Hiring an employee. Does ethnicity matter?

- A qualitative analysis based on 28 interviews

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Acknowledgments

Abstract

This thesis is part of the project 'Measuring and Explaining Discrimination in the Labour Market: New Understandings and Political Solutions' (DISCRIM, 2011). The main objective of the project is to understand the extent and causes of discrimination. In this project we speak of discrimination when two people who have the same qualifications and expertise are treated unequally.

The aim of this work is to come closer to an understanding of ethnic inequality in the labour market by studying what happens at the micro level. Through in-depth semi-structured interviews I seek to gain insight into the hiring process. In particular, I seek knowledge on the impact of employers' actions, decisions and reasoning on the possibility of minorities being hired.

The empirical analysis is based on 28 qualitative interviews. The way respondents are recruited is unusual in a Norwegian context, and is based on a field experiment.

Between September 2011 and January 2012, approximately 300 pair fictitious job applications were sent to real job advertisements in Oslo. For each selected advertisement, two applications were sent. In each pair of applications, the candidates had the same education, equal length of work experience, age and gender. Only the name differentiated the candidates: one candidate had a typical

Norwegian name, while the other had a Pakistani name. We interviewed employers who had been subjected to this experiment. This means that when we interviewed employers, we knew whether these candidates had been treated equally or unequally (in terms of the screening process). Following this stage, we carried out five interviews with key informants. These were mainly recruited through networking. The way I worked during the data collection was inspired by *Grounded Theory* (GT) (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Moreover, some GT techniques were used in the analytical process. These tools have been especially useful to become familiar with a relatively large amount of data.

The analysis develops according to my interpretation of Hedström's (2005) understanding of analytical sociology. According to Hedström, the researcher's task is to decompose complex phenomena into manageable parts. The complex phenomenon to be decomposed in this thesis is the recruiting process, which is studied as a process of matching.

In each part of the process employers take decisions that are contextually constrained. Following this line of thinking, I have decomposed the hiring process in to three main parts: a) the outset of the recruiting process, b) the screening and c) the final selection. Each of these phases correspond to an analytical chapter which handles how employers build the job specification, how employers decide who to invite for an interview, and which methods employers utilise to choose who to offer a job.

The analytical approach is actor oriented: I build a model that look at the chain of activities from the perspective of the employer. The model ties together a wide version of rational choice theory (Opp, 1999), the significance of human capital (HC) (Becker, 1962), and for assumed productivity/hiring and different theories of discrimination (Aigner & Cain, 1977; Arrow, 1973; Phelps, 1972; Becker, [1957] 1971).

The focus of the analysis is on the screening process, which is analysed with the aid of a typology. This typology is based on the outcome of the screening of

these fictitious candidates. For each type of outcome — and by focusing on the most illuminating cases — I discuss how employers explained how they reasoned during the concrete screening process.

Moreover, I discuss how employers think and act during the screening process in general. Part of the screening process seemed to be grounded in a HC way of thinking. However, HC is not enough to be invited for an interview. In cases where there were many applicants, objective criteria fell short. Employers would then use an element of discretion to assess the candidates, where less clear-cut criteria were used to disqualify the bulk of applicants.

Most of the employers in this sample did not discriminate against our minority candidates in the screening process. Neither did they say that they discriminated in other ways. However, it was obvious during the interviews that they communicated more than one thing at a time. More subtle factors are at play in the hiring process and can lead to discrimination.

Through the analysis, the most salient topics are language, suitability, the notion of fitting in and employers' gut feelings. Regarding language, it was noteworthy that employers quickly attributed a lack of ethnic minorities in their labour forces to language issues. Language issues were also prevalent even when we specifically reminded the employers that these candidates were born and had completed their education in Norway. Employers seemed to infer that persons from a minority background in general had poor language skills.

I suggest that language command may be the most widely-used excuse when recruiters' gut feelings are not the 'right ones' and they choose not to hire a minority candidate. Language is an explanation that does not need to be further justified, but may be used to cover up more controversial or dubious reasons.

Sammendrag

Denne oppgaven er en del av prosjektet: 'Measuring and Explaining Discrimination in the Labour Market: New Understandings and Political Solutions' (DISCRIM 2011). Prosjektet hovedmål er å forklare omfanget av og årsakene til diskriminering. Diskriminering er forstått i dette prosjektet som når personer som har de samme kvalifikasjonene og kompetanse blir behandlet ulikt.

Dette arbeidet har som formål å komme nærmere forståelsen av etnisk ulikhet i arbeidsmarkedet ved å studere hva som skjer på mikronivået. Gjennom dybde semi-strukturerte intervjuer søkes det kunnskap om hva som skjer i en ansettelsesprosess. Mer spesifikt søker jeg å få innsikt i hvordan arbeidsgivernes handlinger, beslutninger og måte å resonere på påvirker etniske minoriteter muligheter for få jobb.

Datamaterialet til denne analysen er 28 kvalitative intervju. Måten arbeidsgiverne er rekruttert på er spesiell i norsk sammenheng og baserer seg på et felteksperiment.

I perioden september 2011 — januar 2012 ble det sendt ca. 300 par fiktive jobbsøknader til reelle utlysninger i Oslo. I hvert søknadspar var søkerne substansielt like, men de skilte seg fra hverandre ved at den ene av søkerne hadde et pakistansk navn og den andre et typisk norsk navn. Arbeidsgiverne som vi intervjuet hadde blitt utsatt for dette eksperimentet. Dette innebærer at når vi intervjuet

arbeidsgiverne visste vi om de hadde behandlet våre kandidater likt eller ulikt (i screeningsprosessen).

Vi gjennomførte også fem intervju med nøkkelinformanter. Disse er hovedsakelig rekruttert via nettverk. Måten jeg har jobbet på under datainnsamlingen er inspirert av *Grounded theory* (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Videre er noen GT teknikker brukt i den analytiske prosessen. Teknikkene har vært spesielt fruktbare for å bli kjent med et forholdsvis stort datamateriale.

Måten analysen er oppbygd er basert på min tolkning av Hedströms (2005) forståelse av analytisk sosiologi. I følge Hedström er forskerens oppgave å dekomponere komplekse fenomen i håndterbare deler. Det komplekse fenomenet i denne oppgave er ansettelsesprosessen, en *matchings*prosess som består av flere faser. I hver fase tar arbeidsgivere beslutninger som er påvirket eller begrenset av hva som skjer i konteksten. I samsvar med dette perspektivet har jeg dekomponert ansettelsesprosessen i tre hoveddeler: a) Starten av rekrutteringsprosessen, b) Screeningsprosessen og c) Seleksjonen. Hver av disse faser er analysert i et analysekapitel som ser på hvordan arbeidsgiverne utvikler job spesifikasjonen, hvordan arbeidsgiverne bestemmer hvem de skal invitere til intervju, og hvilke metoder de bruker for å velge hvem de vil ansette.

Videre er den analytiske tilnærmingen aktørorientert: jeg bygger en modell som ser kjeden av aktivitetene fra arbeidsgivernes ståsted. Modellen knyttes til en utvidet variant av teorien om rasjonelle valg (Opp, 1999), betydningen av human kapital (HC) (Becker, 1962) for antatt produktivt /ansettelse og forskjellige teorier om diskriminering (Aigner & Cain, 1977; Arrow, 1973; Phelps, 1972; Becker, [1957] 1971).

Analysens fokus er screeningsprosessen, som studeres ved hjelp av en typologi. Denne er basert på utfallet av screeningen for våre fiktive kandidater. For hver type resultat — og ved å fokusere på de mest opplysende *cases* — diskuterer jeg hvordan arbeidsgiverne sier å ha tenkt i disse konkrete screeningsprosesser.

Dessuten diskuterer jeg hvordan arbeidsgivere tenker og handler når det gjelder screeningsprosesser generelt. En del av screeningsprosessen ser ut til å basere seg på en HC tankegang. Likevel er ikke HC nok for å bli kalt inn til intervju. I tilfeller der det er mange søkere kommer objektive kriteria til kort. Arbeidsgiverne vil da foreta skjønnsmessige evalueringer hvor mindre klare kriteria brukes til å diskvalifisere bulken av kandidater.

De fleste arbeidsgiverne i dette utvalget diskriminerte ikke mot våre minoritetskandidater i screeningsprosessen. De sa heller ikke at de diskriminerte ellers. Likevel, var det tydelig under intervjuene at de kommuniserte mer enn en ting om gangen. Mer subtile faktorer syns å være virksomme i ansettelsesprosesser og kan lede til diskrimering.

De mest fremtredende tema som fremkommer i analysen er språk, personlig egnethet, det å passe inn og arbeidsgivernes magefølelse. Arbeidsgiverne brukte raskt språk som årsak til at deres arbeidsplass var lite mangfoldig. Språk var også et rådende tema selv når vi minnet respondentene om at våre kandidater var født og oppvokst i Norge og hadde høyere utdanning fra Norge. En del arbeidsgivere syntes å konkludere med at personer med minoritetsbakgrunn generelt sett hadde dårlige norske kunnskaper.

Jeg foreslår at språkkunnskaper kan være den mest brukte unnskyldningen arbeidsgiverne bruker når deres magefølelse ikke stemmer og velger å ikke ansette personer med minoritetsbakgrunn. Språk er en grunn som de ikke trenger å argumentere videre med, den ser legitim ut og kan bli brukt for å dekke over mer kontroversielle eller tvilsomme grunner.

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Documents for download

The following documents are available for download at

http://uio.academia.edu/MaricelKnechtel

- Analysis Matrix
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1

Introduction

This study originates from a concern with inequality, particularly the kind that arises from being ethnically different. Norwegian and international research finds that ethnic minorities experience inequality in several arenas of society. Relative to their native peers, ethnic minorities encounter disadvantageous opportunities structures exemplified by educational and occupational attainment, risk of unemployment (Heath, Rothon, & Kilpi 2008), opportunities in the housing market, health and poverty.

There is a large body of literature concerned with minorities' opportunity structures and other disadvantages (for international literature see for example Heath, Cheung & Smith, 2007; Pager & Shepherd, 2008; Rooth & Ekberg, 2003; Nazroo 1998; Lewin-Epstein & Semyonov, 1991). Heath et al. (2008) review research on the educational and labour outcomes for minorities in ten countries. Ethnic minorities have on average difficulties entering the labour market in all countries.

Minorities from less-developed non-European origins tend to have higher risks of unemployment and other disadvantages.

Norwegian statistics and research shows that non-western minorities also have significantly higher risks of unemployment and income inequalities (see for example Birkelund & Mastekaasa, 2009; Wiborg, 2006; Birkelund, Mastekaasa, & Zorlu, 2008; also among highly educated first and second generation immigrants Støren, 2005; Brekke & Mastekaasa, 2008; Evensen, 2008, 2009; Hermansen, 2009). A social phenomenon — ethnic inequality — has therefore been established. But what do we know about its causes?

Observed inequality has often been interpreted quite straightforwardly, equating inequality and discrimination. While significant differences between majority and minority groups may serve as indicators of discrimination, there may not be substantial connections between the two (Rogstad, 2000a, p.42).

In recent years, the concept of *ethnic penalties* has been much used in quantitative analysis on labour market inequality, especially in British literature. Ethnic penalties are defined as the differences between ethnic groups and the majority population after taking education and age into account (Heath & Cheung, 2007, p.25). Consequently, discrimination is a possible cause of the observed differences (Jonsson, 2007) but, most importantly, the concept of ethnic penalties indicates that having a minority background is accompanied by some specific barriers.

On the whole, much research has attempted to explain inequality either by attributing it to differences in the abilities and skills of individuals (human capital) or to theories of discrimination. In both cases, these studies are based on supply side data.

Studies based on demand side data are more rare (for Norway see Midtbøen & Rogstad, 2012; Rogstad, 2000a). The ambition of this thesis is to complement more conventional labour market analysis by studying employers' behaviour.

Employers have the power to decide who gets hired and who does not. Who gets hired is determined by how employers reason and act during the recruiting process. Who gets hired is also pivotal for understanding consequent inequality in labour market outcomes (Petersen, Saporta, & Seidel, 2000).

1.1. Research questions and limitations

Inequality in the labour market has been of increasing concern in the debate about social affairs and in social research. The phenomenon has been explained with supply side arguments such as lack of human capital, for example experience or education, and 'country-specific' human capital, such as networks, knowledge of social codes and language (Barth, Bratsberg, & Raaum, 2004; Chiswick, 1978; Hayfron, 1998) and, as noted above, with theories of discrimination.

With the understanding that discrimination takes place, it is reasonable to expect that this is most likely to happen during the recruiting process (Petersen et al., 2000).

The aim of this study is therefore to come closer to understanding how employers reason and act. The overall ambition is to disentangle the process of recruitment and try to come to terms with the impact of ethnicity compared to other traits - when relevant — in each part of the process.

The underlying research question is two-fold. Firstly, I will try to uncover the hiring process and how employers reason in this process:

(i) According to employers, what happens in each phase of the hiring process?

This question is further specified by the following questions:

a) Which phases can be identified in the recruitment process?
b) Which factors or traits are emphasised when hiring someone?
c) How is hiring constrained or influenced?

Secondly, I am interested in examining the impact of the hiring process and the thinking and actions of those involved on minority applicants:

ii) *What are the implications of the hiring process for minority candidates applying for jobs?*

In particular, I will try to answer:

a) Are the applications of minorities differently scrutinised?
b) What conditions, factors or aspects of conditions and factors disfavour or favour minorities when applying for a job?

The two-fold question implies an initial focus on the recruiting process in general terms and, *then*, a focus on the effects of this for minorities. This approach is based upon the assumption that unravelling the process increases the possibility of identifying beliefs, factors and mechanisms with a special impact on minorities.

Limitations

This study is part of the DISCRIM (2011) project at the University of Oslo[1], and the data it relies upon are 28 in-depth interviews. In several interviews, more than one individual represented an organisation, which increased the total number of respondents and informants to 39. The respondents in this study are Oslo employers who were subjected to correspondence testing (cf. chapter 4). This means that the respondents were recruited through self-selection and, thus, the sample is biased; these problems are further discussed in chapter 4. The information we have about hiring processes is therefore limited to what employers tell us.

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[1] The project Measuring and Explaining Discrimination in the Labour Market (DISCRIM) is led by Professor Gunn Elisabeth Birkelund at the Department of Sociology and Human Geography and funded by the Norwegian Research Council's programme Welfare, Working Life and Migration (VAM) for the period January 2011 – December 2014. The experimental part of the project is led by researcher Jon Rogstad. For more information see ttp://www.sv.uio.no/iss/english/research/projects/discrim/.

Moreover, this study focus on hiring processes that *may* be typical for midsize to big organisations in the Oslo area (cf. 4.3) and/or positions that require an education at the bachelor level. I do not therefore claim to reveal how employers think and act in general when selecting an applicant. My goal is rather to identify possible mechanisms that will need further examination in order to determine their validity.

1.2. About the focus on ethnicity

The importance of focussing on ethnicity can be derived from what I stated initially about inequality patterns. Moreover, the Nordic model of welfare emphasises full employment and participation in the labour market. Participation in working life is therefore regarded as pivotal to integration in society. Yet, some groups of immigrants and their children encounter barriers when trying to access this market at a time when the general unemployment rate is remarkably low.

Over the years, there has been a larger share of unemployed immigrants compared to their Norwegian peers (see figure 1-1). On the whole, the unemployment rate is 4.6 points higher among immigrants than the native population. When we look closer at the differences between the regions the immigrants come from, there are greater variations: the differences between the non-immigrant population and immigrants from the Nordic countries or North America on the one hand and from Western Europe on the other are insignificant. It is apparent that the more distant the culture or the geographical region from which a group originates, the higher the unemployment (see table 1-1 and figure 1-1). This is, of course, a gross oversimplification. Among Indians, Chinese and native of the Philippines, the unemployment rate has been much lower than the average, particularly in more recent years.

These numbers do not tell us all about inequality structures. For example, previous research shows that some of the largest immigrant groups are self-employed or in temporary work to a greater degree than the native population (Henriksen, 2010) and that immigrants have jobs for which they are overqualified to a far greater extent than others (Villund, 2010). Moreover, highly educated immigrants also experience disadvantages. Støren (2005) documents higher risks of unemployment for highly educated non-western immigrants than for Norwegians with the same levels of education. Brekke & Mastekaasa (2008) show that it takes a longer period of time for immigrants to enter gainful employment after completing a master's degree.

Table 1-1: Registered unemployed, by immigrant background, region of birth and sex. In per cent of the labour force. By the end of February 2012.

	Total	Males	Females
Registered unemployed, total	2.6	3	2.2
Non-immigrant population[1]	2,1	2.2	1.7
Immigrants registered as residents, total	6.7	6.9	6.6
The Nordic countries	2.6	3.1	2
Western Europe elsewhere	3,2	3.3	2.9
EU countries in eastern Europe	7.6	7.6	7.4
Eastern Europe elsewhere	6.9	7.2	6.6
North America and Oceania	2,3	2.8	1.7
Asia[2]	8.1	7.9	8.4
Africa	13.2	13.5	12.6
South and central America	6.7	6.3	7.1

1   Non-residents included, 1 736 (2012).
2   Turkey is included.

Source: Statistics Norway (2011a).

Another reason to be sceptical about the trustworthiness of the unemployment figures is that they can be deceptive because people that are unemployed for a long time lose their unemployment benefits[2] and therefore may be forced to opt for other strategies for economical survival.

Figure 1-1: Registered unemployed aged 16-74[1], by country (region) background. In per cent of the labour force. End of November 1989 – 2010[2].
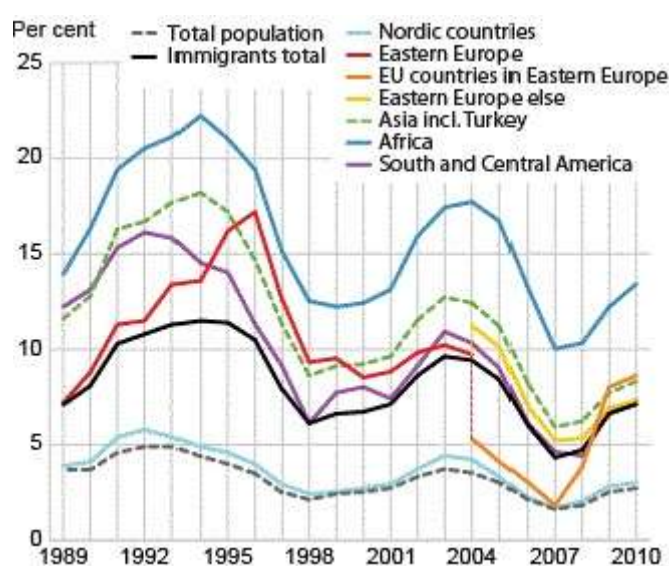
[1]Age group 16-74 years prior to 2008.
[2]Break in the time series in 1999 because of changes in the definition of the unemployed.

Source: Statistics Norway (2011b).

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[2] In general, employment benefits are given for 52 or 104 weeks, depending on previous income (NAV, 2011). New residents and young people who do not have previous work income are therefore not entitled to unemployment benefits at all. There are nevertheless some other labour market schemes with smaller economic payments for those registered as unemployed, and a special scheme for refugees, persons with a residence permit on humanitarian grounds after an application for asylum, and their families (Barne-, Likestillings- og Inkluderingsdepartementet, 2008. Nevertheless, in the absence of benefits, it is unlikely that persons invest time registering unemployment.

If one starts with the assumption that people in general wish to be in gainful employment, then the objections above may indicate that unemployment is substantially higher than the unemployment statistics[3] suggest.

The second generation of non-western immigrants is still a young population and a comparatively small group. By the end of 2011, there were 24 491 Norwegians born to non-western immigrant parents[4] — mostly from Asian origin — of working age, that is, at least 16 years old.[5] Consequently, the literature covering this group is scarcer. Nevertheless, research has documented disadvantages among this group. Hermansen (2009) shows that the highly educated second generation experiences higher risks of unemployment than native majority individuals with similar educational qualifications (see also Evensen 2008). A report from Statistics Norway shows that the second generation is more active in the labour market than immigrants in the same age group, but somewhat less than youth in general (Olsen, 2008). Of those who had been unemployed 34% indicated employer discrimination to be the cause, while lack of references was the second most cited reason (Løwe, 2010).

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[3] Another way to look at the problem is by observing the employment statistics instead, which shows that while 74,9 % of Nordic citizens were in the labour force, the figures were 53,3 % for Asians, 43,9% for Africans and 62,9% for Latin-Americans (Statistics Norway, 2011c).

[4] Statistics Norway does not operate with the concept of non-western immigrants any more. Instead they refer to persons with background from Eastern Europe except the EU, Asia, Africa and Latin-America.

[5] I obtained this information by mail from Bjørn Olsen, researcher at Statistics Norway, in August 2012.

1.3. Central concepts and terminology

Some concepts that have already been introduced and others related to them need to be clarified before proceeding. The most important of these and the one that can be a source of confusion is the term *ethnicity*, which already appears in the title of this work. Other terms I will clarify in this section are *immigrant*, *second generation, recruiting* and *hiring*. A concept that will appear with frequency is the concept of *discrimination*. To avoid repetition the term is shortly discussed in connection with theoretical perspectives on discrimination in chapter 3.

1.3.1. Ethnicity

Generally speaking, ethnicity is understood in terms of national, cultural, religious, linguistic or other distinct attributes of groups of people. Barth (1969) introduces the notion of ethnic boundaries to shift the focus from objective traits (for example, biological populations) to subjective meanings:

> *The identification of another person as a fellow member of an ethnic group implies a sharing of criteria for evaluation and judgement [...]. On the other hand, [the identification] of others as members of another ethnic group implies a recognition of limitation on shared understandings, differences in criteria for judgement of value and performance, and restriction of interaction to sectors of assumed common understanding and mutual interest* (Barth, 1969, p. 15).

From this point of view, when talking about *ethnic minorities* — or, for linguistic variation, simply *minorities* — I will be mostly referring to the respondents' identification of *others*. The identification of others is based on national ancestry, but who the others are varies from respondent to respondent (Swedes and Danes are usually not defined as others).

Initially, and in line with the intention of the DISCRIM project (2011), I was interested in focusing on *visible minorities* (Rogstad, 2000a). The darker the skin, the greater the accent or the more different the culture and values are perceived to be, the more visible the otherness (Hernes & Knudsen, 1990). I was concerned about the effects of different markers of ethnicity on individuals' opportunities in the labour market. Moreover, I was especially interested in the second generation; namely the children of immigrants born or brought up in Norway.

The focus on visible minorities has not been possible to strictly maintain. Some of our respondents were aware that our interest in ethnicity was primarily an interest in groups that statistically have more difficulties in the labour market: groups with non-western offspring and especially those with origins in South America, Africa or Asia. While some employers were conscious of the issue of visibility, many did not seem to operate with a clear mental distinction. As a consequence, they often included western Europeans or other representatives of a western culture when refering to minorities.

1.3.2. The first and second generation

In this thesis I refer mainly to *minorities* (see above), *immigrants* and *the second generation*. The word immigrant refers solely to individuals who have actually migrated to Norway. Their children are referred to as the second generation, which is in accordance with conceptualisation in English literature. For the Norwegian reader it is necessary to point out that the term second generation is outdated. For this group, Statistics Norway now uses the term *Norwegian-born to immigrant parents*.

Initially, I wanted to focus this thesis on the second generation. This focus has faded out. The majority of our respondents quickly turned the issue of ethnicity into an issue about language. In doing so, they automatically included all

immigrants and excluded — allegedly — the second generation. One reason for this exclusion may be that some people do not consider the second generation to be *others.* Another explanation is that the second generation is still a young and small population and many employers may not be aware of their existence as jobseekers (Midtbøen, 2012a, 2012d).

Through the course of the analysis I will try to be as clear as possible to avoid speculation about who I, or the respondents, are talking about. As far as possible I will use the terms the respondents use (for example, bicultural, minority, non-western immigrant). In general, ethnic minorities in this analysis are both first and second generation immigrants.[6] When a distinction between immigrant and second generation is made by the respondent, this will also be reflected in the text. Moreover, when there is a clear distinction between people from western or non-western cultures, this will also be stated.

1.3.3. Recruitment, selection and hiring

Recruitment and *selection* are often used interchangeably. Strictly, recruiting refers to the process that starts with the decision to hire and continues with the integration of new employees into organisations. *Selection* refers to the activities used to evaluate candidates, extending from screening to making an offer of employment (Grimshaw, 2009, p. 7). In this study I will use for linguistic variation *hiring* and *recruitment* interchangeably. However, the circumstances around the decision to hire and the integration of new employees — both part of recruiting — are outside the scope of this study. When speaking of *recruitment* — or *hiring* — I will be referring to the parts of the process that start with decisions or ideas incumbent to the qualifications and traits that the future employee will need to have and end with the final selection of whom to hire. As mentioned above, the

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[6] Other ethnic minorities, such as Tatars and Roma, are not included in this analysis.

analysis of the final selection will, however, be limited to the employers' accounts of the methods they utilise to conduct final selection processes.

1.4. The Norwegian context

As well as being a high priority issue on the political agenda, the importance of ethnicity has become even greater in recent years, especially after the EU expansion. However, immigration to Norway is a new phenomenon — a fact that may have an impact on the orientation of people towards immigration and multiculturalism.

1.4.1. The rapid transformation of Norwegian society

The first immigration wave of importance was in the sixties, caused by significant economic growth. Guest workers were recruited from non-western countries, in particular from Turkey, Pakistan, India and Morocco (Tjelmeland & Brochmann, 2003). A few years later, in the wake of economic recession, the Norwegian government decided to restrict the influx of foreign labour and, in 1975, a moratorium that formally ended large-scale labour migration was introduced. However, contrary to its purpose, the effect of the new regulations led the former guest workers to pursue a more permanent life by bringing their families to the country, made possible by a (then) liberal family reunification scheme (Fangen & Mohn, 2010; Tjelmeland, et al., 2003). The immigration population continued to increase. Late in the seventies a new inflow of foreigners started: refugees and asylum seekers from Vietnam, Chile and other South American countries (Aalandslid, 2005). Since then, political refugees, asylum seekers and family members have continued to arrive, despite stricter family reunification regulations.

After an interlude of almost 30 years, Norway is again experiencing labour migration, this time mostly from Poland and the Baltic countries. The influx of these

migrants has been such that the Polish outnumbered the Pakistani — the largest immigrant group for decades — in 2007 (Pettersen, 2009), and by January 2011 Polish immigrants numbered almost twice as many as Pakistani immigrants and their children. At the same time, a relaxation (and even encouragement from the authorities to attract high-skill labour from outside the EU) of the process of getting a work permit for skilled workers led to a comparatively large increase in these kinds of labour migrant from all over the world, who in turn have brought (or may bring) their closest family members (spouse and children) (UDI, 2005, 2007, 2010a, 2010b). Consequently, from around 2006 (see figure 1-2.), there was a shift in the kinds of migrant entering the country. From mainly coming for family reunions, the prime reason to migrate to Norway became labour.

This is Norway today, a society characterised by ethnic diversity. At least, this is true for the metropolitan areas, especially Oslo. On the whole, Norway has an immigrant population, defined as immigrants and their children — in excess of 600 000 persons, which equals more than 12% of the total population (Statistics Norway 2011b). While ethnic minorities are represented in all municipalities of the country, a great number are concentrated in the big cities. Oslo has the largest share of this population, and as many as 28% of Oslo's residents are of foreign origin (Statistics Norway 2012b).

Figure 1-2: Immigrations, by reason for immigration, 1990-2010.
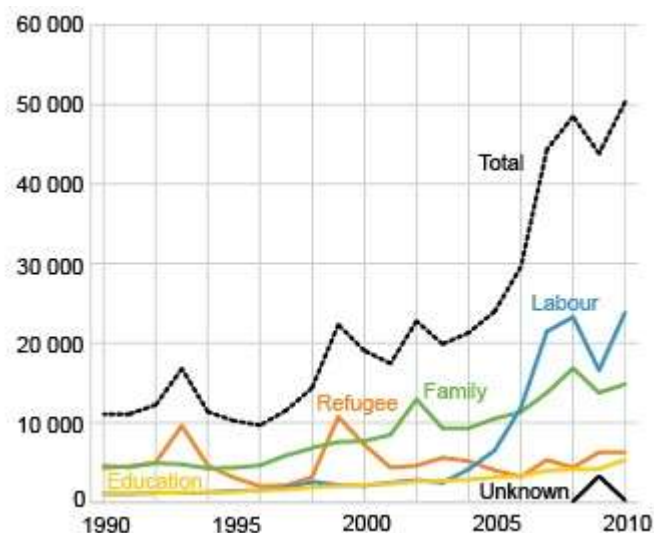
Source: (Statistics Norway, 2011b).

1.4.2. Attitudes towards immigrants

We may expect higher levels of unemployment among minorities in societies with higher rates of prejudices. This is not the same as arguing that the extent of negative prejudices in the population explains the patterns of inequality as outlined above, rather that prejudices may be one important explanation (Rogstad, 2000a).

The extent to which there are prejudices in a society may provide an *indication* of the extension and forcefulness of prejudices among employers. Moreover, the larger social context within which employers' actions are embedded may place pressure on their decisions.

There has been a positive development in Norwegian society regarding attitudes towards immigrants and immigration. From 1993 to 2011, those who agree with the statement that 'All immigrants should have the same possibilities to work as Norwegians' increased gradually from 75% to 88%. On the other hand, those who agree to the statement that most immigrants are a source of insecurity in

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society is relatively large, though this percentage decreased from 45% in 2002 to 35% in 2011 (Statistics Norway, 2011e).

Attitudes toward immigrants and immigration vary according to background factors such as gender, age, education and geography. Women, the youngest groups, those who have higher education and residents of the most urban regions are generally more positive toward immigrants and immigration. This is also the case for persons who have contact with immigrants, and the share expressing positive views increases with the frequency of contact (Blom, 2010, 2011). This research is based on surveys containing questions about immigrants in general; we know less about attitudes towards specific groups which receive negative media attention.

1.4.3. Legislation

Several acts regulate prohibition against discrimination on different grounds. I will shortly summarise the main elements of the Anti-Discrimination Act of 2005[7] (regjeringen.no, 2009). The law specifies that both direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, descent, skin colour, language, religion or belief is prohibited. Acts or omissions which have the purpose or effect of different treatment of persons or enterprises in similar situations are defined as direct discrimination. Indirect discrimination is defined as apparently neutral provisions or practices leading to discrimination (cf. Anti-Discrimination Act of 2005 section 4). Moreover, employers in the public sector and employers in the private sector that regularly employ more than 50 employees are obligated to make active efforts to promote equality in recruitment, pay and working conditions, as well as promotion, development activities and protection against harassment (cf. Anti-Discrimination Act section 3).

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[7] Original title: *Lov om forbud mot diskriminering på grunn av etnisitet, religion mv. [Diskrimineringsloven]* (Lovdata, 2012a).

1.5. Outline of the thesis

The current study is organised into eight chapters. Chapter 2 provides a brief review of previous research relevant to my study, and points out the contributions to new knowledge in the current work.

In chapter 3, I outline the analytical framework I intend to utilise and the main theoretical perspectives that can help to explain employers' reasoning and behaviour in the hiring process and how different mechanisms may have an impact in selecting between candidates.

In chapter 4, I discuss methodological issues such as research design and the sampling procedure and present the empirical data. More detailed information, such as documentation of the sampling procedure, the interview guide and documentation of some of the analytical tools, is partly presented in appendices and partly available for download.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are devoted to the empirical analysis. The breakdown of the chapters coincides with the disentanglement of the process into three manageable parts: a) the outset of the recruitment process, b) the screening of candidates and c) the final selection. This layout should reflect the ambition behind the chosen analytical approach: to give an account of as much as possible of the hiring process.

Finally, in chapter 8 I summarise the main findings and discuss them in the light of the theoretical framework and previous research and propose possible implications for future research and policy making.

2

Previous research on how employers evaluate minority candidates

Labour market discrimination has been studied extensively using different method ological approaches. According to ILO (Bovenkerk, 1992), correspondence and situational testing are the most reliable methods to uncover discrimination in hiring processes (see also Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2003; Rogstad & Midtbøen, 2009). Situational testing is a quasi-experimental method where two actors, one of native background and one with a minority background apply for a job.[8]

Correspondence testing, on the other hand, is used to test the screening process. This method entails sending two fictitious job applications for advertised job vacancies. The skills of the applicants are substantially similar with the only difference being group membership, signalled by the name of the applicant. The extent of discrimination is measured by differences in call-back (Midtbøen &

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[8] Some ethical aspects of these methods are discussed in chapter 3. See also Rogstad & Midtbøen (2009) and Riach & Rich (2004).

Rogstad, 2012; Riach & Rich, 2002; Rogstad & Midtbøen, 2009; Rooth, 2010). Recent studies in this category include the work of Pager, Western, and Bonikowski (2009), Rooth (2010), Riach & Rich (2006), Carlsson & Rooth (2007) and Bertrand & Mullainathan (2003) among others. In Norway this kind of research was carried out for the first time from 2009 to 2011 (Midtbøen & Rogstad 2012), and is now being carried out by the DISCRIM project (2011), of which my work is a part (cf. 1.1).

These studies suggest that ethnicity, gender, age or other work-irrelevant traits continue to influence the employment opportunities of different social groups. However, they offer less insight into the reasons or motivations behind employer behaviour. To a large extent, the way employers act and think during the recruiting process, and the source of their behaviour, remain unclear (Pager & Karafin, 2009).

Below, I will review research that is directly relevant or touches on some aspects of this concern. Some of the contributions to these issues come from other academic disciplines such as human relations and psychology.

2.1. Employers' sorting and ranking of candidates

To my knowledge, the earliest Norwegian study seeking to explain inequality by turning attention to inequality from supply side arguments (poor language skills, education and experience) to demand side arguments (employers' preferences and decisions on whom to hire) was carried out by Larsen in 1995 (see Larsen, 1996). He found that for more of 50% of announced vacancies, employers thought that the possibilities of being hired were better for Norwegians than for those of Portuguese, Polish, Russian, Moroccan, Somali, Pakistani and Vietnamese nationalities. The scepticism was higher the more education the position required (in Rogstad, 2006). This study was partly supported by Kvitastein, Supphellen, & Johansen, who interviewed HR managers in 233 Norwegian companies. They found that candidates

with minority backgrounds were considered to have lower chances of being hired and fitting in. In addition, they found differences of probabilities between nationalities (Kvitastein et al., 1996 in Rogstad, 2006, p. 14).

Similarly, Tronstad (2010) asked 1000 employers how probable it was that a 35-year-old person with different characteristics would be invited for interview. He finds that having a Somali or Polish background reduces the chances substantially for being called for interview. Tronstad argues that it is difficult to determine whether such practices are a result of negative attitudes or whether they are due to risk adversity. However, he finds that people with disabilities fare worse than those with Somali backgrounds with the same qualifications. According to Tronstad, there is no reason to believe that employers have negative attitudes towards people in a wheelchair or blind individuals. Also, Norwegians with education but no working experience had lower chances than foreigners with both education and experience. From these comparisons, he infers that risk averseness rather than negative attitudes may play a role in hiring (ibid).

2.2. Different causes of differential treatment

The study carried out by Midtbøen & Rogstad (2012) is of significant relevance for the present work. As well as conducting correspondence testing for the first time in Norway, their research draws on the advantages of methodological triangulation. The empirical data of this research comprises the results of call-backs from 1800 fictitious applications and 42 in-depth interviews with employers subjected to the test. The results of the tests show that the probability of being called for interview is on average 25% lower when the applicant has a Pakistani name compared to an identical candidate with a Norwegian name. The interviews uncover that the results should be interpreted in terms of different explanations and mechanisms.

