

The exclusionary processes of diversity recruitment

A critical analysis of the technologies of inclusion in online diversity representations

Prospero, you are the master of illusion.

Lying is your trademark.

And you have lied so much to me

(Lied about the world, lied about me)

That you have ended by imposing on me

An image of myself.

Underdeveloped, you brand me, inferior,

That's the way you have forced me to see myself

I detest that image! What's more, it's a lie!

But now I know you, you old cancer,

And I know myself as well.

~ Caliban, in Aime Cesaire's *A Tempest*

[Lorde, 2003]

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Foreword

This thesis describes how and to what extent diversity representations can reiterate exclusionary processes for non-normative job-seekers. A debate within the discourse of diversity and inclusion that is in need of further research, as the management of difference can result in unilateral representations that perpetuate a hegemony of mainstream society. For me as a writer, this thesis helped me to gain a better insight into how these mechanisms of power operate within the representation of difference, and how these mechanisms come into being through the approach of managing difference. In this foreword, I want to give those credit, which credit is due, my thesis supervisor Eva Midden, for giving me feedback and helping me frame the narrative of this thesis, that as a result, helped to create more depth to this thesis. Yvonne Eggens and Pepijn Doornenbal for proofreading my thesis, helping me alleviate and structure my content, by giving clear feedback on certain argumentative structures. Claudia Heres, Marloes Biel and Reinout Jongbloets for helping me edit my content, where a person with dyslexia, such as myself, cannot go without. As of last, I want to thank my family and friends for creating the space and support that I needed to write this thesis.

Roger van Tuijl

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Abstract

This thesis examines how the management and operationalization of difference can create stereotypical representations that can result in exclusionary processes for job-seekers, even though organizations strive for a more inclusive environment. The theoretical framework shows that by adding an inclusionary approach, these negative outcomes can be removed, as it leads to an approach that per definition is multilateral because it includes all (intra-) groups' experiences of exclusion. By using an explorative analysis on the diversity representations of the Rabobank, this thesis examines to what extent the use of stereotypical representations leads to abstract and unilateral representations that can limit the job-seekers capability to identify with an organization, and perpetuates homogenous hiring.

A combined method has been applied to analyze the diversity statement and the diversity photographs of the Rabobank, containing the categories of gender diversity, cultural diversity, and occupational disability. This combined method consists of three analyses'. The first research method is a textual analysis to discern the form, latent meaning, and omission of the statement to help gain an overall insight of the self-conception of the organization. Secondly, a Barthesian approach of meaning production was used in order to analyze the photographs in relation to its cultural background, whereas it enables me to analyze the form of power-knowledge through which these representations are created. As of last, an intertextual method was applied to analyze the combined meaning of the images through the textual analysis of the statement. This enabled me to examine the accumulated meaning that these representations signify.

Based on the explorative analysis of the representations, there can be stated that diversity representations can reiterate stereotypical representations that perpetuate the normalcy of main-stream society. Resulting in abstract and unilateral representations that make it harder for non-normative types to identify with the organization, a process that creates exclusionary processes for job-seekers, as it, in addition, can result in homogenous hiring due to the unilateral representation of difference. As the Rabobank purely represents as an example, further research is necessary to analyze if diversity representations convey the desired message.

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Introduction

Every day, millions of agents are searching the internet for job possibilities. They access the web not only to learn about new opportunities but also to create a perception about an organizations' culture (Walker, Feild, Bernerth, & Becton, 2012) (de Goede, van Vianen, & Klehe, 2011). Organizational websites are, therefore, an import tool to materialize an organization's values and beliefs. In this employee-based market, organizations that do not offer additional values at their organizational website risk losing talent to competitors, especially when the organization has a low representation of diversity factors (Walker, Feild, Bernerth, & Becton, 2012). High-achievers, racial-ethnic minorities, women, and recent immigrants belong to demographics that are most likely to pursue employment with organizations that are perceived to embrace diversity and inclusion (Ng & Burke, 2005) (Avery, et al., 2013) (van Tuijl, 2019). A high representation of diversity factors insinuates that organizations' values and supports differences and enables the opportunities for agents to affirm their social identities. Although diversity-factors are not as critical during the recruitment process -searching, applying, conversations-, they can play a crucial factor in the decision-making process. Roughly a third of all female and racial-ethnic minority applicants have or will eliminate a prospective employer from further consideration due to the insufficient representation of diversity-factors (Avery, et al., 2013) (van Tuijl, 2019).

When trying to actively considering diversity recruitment efforts, website representation are a crucial way for organizations to inform agents about their values and beliefs (Allen, Mahto, & Otondo, 2007). "The more job-seekers perceive an organization's culture to fit their own cultural preferences (Person-Organization fit), the more attracted they are to the organization [...] and the more likely they choose to apply (de Goede, van Vianen, & Klehe, 2011)". Influencing the perception of diversity, by using diversity and inclusion instruments, such as diversity statements and photographs, became a standardized process to attract new agents. This made these instruments of change more the norm than an exception (Avery & McKay, 2006) (Kulik & Roberson, 2008) (McKay & Avery, 2005) (Uysal, 2013). After all, it is commonly understood that companies want to represent their organization as diverse and inclusive as possible. However, the question arises as to whether the representations portray an accurate reality of a specific organization because the reconstructed image is always

created within the power-relations of a given society. This can have a negative effect on non-normative identity types.

In diversity recruitment, it is of utmost importance that the job-seeker experience includes trusting in the inclusionary representation that the organizations communicate (McKay & Avery, 2005) (van Tuijl, 2019). Not representing or misrepresenting, certain identity types can trigger and perpetuate stereotypical (self-)conceptions, lead to misconceptions about the value an organization has for diversity, result in fewer applications, and reproduction of unequal power-knowledge. Representing difference is important during the recruitment process to a) gain control over the job-applicants' perception of diversity; b) create a safe environment that is free of exclusionary processes. Representing diversity is, however, complex since you only have a limited set of data that you can use to represent in order to keep the website users' attention. Conveying an inclusive diversity message is therefore mostly limited to representing diversity instruments such as the photographs, graphs, and short statements. Especially communicating meaning through the use of photographs can easily reproduce exclusion, as you have to use easy-to-grasp signifiers of diverse types. Types that will refer to more complex shared values and beliefs that are created within a praxis of social-historical power-knowledge (Hall, 2013). Type-specific knowledge that is reproduced through limited and restricting sets of data that reiterate stereo-types, are typically less in favor of non-normative identities, as it perpetuates a form of normalcy in favor of dominant mainstream culture (Dyer, 1999) (Gabriel, 2002).

As a white heterosexual cis-gender male, I have had few encounters with representations that excluded me. Nevertheless, based on the research conducted, I know that this reiteration of exclusion is a daily struggle for certain non-normative bodies. This struggle can also affect the recruitment process of agents of non-normative groups that have a harder time accessing the workforce and additionally struggle with increased anxiety due to (internalized-) stereotype threats. This increased anxiety can lead to lower self-esteem, impaired cognitive performance, and reduction of physical well-being (Loos, 2018) (Roberson & Kulik, 2007). In a few instances, I have experienced the anxiety created by stereotype threat when applying for a new job. As I am a study-stacker that lives with an attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and dyslexia I do not make an excellent case on paper. Therefore, I have difficulties in meeting the recruitment requirements for certain selection procedures that are created by

and for normative agents. Inclusive representations during the recruitment processes have helped me to reduce anxiety about my identity that is partly formed by my “disabilities”. From this viewpoint, I find it important that agents should, at the very minimum, not feel excluded due to a lack of inclusive representations in the recruitment process. Creating the possibility to offer everybody the same means to develop themselves and the opportunities to exercise their capacities. For this reason, I will research the following question:

How do organizations strive to create an inclusive environment through the representation of differences, and to what extent do the diversity representations reproduce exclusion for job-seeking agents?

A good starting point in answering this question is then to research the body of literature that shapes the discourse of diversity and inclusion and to find the answer on how the organization strives to create an inclusive environment through the management of difference. The first chapter, the chapter that outlines the background, will then elaborate on how organizations operationalize differences in distinct categories in order to manage it. Furthermore, this chapter will elaborate on what processes are used within a diversity management approach to reduce exclusionary barriers for non-normative types to access the workforce. After describing the positive effect of diversity management, this background chapter will further elaborate on why this operationalization of difference that is needed to manage difference can result in exclusionary practices. This approach, due to its top-down implementation, cannot take all the different forms of exclusion into account that employees experience. As a result, this background chapter will elaborate on the inclusionary approach that was established as a reaction to the diversity management approach. This inclusionary approach focusses on removing exclusionary boundaries from the bottom-up, where those who experience exclusion are also included in the identification and removal of these exclusionary barriers. An approach that is only possible by an inclusive leadership that can bring together all the different perspectives to form the core of the organization. This chapter will form the background on which I build the rest of my theory and analysis.

The second chapter will give a theoretical account on how categories transfer meaning and how these categories can have an inclusive or exclusive effect on certain groups due to the

power-knowledge through which they are created.¹ This theoretical chapter will, then, first describe how categories contribute to the production of meaning, and how these categories can be used to signify inclusion. Subsequently will be described how these categories can perpetuate a hegemony of mainstream-culture that contributes to the exclusion of groups who fall outside the boundaries of normalcy. In continuation, this chapter will describe how power can render certain experiences invisible as they reside between broader and more accepted categories. Based on this theoretical framework, I conclude that job-seekers can experience exclusion during the recruitment process, as the representation of diversity can result in stereotypical representations that do not enable the job-seeker to identify with the organization. Consequently, the stereotypical representation of diversity can result in homogenous hiring, as employers are being exposed to the same unilateral representation of difference.

Based on the background chapter and my theoretical framework, this thesis answers the question of how an organization can strive to create an inclusive environment, how an organization can signify an inclusive environment through the representation of differences, and how diverse representation can reproduce exclusion for job-seeking agents. However, it does not explain to what extent the representation of differences can reproduce exclusions. This last part of my main question, I will answer through an explorative analysis of the diversity representations of the Rabobank that I will account for in my methodology chapter.

