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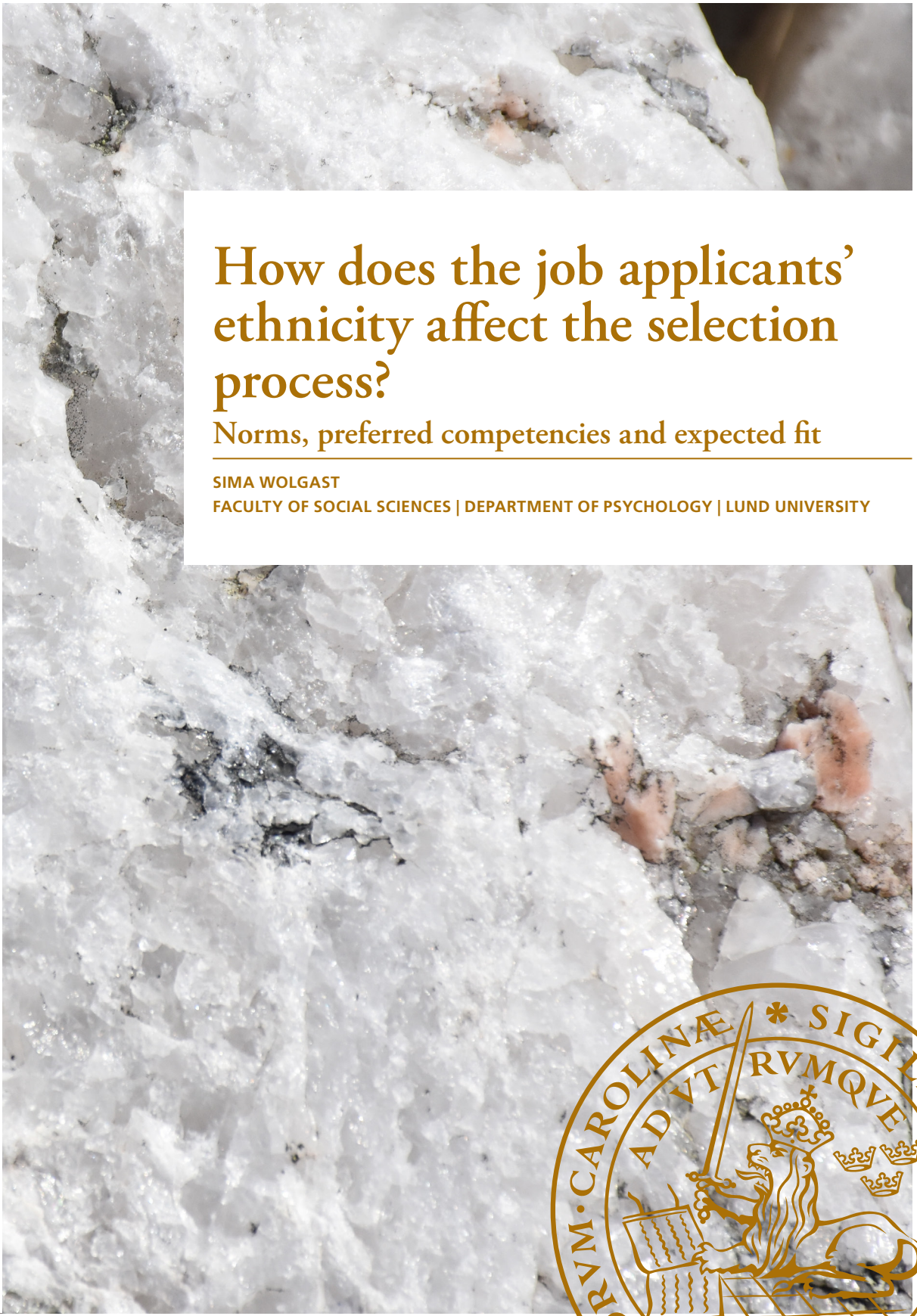
Wolgast, Sima

2017

*Document Version:*
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record



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SIMA WOLGAST
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES | DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY | LUND UNIVERSITY

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Sima Wolgast

LUND
UNIVERSITY

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION
by due permission of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Lund University, Sweden.
To be defended at Edens Hörsal. Date 20171013 and time 13.15

*Faculty opponent*
Professor Eva Derous, Ghent University

| Organization | Document name |
|---|---|
| LUND UNIVERSITY | Doctoral dessertation |
| | Date of issue: 2017-10-13 |
| Author: Sima Wolgast | Sponsoring organization |


Title and subtitle

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Abstract

The present thesis aimed to study different factors influencing recruiters when recruiting from an applicant pool with applicants from an ethnic ingroup and outgroup. Ethnicity was predicted to influence recruiters' perception and behaviour in different phases during recruitment.