One of the findings is related to efficiency in the recruitment process. Employers reasoned differently depending on the number of applications coming in. While it was important that candidates fitted into jobs, it was also important to use effective methods to identify candidates who could quickly be integrated into the working environment. Fitting in was a theme that appeared repetitively. In many cases, not being too different seemed to be a condition for fitting in. Another reason to discriminate seemed to be uncertainty about the productivity of minority candidates (ibid). Assumptions about language skills might have also been a reason for excluding minorities from the hiring process (ibid; Rogstad, 2000a).

Different types of negative attitudes and stereotypes about minorities are also found. These attitudes are often the result of earlier negative experiences. Negativity is therefore often directed against specific nationalities (Midtbøen & Rogstad, 2012).

2.2.1. Stereotypes and customer tastes

One seminal study of employers' ethnic preferences in hiring is that of Kirschenman & Neckerman (1991). They interviewed a large number of Chicago-area employers and found that race was an important factor in hiring. Employers had general views of black people as unstable, uncooperative, dishonest and uneducated. Native whites were considered to have the best work ethics, followed by immigrants from Eastern Europe. Immigrant Hispanics had a less favourable consideration and at the bottom of the list were the native African americans.

Moreover, race was interrelated with perceptions of class and residence. Some employers were concerned about differences between inner-city blacks and other blacks and explicitly engaged in *address discrimination*, avoiding candidates from the poorest neighbourhoods. The data also showed indications that some employers discriminated by race because of their white clientele (ibid).

However, the same set of data was analysed by Wilson J. Wilson, who arrived at a very different result. White managers were not only motivated by stereotypes and prejudices, but by the notion that their perceptions of blacks was not far from reality (Waldinger & Lichter, 2003, p. 142). However, a large study based on both telephone surveys and in-depth interviews conducted in the nineties in four American cities was generally consistent with the Kirschenman & Neckerman research. An additional aspect of the study was to show that increased importance of skill requirements is a factor in the increase of race inequalities (Moss & Tilly, 2001).

The prevalence of negative stereotypes among employers against African Americans has recently been documented by Pager & Karafin (2009). In some cases there was a link between their attitudes and earlier experiences. However, in addition, informants with positive experiences with blacks still maintained their negative conceptions.

2.2.2. Sources of bias in selection processes

From psychological research, we know that discrimination derives not only from employers' conscious considerations, but from ways of doing things. Sandal & Bye (2009) point out that many sources of information that are used in recruiting (CVs, application letters, personality tests and interviews) are based on candidates' *self-presentation* abilities. The recruiter is challenged to distinguish between candidates' self-presentation and their real skills and traits. The larger the differences between these factors, the more difficult and biased the assessment of candidates is likely to be.

A special source of error when evaluating candidates from minority backgrounds is the job interview. Both Norwegian and international research finds that even experienced recruiters are influenced by irrelevant traits of the candidates

(De Meijer, Ph. Born, Van Zielst, & Van Der Molen, 2007; Horverak, Bye, Sandal, & Pallesen, 2011; Sandal & Bye, 2009). One field study shows, for example, that candidates' use of ingratiation strategies often leads to hiring recommendations (Higgins & Judge, 2004). It is likely that candidates with minority backgrounds make poorer impressions at job interviews because cultural differences and underlying value systems are sources of discrepancies between what the recruiter perceives as favourable behaviour at an interview and candidates' understanding of good presentation (Sandal & Bye, 2009). This line of thinking is consistent with the similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971): individuals are more attracted to people that are similar to themselves. Consequently, employers will assess applicants similar to themselves as more qualified for the job (Horverak et al., 2011).

As a result of the interview having been seen as a source of bias, scholars from diverse academic traditions have turned their attention to the ways in which interviews are carried out (for an overview see Posthuma, Morgeson, & Campion, 2002). Huffcutt & Roth (1998) finds that differences in ranking outcomes between blacks, hispanics and whites after structured interviews tends to be relatively low overall and lower than after unstructured interviews. The inference the researchers draw from this finding is that structured interviews are less prone to be affected by personal bias and stereotypes (Huffcutt & Roth, 1998, p. 186; Kacmar & Hochwarter, 1995, p. 224).

A less examined issue is the impact of accents in the context of decisions about employment. Recent research shows, however, that accents may influence employers' perceptions of the suitability of a person for a job (Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2010; Segrest Purkiss, Perrewé, Gillespie, Mayes & Ferris, 2006).

2.3. Summary

Several studies document employers' discriminatory practices and unfair ranking of candidates. The main causes of these practices are attributed to a) stereotyping and prejudices b) uncertainty about the productivity of individuals belonging to certain groups and c) earlier negative experiences with individuals belonging to certain groups.

Organisational psychology and human relations studies have contributed to this knowledge by documenting the impact of irrelevant factors on employers and the influence of unstructured or structured interviews on hiring outcomes.

The main proposition that follows from this short review is that research that tries to understand inequality by studying employer behaviour is rare. With some exceptions (for example, Rogstad, 2000a, Midtbøen & Rogstad 2012), employers' hiring practices have to only a small extent been thematised in Norwegian sociological research. The ambition of this thesis is to contribute to this knowledge by studying the ways employers act — or how they say they act — and the possible implications of these actions in the parts of the recruiting process I have chosen to study.

3

Analytical Framework

The aim of this chapter is to present theoretical perspectives that make up the framework for the analysis.

In this chapter I will delineate the mechanism approach as the overall framework of this analysis and explain some of its main points and epistemological background. The notion of the *rational actor* is the main element integrated in this approach.

This notion implies an emphasis on employer behaviour but does not mean that the relational perspective is excluded. Indeed, the actor-oriented approach in this thesis includes the constraints and influences that arise from the interactions between individuals and structural factors. The underlying macro-micro model and the RC/DBO framework take these considerations into account.

Other theories that compose the analytical framework include theories of matching, human capital and discrimination. The last section of this chapter

concretises the way in which these theories are integrated in the analytical framework.

3.1. The mechanism approach

The first reminiscent appeals for the use of mechanism-based theories in the social sciences can be attributed to the work of Robert Merton, who advocated the identification of mechanisms and the establishment of the conditions under which they arise (Merton, 1968, p. 43).

According to Hedström & Bearman (2009), accounting for the mechanisms that generate social phenomena is a main task of analytical sociology. However, there does not seem to be a consensus about what a mechanism is. These scholars define mechanisms as

> […] *entities (with their properties) and the activities that these entities engage in, either by themselves or in concert with others. These activities bring about change, and the type of change brought about depends upon the properties and activities of the entities and the relations between them* (Hedström & Bearman, 2009, p. 5).

The main idea behind the mechanism approach is that the analyst should engage in understanding how entities and activities — or actors and their actions — are linked together and bring about the type of phenomena we seek to explain (Hedström, 2005, p. 2). Hedström (2005) sees the analytical approach as a process where the researcher dissects the social phenomena to be explained. By *dissection,* he means the decomposition of complex phenomena into manageable parts. The next task is focussing on the most important elements and, by doing that, we remove ourselves, or abstract ourselves from, those elements of lesser importance. Dissection and abstraction are then the main activities of the analytical approach.

From this perspective, the complex totality to be analysed in this study is the recruitment process. This process is composed of several sub-processes or phases. In each of these processes, employers engage in activities and take decisions that are contextually constrained. In turn, the decisions taken in each part of the process influence the next sub-process. Consistently with this perspective, I have divided the recruitment process into three main parts: the outset of the recruitment process, the screening and the final selection. These are analysed in chapters 5, 6 and 7 respectively.

The well-known macro-micro-macro model introduced by Coleman provides an ideal type of the continuous interaction or process between the outcomes at the system-level and the action at the individual level (Coleman, 1986; Hedström & Swedberg, 1998). An adapted version of this model is reproduced in figure 3-1.

Figure 3-1: Colemans' Macro-micro-macro model
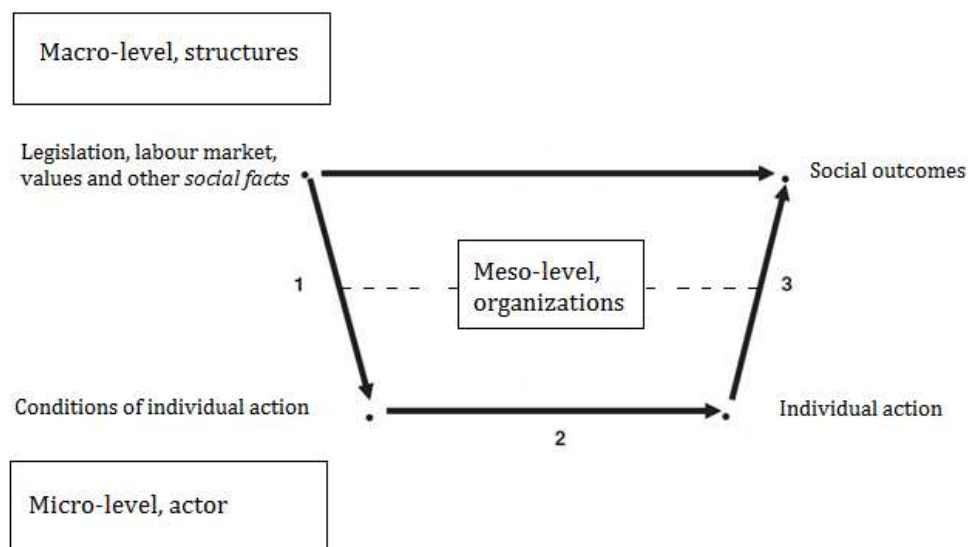
Step 1 links the macro-level to the individual level. Macro-level structures influence the micro-level context in which the individual acts. For example, the market supply of certain kinds of labour will affect the composition and size of the pool of applicants in most recruitment processes. Several acts that regulate prohibition against discrimination on different grounds may also constrain individuals' actions. The macro and micro levels can also be connected through the meso-level *or* the meso-level may also impose conditions of its own — for example, by implementing policies or having an organisational culture that counteracts macro-level conditions. For example, employers in the public sector have to relate to regulations specified in the Governmental Personnel Manual[9] and the Civil Service Act of 1983.[10]

Step 2 refers to the ways in which individuals given opportunities act, make decisions and interact with other actors. Finally, the sum of individual actions and interactions at the micro-level produces outcomes at the meso and macro-levels.

The focus of the current study is at the micro level: the actions and thoughts of employers, which implicate steps 1 and 2. Step 3, the connection between the micro and the macro-levels, is outside the scope of the analytical chapters.

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[9] Original title: *Statens Personalhåndbok* (Fornyings-, Administrasjons- og kirkedepartementet, 2012).

[10] Original title: *Lov om statens tjenestemenn m.m. [tjenestemannsloven] (*Lovdata 2012b*).*

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3.2. Action theory

Hiring is a process at the micro and meso-levels, composed of a series of decisions taken by the employer, the actor. The problem calls for a theory of action that accounts for how and why employers act as they do. Employers' decisions are responsible for an outcome in each part of the process and the sum of all these actions will have a final outcome: who is hired.

In order to understand actors' actions, decisions and behaviour we need to take into consideration the social environment that surrounds them. Actors' structural locations have implications for the formation of desires, preferences and beliefs – which in turn will have an impact on their actions. Both *rational choice* theory (RCT) and the DBO model include a notion of actors and structure (Birkelund, 2010) and are therefore consistent with the overall analytical framework.

Rational choice and DBO

A rationality model is a powerful tool when analysing employers' actions, as it simplifies a complex process (Hovi & Rasch, 1993). In general terms, RCT seeks to explain actions on the basis that actors are rational and have rational beliefs about the available options (Elster, 2007, p. 191). Moreover, a rational actor is risk averse (Gilboa, 2010).

A myriad of theories exists splitting RCT theorists into two camps.[11] According to Opp, all advocates of RCT share some core assumptions, the most seminal being the 'utility maximization proposition: Individuals choose those actions that satisfy their preferences to the greatest extent, taking into account the constraints' (Opp, 1999, p. 173, see also Elster, 1989, p. 22).

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[11] According to Goldthorpe (2000), the varieties of RCT — or rational action (RAT) — can be distinguished according to three criteria: the strength of the rationality requirement, whether the focus is situational or procedural rationality and whether the ambition is to provide a theory of action of a special or general kind.

Following RCT, it would be expected for employers to choose those candidates who they think will be best suited to the job in question. If actors are rational, this example may suggest that RCT is incompatible with theories that give room to *irrationality*, such as, for example, some theories on discrimination. However, whether this is the case will depend on the assumptions upon which our RCT model is based and on how we define rationality.

Of the many controversies that separate RCT theorists, the most important are the general assumptions about preferences and constraints included in RCT. In this study, I will adopt what Opp (1999) calls a wide version of RCT, which assumes that:

a) All kind of preferences — and not only egoistic ones— may explain rational actions.

b) All kind of constraints may influence actions.

c) Actors are not necessarily fully informed.

d) Subjective constraints are as important as objective constraints.

e) Constraints, preferences, or a combination of both, may explain behaviour. (Opp, 1999, pp. 173-175).

This version of RCT also implies that *rationality* is given a wide definition. I will regard an action or a choice as rational when the agent 'feels comfortable with it, and is not embarrassed by it, even when it is analysed for him' (Gilboa, 2010, p. 5). This definition is consistent with Coleman's (1990) view of rationality: one needs to see actions from the perspective of the actors. The notion of rationality is one of coherence between decisions and decision-makers' personal standards (Gilboa, 2010). This does not mean that personal standards are unique to individuals and unaffected by the environment. On the contrary, they change or develop in interactions with other actors, especially 'significant others' (Morgan, 2002).

Rational choice explanations rely on variations in costs and benefits and information about costs and benefits (Rolfe, 2009, p. 438). The variation in

information quality and quantity is of great significance to understanding employers' actions. Lack of information will introduce uncertainty about the feasible options (Gilboa, 2010).

RCT can be regarded as an alternative to DBO theory but also as a specific type of DBO theory (Hedström, 2005, p. 41). The DBO model regards desires, beliefs and opportunities as the proximate causes of actors' actions (Hedström, 2005, p. 38).

Desires and beliefs may lead to actions, which is consistent with assumption a. Moreover, according to DBO, actions are shaped by physical, economic or legal constraints. Actions consistent with all the constraints constitute the opportunity set: the action alternatives from which the agent can choose, provided they are known to the actor (Elster, 2007, p. 165). These propositions in DBO theory are consistent with assumptions b, c and d in the wide version of RCT.

The wide version of RCT incorporates the *embeddedness* (Granovetter 1985) argument. Other actors and structures influence each actor's beliefs and desires and opportunities. Groups of actors, acting on the basis of these beliefs, desires and opportunities, bring about intended and unintended outcomes (Hedström, 2005).

3.3. The process of matching

Analysing the recruitment process as a matching process assumes interaction between two kinds of actors: employers and jobseekers. Sørensen, Kalleberg & Berg (1981) assume in their theory of matching that both employers and employees are maximising agents. This assumption is modified in this thesis: I assume actors to pursue a match that is good enough, given certain *reservation points*. Reservation points represent the boundaries where the characteristics of the potential match are so unflattering that the actor prefers to remain unmatched rather than accept a match with such traits (Stovel & Fountain, 2009).

Two parts are therefore needed to make a match. However, it is the perspective of the employers that is stressed in this analysis. Furthermore, in this analysis actors do not have perfect information, as assumed by the neoclassical model of market functioning and therefore attributed to maximising agents. The matching process will be affected by constraints on available information, information overload and noisy signals (Stovel & Fountain, 2009). Above all, in most job markets employers are not sure of the productivity of candidates. Consequently, hiring is an uncertain investment decision (Spence, 1973).

The most salient analytical feature of matching is that of *preferences*: they are necessary to make a match. Individual preferences are constrained by the other parts' preferences. Moreover, matching people to jobs is also constrained by structural factors, such as the labour market. Since matching is pairing under competitive conditions, actual matches will in part be determined by the composition of the pool (Stovel and Fountain, 2009). For a recruitment process, this means that availability of qualified applicants will affect how the employer moulds his preferences.

Rules and norms place different kinds of pressure on both preferences and information structures (ibid). Examples of sets of rules affecting the recruitment process are The Working Environment Act, the Act against Discrimination, the government's handbook of guidelines for employees, a company's HR policies and other written guidelines and unwritten norms in the firm.

3.4. Human capital and meritocracy

One of the most frequently applied frameworks to study inequality in the labour market has been Gary Becker's (1962) *human capital* theory (HC). Employers will seek to employ the most productive individuals. Since productivity cannot be measured directly, variables such as education and work experience are usually used as proxies for candidates' expected productivity.

From the perspective of HC, inequality in labour markets can be attributed to differences in individuals' abilities and skills — acquired through experience and education (Rosenbaum, Kariya, Settersten, & Maier, 1990). According to HC, employers will assess candidates according to their merits. Employers are expected to hire the candidate who has the best qualifications. A mechanism of meritocracy can therefore be attributed to labour market inequalities (Evensen, 2008, p. 32). While this study is not about inequality per se, the human capital approach may help us to interpret some of our findings about employers' reasoning and arguments.

HC has been criticised because it stresses individuals' productivity and assumes free market competition and perfect information (Rosenbaum et al., 1990). Moreover, it does not take into account other factors that may be decisive in selection processes such as discrimination, network and homophily mechanisms and jobseekers' personal traits.

For this study, the concept of 'country-specific' human capital, which expands the notion of human capital to incorporate knowledge of social codes, institutions and language (Barth et al., 2004; Chiswick, 1978; Hayfron, 1998), is relevant. From this point of view, job search skills and self-presentation strategies — such as job applications and the way in which candidates present themselves at interviews — may form part of minorities' 'country-specific' human capital. Minority candidates can be said to have attained this form of country-specific human capital if the

candidate and the employer share the same expectations about how the interaction in a hiring process should take place (Goffman, 1974; Sandal & Bye, 2009).

3.5. Concepts and theories of discrimination

Allport defines discrimination as treatment that 'denies individuals or groups of people equality of treatment which they may wish'. However, differential treatment based on individual qualities is not to be understood as discrimination (Allport, [1954] 1979, p. 51). Siblings who behave differently may therefore be treated differently as part of parenting strategy. In a similar manner, when an employer chooses a Norwegian applicant over a minority applicant, this does not automatically indicate that the employer has acted in a discriminatory fashion. It is only when the differential treatment is unfair or malicious that we may characterise the treatment as discriminatory. Alternatively, discrimination can be defined as differential treatment that implies immoral and even unlawful action[12] (Banton, 1992). In labour market studies, discrimination is normally conceptualised as unequal or unfavourable treatment due to ethnicity, gender, physical handicap, age or even lack of attractiveness (Arai & Nekby, 2007; Hamermesh & Biddle, 1993; Harper, 2000).

In this project, we think of 'labour market discrimination when people with similar qualifications and merits are treated unequally' (DISCRIM, 2011). Some scholars have pointed out that empirical evidence of employer discrimination is difficult to obtain (Knocke, 2000). The reader may then wonder if the data with which I will be working is well suited to handle this issue. I will address this hesitation with two arguments. Firstly, this thesis is written as part of the DISCRIM project: looking for discriminatory mechanisms is a core part of the project.

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[12] Norwegian legislation distinguishes between direct and indirect discrimination (c.f. 1.4.3).

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Secondly, discrimination is theoretically one of a number of mechanisms that lead to inequality.

Discrimination has mostly been studied within economic sociology, the main approach of which is of intentional discrimination (Reskin, 2002). Intentional discrimination can come about on emotional or rational grounds. Becker introduced the concept of 'taste for discrimination', which incorporates both prejudice and ignorance. In the case of prejudice, an employer is willing to forgo profit just to avoid association with some groups of individuals. Ignorance, on the other hand, may cause an employer to refuse to employ an individual from another ethnic group just because his efficiency is under-estimated (Becker, 1971).

Discrimination can also come about because of co-workers' or customers' prejudices, or because employers believe that co-workers or customers are prejudiced. Hiring someone of minority background when such prejudices prevail in the context may adversely affect business (Merton, 1948).

Taste for discrimination can be differentiated from *statistical discrimination* (Phelps, 1972, Arrow, 1973), which arises when the information that an employer with no distaste for individuals from other ethnic groups gathers is not adequate for predicting a particular applicant's productivity. As it is costly to acquire relevant information about each applicant, the employer makes hiring decisions based upon previous statistical experience of the productivity and reliability of the members of different groups. The applicants' skin colour, for example, becomes a substitute for the information that the employer is not able or willing to acquire (Phelps, 1972).

Statistical can be given a wider meaning than a strictly scientific one (see for example Rogstad, 2000a, p. 39). Employers' earlier experiences of certain ethnic groups and the information they gather about these groups from other sources, such as media coverage, may also form the data from which *statistics* are deduced.

In particular, risk averse employers may engage in statistical discrimination. When having to choose between two candidates with the same skills but different

ethnicities, employers will prefer the candidate who is associated — because of statistical information and earlier experience — with the least degree of risk (Aigner & Cain, 1977).

3.6. Concretising the framework

The recruitment process is a matching process where employers seek a match for a specific vacancy. The process starts with the specification of some requirements that are necessary to perform the job in question. The employers in this sample signal vacancies and their requirements through job advertisements.

Jobseekers, on the other hand, need to fulfil these requirements. However, fulfilling the formal requirements is by itself not enough. Employers need reliable information about candidates in order to assess their applications.

The problem of information has been most comprehensively developed by the work of Spence (1973, 1974) and Stiglitz (1975) on signaling and screening (see also Gambetta, 2009). Employers cannot obtain perfect information about candidates' skills or productivity, but have to make a decision based on candidates' signaling. Jobseekers try to signal their suitability for jobs through job applications, CVs and the submission of credentials. Credentials can be seen as signals of candidates' formal qualifications. However, employers may have preferences about future employees' personal traits, which are more difficult to signal and interpret. A hiring decision can thus be said to be made under circumstances of uncertainty.

In this thesis, the ways in which employers interpret different signals during the selection process is thematised. In the screening process, the effects of minority names on employers will be of special interest. A minority name signals an ethnicity other than Norwegian, regardless of employer awareness of the candidate's particular ethnic membership.

An attempt to summarise my assertions thus far in this chapter is illustrated in figure 3-2. Here, based on earlier studies, I have summarised in a model what I regard to be the main activities, decisions and actions in the hiring process. This schematisation is by no means exhaustive, a reservation that applies to the chain of activities, influences and constraints, the opportunity set and the mechanisms that can be associated with the different choices taken by the agents. In particular, other influences and mechanisms not specified here might be important, such as tiredness, stress and automatic cognitive mechanisms (see for example Reskin, 2000, 2002; Simmel [1908] 1971; Tajfel, 1969, 1974, 2010; Turner, 2010).

Two underlying assumptions about the notion of *corporate rationality* are essential in this model. Firstly, the model assumes that organisational needs are the starting point for this chain of activities. Secondly, what is best for the organisation is what drives the whole process. However, the acting agent is the recruiter, who has his or her own rationality.

For each activity, the influences and constraints that are most likely to apply are identified to the right. Each activity or decision to be made is influenced or constrained not only by structural factors such as legislation, norms, labour market conditions and the prevalence of prejudices at the aggregate. An organisation's own policies, organisational culture and value system also influence the recruiter. However, all these influences may be internalised in varied ways by different actors. Moreover, it is not unlikely that the recruiter will have personal preferences that may override purely economic assessments about what is best for the company. In such cases, individual rationality — in its wide meaning — concurs with corporate rationality.

Figure 3-2: The process of recruitment

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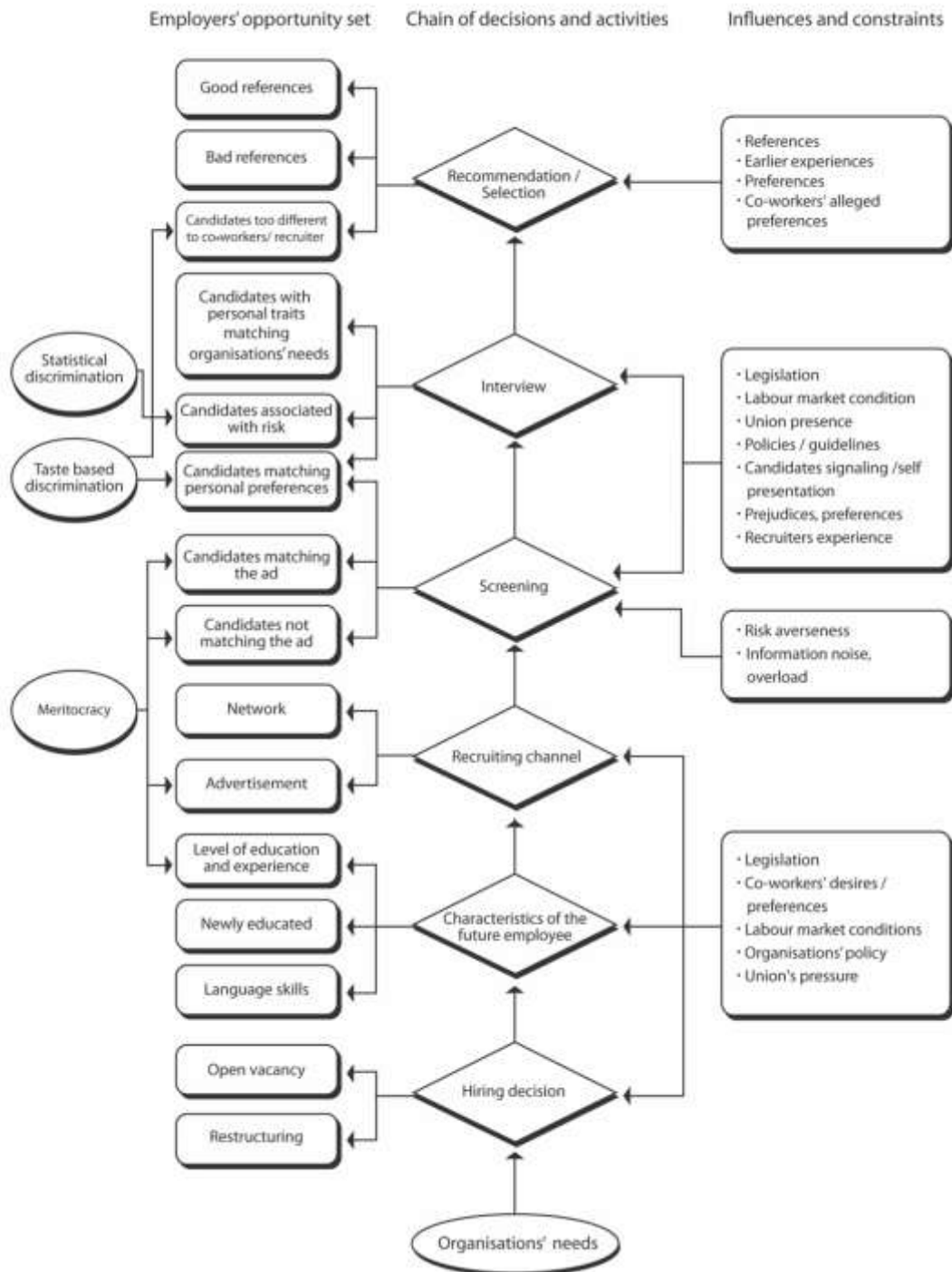
For each activity in the recruitment process, there is an opportunity set from which the employer can choose. In this scheme, some theoretical assumed alternatives are illustrated.

In real life, *opportunities* must be known to the actor if they are to influence actions. Moreover, he or she has to have the ability to distinguish between good or bad choices. Lack of ability may be the result of lack of opportunity or desire at an earlier stage. In other cases, inability may follow from hard psychological or physiological constraints (Elster, 2007, p. 166) or innate traits.

By choosing one of the alternatives, the recruiter will be rejecting other options. For example, by choosing to advertise a vacancy, an employer rejects using networks as recruiting channels (at least he or she rejects the alternative of using networks only). Similarly, during the screening process, by choosing candidates that match the advertisement, he or she will be filtering out candidates that do not match its requirements.

Naturally, this is a simplification of the opportunity set. In cases where there are many applicants that match the advertisement, he or she will apply other criteria to make choices about which candidates go further in the process. During the whole process, there will also be different kinds of constraints and influences on these choices. Obvious influences are recruiters' own preferences for certain kinds of applicant and prejudices against others. However, equally important are structural and organisational conditions that restrict recruiters' liberty of action. Finally, some of the alternative choices may be associated with different kinds of mechanism.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that the model does not aim to be exhaustive. The model is primarily based on a RC approach. Nonetheless, the wide conceptualisation of rationality implies that it can be developed further if the empirical analysis requires this.

4

Methodology and data

A large body of guidelines and advice confronts students when exploring different methodological options. In a rather oversimplified manner, these choices can be said to be between quantitative and qualitative methods. Which method to choose depends on 'the specific task at hand' (Silverman, 2010, p. 9). For this study, however, I was invited to participate in the DISCRIM project (c.f. 1.1.) and given the possibility of making use of the in-depth interviews whose respondents were recruited through the project administration. The research topic thus developed accordingly.

Qualitative research is historically linked to both the positivistic and post-positivistic paradigms, and embraces many traditions and branches (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, pp. 10 - 11; Silverman, 2010). However, even though differences and tensions exist between all these traditions, they do have one key feature in common: the interpretative approach to research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), which entails subjectivity and bias.

4.1. Research design

The concern with how whole groups of people — especially minorities — may be disadvantaged or discriminated against in the hiring process implies trying to gain insight into the actions, motives, perceptions and attitudes of the gatekeepers of the labour market: the recruiters. The aim of the in-depth interviews was to come closer to understanding the ways in which employers think and act during the recruitment process.

This explorative design has implied the gradual development of the research question during the data gathering.

4.1.1. Sampling procedure

As mentioned above, the sampling was carried out by the project administration. The first step consists of the experimental method called correspondence testing (c.f. chapter 2). For each advertisement selected for testing, one application is sent with a Norwegian name and another with a Pakistani name. The team sending these applications to companies in Oslo consisted of three research assistants including myself, though my part in this part of the project was quite modest.

During autumn 2011, 600 fictitious job applications were sent to companies and organisations in Oslo which had announced a vacancy on finn.no or nav.no. For this endeavour, four identities — two female and two male —were constructed: Saera Rashid and Ida Johansen (female pair); and Kamran Ahmad and Andreas Hansen (male pair). (For the purpose of linguistic variation I will refer to these identities interchangeably using the terms minority and majority candidate.) Each identity was provided with several kinds of CV and applications that would match different kinds of position.[13] These identities are the same that were used in the

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[13] An example of a pair of applications can be found in appendix A.

preceding project carried out by the Institute of Social Research (ISS) (Midtbøen, 2012b).

Table 4-1: Range of the data set. General attributes of the organisations recruiters represent.

Attribute	In Sample	Attribute	In Sample
Sector		**Industry**	
Non-profit organisations	5	IT	2
Commercial	10	Health	3
Government/municipal	8	Trade	1
		Education (private & municipal)	3
Size of company			
< 20	3	Aid/Environment	4
20 – 50	5	Transport	2
50 – 100	5	Insurance/Finance	2
100-200	6	Government/municipal (Welfare)	3
200-500	2		
> 500	1	Government/municipal (other)	3
Unknown	1		

N=23

In the second step, employers who were subjected to the correspondence testing were contacted. To ensure a degree of voluntarism, as was required by the National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and Humanities (NESH) the employers were not contacted directly. Instead, a letter was sent to

selected employers[14] (see appendix B). The letter informed these employers about the experiment to which they were subjected and kindly asked them to contact the ISS for more information. Between November 2011 and April 2012, 23 employers who had received this letter contacted the institution and agreed to receive us for an in-depth interview. This recruitment method is characterized by self-selection, an issue to which I will return several times.

Unlike the project carried out by Midtbøen & Rogstad (2012), where as many as 17 discriminating employers agreed to be interviewed, we did not achieve the same kind of representativeness. While the range in terms of industries, sectors and sizes of companies was regarded as satisfactory (see table 4-1), the sample poorly represented the results of the tests (see appendix D).

This is not to say that the respondents did not provide us with valuable information about ways of reasoning during the hiring process and the meaning of ethnicity in this process. However, we were worried that theoretically important processes and less frequent behaviours or attitudes were not being illuminated (Poppe, 2008, p. 87). The concern with the principle of *maximizing for range* (ibid), led us to search empirical data outside the original sample.

The sample was therefore complemented using key informants. The key informant technique used here is not to be understood in anthropological terms as in the works of Margaret Mead and Bronislaw Malinowski, where the researcher enters into a relationship with the informant for a period of time. Our informants were interviewed once and were mainly asked about patterns of behaviour in the recruiting industry (Seidler, 1974, pp. 817-818). They were chosen because of their alleged knowledge about the issues being researched (Kumar, Stern, & Anderson,

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[14] At first all employers that were subjected to the experiment, except those that had been contacted for the project carried out by Midtbøen & Rogstad, were contacted. At a later stage only employers who had given some kind of positive response to any of the applicants were contacted. More than 200 letters (including reminders) were sent.

1993): they had either extensive involvement in the recruitment process and/or knowledge about how such processes were conducted elsewhere. Their accounts give information additional to what was arguably typical for some of the self-selected respondents in our sample and sometimes broaden, reinforce, contradict or fill some gaps. The reliability of their accounts is validated by the positions they hold, their experience and the networks implicated by their roles.

4.1.2. Advantages and drawbacks of the research design

The research design of the project draws on the advantages of methodological triangulation. In the interviews with employers subjected to the test we had the opportunity to link a concrete process that had actually taken place — and of which we knew the results — to the ways in which employers acted (Rogstad, 2012b). However, the design presents some drawbacks, with critical ethical issues of most significance. Permission to undertake the correspondence testing was granted by the NESH before I became associated with the DISCRIM project. Nonetheless, I will address the major ethical issues involved.

Correspondence testing resembles an 'undercover' situation in which serious research should not engage (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). As well as deceiving employers with false applications, they lose time assessing applications and trying to get in touch with candidates that do not exist. Attempts were made to minimise the harmful effects of the testing by being polite in correspondence with employers and answering missed calls, texts and emails as soon as possible.

On the other hand, these deceptions and the time we made people lose are relatively insignificant when compared to the societal importance of the research. Discrimination, being at the core of the DISCRIM project, is inconsistent with the kind of society the *Nordic welfare state* is supposed to be. We therefore need to know the degree of discrimination and some of its causes in order to implement effective measures (see also Riach & Rich (2004) for general issues on deceptive field

experiments and Midtbøen (2012c) and Rogstad & Midtbøen (2009) on ethical issues related to correspondence testing in Norway).

Another drawback of the design has to do with the manner in which the employers were recruited. The fact that there are employers who — after receiving the information letter as described above — contacted us and not the other way around, led to a sample of highly self-selected respondents, mostly concerned with issues of diversity in general and the integration of ethnic minorities in particular. This issue seems to have been mitigated by recruiting key informants, as also seen in section 4.1.1. Moreover, despite their self-selection, these employers have given much information about possible exclusion mechanisms in the hiring process.

4.2. Data collection

The analysis in this thesis is based upon 28 interviews conducted by six interviewers between the end of November 2011 and June 2012. In several interviews, more than one individual represented an organisation, which increased the total number of respondents and informants to 39. Two interviewers were present in each interview, except for two interviews where only one interviewer participated, and two where there were three interviewers. I participated in 15 interviews, sometimes as leading interviewer and sometimes as second interviewer. The interviews lasted on average one and a half hours, the shortest interview being around 40 minutes and the longest two hours and 15 minutes. All interviews were — with the consent of the respondents and informants — recorded and fully transcribed, and I was responsible for 18 of the transcriptions.