My methodology chapter will give an account of why I chose to analyze the diversity statement and three banner photographs of the Rabobank, regarding occupational disability, cultural diversity and gender diversity. In the analysis, these representations will be analyzed through a combined method: textual analysis, an analysis containing the Barthesian approach, and an intertextual analysis. The textual analysis will enable me to analyze the diversity statement of the Rabobank on form, latent meaning, and omission, what will help me to gain an overall insight into the self-conception of the organization (Fursich, 2009) (Singh & Point, 2006). The Barthesian approach will enable me to analyze the diversity

¹ Historically and political informed knowledge that we view as (naturally) given but can contain incorrect representations of the world that are created by and reproduced through agents and institutes. All knowledge is created through power-knowledge without power we couldn't have knowledge, but more often than not power is produced in favor of the ruling group, who determine how and what knowledge is produced -for example, homosexuality and the church, an institute that due to its power back in the days, still shapes current beliefs and attitudes towards homosexuality (Foucault, 1982).

photograph on a denotative, connotative and myth level. This makes it possible for me to give a commonsense description of the pictures, describe the produced meaning within photos to its cultural background, and describe the broader ideological through which the form of the photos is created. This makes it possible to state to what extent these individual photographs can reinforce exclusionary processes (Barthes, 2006) (Bouzida, 2014). The last part, the intertextual analysis, will enable me to analyze the combined meaning of the photographs through the intertextual analysis of the diversity representation of the Rabobank (Hall, 2013). Based on this intertextual analysis of the diverse representation, I can give an answer to what extent diversity representations can reproduce exclusionary processes.

The explorative analysis will answer the second part of the research question as it concentrates on the external communication published by organizations, such as Rabobank. In this analysis, I analyzed whether their visual representation of what they present as their interpretation of diversity and inclusion is likely to convey the desired message. As a result, there can be stated that the representation of the Rabobank attains exclusionary processes, as these representations perpetuate stereotypes that are formed through hegemonical processes of main-stream culture. Processes that stereotypes and renders certain non-normative body types invisible as these bodies are created through a limited space. That results in abstract representations that can lead to exclusionary processes, as certain job-seekers cannot or don't want to identify with the stereotypical representation of race, gender, and disability. Where in addition, these stereotypical representations, can perpetuate the reproduction of an homogenous organizational culture, as employers are being exposed to the same unilateral representation of diversity.

The next chapter will start by giving a brief introduction on why organizations need to manage diversity, whereafter this background chapter will explain how the operationalization of the workforce is necessary to manage diversity from a top-down approach. Subsequently, it will explain how this approach can result in the reproduction of exclusionary processes, and how the inclusionary approach can solve this by opening up the operationalized categories.

Background: Workforce diversity and the technologies of “inclusion”

From the mid-80s, the employment of people with more diverse backgrounds, as opposed to the white able male, became an opportunity for organizations to create and maintain a competitive advantage. By maximizing the benefits that diversity brings in the workforce and customer base, they were able to explore new and untapped markets (Oswick & Noon, 2014). This resulted in the creation of more heterogenic ways of problem-solving within an organization, making organizations more flexible and resilient to changes in the market environment. While heralded as an opportunity, an increase in workforce diversity also had to adverse effects. Especially when ill-managed or not managed at all, diversity can lead to a negative stakeholder opinion, lower utilization of diversity employment, or a reduction in job-applications.² Diversity management, therefore, became a part of the human resource department to include those who are typically less represented within the workforce by removing barriers that structurally exclude certain groups' access to the workforce and promotional option. While diversity management seemed like the solution to create an inclusive environment, it also leads to interpersonal resentment (informal exclusion), as this approach limited itself to removing barriers for specific groups. As interpersonal resentment grew, an approach including all stakeholders was necessary to overcome both structural (formal) as interpersonal exclusion. This chapter will, therefore, elaborate on how organizations try to create an inclusionary environment by explaining the operationalization of difference that was established to manage diversity; what diversity management entails and why it can be problematic, and why an inclusionary approach is necessary to overcome the problems associated with the above, which segregate the workforce in order to attain the management of diversity. Wherein difference is everything other than the able white male; it attains a phallogocentric standpoint of diversity that creates a dualistic opposition that enables and reiterates oppression through technologies -society, language, knowledge institutions, representations, etc.- in favor of normative bodies (Addicot, 2012).³

² The concept of stakeholder refers to internal -employees and board members)-and external (job-seekers, customers, NGOs, etc.) stakeholders. In this thesis, I will refer to the human stakeholders as agents, where in this thesis my reference to agents will be the employee and job-seeker.

³ I will use this concept of phallogocentrism, as a conceptualization of a system that enables western ableist patriarchal dominance within an organization, wherein organizational structures, workforce, knowledge and representations are created in favor for and from normative bodies, that to a large extend are still white able male.

How is workforce diversity established

Workforce diversity doesn't refer to an anthropological conception of difference among individuals that make them special or unique, but to a categorization of static geopolitical and historical formed identities that experience exclusion due to their otherness -those who fall outside the boundaries of a normative society (Mor Barak, 2015, pp. 84-86). Essential to this conception of diversity is that the different identity types are operationalized in distinct categories -cultural background, gender, and occupational disability. These categories come into being by the naturalization of differences to instrumentalize the process of exclusion, meaning that there is a ready-made solution to help reduce exclusion among categories within the employee workforce.

While ironic, referring to categories to formulate a universal definition of workforce diversity is almost impossible, as the implementation of categories is influenced by changes in the (employee) market forces. To overcome this problem, Michàlle Mor Barak (2015) formalized a definition of workforce diversity by conceptualizing the process and its consequences:

Workforce diversity refers to the division of the workforce into distinct categories that (a) have a perceived commonality within a given cultural or national context and that (b) impact potentially harmful or beneficial employment outcomes such as job opportunities, treatment in the workplace, and promotion prospects—irrespective of job-related skills and qualifications (Mor Barak, 2015, p. 84).

This definition of diversity divides the workforce into distinct categories, where diversity is (a) a subjective phenomenon that is established by dividing group members based on shared commonalities that are historical, geopolitical, and social informed. (b) Within formal (structural), and informal (interpersonal) organizational processes, employees can experience beneficial or harmful treatment based upon this naturalized division.⁴ Depriving specific non-normative identity types' access to the workforce, means to develop themselves and exercise their capacities, while at the same enabling normative identities with job-opportunities and resources adds to exclusion within the workforce (Young, 2006).

⁴ Formal exclusion: Structural exclusion refers to the absence of equal diversity structures that limit minority members in; the recruitment process, career-growth opportunities, and equal pay (van Tuijl, 2019, p. 15). " Informal exclusion: the access gained through social conventions to influence decisions and the ability to receive information and resources.

A reproductive form of exclusion, that comes forth from acting within historical and geopolitical boundaries, wherein many individuals and institutions reproduce exclusion - within given institutional rules and accepted norms - in pursuit of their own particular goals and interests, often occurs without the actors being aware that they are reproducing exclusion (Young, 2006).

Diversity management and the problem of workforce diversity

In the pursuit of benefit maximization of a diverse workforce, organizations aspired to create a more “inclusive environment” by actively removing the exclusionary structures for non-normative identities. Businesses and human service organizations, therefore, instituted project-groups or diversity-officers to manage diversity in order to equalize the (white, able, male) playing field from a top-down position. (Lambert & Quintana, 2015) (Oswick & Noon, 2014) (Roberson Q. M., 2006). To attain this inclusive workforce, diversity management had to go beyond the passive tense of valuing diversity by actively managing diversity in “three components; recruitment programs, programs aimed to increase cultural awareness, and pragmatic management policies (Sabharwal, 2014, p. 201).” By focusing on awareness and affirmative action, organizations try to limit the exclusionary process that affects specific agents' access to the workforce in both the recruitment process and in promotional options. Awareness is attained by including diversity as a value of the organization through the representation of diversity in their internal and external communication channels. Creating communities for “homogenous” employees of difference to represent themselves as an unity. Affirmative action is operationalized by implementing internal processes to evaluate and guarantee the increase of diversity representations within multiple layers of the organization.⁵ Aiming to create a more inclusionary environment by merging diverse groups into the normative workforce that from a historical perspective was created in service of able white men.⁶

⁵ Conventional diversity instruments are; key performance indicators, diversity boards, employee network groups, diversity mentoring programs, awareness workshops, inhouse-days, family and friends' programs, diversity awards, and (online and offline) diversity representations.

⁶ As mentioned, a concept that is also referred to 'phallogocentrism', a system that creates a dualistic opposition that enables oppression through technologies (society, language, knowledge institutions, etc.) in favor of the normative body (Addicot, 2012).

While attracting and retaining diverse talents is necessary for an organization to gain a competitive advantage, implementing diversity instruments does not necessarily translate into a more inclusive work environment that enables an agent's full potential. (Groeneveld, 2012) (Sabharwal, 2014, p. 201). In reality, these instruments can lead to more exclusion when implemented in an unsupportive culture. Homogeneous groups can experience these initiatives as preferential treatment, resulting in a loss of privilege. Intra-variance groups can still experience exclusion; instruments can produce new exclusion by not tending to the unique identities and their specific needs within the same categories. As diversity management supervenes on workforce diversity, it has, in itself, the fundamental problem that it has to segregate individuals into distinct categories to help them. It surpasses the fact that these categorized groups aren't monolithic entities, designed out of homogenous agents, that all experience and value exclusion in the same way.⁷

“As Elizabeth Spelman (1988: p.14) rightly states [within a feminist context] ‘even if we all say women are oppressed by sexism we cannot automatically conclude that the sexism all women experience is the same’. (Ang, 2003, p. 191)”

So, helping agents, solely based on one-dimensional categorizations, reduces and naturalizes the employee's experience, which contributes to the fact that these individuals can experience formal (structural) as well as informal (interpersonal) exclusion.⁸ Ergo, removing barriers that structurally deny access to the workforce doesn't mean that agents experience an inclusive environment. So by not managing the social conventions surrounding diversity and by actively reducing the unique characteristics of agents, organizations limit the power of diversity that, in the first place, should help reap the benefits of difference.

⁷ Avery, Volpone, et al (2013) state that that while healthy diversity climates “may exert some influence on everyone, the nature and magnitude of that influence is likely to vary according to how much the individual values diversity.” (Avery, et al., 2013, p. 176) Implicating in their discussion that valuing diversity isn't prima facie limited to all and only the categorization of diversity, but also how people experience and value their diversity – some do more than others (van Tuijl, 2019, p. 8).”

⁸ Interpersonal refers to the exclusionary experience in relation to being an outgroup member, where exclusion comes into through interpersonal contact, where the excluded doesn't have the experience that they belong due to their uniqueness. Structural exclusion refers to the absence of equal diversity structures that limit sub-ordinate groups in gaining entrance to the working force in both recruitment as promotional options (van Tuijl, 2019).

An inclusionary approach to overcome the problems of in-formal exclusion

Recognizing difference and having policies in place that stimulate an employee-friendly workspace are preconditions for an inclusive environment; but do not necessarily translate into an organization that is inclusive and empowers all agents (Sabharwal, 2014, p. 199).⁹ Therefore, inclusion has to go beyond the formal processes of targeting operationalized categories for recruitment and retainment purposes. It must stimulate the unique experience of the employee, to the extent, that the individual feels valued and accepted within the organization in order to overcome the exclusion they experience. Formulating a solution to this problem of formal and informal exclusion, Pelled, Ledford, and Mohrman (1999) assessed attributes that are required to create an inclusionary experience:

How employees and their ideas are valued and utilized; how people partner within and across departments; how current employees feel that they belong and how prospective employees are attracted to the organization; how people feel connected to each other and to the organization and its goals; and finally, how the organization continuously fosters flexibility, choice, and diversity (Sabharwal, 2014, p. 199).