Study I demonstrated that company norms affect recruiters' perception of what an employee should be like. Company norms, either emphasizing cohesion (employees should "fit in") or fairness (everybody should be treated equally), were presented to participants. We found an increased focus on Person–Group fit (such as social competence) when norms related to workforce cohesion (company requirement to fit in) were introduced and an increased focus on for Person–Job fit (such as job specific skills and abilities), when fairness norms related to equal opportunity were introduced. The norm effect was moderated by participants' awareness of the applicants' ethnicity. When expecting applicants with foreign background, participants in the cohesion condition showed an increased preference for selection methods related to social competence.

Study II revealed that outgroup applicants (of Arabic origin) prompt recruiters to focus more on whether they have integrated cultural norms and values fitting the ingroup-norms (Person-Culture fit), as well as the match between the applicants and their would-be work team (Person-Group fit). When applicants were from the ethnic ingroup, recruiters focused more on questions pertaining to the match between the applicants' abilities and the specific demands of the job (Person-Job fit). In addition, the study revealed that questions prepared for outgroup applicants were rated as less useful for hireability decisions, and that interview summaries emphasizing Person-Job fit were perceived as more useful.

Study III investigated whether increased structure during selection improves the outcome. Participants where either provided with tools for systemizing information about the job and the applicants (structured selection), or no such tools (unstructured selection). We hypothesized and found that a structured process improves the ability to identify job-relevant criteria and leads to the selection of more qualified applicants, even when in-group favouritism is tempting (e.g. when the outgroup applicants are more competent). Increasing structure helped recruiters select more competent applicants. Furthermore, increasing the motivation to carefully follow the structured procedure strengthened these effects. We conclude that structure pays off, and that motivational factors should be taken into account in order for it to have the optimal effect.

In all, the findings provide support for the hypotheses that different P-E fit aspects are focused on when recruiters are exposed to outgroup applicants and that structured recruitment leads to an improved ability to identify and select the most competent applicants.



Key words: Discrimination, Ethnicity, Arab, Recruitment, Organizational norms, Person Environment fit, Personnel selection, Social psychology, Organizational psychology, In-group and out-group, Ingroup favoritism, Systematic recruitment

Classification system and/or index terms (if any)

| Supplementary bibliographical information | | Language English |
|---|---|---|
| ISSN and key title | | ISBN 978-91-7753-424-5 (print)<br>ISBN 978-91-7753-424-2 (pdf) |
| Recipient's notes | Number of pages | Price |
| | Security classification | |




Signature  Date 2017-09-04

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LUND
UNIVERSITY

Coverphoto by: Sima Wolgast



Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Psychology

ISBN 978-91-7753-424-5 (print)
ISBN 978-91-7753-424-2 (pdf)

Printed in Sweden by Media-Tryck, Lund University
Lund 2017



MADE IN SWEDEN

*To my family, Martin, Alice, Simon, Felicia and Elna*
*Without you, no me*

*To my mother, who struggled in a country that was not hers,*
*who defeated obstacles higher than mountains*

*To my father, who came back*

*To my brother Sirous, who tried so hard to fit in, but lost his way*

*To my brother Sami, with the world ahead to conquer*

# Table of Contents

# Abstract

The present thesis aimed to study different factors influencing recruiters when recruiting from an applicant pool with applicants from an ethnic ingroup and outgroup. Ethnicity was predicted to influence recruiters' perception and behaviour in different phases during recruitment.

Study I demonstrated that company norms affect recruiters' perception of what an employee should be like. Company norms, either emphasizing cohesion (employees should "fit in") or fairness (everybody should be treated equally), were presented to participants. We found an increased focus on Person–Group fit (such as social competence) when norms related to workforce cohesion (company requirement to fit in) were introduced and an increased focus on for Person–Job fit (such as job specific skills and abilities), when fairness norms related to equal opportunity were introduced. The norm effect was moderated by participants' awareness of the applicants' ethnicity. When expecting applicants with foreign background, participants in the cohesion condition showed an increased preference for selection methods related to social competence.

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off, and that motivational factors should be taken into account in order for it to have the optimal effect.

In all, the findings provide support for the hypotheses that different P-E fit aspects are focused on when recruiters are exposed to outgroup applicants and that structured recruitment leads to an improved ability to identify and select the most competent applicants.