The aim of the interviews was exploratory. Some advocates of exploratory data collection have suggested that unstructured interviews provide the highest data density. This technique, however, requires experience which takes time to

acquire (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 27). Moreover, it was important to keep the focus of the project.

To ensure this focus we performed semi-structured interviews with employers based on an interview guide[15] (see appendix C) developed by Jon Rogstad and Arnfinn H. Midtbøen at ISF. The guide served more as a plan to introduce the topics of interest than a questionnaire that had to be followed in its exact wording. In fact, because of time constraints and the emergence of new themes, not all the original topics could always be covered. As time passed and some of us (the research assistants[16]) became more experienced and comfortable with the interview situation and familiar with the issues in the interview guide, we could work without having to check the guide so much, a factor that I believe relaxed the interview situation and made the interviews more dynamic.

Moreover, when some topics began to become repetitive, we started to practice a degree of *theoretical sampling* (Corbin & Strauss, 2008*)*. We prioritised the advancement of new and interesting topics in the interview that had emerged in earlier interviews already processed. However, we sometimes had too little time between interviews to be able to fully exploit the possibilities of theoretical sampling.

The interview itself also presents ethical dilemmas. These issues usually appear from the moment we come into contact with prospective interview candidates. The most important of these issues are the rule of informed consent and protection of participant anonymity and confidentiality. We informed the interviewees that they could choose to withdraw from the project at any stage of the process and obtained their consent to use what they told us for our research. Anonymity and confidentiality was preserved by giving both the organisations and

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[15] The interview guide is a modified version of the one used in the preceding project at ISF (see Midtbøen & Rogstad, 2012)
[16] Tove M. Aspøy, Erika B. Sterri, Heidi Fischer-Bjelland and Hilda M. L. Knechtel.

individuals involved alias names, not telling respondents or informants the identities of other interviewees and removing or manipulating some details in the data that might disclose the identities of individuals or organisations.

4.3. Respondents and informants

In this thesis, I distinguish between respondents and informants. *Respondents* refer to the employers who have been subjected to correspondence testing, whose accounts mainly inform us about their organisations and/or their personal behaviours and opinions (Kumar et al., 1993; Seidler, 1974). *Informants* refer to key informants (c.f. 4.1.1.).

The names used here are aliases — both for the organisations and individuals. The aliases of the companies try to reflect the kind of industry or organisation involved. None of these are company names that exist in Norway. In the case of some governmental or municipal agencies where the alias given represents the kind of agency, there is some kind of truth in the name. However, there are so many of these agencies that identification is not possible. If someone should associate any organisation name with a specific organisation it will be purely coincidental. The same is true of individuals.

Most respondents and informants were in their mid to late forties and all but one were ethnic Norwegians. The sample was composed of 29 women and nine men. The aliases given are all Norwegian surnames used by 5000 or more persons (Statistics Norway, 2012a). In the search for names I avoided those with the Norwegian letters ø, æ and å, names that could be confused with one another because of their similarity and names that coincided with real names of respondents.

The majority of the firms in this sample were large and midsize. Only four respondents (distributed between three organisations) led a firm with less than 20

employees, while 36 respondents led or were employed by organisations employing 20 or more persons. In a Norwegian context, these are atypical companies; in the Oslo area 31% of all registered companies have between 1 and 19 employees, compared to 4% with 20 or more employees (Statistics Norway, 2011d).[17] Hiring processes in very small companies are likely to be characterised much more by randomness than the relative professionalism we encountered from our respondents. However, the fact that companies that hire 20 or more employees deal with 82% of the work contracts in Oslo does make our sample interesting. All firms and respondents are presented in appendix E. Key informants and their main contributions to the knowledge that is the basis for the analysis is presented in appendix F in the form of memos.

4.4. Strategy and tools for the analysis

The experimental part of the DISCRIM project gives us measures about of the extent of discrimination and, conceivably, a measure of non-discrimination. However, it is necessary to ask which processes and mechanisms account for these observations. We need information about employer attitudes, perceptions, beliefs and concerns, as well as their needs and the constraints that are placed on their preferences. The world is thus complex. This ontology and its methodological implications are discussed by Corbin and Strauss (2008, p. 8) using the simple words: '[...] Events are the result of multiple factors coming together and interacting in complex and often unanticipated ways. Therefore any methodology that attempts to understand experience and situations will have to be complex.'

While I do not claim to have used the most sophisticated techniques, the process of gathering and analysing the data has not been straightforward. In addition, whether or not it can be classified as 'complex', it has been characterised

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[17] Figures do not include public administration and primary industry. 65% of the registered companies have no employees.

by arduousness and intensity. My approach to the data has been inspired by Grounded Theory (GT), the main aims and principles of which are accounted for below.

4.4.1. Grounded Theory (GT)

The main aim of GT methodology has been to provide an alternative to the approach that requires hypotheses and well-defined categories before gathering of data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Kelle, 2007). Thus, this approach fits well with the exploratory nature of this study.

By making use of aspects of GT, I mean that I have sought to apply some principles and practices to systematise the generation of theoretical constructs during data collection and analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Charmaz, 2006). These guidelines are flexible, but the main point is that theoretical construction or verification *emerges* through consecutive levels of data gathering, analysis and conceptual development.

The ideal way of conducting GT methodology, described and illustrated by Charmaz (2006), has been adapted to my possibilities and is illustrated in figure 4.1. The coding and initial analysis starts immediately after the first gathering of data — in this case after the first interview. Coding is arguably the main activity in GT, which I performed using the software NVIVO. Coding involves labelling a piece of data with a word or phrase to summarise the essence of that data (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Saldaña, 2009). Coding, in the way that I used it, was a useful way to become familiar with the data, which gradually developed and ended up including almost 800 pages of transcribed interviews.

Figure 4-1: The process of analysis
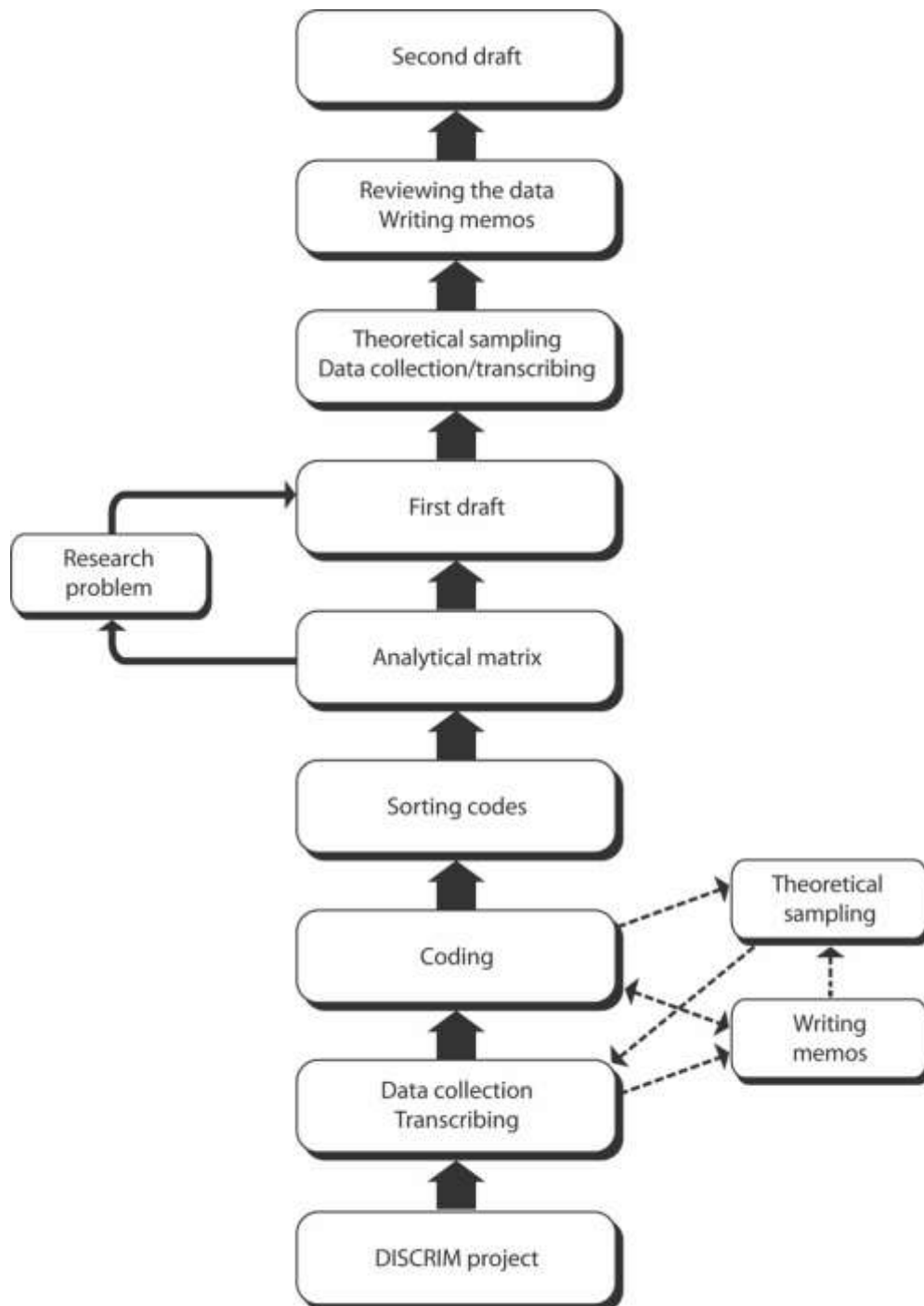
In GT, data collection and analysis go — ideally — more or less together. However, as transcribing — which must be done before one starts coding — took a considerable amount of time and contingency plans had to be developed along the way, it was not always possible to write memos and code data before a new interview was completed. The same is true of *theoretical sampling* — understood here in terms of looking for informants or information or for concepts or categories that appeared in the data at earlier stages — which was carried out more intuitively than systematically. These activities are therefore connected with dotted lines in figure 4-1.

Ideally, the concepts that we derive from data drive new data gathering. This new data engenders new concepts, or new dimensions of concepts. This procedure, called theoretical sampling, is cumulative and circular. The collected new data builds upon former collected data and analysis. The process of data gathering goes on until we reach *saturation*. Though saturation is usually considered as being achieved when 'no new categories or relevant themes emerge' (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 148), the concept is more complex than this and cannot be discussed here (see for example Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 148; Stern, 2007; Dey, 2007; Holton, 2007). A longer process of theoretical sampling, data gathering and conceptual development might therefore be needed to achieve saturation. Moreover, additional methods for sampling to counteract the selection bias in the bulk of our sampling might have been necessary.

4.4.2. Analytical gains and limitations of the data set

The most important part of the analysis is presented in chapter 6. Here, I analyse the actual screening process where we know the outcomes — at least for our fictitious candidates. This part has been particularly challenging because of the size of the data set. It would not have been possible to discuss all 23 screenings, and it would not have been especially fruitful either. I have therefore chosen to discuss some cases based on a typology that builds on the outcomes of the screening. While this typology is not theoretically informed and is meant as a practical way to handle the cases, there are some theoretical underpinnings behind the distinction between five different types.

On the whole, the size of the data set does not allow for a systematic comparison of cases. However, because of the size of the data set I have had the opportunity to disentangle a complex process and gain insight into many factors in the selection process. The process of this analysis can be compared to the building of a puzzle where both respondents and informants have contributed pieces — some very essential pieces for the outlook of the puzzle and others less visible but nonetheless important pieces filling both small and big gaps.

4.5. Validity, reliability and generalisation issues

Validity and reliability are issues more often addressed in quantitative research, though they also apply to qualitative research. However, according to Hammersley (1987), there is not a consensual conceptualisation of these terms, and there is even an overlap between definitions of the two. Nevertheless, most definitions of validity and reliability are *realist* and *nominalist* respectively. In such definitions, validity 'represents the extent to which an instrument measures the property it is intended to measure', while 'reliability refers to the scores produced by repeated efforts to measure the same property by means of the same instrument' (ibid, p. 75).

Strictly speaking, the present study is not concerned with *measuring.* Rather, it is concerned with exploring the mechanisms that may lead to discriminatory practices or practices that are disadvantageous to whole groups of jobseekers. In addition, instead of an instrument, we have human beings telling us a story and are equipped with certain analytical tools and our interpretational capacity.

It is necessary to be concerned with whether the people involved are telling us the truth (or at least what they believe to be the truth) and whether their narratives represent typical behaviour. What respondents or informants tell us is influenced by how we act and what we say. We needed to be open about the nature of the research. Not only is this an ethical requirement, but we also needed to share with employers the results of the test to which they were subjected. As discrimination is unlawful and morally questionable, this openness may have influenced what the respondents said. However, my overall impression is that people were sincere, including in cases where the outcome was differential treatment, or they were revealed to have had some prejudiced attitudes.

The other issue involving validity is whether we were dealing with typical behaviour. The employers we interviewed were subjected to a test. However, sampling bias existed: we do not have the views and stories from those employers who consciously and systematically discriminate against minority applicants and did not want to be interviewed. The constraint of having self-selected respondents is more the rule than the exception in qualitative studies. This lack of representativeness, together with the issue of *small N's* makes this kind of study unsuitable to generalisation in the quantitative sense of the word. However, we can still reach conclusions about possible causes of discrimination and disadvantages (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell & Miller, 2000) and mechanisms that are at work in some situations are likely to appear in similar contexts. This is not to say that I will be able to give a full or perfect description of employer behaviour. Rather, my

task will be to find theoretical accounts of many of their actions and much of their reasoning (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in a limited location and limited period of time.

Reliability, while also referring to the trustworthiness of the analysis, is more about what others would make of the same data. Transparency is important to achieve a high degree of reliability (Berg-Schlosser, De Meur, Rihoux, & Ragin, 2008). In qualitative inquiries, transparency competes with the requirement for confidentiality. This problem is met by documenting the findings and conclusions with extensive use of anonymous quotations that represent the views of participants (Poppe, 2008). For those wishing to scrutinise how I handled the translations from Norwegian, a table of original and translated quotations have been made available for download.[18] In addition, condensed versions of analytical matrices are available for download[19] and summarising memos of interviews with key informants are presented in appendix F[20].

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[18] http://uio.academia.edu/MaricelKnechtel.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Professor Claudius Wagemann, Goethe University, Frankfurt have kindly answered my questions about ways of handling transparency.

5

The outset of the recruitment process

The recruitment process is one of many matching processes in organisational and daily life. It matches people with jobs. The 'matching' may imply an assumption about people choosing to apply for jobs and roles for which they are best suited and motivated. However, the matching is not automatic and not easy. Recruiting is perceived by most employers as a difficult or at least a complex process. Both Ms. Fredriksen, HR manager at *Municipal Agency* (#18) and Mr. Danielsen at *Government Agency* (#16) characterise recruiting as an 'extreme sport'.

Many small and large decisions are taken from the outset and poor decisions may have significant impact on the function, profit or wellbeing of the organisation. Many employers therefore use a variety of resources to find if not the perfect at least a decent fit.

In a recruitment process the first important activity is the decision to hire. Whether the employer is facing growth, restructuring or has to replace someone, he or she has to decide if recruiting is the best solution. Each of these scenarios may

require different approaches to specifying the role and desired qualities of candidates and choosing recruiting channels. The same considerations apply depending on whether a position is permanent or time-limited (Grimshaw, 2009).

It is out of the scope of this study to describe how employers approach the different kinds of scenario specified above. We have studied jobs that have been advertised and it is outside the scope of this research to discuss the implications of different recruitment channels. Instead, the aim of this chapter is to explore what employers emphasise when defining the profile of jobs to be advertised, and whether their specifications may exclude certain groups of applicants.

5.1. Dimensions of the profile construction

The employee to be hired is going to undertake certain tasks. Textbooks on management and recruiting advise recruiters to first develop a specification that defines a role and then the requirements to fit that role (Erling, 2010; Grimshaw, 2009). Critical components of this specification are: title of the position, department and location, mission of the company (Erling, 2010, p. 50). This specification should outline the skills and behaviours needed to perform the tasks identified when the decision to recruit was taken. The role specification is permeated by the organisational culture, which serves as a map against which the recruiter evaluates the candidate (Grimshaw, 2009).

Analysing the interviews, I found role specification to evolve around three important dimensions: a) education and experience, b) language and communication and c) personal traits. Moreover, some employers have gender and age preferences. However, these preferences — along with preferences for ethnicities — are, with some exceptions, illegal. Such preferences will therefore not be stated in the actual advertisements, the development of which is included in the role specification.

5.1.1. Education and experience

The role specification provides the basis for the minimal length and kind of education and experience that candidates are required to document. When specifying education and experience requirements, the employer will be trying to answer a) what kind of expertise is necessary b) what kind of expertise is relevant and c) what kind of expertise would be a desirable addition to fit the role (Grimshaw, 2009). How precise these specifications should be varies from role to role and depends on legal constraints that apply to the role and/or institution, as well as labour market supply.

Most employers will define a certain *length of experience* for the role they need to fill. In some branches, managers cannot afford to do this. In our sample, this constraint applied particularly to kindergartens. The four respondents at the three kindergartens that we visited described the difficulties they have in recruiting pre-school teachers. The shortage of pre-school teachers restricts how picky employers can be when developing their profiles. The law outlines the requirements for teaching staff[21], and these are almost all they can ask for. Indeed, a quick search of advertisements asking for pre-school teachers performed in May 2012 shows that no experience is required.

While other sectors of the economy do experience some difficulties in recruiting labour with the required credentials — including the health, accounting and IT sectors — the labour supply is not as scarce as is the case for pre-school teachers. With few exceptions, employers confirmed that they had specified roles

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[21] In the case of *kindergartens* the regulations are very clear about how many pre-school teachers a kindergarten must have and the formal qualifications the teachers must fulfil. See section 18 in The Day Care Institution Act (2005) and regulations concerning the manning of day care institutions. There is no official translation available for this act and regulations. The original titles are: *Lov om barnehager [Barnehageloven]* Lovdata (2012d) and *Forskrift om pedagogisk bemanning* Lovdata (2012e).

where both a certain education and experience level were required. It seems that constraints in some sectors and abundance of labour in others have significant impact on setting profiles of suitable candidates, more than the actual necessity of skills to perform the tasks in question.

The aim of setting some *minimal* requirements seems to be to attract enough candidates to choose from. In situations of labour market slackness, employers may inflate these minimal requirements, asking for examples of more education and/or experience. These fixed requirements will exclude many suitable people from recruiting processes. Recent graduates often have a hard time finding a first job that matches their education. As Ms. Sandvik, managing director at *Directorate I* (#22) states:

(1)   *Ms Sandvik: It's not so very often that we clearly ask for newly graduated people. When we think that it is ok to recruit newly graduated people, we say specifically in the ad that newly graduated can apply. There have been two or three such positions lately [The organisation hires around 25 persons each year].*

With the exception of a few employers, all organisations in our sample required relevant work experience. Applicants without work experience were simply excluded from processes where the profile included such requirements.

Whether minority background candidates are more likely than natives to be excluded from jobs requiring experience is connected to the issue of whether finding a first job is equally easy or difficult for both groups. Getting a first job may be difficult for all, but not necessarily *equally* difficult. Norwegian research shows that immigrants with higher education levels struggle after graduation (Brekke, 2006; Støren, 2002, 2004). Moreover, research also reveals evidence that the second generation have a harder time finding first jobs than their native peers holding similar educational qualifications (Evensen, 2008, 2009; Hermansen, 2009).

5.1.2. Language and Communication

Language and communication are issues that all employers in our sample consider essential at some level. For most of the respondents, communication is synonymous with having a good knowledge of the Norwegian language. The issue was, in several cases, brought up by respondents spontaneously when asked about the ethnic composition of their company. Ms. Strand, HR manager at *Aas Accounting* (#6), states:

> (2) *Ms. Strand: We do not have any employees of foreign background here. And the reason is... there is no reason. But when we look for a person, that person must be fluent in Norwegian, and have knowledge in Norwegian accounting.*

At least two points can be drawn from this short quotation. One is that fluency in Norwegian is set as a requirement. Another is that there is an implicit assumption that a foreign background entails lack of fluency in Norwegian. What a foreign background means to Ms. Strand is not quite clear — whether she means immigrants or also includes their Norwegian-born children. However, she does make an automatic connection between ethnicity and language in explaining why there are not any employees of non-Norwegian background at her company. Ms. Strand elaborates later that the reason for having this language requirement is the organisation's working culture. Every accountant has full responsibility for his or her portfolio of clients, which includes both written and verbal communication with them. This is just the way things are done 'around here', and cannot be changed.

According to Elin Ørjasæter (2012), consultant at Burson-Marsteller, there are numerous advertisements on finn.no where employers require fluency in Norwegian. Furthermore, her opinion is that the requirements are unreasonable and, in several cases, a masked way to keep foreigners out of the recruiting process. Two of our key informants, who have many years of experience mediating between

applicants and employers, made similar objections. Mr. Lie (#24), a key informant working at a welfare office, states:

(3) *Mr. Lie: Norwegian employers place too much emphasis on the requirement that employees should be able to write Norwegian without any errors.*

Language requirements seem to vary more according to labour supply than to the kind of task to be performed, a suggestion that is supported in previous research (Rogstad, 2000a). Mr. Lie (#24) states:

(4) *Mr. Lie: [...] Language requirements are very rigorous [...] when times are bad, but when the labour market is tight, then language requirements are not that strict.*

While *language* may be an actual barrier in many cases, for pre-school teachers the issue is not particularly relevant in practice — even though they do need to have a proper level of Norwegian. Employers assume a very good level of Norwegian knowledge among the pool of suitable applicants; after all, they have to have attended a college education in Norway or subjected their educational credentials to the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT), which will ask for proof of Norwegian knowledge. This assumption does not seem to apply in other sectors.

The issue of language is quite complex, not only because different employers may require different levels of language skills to do the same kinds of job, but because there seem to be clearly subjective understandings of fluency, good levels and adequate levels to perform a job. I will elaborate on the impact of preconceptions about minorities' language skills during the screening in chapter 6 and on how language issues may influence intercultural meetings in chapter 7.

5.1.3. Personal traits

The Norwegian phrase 'personlig egnethet' is emphasised in almost every job advertisement and certainly in most of the advertisements for the positions we discussed with our respondents. 'Personlig egnethet' can be translated as *suitability*, which incorporates the personal or informal traits of individuals as opposed to formal qualifications or human capital variables. For the sake of simplification I will refer to suitability. [22]

Suitability is perhaps the one topic that recurs most frequently. However, it is the most difficult to grasp and define. It is necessary to ask if suitability is defined when roles and their tasks are specified or whether it is something fuzzier that can be constructed after meeting the candidates, to legitimate the choice that is taken.

In positions where the role entails customer contact or mentoring clients, suitability is defined using adjectives such as service-minded, empathetic and helpful. For example, referring to personal traits necessary to work at *PC Service* (#11), Mr. Andersen states:

> (5) *Mr. Andersen: ... You have to be the right type, and it's not only about being social here. We wish persons with social skills because you have to handle 50 teachers in four different schools, which means 200 persons. You have to be service-minded and you have to understand the problems of 65-year old teachers who hate computers, and those of the 23-year old ones, who are just graduated and can be extremely proficient, right.*

At other times, suitability is connected to company characteristics. For example, Ms. Mathisen at *Internet Solutions* (#10) states:

> (6) *Ms. Mathisen: Flexibility is very important. And we do notice quite quickly if someone comes here and only wants to work with something*

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[22] By doing this, the use of the term suitability in this thesis differs from the way Rogstad (2000a) and Jenkins (1986) use it. According to Jenkins, suitability refers to functionally specific selection criteria, such as education or training. Acceptability, on the other hand, refers to functionally non-specific criteria, such as manner and attitude, apperence and maturity (1986, chapter 3).

specific. Then he fits very poorly into our company, because we are an expanding company and we have to utilise people wherever we need them. [...] People need to be willing to contribute, even if you are hired in some role, you may have to help here and there when we need it. [...]

Here, an employee, however his initial role was defined, has to be able to move around and help with other tasks or work more irregular hours. In this company, flexibility seems to be present in all role specifications, as the management sees it as an indispensable trait for their dynamic and growing organisation.

Suitability can be defined as a complement to the traits that the members of the team already possess. Ms. Holm at *The Blue Pony kindergarten* (#17) states:

(7)   *Ms. Holm: When I try to concretise which traits we want, I think that it often depends on which position is vacant. If you have very energetic people, who take initiatives and have good ideas, then you need a stabiliser. The one who works steadily over time, who is persistent. [...] You need different kinds of people.*

Another interesting definition of suitability is given by Ms. Knutsen at *Welfare Agency I* (#19):

(8)   *Ms. Knutsen: [...] Because, I think that suitability with us surely could be a background from Somalia. Very suited indeed. You then have a background that makes you very suitable here.*

In this case, the concept of suitability is considered a 'trait' that matches a good proportion of the clientele. Rogstad finds also that a minority background can be regarded by an employer as a special form of suitability (Rogstad, 2002, p. 4).

Suitability can also refer to a person's behaviour and appearance. A person who is to represent a firm should have a certain look and dress in a certain manner. This constraint may apply for Norwegians and non-Norwegians alike, but, for minorities, dressing a certain way may be more obvious. When asked about

whether it would be acceptable that a woman with a *hijab*, for instance, represented the firm, Mr. Berg, personnel manager at *Wholesale Supplies* (#9) states:

> (9)   *Mr Berg: It has never been an issue.*
>
> *Interviewer: But if it is an issue?*
>
> *Mr Berg: I think that... it's a little difficult.*
>
> *Interviewer: You think so.*
>
> *Mr Berg: Back to our customers... You have to try to put yourself in their situation, what they expect. One can absolutely say that it's too silly, because we are all equal and anyone can make it work, and so on. But sorry, it's just not the way it is in Norway today.*

Others concentrate on suitability in terms of cultural values, like Mr. Svendsen at *Neptune Insurance* (#7) (cf. quotation 29), and others in terms of age. On the whole, there are almost as many definitions of suitability as there are respondents.

It is difficult to grasp, however, whether personal traits and suitability are clearly pre-set. Very few respondents seem actually to have deeply analysed the jobs to be filled or examined the personal traits necessary for successful performance of the tasks. The ways in which Ms. Berntsen and Ms. Bakken (#28) — key informants and professional recruiters at a major provider of HR solutions — work represents an exception. Ms. Berntsen explains:

> (10)   *Ms Berntsen: [...] We are concerned about developing good specifications or job analyses for the client [...] We do an in-depth analysis. How is the organisation culture around here [...] Beyond the expertise that is absolutely required, regarding education and experience, there are so many other things to consider.*

Evidently, 'many other things' refers to suitability and fitting in. Later in the interview, she elaborates on the ways in which she interrogate her customers —

those who are to become employers — to find out which personal traits she should be looking for in a candidate. She states:

(11) *Ms. Berntsen: So... what does service-minded mean? If you are my client and are looking for a service-minded employee, I will ask OK, what is service-minded for you? What does that word mean to you? Then, if you are my client you have to be able to explain to me what you mean by that expression.*

When searching for candidates, these recruiters do not wait until the interview to get a 'gut feeling' about whether a person is suitable. One important part of their job is doing an in-depth job analysis and setting up a good specification where not only expertise and education, but also personal traits necessary to fit in and manage the job, are clearly defined.

In this data I find two dividing lines concerning suitability. One of these lines exists between those who have a conception of which personal traits are needed for a role or for an organisation and those who have a more blurred definition and more or less act on a 'gut feeling' about a candidate and whether they will fit in. The other line lies between those who wish to keep some kind of status quo and prefer people that resemble those who are already there and those who wish a workplace characterised by diversity.

Preferring people that resemble oneself has been documented in studies of *homophily* in networks (Feld & Bernard, 2009; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001; Sandal & Bye, 2009) and the attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1997, 1971). In this sample, no employer says directly that suitability and fitting in is related to Norwegian ethnicity. While they define suitability with varying degrees of clarity, it is not clear whether such definitions are set in advance or whether they are defined at a later point.

On the other hand, some employers are eager to talk about inclusive HR policies or personal preferences for minority candidates. A parallel to this finding is

revealed by Rogstad (2002, p. 7), who also points out that some companies use ethnicity for marketing and profiling.

5.2. Attracting candidates

Once the requirements are set, employers need to attract candidates. This study focuses on the kind of process that starts with an advertisement — on finn.no or nav.no — and which is conducted by the company itself — an HR or other department.

It is important to keep in mind, though, that recruiting through other channels is also important for candidates, employers and company composition. Alternative channels of recruiting include the use of internships, which can be mediated by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), headhunting and recruitment agencies, and network referrals. The channel utilised, including the kind of media used for the advertisement, as well as any external assistance or network, may depend on the kind of position available, whether the position is permanent or time-limited, as well as what kinds of candidate and how many candidates an employer wishes to attract to the pool (Grimshaw, 2009, p. 101).

How important advertisement is compared to other channels is not very clear. A relatively recent Norwegian study shows that only 26% of vacancies are announced in newspapers, while 10% are announced on the internet. Advertisements in newspapers may have also been published on the internet, increasing the percentage of internet advertisements (Hagtvet, 2005). Nonetheless, the rapid development of internet tools and the increasing use of media such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn may have changed this picture radically. Advertisements are otherwise appropriated when employers want to attract as many applicants to the pool as possible to be able to find a good match.

The design of advertisements has an additional function for vacancies in public administration. Candidates who do not fill the requirements in the advertisement cannot be called for an interview. We asked Ms. Knutsen at the welfare agency about this issue:

> (12) *Interviewer: [...] Does it happen that maybe some applicants somehow stand out, you get curious and in a way then deviate from the requirements?*
>
> *Ms. Knutsen: It was like that in this case, yes. There were a couple...I thought maybe we should.... or it would have been exciting...but at the same time we are very specific in our ads [...] We have strong unions which are concerned with the educational requirement...*

The staffing of vacancies for the public sector is well regulated and aims to prevent arbitrariness in hiring processes. According to the Civil Service Act and corresponding regulations,[23] for example, all positions — with some exceptions — have to be announced and special rules apply when no qualified candidates express interest after the first advertisement. However, laws and regulations can always be circumvented. Mr. Antonsen, a key informant, states:

> (13) *Mr. Antonsen: But in most professions you have to advertise vacancies. And I think that no one in the public sector will say that someone is assigned to the position before it is announced. But I know about many cases where the vacancy was announced, but they knew already who was going to get the job.*

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[23] Original titel: *Lov om statens tjenestemenn m.m. [Tjenestemannsloven]* (Lovdata 2012b) and *Forskrift til lov om statens tjenestemenn m.m* (Lovdata 2012c) (no translation available for the second).

Theoretically, this can be done by, for example, designing an advertisement in such a way as to fit a certain candidate. The extent to which this happens is, to my knowledge, unknown.

5.3. Conclusions

The main objective of this chapter has been to explore what I have understood to be the most important activity at the outset of the recruitment process: defining the profile of the candidate once the requirements for a position have been understood. In addition, advertisements as recruiting channels, around which this study revolves, have been discussed.

The decisions employers take regarding these two activities have implications for the composition of the pool of qualified candidates and which candidates will be regarded as qualified. The design of the advertisement has even greater implications for the screening process in the public sector, where it is a parameter of the tidiness of the process.

According to Stovel & Fountain (2009), matching people to jobs is constrained by structural factors from the very beginning. *Regulations* and *market constraints* limit the range of choice when defining requirements for some positions. In this sample, availability of qualified applicants affects how employers mould their preferences. Employers' knowledge about the composition of the pool affects the requirements they set for jobs. According to the theory of matching, employers lower the requirements they set for jobs when the pool of applicants is small. However, lower requirements may not be possible for reasons of expertise (education and experience). The example of pre-school teacher illustrates how legal and market constraints interact and how they limit what employers can require or prefer. Kindergarten regulations require a certain level of education. At the same

time, candidates holding these credentials are so few that preferences for experience or personal traits are not likely to have practical importance.

In contrast, in situations where the market is *slack,* employers may inflate educational and/or experience requirements. Employers with preconceptions about the composition of the pool will influence the requirements that they set during the role specification. For employers this is a *rational* strategy: it reduces the pool of qualified candidates to a manageable size and increases the chances of choosing the best candidate for the company.

There does not seem to be evidence in this sample that the definition of the role in terms of experience has a discriminatory intention — at least when it comes to ethnicity. However, it will effectively exclude candidates without experience. For newly educated candidates holding credentials in large supply, the inflation of *working experience requirements* make it difficult to find first jobs. Obtaining first jobs is difficult for both natives and minorities. However, it is has been documented that this is not equally difficult. As we have seen, Norwegian research has shown that both immigrants and descendants with higher education struggle after graduation. Without initial work experience, they are simply excluded from processes where the profile requires relevant experience.

It is not unlikely that requirements for language skills are set for exclusion purposes, as pointed out by Rogstad (2000a, pp. 113-116). However, the data does not tell us this directly. Employers seem to have legitimate reasons for requiring relatively high language skills. Nevertheless, language requirements can be excluding in at least three ways. Firstly, this is the case if employers assume that a minority name is accompanied by lack of fluency in Norwegian (cf. section 6.2.). Secondly, it is the case if language requirements are set at levels that are unreachable by many. Thirdly, requirements can exclude if the standard of proper language set by employers corresponds to certain sociolects — or social dialects

associated with a social group such as a social class or an ethnic group (Hudson, 1980).

Suitability (personlig egnethet) is a term found in most Norwegian job advertisements and in most of the advertisements for the positions we discussed with our respondents. Theoretically, the nature of suitability depends on the requirements of jobs. However, few respondents appear to have analysed the job to be filled in an in-depth way or explored the personal traits necessary for successful performance of the tasks. Moreover, few respondents seem to have clear conceptions about what they mean by suitability. In many cases suitability is defined in a blurred way. In any case, definitions of suitability can be used at a later stage to disqualify candidates.

Once the role of the future employee is defined and the channel of recruitment chosen, the actual *selection* process starts.

6

Screening the pool

This chapter focuses on screening processes — here defined as a process of quick applicant assessment. Since our interviews are based on employers subjected to correspondence testing, we know the outcomes of assessment processes for our candidates.

During screening, an employer will try to sort information about applicants. The first sorting is made through distinguishing the qualified from the unqualified candidates.[24] This is not a straightforward task. Screening is a complex process where even experienced recruiters may feel uncertain about their assertiveness. Several respondents worried about making wrong decisions, partly because of the cost of hiring the wrong person and partly because they are concerned about the fairness of the process.

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[24] The evaluation of candidates chosen for interviewing is discussed in chapter 7.

6.1. Systematic and discretional screening

Evaluating job applications is costly and the benefits of thoroughly executed evaluations cannot be taken for granted (Stiglitz, 1975). Particularly costly are processes where there are many applicants. In several cases in this sample, the first sorting, where unqualified applicants are filtered out, is not enough; still too many applicants meet the requirements of education and experience outlined in the role specification (Granovetter, 1994). Ms. Rasmussen at *Directorate II* (#23), for instance, informed us that of 133 applicants in the process whereby we applied with fictitious names and CVs, a total of 91 fulfilled the minimum requirements. Similarly, Mr. Karlsen at *Rainbow Action* (#4) informed us that at least 35 applicants were good enough. None of the employers in such a situation had the time to meet all the qualified applicants. They had to choose.