In the summarization by Sabharwal, she describes that the perception of agents is central; an inclusionary workforce can only be attained when agents have the feeling that they belong, while their unique identities are valued and utilized. They must experience that their belongingness (perception of formal and informal inclusion) is safeguarded by a continuous diversity process that enables them with the ability to influence decision-making processes (Sabharwal, 2014).¹⁰ Inclusionary processes should be able to integrate and represent different perspectives, and where needed change the phallogocentric starting point through which difference is created.¹¹ Inclusion then starts from a multilateral point of view, an approach that then removes the barriers of exclusion from the bottom-up, meaning that the

⁹ The concept of agents refers to both the job-seeker, as well as to employees within organizations.

¹⁰ "Hunt, Layton, and Prince (2015) state that seventy percent of the change program`s surrounding diversity fail due to the lack of belief, involvement and prioritizing diversity initiatives. Drawbacks that can lead to doubt, frustration, conflicts, and confusion under employees if not well managed, resulting in turn to a loss of faith in these initiatives." (van Tuijl, 2019)

¹¹ As mentioned in the introduction and footnote two, a phallogocentric standpoint refers to a dualistic opposition that enables and reiterates oppression through technologies -society, language, knowledge institutions, representations, etc.- in favor of normative bodies. A concept that I use to describe a system that enables western ableist patriarchal dominance within an organization, wherein organizational structures, workforce, knowledge and representations are created in favor and from the standpoint of normative bodies, that a large extend are still white able male.

formal processes against exclusion are not determined and executed by higher management but from the level and the experience of the employee, resulting in new initiatives that are created by employees who experience exclusion – a relevant example of this is practice is the use of inclusionary counsels, wherein employees who experience exclusionary boundaries within the organization, gather in order to search for ways how these process can be altered. As a result, it removes the exclusionary process that comes from the diversity management approach, as it removes the phallogocentric starting point, by including the exclusionary barrier that men can also face, and more importantly, it breaks open these operationalized categories that render intra-group variance invisible. Inclusive leadership is then of vital importance, as it has to bring these different perspectives together to form the core of the organization's culture, wherein agents have the feeling that they belong, and their position is safeguarded to start removing these barriers. An inclusionary approach then can only be attained if higher management shows; willingness to engage in positive interactions on uniqueness, recognition of employee contribution, building a vision and active strategy to attain an inclusionary environment, wherein everybody can identify with the organization and have experience that they belong while retaining unique characters that can help break homogenous thinking (Sabharwal, 2014, p. 199).

So, while both approaches are necessary for an organization, diversity management focusses on attaining inclusion through the use of a top-down approach, that creates recruitment programs, programs aimed to increase cultural awareness, and pragmatic management policies to remove exclusionary barriers for operationalized groups of difference. An approach that can result in exclusion as certain experience are rendered inadmissible, as they do not fit these broader categories, where other homogeneous groups -that experience exclusion- can experience these initiatives as preferential treatment. So in addition to the diversity management approach, an organization should adopt or replace it with an inclusionary approach, that removes barriers from the bottom-up, where the experience of exclusion by agents is central and leading to implement a process to remove exclusionary boundaries. Therefore, inclusive leadership is vital in bringing together the different perspectives to form the core of the organization's culture, allowing agents to identify with the organization.

Chapter conclusion

So, in conclusion: while diversity management is a prerequisite for inclusion, it cannot fully eliminate the exclusionary practices within an organization due to its top-down approach that reduces homogeneous agents to one-dimensional identities. An inclusionary approach is required to create different perspectives at the core of the organization to remove invisible barriers that can enable unequal opportunities for all agents. In line with this background chapter, I will describe in the next chapter how diversity representation can attain these exclusionary processes, as categories are used to communicate a diverse and inclusive environment to job-seekers.

Theory: In- and exclusion through the representation of difference

Recruiting for difference falls in the domain of diversity representations since organizations must materialize their values and belief to communicate their standpoint of diversity to job-seeking agents. As the previous chapter discusses, these representations can be established by diversity management, with or without an inclusionary approach. A difference in method that determines whether the division of workforce attains a phallogocentric standard through which naturalized conceptions of difference is established. Representing difference shall, therefore, always make use of workforce diversity to create an imagined employee as categories are necessary to communicate about the organization's culture, values, and beliefs. However, there can be a difference in power relations if certain types aren't shown, or certain types are only shown as stereo-types. Exclusionary mechanism of power that these representations should help to oppose. This chapter will, therefore, describe; what social representations are, how exclusion is created through the reiteration of hegemonical representations, how power affects visibility for intra-groups variance between the categories of identity.

Social representations

As discussed in the background chapter, categorizations can reduce assemblage identities to rigid denominators that enable the reinforcement of informal exclusion. But we do not want to reduce and naturalize identities to particular types of categories. Classifications are necessary for us agents to understand: "the wider process by which any human society, and individuals within it, make sense of that society" (Dyer, 1999). A concept that is known as typing and helps us to order and understand the complex mass of data that we receive of the

world by placing “objects” in general classificatory schemes, which are sets of data that allows us to deduce knowledge through which we identify and distinguish objects, personality types, or emotions. This is a process that is necessary for agents to create meaning by combining attributes that will always refer to a specific types. Allowing us to apply that type to gain a broader understanding of an “object” within a specific environment by using abduction.¹² Typing within diversity representations can, therefore, be useful as certain types will refer to broader values, beliefs, and attributes. Stuart Hall describes this process of typing agents within classificatory schemas as following:

Thus, for example, we come to ‘know’ something about a person by thinking of the roles which he or she performs: is he/she a parent, a child, a worker, a lover, boss, or an old age pensioner? We assign him/ her to the membership of different groups, according to class, gender, age group, nationality, ‘race’, sexual preference, and so on. We order him/her in terms of *personality types*- is he/she happy, serious, depressed, scattered-brained, over-active kind of person? Our picture of who the person ‘is’ built up out of the information we accumulate from positioning him/her within these different orders of typification. (Hall, 2013, p. 247).

According to Hall, we can gain an understanding of an agent by positioning him/her/they within an assemblage of types, where a limited set of signifiers refers to broader classificatory schemas that historically, socially and geopolitically given. Making it possible to describe a person based on easy to grasp, vivid and wildly recognizable categorizations (Hall, 2013). Richard Dyer describes these classificatory schemas as shortcuts, representations of the world that are created through power-relations that constitute our knowledge to explain certain phenomena, actions, or feelings. Social categories aren't, therefore, harmful when viewed as a limited and partial representation of reality, which gives us the ability to act within a given society (Dyer, 1999).

Representing these social categories as compromised knowledge can be useful for organizations to express their values and beliefs about inclusion within their diversity representations. As social categories do not merely signify an individual cognition, they share a collective embodiment of historically informed experiences that are carried by a large

¹² Inference to the best explanation (Douven, 2017)

number of people (Schaller & Latané, 1996). Representing diversity can, therefore, help agents to be informed as to whether they have a good match with the organization's values and beliefs. It also minimizes the fear of being seen and judged according to negative stereotypes surrounding their salient characteristics and relieves job-seekers of pre-occurring or internalized doubts and anxieties about their identities when applying for a vacancy (Roberson & Kulik, 2007).

Power as an exclusionary mechanism within representations

Representing a variety of categories within the recruitment process can thus help to signify an inclusive environment that is beneficial for job-seeking agents. This creates psychological contract -between an organization and agent- that the organization values and supports a diverse workforce: wherein the agent establishes trust in the organization that their assemblage identity will be valued (McKay & Avery, 2005).¹³ Diversity representations help in this sense to attract and retain talent; however, organizations have to be careful when representing difference through inter-textual symbols and signs, as all representations reinforce meaning that is created within power-knowledge (Foucault, 1982). Representations or at least the lower-order entities that make up the aggregate -building blocks of the representation- can signify exclusionary processes for certain groups of agents (Schaller & Latané, 1996). Turning social representations of inclusivity into reproductions of exclusion by not tending to historical and political given power relations. (Cable, Aiman-Smith, Mulvey, & Edwards, 2000).

The key to understanding exclusion within representations is to understand how the mechanism of exclusion and power work. For example, within workforce diversity, I have established in my background chapter that exclusion comes into being from the standpoint through which these categories of difference are created. As to workforce diversity, Hall and Dyer attribute power as the demarcation criterion of exclusion; power splits the normal and accepted from the abnormal and the unaccepted to establish normalcy of the ruling group. Where power creates a system of social- and stereo-types that facilitates "the 'binding' or bonding together of all of Us who are 'normal' into one 'imagined community'; and it sends

¹³ The focus of this thesis is in the representation of diversity within the recruitment process; however, when organizations portray a false representation about their diversity and inclusion policies, the psychological contract can be broken when agents enter the work. Increases the change that agents will leave the organization prematurely. (McKay & Avery, 2005)

into symbolic exile all of Them" (Hall, 2013, p. 248) Creating rigid stereo-types to reinforce what is normal through representing the abnormal; that is reduced, essentialized and naturalized to fix difference. Stereo-types as social types both create their symbolic meaning by easy to grasp, vivid and recognizable categorizations; however, stereo-types differ by insisting on rigid boundaries where, in reality, they are non (Dyer, 1999). A mechanism of power that is needed to perpetuate the normalcy of the imagined community, by excluding those bodies that do not belong or seen as "threat" to maintain a mainstream-culture, as these non-normative bodies can disrupt the homogeneous self-conception of normalcy (Talbot, 2008). Applying stereo-types thus helps to maintain power by reinforcing a hegemonical tendency toward non-normative groups (Hall, 2013) (Talbot, 2008). As Dyer states:

The establishment of normalcy (i.e. what is accepted as "normal") through social- and stereo-types is one aspect of the habit of ruling groups ... to attempt to fashion the whole of society according to their own world view, value system, sensibility and ideology. So right is this world view for the ruling groups that they make it appear (as it does appear to them) as "natural" and "inevitable" - and for everyone - and, in so far as they succeed, they establish their hegemony. (Dyer, 1977, p. 30)

As Dyer describes, the establishment of normalcy is a struggle for hegemony, where power-knowledge is key to attaining power through consent instead of using force (Talbot, 2008). Wherein stereo-types play a central role in upholding a sense of geo-historically formed ideology by imposing a limited space in representations for non-normative identity types. A vicious process is maintained by the endless reiteration of power-knowledge to uphold the imagined community (Hall, 2013).