# Abstract in Swedish

Denna avhandling studerar faktorer som påverkar rekryterare då de skall välja bland jobbsökande med olika etnisk bakgrund. Generellt förväntades att de sökandes etnicitet skulle påverka rekryterares val och deras uppfattning om vad som är viktigt att ta fasta på hos en arbetssökande person, och att detta kan ske i olika faser av rekryteringsprocessen.

Studie 1 visade att företagsnormer påverkar rekryterares uppfattning av hur en potentiell medarbetare bör vara. Två olika normbeskrivningar, en som betonade sammanhållning (vikten av att framtida medarbetare skall ”passa in”) och en som betonade rättvisa (att alla skulle behandlas lika), presenterades för deltagarna. Studien visade att deltagarna tog fasta på arbetssökandes ”sociala kompetens”, när företaget betonade sammanhållning samt vikten av att ”passa in” i företaget (så kallat person-grupp matchning, P-G fit). När företagsnormen betonade rättvisa däremot, tog deltagarna istället fasta på jobbrelevanta kriterier (så kallad person-jobb matchning, P-J fit) i större utsträckning. När de sedan fick veta att det fanns sökande med utländsk bakgrund i sökandegruppen, visade deltagarna i den betingelse där företagsnormen betonade vikten av att ”passa in”, en ytterligare förstärkt preferens för urvalsmetoder relaterat till att bedöma den sökandes sociala kompetens.

Studie 2 visade att jobbsökande med ”arabiskt” ursprung bidrar till att rekryterare med ”svenskt” ursprung i större utsträckning fokuserar på huruvida den jobbsökande har integrerat ingruppens kulturella normer och värderingar (person-kultur matchning, P-C fit) och hur väl de passar in i en arbetsgrupp (person-grupp matchning, P-G fit). När de jobbsökande däremot var från den egna ingruppen, fokuserade rekryterarna mer på frågor som undersökte den sökandes jobbspecifika förmågor och färdigheter (person-jobb matchning, P-J fit). Vidare visade studien att de frågor som rekryterarna i större utsträckning hade föreslagit i relation till utgruppen skattades som mindre relevanta för vidare anställningsbeslut och att intervjusammanfattningar som fokuserade på person-jobb matchning ansågs mer användbara.

Studie tre undersökte om en ökad strukturering av information och informationsbearbetning under en rekrytering kan bidra till bättre beslut. Deltagarna försågs antingen med verktyg som hjälpte dem att systematisera information om jobbet och deltagarna (strukturerad selektionsmetod), eller så fick de inte tillgång

till dessa verktyg. Studien visade att de som arbetade strukturerat hade bättre möjlighet att både identifiera jobbrelevanta förmågor och välja de mest lämpade kandidaterna, även när ingruppsfavoritism var lockande (som när utgruppskandidaterna var mest kompetenta). Ökad struktur i rekryteringen bidrog alltså till att de mest kompetenta kandidaterna valdes till jobbet i större utsträckning. Vidare visade studien att, om man ökar deltagarnas motivation till att utföra rekryteringen noggrant, så stärks ovanstående effekter. Slutsatsen är att systematisering av information under en rekrytering fungerar och att rekryterares motivation att genomföra en rekrytering systematiskt är avgörande.

Ovanstående resultat och fynd stödjer hypotesen om att olika person-miljö matchning (P-E fit) fokuseras när rekryterare exponeras för jobbsökande med annan bakgrund än den etniskt ”svenska” och att ett strukturerat arbetssätt under en rekrytering bidrar till bättre möjligheter för rekryterare att identifiera och välja de mest kompetenta kandidaterna.

# List of papers

The present thesis is based on the following papers, referred to as Study I, Study II and Study III.

I. Björklund, F., Bäckström, M., & Wolgast, S. (2012). Company norms affect which traits are preferred in job candidates and may cause employment discrimination. *The Journal of Psychology*, *146*(6), 579–594

II. Wolgast, S., Björklund, F., & Bäckström, M. (2017). Expected fit: Applicant ethnicity affects which questions that are prepared for a job interview. Resubmitted to *Journal of Personnel Psychology*.

III. Wolgast, S., Björklund, F., & Bäckström, M. (2017). Tools for fairness: Increased structure in the selection process reduces discrimination. Unpublished manuscript.

# Acknowledgement

This dissertation is a product of the great support that I have received from so many people over the years. I offer my heartfelt thanks to all of you.