The specific way in which each employer in this sample handles the screening varies, as do the techniques they use. They may, for example, use a form that specifies the strength and weakness of each applicant or one that compares each candidate with the qualification that is asked for. Others may sort in groups according to traits the recruiter has defined as important to the role. Ms Jakobsen — at *Peter Pan kindergarten* (#21) — explains how they perform the screening for assistant positions:

> *(14)   Ms. Jakobsen: We print the list of applicants, and there is the CV and the tiny part that is the application. It's in the same sheet. And then, if you are 18 or 19, you end in a bunch. I use to sort a bit. Then I look at those with an education, and maybe an education at college level, which is not necessary for an application for position as assistant. [...] and then is experience at kindergarten or other work with children. It's a rough sorting, we look at it together and we make a decision together, and then the union look at the list, to check if they agree with us.*

Others are less systematic, such as Ms. Olsen, manager at *Caring* (#1). When the interviewer asked how she reviewed the applicants she answered as follows:

(15)   *Ms Olsen: [slight pause] Well, I don't know. Actually, I do know what I look for in the CV, but I do not know what I look for in the application.*

Interviewer: Can you say something about what makes you react negatively or...?

Ms Olsen: I react negatively on many positive words about themselves, because then it's just an iteration of...what's it called, adjectives. It's somehow irrelevant [...] kind and nice...etc.

Ms. Olsen, manager at *Caring* (#1), searches for the candidates that meet the educational requirements, who seem to be few in number. She might therefore not have needed to apply a special screening system, as she may very well end up inviting all the qualified applicants to interview. The quotation above, however, illustrates the informational impact of traits other than educational achievement or work experience. When a letter is packed with adjectives, Ms. Olsen feels that she is being informed about the nature of the person writing the letter. While at *Caring* the letter might be less significant, these may be factors that sort candidates in processes where the recruiter is confronted with information overload.

When asked about what the recruiter is looking for while screening several respondents, most said that they looked for the ones showing *motivation* for wanting to work at their company, standing out from the crowd. Ms. Fredriksen at *Municipal Agency* put it this way:

(16)   *Ms Fredriksen: ...because what we look for is that there is some uniqueness. People should tell us why you should pick me, and not only that they produce a list about knowledge they have, but that you [...] But to see that some stand out from the crowd, that this is something they are passionate about, something they really wish...yes...[..] The applications must be really good, right? You have to really stand out from the crowd.*

The last two quotations illustrate that human capital — and whether applicants manage to signal that they have the right human capital — is decisive to being sorted in or out. However, it is not sufficient to be invited to an interview. When applying for jobs where there are numerous applicants, candidates need to understand how to signal their strengths. They also need to understand how to avoid signaling negative traits about themselves. For example, most employers agree that typographical or idiomatic errors signal carelessness or inadequacy for the job. Nevertheless, there are variations on how rigorously this is evaluated. These variations can be consequences of the type of position in question — a communication adviser has to have impeccable language — or how the recruiters choose to interpret these signals.

Employers need to read these and other more intangible signals. This is not a straightforward process, and even experienced recruiters can feel overwhelmed by it. For example, Ms Sandvik at *Directorate I* (#22) states:

> (17)   *Ms Sandvik: And then, and then I think there is a bigger risk for making a mistake, when you have so many applicants. [...] Because you sit there with so much information [...] and I think many times there are a lot of people that have put time and effort into it, writing applications, and we sit there with such a huge bunch ... we are not able to go deeply into all the applications. We have to do a filtering.*

Ms. Sandvik is among those employers faced with a large number of applicants. When asked about these techniques, Ms. Sandvik states:

> (18)   *Ms Sandvik: I screen in several rounds before I choose those I want to interview[...] [How I perform the screening] depends on how large the bunch is and how much time I have. What I wish to do, is to read all the CVs and applications. I'm not able to do that always, sometimes I read the extended list of applicants and find out who does not meet the requirements and sort them out, and then I go to the next step which is trying to answer some questions I have and then I print the CV and*

> *applications, and read them [...] Basically the CV and the applications provide the basis for...if they are to be interviewed. And having an electronic job portal system, it's the CV that each applicant themselves provide that is presented in the extended applicants list.*

Employers faced with large numbers of applicants need to develop efficient screening techniques. On the other hand, discretional screening may parallel systematic screening, where less clear-cut criteria is used to disqualify the bulk of applicants (see for example quotation 16). Similarly, Rogstad (2000a, p. 107) points out that employers emphasise social communicative skills, especially in the sorting between Norwegian and minority applicants. However, the concept of social communicative skills is poorly defined.

From this review, we may then draw some preliminary conclusions. Consistent with the theory of matching, time pressure has an impact on how meticulous recruiters are in the assessment of candidates. The larger the pool, the less time the recruiter has to evaluate each candidate. A responsible recruiter will try to develop a schematic system to evaluate the pool as fairly as possible, according to the requirements in the role specification. When the objective criteria fall short, discretionary evaluation is implemented. Discretion in this discussion is a matter of interpreting the signals sent by applicants, and it seems that this interpretation is influenced by recruiters' tastes and preferences.

6.2. The impact of signaling ethnicity

As outlined in chapter 4, the core of the field experiment of the DISCRIM project, of which this study is a part, is to measure reaction to signaling ethnicity, by sending two fictitious applications to the same employer. Ethnicity is the only trait which is (supposed to be) different between the two candidates, and is signalled by the name of the applicant.

Above, I have implied how the role specification and the size of the pool are decisive in the screening process. It is necessary to ask if ethnicity is a trait that is defined in advance as positive or negative, even though formally illegal or whether it is a trait that is considered during the screening process, given certain tastes and preferences. If this is the case, what does influence these preferences and tastes?

Before I elaborate on these questions, it is necessary to summarise the different kinds of treatment to which our candidates were subjected by our respondents. The typology in table 6-1 is only meant as a practical way to handle and compare some of the cases, and not as a theoretically informed typology. It separates cases according to the outcomes of the experiment. By *cases* I mean the 23 cases where employers subjected to the experiment were interviewed.

As it is not feasible to discuss every case, I will discuss only cases where the respondent was involved in the recruiting process that we tested. Of these cases I will focus on those I consider to be most illuminating for this section, while the reasoning of respondents outside the type under discussion may be discussed for the sake of comparison.

Table 6-1: Case typology

Type of treatment	Non-profit	Private	Governmental/ Municipal	Total
I. Equal (rejection)	1	1	1	3
Organisation alias	Rainbow Action - #4	Aas Accounting - #6	Directorate I - #22*	
II. **Equal** (call-back under uncertainty)	1	-	3	4
Organisation alias	Light and True - #2		Government Agency - #16 Welfare Agency I - #19 Welfare Agency II - #20	
III. **Equal** (call-back for interview)	2	7	2	11
Organisation alias	Caring - #1 Project Life - #3	Scandia Health - #8 Wholesales Supplies - #9* PC Service - #11 Gratifying Retirement - #12 Allied Fright - #13 Snow White - #14 Transporting People - #15*	The Blue Pony - #17 Peter Pan - #21	
IV. Differential (Minority candidate rejected)	-	2	-	2
Organisation alias		Neptune Insurance - #7 Internet Solutions - #10		
V. Differential (Norwegian candidate rejected)	1	-	2	3
Organisation alias	Ideal World - #5	-	Municipal Agency - #18 Directorate II - #23	

N= 23

* Interviewed person did not participate actively in the recruiting process involved in the experiment.

Type I – cases

This kind of outcome is interesting because the fact that the candidates were treated equally does not automatically imply that the employer is otherwise open-minded and does not discriminate on a general basis. From the interviews with the respondents in these cases we know that both the candidates were rejected because they could not compete with the qualifications of the other candidates in the pool. While I do not have evidence that ethnicity played a role in the screening process at *Directorate I* (#22) or *Rainbow Action* (#4), I have found indications that, under certain conditions, the outcome of the *Aas Accounting* (#6) case could have been another. This makes this case particularly interesting for examination.

Ms. Strand, HR-manager at *Aas Accounting*, tells us that the pool was simply composed by far more qualified candidates that outperformed ours. In theory, our candidates do fit the role and fill the minimal requirements, but their information is not detailed enough. When she had others that also fit the role who had bothered to describe their qualifications thoroughly, she did not need to make inquiries about our candidates. It seems that the lack of information about their qualifications was the reason for these candidates being disqualified. Thus far, it seems that both human capital (Becker, 1962) and signaling theory (Spence, 1973) can explain recruiters' reasoning. Our candidates seem to have too little human capital compared to the others. Moreover, they have not been able to signal their qualifications in a comprehensive way. However, the outcome of a situation where our candidates were as qualified as the best qualified candidates in the pool and whether ethnicity would have been a criterion is a valid question.

From the quotation below, it is evident that ethnicity does not go unnoticed:

(19) *Interviewer: When you review the application, what is the first you look at?*

Ms. Strand: I look automatically at the name. [...] And then I look at the CV, because it is the fastest way to see whether the person has a relevant background or not. And then I look at the education, and then at work experience and one like this one, there is not much there about what he has done. So then I have to read the application. [Picks up what she believes is our application.] Like here, I look at the CV, so the education, yes it's ok – and I look at the work experience, it says only account assistant. For me it's just too little. There's nothing about the clients, industries, how much responsibility the person had, and so on.

The name of the applicant is the first thing Ms. Strand looks at and it is not unlikely that some automatic assumptions will be made about the carrier of that name. This is the mechanism of *social categorisation* (Reskin, 2002; Tajfel, 1969). This mechanism refers to the process of locating oneself and others within a system of categories; we define ourselves outside some groups and inside others (Turner, 2010). This mechanism may lead to favouring in-group members even in the absence of out-group antipathy (Reskin, 2002).

Such mechanisms are difficult to prove empirically, since we cannot read peoples' minds.[25] However, even if categorisation occurs, the implications of this mechanism should not be overstated. Certified accountants do not seem to be readily accessible; *Aas Accounting* (#6) usually has between 2 and 10 applicants — whether this refers to the whole pool of applicants or just those considered qualified is not made clear — for this kind of position. A pool of that size does not allow for too much subjectivity or irrelevant requirements such as ethnicity to be considered, at least at this stage. In addition, minorities do get invited to interviews (see below).

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[25] Regarding personal encounters, it has been demonstrated that the extraction of ethnic markers from faces occurs 170-200 ms after face onset (Quadflieg, Mason, & Macrae, 2010, p. 69).

Nevertheless, as discussed in chapter 5, Ms. Strand does make automatic connections between ethnicity and language skills and between ethnicity and inadequate knowledge of the Norwegian accounting system (see quotation 2). We may wonder if this is the reason for looking at the name of the applicant. The automatic connection she makes between language skills and foreign names seem to have root in experiences of interviewing foreigners:

> (20) Ms. Strand: On one occasion, I regretted almost immediately after I called the applicant because I had problems in understanding what she said. It may be she was a bit nervous, but the same happened at the interview, we had some problems in understanding each other. And I'm relatively used to hear people talking other dialects. [...] I thought that this is not good.

Rogstad (2000a) also finds that some employers attribute all persons of minority background with bad language skills based on experiences with some individuals with limited knowledge of Norwegian. According to Rogstad, this form of attribution is related to Becker's ([1973] 1983) labelling theory, which states that in-groups control how other groups are perceived by others and themselves (in Rogstad, 2000a, p. 142).

Ms. Strand has had other negative experiences as well, for instance, with a foreign woman who was very rude after being rejected because of her lack of experience. The woman was apparently upset and asked 'How am I supposed to get the experience?' Moreover, there turned out to be certain scepticism in the company connected to the owners' or the company's experiences of working with people from Eastern Europe:

> (21) Ms. Strand: To put it like this, then. We have previously hired one person from east bloc, very skilled girl, but then it wasn't a success regarding contact with the customer, something happened. And after a while, she didn't do what she was supposed to. And it was a comment like 'Didn't I tell you?' But it was one person. But the general manager has also worked

with eastern Europeans before and he is basically sceptical. He starts off being sceptical. Because he has his own experiences working there with accounting and has been a consultant there many years ago. If I say that we should be open to this, we have to accept the applicant, he is still sceptical [...]

The impact of past experiences is also admitted by other respondents such as Ms. Evensen, at *Transporting People* (#15), who admits that her experiences may influence her decisions, and that some nationalities are more appreciated than others.

(22) *Ms. Evensen: There is a large difference regarding where the different applicants come from, which values they bring with them. I must admit that I have some preferences as to which county I would hire from. Not consistently if the applications are equally good and candidates and so on, so not consequent if there are two equal, so I it could be that I look at such things [...] I have amongst others hired from Sri Lanka which have been absolutely fantastic and this makes me more inclined to hire from Sri Lanka than another nationality.[...] That's how we people work. So even if we try in a way to be a little objective it's not always so easy. Well, we have a few Pakistani working here, and there is an equal amount of variation between them as amongst the Norwegians in a way. I don't have equally good experience with Pakistani girls as with boys actually. Because some have been here for many years, but a majority really have been here a while, then they disappear, and do not hear from them again.*

Similarly, Midtbøen (2012a) finds that employers that were sceptical of diversity in the workplace or refused to hire certain minorities attributed this to earlier experiences with these groups.

Under conditions of scarcity *Aas Accounting* (#6) seems to treat candidates equally, at least during screening. Signals of ethnicity are overshadowed by necessity. Proof of language skills must wait until later in the process. In conditions of abundance, on the other hand, it would not have been improbable that equally qualified candidates, differentiated only by their ethnicity, may have been treated

differently. Based upon *experience* of minorities' lack of language skills and owners' scepticism about certain nationalities, it is not unlikely that Norwegian candidates would have been preferred.

The case of *Transporting People* (#15) is similar at this point, based on experience of Pakistani women and Sri Lankans' labour behaviour, the owner admits she would discriminate against Pakistani candidates and favour those from Sri Lanka.

Type II – cases

From the interviews with the respondents in these four cases we know that either the candidates were called to answer some questions about their background or they were called for an interview with a certain degree of uncertainty. The evidence from these cases is that our candidates might have been omitted, not because of ethnicity, but on account of their somehow deficient applications and CVs. As with *Aas Accounting* (#6), our candidates — both minority and majority — had problems of signaling.

The three cases in the public sector are of particular interest: a minority name is an additional reason for eligibility. These agents have to relate to employment regulations specified in the Governmental Personnel Manual[26] and the Civil Service Act of 1983[27]. Furthermore, the Personnel Manual (section 1.6.) states that the composition of the labour force in government agencies shall reflect social composition of, for example, gender, age, impairment, ethnicity and sexual orientation. In recruitment processes, governmental agencies should invite at least one person with an immigrant background (first or second generation) for interview, provided that the candidate is qualified. Moreover, there are individuals

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[26] Original title: *Statens personalhåndbok* (Fornyings-, Administrasjons- og kirkedepartementet, 2012).

[27] Original title: *Lov om statens tjenestemenn m.m. [tjenestemannsloven] (*Lovdata, 2012b*).

from non-European or non-western backgrounds that would preferably be invited. If there are candidates with an immigrant background who are not called for interview, this will have to be explained in the final recommendation document.[28]

In the case of the *Welfare Agency I* (#19), there were just 30 applicants for the social worker position. At the end of the process, the *Welfare Agency I* needed to hire 3 people, which means that 10 candidates applied per available position. Moreover, only a few of the candidates fulfilled the educational and work experience requirements. Ms. Knutsen, manager at *Wefare Agency I*, states that she was uncertain about calling back our candidates because they had not specified what they had done. Ms. Knutsen therefore has the same problem as Ms. Strand, as discussed in the section above. She lacks detailed information about the candidates. Our applicants might have been omitted from the process, as they were in the *Aas Accounting* (#6) case, but an even greater shortage of qualified applicants made Ms. Knutsen call our candidates.

The situation is similar to those of the *Welfare Agency II* (#20), *Light and True* (#2) and the *Government Agency* (#16). Ms. Johnsen, recruiter at *Welfare Agency II*, was in a better position with regards to how many qualified candidates were in the pool. However, of the minority candidates, the only candidate who fulfilled the educational requirements was our candidate, Saera Rashid. As a result of regulations in the public sector, Ms. Johnsen felt that she had to call Saera, even though her CV was considered quite messy (education entries were duplicated) and the electronic application was filled in erroneously.[29] Ida was called just in the name of fairness, as her background and application were so similar to those of Saera. The impact of discretional assessment is notable here. While Ms. Johnsen considered

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[28] The municipality of Oslo has equivalent rules (Oslo kommune, 2001).

[29] We had some technical problems when applying through some electronic systems. We used one email address for each of the identities, but each identity could have different education and experience levels. When sending applications through a centralised system, information that was entered at an earlier point might have remained in the system.

Saera qualified, another recruiter dealing with exactly the same bureaucratic guidelines might have considered her unqualified because of her messy CV. Discretion is also important in interpreting why Ida was called. The rules say only that at least one qualified minority applicant has to be invited. They say nothing about inviting candidates that are similar to the one of minority background. However, for Ms. Johnsen, this was the fairest approach to take.

Another invitation under uncertainty was made by Ms. Dahl, HR manager at *Light and True* (#2). Ms. Dahl works, like the majority of our respondents, quite systematically through the screening. She gives the candidates a score after evaluating the formal qualifications and whether they communicate some kind of motivation for wanting to work at the organisation. They also receive a colour code: green for those clearly qualified and to be invited for an interview, yellow for those about whom she is uncertain. When asked about the colour code of our candidates, she responds:

> (23) *Ms. Dahl: I think they got yellow at first. And the reason must have been that none of them said why they applied for a job at Light and True, or gave any good reason for their motivation for wanting to work at our organisation [...] That's why they got yellow. But we want to recruit some men. So I thought, OK, we need to interview some men. And I was considering those two, who should I take, him or him? Mmh, I take both.*

In this case, our candidates' lack of motivation might have disqualified them. However, because the management in this organisation is concerned with gender balance, our male candidates were invited to interview. Ethnicity had no negative or positive impact, but gender did and gender was the deciding factor.

The last case I address here is the case of the *Government Agency* (#16). Mr. Danielsen and Mr. Halvorsen states that there were two issues concerning them about our candidates. Their young age was regarded as negative and evidence of

lack of experience. On the other hand, the candidates claimed to have worked with insurance settlements. However, again, the CVs were too tiny:

> (24)   Interviewer: *So you called them back to make some inquiries.*
>
> *Mr. Danielsen: ...to have a chat and get information about what in particular they had worked with, since both had experience from the insurance business. Because insurance can be everything from travel insurance to major injuries, and it was not so clear what they had done. Therefore I called both to hear about what kind of experience they had.*
>
> *Interviewer: So you do that when you are uncertain, you don't just sort it out, you'd rather call to ask the person to elaborate [...]*
>
> *Mr. Danielsen: It depends on the pool, this was quite early in the process, so I just felt like doing that, quite simply.*
>
> *Mr. Halvorsen: So I would think then that what you are saying that they were a bit marginal candidates, so if there had been ten more obviously better candidates [...] both would have been sorted out, and you wouldn't have called them.*

These cases show that recruiting is far from an exact science. The role specification is not enough to evaluate the candidates. The cases show different reasons for doubt, and none of these reasons has anything to do with ethnicity. Here, the candidates were given the benefit of the doubt. Getting such a benefit seems to depend on the time the recruiter has available, the size and composition of the pool, the gender composition of the organisation, regulations and feelings of fairness.

Type III – cases

Most of the cases fall into this category, where both candidates were called back for an interview. One of the interesting findings from these interviews is that despite preferences for either majority or minority backgrounds, the outcome might indicate equal treatment.

For example, Ms. Holm, manager at *The Blue Pony kindergarten* (#17), states:

(25) *Ms. Holm: Here, since we have an intercultural group of children, and this is East Oslo, it's absolutely an advantage, so when I had an applicant, qualified applicant with a non-western... bicultural background, I see that as an interesting applicant [...] So a Saera Rashid would be slightly more interesting than Ida Johansen. We already have plenty of Ida Johansens, but Saera Rashid, who could have good experience, background, interest for bilingual children... In kindergartens in this part of the town it's considered an advantage and something we need.*

However, even although Ms. Holm might have preferred Saera, for instrumental reasons she did invite both candidates for interview. As discussed in chapter 5, the law is very clear about the qualifications a pre-school teacher needs to have. There are usually few qualified applicants for these positions; the number varying between zero and ten. Sometimes, some of these applicants do not even meet the formal educational requirements. In these cases, screening is quite simple: looking for the formal credentials required in the CVs and applications. Applicants who meet these requirements are called for interview.

The screening can also be characterised by haste. Ms. Holm calls qualified applicants immediately, regardless of their age, gender, or ethnicity. Kindergarten managers are, in general, not in a position to have these sorts of preferences and are happy when they have applicants at all. It is interesting also that in these cases language skills are almost taken for granted, as in the example below:

(26) *Ms. Holm: [...] If it's someone who has a pedagogical education from Norway, then it's...then I think that the writing skill is present by default. And then... then there should not be any difficulty. We have to trust our educational institutions. [...]*

Mr. Andersen at *PC Service* (#11) does not set the requirements too high for an IT maintenance position as young men enter the company either with some education *or* experience. However, he requires high skills in using the Norwegian language and does not take these skills for granted, even if applicants are educated — or even born — in Norway. While he did not discriminate against Kamran, he makes a distinction between those who have grown up in Norway and those who have not. He is especially sceptical about applicants who have been in Norway only a few years. Moreover, Mr. Andersen thinks that other employers may not call applicants from ethnic minorities to interview because they suspect that their Norwegian skills are not good enough. He explains:

(27) *Mr. Andersen: [...] It's about getting across in your CV or your application that you are Norwegian, then. But it's about emphasising it in a good way, so people read it[...]*

According to Mr. Anderson, signaling *Norwegianness* is important if minority candidates are to be called to interview. Nevertheless, he tries to be objective and will therefore call as many as possible to interview and try to see 'the human being' behind the application. He is able to do this because he does not receive as many applications as a bigger company. During screening, then, he does not automatically sort out the foreign names (Kamran was called for an interview). His sorting seems to be more based on age. Mr. Anderson does not worry about other cultures in the workplace[30] as he has only had good experiences with his minority workers. Actually, a good proportion of his employees have a minority

[30] He is not so enthusiastic about religion though. See chapter 7.

background.

In addition, there is an economic aspect for Mr. Andersen when hiring minorities. He explains:

> (28) *Mr. Andersen: I forgot to say that among the employees there are two Somalis as well. And they belong to a group who struggles to get a job, I think. And those two do a fantastic job here, they have a bachelor degree both of them[...]. That way... if they were called Ola Norman they could have got hundred or two hundred thousand more, somewhere else...*

This is the only case of *monopsonistic discrimination* in this sample. According to Manning (2003), workers will have different levels of monopsony[31] power because they differ in their alternative labour market options. As Mr. Anderson states above, some individuals do not have many options. Mr. Anderson interprets this as a win-win situation. He is able to hire good labour for a low price and those striving to get into the labour market have the opportunity to undertake work experience and therefore compete more easily later. The economic aspect clearly has an impact in the screening process. Mr. Anderson knows from experience that it is advantageous to hire minorities.

Type IV – cases

Only two of the employers to whom we spoke favoured the Norwegian candidate, but only in one of these cases can we be certain that the treatment was discriminatory. Regarding Internet Solution (10#), the application of the minority candidate was deemed erroneous. It is difficult to question this explanation for several reasons. Firstly, almost all respondents say that errors in CVs or applications are considered negatively. In general, errors or inaccuracies lead to disqualification from the process. Secondly, the company has an overseas branch and is used to

---

[31] Monopsony means literally a market with a single buyer (Boal & Ransom, 1997).

intercultural interaction and cooperation. Thirdly, English as a business language has been incorporated to be able to accommodate employees with scant levels of Norwegian.

In contrast, Mr. Svendsen at *Neptune Insurance* (#7), who only invited Ida Johansen to an interview, admits the possibility that the candidate's minority name might have been a reason for unequal treatment.

He does not remember thinking anything in particular about how he might have thought when he saw Saera's application. However, he does remember thinking that the Norwegian applicant had a very interesting background. Saera's application does not seem to have been noticed, though she had the same background as Ida[32]. It is possible to object that there might have been differences in the applications that to which the recruiter may have reacted, such as where the applicants had been employed, the wording in the applications or the font used. While this is true, Mr. Svendsen do not seem to react much to these differences when looking at the applications in the interview. Instead, he states:

> (29)   *Mr. Svendsen: There are different processes one goes through [...] and a little depending when during the day you look at it... There is a lot of randomness...I'm very open now. But at the same time there are small things that make you...[...] I do not have so many thoughts about it...I think more that it was a pity she didn't apply somewhat earlier, then I would have more to say. But... it's not a coincidence that Ida Johansen was chosen. It has something to do with the name. But... I did read all the applications from the other minority candidates earlier. Because I think there are those who really want something here in Norway and... succeed. And you have those who unfortunately have another culture, and therefore will not fit in. But, I'm not scared about hiring someone with that background, but if you have a time pressure and want to make a safer decision, it's easier to take Ida than Saera...*

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[32]   The two applications and CVs are in appendix A.

Mr. Svendsen is sincere about having some preconceptions saying that those from other cultures might not fit in. This is one of the few cases in the sample where the respondent admits that not fitting in is directly related to belonging to another culture. While Mr. Svendsen states that he does not remember what he thought when looking at Saera's application, it is not unlikely that a *mechanism of categorisation* (cf. Type I cases) might have taken place. Saera is put in the category of 'alien culture', and the implications of belonging to that category made Mr. Svendsen screen right through her application.

There are accounts, both from this material and from daily life, where what happens is just this. People are filtered out simply because of their names. Rogstad also finds that many applications with a minority name are not judged trustworthy (Rogstad, 2000a, p. 117).

Such neglect might be caused because of distaste for out-groups, but this is not necessarily the case. As implied above, automatic mechanisms might take place. In the case of Mr. Svendsen, he is not fully prejudiced, as he expresses admiration or at least respect for ambitious young people of minority background who wish to move forward. In another situation he might very well have invited Saera for an interview. However, in the context of a somewhat chaotic recruiting process, where he felt time pressure and uncertainty about his role as recruiter and did not know whether a person with another culture would fit in, he took a 'safer decision'. In general, hiring is a decision made under uncertainty; employers cannot be sure of the productivity of candidates (Spence, 1973). In particular, the 'safer decision' to which Mr. Svendsen refers may be the result of uncertainty about the productivity of certain minorities as outlined in the theory of statistical discrimination (Aigner & Cain, 1977). As information is costly, screening implies lumping together individuals according to attributes that the employer assumes to be relevant for the productivity of the individual (Stiglitz, 1975).

Type V – cases

This section discusses a special kind of result; cases where the minority candidate was favoured. The cases in question are one governmental agency, one municipal agency and one non-profit organisation. In the two cases in the public sector, (*Municipal Agency* (#18) & *Directorate II* (#23)), the minority candidate was favoured as a result of governmental policies (cf. Type II cases). However, in one of the cases, the decision was taken reluctantly.

In the following quotation, Ms. Fredriksen, HR manager at *Municipal Agency* (#18), reads from a memo written by the Head of the Section, who was responsible for the recruiting process in question:

> *(30) Ms. Fredriksen: 'What they wish to examine –[to the interviewer] she talks about you – is to see whether applicants with a Norwegian name are called back for an interview, and the applicants with a minority name are not, even when the applications are quite identical. In our case the opposite happened. The Norwegian applicant was not considered qualified enough, while Kamran was chosen only because he was in the category 'minority filling the minimal requirements'. Apart from his name, he would have come in the No category, due to a bad application. And a bad CV.*

This is a screening process characterised by uncertainty. The uncertainty was mainly due to an application not matching the position advertised. When the decision was made to call the minority applicant it was only because of municipal recruiting guidelines. However, more importantly, the respondent admits that the process maintained their prejudices because it was difficult to get in touch with Kamran. Candidates usually respond to employers' calls immediately, but Kamran was sluggish in responding to their invitation. Ms. Fredriksen explains:

(31) *Ms. Fredriksen: Usually people call back at once, it's not like you wait until the next day... And it's a pity... We both commented, isn't that typical? [...]*

While it is lamentable that the response was not sent to the employer quickly enough,[33] this example illustrates the *attribution error mechanism* (Reskin, 2002). This mechanism is closely associated with stereotyping, which can be defined as the attribution of general traits to large groups of individuals (Tajfel, 1969). Stereotypes and in-group versus out-group membership influence our expectations about the actions, behaviours or performances of others (Reskin, 2002). Thus, members of less valued social groups are attributed with negative characteristics and hence are expected to act in certain ways. Kamran acted in accordance to what the respondents saw as stable traits of his group.

This case is contrasted by the *Ideal World* (#5) case. Ms. Pedersen, HR manager, did not call Kamran for an interview because she had to but because she wanted to. Indeed, she strives for an organisation that is characterised by diversity in every sense of the word. When asked about whether Kamran was called because of his minority status, she explains that *that* was something she wanted to see, even when the application was not considered particularly good:

(32) *Ms. Pedersen: [...] because the person had a minority background and satisfied at least one of the requirements. Not that much, he had experience in communication. But I think a little bit like... because we look at how you write the application too. Some are very motivated and write why they want this job and things like that. And there are some that barely write anything at all. And I think that that was the case for this one.*

Interviewer: Would you have invited him if he had a Norwegian name?

Ms. Pedersen: Maybe, because he was a man.

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[33] I was not present at this interview, but of course the interviewer apologised for the slowness of the response. Moreover, the routines for our response have improved since then.

The combination of gender and ethnicity made Kamran an especially attractive candidate. Furthermore, Ms. Pedersen was of the opinion that Kamran's background was slightly better. The kind of experience with which we equipped him is somehow more relevant than that of Andreas and the wording in his application was also more sophisticated (the application was not the same one sent to *Municipal Agency* (#18)).

6.3. Screening: Beyond the experiment

Thus far, I have discussed how discretional screening complements more systematic screening systems on a general basis and in relation to the recruitment processes that were used for the correspondence tests. This section will complement the discussion with some aspects of the screening process in general, which are not necessarily related to the evaluation of our fictitious candidates.

6.3.1. Management of self-presentation

Until now, I have mainly been taking the perspective of the recruiter. However, there are two parts in this process and the results of the screening — which applicants are called in for interviewing — are therefore also influenced by how the applicants manage to present themselves in their CVs and applications.

According to Rogstad (2000a), jobseekers have to able to signal to the employers not only that they have relevant qualifications but they have more intangible skills (communicative and social skills) and that they will therefore fit in. Probably, employers have most training in interpreting signals from candidates that belong to their own ethnic group (Rogstad, 2000a, pp. 102-103).

Ms. Sivertsen (#27), informant and mentor at a vocational school, states that she trains her students in self-presentation. For her, this means learning social

codes and appearing as Norwegian as possible, because people are afraid of everything that is different. A strategy she has found to be useful for her students is finding common denominators with the recruiter. In this way, the applicants shorten the cultural distance between them and the recruiters. She explains:

(33) *Ms. Sivertsen: Find common ground. And there are several we have given examples on, because we talk about when we are writing application to find out as much as we can about the company. That's where you apply. Just to show, I want to be with your firm because I see that the values in your company correspond with mine. And the second point is to find out what you can about the person you send the application to, the person that receives it, and if he...someone here told me: I found out that the recipient of the application was biking, he had biked the 'Birke', not skiing, and the applicant was also an eager cyclist. And that was a reason for the applicant to be called for an interview, they found common ground [...]*

It is not unlikely that finding common ground is especially important when there are many applicants. According to our key informants in the recruitment industry, this strategy is effective for being noticed (provided the employer is not a professional recruiter).

Whether or not applicants should learn the *right* codes of self-presentation or whether employers should learn how to read different forms of self-presentation is not a matter for discussion here. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that not only unwillingness from recruiters, but *cultural distance* (Schwartz, 2009) between recruiters and applicants has an impact on how the self-presentation of the applicant is perceived.

For example, Ms. Pedersen, at *Ideal World* (#5), is aware that there are different traditions in which a CV is written. While other recruiters may perceive these differences negatively, Ms. Pedersen has a cultural knowledge that makes her aware of what she is dealing with.

6.3.2. The positive impact of ethnicity

Signaling a minority background may also have a positive impact not only as a result of guidelines, but as a result of positive traits recruiters attribute to belonging to a certain group. It has been pointed out earlier that suitability can be defined as having a minority background or a particular ethnicity, whether this is for instrumental reasons (as for a kindergarten or welfare office with a large minority clientele) or for the sake of profiling (see 5.1.3.).

There are several examples in this data of recruiters having good experiences and thoughts about certain nationalities. Mr. Antonsen states:

(34) *Mr. Antonsen: A good example is Asians because Asians are very hard working. It's wrong to stigmatise, but still...I allow myself to be a bit outspoken [...] My experience with Asians is in general very good. They are very often industrious, reliable people. So Asians.....*

Mr. Antonsen applies here the logic of statistic discrimination, but in a way opposite to its mainstream definition. As a result of — according to his own experience — Asians being on average more productive, he would rather hire an Asian than a Norwegian.

Another account generalising immigrants in a positive way is that of Ms. Gundersen at the Sn*ow White kindergarten* (#14):

(35) *Ms Gundersen: [...] I don't think there are enough Norwegians who will work in kindergartens. Another thing is that their work ethic is so much better. At least, it's my experience. [...] They push themselves more when they are ill. They show up to work even when they are not in a very good shape. [...]But I can only speak for our place, I can't apply this to the society but... Norwegians call in sick easier... [...] They [immigrants] do their best to do a good job.*

This employer has not only a high regard for immigrants, but the kindergarten is, according to her, dependent on them. Nonetheless, we learn later in

the interview that she would have read applications from Norwegians more carefully, precisely because of the high percentage of minorities in the workplace.

The last example I bring up here is the account of Ms. Nilsen at *Gratifying Retirement* (#12), who leads a company where there are more employees of minority than majority background. Working conditions can be affected by communication and cultural misunderstandings. This situation seems to be challenging both for employees and managers, an issue that is discussed several times in the interview. Nonetheless, at *Gratifying Retirement*, diversity has both positive and negative dimensions. When asked whether she feels that hiring minority candidates is more risky, Ms. Nilsen states:

> *(36)* *Ms. Nilsen: I often experience that some cultures have higher ethics, work ethics and more respect for the elderly than Norwegians. And they show up at work. It is the Norwegians that do not come to work, who have been partying and...relax and are too comfortable. [...] So, the other way around, it is almost so that I discriminate [the Norwegians].*

Having a minority name can, in some branches, make it easier to be noticed, as is pointed out by Rogstad (2002, p. 9). However, being noticed due to a minority name is only advantageous if the positive associations of that name exceed the negative ones, as in the case above.

6.3.3. Do minority applicants lack qualifications?

The dynamics of preferences in the screening process can be understood through the concept of *reservation points* (cf. 3.3.). Reservation points are important because they serve as tools for speedy screening alternatives. The minimal requirements of education and experience seem to be employers' most important *reservation points.* Employers in the public sector have to remain unmatched if no candidates with the required minimal requirements apply. In the private sector, there is some slack because employers do not have to report to authorities about how they conduct their hiring. In the private market, employers have a higher degree of autonomy than in the public sector, where candidates have to strictly match job advertisements. Nevertheless, in both sectors, applicants who do not fulfil the requirements that are asked for in advertisements are likely to be quickly filtered out. Among our respondents, other features of the applications and CVs also operated as *reservation points*, including typographical or grammatical errors, lack of motivation and poorly written applications.

In chapter 5 (cf. 5.1.1.), I discussed whether specifications of requirements excluded minorities from the outset to a greater extent than majority applicants. An issue connected to this discussion is whether minorities are, to a greater extent, lesser qualified jobseekers than majority candidates. Ethnic inequality in the labour market performance has in fact been attributed to differences in *human capital* (Hayfron, 1998; Longva & Raaum, 2003). While this issue is not a major concern in this study, employers' *perceptions* about minorities' human capital are of significance.