Relating to the representation of difference within diversity management, diversity representations can reinforce exclusion when differences are represented through a phallogocentric standpoint that enables hegemony. Creating exclusive "social" types that carry signifiers can have a deterrent effect on the recruitment efforts of an organization; when organizations represent their corporate environment in a way that reaffirms stereo-types and unequal power-relations. This can be detrimental to job-seekers' positive self-identification and affects self-esteem, causing them to eliminate a prospective employer from further consideration because they don't picture themselves working for this particular

organization. In addition, the continuation of the hegemony results in the same demographic continuously being recruited, as employers are being exposed to the same unilateral representation of diversity.

Power, intersectionality, and in-visibility

As discussed in the previous paragraph, the reiteration of power-knowledge reinstates the boundaries of an imagined community. Social- and stereo-types are used to maintain this hegemonical world view that is being passed off as "natural" and "inevitable", creating limited space for sub-ordinate groups. The visibility of non-normative identities within these limited-representations thus forms an opportunity for the ruling group to perpetuate normative ideologies by reinscribing "the norm" (Johnson & Boylorn, 2015).

As diversity representations ought to be in favor of the less represented, these representations should have the intention to break the power-relations through which these limited spaces come into being. While globalization, market demographics, legal and external pressure are growing in favor of creating diversity, it not difficult to conceive that organizations do not want to go against the grain and agitate normative stakeholders and their ideology that is leading for the continuation and profit of a business (Kulik & Roberson, 2008). Organizations usually make minimal changes to meet the expected requirements within diversity representations. In such cases, as Sarah Ahmed puts this, good practice equals ticking off boxes in order to meet the requirement of "doing well" (Ahmed, 2007). Diversity representation can, therefore, gain the function of an evidence system, wherein the representation of non-normative identities is only being represented within this limited space that is seen as acceptable through a normative lens. A space that is mapped out through the usage of social- and stereo-types wherein the representation of non-normative types is mostly limited to single-axis representation that is "accepted" (Barnum & Zajicek, 2008).

Exclusion then also becomes central to those non-normative identities that are not rendered visible. So an intersectional approach is necessary to analyze intragroup variances to open-up this limited space of visibility. This is in line with Audre Lorde, Adrienne Rich, and Bell Hooks, Kimberly Crenshaw coined intersectionality to describe the fact that intragroup experience of exclusion is just as important as broader categories of difference (Crenshaw, 1989) (Johnson & Boylorn, 2015). She is describing in her article that certain lived experiences of women of color are rendered invisible as their intersectional experience does not fit the

categories of womanhood or blackness. This conceptualization helped to reveal the fact that intersectional experiences are greater than the sum of specific categories. Creating a theoretical argument as well as an empirical approach to analyze the interaction of types, such as sex, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, religion, and body (Winker & Degele, 2011). Intersectionality, in this sense, made it possible to research and conclude that invisibility due to limited representation of intragroup variances can work just as excluding, as applying stereo-types.

For example, most bodies that live with a disability are also in this limited space, where their identity is either represented as clearly physically impaired with no regard to difficulties of high-crip time or are simply not shown at all.¹⁴ While a non-visible impairment is hard to represent, this situation can also be applied to clear visual types, who are not rendered visible because they live within the intersection of types and are not represented within this limited space of representation. Invisibility is the result of hegemony, excluding everybody that does not belong to main-stream culture. It then becomes a mechanism of power to enforce normalcy by only representing non-normative bodies that are seen as “accepted”.

So, main-stream culture perpetuating stereo-types results in invisibility. When representing diversity through a limited space, this excludes intra-group variances. For a number of job-seekers, who are not able to identify themselves with the accepted non-normative bodies this only adds to their exclusion, adding to the situations where they regard themselves as not-fitting the standing organizational culture – as previously described when discussing stereo-typing.

Chapter conclusion

So, in conclusion, social- and stereo-types map out the boundaries of what is normal and accepted by creating shortcuts to understand the world and to reinforce one's image - agents as well as an imagined community. However, stereo-types and invisibility of intragroup-variance can be harmful as they can reiterate and perpetuate hegemony through representations. Therefore, organizations have to be aware that their diversity representations can affect their recruitment process, both by deterring non-normative

¹⁴ Criptime refers to the time reorientation of time for those bodies that live with an impairment, “and perhaps especially, a challenge to normative and normalizing expectations of pace and scheduling. (Kafer, 2013)”

identity types as well as promoting inclusion by positive diversity representations. The next chapter will describe the methodology for researching if organization reproduce exclusion through their diversity representation, this chapter will lay the basis for preliminary research, that will be conducted on the diversity statement and diversity photographs of the Rabobank.

Methodology: Inclusion and exclusion, a signifying practice

Creating a diverse workforce means that organizations have to actively manage differences within their organization to reduce formal as well as informal exclusion. Categorizing identities can be useful to examine and communicate about exclusionary processes, as they share a collective embodiment of historically informed experiences that are lived by a large number of people. As organizations communicate about their value for an inclusionary environment, diversity representations can help to relieve anxiety and reaffirms job-seekers' positive self-identification that affects self-esteem, physical well-being, and cognitive performance during the recruitment process (Loos, 2018) (Roberson & Kulik, 2007). From a deterrence perspective, diversity representations can also reproduce power-relations that block job-seekers from considering a vacancy due to exclusionary representation of the organizational culture, as these representations can attain stereotypes that reiterate hegemony. These exclusionary processes can be signified through diversity representations when:

- 1) Workforce diversity is represented through a phallogocentrism conception of operationalized difference
- 2) Lower-order entities that make up the aggregate of a representation signify unequal power relations to reiterate normalcy

Being in the best interest of organizations and agents, organizations have to be aware that their diversity representations can reproduce exclusionary processes. Not addressing this issue can not only harm their reputation in a passive tense, but they actively contribute to reinstating exclusionary processes on a substantial scale due to their online visibility. In this scenario, the organization bears responsibility as they actively try to influence the perception of stakeholders (Young, 2006). Researching if diversity representations contain exclusionary processes can, therefore, contribute to a healthier discourse regarding the domain of

diversity and inclusion. As this thesis will function as explorative research, it will analyze one corporate organization, the Rabobank, in order to see to what extent representations can attain the exclusionary processes. This chapter, then, will describe the reason why I chose for a cooperate organization, the Rabobank, and the methods I will use.

Measures to analyze a corporate diversity message

Motivated by the fact that organizations can reproduce unequal power-knowledge, I am going to analyze to what extent organizational representations can attain exclusion. As corporate organizations are most know to use diversity management as a way to benefit economically, it is most interesting to analyze how the websites of these organizations represent an inclusionary environment (Oswick & Noon, 2014). A second reason to analyze a corporate organizational website is that in most cases, they communicate a clear diversity message, through a specific designed inclusion and diversity page. Analyzing this diversity and inclusion page can be useful as a) job-seekers view a diversity and inclusion page as a proxy for the organization level of commitment to diversity (Avery, et al., 2013) (Uysal, 2013); b) companies use this page to communicate an active diversity and inclusion message that contains a diversity statement and diversity photographs regarding the categories of sex, racial-ethnicity, and disability (Singh & Point, 2006) (Uysal, 2013). As the diversity statements and photographs are the most used instruments to communicate an organization's stance towards diversity and inclusion, it sets a clear boundary on the data that can be analyzed (Uysal, 2013).

Rabobank's diversity representations as a data-sample

As this research is an initial exploration, this research will be limited to the Rabobank. To be more precise, their diversity statement and three of their diversity photographs that are represented as banner photos under the categories of gender diversity, cultural diversity and occupational disability. As the sample size is too limited to make structural recommendations, it will provide the reader with knowledge about the exclusionary practices within the discourse of diversity and inclusion and opens up an area for further research on the exclusionary practices within the representation of difference.

Analyzing the diversity statement and photographs of Rabobank is compelling, as the organization functions within a sector that does not have the best reputation of being accessible for non-normative types. So, to attract diverse job-seekers, one would expect that

the diversity representations of the Rabobank would be significant. However, based on previous research for the Rabobank, I concluded that their representation practices were insufficient to attract bi-cultural job-seekers. This analysis was based on the overall optimization of the diversity message but did not include if these representations could also reproduce exclusionary process (van Tuijl, 2019).

In line with this research, I will analyze if their diversity statement and photographs can reproduce exclusionary processes by researching if their representations represent diversity through a unilateral representation of difference and if these representations are represented through hegemonical processes that reiterates and perpetuates normalcy. Processes that can block job-seekers from identifying with the organization, as well as result in the same demographic continuously being recruited, as employers are being exposed to the same unilateral representation of diversity.

A combined method

To analyze the representations of the Rabobank, I will use a combined method to analyze the diversity statement, diversity photographs, and the combined meaning of Rabobank's diversity message. The diversity statement will be analyzed through textual analysis, and for the analysis of the diversity photographs, I will use a Barthesian method of meaning production and the combined meaning will be analyzed through an intertextual analysis, where the combined meaning of the photos will be established and will be read through the textual analysis.

First, the Rabobank's diversity statement will be analyzed through a textual analysis, an analysis that focusses on the production of meaning that comes in to being through the form and underlying assumptions of meaning that the text implies. In broader terms, it is a method to research the ideological and cultural assumptions of a text, that allows the reader to discern the latent meaning of a text, but also its "implicit patterns, assumptions and omissions (Fursich, 2009)." Analyzing the diversity statement on form, latent meaning and omission will help to gain an overall insight into the self-conception of the organization.

This analysis will be read through a framework developed by Singh and Point (2006), who emphasize that language used within a diversity statement is of the utmost importance and should at least explain: what diversity means why it is important, how it should be done how

much commitment there is from higher management. By analyzing the form, latent meaning and omission of the text through these four points emphasized by Singh and Point, I will shape a context through which the combined meaning of the photos can be analyzed in the inter-textual analyses.

The diversity photographs will be analyzed through a Barthesian approach of meaning production (Barthes, 2006) (Bouzida, 2014). This method will be used to read the message that is signified through the picture, this will be done on three levels: the denotation, connotation, and myth. At the level of the denotation, I will give a common-sense reading of the signs –the signifier (the object) and the signified (the mental representation)-, that will result in an obvious description of the identity-types, the focus of photo and background setting that is represented within the photo.

At the level of the connotation, I will read the meaning of the signs in relation to its cultural meaning, and how the combined meaning is connected to broader beliefs and values these signs signify. Important to notice, is that at the level of the connotations, the reading of a photo is influenced by subjective factors that are open to multiple interpretations, as the meaning of the signs –signifier and signified- is produced in interaction with the readers cultural values, emotions, feelings and other factors that determines their view on the world. In this sense, the photos are open to multiple interpretations, but as the production of meaning finds its basis on the denotations, it should limit their multitude (Bouzida, 2014).