I would like to express my special appreciation and thanks to my main supervisor Professor Fredrik Björklund, you have been a significant support for me in my research. I would like to thank you for guiding me and generously sharing your skills and knowledge. Your advice has been invaluable. I would also like to thank my co-supervisor Martin Bäckström for your important input and support especially concerning methodological and statistical issues. I also direct my appreciation to those assistants and students that have in different ways been involved in and contributed to my project. Thank you all.

A special thanks to my family. Words cannot express how grateful I am to my life partner Martin Wolgast, and our beloved children Alice, Simon, Felicia and Elna, that brighten up the darkest skies. Thank you for supporting me through everything, and especially I can't thank you enough for encouraging me throughout this experience.

I also thank my mother Azam Nourali, that has shown me that struggle makes you strong, and that giving in is not an option. I thank my father Mohsen Ajdahi, for his wonderful food and barbeques on Sundays, and giving my family and me taste-sensations we cannot forget. Thank you also to my brothers, Sami and Sirous Ajdahi, and my parents-in-law, Inger and Bertil Wolgast, for caring and supporting me through this process.

My gratitude also goes to my colleagues at Department of psychology, at Lund University. I want to thank Una Tellhed for your engagement in important issues such as discrimination and racism, that you have the guts to discuss subjects others like to avoid. Thanks to other colleagues for caring and asking about my research and how I'm doing during the years.

I direct a special thanks to important teachers such as Per Jonson and Björn Gustavsson. After my graduation I was devastated to leave the University, this world of knowledge, and to do research didn't cross my mind. Per Jonson encouraged me to come back and give the world of science a try. I'm grateful for you advice and encouragement. Björn Gustavsson, my supervisor in clinical psychology, has in a humorous way helped me to approach skills as a therapist and supervisor in therapy.

Thank you both. I would also thank Britta Liljedal, Anita Lennerstedt and Annika Linné. You were the first co-workers at the department of psychology and gave me an important insight in the world of University.

I would also like to acknowledge my colleagues and friends that are working as clinical psychologists. Hedda, Johan, Andrea, Adam, Sabina, Christian, Karolina to mention some that everyday meet injustice and people that struggle in an unfair world, but that won't give up the idea that another world is possible. That we can build a society based primarily on solidarity and not profit. I hope that we can continue that struggle together.

Finally I wish to offer my deepest thanks to all my friends and special thanks to Pinar, Jon, Lova, Fredrik, Johanna, Emma, Hanna, Johannes, Elisabeth, Tove, Ämma, Boulette, Anne, that have listened, supported and encouraged me during the years. A special thanks to Holly Knapton and Anna Lindqvist, dear colleagues and friends for wise input and support. Anna our hour long walks and discussions have been indispensable. Every time we meet I'am filled with new ideas and perspectives, new thoughts and views. Thanks for being the person that you are.

All persons mentioned above have been a part of the journey leading up to this thesis and for that I am deeply grateful. I thank you all.

# Introduction

The present thesis concerns organizational discrimination and more specifically discrimination during the recruitment process. The focus is to investigate the behaviour of recruiters in a context where immigrants run the risk of being discriminated against based on their ethnicity. In study I and study II the initial phases of the recruitment practice are studied. The experiments focus on whether recruiters when exposed to applicants' ethnical background in different contexts shift their preferences in relation to what aspects and abilities are deemed as important for the job in question. Recruiters' actual behaviours during the selection phase are investigated in study III, where experiments are conducted in order to reveal potential useful tools that may counteract discrimination during applicant selection. Before describing the empirical studies on which the thesis is based, a theoretical overview of important scientific concepts, theories and studies concerning stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, intergroup relations and the unequal distribution of social power and resources will be presented.

## Discrimination

A dictionary definition of discrimination refers to the expression as originating from the Latin verb *discrimire*, which means *to separate, to distinguish, to make a distinction.* Discrimination appeared in the English language in the early 17th century. The term has been used as we presently know it since the American civil war, when it started to refer to intentional unequal treatment, *disparate treatment*, of individuals based solely on their race. Later the concept has been broadened and refined and refers no longer only to intentional differential treatment on the basis of a social group, but also to treatment which on the surface seems to be neutral with regard to social groups, but which nevertheless has negative outcomes for disadvantaged social groups; so called *disparate impact* (Green, 2003; SFS Diskrimineringslag, 1 kap, 2008:567). Thus, the concepts of disparate treatment and disparate impact, which are used in anti-discriminatory theory to classify discriminatory actions, entails the claim that behaviours should be considered discriminatory and illegal if they have disproportionate unfavorable outcomes for individuals belonging to protected groups, whether intentional or not. Contemporary

psychological research defines discrimination as intergroup behaviours driven by interests (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Foels, & Pratto, 2015), social norms and culturally formed cognitive processes, such as stereotypes and prejudices (Crandall & Stangor, 2005), which is the emotional or affective component in discrimination (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2007; Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2008). In the studies included in this thesis, we study discrimination conceptualized as actual behaviours, manifested as preferences (e.g. assessment of applicants' hireability) and actual selection decisions in an experimental context.