Many employers in our sample believe that there are a lot of qualified people among minorities and that is shameful that many of them do not get a chance. Other employers emphasise their experience in receiving applications which totally lack relevance for the positions that are offered. When asked about her opinion of

why some individuals with a minority background never get invited for an interview, Ms Strand at *Aas Accounting* (#6) states:

> *(37)* *Ms. Strand: I will tell you what I think about that. Because I get so many applications that are completely out of place [...] We do specify that you have to know Norwegian accounting, you must know this and that. But no, it is marketing, project work... and they keep sending these applications. There is a person I at least have answered 3 or 4 times. 'You know, we do not have work for you.' They have some automatic button, when there is some word with economics, you send a standard application. I just...Please! [The application] has nothing to do with the ad. Completely wrong expertise... [..]Like 'I'm a kindergarten assistant and would like to work with accounting.' And we are looking for a certified accountant with several years of experience [...]*

A similar comment is made by Mr. Halvorsen, at the *Government Agency* (#16):

> *(38)* *Mr. Halvorsen: [...] it strikes me when I skim the applications, and of course it is a little bit dangerous to conclude, but many of those with minority names.... They frequently do not fill the requirements we have asked for. Many have worked in non-relevant positions.*

Ms. Johnsen, at *Welfare Agency II* (#20), informs us about one of the reasons some applications are misplaced:

> *(39)* *Ms. Johnsen: Some of the applications that end up here... I have worked with welfare, that some simply have a requirement to apply for jobs and submit documentation about this activity, in order to keep their welfare. Some of them have no education. But they still apply. Those applications are not evaluated in any other way than that they are listed in the list of applicants.*

At *Directorate II* (#23), we had the opportunity to go through the complete list of applicants and could corroborate that none of the applicants with a minority

background except Kamran filled the minimal requirements that were asked for in the job advertisement. Naturally, we cannot draw from this case the conclusion that minorities apply more often than Norwegians for jobs for which they are not qualified. What is more important in this context is that these experiences may nourish prejudices among employers. Midtbøen (2012a) also finds that employers think that the quality of minorities' applications is often poor and that many are frustrated about NAVs requirements for recipients of various welfare benefits. These requirements — proof of work search activity — contribute to channelling too many unqualified jobseekers into the labour market (Midtbøen, 2012a, p. 112).

6.4. Conclusions

In this chapter, I have primarily focussed on the impact of ethnicity on the screening process for positions that have been subjected to correspondence testing and where the employers were interviewed. What it takes to be invited for an interview depends on several factors and conditions. Human capital — and whether applicants manage to signal that they represent the right human capital — is an important factor determining whether an applicant is sorted in or out. However, it is not sufficient.

In a job-searching situation, we expect jobseekers to adjust their signaling according to what they believe employers require. Employers will try to sort information about jobseekers in the most cost-effective way possible. Evaluating job applications is costly and the benefits of thorough evaluation cannot be taken for granted (Stiglitz, 1975). Particularly costly are processes where there are many applicants.

Time pressure has an impact on how meticulous recruiters are in the assessment of candidates. This is particularly the case for situations where many qualified applicants compete for a single job. Applicants need to stand out in order

to be selected for interview. Similarly, Rogstad (2012a, p. 152) also finds that employers reason differently depending on the number of applications they have to assess. Moreover, under these competitive conditions, the qualifications of each individual do not stand alone. Sometimes, candidates are compared to the qualifications of other applicants in the pool. A slack labour market also allows — or compels — a higher degree of discretion in the screening process. At this point, human capital does not seem to apply anymore. Under discretional screening, employers seek to find something else, such as signals of motivation, personal traits or suitability, but how this is actually done is not clear. In some examples, it can be a matter of liking or disliking how a letter or CV is written. As pointed out in chapter 5, suitability is not always clearly defined in advance.

When the labour market is tight, the pool of applicants is composed of few qualified jobseekers. Low supply will tend to override employer prejudices or scepticism. When the labour market is slack, employers will be more demanding when assessing candidates.

There are indications in the data that assumptions about poor language skills can be used against minority applicants. These assumptions are sometimes grounded in earlier experiences of employers, causing them to generalise.

The presence of unions, the Civil Service Act and recruiting guidelines in the public sector have been found to be of importance among the public sector employers in our sample. All public sector employers act in accordance with institutional requirements and most are concerned with the fairness of the recruitment process. However, the rules which aim to promote ethnic diversity in Government and the Oslo municipality may represent a double-edged sword, as the case at *Municipal Agency* (#18) showed. Here, the minority candidate was only reluctantly called in for interview.

The only case where the outcome of the test was discrimination seems to be quite complex. The employer is inclined to attribute his decision to time pressure

and risk averseness; which can be seen to be a result of rational modus operandi. The decision could also have been based on uncertainty about the productivity of some groups, as stated in the theory of *statistical discrimination* (Aigner & Cain, 1977). The same employer also expressed some unease about some people of minority groups not adjusting to Norwegian culture and norms. This may be lead to discrimination on the basis of *taste* (Becker, 1971). Finally, there are also some indications that the *automatic cognitive mechanism of categorisation* takes place.

The impact of automatic cognitive mechanisms is demonstrated elsewhere in the data. Some automatically relate 'minority' with lack of language skills, while others may relate a minority name to the category of *unqualified candidate*, because of earlier experiences.

Positive attitudes towards minorities have been given less attention in the analyses. However, there is evidence in the data that many employers appreciate minority candidates, in some cases because they wish to have a more diverse workplace and sometimes because minorities' approach to work contributes to richer solutions for work tasks or they are estimated to have higher work ethics.

7

Selecting the candidate

In the previous chapter, the importance of the screening process was discussed. It is during screening that most applicants are excluded (except for those positions where there pool is small). Nevertheless, the ranking of candidates is ongoing during the recruiting process. Ultimately, if one position is available, only one candidate can be chosen (Rogstad, 2000a).

This chapter deals with the interview situation and the criteria employers use to make the final selection. Analytically, it will differ significantly from the previous chapter. When studying the screening process we had the opportunity to discuss — in the majority of cases — a concrete process of which we knew the outcome. In a few cases, the documentation of this process was even shared with us. In contrast — for this part of the analysis — we do not have a concrete process where we know the result, but must work with the accounts of employers and key informants. The typology constructed in the last chapter is therefore not a suitable analytical tool here. Instead, I will try to disentangle the narratives about general

practices for evaluating those candidates who — during screening — are considered to be the best qualified.

In Norway and elsewhere, interviewing is the selection method most widely used (Huffcutt & Roth, 1998; Sandal & Bye, 2009). Nowadays, many recruiters also use additional tools other than a single interview and, depending on the position, an assignment and/or personality test may be used to complement the evaluation of candidates. The final decision is made after checking references. In addition, for municipal and governmental positions the hiring recommendation goes through an internal process, where the union is also involved. While this institutional arrangement is important for the transparency of the process, it is probably not decisive in the actual selection and is therefore excluded from the analysis.

7.1. The job interview

According to Sandal & Bye (2009), the interview is, along with the application and personality tests, information sources that depends on a candidate's ability to present him or herself. The interviewer has to be able to distinguish between this ability — or lack thereof — and actual abilities, skills and traits. The interviewers' assessment abilities are further challenged when the cultural background of the applicant is very different from their own (Sandal & Bye, 2009, p. 105).

Interviews vary in several ways. The same employer may conduct interviews in different ways. For example, Ms. Jacobsen, at *Peter Pan kindergarten* (#21) states:

(40) *Ms. Jacobsen: We have spoken about this in relation to hiring people we are in lack of and hiring assistants when we have 200 to choose from. [Because when you hire a pre-school teacher] you elaborate to sell the kindergarten, right? But when you can chose between a heap of assistants, I think, embarrassing silence, it's not worth it. But as a leader, we try to charm. I know that the person in question is going to attend seven more interviews.*

The nature of the interview may vary according to the level of skill required, and according to the degree of demand for the profession in question. Moreover, the interview can be structured or unstructured or can focus around an assignment, personality test or hypothetical cases.

7.1.1. The aim of the interview(s)

Before interviewing, the recruiter has a significant amount of information about candidates' skills. The main purpose of the interview is to get an impression of a candidate's personal traits and, consequently, about whether a candidate will *fit in* (Grimshaw, 2009; Sandal & Bye, 2009). Ms. Iversen, at *Allied Freight* (#13), put it this way:

> (41)   *Ms. Iversen: [...] we are interested in a lot concerning the person; see the whole human being, not only what is on the paper. You can, when you get a CV, see if the applicant in a way has the skills required education-wise and if you have the experience, it's yes or no. Then it's the rest, which you have to do in the meeting.*

Minimising risk seems to be an important aim in the process of interviewing, especially when interviewing is carried out over several sessions. We asked some of our respondents and informants whether changes have taken place in the method of recruiting — in terms of several interviews and testing of candidates — and why the process has become more complicated. Mr Berg, at *Wholesale Supplies* (#9), states:

> (42)   *Mr Berg: No, not more complicated. But one is maybe more concerned about recruiting the wrong kind of employee. It's a cost issue, no doubt about it. And so it is for both parties. It's not fun to start in a position, and find out that... this is not what I should be doing. [...] Because then you have to do it all over again [...]*

Some of the employers in this sample state that they obtain enough information from a single interview and references to evaluate the final candidates and make a decision. Their arguments are that there are always at least two interviewers in place and that the selection panel always agrees about the final ranking of the candidates.

For example, at the *Government Agency* (#16), the respondents state:

(43) *Mr. Danielsen: As a rule, we are two or three at the interviews, and we discuss afterwards as well, about our impressions.*

I: Do you usually agree?

Ms. Eide: Yes.

Another instance of the security that having more than one interviewer implies is given by Ms. Nilsen, manager at *Gratifying Retirement* (#12):

(44) *Ms. Nilsen: [...] we are always two performing the interview. One that leads, and one that observes...or more can ask questions, but two to evaluate, and we talk afterward, and it's a manner of securing quality that it's not only the impression of one...if a dilemma occurs...[...]*

Though one interview may be enough, at least two is often a prerequisite, especially if a more risky decision needs to be taken. Ms. Nilsen illustrates such a situation as follows:

(45) *Ms. Nilsen: [...] if a dilemma occurs....the references might be bad and the impression good, then I would have another interview, and I have had...and...I am very honest then. We are very honest and we ask directly in accordance with that. For example there was one applicant where the reference said that she had had a period with a lot of sick leave, and I could not get this to fit, so I asked and it was apparent that she had experienced a down period, so.... things happens in life and it was right to give her that opportunity, so a new phase is to listen to what they have to say, to what that has been brought to our attention [...]*

Some employers — like Ms. Nilsen — may use a second interview to clarify the mismatch between the interviewers' 'gut feelings' (cf. 7.2.) and a bad reference. For others, two interviews is the standard procedure for hiring.

In this sample, 12 of 23 employers says specifically that they conduct two interviews, while in some few cases it is not clear how many interviews are usually performed. Nevertheless, interviews over two sessions seem to be the rule when many applicants are in the pool. In some cases, interviews over two sessions are complemented with tests of professional skills or personality tests. Whether the two interviews are of formal character also varies according to the positions in question. Mr Berg, staff manager at *Wholesale Supplies* (#9), comparing different kinds of position, states:

(46) *Mr Berg: [...] The second time people are called in, it's often a little bit like that, you have same questions or there is something that was not that clear. It can be from both sides. The first interview session is usually a standard interview, where we follow a scheme [...] Session two can be more loosely performed. Other times, the second interview can be very tiresome. The candidate may have got an assignment to present. This is normally used for more important positions. We evaluate how candidates react about getting such assignments.*

There is, apparently, a pattern that a combination of methods is used for high-level positions such as IT technicians, management communication advisers and other critical positions.

7.1.2. Structured vs. unstructured interviews

According to Norwegian and international research, the job interview represents a special source of bias when evaluating candidates. The ways in which interviews are carried out — structured or unstructured — have therefore been studied in disciplines such as organisational psychology (c.f. 2.2.2).

In our sample, interviews are conducted in different ways and some respondents use variations according to the relevant position, to try out different techniques or be able to interview more candidates in cases of uncertainty where many applicants fit the requirements. The variations found in the sample are shown in table 7-1.

Table 7–1: Interview sessions and kinds of interview

Kind of interview	Sessions of Interviews			
	Unspecified	One session	Interviews in two sessions	
			First session	Second session
Unspecified	#1, #3, #6, #7, #8, #11, #15, #19, #21,	#16, #20	#10, #23, #13	#13, #12*
Aided with interview guide		#14, #12*	#12*	#12*
Short ***			#2, #3, #4, #5**, #12*	
Formal			#9, #17	
Formal, with an assignment				#2, #3, #4, #5**, #10, #23
Informal				#9, #17
Structured			#22	#22
Unstructured			#18	#18

*Respondents described different ways of conducting interviews.

**Personality test between interviews.

*** Respondents referred in four of the cases to speed-interviews.

The table shows that, in many cases, we are not certain about whether the interviews took place over one or two sessions, or about what kind of interviews the respondents used. This lack of information is partly due to my own initial unawareness of the importance of how interviews are performed. On the other hand, that so many respondents have not given specified accounts of these issues may indicate that many of them are unaware that interviews are sources of error. Apart from three of our key informants — professional recruiters — only the respondents from *Directorate I* (#22) are conscious of the importance of how interviews are performed. Mr. Solberg, senior advisor at *Directorate I*, states:

(47) *Mr. Solberg: There are people that think [...] that the interview is the greatest source of error. Because of the underlying relational things, and gut feelings, etc, and preferences and things like that. But anyway, it is important to have a high awareness about the interview, and which methods one uses.*

Another particularity of which one should be aware is that while the literature differentiates between unstructured and structured interviews, I have differentiated between several more categories. The reasons to do this include, for example, the fact that I could not be sure whether a 'formal' interview was the same as a 'structured' one. Nevertheless, only 3 employers states specifically that they conduct the first interview in either a formal or structured way. The implication of this finding is discussed below.

7.2. Suitability, self-presentation and a 'gut feeling'

In a job interview there are at least two actors: the candidate and the interviewer. The candidate will try to influence the recruiter by means of signaling what he or she thinks is important to the recruiter. The recruiter, on the other hand, will try to assess these signals relative to the role specification, which may contain some description of which personal traits are necessary, and a notion of suitability or fitting in. As far as I have interpreted the data, 'suitability' and 'fitting in' are not always defined in advance, but are connected to recruiters' 'gut feelings' at the interview. One respondent, Ms. Jakobsen, at *Peter Pan kindergarten* (#21), defined 'gut feeling' as follows:

> *(48)* *Ms. Jakobsen: We have talked about gut feelings, because it sounds so spirit-like. But it's not, it's just that you have perceived a million small signals but because you have registered them so fast, you are not able to analyse them one by one. Then you put it together to something that you call gut feeling. But it is about eye contact, handshaking, how the person talks.*

Most respondents in this sample are not able to articulate precisely how they arrive at the conclusion that a candidate will match the role specification and fit in. In general, they explain it in terms of 'this is not going to work'.

A more elaborate explanation of how a candidate is evaluated during interview is given by Mr. Halvorsen at the *Government Agency* (#16):

> *(49)* *Mr. Halvorsen: And when we call someone for an interview it's because we want to get an impression of the person. And we know which division, which environment, which tasks the person will have to deal with, and we can use the interview to probe a bit if this is a person we think will be suitable for the job [...] We make an assessment against the ad. And education is just a bit of it. Extensive experience.*
>
> *Mr. Danielsen: Suitability.*

> *Mr. Halvorsen: Suitability. Preferably experience in knowledge dissemination, in teaching, that what it says, good assessment ability, good communication skills, thus, all this is in a way equal criteria.*

In this example, what is included in suitability is well-defined. However, how the candidates are mapped against this suitability chart is not accounted for. At the end of the day, 'gut feelings' — confirmed or unconfirmed by references — might be decisive. Indeed, later in the interview, Mr Halvorsen states:

(50)   *Mr. Halvorsen: [The interview] is a one-time event and to say that the first impression or the gut feeling has nothing to say, I think is completely unrealistic.*

Comparing candidates on the basis of 'gut feelings' may result in evaluations biased by age, gender, social background and, most interesting for our study, culture. In one of the interviews — where the respondent also emphasised 'gut feelings' — the interviewer asks whether our 'gut feelings' are based on 'brown goat cheese' and 'hiking in the woods on Sundays'.[34] While the question may be criticised for being somewhat leading, the answer is more elaborate than yes or no, and is thus informative. Ms. Iversen, at *Allied Freight* (#13), answers:

(51)   *Ms. Iversen: I think it is. [Minority candidates] are more difficult to read because you do not have experience. It must have something to do about experience if you can relate to Norwegians better than … could be. I have not given it so much thought.*

Almost all respondents in our sample talked, mostly unprompted, about how they are led by their 'gut feelings'. In contrast to this pattern, professional recruiters claim to banish 'gut feelings', which they relate to the use of unstructured interviews. Ms. Berntsen — key informant and adviser at a major recruiting agency, states:

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[34] This refers to a) famous Norwegian cheese regarded as one of the most typical items in the Norwegian diet, and b) the peculiar habit of Norwegians of wandering aimlessly preferably on the outskirts of town before Sunday dinner.

(52) *Ms. Berntsen: [Unstructured interviews] are completely banned here [...] The interview is not supposed to be a cosy conversation, which is another word for unstructured interview. Because if you come in and have a t-shirt from some town in Spain, and I'm also about to go there, then we talk about that for 15 minutes. And then I like you so much! And we talk about the other things, because you are quite perfect [...] So a cosy conversation or unstructured interview is as simple as this [...] So, all the interviews we perform are structured. But everybody does not get the same questions, because we adapt them to the kind of position we are looking to fill. But all candidates, you, you and you, are asked about the same things. So that we can compare you. Against the job specification, and not because you talk less and you talk more. It was so much easier to talk to you. So I like you much more.*

Unstructured interviews are opposite to structured interviews. They were used by at least six[35] respondents in our sample in some way. The most common way of doing this kind of interview in this sample is by calling several candidates for a short interview, usually called a speed interview. Mr. Lund, organisation manager at *Project Life* (#3), informe us that the company invites ten to fifteen people for an interview of typically 15 minutes. He explaines that, then, they will know immediately which candidates have the most potential. When asked about what kind of question they ask in these short interviews, Mr. Lund explains:

(53) *Mr. Lund: We hardly ask any questions at all. We ask them to tell us about their motivation for applying for this job. And then the word is yours. And then ... through what they say and don't say, we get a picture... an impression on whether this can be something or not. [...] But of course, when you sit there and talk about yourself it is a little bit ... many are very good to express themselves, they say all the right stuff, but you can hear if it is empty words, or if it is something that they do not want to talk about*

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[35] I count here short interviews and a case where the respondent claims specifically to conduct unstructured interviews (c.f. Table 7-1). There are a number of interviews we do not know so much about, while formal and informal are not necessarily the same as structured and unstructured respectively.

[...] For me it is a little safer because we can get blinded on qualifications, and you pick those who apparently are the best. So I challenge the organisation in considering more odd candidates [...] we have to dare and see...maybe we get a pleasant surprise.

As our key informants in the recruiting industry have implied, this kind of interview may represent a cognitive pitfall for at least two reasons: a) the information the employer obtains might not be relevant for the job and b) the employer might not be able to compare the candidates in a fruitful way. According to Sandal & Bye (2009), the information one obtains from unstructured interviews represents, in general, much randomised information from each candidate. In the case of speed interviews, the situation might be worsened by the short time candidates have available to make a good impression. It is not unthinkable that shy candidates cannot even warm up. As Mr. Lund himself is aware, some people are better at expressing themselves than others. The ability of expression is undoubtedly relevant for a position as communication adviser — provided also that the position implies talking to the press or other agents. However, it is unclear if it is relevant for all positions where the method is used.

It is not unlikely that the comparison will be based purely on 'gut feelings', the result of the relationship between an applicant's self-presentation and the recruiter's interpretation of this.

The nature of good self-presentation is socially and culturally constructed (Sandal & Bye, 2009). Mr. Lie, one of our key informants, states that, previously, it was important to be humble and gentle and that you did what you were asked to do. However, this is not always the case nowadays:

(54) *Mr. Lie: Yes, yes, so you at least must give the impression of being very active and all the time...yes, be very self-reliant, then [...] I do have the impression that this mix between... between being humble and modest and*

not promote yourself too much, and being self-reliant, that it is like that, is Scandinavian...

This view is consistent with Sandal and Bye's (2009) research about what Norwegian managers consider to be advantageous self-presentation during an interview. In contrast to this view of self-presentation, people with an Asian background for example, say they will try to avoid eye contact and will not talk unless they are asked.

Another example of the importance of cultural differences is given by Ms. Moen (#26), a key informant with more than 15 years of experience in the recruiting business:

(55) *Ms. Moen: [I have talked to some employers that] wonder why Russian engineers do not smile at job interviews. They give an impression of being hard and introverted. But there is a lot of research internationally which says something about cultural differences associated to smiling, for example. In a Russian context, you might be considered as less professional if you smile [...] [If you do not have that knowledge] you will automatically think that they will not fit in the working place [...]*

This example illustrates how discrepancies between what the recruiter perceives as favourable behaviour at an interview and the candidates' understanding of good presentation may be disadvantageous for foreign candidates. Employers lacking knowledge about different cultures of self-presentation may infer that a particular candidate has no social skills and consequently will not fit in.

7.3. Language issues

I argued in chapter 5 that requirements for language skills could be excluding from the very beginning and, in chapter 6, I made reference to the likelihood of being filtered out of the screening process due to the connections some employers draw between a foreign name and lack of fluency. In this section, I elaborate on how perceptions of language can influence the interview.

International research shows that the language skills of a person with another mother tongue can be perceived differently according to who is listening (Matsuda, 1990). Research that has examined sources of bias in evaluating candidates shows that people talking with an accent were judged less favourably than others (Segrest Purkiss et al., 2006).

When it comes to Norwegian, oral fluency or 'perfect Norwegian' is complicated to define. There is no standard oral Norwegian that one can measure. Norwegian as a second language is usually taught within the frame of the *Bokmål* standard[36] and spoken *Bokmål* is used. However, this way of speaking builds on intonations which belongs to dialects. None of the variations educators may use to teach it can be said to be more correct than another. In any case, spoken Norwegian deviates from the written form, as any other language does. However, the way a foreigner deviates from the written form is typically different from native Norwegians. In addition, these spoken deviations are spoken with an accent, as it is virtually impossible to get rid of an accent when a foreign language is acquired in adulthood. The sum of these deviations might then be perceived as poor oral skills and anyone with any kind of accent might be labelled as not fluent. How fluent a

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[36] There are two standards of written Norwegian. The *bokmål,* which is used by 85 % of the population, and *Nynorsk*.

person with an accent is perceived will depend as much on the person talking as the person listening.[37]

When asked about how fluent a person should be to work at her organisation, Ms. Knutsen at *Welfare Agency I* (#19) tried to explain what she considered to be a good level of Norwegian:

> *(56)* *Ms. Knutsen: It is a little bit hard to say how good your oral skills should be. Because I think we measure that differently than the population in general. We are so used to 'bad Norwegian' somehow or at least another kind of Norwegian. How are Norwegian language skills around here? I think they are good. Because we can communicate, reasonably. And as long we can communicate, we think the skills are good. [...] Let's take those at my team. I would not say they have a very high level. Their writing skills are good, among those who work as executive officers or mentors. And their oral skills are good enough ... I do not know how to describe it...There is a Pakistani who has grown up here in Norway. He speaks more correctly than I do. And I have for example one employee who has been here 7 years... It's a great difference between those two [...] But I feel we can make it work.*

Ms. Knutsen believes that sometimes language requirements are too rigorous. Comparing her attitudes to those of other employers she states:

> *(57)* *Ms. Knudsen: I think that... several of those we have employed here, if they had come to an interview someplace else, where they do not have the experiences we have, and where they do not have the attitude we have...I think they would not have been considered at all.*

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[37] Personal conversation and email with Professor Wim Van Dommelen and Associate Professor Olaf Husby, at the Department of Language and Communication Studies.

Ms Knudsen's accounts illustrate that the evaluation of language level is relationally biased. How fluent a person with an accent is perceived will depend as much on the person talking as on the person listening.

Many respondents mention that lack of language skills might be disqualifying in the hiring process or a source of frustration and misunderstanding in the workplace. Scepticism about minorities' skills in the Norwegian language also affect, to some degree, the Norwegian-born descendant.

Mr. Andersen at *PC Service* (#11) sets the language requirement quite high for entering his company. His clients, who are mostly teachers, are incredibly concerned about language, he says. Moreover, some groups do not seem to reach his desired level of language, even when they are born in Norway:

> *(58) Mr. Andersen: Some Pakistani that apply here, they speak Norwegian poorly, even when they are third generation. In lack of a better term. And of course it depends on the language [...] Of course, it is a problem. But there is a fact, that for some ethnic groups it is more important to keep their language. And that is the reason they have a hard time in the labour market. Because they speak Norwegian, but they do not speak Norwegian... You can hear their Norwegian is not perfect.*

Mr. Andersen's references to Pakistanis not talking perfectly might be challenged by linguists, who view the development of different kinds of everyday language as natural processes in society (Matsuda, 1990). In the same way as different kinds of western and eastern sociolects in Oslo have developed, geographically, economically and culturally patterned, different kinds of minority-influenced forms of Norwegian are also being developed.

Some of the respondents are noticeably not particularly rigorous in evaluating language skills, like Ms. Knudsen above. Others emphasise necessity for fluency and others still are vague in their description of the level they consider to be good enough for the job in question.

7.4. Other selection criteria

There are some factors of which the recruiter may not have been aware during the screening process, and which come to the surface when meeting the candidate. Such factors include those irrelevant for performing the job or any kind of job and therefore not described under the role specification. However, irrelevant factors can also determine whether a person is hired or not or at least may form part of what recruiters define as 'gut feelings'. According to Sandal and Bye (2009), even experienced recruiters may be influenced by irrelevant factors.

One factor that can influence the decision of a recruiter is religion. Resentment against religion is more the exception than the rule in our sample. Nevertheless, Mr. Lie (#24), one of our key informants, indicated how religion could be detrimental for applicants:

> *(59) Mr. Lie: I worked with an Iraqi economist who had a very good background. She had taught at a college in Iraq. Very good background indeed, very skilled lady, and she wrote very good applications and CV, and at the phone she was good too. But every time she got sorted out because of the interview. Every time. And it was because they...she was very, very Muslim. Almost as a newly converted, she was like ...Oh! She was a Muslim...*

The lack of acceptance of religion may also be implicit in Mr. Svendsen's disapproval of other cultures (cf. quotation 29).

An interesting account of religiosity is given by Mr. Andersen — who has around 30% of employees with a minority background, of whom several are Muslims. For Mr. Andersen, religiosity is acceptable as long as religion does not manifest itself in the workplace:

> (60) *Mr Andersen: I have employed one here who is a very engaged Muslim. He is not only a Muslim ... which religion or sexual orientation people have, it doesn't matter. And it is not supposed to matter. But if it is expressed, then...*

Merton's fourfold typology (1948) can be invoked to understand Mr. Andersen's way of thinking when evaluating overtly religious candidates. Depending on how hiring negotiations with such an applicant progress, we could place Mr Andersen in either the category of *prejudiced non-discriminator* or the *unprejudiced discriminator*.[38] On one hand, he can be placed in the category of prejudiced non-discriminator: while not fond of religiosity, discriminating against a good candidate might hurt his business. However, he assumes that expressions of religiosity may interfere with the job and the company's image. If, during a hiring process, he is not convinced that a candidate will adjust to the company's behavioural culture, he may not hire that person and thus be categorised as an unprejudiced discriminator. He explains:

> (61) *Mr. Andersen: ...if you walk around with a special uniform, like hijab, or if you had been an orthodox Jew and you had those curls, right? Then you give a very...then you are religion first and then human being. And that would be a problem for me [...] As manager, it would have been a problem for me, because I wish that when you are at work, you are there representing PC Service, and not...*

The use of the *hijab* and the right to wear it has generated much controversy. That employers can be negative to its use is documented elsewhere (see for example Fangen, 2010 and Kvittingen, 2011). In this sample, apart from Mr Andersen's statement shown above, none of the respondents express directly that they would not hire someone wearing a hijab. However, as we saw in chapter 5 (cf. quotation 9),

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[38] The other types are *prejudiced discriminator* or *unprejudiced non-discriminator*. Depending on how we define prejudice — whether it is prejudiced to require that people do not manifest religiosity at the work place — it can also be discussed whether Mr Andersen could be placed in these other categories as well.

for certain positions an employer can show direct reservations because of their allegedly customers' prejudices. Another example that sheds light on this issue is this extract from Mr. Svendsen's interview, at *Neptune Insurance* (#7):

(62) *Mr. Svendsen: I... again, I feel that there are large differences in Norway. I have not considered it here. We have very few customers coming by, I wouldn't feel that it would influence our reputation, would rather wonder what the employees would think, and...and. I don't approve of the hijab, so I have no problem saying that it is a particular...particular outfit, but...if I have discussed and know how the others would have reacted....I don't know.*

While he does not say directly that he would not hire someone wearing a hijab, he admits that he is not particularly enthusiastic about this piece of clothing. Moreover, he is not alone in being unsure about what other employees would have thought.

Most employers in this sample do not express reservations against the use of the hijab. When asked about whether this is a problematic issue, Ms. Larsen and Ms. Paulsen at *Scandia Health* (#8) respond very confidently that it is not an issue at all. They claim to have many employees wearing hijabs, and state that if we would have come some weeks earlier, we would have been received by a woman wearing one.

Dressing is not only an issue about non-western clothing culture or signaling ethnicity or religiosity. For example, Mr. Karlsen at *Rainbow Action* (#4), for whom the hijab was not a relevant issue, states:

(63) *Mr. Karlsen: Eh, hypothetically, we would of course have to reflect about it if [the hijab] it was about an outwardly oriented position. For us it has been more an issue about women dressed in an environmentalist-kind-of-habit.*

The issue of clothing can be seen as one factor making up appearance. The concept of appearance — however — seems to be taboo in Norway. No job advertisements will have a requirement of 'good appearance' — as may be common in some countries. Employees should not be evaluated on looks. Indeed, the theme does not appear in our interviews with the employers. However, Mr Antonsen (#25), a key informant, tells us a story about how the look of one candidate scared him, so he would not hire the person at first. On account of other contingencies he ended up hiring him after all and he turned out to be, in his own words, gold-worth-hiring. About looks in general he states:

(64) *Mr. Antonsen: Appearance means a lot [...] looks matter. There is no way round that.*

Interviewer: But in Norway it is a bit taboo to talk about this, I think.

Mr. Antonsen: Yes, it is a bit taboo...because...here you see a large difference in the private and public sector. I am sure that if you ask this very question to public and private sector, you will discover a significant difference in the answers. I am quite sure that in the public sector they will say, no, no, no. But in the private sector, they say that would rather have an attractive person in the workplace than someone who looks like an owl. It's clear that...there is another way to respond...

Another key informant, Ms. Sivertsen (#26), gave us another example of the importance of looks:

(65) *Ms. Sivertsen: I had a lovely Pakistani student...she wore traditional Pakistani clothes, fantastic. And at the end... she didn't understood why she didn't get in anywhere. She was very skilled. And then I say, maybe you should apply in a Pakistani company because there you fit right in. She talks Norwegian fluently, the intonation, everything is right. But she becomes very different when she comes in with her clothes. She was called for interviews, but she didn't get any further. So one day she changed her clothes for western ones, tight jeans and regular sweater [...] and she got a job.*

In this case, the jobseeker's looks are more related to ethnicity than simply clothing. According to Ms. Sivertsen, the relevant issue is about how to present oneself as similarly as possible to others.

While we do not know for sure whether this jobseeker's change in clothing was what made the difference or whether this was a coincidence, the two informants' accounts above suggest that the significance of appearance for *homophily* mechanisms (cf. chapter 2) — in terms of, for example, clothing, beauty or ugliness, obesity, class or signaling otherness — might be an issue for further investigation.

Finally, I will shortly refer to the issue of references. Many respondents use references to confirm their 'gut feeling'. Moreover, the majority of the employers in this sample usually disqualify candidates whose references are considered to be unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, some employers may be willing to hire a person whose reference was not particularly satisfactory, as in the example given by Ms. Nilsen, who used a second interview to clarify the mismatch between her 'gut feelings' and a bad reference. This case suggests that scarcity of labour in certain industries — in this case the health industry — may influence recruiters' willingness to make decisions that in other contexts might have been considered risky. Another explanation, that should not be underestimated, can be found in the values and humanity of the recruiter, who in this example excused the person for having a down period in life.

Key informants are more cautious with regard to references. Ms. Berntsen (#28), for example, states:

> *(66) Ms. Berntsen: The correlation between references and reality is very low. We know somehow that what the reference says doesn't mean much. References are selected wisely, because it has to be someone who likes you. That's one thing. And then we never know whether the person has*

been downsized, and it is a part of a downsizing deal to give you good references. It happens [...] So we don't trust references blindly.

Instead, at the recruiting agency where Ms. Berntsen and Ms. Bakken work, references are used to confirm or disconfirm information that has emerged during the interview, and whether the referees like or dislike the candidate is not relevant. Also, at this point, professional recruiters seem to distance themselves from the concept of 'gut feelings'.

7.5. Conclusions

In this chapter, I have discussed the accounts of respondents and informants of the methods and selection criteria in the last phase of the hiring process. The interview has been given a central position, not only because the job interview is the selection method most widely used, but because it has been found to be a critical source of bias. Research shows that unstructured interviews favour candidates that are most similar to recruiters and that they are often influenced by factors that are irrelevant to candidates' potential job performances (De Meijer et al., 2007; Horverak et al., 2011; Sandal & Bye, 2009; Higgins & Judge, 2004; Posthuma et al., 2002; Huffcutt and Roth, 1998; Kacmar & Hochwarter, 1995).

Several variations in ways of conducting interviews — in terms of sessions and forms — are found in this data set, while in many cases we have little or unclear information about the way the interviews were performed. The data I have at hand does not document that some ways of interviewing have led to discriminatory practices among employers in the final evaluation of candidates. However, the fact that — apart from two respondents and three key informants — recruiters in general are not aware of the possible discriminatory effects of the interview situation is an interesting finding.

In this context, *Ideal World* (#5) can be regarded as a *negative* case – that is, a case that does not fit the pattern (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). At *Ideal World*, short and unstructured interviews are conducted. However, the employers' awareness of cultural differences in self-presentation, personality and vision for the organisation seem to counteract the bias in the selection method.

Language is among the issues that have most frequently emerged when talking to our respondents, so there is no doubt that language is an important selection criterion for all the respondents at some level. How they concretely evaluate the level they require for doing a specific position is generally less clear. Depending on the position, some respondents are not rigorous in evaluating language skills. Others seem to require high language skills levels on relatively poor grounds. In such cases, even the use of a sociolect or accent may be disqualifying.

Finally, I have discussed factors such as expression of religiosity, clothing and appearance. These factors do not appear often in the data. However, this does not mean that they do not influence selection, rather that these may be issues that are not so easy to talk about.

On the whole, the discussion in this chapter is not meant to be conclusive, and issues about appearance in particular might have greater significance and be in need of further investigation.