At the level of the myth, these photos will be read and analyzed in the form of the representations, meaning that the signs will be analyzed in a broader context of ideological and social-cultural power-knowledge (Barthes, 2006) (Bouzida, 2014) (Foucault, 1982) (Hall, 2013).¹⁵ So, in addition to the connotation, I will at the level of the myth research if these photographs signify geo-political and historical formed ideological beliefs of power-knowledge by reading these signs through feminist, post-colonial and ableist discourse. This

¹⁵ As mentioned in footnote one: Historically and political informed knowledge that we view as (naturally) given but can contain incorrect representations of the world that are created by and reproduced through agents and institutes. All knowledge is created through power-knowledge without power we couldn't have knowledge, but more often than not power is produced in favor of the ruling group, who determine how and what knowledge is produced -for example, homosexuality and the church, an institute that due to it power back in the days, still shapes current beliefs and attitudes towards homosexuality (Foucault, 1982).

analysis will help to give insight, as to how these diversity photographs want to accomplish a signification of an inclusive workforce, and if these representations attain exclusionary processes that are created by and through the connotative meaning and the form of these representations.

In the intertextual analysis, the combined meaning of the photographs will read through the textual analyses to research on a broader level, the accumulation of meaning that is produced through the interaction of these representations (Hall, 2013). An important additive, as researching these representations out of context which each other, would only give insight in the particular exclusionary processes these representations hold, but would not tell us how these representations created meaning through their unity. So, by reaching the combined meaning of photo through textual analyses of the statement I will be able to research if the combined meaning signifies power-knowledge that reiterate normalcy of main-stream culture, that can exclude certain job-seekers as they cannot identify with the organization while perpetuating same demographic hiring, due the reiteration of a unilateral representation of the workforce.

Chapter conclusion

So, in conclusion, the diversity statement and three banner photographs of the Rabobank will be analyzed through a combined method to analyze, to what extent these representations and their combined meaning reproduce exclusion for job-seeking agents. This combined method will attain a textual analysis to analyze the self-conception of the Rabobank's diversity efforts. A Barthesian approach will be used to analyze the production of meaning on the three levels of the denotation, connotation and myth. Whereas in the intertextual analysis the combined meaning of the diversity photographs will be read through the textual analysis of the diversity statement. On this basis, I expect to analyze whether the representation are represented through a phallogocentrism conception of operationalized difference, that results in a unilateral representation of diversity, and if these representations through their form reiterate exclusionary processes. On the basis of these outcomes, it would possible to state to what extent non-normative job-seekers are included or excluded through the representation of difference.

Analysis: How does the Rabobank do in their diversity representations?

Introduction:

The Rabobank was established in 1970 by a merger of two Dutch agricultural cooperative banks, the Raiffeisenbank and the Boerenleenbank. Two banks that find their roots at the beginning of the 19th century to support the agricultural community (Mooij, 2018). Present-day, this philosophy still stands, the Rabobank is the biggest non-profit creditor of agriculture in the world, and one of the biggest service banks for the private sector in the Netherlands. The Rabobank is the biggest non-governmental employer of the Netherlands with almost 42 thousand employees, placing roughly 7000 vacancies every year.

To enable job-seekers, Rabobank has created a clear online structure to inform on their vacancies and organizational culture. They have a career site, Rabobank.jobs, through which they deploy their vacancies and gives job-seeker a glimpse of the organization's culture through the use of user stories. Additional information on the organization, its culture and diversity policies can be found on their corporate website, Rabobank.com

On Rabobank.jobs, as well as Rabobank.com, you can find diversity photographs and a diversity and inclusion statement. When job-seekers are on the career platform and want more in-depth information on the organizations' stance towards diversity, the platform refers job-seeker to the diversity and inclusion page on the Rabobank.com website. A loss, as the organization retains itself from giving recruitment specific diversity information, as the diversity and inclusion page on the Rabobank.com gives general information on the Rabobank stance towards diversity and inclusion (van Tuijl, 2019).

On the diversity and inclusion page of the Rabobank.com website, which holds the focus of this analysis, the organization starts by giving a diversity and inclusion statement, diversity photographs, two articles on their engagements with diversity initiatives, and four additional pages that give information on the topics of the power of diversity, gender diversity, cultural diversity, and occupational diversity (Rabobank, 2019). These four pages all attain a diversity photograph in the banner, for this research I chose to analyze the diversity statement in relation to the diversity photos within the operationalized categories of diversity that the Rabobank focusses on, to research if the operationalization also translates in unilateral

representations that can exclude job-seekers from identifying with the organization and can result in a reiteration of homogenous hiring.

Diversity and inclusion statement

As stated in my methodology, I will analyze the statement of the Rabobank to gain an overall insight into the self-conception of the organization's value towards diversity. This analysis will be based on the four requirements given by Singh and Point; what diversity means, why it is important, how it should be done and how much commitment there is from higher management, in order to analyze if Rabobank represents diversity as an intrinsic value or as a problem that needs to be solved. As diversity is a complex term that can have many interpretations, I will start by analyzing what diversity means, in relation to the Rabobank; the other requirements will gradually be included (Singh & Point, 2006). Through the diversity statement below, I will conduct my textual analysis:

Rabobank maintains an active diversity policy. On the one hand, it does this by creating teams that are diverse in gender, cultural background, age, and the like, and on the other hand, by creating an inclusive corporate culture in which people are open to each other's backgrounds and no one is excluded. That's part of our position in the community. As a result, our services also better matches the wishes of our customers (Rabobank, 2019).

In this statement, the Rabobank refers to diversity as both the management- and the categorization- of difference. The management of difference refers to the creation of diverse teams and an inclusive environment from a top-down position, whereas the categorization of difference refers to those identity types that can be managed. At first sight, the statement gives the impression, to meet the requirement set by Singh and Point: diversity for the Rabobank, is to create active policies on different identity types so that an inclusive environment can be attained so that no one is excluded. However, this statement hardly explains what they mean by diversity, what they consider active diversity policies and identity types to be, and to whom they apply. Furthermore, by not defining why diversity policies are necessary, Rabobank does nothing to reassure job-seekers; the language used in this statement contributes to this abstract image, as it is written in a third person- and positive-tense, which does not tend to the lived experiences of exclusion. As a result of this abstract

phrasing, they're missing the underlying cause of diversity and inclusion, the acknowledgment and recognition of the fact that employees experience exclusion, and that this exclusion has a negative effect on them in both formal as well as informal exclusion (Mor Barak, 2015).

The omission of the recognition that exclusion is present within their organization is amplified by the fact that their motivational reasons for diversity are externally focused. Instead of stating why diversity is important for agents or what should be done to attain this inclusive environment, they focus on why diversity and inclusion are important in relation to their position in the community and that it is beneficial for the customers. By emphasizing the motivation to better cater to the clients' wishes, the phrasing strengthens the perception that diversity is being viewed as imperative for economic value, instead of an inclusive corporate culture being regarded as an internal asset.

Hence, by not saying anything about how they plan to attain this inclusive environment and the inclusive leadership that is central to an inclusionary approach and putting the emphasis on their external, commercially related motivation, they distance themselves from agents and the perception that they're aiming for an inclusive environment. As a textual analysis, it by-itself cannot account for production of meaning of the context, but it will serve in the intertextual analysis as the framework through which photos will be read, the combined meaning of the textual analysis and meaning produce from the photographs will give clear an overall insight in the diversity and inclusion message of the Rabobank that is signified through these representations.

The diversity photographs of the Rabobank

In this section, I will analyze the three diversity photographs that are related to the categories of sex, ethnicity, and ability within the diverse representations of the Rabobank. The Rabobank defines these categories as Gender diversity, Cultural diversity, and Occupational disability (Rabobank, 2019). The photo's within these categories function as banners and include a title; I will analyze the picture in relation to the title on three levels the denotation, connotation, and the Myth. At the level of the denotation, I will give a common-sense reading of this image by describing the signifiers that are being represented through the types and

the background, where the focus in photograph lies; and how the photo is set up (Bouzida, 2014). Secondly, on the level of connotation, I will describe the photo at the level of connotation in which I will describe the message that is signified through the denotations “that are mainly associated to the social and cultural background of the semiotic reader (Bouzida, 2014, p. 1006)”. As of last I will describe if the combined meaning of the denotation and connotation reproduces exclusion by describing these signs through a broader context of feminist-, post-colonial- and ableist-studies. In result, the produced meaning of the representations can give an insight into the representation of difference, and if they attain exclusion through the meaning they produce. In the intertextual analyses these photos will be read in relation to each other, and the textual analysis, to analyze if the combined meaning reproduce excludes non-normative job-seekers from identifying with the organization.

Gender diversity targets

In this analysis, I will begin by reading the banner photograph of gender diversity at the level of the denotation. At this level, I will give a common-sense reading of the sign, which will be an obvious description of the identity-types, focus of photo and background setting.



Figure 1: Gender diversity targets (Rabobank, 2019)

The diversity photograph that is placed in relation to the title “Gender diversity targets”, portrays three slim women with different racial backgrounds that I perceive as Latino, black, and Asian. These women are smiling and have straight hair, plucked eyebrows, clear skin, and white teeth. The focus of this photo lies on the black female in the middle of the photo, as the photo blurs the other two women and the background. The photo was taken in front of a glass frame, the background is extremely blurry and gives an outside view, that shows a lamppost, unidentifiable vegetation and a desert-like landscape.

At the level of the connotation, the intersectional relations of women of color signifies difference as something that is good and positive, where exclusion doesn’t affect these women, as they, and especially the black female in the center of the photograph includes and

invites viewers by her gaze. The position of the gaze corresponds to the idea that the women in the photo are more than passive objects to be looked at by the gazer. Breaking the dominance over the object of the gaze by the gazer, as the establishment of the interpersonal gaze, forces the recognition of subjectivity that creates a relation between the gazer and the gazed upon (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004).¹⁶

In relation to the title, this representation seems to want to signify the subject of gender diversity as inclusive, as it tries to establish a relationship bond between the gazer and women represented in the photo. A photo that can signify difference for all-round diversity purposes, without being an actual representation of the organization, as the photo does not hold organization signs that place these women in relation to the Rabobank. In result, this photo creates an abstraction, as it places these women out of the context of the workforce. An abstraction that is further enhanced as the signifiers of womanhood and races are reduced and essentialized to signify diversity, as the photo makes a clear difference between three types of race, whereas their signifiers of womanhood seem to be identical.

When reading this representation critically, it places the difference of race or gender under enhancement, creating a hypervisibility by over-representing the categories of race or gender. A process that can result in reduced potential for job-seekers to identify with the organization, as the usage of stereotypical representation of femininity and the lack of signifiers leads to an incomplete representation of the actual workforce. In addition, this overrepresentation can reduce the level of inclusivity employees experience as it, due to its lack of organization signifiers, gives a misrepresentation of the actual workforce, that doesn't show the actual fit with the reality of the workforce. Rendering invisible that the workforce might not be so diverse in the intersection of race and womanhood, as the organization wants. The title of the photo implies that the organization has targets regarding women in

¹⁶ In addition, Schroeder & Zwick refer to the interpersonal gaze as a mechanism of desire, where the object of the gaze fulfills the desire of self-completion. A concept of the gaze that finds its nature in existential conception, wherein man is per definition lonely and wants to escape this existential threats of loneliness that never can be fulfilled. For most people this is only possible when they encounter, another subject, where the relation is established through the gaze, that forces the recognition of the other, from object to subject.

their workforce but does not give insight into their backgrounds since they use stereotypical representations (Settles, Buchanan, & Dotson, 2019).