Despite strong evidence of a decline in negative racial attitudes (for example Quillian, 2006) and stronger legislation initiatives to decrease discrimination (Rydgren, 2004), recent surveys and research (World Values Survey between 1981 – 2014; European Social Survey, 2008 and 2009; Riach & Rich, 2002) still reveal substantial negative stereotypes, prejudice and discriminatory tendencies among studied populations against specific social groups in society (e.g. women, people of another nationality, homosexuals and elderly people). Thus, racial and ethnic discrimination is expressed verbally and behaviourally in many different contexts, and several theories and concepts have been suggested to explain the persisting and recurring nature of discriminatory practices. Some theories and studies focus on intrapsychic mechanisms, such as general and individual cognitive- and emotional processes, whereas others focus intergroup relations and contextual factors influencing the activation of the intrapsychic processes. A third way for researchers to increase our understanding of discrimination is to put the above-mentioned concepts in theoretical frameworks aiming to explain power related interests in society. Below is an overview of all these approaches to understanding discrimination.

## Stereotypes, Prejudice and Discrimination

Discriminatory behaviours can be understood as the result of intricate and complex psychological and relational processes, where basic cognitive mechanisms interact with different interests and needs of people belonging to different social groups (Cuddy, et al., 2007; Cuddy, Fiske, Kwan, Glick, Demoulin, Leyens, & ... Palacios, 2009; Foels & Pratto, 2015). Based on this assumption, all three studies in the thesis deal with intergroup relations, where Swedish recruiters (ingroup) are instructed to assess or select applicants of Arabic origin (outgroup). Among whites with middle class background, Arabic men are for example generally stereotyped as low in competence friendliness, agreeableness and empathy (Cuddy, et al., 2008; Cuddy et al., 2007; Agerström & Rooth, 2009), whereas ingroup members (i.e. whites) are generally stereotyped as warm and competent (Cuddy, et al., 2007; Cuddy, et al.,

2009). Hence, even though the conducted experiments do not explicitly study stereotype activation, we assume that the content of stereotypes or individual differences will trigger stereotypes and the following prejudices (whatever they might be), and recruiters will behave differently when exposed to Arabic men compared to native Swedes. The literature on stereotypes and related social cognitive processes thus serves as an important theoretical background to the performed studies and will therefore be reviewed below.

**Social categorization and Stereotypes.** One of the most fundamental cognitive processes that plays an essential role in the distinction of social groups, is *social categorization*. Social categorization has been suggested to follow the same process and laws as the categorization of objects (Taylor, Fiske, Etcoff, & Ruderman, 1978; Fiske & Taylor, 1991), and is argued to occur spontaneously in our everyday perception (Macrae, Bodenhausen, Milne, Thorn, & Castelli, 1997; Taylor et al., 1978, Fiske & Taylor, 1991). It is an automatic process that triggers a network of associated functions and characteristics previously encoded in memory, providing a probabilistic guide to interpret experience, shape expectations, and improvise appropriate action in response to situational demands (Vaisey, 2009; Strauss & Quinn, 1997; Lizardo & Strand, 2010). Prior experience and memories operate on current perception and cognition (interpretation and storage of information) by making certain categories more accessible during the interpretation of incoming information, a process known as *Category accessibility*, *Implicit memory activation* or *Priming* (Schneider & Shiffrin, 1977; Bargh, 1982; Bargh & Pietromonaco, 1982; Sedikides & Skowronski, 1991). Either consciously or unconsciously, priming activates a social category, and tends to make people behave along category-relevant dimensions (Macrae & Strangor, 1994; Lizardo & Strand, 2010; Devine, 1989; Dovidio, Kawakami, Johnson, & Howard, 1997; Lepore & Brown, 2002; Devine & Monteith, 1999). The traits or characteristics that are associated with a social category are called *stereotypes*, which refer to cognitive structures representing group-level generalizations and simplifications of information about social groups and their members (Allport, 1952; Macrae & Stangor, 1994). Stereotypes provide both descriptive and prescriptive social knowledge (Prentice & Carranza, 2002), which means that they both describe the characteristics that group members are believed to have and also inform us about what group members should be like or how they may behave. Furthermore, stereotypes are seen as the result of socialization and are often socially shared in a more or less consensual way (Gardner, 1994; Lamont, 2000; Hofstede, 1980).