8

Discussion and Conclusions

In this thesis, the recruitment process has been analysed as a matching process. The main focus has been empirical, drawing information from 28 interviews with 38 respondents and informants. For analytical purposes, I have divided the process into three phases: a) the outset of the recruitment process (chapter 5), b) screening (chapter 6) and c) the selection (chapter 7). In each phase I have tried to grasp how employers reason and act. The employer or his or her agents have been central to each phase of the process, a perspective that has been rare in labour market analysis. However, it is recognised that the employer is interacting with another party: the jobseeker. The employers' desires and preferences are constrained by the jobseekers' preferences: the match must be acceptable for both parties (Stovel & Fountain, 2009).

I start this chapter by reviewing the research design, which has implied some limitations in the analysis, and discussing how these limitations can be turned into advantages. The main findings are then summarised. Next, I discuss how much

human capital matters in hiring processes and whether we can talk about discrimination and, if so, what kind of discrimination. At the end of this analysis I attempt to link the discussion to macro-level outcomes before discussing issues of fitting in and what language really means. Based on this final discussion and analysis I revise the initial analytical model. Lastly, I conclude the thesis with some suggestions for further research and policy.

8.1. Reviewing the design

One of the aims of this study has been to analyse not only what employers *say* they do, but also what they *actually* do. To some extent, this aim has been accomplished. This has been made possible due to the research design of the DISCRIM project (cf. chapter 4). As a result of employers being subjected to correspondence testing before we interviewed them, we could discuss a concrete hiring process that had actually taken place and of which we knew the results (Rogstad, 2012b). However, the extent to which we can analyse what employers actually do was, for us, limited to the screening process, the only area from which we knew results. For the definition of the profiles, we used only the advertisements as control tools. Aspects of a profile that are not in an advertisement can be of great significance. However, the reasons for which employers arrive at decisions to invite candidates for interview can vary significantly, even if the outcomes are similar. We have only their own accounts to assess how employers reasoned and thought during these processes. The same can be said about selection methods. We have only information from what employers have told us, a shortcoming of using interviews as a method for data collection.

Another limitation has to do with memory. Some time had passed — in some cases several months — from the recruitment process taking place to the day the employers were interviewed. In companies where little recruitment takes place,

this seems not to have been a major problem. However, in other cases, the people who were interviewed were not those who had been responsible for the process in question, and/or representatives of large organisations responsible for much hiring. In the analysis, these shortcomings have been taken into consideration, for example by not focussing on accounts where the interviewed person was not responsible for the selection process in question.

The problem of self-selection should be repeated. Most of the employers in this sample treated our fictitious candidates equally: either both applicants were rejected or they were called for questioning or for interview. In only two cases was the native candidate called for interview, and it seems that only in one of these cases was the differential treatment due to discrimination. We also had three cases of positive discrimination, where only the minority candidate was invited for an interview (cf. table 6-1). Thus, the screening outcomes in this sample are not representative of reality. Midtbøen & Rogstad (2012) finds that the probability of being invited to interview was reduced on average by 25% when the applicant had a foreign name compared to identically qualified Norwegian candidates. Moreover, discrimination is found for all kind of positions, even for those where labour supply was very scarce, and for governmental positions where systematic screening methods are supposed to prevent arbitrariness in selection processes.[39]

However, even though our respondents were self-selected, there are several factors that may indicate that the consequences of this are not particularly important. Firstly, not all employers that had acted in a non-discriminatory way knew for sure that they — or their co-workers— had not discriminated. From this perspective, it would have been the same if we interviewed employers who had

[39] The preliminary results of the DISCRIM project point in the same direction and will be analysed elsewhere.

discriminated. Secondly, in some branches, employers — due to a tight labour market — could not afford to discriminate. Such conditions imply that when we interview these employers, they have to talk about the benefits of hiring minorities, which possible made them keener to have non-discriminatory hiring practices. Thirdly, some employers' agents invited the minority candidate only because — due to regulations — they had to. The two last points indicate that actions and attitudes are not necessarily consistent and imply that even when an employer acts in a non-discriminatory way they might still be influenced by prejudices or in-group preferences.

Moreover, we should remember that the evidence we have about employers' non-discriminatory decisions is limited to the screening process. We do not know how Kamran and Saera would have been treated during the final selection. That is, the fact that our minority candidates were not discriminated against at the screening process does not automatically mean that they would not had been discriminated against at a later point in the selection process. All in all, the information we obtained from the employers in this sample is partly independent from the concrete hiring process we wanted to test; meaning that we may have a higher degree of trust in the data than we initially thought.

On the whole, the data set reflects the complexity of the hiring process. The employers have provided us with insights about different mechanisms that may be involved in the hiring process. Moreover, the complementation of their accounts with those of the key informants indicates that some of the findings here have transferable value to other actors by shedding light on actual attitudes, beliefs and practices of employers.

A last reflection about the data provided by our respondents is that even when they appeared to talk quite openly about hiring practices and personal or corporate attitudes, we should not take all they said literally. In this chapter, I adopt a more critical distance than in the analysis, and question some unresolved issues.

8.2. Main findings

As pointed out above, most of the employers in this sample did not discriminate against our candidates in the screening process. Neither did they say that they discriminated otherwise. However, they communicated more than one thing at a time. More subtle factors — which are more difficult to grasp — are at play in the hiring process. Such factors are connected to *definitions of otherness,* with reference to language issues and personal suitability.

The main findings are summarised below. The way these findings are ordered is not necessarily in order of importance. For example, I see language and fitting in, as well as gut feeling issues, as the most salient topics in this study. However, employers may emphasise human capital, at least when screening. On the other hand, some findings come lower down not because these factors are less important but because the evidence might be perceived as less convincing.

(i) The qualifications that the candidates should have are defined in terms of human capital variables, typically education and length of experience.

(ii) Human capital parameters are used to screen and filter out unqualified candidates.

(iii) When there are many qualified candidates, human capital differences seem not to be important. Employers rather look for signs of motivation and personal suitability.

(iv) Almost all employers make the final hiring decision based on 'gut feeling' of a person's suitability, which they verify through references.

(v) Suitability has different meanings for each employer. Moreover, not all employers seem to have clear conceptions of the personal traits they require.

(vi) Some employers define suitability in terms of similarity to the present labour force or in terms of their customers. Others emphasise diversity.

(vii) Language is a prevailing topic among employers, but it is very unclear what good Norwegian is. Moreover, language requirement is not necessarily connected to the tasks the employee has to perform.

(viii) Earlier experiences influence employers' attitudes to minorities in both positive and negative ways.

(ix) Most employers conduct unstructured interviews. Employers are generally not aware that this kind of interview is a particular source of error.

(x) Many employers do not seem to be aware of the existence of the second generation as potential job candidates. When asked about the second generation they start talking about the first generation of immigrants.

(xi) Many employers do not automatically assume that individuals from the second generation have language skills that equal those of the majority population.

(xii) Regulations in the public sector may influence employers' decisions in the screening process in favour of minorities, provided they are qualified enough.

(xiii) Labour market conditions influence how employers mould their requirements during the definition of the profile, and the way the screening and interviewing proceeds.

(xiv) Several employers appreciate minority candidates, especially those used to intercultural interaction.

(xv) Some employers insinuate that they more frequently receive bad or misplaced applications from minority candidates than from native applicants. It is not therefore unlikely that minority names are sometimes automatically associated with bad applications and filtered out.

(xvi) There are some indications in the data that employers' reasoning is influenced by cognitive automatic mechanisms of categorisation, stereotyping and attribution.

Some of these findings are discussed more thoroughly in the following sections.

8.3. How much does human capital matter?

According to human capital theory (Becker, 1962), employers seek to hire the most productive individuals. Since productivity cannot be measured directly, employers use different parameters to assess people's productivity, typically education and experience. In this analysis, it is evident that the profile of the future employee is *partly* defined according to these human capital variables. *Additionally*, employers emphasise personal traits or suitability.

During screening, employers filter out candidates that do not fulfil the minimal requirements of education and work experience. However, in branches where there are many applicants holding basic qualifications, employers look for supplementary qualifications or traits that are not always defined in advance. Some employers say that in these competitive circumstances, those holding most human capital are those who are invited for interview. Others focus on applicants' motivation levels to do the job and work at that specific organisation.

During the final stage of the selection process, human capital differences among the candidates do not seem to matter anymore. This finding has parallels in previous Norwegian research. For example, Wiborg (2006) finds that human capital variables do not explain differences in earnings between Norwegians on the one side and Latin-Americans and Africans on the other (see also Hansen, 2000). Hermansen (2009) finds that some groups of descendants experience higher risks of unemployment when compared to Norwegians with similar educational qualifications. In a study on the probability of obtaining an apprenticeship as a part of upper secondary education, Helland & Støren (2006) find considerable

differences between the ethnic majority and minority groups of non-western origin which cannot be explained through human capital factors.[40]

These findings *may* be better accommodated within the frame of human capital theory, by applying the concept of 'country specific' human capital. This term incorporates all kinds of knowledge and skills that relate to the host country: for example, language skills, job-search competence and norms of interaction and presentation (see for example Chiswick, 1978; Hayfron, 1998; Longva & Raaum, 2003). Thus, minorities' ability to signal that they fit in the context of Norwegian companies and have good language knowledge should be of significance in hiring processes. These issues are discussed in sections 8.5 and 8.6.

8.4. Discrimination at micro, inequality at macro?

Looking back at the findings in this study and the discussion so far, the reader may well ask if there is proof of discrimination and, if so, what kind.

The first question is the easiest to answer: we have one case — *Neptune Insurance* (#7), represented by Mr. Svendsen — where we can be certain that our minority candidate was discriminated against during screening. Two points need to be repeated here: a) a qualitative study is not likely to be representative — that is, we cannot quantify the outcomes; b) mostly respondents interested in the issue of integration of minorities into the labour marked selected themselves to be interviewed.

The second question is somewhat more troublesome. Mr. Svendsen admitted that ethnicity; signaled by the candidate's name, might have been the reason for not inviting Saera to an interview. Since he allegedly did not remember even having seen the candidate's application, it is possible that automatic

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[40] One may, though, question whether these studies manage to operationalise HC adequately. Wiborg's study, for example, measures HC using the variables educational attainment and length of residence.

categorisation or stereotyping might have taken place. According to Reskin (2002), in situations where we need to be cognitively efficient — for example, if there is time pressure or information overload — the likelihood of invoking stereotypes increase.

On the other hand, Mr. Svendsen said that he might have decided to take a safer decision in a situation of time pressure. He also told us that he had previously experienced poor oral skills among other minority applicants. Rogstad (2000a) finds also that employers tend to attribute lower language skills to minorities with non-western backgrounds than they actually possess. Midtbøen & Rogstad (2012) find that assumptions about the language skills of minorities may be one reason for excluding minorities from the hiring process. From this point of view, language is used a proxy for productivity. However, language may also be used as an excuse for less legitimate reasons (see 8.6). Both uncertainty and generalised experiences indicate statistical discrimination. According to Djuve (2007, p. 11), data about companies with at least 10% immigrants in their current labour force supports the assumption that employers are uncertain about the productivity of workers with a minority background. When hiring, employers will try to avoid candidates with assumed low productivity, unless they employ tools that reflect the productivity of each person (such as piece wage systems) or reduce the risk involved in hiring (for example, with temporary employment).[41]

To complicate this picture further, Mr. Svendsen expressed some distaste or disapproval for other cultures, suggesting *taste for discrimination*. Other studies are also inconclusive about what kind of discrimination is involved in hiring (see for example Helland & Støren, 2006).

I have thus far discussed one single case where proof of discrimination was found. What do the other 22 cases reveal about discrimination? One of the reasons

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[41] These practices are more characteristic of low-tech industries, where the share of highly educated labour is low (Djuve, 2007).

for a lack of discriminatory outcomes can be related to the issue of self-selection as pointed out above (see also 8.1, 4.1). However, when indications of prejudice or other kinds of negative generalisation are found even among employers that have not discriminated during screening, it can be assumed that such attitudes are likely to exist elsewhere and lead to discriminatory practices.

When talking about minority applicants *in general*, several employers pointed out the inability of minorities to signal their skills and competence, and the tendency of those of minority background to submit applications completely out of place. These themes recur in the work of Rogstad (2000a) and Midtbøen & Rogstad (2012).[42] It is apparent that some employers automatically think of minorities as unqualified applicants.

In one of the interviews — where due to municipal employment regulations the manager felt compelled to call our minority candidate for interview— mechanisms of *attribution error* (cf. quotation 31 and discussion below), which is closely related to stereotyping, had clearly taken place.

Above all, the most salient topics in the interviews were language, suitability, the notion of fitting in and employers' 'gut feelings'. Talking with our respondents about these issues, it is evident that attitudes existed that were difficult to define and comprehend. Regarding language, it was noteworthy that employers quickly attributed lack of ethnic minorities in their labour forces to language issues. Language issues were also prevalent when we specifically reminded the employers that our candidates were born and had completed their education in Norway. Employers inferred that persons of minority background in general have poor language skills. Minorities were attributed with levels of language skills according to their names and not according to employer knowledge about the individual

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[42] Both in this data set and the referenced studies, some employers attribute these misplaced applications to the job activity requirement that NAV places on some welfare recipients or unemployment beneficiaries.

applicants. In some cases, this generalisation was based on experiences with some individuals with limited knowledge of Norwegian. This pattern is also found by Rogstad (2000a). I have found these topics of such significance that they are discussed separately.

It is necessary to ask how this discussion relates to the patterns of inequalities that were introduced in chapter 1 and are otherwise so well-known. In chapter 3 I indicated that the link from actions, preferences and decisions at the micro level to patterns of disparities at the system level (step 3 in figure 3-1) was outside the scope of this analysis. Indeed, as Birkelund (2010, pp. 163-164) points out, this link is the most difficult to explain, as it often involves more than one mechanism. However, at least a tentative attempt should be made here at accounting for this. After all, it was ethnic inequality that motivated this study.

Coleman calls for models of explanations where different relations among actors with different goals bring about actions that result in different outcomes at the system level (Coleman, 1986, p. 1323). This relational approach is embraced by Rogstad (2000a, 2012b), who calls for an approach that looks at the situations and contexts of employers, and possibilities of influencing their legitimate actions. The problem to be faced here is not about widespread illegitimate decisions based on racist attitudes. In general, employers are eager to appear tolerant and have convincing explanations for their reasoning, actions or decisions. A parallel to this situation is Schelling's (2006) classic example about peoples' preferences for the colour of their neighbours. Moving pennies and dimes on a sheet of paper, he showed that preferences to live with people of the same colour or even preferences for a certain mixture could lead to high degrees of segregation.

Strongly racist statements from employers are not at all apparent. At best, it is possible to find some disapproval for certain manners or clothing or ambivalence, uncertainty or unconscious stereotyping. Isolated, these preferences, doubts or decisions may seem insignificant to employers. The sum of all these small decisions

may, however, lead to significant patterns of employment inequality between groups, a perspective that is summarised by Rogstad as 'small causes — big difference' (Rogstad, 2001, 2012c). It is not the degree of racism or distaste that causes these differences. They are rather a result of how subtle preferences systemically affect minorities, leading to group differences at the aggregate. This pattern is being documented through ongoing correspondence testing in the DISCRIM project and is also documented by Midtbøen & Rogstad (2012).

Documenting discrimination has not made the empirical distinction between kinds of discrimination easier. The concept itself is, according to Rogstad (2000a), problematic if we are to understand patterns of ethnic inequality in the labour market, as the line between what is discrimination and what is not is difficult to draw. All the small intangible preferences that employers have may lead to unequal treatment that may be difficult to label as discrimination in legal terms. At an individual level, employers may have legitimate reasons for hiring their ethnic peers. If language is emphasised, for example, immigrants will never stand on an equal footing with Norwegians.

Even though the concept of discrimination may be seen as problematic, I question the need to find a novel term to be attributed to 'legitimate' reasons for discriminatory practices when we are referring to otherwise equal candidates for a job, fully understanding that *discrimination* is a term with political and emotional connotations.

8.5. Fitting in: Homophily in motion?

In this study, it is found that when deciding whom to hire, the employer tries to assess a person's suitability, that is, that the candidate has the right personal traits to do the job and fit into the organisation. The importance of personal traits and the issue of fitting in have previously been documented by Rogstad (2000, p. 125), who finds that employers emphasised the need for employees to fit into the culture of organisations (see also Tronstad, 2010,p. 35, Waldinger and Lichter, 2003, p. 145, Jenkins, 1986, ch. 3).

The issue of suitability is problematic. Personal traits are difficult to measure and document. An objective and transparent comparison of different candidates is therefore also difficult (Rogstad, 2012c, p.24). It can be argued that the issue of fitting in may apply to Norwegians and ethnic minorities alike. This is a legitimate argument, particularly as our respondents in general do not make direct connections between suitability, fitting in and minority status. However, in light of earlier research that shows that managers do link suitability to ethnicity (see for example Kvitastein et al., 1996,[43] Rogstad, 2000a, Midtbøen & Rogstad, 2012) and the final selection methods employers apply, it is possible that the issue of fitting in is linked to discrimination, whether intended or not. This link is expressed in a striking way by Midtbøen: 'At times, one can get the impression that [...] suitability [...] is used as a generic term for a variety of ways in which minority candidates do not fit in' (Midtbøen, 2012a, pp. 111-112).

In this study, it is found that employers, from the very beginning of the hiring process, have some idea about which personal traits candidates should have. However, every employer has — because of different organisational cultures — different notions of suitability and fitting in.

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[43] In Kvitasteins' study 233 managers were asked to compare a Vietnamese, a Pakistani and a Norwegian with the same education and similar grades. Both minority candidates were given lower probability to fit in and be hired (in Rogstad 2000: 128)

It is not clear whether personal traits are clearly defined in advance, or whether employers may use them to legitimise their decisions when making the final selection. From these remarks, a pertinent question arises: How do employers assess whether a person has personal traits that make him or her suited for a job and to fit into the organisation?

In this respect, professional recruiters work in ways that distinguish them from companies' own recruiting practices, especially those who hire new employees only now and then. Only professional recruiters and a couple of employers we interviewed deeply analysed the personal traits needed for a successful performance of jobs and fitting into the relevant company. Most employers, on the other hand, waited for the interview to get a 'gut feeling' about applicants. Virtually every employer made hiring decisions based on gut feeling. This finding is in line with previous Norwegian research (see Midtbøen & Rogstad, 2012; Sandal & Bye, 2009). International studies also demonstrate that employers use gut feeling and irrelevant factors to a higher degree when they evaluate minority candidates (De Meijer, Ph Born, Van Zielst & Van Der Molen, 2007; Frazer & Wiersma, 2001).

'Gut feeling' was a central topic in the interviews. It is a fuzzy concept about the employers' impressions of candidates and the working environments where he or she has to fit in. Gut feeling can be seen as the result of the relationship between the applicant's self-presentation and the recruiter's interpretation of it. The recruiter is challenged to distinguish between candidates' self-presentation and their real skills and traits.

According to social cognitive theory, we have the tendency to favour in-group members, even when we do not feel distaste for out-groups members (Reskin, 2002). This tendency will bring about a *homophily* mechanism — preferences for interacting with similar others (Feld & Bernard, 2009; Sandal & Bye, 2009; see also Byrne, 1971). Accordingly, employers will have a tendency to prefer candidates similar to themselves. The larger the differences between the two parties, the more

difficult and biased the assessment of candidates will be. According to McPherson et al. (2001) ethnicity is the strongest parameter for association followed by age, religion, occupation and gender. Following this line of reasoning, it is not unlikely that Ida and Andreas would systematically have been preferred before Saera and Kamran in the process of final selection.

Interestingly, several employers were aware of the homophily principle — or *similarity attraction paradigm*, which they specifically addressed as a principle they instructed their recruiters or colleagues not to follow. However, only one employer was aware of the interview situation as a source of bias. In this sample, only one employer specifically conducted structured interviews and was aware of the effects of unstructured interviews. As mentioned in chapter 2, research has showed that high-structure interviews have lower group differences on average than low-structure interviews because structured interviews are less prone to be affected by personal bias and stereotypes (Huffcutt and Roth, 1998, p. 186; Kacmar & Hochwarter, 1995, p. 224; for an overview of research on interviews see Posthuma et al., 2002).

8.6. Examining the meaning of language

Knowledge of the language of the host country is seen as a part of a person's country specific human capital (Chiswick, 1978). On the basis of this theoretical perspective, differences in unemployment rates between the native population and minorities can partly be explained by minorities' poor knowledge of the host country language. In fact, lack of language skills is often used as a reason for not hiring minorities (IMDi, 2011; Midtbøen, 2012b; Rogstad, 2000b). However, the significance of knowing Norwegian points in different directions (Rogstad, 2000a, p. 107). Djuve and Hagen (1995) point out, for example, that language has virtually no impact on

getting a job. In a newer study, Støren (2004) finds that language skills do not have a substantial independent effect on risk of unemployment.

The issue of language is salient and complex. In this sample, virtually all employers express concern about language issues. The topic was often raised spontaneously by employers, sometimes in connection with our question about the ethnic composition of companies.

Individually, employers highlighted different reasons — typically requirements of the job itself and contact with clients — to require good knowledge of or even proficiency in Norwegian. Moreover, different employers could require different levels of language skills to do the same kind of job. Sometimes the employers did have good reasons for requiring good language skills or even fluency, while at other times arguments for fluency sounded more peculiar. On the other hand, in jobs where one would expect language skills to be important, lower language skills were accepted. In general, language requirements seemed to vary more according to labour supply than according to the kind of task to be performed. This finding is supported in previous Norwegian research (Rogstad, 2000a; Midtbøen, 2012a). Even more notably, *assumptions* about minorities' command of Norwegian varied with labour market conditions. For example, pre-school teachers were assumed to be fluent in Norwegian if their education was completed in Norway, while the same assumptions were not made in other sectors.

Looking at these findings and previous research as a whole may lead us to ask about the real meaning of language. A tentative answer to this question was given by Ms. Moen (#27), a key informant and professional recruiter:

(67) *Ms. Moen: To give language the blame is somehow so harmless [...] But very often there are other things than language. And it's a lot of uncertainty about [foreign] education, and that ensuring the quality of the candidates is so demanding that... no, I can't bear it, let's just take the Norwegian one.*

Ms. Moen is referring here to uncertainty about foreign education. However, this innocuous justification may be used more generally. My general interpretation of the significance of language issues is consistent with Ms Moen's statement: language command may be the widely used excuse when recruiters' gut feelings are not the right ones and they choose not to hire a minority candidate. Language is an explanation that does not need to be further justified but may be used to cover up more controversial or dubious reasons (see for example Rogstad, 2000a, pp. 113-116). In light of this discussion one may wonder if employers set the requirement high in order to exclude minorities from the recruitment process itself.

Another relevant question concerns how employers evaluate language skills. Submitting a certificate of language proficiency — or completed Norwegian education — should be enough to evaluate written skills. The different certificates that exist for proof of Norwegian capability were often, however, unknown to employers in this sample (or at least were not mentioned). The way oral skills were sometimes evaluated lacked professionalism. Several employers said that they would call to check if a person was as good in Norwegian as he or she was trying to signal by letter. This method was also found among the employers interviewed in the project carried out by Rogstad and Midtbøen (Midtbøen, 2012b). Such short tests could sometimes be enough for not inviting a person to interview.

Lastly, it should be pointed out that communication is a process with at least two parts. The evaluation of language level is therefore relationally biased. International research shows that a person's language skills may be perceived differently according to whom is listening (Matsuda, 1990; Smith, 2005). Talking with an accent at a job interview may, for example, be enough to be categorised as having 'poor language skills'. In this sample, most employers rejected the notion that an accent would have an impact if the person was understandable. It is, however, unclear where the line lies between understandable accents and

frustratingly broken language.[44] In light of international research showing that accents influence hiring decisions (Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2010; Matsuda, 1990; Segrest Purkiss et al., 2006) this is an issue that should be further investigated.

8.7. Revising the analytical model

The point of departure of this analysis has been a rational choice model. I have also suggested in the course of the analysis the impact of mechanisms outside the scope of rationality which have been taken into account to explain some of the employers' behaviour. Thus, reading rationality in a narrow way (Opp, 1999) would imply that the task has been unfulfilled. Do employers act rationally and, if so, how do mechanisms other than rational ones comply with the analytical frame?

For this model to be useful, one needs to see rationality from the perspective of the employers and assess what makes sense to them (Coleman, 1990). I have made the same assumption as Rogstad (2012b, p. 25): '[...] People try thoroughly to act in rational ways when different factors are weighed against each other. Additionally, there will be factors that influence their actions, but to which they do not have a reflected approach.'

According to Elster (1989,p. 13), any kind of action can be explained as the result of a) a filtering operation composed by all kinds of constraints and b) the mechanism that ascertains which action within the opportunity set will be carried out. Turning this statement around, we can then say that mechanisms ensure action *only* after certain constraints have narrowed the opportunity set. Constraints can be legal, economic and psychological.

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[44] I tried to get an understanding of this issue by asking some of the respondents if my oral skills were satisfactory to work at their company. The responses varied from 'charming accent' to 'unclear diction', even when the person showed no signs of not being able to understand me.

Below, I discuss some of the main findings in light of a wide concept of rationality and its constraints.

The meritocratic mechanism

This mechanism is perhaps the easiest one to incorporate into the analytical frame, as meritocracy is considered to be a cornerstone of rationality in human resource management (Roe & Van den Berg, 2003, p. 263). If a simple definition of acting rationally is to do the best for oneself — or for the company — then taking the best candidate for a job is rational.

The meritocratic principle is found to apply in the definition of the profile and to a certain degree in the screening process. In both sub-processes, constraints applied. Shortage of pre-school teachers, for example, implied that the profile for this kind of labour could not be defined according to a certain length of working experience — which would obviously be the best for the kindergarten — or other additional qualities of which a particular kindergarten might be in need.

In the screening process, following the meritocratic principle implies that employers have to collect evidence about the candidates. In other words, evidence is necessary for choosing the best course of action — to make a rational choice. However, the costs of thorough evaluations may exceed the benefits (Stiglitz, 1975, Elster, 1989). In this study it was found that employers sorted information about jobseekers in the most cost effective ways possible, adapting to the circumstances of their situations, time being the most obvious constraint. When facing many applications, employers did not have time to screen thoroughly. Other constraints had to do with jobseekers signaling abilities. If jobseekers did not succeed in adjusting their signaling in a way that was understandable to employers, then employers were not able to assess their human capital.

Discrimination mechanisms

In this sample it was found that only in one instance did the employer (Mr. Svendsen at *Neptune Insurance* (#7)) act in a discriminatory way in the screening process, while in some other cases we found accounts which concealed attitudes that were likely to lead to discrimination. The question of rationality in these cases may be resolved by deciding what kind of discrimination we may be talking about. However, as discussed in section 8.4, labelling discrimination was not an easy task.

Let us first assume that Mr. Svendsen discriminated according to the theory of *statistical discrimination*; because he did not have enough information about the average productivity of Saera's ethnic group, *or* he assumed that this ethnic group had a low productivity. The employer's unwillingness to take risks complies with even a narrow version of RCT. It has to be emphasised here that endless pursuit of evidence is irrational. As stated above, the cost of obtaining more information about candidates may exceed the final benefits, and employers do try to be economic when screening.

Let us now assume that it was taste that led the employer to discriminate against Saera; there was evidence in the interview that Mr. Svendsen did not approve of certain cultures. This kind of discrimination, described by Becker ([1957] 1971), is seen as irrational from the perspective of the company. According to economic theory, it is not profitable to act according to prejudices; companies behaving in this way will be competed out of the market. However, companies need real people to act and for real people it makes sense — a wider definition of rationality — to exclude from the workplace people they do not like. Moreover, recruiting people that recruiters do not like may affect productivity and, in this way, the choice is rational even in terms of corporate rationality, as shown below.

Another kind of attitude that could lead to discrimination includes those based on beliefs about customer attitudes. According to Merton's fourfold typology

(1948) unprejudiced employers could discriminate because of customer tastes — or assumptions about their prejudices or preferences — as these are assumed to adversely affect business. Since the employer will be making a judgement based on economic productivity, discrimination based on customer attitudes is also rational (Becker, [1957] 1971, p. 40, Rogstad, 2000, pp. 38-39).

The same logic applies to co-workers' prejudices. One may wonder whether the issue of fitting in, which has been so salient in this data, is connected to co-workers' attitudes. Although controversial, the well-known *Howthorne studies* (Mayo, [1949] 1975) can be invoked here to argue for the rationality of taking the opinions of co-workers into consideration. In these studies, Mayo and his team found that productivity was to a great extent affected by social conditions at the factory.

It appears troublesome to keep a rational model in light of those psychological reactions that I have suggested emerged in this data, upon which all humans may act. Reskin (2002) calls these reactions *automatic non-conscious cognitive mechanisms* and distinguishes between *categorisation, stereotyping* and *attribution.* According to Reskin, these are non-rational mechanisms that are pivotal to understanding the ways in which employment decisions are routinely biased.

According to a narrow understanding of rationality, economically motivated action cannot accommodate these peculiar social cognitive mechanisms. A serious project such as hiring — where economic interests are at stake — needs the specific attention of the manager. He or she is supposed to evaluate candidates according to their qualifications, and find the one who will do the best job *without* involving too many risks.

On the other hand, constraints influence rational action. Time is a significant constraint: it is not rational to keep searching for information forever. As a result of time pressure, employers may opt for coarse labelling (Stiglitz, 1975). This economic method may lead to categorisation, stereotyping and attribution. These

mechanisms are closely related to each other and have in common a subjective automatic distinction of 'us' and 'them' (Brewer, 1997).

To accommodate these mechanisms within the initial analytical frame, an important assumption in the wide version of RCT needs to be emphasised: subjective constraints are as important as objective constraints (Opp, 1999; cf. 3.2). Categorisation, stereotyping and attribution introduce simplicity in place of complexity and variation. Stereotypes are therefore stubborn: even when facts contradict a stereotype, we still find ways to preserve the general content of our categories (Tajfel, 1969). The reason for this is that information that supports our stereotypes can be processed more effectively. In situations where we need to be cognitively efficient — for example, if there is time pressure or information overload — the likelihood of invoking stereotypes increases and their impact on our judgement and memory is enhanced (Reskin, 2002, p. 224).

In the data we have seen some examples in which these kinds of psychological constraints were likely to have taken place during screening. Moreover, virtually all employers mentioned that they let their gut feelings guide the selection. If gut feelings and whether a person fits in were correlated, the issue of rationality would not be problematic, as productivity also depends on well-being. The problem is that gut feelings from one or two interviews do not necessarily mean that a person would fit in. Conversely, the lack of positive gut feelings does not necessarily mean that a person would not fit in. However, one may ask which alternatives employers have at the final stage: if two, three or four candidates have similar qualifications and they have no means of predicting further differences in productivity among these candidates, it seems only natural — and rational — to select the candidate one likes the most. The implication this has for minority applicants is that, if the employer is attracted to people who are like him or herself, the most likely outcome will be that the majority candidate will be offered a job. At the end of the day, it is not likely that many employers could be accused of

discrimination in a legal sense. They probably do not think of themselves as discriminating actors either.

The line of reasoning I have followed may give the impression that I am taking the side of the employers and excusing discriminatory practice with arguments of rationality. On the one hand, such a criticism may be justified, since I have taken the perspective of the employers. However, this perspective is pursued in order to come closer to an understanding of what happens when people apply for a job. By doing this, I believe that a subtle form of discrimination has been documented, where the aggregate outcome of employers' individual decisions is fewer job opportunities for minorities. Hence, a distinction between explaining behaviour with the explanatory models we have within the social sciences and what is a normative or political right needs to be made. Acting rationally is, after all, not the same as doing the right thing.

8.8. Implications for policy and further research

In this study I have focused on employers' reasoning and the impact this has on minority applicants. This kind of study is scarce, and the unresolved issues left here suggest that more research taking this perspective is needed. The real meaning of language to employers is one of an issue requiring further exploration. For example, the impact of accents in an interview situation has, to my knowledge, not been studied in a Norwegian context.

Even when language skills are not used as a cover for other attitudes, we can still conclude that many employers have difficulties in assessing knowledge of language. A possible policy implication of this finding is that the contents of existing language tests need to be communicated to employers in a better way. Furthermore, the myriad of different tests that exists today should be unified into one standardised test that also includes a test for oral skills. The results of such tests

should be binding, meaning that an employer cannot use language as an excuse for not hiring people with a minority background. These tests should be free of charge.

Another focus in this thesis has been on processes where higher education is required. While not unique, this focus is also rarer; most attention is given to marginalised groups. Previous research within this category has suggested that highly educated minorities have more difficulties in obtaining their first job after graduation (Brekke, 2006, 2007; Brekke & Mastekaasa, 2008; Hermansen, 2009). Several explanations have been launched to account for these differences: lack of networks, country specific human capital and discrimination. Less is known, however, about the interaction of supply side and demand side mechanisms. This interaction may have a cumulatively disadvantageous effect — or vicious spiral effect — for some individuals (see for example DiPrete & Eirich, 2006). For example, a person that is discriminated against at some point may have difficulties finding a job at a later point. He or she may encounter difficulties because of the length of time he or she has been out of the labour market, a situation that most employers — including the tolerant or non-discriminative ones — see as unfavourable. People falling into such situations —minorities or natives— may need special schemes to be helped. The schemes that exist today under the auspices of NAV are often more stigmatising than a real help.

This thesis has emphasised attitudes and mechanisms that are disadvantageous for minorities, which is natural given the project of which this study is part. Nonetheless, while interviewing and analysing this material, we have encountered much positivity about minorities. This finding, supported by increasing literature about minorities' success in the educational system (for example Birkelund & Mastekaasa, 2009), might imply that in order to balance the picture, we should shift focus towards minorities' success stories or towards successful multi-ethnic workplaces. Several respondents in this data have testified that working with people from other backgrounds has changed their attitudes

towards minorities and encouraged them to accept, appreciate and benefit from differences. These employers routinely employed people from minority backgrounds. Moreover, in this study it has also been found that cultural knowledge among employers counteracts the effects of biased methods of selection. Such stories support the contact hypothesis which states that contact with people of different ethnicities destroys stereotypes and develops friendly attitudes or at least increases tolerance (Allport, [1954] 1979; Pettigrew, 1998; Wilson, 1996). Several scholars working on intergroup research have suggested strategies for reducing intergroup bias by exploiting the ways in which people process social information (Gaertner et al., 2000; Reskin, 2002).

A finding that I believe is worthy of emphasis is that well-intended policies may have negative effects. I refer here to the obligation of agents in the governmental sector (and some municipalities) to call at least one person of minority background, which in this study meant that in some cases only the minority applicant was called for interview. In one of these cases the decision was taken reluctantly (cf. chapter 6 type V cases). It is not unlikely that compelling employers to call a person of minority background may do more harm than good, if such obligations are not anchored in more binding policies or statutory provisions. For example, Rogstad (2012a, p. 157) suggests that organisations must document reasons for their hiring practices if in more than 80% of their recruitment native candidates are offered jobs. I would propose that such a scheme is specified by type of position. In this way employers may not benefit from branch segregation[45]. Obligations should, however, be accompanied by rights that compensate employers for risk they may be taking if they feel compelled to hire people from minority backgrounds to fill a quota.

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[45] This has a parallel to quotation of women in companies' board.

On the whole, this thesis suggests, in line with the work of Rogstad (2000a) and Midtbøen & Rogstad (2012), that more attention should be turned to ways to influence employers' allegedly legitimate decisions.

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All references used in this thesis are reported.