At the level of the myth, the exclusionary practice of abstraction becomes more visible, as the identities are reduced to mere signifiers of the body that relate to socially influenced stereo-types surrounding the categories of womanhood and race. A mechanism of power that reproduces exclusion for agents as certain identities don't fit or don't want to fit in rigid and naturalized conceptions of femininity that are formed by western patriarchy (Patterson, O'Malley, & Story, 2009) (Settles, Buchanan, & Dotson, 2019). In this representation, this stereotypization of womanhood is visible, as these women are being represented within the monolithic construction of femininity. As the signifier of womanhood is constructed through women that are young, well-groomed, slim, able and smile; signs that make women approachable and caring as is associated with embodied emotionality and passivity (Bay-Cheng, Bruns, & Maguin, 2018). A signifier that connotes to a stereotypization of CIS gendered femininity that tends to attain a conception of 'emphasized femininity' that is "'defined around compliance with [female] subordination and ... oriented to accommodating the interest and desires of men' (Patterson, O'Malley, & Story, 2009, p. 10)". A connotation of femininity that wants to react to our sexual identities to the physical attraction by the other and to own self-conception of beauty and behavior (Patterson, O'Malley, & Story, 2009). This stereotypization of femininity is focused on the embodiment of passivity, emotionality, the body, and caring roles (Patterson, O'Malley, & Story, 2009, p.10)." Men, on the opposite, are associated with "...activity, rationality, the mind, and a productive role (Patterson, O'Malley, & Story, 2009, p.10)." from a historical perspective. This stereotypization is reinforced in the photo as the representation does not hold a signifier that places these feminine women in relation to the workforce. The use of such photos is a common practice, that results in a reproduction within representations that still exclude women out of the workforce as it endorses the historical perspective of embodied femininity.

The concept of gender is not static but performative. The reproduction of embodied femininity as a stereotype can be harmful to agents because it contributes to socially influenced self-objectivation by women. This can cause agents to observe themselves from a third-person perspective that focuses more on observer able attributes instead of observing from a first-person perspective that focusses more on non-bodily characteristics (Fredrickson

& Harrison, 2005). A process that is not only negative to agents as this stereotyped of femininity is reproduced but, in relation to the Rabobank and its recruitment process, it can also be work excluding, as specific agents cannot or do not want to identify with such rigid categories of femininity and therefore don't apply for vacancies (Avery, et al., 2013). In case of the latter, it can be even worse; as young women who want to work at the Rabobank think that is a semi actual representation of femininity and that they should adopt to comply with the standards the organization represents.

Concerning the hypervisibility of race, this problem is also amplified as it emphasizes the reduced and rigid representation of women of color; wherein race does not create an intersectional relation between womanhood and race, but seems to be added to categories of womanhood; as the photo makes a clear difference between three types of race, but their type of womanhood, bodies, and self-cares seem to be identical. A phenomenon that arises as race is being represented through a western norm of whiteness. A mechanism of power that reinscribes the norm, by reinforcing images of a nation and mainstream culture, through the body of the other, a process that in relation to blackness is also known as whitewashing (Gabriel, 2002). For example, the Afro-American female is being represented with straight hair.

To summarize, the representation signifies diversity through the categories of race and womanhood, creating an inclusive feeling as women in the middle disrupt the dynamic of the gazer and the gazed upon. However, the photo holds a particular power relation that reinforces exclusion, as race and gender are stereotyped and made hyper-visible to signify diversity. At the level of the myth, these exclusionary processes become visible as this representation reproduces a very narrow conception of femininity that claims an entailment on the sexual identity to represent womanhood, wherein race is added to the equation through this western norm of femininity.

Promotion of cultural diversity

In line with the operationalized category of ethnicity, the Rabobank promotes their diversity and inclusion policies toward different categories of race, ethnicity, nationality, cultural background, and religion under the denominator of cultural diversity (Winker & Degele, 2011).



Figure 2: Promotion of cultural diversity (Rabobank, 2019)

In this analysis, I will presume that all of the agents are female -as not all faces are visible. There are multiple signifiers of race, as four women have a black-, one has a white- and one has a light tinted-skin color. All agents wear business casual clothing and most wear jewelry except the women who is wearing a hijab; I presume that the hijab is a signifier for the Islamic religion as it is placed in relation to cultural diversity; the women wearing the hijab wears clothing of a bright color. The other women wear either black, white or pastel-colored clothing. The age of the agents varies, this is primarily signified through hair color. The four black women have black hair and the white woman has grey hair, the hair of women that is wearing the hijab is not visible; the hairstyles variate. All visible agents have a slim build, are well-groomed, wear make-up and look able, except for the fact that all the black agents are put in relation to glasses.¹⁷

In this setting, the women at left seem to be talking, while the other visible agents smile and look in the direction of the agents who is back is visible. All agents sit around a glass table that holds office supplies, electronic devices, a glass of water. The photo is taken from the outside, through a window that contains the reflection of another window that blurs the picture, the room is primarily made up out of windows that give a view to grass and other vegetation. The categories of ethnicity and sexuality are not signified, and the photo holds clear signifiers of sex, race, religion, and age.

¹⁷ As the demarcation criteria between able and disabled is highly socially influenced, it requires a certain determination to determine where the accepted deviation of an ability begins. Assessing then if "needing glasses" crosses the threshold of disability in "vision impairment" is hard as; a) needing glasses is a normalized and typical understanding; b) wearing glasses can be seen as the technological enchantment of the senses (Taylor, 2013). For this reason, I will not describe glasses as a disability in thesis, while people can experience wherein glasses as a visual impermanent, that has affect on their lives.

At the level of the connotation, it appears that the Rabobank wants to signify their value of diversity, as the representation draws attention towards the diverse categories of sex, race, age, and religion. Representing a diverse set of cultural signs that are placed within a workforce setting to signify cultural diversity. In this created paradigm, the representation lies in favor of race, wherein blackness establishes the norm. A norm that emphasizes the age of the white woman, who signifies difference of age through her gray hair, and the light-skinned women, who signifies the religion of Islam through her Hijab. While the signs of cultural diversity are very present, it would be an overstatement to say that the signifiers of cultural diversity are highly culturally diverse; as a) there are no clear signifiers of their geopolitical status or class-related upbringing; b) the categories of sex, race, religion, and age refer to broader types, where there are no intra-group relations present.

Whilst these signs appear diverse, they actually signify a limited conception of cultural diversity, where the signifiers are reduced to set hard boundaries between the categories. This results in a stereotypical representation that can easily convey a message of diversity but does not represent an actual workforce situation at the Rabobank. A factor that is emphasized by the fact that the photo is missing signifiers that place this representation in relation to Rabobank; in turn, the constructed set-up of the photo resembles an American corporate stock photo that creates an abstraction. Resulting in the fact that the diversity message the Rabobank wants to convey -the promotion of cultural diversity- misses its point, by using a stock photo to convey their value for diversity, that can have an adverse effect on agents, due to its stereotypical representation. By using a photo that quickly transfers the meaning of diversity through stereo-types, the picture can create the connotation that Rabobank just wants to tick off the boxes in order to comply with good practice instead of doing the work to achieve inclusive work environment for bodies that are culturally diverse (Ahmed, 2007).

Analyzing this photograph at the level of the myth, this practice of ticking off the boxes becomes more evident, as the cultural categories are represented through a phallogocentric standpoint that reflects the management of diversity without an inclusionary approach -meaning that the categories of diversity are created to represent everything that is not white able male, and that diversity through strict categories of difference (Addicot, 2012). This approach towards representation leaves out men and non-

normative identities that can experience exclusion through their intersectional position, creating -as mentioned in the background chapter- both formal and informal exclusion. As they are on a formal level, they are not represented as a group that could experience exclusion, and on an informal level cannot identify with the represented identities. This exclusionary process perpetuates the normalcy of main-stream culture by representing differences through a limited space, that only includes bodies who are not considered as a threat.

In this representation the power-knowledge is visible, as cultural diversity is represented through a limited representation of womanhood. As cultural diversity affects both women and men, it is strange that males are not presented within the setting. A reason for this can be that the difference is represented through a phallogocentric standpoint that it leaves out men, as they count as the normative bodies that are not excluded from the workforce; however, this reading should mainly explain why able white men are left out of the equation, as the exclusion and stereotypization of cultural diversity affects all sexes.

Another reading could be that the binary opposites of these black and Muslim women are subjected to the stereotype of the embodied aggressor, that can be experienced as threatening. The orientalist gaze represents black men -from a historical perspective- as hyper-masculine and ominous criminal predators, whereas Muslim men are stereotyped as fundamentalistic, perverse, and oppressive to women (Bay-Cheng, Bruns, & Maguin, 2018) (Dagistanli & Grewal, 2012) (Fischer, Greitemeyer, & Kastenmüller, 2007) (Hall, 2013) (Welch, 2007). This representational practice stereotypes black and Muslim men -and their intersections- through racialized knowledge of the other. By excluding men from the representation of cultural diversity, it can be stated that the representation of womanhood is stereotyped as less threatening to a western phallogocentric workforce; as in the representation womanhood, religion and race reside between the stereotype of subordinate femininity and gendered orientalism.¹⁸ A position for which can be argued, that women who deviate from the socially constructed western norm of whiteness and femininity do not

¹⁸ Genderd orientalism refers to the idea that women of a non-western background face more internalized stereo-types than their male counterparts.

"...have straight forward access to implicit male position within the workforce (Lewis, 2013) (Patterson, O`Malley, & Story, 2009) "

To summarize, in relation to the title this photo represents diversity through the different categories of age, sex, race, and religion. Whilst this picture represents different signifiers of cultural diversity, the signifiers are reduced to set clear boundaries around the types that connote to stereotypical representation of the categories. At the level of the myth, the photo signifies a phallogocentric representation of diversity, as the categories race, age and religion are only represented through the category of womanhood. A connotation that can be linked towards the threats of black and Muslim male bodies to a western phallogocentric workforce.

Deployment of people with occupational disabilities

This banner photo is placed under the category of occupational disability and focuses on eight white individuals that are posing in front of a Rabobank sign in a restaurant setting. The background shows four white able individuals, two women at the bar, two men in the kitchen, and a warm and inviting interior due to the green walls and wooden furniture. Out of the eight individuals that are posing for the photo, six are male, and two are female, there is an age variation between the individuals. Five are business casual dressed; three men are wearing a t-shirt with a logo of Brownies&downieS, and also seem to have down syndrome; two men are wearing glasses, and one woman is wearing a bandana. As the photo is placed in relation to the deployment of people with occupational disability, the other signs will be left out of the equation at this denotative level.