The problem with stereotype formation is not that we possess the ability to simplify or categorize information concerning objects and individuals in our environment, since these abilities helps us to organize and guide us in an information overloaded world. Rather, the problem is that, when it comes to humans, the categorizations and the characteristics attributed to the social categories, are often negative,

overgeneralized and inaccurate (Stangor, 1995; Hamilton & Gifford, 1976). When categorizing people, we have a tendency to differentiate individuals and ascribe them to diverse groups, on the basis of distinctive phenotypical/demographic features or characteristics (Ito & Urland, 2003; Blair, Judd, Sadler, & Jenkins, 2002; Maddox & Gray, 2002; Maddox, 2004; Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Taylor et al., 1978), and then view individuals within these categories as maximally similar (McGarty & Penny, 1988; Linville, Fischer, & Salovey, 1989; Park & Judd, 1990). An overgeneralization from these parameters can however be incorrect, since basing judgments of individuals, and one's behaviours towards them, on category level knowledge has frequently been proven inaccurate (Sommers, Apfelbaum, Dukes, Toosi, & Wang, 2006). Consequently, another concern with negative stereotypes is that they can trigger discriminatory behaviours in different contexts, given that they represent implicit internalized social norms (Gardner, 1994; Lamont, 2000), which are not often reflected upon.

**Prejudice and discrimination.** Stereotypes are also believed to be systematically associated with certain emotional and behavioural tendencies (Cuddy, et al., 2007; Cuddy, et al., 2009). *Prejudice* includes and combines cognitive-, emotional- and evaluative variables. Theories on prejudice postulate that different stereotypes and associated emotions generate different types of discriminatory behaviours. Discriminatory behaviours against outgroup members driven by negative stereotypes and associated negative emotions towards the outgroup, have been termed *active and passive harm*. Active harm refers to behaviours that overtly harm the outgroup or its members, whereas passive harm refers to behaviours harming a group or its members either by not doing things that would be helpful or by not engaging in behaviours that are conceptualized as friendly (e.g. avoidance, neglect, ignorance, lack or scarce social interaction) (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Cuddy, et al., 2007). Hence, passive harm is a more subtle form of discrimination.

Additionally, outgroup members run the risk of being disadvantageously treated in indirect and subtle ways, when people engage in behaviours that are driven primarily by positive emotions toward the ingroup (Cuddy, el at., 2007; Cuddy, et al., 2009; Brewer, 1999). Such behaviours have been termed *active facilitation,* which refers to behaviours that help the ingroup and its members get ahead in society, and *passive facilitation,* which refers to not hindering a group or its members from getting ahead (this so called group-serving tendency, when ingroup members evaluate one's own ingroup more favorably than the outgroup, is further explained below). Other forms of subtle and nonobvious discrimination are often dependent on contextual justifications, such as when instructed by an authority figure to discriminate against outgroups (Petersen & Dietz, 2000; Petersen & Dietz, 2005; Brief, Buttram, Elliott, Reizenstein, & McCline, 1995; Brief, Dietz, Cohen, Pugh, & Vaslow, 2000). Modern racism is a theoretical framework that tries to explain subtle form of prejudice and discrimination (McConahay, 1986). From this

perspective, subtly prejudiced individuals do not openly support unjust treatment of outgroup members or negative stereotypes about them, but deny the existence of discrimination. They also resist demands made by minorities and political activities that support them (thus passively harming them). Subtly prejudiced individuals see themselves as nonprejudiced (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1998), arguing that they reject stereotypes about minority groups and believe that prejudice and discrimination are bad (McConahay, 1986). Nevertheless, several studies have found that subtly prejudiced individuals perform discriminatory behaviours when the context provides justification thereof, for example instructions from an authority figure (Petersen & Dietz, 2000; Petersen & Dietz, 2005; Brief, et al., 1995; Brief et al., 2000).