Word count: 39 532

Appendix A

Pair of Application

Saera Rashid
Munkegata 9
0656 Oslo
Mobil: 93002783
Email: saera.rashid86@gmail.com

Oslo, October 14th. 2011

Application for the position as portfolio staff

My name is Saera Rashid, and I apply with great interest for the position as portfolio staff in Vertikal Helseassistanse. I hold a BA in economics and administration, and I have two years of experience in the field of finance and accounting and have, amongst other tasks, been working with accounting, billing and reporting.

On account of my studies and my present position as an accountant consultant, I have learnt to work systematically, and I know from experience that I perform well under pressure. As your employee, I will therefore be able to work systematically and independently. Furthermore, I have good sense of humour, I am aim to please and I like to cooperate with others.

If this sounds interesting, I sincerely hope that you will be in contact with me. I can readily be contacted by e-mail, and I look forward to seeing you in an interview.

Yours truly,
Saera Rashid

Curriculum Vitae

Specifics and contact information
- Saera Rashid
- Born: March 22nd, 1986
- Munkegata 9, 0656 Oslo
- E-mail: saera.rashid86@gmail.com
- Cell phone: 93002783

Education
- BA in business administration, Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus (2006-2009)
- Elvebakken secondary school (2003-2006)

Work experience
- Accountant for Steen og Jensen Økonomi AS (2009-2011)
- Employed in sales at BikBok (2003-2005)

Knowledge of language and computer skills
- Very good knowledge of Norwegian and English, written and verbal
- Very good level of skill in computers (Excel, Visma Business, Mamut)

References provided upon request

Ida Johansen   XX/XX 2011
Trondheimsveien 70
0565 Oslo
Email: johansen_ida86@hotmail.com
Cell phone: 93008674

Application for the position as portfolio staff

I refer to the job announcement on finn.no and apply herewith for the position as portfolio staff.

I have a BA in business administration from Høyskolen in Oslo, which I concluded in spring 2009. In addition, I have two years of work experience in Ticon Management Ltd., where I have gained a good level of knowledge in the fields of financial management and accounting.

I am responsible and focused on finding solutions, and I thrive on challenges. At the same time, I recognise that it is important to work meticulously and within a structure; my student record and my past work experience will demonstrate that I have mastered these traits. These qualities make me well suited for the portfolio staff position.

If you have any questions, I can be reached by e-mail. I do hope for a positive response.

Yours truly
Ida Johansen

CV – Ida Johansen

Ida Johansen
Trondheimsveien 70
0565 Oslo
Born: April 14th 1986
Cell phone: 93008674
Email: johansen_ida86@hotmail.com

Work experience
2009-2011: Accountant at Ticon Forvaltning AS
2002-2004: Employee at GlasMagasinet

Education
2006-2009: Bachelorgrad in Business administration at Høyskolen i Oslo og
Akershus
2003-2006: Manglerud secondary school

Language skills
Very good English, written and spoken

Computer skills
Excellent fluency in Excel and Mamut

Saera Rashid
Munkegata 9
0656 Oslo
Mobil: 93002783
Email: saera.rashid86@gmail.com

Oslo, dato

Søknad på stilling som økonomi- og porteføljemedarbeider

Mitt navn er Saera Rashid og jeg søker med stor interesse på jobben som økonomi- og porteføljemedarbeider i Vertikal Helseassistanse. Jeg har en BA i økonomi og administrasjon og to års erfaring innenfor økonomi og regnskapsarbeid, og har blant annet jobbet med bokføring, fakturering og rapportering.

Gjennom økonomi- og administrasjonsutdanningen og min nåværende stilling som regnskapskonsulent har jeg lært meg å arbeide systematisk og ryddig, og jeg vet fra erfaring at jeg jobber godt under hektiske forhold. Som medarbeider hos dere vil jeg derfor kunne jobbe strukturert og selvstendig. I tillegg har jeg godt humør, er serviceinnstilt og liker å samarbeide med andre.

Dersom dette høres interessant ut, håper jeg dere tar kontakt med meg. Jeg kan best nås på e-post og stiller gjerne opp til intervju.

Med vennlig hilsen

Saera Rashid

Curriculum Vitae

Personalia og kontaktinformasjon
- Saera Rashid
- Fødselsdato: 22.3.1986
- Munkegata 9, 0656 Oslo
- E-post: saera.rashid86@gmail.com
- Mobil: 93002783

Utdannelse
- BA i økonomi og administrasjon, Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus (2006-2009)
- Elvebakken videregående skole, allmennfag (2003-2006)

Arbeidserfaring
- Regnskapskonsulent i Steen og Jensen Økonomi AS (2009-2011)
- Salgsmedarbeider på BikBok (2003-2005)

Språk og datakunnskaper
- Svært gode norsk- og engelskkunnskaper, muntlig og skriftlig
- Svært gode datakunnskaper (Excel, Visma Business, Mamut)

Referanser oppgis på forespørsel

Ida Johansen   XX/XX-2011
Trondheimsveien 70
0565 Oslo
Email: johansen_ida86@hotmail.com
Tlf: 93008674

Søknad på jobb som økonomi- og porteføljemedarbeider

Jeg viser til stillingsutlysning på finn.no og søker med dette på jobben som
økonomimedarbeider hos dere.

Jeg har en bachelorgrad i økonomi fra Høyskolen i Oslo, som jeg avsluttet våren
2009. I tillegg har jeg to års erfaring som regnskapsmedarbeider i Ticon
Forvaltning AS, der jeg har fått god kjennskap til generell økonomistyring og
regnskapsføring.

Som person er jeg ansvarsfull og løsningsfokusert, og glad i en utfordring.
Samtidig er det viktig å kunne jobbe nøyaktig og strukturert, noe studiene og
tidligere arbeidserfaring har vist at jeg behersker. Disse egenskapene gjør at jeg ser
meg godt egnet i stillingen som økonomi- og porteføljemedarbeider.

Ta kontakt på e-mail hvis det er aktuelt å invitere meg til et personlig intervju. Jeg
håper på positiv respons!

Vennlig hilsen
Ida Johansen

CV – Ida Johansen

Ida Johansen
Trondheimsveien 70
0565 Oslo
Født: 14/4-1986
Tlf: 93008674
Email: johansen_ida86@hotmail.com

Arbeidserfaring
2009-2011: Regnskapsmedarbeider i Ticon Forvaltning AS
2002-2004: Butikkmedarbeider i GlasMagasinet

Utdanning
2006-2009: Bachelorgrad i økonomi fra Høyskolen i Oslo og Akershus
2003-2006: Manglerud vgs, allmennfaglig linje

Språkkunnskaper
Meget gode engelskkunnskaper, skriftlig og muntlig

Dataferdigheter
Meget gode dataferdigheter. Har spesielt lang erfaring med bruk av Excel og
Mamut.

Appendix B

Letter to Employers

UiO ⦂ University of Oslo
Department of Sociology and Human Geography

University of Oslo
Department of Sociology and Human Geography
Harriet Holters hus
Moltke Moes vei 31
0851 OSLO

Oslo,

Name of company

Regarding the research project on hiring processes
The Institute of Sociology and Human Geography is at present conducting an investigation into the selection processes in the labour market. The project is financed by the Norwegian Council for Research and has been approved by the Committee for Ethical Research in the fields of sociology and the humanities. We are particularly looking into the conditions for equal treatment and, within this field, into what factors render some workers more attractive during hiring processes.

In this context, your business has been selected. The study was initiated by sending you two applications for a position for which you had recently advertised. The applications are almost identical with one major distinction: the applicants' names. In this way, we wish to examine practices and decisions in a large amount of businesses in Norway.

We are sorry if being selected has been an inconvenience for you. At the same time, we wish to stress that the trial was immediately terminated after your response was received. The project has thus not influenced which person you eventually would offer a position in your company.

We also point out that there is no specific reason for your company to have been selected other than having advertised for a position within the time frame in which we were gathering data.

We therefore wish to thank you for being a part of increasing the knowledge of the process of hiring. We would like, however, to do a short interview with you.

In this, you may account for your assessments in relation to the current announcement and the hiring process that ensued. Furthermore, you may find the results of the test for your company regarding the current applications.

We do hope you will contact us in order to take part in the next step of this research. Your contribution is of the highest importance to us. We want to draw attention to the fact that the study guarantees full anonymity, regardless of your further participation or not. To take part is, of course, voluntary, and you may at any point of time withdraw from the investigation.

I hope to hear from you so we can confirm a date. You may contact me by e-mail and by telephone.

Any questions regarding this project may be directed to:

Jon Rogstad: jon.rogstad@fafo.no, 22087942
Gunn Elisabeth Birkelund: g.e.birkelund@sosgeo.uio.no, 22844051

Yours truly,

UiO **⫶ Universitetet i Oslo**

Institutt for sosiologi og samfunnsgeografi

Universitetet i Oslo
Institutt for sosiologi og samfunnsgeografi
Harriet Holters hus
Moltke Moes vei 31
0851 OSLO

Oslo,

Firmanavn

Angående forskningsprosjekt om ansettelsesprosesser i arbeidslivet

For tiden gjennomfører Institutt for sosiologi og samfunnsgeografi ved Universitetet i Oslo en undersøkelse om seleksjonsprosesser i arbeidslivet. Prosjektet er finansiert av Norges forskningsråd, og har vært gjennom godkjenning av den forskningsetiske komiteen for samfunnsfag og humaniora. Vi ser særlig på betingelser for likebehandling og herunder hva som gjør at enkelte arbeidstakere framstår som mer attraktive enn andre i ansettelsesprosesser.

I den sammenheng er deres bedrift trukket ut. Undersøkelsesopplegget går ut på at vi har sendt dere to søknader på en stillingsutlysning dere nylig har offentliggjort. Søknadene er nær identiske, med unntak av navnet på søkeren. På den måten ønsker vi å få grep om grunnlaget for praksis og beslutninger i en stor mengde virksomheter i Norge.

Vi beklager om det har vært en ekstra belastning for dere å bli trukket ut. Samtidig vil vi understreke at forsøket ble aktivt avsluttet umiddelbart etter at vi fikk respons fra dere. Prosjektet har derfor ikke påvirket hvem dere til slutt endte med å tilby jobb i virksomheten. Det skal også påpekes at det ikke er noen grunn til at akkurat deres bedrift ble trukket ut, utover at dere hadde en stillingsutlysning i den tidsperioden hvor datainnsamlingen pågikk.

Vi vil derfor her takke dere for at dere var en del av kunnskapsutviklingen når det gjelder ansettelser. Vi ønsker imidlertid svært gjerne å gjennomføre en kort oppfølgingssamtale med dere. I denne samtalen kan dere gjøre rede for deres vurderinger i forhold til den aktuelle utlysningen og ansettelsesprosessen som fulgte. I tillegg kan dere få vite hvordan akkurat deres virsomhet kom ut når det gjaldt de aktuelle søknadene vi sendte.

Vi håper dere tar kontakt for å delta i neste trinn av undersøkelsen. Deres videre bidrag er svært viktig for oss. Vi gjør videre oppmerksom på at virksomheten

uansett deltakelse eller ikke, er sikret full anonymitet. Men selvsagt er deltakelsen frivillig, og dere kan når som helst kan trekke dere fra undersøkelsen.

Dere kan ta kontakt på mail eller på telefon:

Mail: h.f.bjelland@sosgeo.uio.no
Tlf: 22844728

Håper på å høre fra dere, så vi kan avtale et tidspunkt etter 22.11.2011. Ved eventuelle spørsmål om prosjektet, kontakt

Jon Rogstad: jon.rogstad@fafo.no, 22087942
Gunn Elisabeth Birkelund: g.e.birkelund@sosgeo.uio.no, 22844051

Med vennlig hilsen

Postadresse: Postboks 1096 Blindern, 0317 Oslo
E-post: ekspedisjonen@sosgeo.uio.no
www.sv.uio.no/iss/

Appendix C

Interview Guide

Below is the translated interview guided as developed by Jon Rogstad and Midtbøen[46]. The original follows.

A guide to the interview with employers

Short presentation of the project

1. The project is carried out by the UiO and financed by the Norwegian Council for Research.

2. Goal: To understand more of the subject of hiring processes in the Norwegian labour market.

3. Method: Two identical job applications have been sent. They differ mainly by the name of the applicant, signaling an ethnic minority or majority background.

4. Method justification: the only way to find out how hiring processes work.

5. Your company has randomly been selected, the variable being the type of position and the time period in which you announced, and we are sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused your company.

Anonymity, volunteering and the right to withdraw

1. Do you agree that the material from this interview can be used in research?

2. Both you and your company will have full anonymity.

3. You can at any time withdraw from the interview.

---

[46] The complete initial guide had some questions about the consequences of the Utøya massacre 22 July 2011. These questions have been removed, as we stopped using them after a few interviews.

4. The material from the interview will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project.

Brief information on the company and employer – context
1. How large is the company, number of employees, areas of expertise, public/private organisation, etc?

2. Who are the users or customers of the company?

3. What is the gender composition of the employees?

4. What is the ethnic composition of the employees?

5. Are you satisfied with the ethnic and gender composition or are there specific groups you wish to hire?

6. How is the management composition; are you satisfied with this composition?

7. What is your exact job description?

8. What part do you take in hiring processes?

The last recruiting process
1. What were the circumstances of the advertisement of position X?

2. What kind of expertise is needed for this position?

3. How did you proceed in this recruitment process?

   a) Advertisement at finn.no/nav.no? Did you also use a recruitment agency or/and newspaper?

4. Was this process different from general hiring practices?

   a) For example, have you recruited via the Internet or in some other way hire people without advertising?

5. Do you remember how many candidates applied in this process?

   a) Is this a regular number or is it more/less than usual?

6. Do you remember how many candidates were called in for an interview?

7. How did you proceed when choosing which candidates should be called for an interview?

8. How did you prepare yourself for the interview?

9. Do you remember how you reasoned when making the final selection? What characterized the person chosen?

10. Which factors were important?

11. What should have been different for you to arrive at a different result?

12. Beside education and work experience, which criteria were applied when choosing candidates, first for an interview and when making the final decision?

Results of the correspondence test

1. In the letter you received, we informed you that you could get information about the concrete test of position X. Are you interested in knowing what the result was?

2. What do you think about this result?

3. What do you think can be the reason(s) for this result?

Uncertainty in hiring processes

1. What do you look at first when you receive an application?

2. Hiring someone always implies that you are taking a chance on one or a few over others. This may imply uncertainty about a person's suitability, productivity, etc. What kinds of risks are associated with position X?

3. In terms of this position, is it about finding 'the one", or is it merely about avoiding a completely wrong hiring decision?

4. Which kind of candidate stands out?

5. Have you made wrong hiring decisions?

6. Is it then something typical about such bad hirings?

7. What kind of experience has your company had when hiring people with a minority background?

   a) Do you think this experience influences how you make you hiring decisions?

8. Do you feel that there are different risks involved when you hire people with a minority background?

   a) If yes, what kind of differences are we talking about?

9. In terms of male and female persons with a minority background, do you feel that there are different kinds of risks involved with these groups?

   a) What kind of differences?

Risk factors – especially language

1. How important is knowledge of Norwegian in working for your company, especially regarding position X?

2. What have been your experiences with applicants'/employees' language skills?

3. When you receive an application in a foreign language, is it possible to say something about the person's language skills?

4. Are there other kinds of indicators you use to assess language skills?

5. When the company is in the process of hiring process and a relevant candidate has a name that signals an ethnic minority background, is there the possibility of special arrangements or the potential for specific challenges? Examples of these may include:

   a) Food at the cantina?
   b) Alcohol at Christmas parties etc.?
   c) Wearing a *hijab*?
   d) Wish to pray during the work day?
   e) Extended holidays?
   f) If hiring a man: The relation to female managers?

g) If hiring a woman: The relation to other male employees?

6. If you answered 'yes' to any of these questions, how do you decide if such conditions apply to this candidate?

Other relevant circumstances

1. In cases where the new employee is to interact with customers or people in general, how important are the customers'/users' perceptions about your employees when you are looking to hire a new person?

2. How important is the existing work environment, and what you know about your labour force's attitudes towards ethnic minorities?

3. How do you think other employers assess hiring people with a minority background?

4. Do you think there is a difference between the private and public sector?

5. Now and then, we read in the newspapers about persons with a minority background who have applied for many jobs without being invited for an interview. What do you think about these headlines?

6. We have sent many hundreds of applications to employers in Oslo. Many times, the candidates are treated equally. However, the Norwegian candidate is the one who is systematically favoured. What do you think this is about?

7. Do you have any advice for other employers who wonder about hiring persons with a minority background?

Social responsibility — closing the interview

1. Is the inclusion of ethnic minorities in the Norwegian labour market an important issue for Norwegian working life today? Or do you think that the present structure works fine?

2. Do you think of other and better ways to work for achieving ethnic equality than what is done today?

3. Some years ago, the Norwegian debate about immigration changed from being focused on problems to being focused on arguments like 'without immigrants Norway stops'. How do you assess the importance of immigrants for the Norwegian working life?

4. Has the ethnic composition in your company changed over the last few years?

5. Is there something I did not ask about and you would like to add?

Intervjuguide

Kort presentasjon av prosjektet
1. Prosjektet utføres fra UiO, finansiert av Norges forskningsråd.

2. Mål: Å forstå mer om hvordan ansettelsesprosesser i det norske arbeidsmarkedet foregår – særlig med tanke på personer med etnisk minoritetsbakgrunn.

3. Metode: To tilnærmet identiske jobbsøknader er sendt ut. Skiller seg fra hverandre ved navn – som signaliserer etnisk minoritets- og majoritetsbakgrunn.

4. Begrunnelse for metode: Å finne ut hvordan ansettelsesprosesser skjer i praksis – eneste metode.

5. Din bedrift er i denne forbindelse tilfeldig trukket ut (X var stillingstype vi hadde valgt ut på forhånd og dere annonserte i prosjektperioden), og vi beklager de mulige omkostningene dette kan ha medført for bedriften.

Anonymitet, frivillighet og reservasjonsrett
1. Samtykker du i at materialet fra dette intervjuet blir brukt i forskningsøyemed?

2. Både bedriften og du som enkeltperson vil være sikret full anonymitet.

3. Du kan når som helst trekke deg i løpet av intervjuet og også i ettertid.

4. Intervjumaterialet vil bli makulert ved prosjektslutt.

Kort om bedriften og arbeidsgiver – kontekst
1. Hvor stor bedrift, antall ansatte, kompetanseområder, offentlig/privat, etc.

2. Hvem er brukerne av eller kundene til bedriften?

3. Hvordan er sammensetningen i forhold til kjønn?

4. Hvordan er sammensetningen i forhold til etnisk bakgrunn?

5. Er du fornøyd med den etniske og kjønnsmessige sammensetningen, eller er det bestemte grupper dere ønsker å rekruttere?

6. Evt.: Hvordan er fordelingen på mellomleder- og ledernivå, og er du fornøyd/misfornøyd med dette?

7. Hva går din konkrete stilling ut på?

8. Hvilken rolle spiller du i ansettelsesprosesser?

Om den siste rekrutteringsprosessen
1. Kan du først fortelle litt om omstendigheten rundt utlysningen av stilling X?

2. Hvilken kompetanse kreves for denne stillingen?

3. Hvordan gikk dere frem i denne rekrutteringsprosessen?
   a) Kun utlysning på finn/nav eller brukte dere også vikarbyråer og/eller pressen?

4. Skiller denne prosessen seg fra generell praksis i ansettelser på noen måte?
   a) Hender det f. eks at dere rekrutterer internt eller på andre måter ansetter uten at en stilling er utlyst?

5. Husker du hvor mange søkere det var til stillingen?
   a) Er dette et vanlig antall eller mer/mindre enn vanlig?

6. Husker du hvor mange kandidater som ble innkalt til intervju?

7. Hvordan foregikk utvelgelsen av kandidater til intervjuet?

8. Husker du hvordan du forberedte deg til intervjuet?

9. Husker du hvordan dere resonnerte rundt den endelige utvelgelsen av en kandidat til denne jobben – og hva kjennetegner vedkommende?

10. Hvilke faktorer var viktige?

11. Hva skulle til for at dere kom frem til et annet resultat?

12. Ved siden av formell kompetanse og arbeidserfaring, hvilke kriterier legges til grunn for utvelgelsen av kandidater – først til intervju og til slutt til endelig ansettelse?

Velge om du vil vite hvordan deres bedrift 'kommer ut'
1. I brevet dere mottok fra oss, skrev vi at dere kunne få opplysninger om hva utfallet ble i den konkrete testen som handler stilling X. Er du interessert i hva utfallet ble?
2. Hva tenker du om dette utfallet?
3. Hva tror du kan være årsaken til at akkurat dette ble resultatet?

Om usikkerhet
1. Hva er det aller første du ser på når du mottar en jobbsøknad?
2. En ansettelse vil vel alltid innebære at dere tar en sjanse og satser på én eller noen få framfor andre. I dette ligger en usikkerhet som knytter seg til egnethet, produktivitet, etc. Hva slags risiko mener du at det knytter seg til den bestemte stillingen X?
3. Handler det i stillinger som denne å finne 'den ene' til jobben, eller er det først og fremst snakk om å unngå å ansette helt feil?
4. Hva gjør at noen peker seg ut som den ene?
5. Har det forekommet noen feilansettelser?
   a) Er det i så fall noe typisk som går igjen ved slike feilansettelser?
6. Hva slags erfaringer har din bedrift med å ansette personer med etnisk minoritetsbakgrunn?
   a) Hvis ja: Tror du denne erfaringen har noen påvirkning på hvordan du stiller deg til senere ansettelser?
7. Opplever du at det er ulik risiko involvert om du ansetter personer med majoritets- og minoritetsbakgrunn?
   a) Hva ja: Hva består denne forskjellen i?
8. Hva med kvinnlige og mannlige personer med etnisk minoritetsbakgrunn, opplever du at det er ulik risiko knyttet til disse gruppene?
   a) Hvis ja: Hva består denne forskjellen i?

Andre risikofaktorer – hovedsaklig språk

1. Hvor viktig er beherskelse av norsk for å jobbe i din bedrift, og spesielt i den gjeldende stillingen X?

2. Hva er dine erfaringer med språkbeherskelsen til personer med etnisk minoritetsbakgrunn?

3. Når du får en søknad med et utenlandsk klingende navn, er det mulig å si noe om personens språkbeherskelse?

4. Er det andre former for indikatorer som man kan bruke?

5. Når bedriften er i en ansettelsesprosess og en aktuell søker har et navn som signaliserer etnisk minoritetsbakgrunn, er muligheten for tilrettelegginger eller særegne utfordringer av betydning? Jeg tenker f. eks på:

   a) Maten som tilbys i kantina?
   b) Alkoholproblematikk ved julebord o.l.?
   c) Hijabbruk?
   d) Ønske om å få be i løpet av arbeidsdagen?
   e) Lengre ferie?
   f) Ved ansettelser av menn: Forholdet til f. eks kvinnelige ledere?
   g) Ved ansettelser av kvinner: Forholdet til andre mannlige ansatte?

6. Hvis ja på de foregående spørsmål: Hvordan avgjør du om slike forhold er relevante for akkurat denne søkeren?

Andre relevante forhold

1. I tilfeller hvor ansettelsen gjelder en person som skal behandle kunder eller i det hele tatt møte mennesker: Hvor viktig er kundenes/ pasientenes/ brukernes oppfatninger om dine ansatte for deg når du skal ansette en ny person?

2. Hvor viktig er det eksisterende arbeidsmiljøet og det du vet om holdninger til etniske minoriteter i arbeidsstokken?

3. Hvordan tror du andre arbeidsgivere vurderer ansettelser av etniske minoriteter?

4. Tror du det er noen forskjell på offentlig og privat sektor i denne sammenhengen?

5. Fra tid til annen dukker det opp avisoverskrifter om personer med minoritetsbakgrunn som har søkt utallige jobber uten å bli kalt inn til intervju. Hva tenker du når du leser sånne overskrifter?

6. Vi har sendt mange hundre søknader ut i det norske arbeidsmarkedet. Selv om de to kandidatene ofte likebehandles, er det likevel slik at kandidaten med et typisk norsk navn favoriseres systematisk på bekostning av kandidaten med minoritetsbakgrunn. Hva tror du dette skyldes?

7. Har du råd til andre arbeidsgivere som lurer på dette med å ansette personer med minoritetsbakgrunn?

Fra bedrift til samfunn – avrunding

1. Er inklusjonen av etniske minoriteter i det norske arbeidslivet en viktig sak for norsk arbeidsliv i dag, eller tenker du at dette går seg til/fungerer bra?

2. Kan du tenke på andre og bedre måter å jobbe på for å nå målsettinger om etnisk likestilling enn det som gjøres i dag?

3. For noen år tilbake endret debatten om innvandring til Norge seg, fra å ha vært hovedsaklig problemfokusert til argumenter av typen "uten innvandring stopper Norge". Hvordan vurderer du betydningen av innvandrere for det norske arbeidslivet?

4. Har den etniske sammensetningen i din bedrift endret seg mye i løpet av de siste årene?

5. Er det noe vil legge til som jeg ikke allerede har spurt om?

Appendix D

Correspondence test results

Table D-1: List of respondents (employers) and correspondence test results

Non-profit organisations

Organisa-tion/ Respondent	Position to fill	Gender of appli-cants	Outcome of the experi-ment	Number of appli-cants	Diffi-cult position to fill	Remarks
1. Caring Ms. Olsen	(Authorized) Social Educator	F	Both call-back	-	YES	The position had to be announced again.
2. Light and True Ms. Dahl	Controller	M	Both call-back	35	NO	The recruiter was unsure about calling our candidates. They were called at the end because they were men.
3. Project Life Mr. Lund Ms. Eriksen *	Web editor	M	Both call-back	70	NO	
4. Rainbow action Mr. Karlsen	Communica-tions adviser	F	Both rejected	130	NO	Our candidates were not good enough due to lack of experience. At least 35 were good enough.
5. Ideal World Ms. Pedersen	Communica-tions adviser	M	Native candidate rejected	19	NO	There were fewer applicants than usual. Kamran's application was better articulated. However, the lack of motivation may have disqualified him. He was called back because he was minority and male.

Private Companies

6. Aas Accounting Ms. Strand	Certified accountant	M	Both rejected	9	YES	Our candidates had inaccurate CVs.
7. Neptune Insurance Mr. Svendsen	Controller	F	Minority candidate rejected	60	YES	The only case where the minority candidate was clearly set aside because of her name.
8. Scandia Health Ms. Larsen* Ms. Paulsen*	Nurse	F	Both call-back	11	YES	While in most cases our applications are seen as too standard, here they were perceived as positive and exciting.
9. Wholesale Supplies Mr. Berg*	IT technician	M	Both call-back	-	NO	Kamran was called for an interview three days after the majority candidate declined the invitation. Mr Berg does not have information about this process and cannot tell us the reason for the delay of Kamran's invitation.
10. Internet Solutions Ms .Mathisen	IT support	M	Minority candidate rejected	30	YES	The CV of the minority candidate was inaccurate. According to the respondent the CV of the minority candidate was of poorer quality.
11.PC Service Mr. Andersen	IT technician	M	Both call-back	51	NO	While our candidates had a bachelor degree, the company does not require this level of education for this kind of positions.
12. Gratifying Retirement Ms. Nilsen **	Nurse	F	Both call-back	20	YES	
13. Allied Freight Ms. Iversen Ms. Thomassen	Communications adviser	M	Both call-back	10	YES	
14.Snow White kindergarten Ms. Gundersen	Pre-school teacher	F	Both call-back	12	YES	Few of the applicants fulfilled the formal requirements. Often there are few if any with the right requirements.
15. Transporting People Ms. Evensen*	Information/ Communication	F	Both call-back	10	-	The respondent did not have much information about the recruitment process that was subjected to the experiment.

Governmental and municipal organisations

16. Government Agency Mr. Halvorsen Ms. Eide Mr. Danielsen	Executive officer	F	Both call-back	35	NO	
17. The Blue Pony kindergarten Ms. Holm	Pre-school teacher	F	Both call-back	14	YES	6 candidates fulfilled the formal requirement (our candidates included). All except one withdrew the application.
18.Municipal Agency Ms. Fredriksen **	Web editor	M	Native candidate rejected	82	NO	Kamran was invited to an interview because he was the only candidate with a minority background who fulfilled the minimal requirements. However, the application was evaluated as having too poor quality for the position.
19. Welfare Agency I Ms. Knutsen	Social worker	F	Both call-back	30	NO	Few fulfilled the formal requirements. The No here is in a border zone.
20. Welfare Agency II Ms. Johnsen	Social worker	F	Both call-back	37	NO	Many did not fulfil the formal requirements.
21.Peter Pan Ms. Jakobsen Ms. Haugen	Pre-school teacher	F	Both call-back	-	Usually YES	While this time there were several qualified applicants, there are often few candidates for this kind of position.
22. Directorate I Ms. Sandvik Ms. Simomsen Mr. Solberg Mr. Hansen *	informasjon/ Communication	M	Both rejected	-	NO	Our candidates probably had too little experience and education to compete with the other candidates. Often there are between 80 and 150 applicants.
23. Directorate II Ms. Rasmussen Ms. Haugland	Information	M	Native candidate rejected	133	NO	Probably Kamran was called back due to his minority status. No other candidates with a minority background fulfilled the requirements. In total 91 person fulfilled the minimum requirements and 8 were considered interesting. 2 persons were hired.

Appendix E

List of respondents and informants

Non-profit organisations

1. **Caring**: Ms Olsen.
2. **Light and True**: Ms Dahl.
3. **Project Life:** Mr Lund, Ms Eriksen.*
4. **Rainbow Action:** Mr Karlsen.
5. **Ideal World:** Ms Pedersen.

Commercial organisations

6. **Aas Accounting:** Ms Strand.
7. **Neptune Insurance:** Mr Svendsen.
8. **Scandia Health:** Ms Larsen*, Ms Paulsen.*
9. **Wholesale Supplies:** Mr Berg. *
10. **Internet Solutions:** Ms Mathisen.
11. **PC Service:** Mr. Andersen.
12. **Gratifying Retirement:** Ms Nilsen. **
13. **Allied Freight:** Ms Iversen, Ms Thomassen.
14. **Snow white kindergarten:** Ms Gundersen.
15. **Transporting People:** Ms Evensen *

Governmental and municipal organisations

16. **Government Agency:** Mr. Halvorsen, Ms. Eide, Mr. Danielsen.
17. **The Blue Pony kindergarten:** Ms. Holm.
18. **Municipal Agency:** Ms. Fredriksen.
19. **Welfare Agency I:** Ms. Knutsen.
20. **Welfare Agency II:** Ms. Johnsen.
21. **Peter Pan:** Ms. Jakobsen, Ms. Haugen.
22. **Directorate I:** Ms. Sandvik, Ms. Simonsen, Mr. Solberg, Mr. Hansen.
23. **Directorate II:** Ms. Rasmussen, Ms. Hauglan.

Key informants

24. **Mr. Lie.**
25. **Mr. Antonsen.**
26. **Ms. Sivertsen.**
27. **Ms. Moen.**
28. **Ms. Berntsen and Ms Bakken.**

 *Interviewed person did not participate actively in the recruiting process which concerns the experiment.
** Interviewed person did not participate actively in the recruiting process which concerns the experiment, but is well informed.

Appendix F

Employers' General Attributes

Below, I present the most salient attributes about the respondents and the organisations they represent, such as:

- Kind of organisation/company, company policy

- Employees: number, age, ethnic and gender composition

- The respondents' positions and roles in the hiring process

- The respondent's understanding of 'ethnicity'

Part of this information — along with the most salient information that is used in the analysis — is also presented in a table format in the 'Analytical matrix' which is available for download at http://uio.academia.edu/MaricelKnechtel

Non-profit organisations

1. **Caring:** Ms Olsen
Interviewers: Jon Rogstad, Maricel Knechtel

Ms Olsen is a mid-level manager with personnel and professional responsibility. In the recruitment process, she has more or less the entire responsibility.

Caring is a relatively small organisation that offers health services to impaired children with challenging behaviour. The organisation employs 12 people, five working full-time and seven part-time. Among those working full-time, four are men. In total, then, 66% of employees are men. Some employees have a father from another country. The organisation has had employees from minority backgrounds earlier, but we were not been able to know whether these were good or bad experiences.

2. **Light and True:** Ms Dahl

Interviewers: Maricel Knechtel, Heidi Fischer-Bjelland

Ms Dahl is HR Manager at *Light and True.* *Light and True* is an environmental organisation which is part of an international network. It employs about 40 persons. Most of the organisation's work is about influencing public opinion and politicians. There are about 60% women and 40% men. When asked about the company's ethnic composition, Ms Dahl says there are several nationalities represented, and about 25% are non-Norwegians. She believes that this is quite representative of the population; however, four of seven nationalities listed are Western cultures.

3. **Project Life:** Mr Lund & Ms Eriksen

Interviewers: Jon Rogstad, Tove M Aspøy

Mr Lund is the Organisation Manager at *Project Life,* and Ms Eriksen leads an intern project that reviews the organisation's recruitment. Mr Lund participates only in interviewing at the management level; otherwise, the local managers are responsible for this task.

Project Life is an idealistic organisation that works with health issues. The organisation employs around 170 people in Oslo and other cities throughout the country. The respondents were very positive about the researchers' visit, as it coincides with the project mentioned above. Furthermore, the organisation is concerned with reaching out to and informing all social strata, including ethnic minorities. In order to do that, they strive for an ethnic balance that approaches the ethnic composition in Norwegian society.

The organisation has only two employees working with HR issues, which implies that the recruitment processes are decentralized. Mr Lund said that it is a

challenge to follow the values upon which they wish to base their recruitment guidelines. Thus, when he learned about the result of our experiment, he was relieved, as the wish to integrate minorities in the organisation is genuine.

4. **Rainbow Action:** Mr Karlsen

Interviewers: Erika B Sterri, Tove M Aspøy

Mr Karlsen is vice-chairman and Finance Manager at *Rainbow Action*. He is involved in many recruitment processes, a responsibility shared with the general manager.

Rainbow Action is an environmental organisation which is part of an international network. It employs 30–40 persons. The organisation has internationally oriented positions whereas the main task is to influence Norwegian opinion and politicians. Employees are about 60% women and 40% men, while the management is about 50-50. When asked about ethnic composition, Mr Karlsen says that they have several foreigners at the organisation, but if one is going to think in terms of *ethnicity* there are only two. Mr Karlsen believes that one reason may be that minorities' educational choices not matching the kind of expertise the organisation needs. Regardless of how diversity is defined, an international milieu is positive for the organisation, though language presents some challenges, particularly in regard to social relations.

5. **Ideal World:** Ms Pedersen

Interviewers: Tove M Aspøy, Erika B Sterri

Ms Pedersen is HR adviser at *Ideal World*. She has a social commitment and a tough demeanour, and she describes herself as part of a countermovement in the organisation. By the way she speaks, it seems that her opinions are not easily overridden and that she holds an influential position in the organisation.

Ideal World is a large Norwegian NGO that works with lobbying and is involved in projects in underdeveloped countries. Around 150 people work in this Norwegian-based organisation with some employees working abroad. The gender composition is about 65% women and 35% men, and about 50-50 for management positions. Through the accounts during the interview, there seems to be a good proportion of people with a non-Western background, mostly immigrants. They do not have a lot of second generation immigrants, something that has to do with these groups' educational choices. Moreover, they have had employees emigrate from Western countries.

6. **Aas Accounting:** Ms Strand

Interviewers: Jon Rogstad, Heidi Fischer-Bjelland
Ms Strand is HR manager at *Aas Accounting*. She handles everything regarding recruitment and dismissals. However, the final decision in hiring is taken by the local manager.

