger of being misunderstood by presenting their accounts to non-consenting, non-implied communities. This, we believe, is the first general lesson of our study: the repoliticization of organizational diversity work must begin with the repoliticization of scholarly practices. Having studied norm-critical activism, we, the researchers, are enticed to consider our own performativity as potential mediators between (unsafe) organizational spaces and (safe) activist spaces. Let us consider the performative potential of such activist scholarly practices:

Basing our analysis on Ashcraft and Mumby’s (2004) three dimensions of communicative work, we identified three performative tensions, the workings of which may inspire a scholarly-activist agenda for re-politicizing diversity work. The first tension of personal↔public indicates how the re-politicization of diversity currently hinges on the ability and willingness of individuals to speak up against societal/organizational consensus. This is not ‘nice’ work, as Ahmed (2017) pointedly demonstrates with her concept of the killjoy, but if the consensus remains undisturbed, the false assumption that diversity has been ‘achieved’ is allowed to continue the exclusion and/or suppression of non-normative subjects from organizational settings. What is at stake here is a foundational dilemma of individual action for collective change. The three activists in our study are all resourceful individuals who have succeeded in making their voices heard within organizational/institutionalized spaces. While we are highly appreciative of and inspired by their efforts, it is imperative to stress that we do not mean to suggest that the responsibility for change should be left to the individual. To the contrary, all too many leaders (whether in private or public

organizations) have been able to argue that since they have not heard of a problem, the problem does not exist. It is this basic assumption of ‘silence equals consensus’ that norm-critical approaches replace with the alternative assumption that all spaces are always normative and, hence, political. We should not ask *whether* a space is dominated by certain norms, but *what* norms it is dominated by (Butler, 2004, p. 115). While resourceful individuals – such as researchers/activists who are invited in as facilitators of organizational change – may use their personal stories to raise awareness of this point, the organizational implication is that the responsibility for identifying and altering normative mechanisms of in-/exclusion is always collective, not individual. *And* that the organizational norm-critical work is never done; if and when a space feels inclusive, the people in that space should look around for who is *not* there.

This leads us to the second tension of safe↔unsafe, as we do not mean to suggest that all spaces must be upset all the time. To the contrary, everyone needs safe spaces and, again, we might reverse the problem to suggest that those subject positions who never experience unsafety are the most problematic. Thus, diversity work may involve setting up minority networks and other constructions of organizational safe spaces, but it is just as important for leaders to step outside of their comfort zones. Again, it should not be the responsibility of individual organizational members to put themselves at risk in unsafe spaces, but we may learn from the example of activists to challenge leaders to follow suit. Experiences of insecurity and vulnerability are part and parcel of everyday organizational life for most minority subjects, whereas majority subjects mainly experience their professional contexts as safe spaces. Reversing those roles may be a very powerful experience, and norm-critique not only points to the potential of this experience, but indicates how it can be enacted.

Thus, the third tension of creative↔conventional offers opportunities for creatively opening up new spaces for the interrogation of current norms. Spaces that are ‘safe’ because they are set aside from ‘normal life’ (e.g., as case work in a training session or a dance performance at the end of a seminar; see also, Ashcraft & Muhr, 2018), but are nevertheless challenging, as they enable people to see their own privileges and/or try out what different normative regimes might feel like. The performativity of such methods, however, is restricted by current norms of recognition; if norm-critical approaches are to have an impact, they must be recognizable as, for instance, contributions to public debate, pedagogical exercises, leadership training, etc. Again, organization and management scholars have a crucial role to play, not only in conceptualizing norm-critique and identifying norm-critical practices, as has been the main concern of this paper, but in operationalizing norm-critical approaches for diversity work, making such approaches recognizable to and productive within organizational settings.

In so doing, we should recall how existing organizational responses to diversity issues have become co-opted and de-politicized: In pursuit of change, organizational practitioners engage in local micro-politics to identify and consolidate alliances and ensure support for transformative efforts (Mikkelsen, 2012). Paradoxically, this political entanglement also delimits the transformative capacity if powerful coalitions go against change or access is blocked because of political considerations. Diversity workers, then, must either risk their own positions within the organizations they work for by continuing to question the norms or they, themselves, risk becoming co-opted. Norm-critical approaches offer a way out of this vicious cycle, but the catch is: they must become normative to do so. Thus, the question remains: how can individual activist practices become organizational? We hope that future research might revolve around this issue to further develop the practical and conceptual implications of norm-critical activism.

At present, we suggest that the process of normalizing norm-critique for organizational diversity workers – and their leaders as well as organizational scholars working with them – can begin with reflections on how they might correlate safe/unsafe spaces when developing initiatives. Further, they can activate methods that play with the ‘grey scale’ of what is taken-for-granted by mixing creative, radical and more conventional methods. Such ‘repetition with a difference’ (Allen, 1998) might, among other things, involve problem-based learning and simulations, personal stories and cases, video spots and digital dilemma games. The means of conversation are less important than the impact: to realize the performative potentials of norm-critical approaches to diversity work, beginning with the re-politicization of diversity issues.

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**Table 1: Analytical findings of discursive practices and tensions.**

Tensions	Practices	Effects
Personal↔Public issues	Personal experiences of certain norms of difference enable the activists to address these norms as public diversity issues.	The tension plays out as a struggle that legitimizes the norm-critical methods.
Safe↔Unsafe spaces	Safe spaces may help challenge normative constructions, but creating change demands norm-critical activism in unsafe spaces in which the activists encounter people who disagree with them.	The tension plays out as a struggle that conditions the norm-critical methods.
Creative↔Conventional methods	Creative methods are a communicative mode of raising awareness and challenging norms, but sometimes more conventional methods are needed to translate norm-critical points for	The tension plays out as a struggle that expands the norm-critical methods.

	mainstream audiences.	
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