Individual differences related to discrimination is a well-researched area, where degree of prejudice and different personality traits functioning as risk factors for discrimination are studied (see e.g. Christiansen, Kaplan, & Jones, 1999; Sidanius & Pratto, 1993, 1999; Whitley, 1999; Akrami & Ekehammar, 2006; Gylje & Zakrisson, 2004). For example, in social dominance theory (SDT), individuals high on social dominance traits (Social dominance oriented, SDO high) tend to favour the establishing, and maintenance of, a group-based hierarchical structure in society, referred to as hierarchy-enhancing ideologies and policies (Sidanius & Pratto, 1993, 1999). Among numerous individual difference variables, SDO is by some researchers considered to be one of the most important predictors of prejudice and discrimination (Sidanius & Pratto, 1993, 1999; Whitley, 1999). The desire to maintain the superior position of their ingroups motivates people high in SDO to denigrate members of outgroups and particularly people of low power and status (Duckitt, 2006), for example members of minorities such as ethnic groups, feminists, homosexuals etc. Research has demonstrated that high SDO scores are related to various social attitudes, such as support of military intervention, opposition to interracial marriages, opposition to affirmative action policies, group-based discrimination, racism, ethnocentrism, classism, and sexism (Pratto, Sidanius & Stallworth, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1993; Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo, 1996; Sidanius, Devereux, & Pratto, 1992; Jackson & Esses, 2000). Pratto and colleagues (1994) showed, using different racism measures, that SDO is strongly related to ethnic prejudice. Furthermore, in an experimental study it was found that high levels of SDO and ingroup identification each predicted outgroup discrimination, but that the effect was not independent (Sidanius, Pratto, & Mitchell,1994). Thus, recruiters high on both these variables discriminated even more against the outgroup (Sidanius et al., 1994). Pratto and colleagues (1994) also found that SDO correlates negatively with empathy, tolerance, communality and altruism. These variables are postulated to be included in hierarchy attenuating ideologies that strive to reduce inequality between groups and thereby reject discriminatory behaviours. To study the effect of SDO as an antecedent to discrimination Amiot and Bourhis (2005) conducted an

experiment that showed that SDO measured one month before a minimal group experiment could predict discriminatory behaviour against outgroup members. Authoritarian personality theory (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950) and right-wing authoritarianism (RWA; Altemeyer, 1998) are other theoretical frameworks, within the personality approach that have offered explanations to prejudice and discrimination. Possessing these traits is supposed to capture a person's attitudes towards following established authority (Altemeyer, 1988). Research on Right-Wing Authoritarianism has shown that people scoring high on authoritarianism have negative attitudes regarding homosexuality and gender equality (Altemeyer, 1988; Lippa & Arad, 1999) and negative attitudes to minority groups (e.g., Altemeyer, 1998; Heaven, Organ, Supavadeeprasit, & Leeson, 2006).

The experiments in the present thesis are based on the understanding of stereotype activation and prejudices described above, that when competition over material resources is present (e.g. limited job opportunities), ingroup members tend to favour individuals they perceive belonging to the ingroup (Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002; Husnua & Lajunenb, 2014; Mummendey & Otten, 1998). In doing this, we also want to investigate if other contextual cues (such as company norms) than direct instructions might trigger behaviours with possible discriminatory consequences. Hence, with regard to the literature on individual differences referred to above and in order to keep the thesis focused and coherent, the present thesis takes a distinctly social psychological approach when seeking to understand the effects of applicant ethnicity on processes related to recruitment, and does not investigate individual differences neither related to the recruiters nor to the applicants. Before summarizing the conducted studies however, general theories concerning intergroup relations and discrimination in organization and recruitment, are shortly reviewed.

## Intergroup bias

In addition to the individualized view, that focuses on individuals as entities that either are affected by cognitive processes such as automatic stereotype activation or prejudiced opinions due to personality factors, there are also alternative explanations that include motivational factors based on intergroup relations. *Intergroup bias* refers to the systematic, group-serving tendency to evaluate one's own ingroup more favorably than outgroups. This can include favoring the ingroup (*ingroup favoritism*) as well as denigrating the outgroup (*outgroup derogation* or *prejudice*). Many studies have found that even if both ingroup and outgroups can be evaluated positively, ingroups are often treated more favorably than outgroups (Hewstone, et, al., 2002; Husnua & Lajunenb, 2014; Mummendey & Otten, 1998), since expectations for behaviour reciprocation among ingroup members (i.e. "generalized exchange belief" that ingroup members will reciprocate) is present