Aas Accounting is a middle-sized company that employ around 60 persons spread throughout different towns. Over 50% of the employees are certified auditors, certified accountants or MBAs, which, according to Ms Strand, is a high proportion of highly qualified personnel. Certified accountants are in demand, and the company has often only between two and nine applicants. Ms Strand describes the company as family friendly, which the company seems to use actively in profiling the company as an attractive workplace. The company's clients include all kind of companies that need accounting, auditing services, advice or assistance in accessing the stock market.

The age of the employees ranges from 30 to 67 years. Several more women than men are employed at *Aas Accounting*. However, management is male-dominated. The company does not have employees of foreign background, except

for one employee from another Scandinavian country. According to Ms Strand, this fact has nothing to do with ethnicity; it is a language issue.

7. **Neptune Insurance:** Mr Svendsen

Interviewers: Jon Rogstad, Tove M Aspøy

Mr Svendsen is Director of Finance at *Neptune Insurance* and handles recruitment only for administration. Mr Svendsen is the only person in our sample whom we can be sure discriminated against the minority candidate.

 Neptune Insurance sells health policies to private customers and companies. The company is relatively young. The company have been growing by around five employees every year and employs today around 40 persons.

 The company has no employees of foreign background[47]. The reason for this is that the company needs very special employees. Language is important, both oral and written.

8. **Scandia Health:** Ms Larsen & Ms Paulsen

Interviewers: Maricel Knechtel, Tove M Aspøy

Ms Larsen is HR director, and Ms Paulsen is HR coordinator at Scandia Health. Ms Larsen has experience from the governmental sector and from other large companies that have applied policies of diversity. They work more with organisational culture and policies, and not with the actual process of selection.

 Scandia Health is one of the largest companies in our sample, employing 700 persons both in Oslo and other parts of the country. The company hires around 60 employees per year. The companies' clients are other companies, mostly large companies.

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[47] At first Mr Svendsen said there is one employee with a minority background. Later in the interview, however, he said there are no employees with a minority background.

The company is women-dominated (around 70%), and the average age is around 45. In management, the gender share is about 50-50.

A new HR strategy that has not been implemented emphasizes the recruiting process and specifies the wish for diversity. Ms Larson said that there is little diversity at *Scandia Health*, in gender, age or ethnicity. She thinks that if companies are to survive, they need diversity at the workplace.

9. **Wholesale Supplies:** Mr Berg

Interviewers: Tove M Aspøy, Maricel Knechtel

Mr Berg is the staff manager at *Wholesale Supplies*. While he does not usually have an active role in hiring, he is one of the persons in the organisation who has the task of authorizing recruitment process and assisting the respective manager in specifying the requirements for the new position. Preferably, most recruitments start with a defined need, but open applications are also taken seriously.

Wholesale Supplies is a family-based wholesale company which is more than 100 years old and employs around 200 persons. Mr Berg described the company as risk-averse; they invest only where they feel they have control. Moreover, the company is stable and predictable. Its customers are other companies of all sizes, but the typical customer is a middle-sized company.

The average age is 44 years, the average length of service is 13 years, and the turnover and sick absence are low. There are around 64% men and 36% women. Regarding expertise, they have several skill levels and specialities; however, there are not many with a master's degree.

When asked about how many employees have a minority background, Mr Berg said that there were 10-12, with European, African and Asian backgrounds. The majority are at low-level positions. The company is open for persons with a minority background, but they do not have a special policy to achieve diversity.

10. **Internet Solutions:** Ms Mathisen

Interviewers: Maricel Knechtel, Tove M Aspøy

Ms Mathisen is head of marketing and recruitment at *Internet Solutions*. Together with the manager of the respective department, she participates actively in each recruiting.

Internet Solutions is a very atypical IT firm, with a female composition of 30-35%. The management is dominated by women, having a female general manager. The company is only a few years old and employs 80-90 persons in Norway and 80-90 persons overseas. The company is continuously growing, whereas the biggest challenge is to find the expertise they need.

The overseas offices handle primarily Norwegian customers, which are other companies. The cooperation is described as exciting, and Ms Mathisen added that they are not that different in cultural terms. There are some challenges and differences, but, according to Ms Mathisen, it works fine.

When asked about the ethnic composition in the Norwegian-based company, Ms Mathisen said that they have five non-Norwegian employees, three from other Western nationalities.

11. **PC Service:** Mr Andersen

Interviewer: Tove M Aspøy

Mr Andersen is the general manager at *PC Service* and handles all the hiring. *PC Service* is a small company that delivers IT maintenance solutions to other firms and organisations. Many of their customers are public schools, and employees have to deal mostly with teachers.

Financially, the company has performed very well in these later years. According to proff.no, *PC Service* is the second-best performing company in our sample.

All the employees are between 20 and 30 years old. Their expertise varies from persons with vocational IT education, some teachers, and some with a bachelor degree. There are only three females among the employees. Often, there are few if any women among the applicants, even when the ad encourages women to apply. Mr Anderson is also proud that the company is ethnically diverse. At least four have non-Western background at the moment (second generation). He knows that several of his employees have had a hard time finding a job, and that, if they were Norwegian, they would have earned a lot more somewhere else.

12. **Gratifying Retirement:** Ms Nilsen

Interviewers: Tove M Aspøy, Erika B Sterri

Ms Nilsen is the general manager at *Gratifying Retirement*, a nursing home in an affluent area of West Oslo.

Gratifying Retirement has about 100 employees, of whom 80% are women. Most employees have a health-related education. Ms Nilsen said that the company has a focus on quality and has set high requirement for entering. However, it is not easy to get enough applicants for nursing positions. Therefore, they have to promote themselves as a good working environment.

When asked about the ethnic composition, Ms Nilsen said that there are many cultures represented in *Gratifying Retirement*, both immigrants and their descendants. In fact, there are more employees from other cultures than from Norway. Therefore, they have training programs about Norwegian culture, e.g., in relation to Christmas and Easter, since such cultural knowledge is important to the residents. The residents are all, except one or two, Norwegian and are incredibly tolerant. They become very fond of the employees, regardless where they come from, and they have become interested in their background.

13. **Allied Freight:** Ms Iversen, Ms Thomassen

Interviewers: Jon Rogstad, Erika B Sterri

Ms Iverson is a Strategy and HR manager and Ms Thomassen is a communications manager. *Allied Freight* is shipping company that employs more than 200 persons in 15 branches throughout Scandinavia.

The main Norwegian base employs around 100 persons. When asked about the ethnical composition, Ms Iversen said that, among their employees, there are Polish, Swedes, Danes, Indians and a lot more. The age composition at the company ranges from the mid-20s to retirement age.

14. **Snow White Kindergarten:** Ms Gundersen

Interviewers: Tove M Aspøy, Maricel Knechtel

Ms Gundersen is general manager at *Snow White Kindergarten* and has the main responsibility in hiring. *Snow White Kindergarten* is a privately owned kindergarten, with a very good financial performance.

Snow White Kindergarten counts 12 employees, among whom four are pre-school teachers, and the remainder are assistants. The kindergarten is located in a wealthy part of Oslo. The majority of the children's parents are Norwegian and highly educated.

Among the employees, many nationalities are represented. With regard to gender, over 80% are women.

15. Transporting People: Ms Evensen

Interviewers: Maricel Knechtel, Tove M Aspøy

Ms Evensen is manager of one of the departments at *Transporting People*. She is not familiar with the recruitment process we have tested. The company does not have a centralized HR system, and each department handles its hiring independently. Ms Evensen has worked for the company for about 20 years and has been responsible for much recruitment. She probably hires about 30 persons each year.

As the name suggests, this company organizes people's transportation and employs nearly 200 individuals, whereas more than 100 work at Ms Evensens' department. The financial performance of the company is, according to proff.no, weak.

Many of the employees work part time, and the work force is composed of different kinds of people at different ages – from 18 to retirement age. There is a high turn-over among the part-time employees, as most of them are students who quit when they get a permanent job after graduating.

The gender composition is about 50-50. When asked about the ethnic composition, Ms Evensen answered that there are 52 nationalities (second generation included) represented at *Transporting People*, but she said that there is an (absolute) requirement that people are fluent in Norwegian, both written and oral.

Governmental and municipal organisations

All respondents in this section have followed the recruitment guidelines stated in chapter 1 (section).

16. **Government Agency:** Mr Halvorsen, Ms Eide & Mr Danielsen

Interviewer: Tove M Aspøy

Mr Halvorsen is Staff Manager, Ms Eide HR and Mr Danielsen is one of the managers at the *Government Agency*. Mr Halvorsen and Ms Eide are responsible for the advertising and facilitating the recruitment process. Mr Danielsen was the responsible manager for the recruitment process which was subjected to the test. Ms Eide had worked earlier with HR at a private company.

  Government Agency has around 140 employees. Most of them are jurists, but some have a health or social sciences background. Around 70% are women. At the managerial level, the gender share is about 50-50. When asked about the ethnic composition, Mr Halvorsen said that they are quite a white crowd. For a few years, there were about five or six persons with non-Western ethnic background, while there are some more now.

17. **The Blue Pony Kindergarten:** Ms Holm

Interviewers: Erika B Sterri, Tove M Aspøy

Ms Holm is manager for this and other kindergartens and has personnel, economical and pedagogical responsibility. Hiring is one of her responsibilities. However, she says, it is the union that has the last word; they have to agree with her recommendation. The *Blue Pony Kindergarten* is located in the east part of Oslo. The organisation has 23 employees, whereas six are pre-school teacher positions and the rest are assistant positions with no educational requirement. While pre-school teachers are difficult to recruit, for an assistant position, they can get as many as 200 to 300 applications.

Only three employers are men. At least seven employees have a non-Western minority background, and others are from Western Europe. Only one teacher has a minority background.

Many of the children's parents are relatively well off; otherwise, it is a good mix among their 'customers'. Therefore, Ms Holm thinks it would be an advantage to recruit several teachers with bicultural background with interest in working with bilingual children. This kind of expertise is appreciated in this kindergarten.

18. **Municipal Agency:** Ms Fredriksen

Interviewer: Tove M Aspøy

Ms Fredriksen is HR manager at *Municipal Agency*. Her role in recruitment process has to do with quality assurance of the definition of the position and the advertising as well as with advising managers in recruiting. Moreover, she is present at interviews for managerial positions. She has not been directly involved in the process that was subjected to the test, but she is well informed about it. Ms Fredriksen has worked in the recruiting business in the private sector. When comparing both sectors, she said that, in the public sector, the process is very neat where everyone gets a serious treatment.

Municipal Agency employs 120 persons, most of whom are university graduates. The gender composition is about 50-50. There are many employees with an ethnical minority background. The agency has an equalization policy and a strategy that refers to equality issues, ethnicity among them. Ms Fredriksen is satisfied with the gender and ethnic composition of the organisation.

Ms Fredriksen is among those respondents who took up language issues when asked about ethnicity. Therefore, most of the employees with a minority background are second-, not first-generation immigrants.

19. **Welfare Agency I:** Ms Knutsen

Interviewers: Tove M Aspøy, Maricel Knechtel
Ms Knutsen is at *Welfare Agency I*. She is team manager and has also financial and personnel responsibility. In the recruitment process, she has almost the whole responsibility: she writes the advertisement, does the screening and conducts the interviews together with the union representatives.

 Welfare Agency I has 100 employees. Most of the employees have a social worker education, and, consequently, the workplace is dominated by women (around 70%). Ethnically, the organisation is, according to Ms Knutsen, quite diverse, although the staff composition does not reflect the ethnic composition of the population.

 Except for the guidelines that are similar for Oslo municipality and government, *Welfare Agency I* does not have an active policy for recruiting people with a minority background. She is of the opinion that this has not been necessary, as they usually have qualified applicants with a minority background. Because *Welfare Agency I* is located in an ethnically diverse area, the management is eager to recruit persons with non-Western backgrounds. Diversity is also positive for the working environment, as the group is uniform in terms of gender and profession.

20. **Welfare Agency II:** Ms Johnsen

Interviewers: Maricel Knechtel, Tove M Aspøy
Ms Johnsen is a team manager at *Welfare Agency II*. She has worked here for a relatively short period, wherein she has been responsible for about two permanent and some temporary hirings. *Welfare Agency II* counts approximately 35-40 employees. Over 95% of the employees are women, and the average age is 55 years. At this moment, there are no employees with a minority background. The clientele at *Welfare Agency II* is mostly Norwegian.

21. **Peter Pan:** Ms Jakobsen, Ms Haugen

Interviewers: Maricel Knechtel, Erika B Sterri
Ms Jakobsen and Ms Haugen are managers at the *Peter Pan Kindergarten* and handle all the recruitments together. The kindergarten is located in a central part of Oslo, and the children come from different social strata. Ms Jaboksen is married to a man of minority background and is very interested in the theme of our project.

Nearly 20 employees work at the kindergarten, whereas nearly a third is men. The recruitment of men has been done quite consciously, by calling many males for an interview. The employees are between 22 and 40 years of age.

When asked about ethnic composition, they responded that they have six persons from non-Western countries and three from Western European countries. They have not made this mix consciously; the employees were hired because they are competent. The company is not interested in ethnicity. According to Ms Jakobsen and Ms Haugen, it is all about education and motivation.

22. **Directorate I:** Ms Sandvik, Ms Simonsen Mr Solberg, Mr Hansen

Interviewers: Maricel Knechtel, Tove M Aspøy
Ms Sandvik is general manager. Ms Simonsen, Mr Solberg and Mr Hansen are Senior Advisers at *Directorate I*. None of them have had to do with the recruitment process that was subjected to the test wherein both our applicants were rejected.

Directorate I has about 200 employees: 70% are women and 30% men. This employer has a large share of employees with an ethnic minority background, about 30%. At the managerial level, there are about 25% with a minority background. The Personnel Regulations specifies that at least 50% of those invited for an interview have a minority background, provided they are qualified. *Directorate I* is perhaps the only organisation that thinks of minorities in terms of non-Western nationalities. Moreover, they do not count Eastern Europeans in their definition of

minorities. The reason for counting only Africa, Asia and South America is that there are individuals with those backgrounds who are most likely to meet challenges in the labour market.

As a rule, almost 40% of the pool of applicants has a minority background. Whereas many employers say that they do not have applicants with a minority background, *Directorate I* say they do not have this problem. On average, there is a total of 80 applicants for each position, but having between 100 and 200 applications is not unusual.

23. **Directorate II:** Ms Rasmussen, Ms Haugland

Interviewers: Maricel Knechtel, Tove M Aspøy

Ms Rasmussen and Ms Haugland have worked at *Directorate II* for about one year. The directorate has gone through a growing phase, and many people began their employment last year. Ms Rasmussen and Ms Haugland have worked intensely in professionalizing their HR system. They are both involved in the recruitment process, although the selection proposal is done by the respective section manager.

Directorate II is engaged in a project which aims is to protect and inform citizens. Their 'customers' are other governmental and municipal organisations and citizens in general.

At the moment, *Directorate II* employs nearly 100 people. The workplace is described as dynamic and intense. Besides administrative staff, most employees are engineers and technicians.

When we asked about the composition in the organisation, we are informed that around 70% are men, and that they have several employees with an immigrant background, between 5 and 10. Two are from countries outside Europe. When we asked specifically to count only those outside Western Europe, Ms Haugland said that they are aware of our definition of *immigrant*, but, when you count, it is all about language and communication.

Appendix G

Summarizing Memos (Key Informants)

In these memos, the main basis for the analysis is summarized. Moreover, some salient topics which are left out of the analysis and that the reader may find interesting are included.

24. Mr Lie

Interviewers: Maricel Knechtel, Erika B Sterri, Tove Aspøy

Mr Lie is adviser at a relatively small labour market-oriented welfare agency. He has worked over 20 year helping highly educated immigrants in the labour market. According to Mr Lie, employment service has developed to focus on welfare aids instead of on helping people in the labour market.

Mr Lie says that unemployment is much higher than what the figures say. Many immigrants do not have the right to unemployment benefits; therefore, there is no reason for them to register.

One important issue Mr Lie think is a disadvantage for immigrants is that language requirements are too high. At the same time, Norwegian skills among natives are overestimated. Many Norwegian do not write that well either. In a tight labour market, however, language requirements are not so high.

Another factor is that foreign education is disregarded. However, there has been a gradual positive development.

There are also negative and positive stereotypes: a Chinese woman with high education will have much greater chance than an African man. Mr. Lie has sometimes met prejudiced attitudes. Sometimes, an employer can say, 'we had one like [e.g., an Ethiopian] that and it did not work out'.

For some vacancies there are many applicants. Some markets are very difficult, even for Norwegians. Most immigrants do not understand this. However, they do know through media and research focus that there is a discrimination factor. Consequently, many will have a 'discrimination account'. They put all rejections in this account and interpret all their experiences from this perspective. It becomes a negative spiral, and this negativity will permeate applications and interviews. People will apply increasingly worse, mass-produced applications. Employers will sort out such applications quite automatically.

Job-seeking training does not make the situation better. Providers of job-seeking training restrict their costs but limit the number of coaches. Coaches have to work with mass-produced materials, which means that what applicants come out with are standard formulations. Thus, these job-seeking training formulations are seen right through by employers.

Mr Lie is of the opinion that immigrants with higher education are more difficult to help. The un-skilled market for internships is much easier: if you have two arms and legs, employers do not need to think much about it. It may work, and is low-cost labour. Skilled people may find the job search much more difficult. Employers may hesitate because of the time they have to invest in training. They keep many people with a master's degree from Norway on internships for a long time without offering a job afterwards. If the NAV official is clever, he will try to sell a trainee by arguing for the entire routine and overdue tasks that the trainee can help with too. It usually works best if there is some kind of condition of immediate utilization. Employers do not like to feel that they are providing charity. On the other extreme, there are large companies that are aware of the positive effects a 'diversity policy' may have on their public image.

Another obstacle for some immigrants is being overqualified, as for example having a PhD, or having an education that, because of authorization requirements, does not give immediate working possibilities.

Cultural issues are also important. The working culture has changed. Before, it was enough to be humble, modest and polite. Nowadays you have to find a balance and create the impression that you are very active and independent as well. Some immigrants might have not succeeded in their working life, because they do not take enough responsibility. In the Norwegian work culture, employees do not expect to be told all the time what to do.

Cultural clashes can also occur wherein people come from cultures characterised by a patron-client relationship. In these cultures, a jobseeker may appeal to the employer's compassion. However, employers want resourceful employees, not people with problems. These appeals are totally misplaced in a Norwegian context, for, here, the employer looks for motivation. The issue of motivation has been discussed at length.

Another issue is the tension between working efforts and sociability. Too much sociability will not be accepted by the manager. He or she needs employees for production. If you are on the other extreme, working hard and opting out the social life, you will not be popular among co-workers. People in internships who do not find the balance will not be offered a job.

25. Mr Antonsen

Interviewers: Maricel Knechtel, Tove Aspøy

Mr Antonsen is an investor and HR manager. Mr Antonsen has been involved in about 100 recruiting processes either for his company or as a subcontractor.

Mr Antonsen believes that there is a big difference between the private and the governmental labour market. There are objective and subjective criteria by which to measure this difference.

Governmental employers have some criteria that they have to follow when recruiting. They do their job as they are supposed to according to the rules, but, at the end, the result is the same; they are led by their subjectivity. This will apply

especially in situations wherein applicants are very similar; the manager will choose according to which 'face' he or she likes more.

However, while governmental employers are concerned with being fair, within the private market, it is easier to do as one pleases. Mr Antonsen has heard employers say: 'Somali? I don't hire Somalis'. It will have no consequences. A governmental official cannot say that.

For Mr Antonsen, quality systems in a company are very important. A good quality system will have routines and instructions for the recruitment process. Many companies do not like that. However, his experience is that, in large companies, there is an intention to follow such systems. One can become too reliant on choosing according to one's beliefs and experiences. In such systems, there will be guidelines about the expertise required for being hired. The skin colour of the candidates will not be of interest.

Many times, Mr Antonsen has experienced that people are rejected because of their religion. He has heard outspoken HR people say 'we do not want Muslims here' or 'I do not want a woman with a scarf on her head'. The reason for this kind of discriminative statements, Mr Antonsen noted, is some degree of xenophobia. When asked if there branch differences here, he said that is more about the kinds of managers. People are very different, and some should not have the task of hiring.

Cultural differences that are completely irrelevant for the job — such as odour, hairstyle or wearing a beard — can be a cause for discrimination. Mr Antonsen has caught himself in situations whereas he had almost discriminated against a person because of his or her looks.

Mr Antonsen does not have very high thoughts about the work ethic of some Norwegians. If two applicants are very similar, he will be more inclined to hire the foreign one. Of course, though, working cultures are different among different cultures, and there are differences among nations.

There are also cultural differences regarding the respect employees have for their managers. Norwegians are not that respectful. However, employers are not very aware of this, nor does it seem to be a quality that impresses them.

Mr Antonsen believes that a combination of gender, age and family circumstances can have more discriminatory effects than nationality, culture and religion. Appearance is also important, something that affects both Norwegians and others. In the public sector, he believes that people will answer that appearance has no significance, while in the private sector people will say that they would rather have a person who is good to look at.

Mr Antonsen is among the few respondents who are cautious regarding references, for good references are not everything anymore. However, references have great value for people chosen through a network, which would have a lot to say in hiring, especially for high positions.

26. Ms Sivertsen

Interviewers: Maricel Knechtel, Tove Aspøy

Ms Sivertsen is a coach at a school that provides vocational adult education services. The candidates attending the courses are clients of the welfare scheme. There are often more applicants for the courses than vacancies, and it is NAV that has to do the selection. Ms Sivertsen said that her work is to mentor people according to their experiences, education and culture. A lot will depend on peoples' attitude. She believes that around 50% of those who go to these vocational courses manage to get a job.

The school has a network of cooperative companies. This network is used actively by the mentors to place candidates in internships. In this school, there are all kinds of people. Some are required to take a course in order to keep their unemployment benefits. Some are people who have been out of the labour market for a very long time. Some have lost their jobs under the financial crisis, and others

are going to looking for their first job in Norway. The students range between 19 to 62 years old. There are more people from an ethnic minority background than native Norwegians. To be able to enter the labour market minorities need to learn Norwegian social codes. People have to work on diminishing misunderstandings because they are different, and they have to appear as Norwegian as possible.

When we asked her to elaborate what this means, she named several vital factors for being integrated into working life. Having social antennae is one of them: banalities of the weekend, for example, are expected to be shared. Some people have a great respect for their manager. They do what they are told but nothing more, because they expect the manager to tell them what to do next. In the Norwegian work life, you are expected to take responsibility for your working situation. This has to do with the fact that, in general, organisations have egalitarian structures.

When applying for jobs, you should find as much as you can about the firm where you are applying. Moreover, you should find about so much as you can about the person receiving your application to find common denominators at the personal level, and to appear as similar as possible.

Attitudes are, according to Ms Sivertsen, extremely important. Some employers are impressed with people that never give up. Those who do not give up succeed no matter which culture they come from. Furthermore, showing motivation and drive, either in a written application or personally, is essential.

When we asked whether it is easier the longer you have lived in the country, she said that it does not matter if you have lived here 40 years, or if you are born here if you only mingle with your own. You have to embrace Norwegian customs, values, attitudes, and even food. Norway is a conservative nation not accustomed to other cultures. There is scepticism because we do not know each other. We choose what is similar to us and what we know. Regarding employees, we know that 25-30% are sorted out because of their names; it may be because some people do not know

how to relate to cultures they do not know. Therefore, minority candidates need to compensate for their differentness by finding denominators that make them more Norwegian.

We also talked about language, something that can be a problem even for people born here. In particular, Pakistanis have not developed good language skills. They speak in an elementary school Norwegian, not professional Norwegian, because they only speak Urdu at home.

Language skills are very important. Many employers are very afraid to employ people without sufficient language skills, because it can lead to many misunderstandings. Language is important even when the daily tasks do not require fluency; one may have to communicate with customers from time to time. Last, but not least, it is important to take part in the social life at the work place.

Moreover, the issue of foreign education also came up. Ms Sivertsen said that it does not help to have a bachelor's or master's from Russia if you come and speak broken Norwegian. Besides, there are many prejudices about these kind of education. She noted that many employers think that foreign diplomas are not authentic; rather, they are something that has been paid for. Finally, there is a lack of cultural knowledge. While the Eastern European culture is very tough, in the Norwegian working life, humour has a place.

Ethnical diversity is positive, as it may enrich Norwegian working life in different ways. But the ways in which diversity can contribute to this enrichment has to be expressed. Sometimes, Ms Sivertsen encourages candidates to emphasize their cultures, to identify what strengths in their cultures have contributed to strengthen them as private individuals.

27. Ms Moen

Interviewers: Maricel Knechtel, Tove Aspøy

Ms Moen is HR manager at a major recruiting agency. She has also worked at governmental agencies. She has worked in the employment industry for more than 15 years. Ms Moen says that persons with a minority background that may not be discriminated during screening may be discriminated against during the interview, wherein language issues are used as an excuse for not hiring that person. She has also been interested in what happens during the multicultural meeting, and why recruiters use 'gut feelings' more when they meet people who do not look like their selves. Moreover, many of the selection tools that are used in Norway — e.g., personality test, cases and ability tests — have been developed in a Western cultural context. Different tools need to be adapted to become culturally sensitive.

Even the interview is a source of discrimination of which most recruiters are not aware. Persons who have not grown up in Norway do not have the communication form that is advantageous in a typical interview situation. According to the standard, minority candidates will perform badly in an interview.

According to Ms Moen there are two types of tests that are used in Norway: Jungian and ipsative. Some of these are ISO certified. The challenge with these tests is that they are developed within a Western-influenced science. Different ethnic groups respond differently to these tests. Ipsative tests, which are about self-presentation, are quite tough for some candidates. In the Norwegian recruitment process, the recruiter wants you to present yourself, something that is not common in very many cultures. Norway has a tradition for authenticity, while, in other cultures — and you do not have to go further than England — authenticity does not mean that much. Many candidates will have a bad interview, because they do not understand the relevance of their private 'I' in a work setting.

Recruiting agencies are more trained in different kinds of interview techniques. There is a lot of discrimination in the interview technique, and the reason is lack of expertise. They know, for instance, that hypothetical interview techniques do not work well when interviewing non-Western candidates. Instead, they will use a retrospective interview, wherein they have to explain concrete events they had been through.

Regarding 'gut feelings', there is a difference between professional and non-profession recruiters. Professional recruiters do not use their gut feelings so much. However, these gut feelings come into play when they meet something that is unknown. Employers that are not trained see recruitment as an isolated event, something they do once every three or four years. They do not analyse the recruitment process to see what they could have done differently.

Ms Moen has had problems selling in candidates many times. There is scepticism, and much of this scepticism is about language. She has also problems with placing Muslim candidates. Therefore, candidates have had internal training about how to persuade employers via the simplicity of adaptation.

Larger companies that operate in international markets have understood that they need multicultural expertise. Small- and mid-sized companies consider recruiting minorities a risk, although it is not documented that it is a higher risk to hire a person with a multicultural background. However, for some reason, risk is associated with multiculturalism.

Why the issue of language is so important for employers may in part be explained by the complicated system that Norway has developed for language training and tests. Employers do not always manage to find out the language skills a person may really have. Finding out what a specific foreign education contains is not easy either, as the system NOKUT has developed cannot be understood among employers. It is easier for employers to choose what seems to simply be the least amount of work: sorting out minority candidates. Still, some companies are

becoming more and more conscientious, because they need the labour. They have needs that go before their scepticism.

Some companies are being applauded because they are good at diversity. Much of this diversity, though, is found at the bottom line. The higher you look at the hierarchy, the whiter it is. Some companies have started to look into this issue, because they see that there is discrimination in career mobility.

We asked whether Ms Sivertens' advice to jobseekers about finding common denominators really works. Ms Moen answer is positive: at the interview, people do engage in conversations that have no relation to the job.

Ms Moen does not believe that there is less discrimination in the governmental sector than in the private market. Private companies are driven by profit, and they are pragmatic. Since money is what counts, thresholds go up and down according to market forces. If it is easy to find engineers, then language requirements are set high. But there are always preferences and a rank order. An Italian engineer will be preferred before a South American one, while the African will come last.

Within the governmental sector, there is the Governmental Personnel Manual and rules about how the recruitment process is to be conducted. However, some of processes are just processes that are conducted in order to comply with the policies. When some people come to the interview, they have experienced that, because they have a minority background, the interviewer is more concerned in getting them out than in, and questions evolve into what they cannot manage, rather than what they can contribute. In such cases, and when the recruiter cannot document a lack of expertise or language, it will all be about suitability. The candidate will not fit in.

We talked also about a catch-22 situation. Many recruiters are sceptical of minority candidates because they have experienced repeatedly that CVs and

applications are written in perfect Norwegian, but, when the candidate comes to the interview, he or she does not speak Norwegian that well. On the other hand, if the application have errors, the applicant is careless. When people are essentially sceptical, they will use one argument or the other to eliminate candidates of a minority background.

28. Ms Berntsen and Ms Bakken

Interviewers: Gunn E Birkelund, Maricel Knechtel, Tove Aspøy

Ms Berntsen and Ms Bakken work on a daily basis with recruitment at a major recruiting agency. The agency has an expressed commitment to social responsibility.

The company has accepted the consequences of demographical and market changes, and recruited people with minority background, especially from Eastern Europe, which has become the largest immigrant group in Norway.

One of the first things Ms Berntsen tell us, when presenting herself, is that she does not listen to her gut feeling. She thinks that is very important to have continuous training in the recruitment business, specially relating to those people defined as different, such as bilingual people, people with disabilities, etc.

Ms Berntsen explains that one important part of their job is setting up good specifications. They do not ask for a former job description, but they do a deep job analysis according to their present needs and working culture. For example, such things as how formal the employees at the organisation are in dress as well as gender composition are taken into account. According to Ms Berntsen, these facts are the kinds of knowledge they need to provide to the candidates. Essentially, the match is a relation with two parties. They do not only work for the employer; the new employee has to be comfortable in his or her new working place. Therefore, there are three things she is concerned with: is the candidate able to perform the

tasks, is he/she going to perform these tasks and will he/she fit in? 'Fitting in' addresses the organisation's culture. Both fitting in and the personal traits that the employer is looking for are thoroughly examined. The definitions of personal traits are established after in-depth conversation with the client.

Regarding minorities, employers often say that the person has to speak Norwegian. However, sometimes they just say that the applicant will not fit in at their work place, but this does not happen so often. Other times, they can say that they have had some bad experiences with people from certain countries. In addition, the media also play a role. There was a period when newspapers had given Lithuanians a reputation of being thieves; suddenly nobody wanted to employ Lithuanians. However, it disappeared after a while, and people forget. Ms Berntsen believed that this has to do with the Norwegian labour market. The market is so tight that to accept people from other countries in the worke place is quite high. Moreover, in certain businesses, some nationalities are more welcome than Norwegians; e.g., Indians within the IT industry. Both informants agreed that many employers hire people with a background that is similar to their own. It is familiar and safe. The result will be a uniform working place very similar people. However, the situation is changing, and good managers surround themselves with people of different kinds.

Ms Berntsen also tells about the way that they work. The first screening after the deadline is done by comparing the expertise against the specification, not the comparing of candidates against each other. In this first screening, some candidates are sorted out, regardless of name or address. When this first screening is done, they start looking at other things, such as where they went to school or if they had taken part of their education abroad, something that is positive today. They also consider the application letter: what kind of motivation does the candidate express and what he/she can contribute? How the application isconstructed and presented is

also important, although acceptance for typographical or grammatical errors will be higher for minority candidates.

Whether the candidate will fit in cannot be assessed before they have talked to him/her. When people have similar expertise, it will be difficult to distinguish from each other. Thus, they will call for an interview all those they believe are competent. For the kind of positions Ms Berntsen and Ms Bakken work with, there will not be too many candidates that fill the requirements to all specifications. However, if there are many applicants for a position, they will take as many as 15 for an interview.

Foreign educations are checked through the NOKUT system. They also check credentials' authenticity; this is done as well for Norwegian education.

This agency uses different kind of tests to find out about the candidate's suitability. One of these tests is NEO PI-R, based on the five-factor model, which is the most-used model internationally. They use also, but to a lesser degree, the OPQ *ipsative* tests. Other times they use Cut-e. Which test they use will depend on what they are looking for. They also use such ability tests as Matrigma and the electronic version of Raven. EKT is used for critical thinking. Ability tests are sent online and may be used to screen large applicant pools if necessary.

Personality test are not used to screen, but are used on candidates that have moved on in the recruitment process. At the end, there will be anywhere from two to four candidates, all of whom are competent according to the specification. At this stage, it will be the employer's task to choose among these. The employer will be the one to use the gut feeling; the agency will not influence anymore.

When asked about the *whiteness* of these test, Ms Bakken says that the criticism is not relevant. The test they use is normalized according to people's nationality. Furthermore, the capability tests they use are not numbers or letters, but figures.

The agency has at least a third phase interview round. The first interview is similar for all: i.e., standard questions. The second and third interviews are often adapted to the test results and the specifications of the position. All interviews are structured, and the same questions will be posed. In addition, there will be questions based on the test results.

Unstructured interviews are banned; a job interview is not cosy talk. All candidates are asked about the same things, so they can be compared against the specifications, and not compared because one candidate talked more or less than the other.

When asked about whether they may have problems placing Muslim candidates, the answer is positive. On the other hand, they do not have so many applicants for permanent positions with this background.

Negative attitudes towards candidates of minority background are more rare now than 8 to 10 years ago. Ms Bakken said that, according to the agency policies, they are obligated to turn down assignments that set conditions on people's skin-color. When employers have these kinds of attitudes, it is more often about the colour of the skin than being a foreigner.

For some positions, especially unskilled, bottom-line positions, there are employers that rather say that they do not want Norwegian candidates, for they have developed the reputation of having a poor work ethic. Foreigners are often preferred for physical heavy jobs. They also see that a work ethic is sometimes higher among second generation immigrants; they have often better credentials than ethnic Norwegians.

Networks are important, and 60-70% of jobs are not announced. Ms Berntsen admitted that it would be quite easy for her to let the neighbours' daughter to come to an interview, just because she knows her neighbour.

We asked whether Ms Sivertens' advice to jobseekers about finding common denominators really work. The answer is positive; it is good advice. However, the strategy will not work on professional recruiters.

Ms Berntsen is among the respondents who are cautious with regard to references. These are used to confirm or disconfirm information that has emerged during the interview. Otherwise, she says that there is a low correlation between what references says and reality, because references are selected with care. Some references can even be the result of a dismissal package.

Appendix H

Acronyms & Definitions

DISCRIM: Refers to the project, *Measuring and Explaining Discrimination in the Labour Market at ISS,* of which this study is part.

HC: Human capital theory

IMDi: The Directorate of Integration and Diversity

ISF: Institute for Social Research

ISS: Department of Sociology and Human Geography (University of Oslo)

NESH: National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and Humanities

NAV: Norwegian Labour and Welfare administration

NOKUT: Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education

RCT: Rational Choice theory

Definitions

Correspondence test: experimental method that entails sending a fictitious pair of applications to job ads. In the first part of the DISCRIM project, one application is sent with a Norwegian name and another with a Pakistani name to companies/organizations in Oslo

Respondent: In this thesis, *respondents* refer to the employers who have been subjected to correspondence testing and whom we interviewed.

(Key) Informant: In this thesis, informants are persons with extensive involvement in recruitment processes and/or knowledge about how such processes are conducted elsewhere. They were recruited independently of the correspondence testes and interviewed once.