Figure 1: Deployment of people with occupational disabilities (Rabobank, 2019)

At the level of the connotation, this photo focusses on the binary opposition between normative bodies that are temporally able (tab) – short for temporal able bodies - and bodies that are born with down-syndrome (Kafer, 2013). The setting of the photo, represents a collaboration between Brownies&downieS – a catering service that employs workers with a mental disability- and the Rabobank in what appears to be an event setting, due to the fact that the photo is taken in a restaurant. In relation to the text, this photo highlights the Rabobanks cooperative social responsibility as they include less able agents to gain access to

the workforce by deploying them. At first sight, a signification of inclusion is achieved by the warm and inviting setting of the restaurant and the eight employees that seem to be excited to work together as they join to take this picture without other guests. This inclusive feeling is emphasized by the fact that the Rabobank employees have different signifiers of fashion, and the employees of Brownies&downieS have matching uniforms, while two of them are not looking into the camera.

This photo looks to be inclusive at first sight, as in relation to title it emphasizes the deployment of workers that live with the down-syndrome. However, when looking at the actual diversity representation at the denotative level, the difference between the categories and intra-categorical relations is not that high. The representation attains a semi-equal division in sex (40/60) and a division in age (primarily through the two older men) but doesn't include racial differences next to whiteness and limited signifiers of cultural background. Also, and most important in this context, disability is only shown through workers of Brownies&downieS, but not through the other individuals who most likely are employed at the Rabobank. Whilst the photo shows the deployment of disability, it does not signify how disability manifests for agents that are to be employed or are employed at the Rabobank. As a result, this representation can exclude multiple groups on an (in-)formal level; as a) agents on an interpersonal level cannot identify with the people working at an organization; b) signifying on the formal level that operationalized categories of workforce diversity are not that well embedded, as the photo signifies older age only through men, race only through whiteness; c) disability is represented only as chromosome abnormality, that is usually associated with a high crip-time – a defiance of the normative conception of time that is experienced by tabs, crip-time refers to the time it takes for an agents with a disability to perform and experience the effects of an action- and has a lot of stereo-types surrounding this disability. In this sense, the representation stereotypes disability and excludes people with a disability from identifying with the Rabobank. As the photo is placed within the context of disability, the focus of the level of myth will be on the representation of disability through down syndrome.

At the level of myth, this exclusive factor of representing disability through a visually noticeable impairment as down-syndrome becomes more apparent through two factors. The first factor is that this representation reiterates stereo-types of down-syndrome disorder, as

this disability is due to a chromosome abnormality that carries a lot of stereo-types; including a myth of uniformity, that all people with down syndrome have severe physical and cognitive deficits and affectionate, loving personalities (Gilmore, 2006). Resulting in the fact that these individuals in the photo are seen as special, cute and unique. As down-syndrome with its many stereo-types is used to represent disability, the disability itself becomes stereotyped as a potential severe case of restrictiveness in agency with high crip time when compared to a normative conception of time management (Gilmore, 2006) (Kafer, 2013) (Taylor, 2013). While people with down-syndrome can be highly functional it does not seem an actual representation of the disability conditions most employees at the Rabobank struggle with, a fact that is emphasized as they are using the workers of Brownies&downieS to show a binary between tabs and bodies that live with a disability.

As of last, it can be stated that representing disability through a birth anomaly that carries a high crip-time, rather than through something we all can gain through illness, age or accident, relieves tabs agents of the anxiety for "becoming disabled" (Kafer, 2013). In this sense, this representation perpetuates a hegemonical conception of disability that is not threatening to tabs who belong to mainstream culture and therefore dictates the spaces through which identities can be represented. This relieves normative-bodies of the fear of becoming less able by reinscribing their naturalized conception of disability, that they will not or at least for some time become disabled through stereotyping disability, as something that has come with birth.

To summarize, the first connotation with this photo of the deployment of people with occupational disabilities is that this representation portrays an inclusive environment for agents with a disability. The set-up of the photo places diverse employees of the Rabobank in relation to the organization of Brownies&DownieS that helps people with down-syndrome to gain access to the workforce. However, after a more in-depth analysis, this representation of disability does not seem to reflect the actual workforce of the Rabobank; on the contrary, it contains and reiterates stereo-types surrounding down syndrome and disability. Making it hard for agents that are unrepresented to identify with the organization.

A reading of the combined meaning of the diversity photographs and statement

In this section, I will give a reading of the combined meaning of the three photographs through the diversity statement of the Rabobank. This will analyze if the combined meaning of photos and statements results in exclusionary practices that are reinforced as these instruments are read in context. As an overview, I will first analyze the diversity photographs in relation to each other to see if there are patterns to be found on the denotation, connotation and myth levels. After describing the connotation of these combined pictures, I will research the combined meaning of the pictures through the diversity statement that describes the self-conception of the Rabobanks value towards diversity

Based on the three photographs that were analyzed using a Barthesian method, the Rabobank signifies diversity through the categories of sex, race, age, religion, body, and disability. A message of diversity is communicated through easy-to-grasp, vivid and wildly recognizable categorizations, which results in a process of knowledge sharing that establishes clear demarcations between the signifiers of types to communicate difference. In its sense, the diversity photographs do what they have to do, using stereotypization to convey a message of difference; however, diversity photographs should also communicate an inclusionary feeling through which people can identify.

By using stereo-types without an intra-group variance and placing them within a setting that signifies diversity as a merry occasion, the pictures attain a connection of abstraction, as the representations do not portray the actual everyday experience of exclusion that is inherent to this subject of diversity. A process that is emphasized within the pictures; as difference in race and religion is represented through a narrow conception of womanhood in the first two pictures without clear signifiers that places these bodies in relation to the Rabobank; whereas in the last picture, disability is represented through a chromosome abnormality by agents that are external to the organization. This is a process that adds to the abstraction as it removes non-normative bodies from identifying with the diverse employees of the Rabobank, as the pictures use stereo-types that perpetuate a main-stream culture that not related to the Rabobanks workforce. So, while these representations have clear markers of difference, it questionable if the Rabobank does not contradict their point, by using easy-to-grasp, vivid and wildly recognizable signifiers that are reduced and essentialize to signify the

difference. Stereotyping contributes to the level of abstraction that has negative effects on the signification of inclusivity by the organization. A process that can have a deterring effect on the recruitment process, as the organizations represent their corporate environment in a way that reaffirms stereo-types, and by this excludes certain types, causing job-seekers to eliminate employment with organizations that are not perceived to embrace a diverse and inclusive environment. (McKay & Avery, 2005) (Avery, et al., 2013).

At the level of the myth, the exclusionary processes of these stereo-types becomes more apparent, as the photos reinscribe an unequal normalization of mainstream society through the categories of femininity, race, and disability. The stereotypization of femininity and race becomes apparent within the first two pictures, as these representations signify womanhood and race through the stereotypization of embodied femininity. A representation of femininity that relates to the aspect of sexual desire and subordinate position that connote to the behavior of being passive, embodied, emotional and caring (Patterson, O'Malley, & Story, 2009). A mechanism of powers that naturalizes womanhood in order to less threatening to a phallogocentric work environment (Bay-Cheng, Bruns, & Maguin, 2018).

A mechanism that becomes most apparent in the first representation, it represents gender diversity through women that are a well-groomed, young, slim and look very approachable, where one of the women is positioned in the interpersonal gaze that establishes a desire for self-completion through the other (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004). A process of embodied femininity that is created through a western gaze, a process that is visible as race doesn't intersect with womanhood but is added to the category; as the photo makes a clear difference between three types of race, but their type of womanhood, bodies and self-cares seem to be identical. This whitewashing reiterates the boundaries of mainstream culture how "the other", and in this case race, should be represented. This embodied femininity and whitewashing are two mechanisms of power that are also visible in the second picture, as the signifiers of cultural diversity, are represented through a subordinated stereotypization of femininity that is approachable and non-threatening. A representation of cultural diversity, that at the same time further excludes black and Muslim males, as they are most often stereotyped through hyper-masculinity that deprive them access to the workforce as they are seen as threatening.

Representing “the other”, as passive, embodied and non-threatening is also visible in the third picture, where disability is represented through bodies that live with a chromosome abnormality that endure a high crimp-time. This is a process that creates abstraction for people that live with a disability and want work at the Rabobank, as disability is represented through a binary opposition to temporal able bodies, wherein the temporal able-bodied works at the Rabobank and the “disabled bodies” not. As a result, these stereotypization makes it harder for non-white, -cis -western, females and males to identify with the organization.

The combined meaning of these images thus conveys a message of diversity through stereotypical representation, that are created within hegemonical relations of power. Based on the photographs it can thus be stated that the Rabobank represents exclusion for at least some job-seekers, as they create an abstraction corporate environment through which job-seekers cannot identify with the organization, that primarily portrays diversity as non-treating. A conception of the diversity photographs, that seems to be in line with the representation of the diversity statement, that stated that the Rabobank distance themselves from reassuring agents and the perception that they are aiming for an inclusive environment.

However, the same as intersectional categories, the meaning of diversity representation is greater than the sum of specific representations. Therefore, I will research how these two representations intersect, by reading the diversity statement through the analyses of diversity statement and combined meaning of the photographs.

Rabobank maintains an active diversity policy. On the one hand, it does this by creating teams that are diverse in gender, cultural background, age, and the like,... (Rabobank, 2019).

As stated in the textual analyses the Rabobank defines diversity as the management of workforce diversity to gain an inclusive environment. When reading the combined meaning of the photographs through the description of the textual analyses, there can be stated that the photos correlate with the first part of the statement, as most photos represented teams that are diverse in gender, cultural background, age, and the like. The photos also correlate with the statement that no intra-group variance is present, rendering in the same fashion multiple bodies invisible. The representation then shows that the organization uses a

diversity management approach to signify the operationalization of difference, that could work exclusively for job-seekers who live within the intersections of these broader categories.

As mentioned in relation to the article of Sign and Point, the usage of language within a diversity statement is of utmost importance to create an inclusion perception, by not clearly defining: what the Rabobank consider active diversity policies and identity types to be, to whom they apply, and how they wish to obtain this inclusive environment; they create an abstraction between them and their active diversity policy. An abstraction that is furthermore enhanced as the language is written in a third person- and positive-tense, which does not tend to the lived experiences of exclusion. In this sense, the photos also correlate with the statement, as they in addition to the stereotypization, create a level of abstraction by a lack of signifiers that place the individuals represented in photographs under the employment of the Rabobank. A level of abstraction that is additionally created by the setting of the photos, as all photos connotate to the idea that diversity is something fun and positive. While diversity can and should be fun, the diversity message within these representations should also address the very nature of the problem, that people experience exclusion, both on a structural level of entering the workforce and promotional opportunities, as on an interpersonal level, between people. Both the diversity statement as the photograph do not convey this message, this gap is further enhanced as Rabobank states that:

and on the other hand, by creating an inclusive corporate culture in which people are open to each other's backgrounds, and no one is excluded (Rabobank, 2019).

