

# Diversity management discourse: Increasing or limiting diversity?

Research Group on Diversity and Discrimination  
Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> of October 2009

Sine Nørholm Just & Tanja Juul Christiansen

snj.ikk@cbs.dk

tjc.ikk@cbs.dk

Department of International Culture and Communication studies

# Diversity management discourse



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BLIV ELEV I TRYG

Hos Tryg er der plads til alle.  
Men du skal alligevel  
være noget særligt

A collection of various glasses, including clear, yellow, blue, and patterned ones, arranged on a white surface. The glasses are of different shapes and sizes, some with intricate patterns or colors, symbolizing diversity.

Det handler om at være **Tryg**

# Program

- ① Analysis of diversity (management) discourse (in a Danish context)
- ② Discussion of possible alternatives

# Position

- Poststructuralist stance
- Discourse analysis/rhetorical criticism

# Claim

Diversity management discourse is problematic in terms of:

- *Address*
- *Categorization*
- *Identity and agency*

# Address

“Copenhagen Business School is an equal opportunity employer encouraging all interested parties to apply regardless of age, gender, religion, or ethnic group”

- <http://frontpage.cbs.dk/jobs/stil.pl>

“What is this specific existence that emerges from what is said and nowhere else?”  
(Foucault 1977: 28)

# Categorization



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“Even if any given terminology is a *reflection* of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a *deflection* of reality”

(Burke 1966, p. 45)

# Categorization

“Employment with Novozymes is offered and provided, based on merit. Recruitment, terms of employment, promotion and termination of employment is practised without any distinction, exclusion or preference on the basis of:

- race
  - colour
  - ethnic, national or social origin
  - gender
  - religion
  - age
  - disability
  - political opinion
  - sexual orientation
  - family responsibilities
  - any other protected status designated by local or national law”
- <http://www.novozymes.com/en/MainStructure/AboutUs/Positions/Diversity+and+equal+opportunities.htm>

# Identity and agency



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“The diversities of employees regarding gender, age, race, religion, ethnic origin, sexuality, education, personality and view of life are to be valued and used actively”

- <http://www.kk.dk/FaktaOmKommunen/LedelseOgPersonale/MangfoldighedOgLigestilling/Mangfoldighed.aspx>  
(our translation)

“The address constitutes the being within the possible circuit of recognition”  
(Butler 1997: 5)

# Identity and agency



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## “Why choose Tryg as place of employment?”

Because we first and foremost are a place of development, which offers you the best framework for personal growth and balance no matter where you are in life.

**Capability of action.** We point the way, when you need new challenges. We offer personal development plans, engagement with experienced colleagues, education, and job opportunities in the Nordic countries, if you deliver enthusiasm, talent, and initiative.

**Innovation.** A new generation of employees requires a new generation of possibilities. Therefore, we are open to untraditional solutions, if you are an unusual employee. You are welcome to challenge us to equilibrate the work-life balance. It may provide unexpected results!

**Humanity.** We know that tolerance creates growth, and that difference is an asset. Therefore, we see potential in diversity, and welcome everyone who shares our attitude.”



# Theoretical reflection

- Suggest alternatives without abandoning theoretical stance?
  - Speaking to the “unknown unknown”
  - Hypothetical third (personae)

“The emphasis on the ‘hypothetical’ nature of this perspective reminds us of our limits. Our solidary reflection may never enable us fully to include the voices and experiences we exclude”  
(Dean 1996: 34)

# New voices



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The mercenary missionary:

”What does those smaller decisions look like? Admitting a mistake. Providing information that a colleague may find beneficial. Fixing an error today that could easily be left for someone tomorrow. Accurately recording vacation days. Refraining from making disparaging remarks about a coworker or partner. Striving for excellence when noone else is looking. These things may seem small at first glance. But it is here that the kind of honesty and integrity needed to inform significant decisions takes root.”

# New voices



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## The loyal sceptic

Am I cheating?

I am married on 6th year in a good and strong relationship. My wishes and needs are totally satisfied. Almost. Because I also have a relationship to someone else – and even have hot thoughts regarding a third. [...]

When I take my affair with me to work I feel like a rebel – it is probably a little childish.

The thing is, that I want my marriage with [this company], but at the same time I cannot live without my lovely iPod.

Do you think it is OK that I as employee in [this company] own an iPod and dream of a PS3 with BluRay? Or is it the worst kind of cheating?

:) Flemming

# New voices

## The missionary:

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## The mercenary:

I am very faithful to [our company] and do not allow foreign products in my house. I can not see the necessity of giving away my hard earned money to the competitions.

Regards, Jens

# Possible alternatives

## Diversifying discursive practices

1. Multiple address
2. Abandon categories
3. *Create new possibilities of voice*
4. A process – not a goal