By using only this positive language, to describe an ideal situation of inclusion they, reiterate the stereotype that "we" as an imagined community, do not discriminate and exclude people for being different from our mainstream culture (Wekker, 2016). While it is very noble of Rabobank to state that they want to create an inclusive corporate culture, their wishes and actions do not seem to align, as they represent this "inclusive corporate culture" through stock photo that is made up out of stereo-types that convey limited representation of diversity. A representation of diversity that reiterates power-knowledge that can work excluding as it creates an abstraction between the Rabobank and its inclusive corporate culture by representing diversity as non-threatening within an isolated space. A space that, based on the representation, is inhabited by "the other" who is not a white, able, man and cis-gendered female. In this, they fulfill their part in the community, wherein the limited

acceptance of others, is very present and the discourse of diversity equals ticking off boxes in order to meet the requirement of "doing well" (Ahmed, 2007)

That's part of our position in the community. As a result, our services also better matches the wishes of our customers (Rabobank, 2019).

In summary, the organization statement and diversity photographs align, both representations show the abstraction of the Rabobank with the topic of diversity. When reading the statement and photographs through each other, their wish to create an inclusive corporate environment is not reflected through the photos, as they use a stereotypical representation that does not show intra-group variance and reproduces the exclusionary process. A representation of diversity that perpetuates main-stream culture adding to the situations where non-normative bodies regard themselves as not-fitting the standing organizational culture.

Chapter conclusion:

The most apparent conclusion that can be made on the basis of this chapter is that the diversity representation contains exclusionary processes, that can create a level of abstraction within their representation of diversity. An abstraction that becomes evident as they communicate diversity as something merry, without tending to the actual situation of exclusion, wherein diversity is signified through stereotypical representations that only creates a limited space through diversity is represented. In this sense, the diversity representation of Rabobank perfectly paraphrases the problem of diversity that Sarah Achmed has with the discourse of diversity; that organization rather wants to tick off the boxes instead of doing the actual work, and by this help reiterate the exclusion processes for certain non-normative bodies that that face exclusion on a daily basis.¹⁹

¹⁹ An important footnote should be made, that these representations do not necessarily represent the actual practice of the diversity by the Rabobank.

Conclusion: Results, limitations & conclusion

In this chapter, I will first discuss the results of the theoretical framework and analysis to answer my main question. Secondly, I will elaborate on the limitation of my research. Thirdly and lastly I will reflect on the answers I formulated on my main question.

Results from theoretical framework and analysis

A high representation of diversity factors on an organizational website insinuates that the organizations' values and supports differences that enable the opportunities for agents to affirm their social identities. As organizations communicate about their value for an inclusionary environment, diversity representations can help to relieve anxiety and reaffirms job-seekers' positive self-identification that affects self-esteem, physical well-being, and cognitive performance during the recruitment process (Loos, 2018). From a deterrence perspective, diversity representations can also reproduce power-relations that reiterates a normalcy of mainstream culture. A hegemonical mechanism of power that is perpetuated, as diversity is signified through a unilateral representation of the difference. A process that produces exclusion for certain bodies as they are reduced naturalized and essentialized to represent difference, that in result can render certain bodies invisible, as there is no intra-group variance present between the types. A continuation of the hegemony through diversity representation can block job-seekers from considering a vacancy due to exclusionary representation of the organizational culture that additionally can result in the same demographic continuously being recruited, as employers are being exposed to this same unilateral representation of diversity.

A form of exclusion that comes into being through the operationalization of difference, that is needed to manage diversity from a top-down position, by ready-made solutions to help reduce exclusion for specific and broad categories of agents -without intra-group variance. Resulting in a one-dimensional approach for categories such as women, LGBTQI+, disability and cultural background, that excludes intra-group variances of exclusion, and attains hegemonical power relations as these categories of difference come into being through a phallogocentric conception of diversity, wherein difference is everything that is not white able male. For organizations to overcome these exclusionary processes within their diversity representation, their management of difference needs to include an inclusionary approach

that goes beyond the operationalization of difference by focusing on the agent's experience of exclusion. An approach that includes both the efforts of management as well as that of employees is to remove exclusive barriers by creating a sense of belonging to actively remove these barriers. While retaining the characteristics that make all these agents unique. Resulting in an approach that is per definition multilateral, as the starting point includes all (intra-) groups' experiences of exclusion, through this starting point it removes hegemonical tendencies of them (the other) and us (the white, able, male). An approach that needs a strong representation of inclusive leadership to bring together, all these different perspectives, to form the core of the organization through which everybody can identify themselves.

Clearly visible in the explorative analysis of the Rabobank, is that the Rabobank represents their inclusive environment through the management of diversity, without an inclusionary approach. As their diversity representation, -the diversity photographs of cultural background, disability and gender, and their diversity statement- signify diversity through operationalized representation of difference. In result, these representations attain a phallogocentric conception of difference that makes these representations too abstract for agents to identify with, and thus reiterates exclusionary process for certain non-normative bodies.

The reiteration of hegemony that perpetuates the normalcy of mainstream culture is then also most visible in these representations. As the represented bodies within the image were reduced, essentialized and naturalized to signify broader categories of difference, without intra-group variances, and where an unequal power-knowledge is reiterated through it's form. A representational practice of the ruling group, that helps relieve the threat from the other, as these accepted bodies are represented through stereotypical representation of subordinate femininity and disability in order to become more approachable. A process that structurally renders certain bodies invisible, and is clearly visible in the diversity photographs of the Rabobank, as all they signifiers of cultural diversity where represented through a subordinate representation of womanhood.

As a result, these stereotypization makes it harder for non-white, -cis -western, females and males to identify with the organization, as it creates a level of abstraction within the representation. Both in the photographs and the diversity statement. An abstraction that

comes into being as the Rabobank -in these representations- only communicates diversity as something merry, without tending to the actual situation of exclusion. Creating through these diversity representations a space that is more inhabitable for white, able, males and cis-gendered females and less for non-normative bodies, who face exclusion and for whom these representations should work. As these diversity representations reiterate hegemonical process, that perpetuates a homogenous culture, it creates an exclusionary process that can affect non-normative job-seeker from identifying with the organization. An exclusionary process that can be detrimental to job-seekers' positive self-identification and self-esteem, causing agents to eliminate a prospective employer from further consideration because they don't picture themselves working for this particular organization. In addition, the continuation of the hegemony can result in the same demographic continuously being recruited, as employers are exposed to the same unilateral representation of diversity.

The main limitations of this research

As with most research, there are limitations present within this thesis that can affect the outcome of the explorative analyses of the Rabobank. The research question, on which my background chapter and theoretical framework have been built, concentrates on the external communication published by internationally active organizations, such as Rabobank. Let us be clear that Rabobank purely represents an example. Without accurate data about the demographic of the organization behind this publication, my goal is clearly not to evaluate whether they have accurately represented their organization as it stands today. Instead, I analyzed whether their visual representation of what they present as their interpretation of diversity and inclusion is likely to convey the desired message. As the inclusionary effects were found to be limited, the focus naturally evolved to a more significant reading on the exclusionary practices in comparison. Creating a preferred reading that can be in favor of the production of the exclusionary meaning within the text and the photos, as meaning is not simply reproduced but produces through the scope of your research (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010) (Tseëlon, 1991).

As is mentioned in my methodology chapter, this explorative analysis uses a smaller sample that is not designed to make structural claims. In addition, the produced meaning can alter when broadening the perspective, for example when all the diversity photographs and texts are analyzed, or the diversity messages of other organizations are included in the study. This

reading can help gain an understanding of why these photos were chosen, why main-stream culture is not aware of the stereotypical representation that these images entail and how the hypervisibility of certain types could help reverse the form of certain stereotypes (Hall, 2013).

Conclusion

Limitations notwithstanding, the explorative analyses within this thesis makes a contribution to the knowledge about the exclusionary practices within the discourse of diversity and inclusion. Researching the diversity representations from a Media and Culture studies perspective helps to open up the discourse of diversity and inclusion, that is primarily focused on attaining inclusion by measuring and implementing a process that should help to overcome the exclusion within the organization, leaving out how society creates the knowledge from which we learn how to act. The current research on representations primarily focusses on whether there are signifiers of diversity through which people can identify but does not focus on the construction of these signifiers that can create exclusionary processes. As these types are created through cultural and ideological power-knowledge, that creates limited representation that renders certain agents invisible. A reiteration of mainstream culture that is perpetuated through the diversity representations that should help gain inclusion and not reproduce exclusion. This research contributes to the theoretical discourse by highlighting the fact that while diversity and inclusion measures within large international organizations are internal, they can help perpetuate exclusionary processes in main-stream culture when these organizations are insufficiently aware of how the external representation of their internal policies influence society.

The analysis of the representations of the Rabobank shows exclusionary processes, that can block job-seekers from identifying with the organization and can perpetuate homogenous hiring. As the analysis of combined meaning shows, the representations gain a level of abstraction, due to the form that was used to create them, this abstraction can be removed when the Rabobank uses photos, where the signification of diversity, is not the primary objective that needs to be constructed and represented, as it can result in the perception that they only want to tick off the boxes in order to meet the requirement of "doing well".

On this basis, it is not possible and not the function of this explorative analyses to state that the Rabobank diversity representation is exclusive, only that certain representations of the Rabobank reproduces exclusionary processes through the form and naturalization of the

diversity groups that can make it difficult for certain non-normative agents to identify with their organizational representation.

Based on the theory and the analysis, there can be stated that the Rabobank's diversity representation could improve when they use an inclusionary approach that would remove the phallogocentric starting point through which the operationalization of difference is established and managed, a perspective on diversity that takes the intra-variances within the diversity groups into account. This results in a multilateral representation of difference, that includes everyone as it is better able to represent everyday experience.

In result, this thesis opens up an area that is in need of further research to determine whether organizations, other than the Rabobank, create an abstract representation of their diversity representation. This results in non-threatening and stereotypical diversity representations without intragroup variance. A representational practice of diversity management that creates exclusionary processes, as certain job-seekers cannot or don't want to identify with the stereotypical representation of race, gender, and disability, whereas others, who fall between the categories, are rendered invisible. This results in a reproduction of homogenous organizational culture, as employers are being exposed to the same unilateral representation of diversity and job-seekers eliminate a prospective employer from further consideration due to the insufficient representation of an inclusive organizational environment.

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