(Foddy, Platow, & Yamagishi, 2009; Yamagishi & Mifune, 2008). For instance, empathy, positive affection, trust, cooperation and positive emotions are extended to the ingroup, but not to the outgroup, whereas outgroup derogation can include aggression and violence. Brewer (1999) has suggested that ingroup favoritism is not necessarily equivalent to outgroup hate or prejudice. Brewer's findings from both cross-cultural research and laboratory experiments support the view that ingroup identification is independent of negative attitudes toward outgroups and that much ingroup bias and intergroup discrimination is motivated by preferential treatment of ingroup members, rather than negativity or hostility towards outgroup members. Hence, when intergroup relations are not conflict-based, attitudes toward the ingroup and prejudices regarding the outgroup are essentially independent. In contrast, perceived conflict and competition for resources is associated with a positive relationship between ingroup identification and outgroup hostility (Brewer, 1999). Thus, variables that make ingroup attachment and commitment important to individuals (such as perceived moral superiority, sensitivity to threat, the anticipation of interdependence under conditions of distrust, social comparison processes, and power politics) also provide a potential source for antagonism, distrust of outgroup members and overt hostility toward outgroups (Brewer, 1999).

## Discrimination as a tool to maintain unequal power relations.

A great deal of contemporary research on stereotypes, prejudice and their discriminatory consequences is included in theories about social power relations (Foels & Pratto, 2015; Jost & Banaij, 1994; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). As described above, discriminatory behaviour can be activated when individuals self-identify with a certain social category, where ingroup members are perceived as sharing social norms, values and beliefs. The formation of social norms that promote prejudiced attitudes against outgroup members and facilitate discriminatory behaviours, is by some researchers suggested to be the result of a desire for groups to defend or establish superiority of one's group over other groups (Foels & Pratto, 2015; Kriendler, 2005; Duckitt, 1992; Tajfel & Turner, 2001; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost, et, al., 2004). The idea that one's ingroup possesses desirable resources or superior norms and values can be a basis for prejudice and the justification of discrimination of outgroup members. This hierarchal view of one's ingroup, as being superior in relation to other groups tends to induce fear of losing these privileges (Levine & Cambell, 1972; Jost, et. al, 2004). Outgroups are then perceived as a potential threat to the ingroup's social benefits, necessary economic resources or physical safety (Duckitt & Sibley, 2007) as well as a threat to the social norms and values that is associated with the ingroup (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Ingroup benefits are by some researchers argued to be protected and preserved by

means of internalized norms, rituals and routines in both organizations and institutions (Rydgren, 2004). Institutional activities, where societal norms are manifested in routines and behavioural practices in organizations, which have discriminatory consequences, have been termed *institutional discrimination* (Rydgren, 2004). When identifying with a role or complying with the norms of a social group people are more likely to obey an authority (i.e. administrative authority, leaders, board of directors) or the majority's opinion, and follow an issued command, instruction or rule (Asch, 1957; Milgram, 1963, Brief, et al., 2000). This is even more so when one strongly identifies with a professional role (Haque, De Freitas, Viani, Niederschulte, & Bursztajn, 2012). It seems from the aforementioned research, that when people face a facilitating context (such as when social/organizational norms justify discrimination, and when the responsibility for actions can be defused from the self), it is not unlikely that they might obey instructions with discriminatory outcomes.

A central assumption behind the studies in the present thesis is that, even though not directly studied, the above-mentioned processes do influence our participants' preferences and decisions in a recruitment context when exposed to job applicants from an ethnic outgroup. Stereotypes and prejudices against outgroups are believed to influence preferences and actual behaviours in a recruitment context. These behaviours may manifest in the type of traits and abilities recruiters focus on and consider as important to the job role, as well as the relative tendency to favor applicants from an ethnic ingroup.

# Discrimination in Organizations

Before addressing the different studies, an overview of research concerning discrimination and organizations, and more specifically the recruitment context is provided below. It might not be surprising that the same type of intergroup processes and mechanisms studied in social psychology and discussed above, are involved in and impact the processes operating in organizations during selection and recruitment when ingroups and outgroups are involved. A theoretical overview related to group processes in organizations, relevant for the understanding of the conducted experiments, is presented below.

## Group processes and Organizational discrimination

Social groups are crucial for human beings and we depend on them in order to survive (Caporael & Brewer, 1991). Given this, it is important that social groups function well in order to be able to provide the desired protection, but also to

facilitate a group's exploitation of the environment (Kurzban & Leary, 2001; Neuberg, Smith & Asher, 2000). From this perspective, the group processes discussed above (such as social categorization, self-categorization and self-identification with a group, stereotypes, development of social norms, ingroup favoritism, outgroup denigration and discrimination of outgroup members), can be understood as serving the function of improving perceived group cohesion and reducing competition within a group, as well as enhancing social control in order to maximize a social group's chances of survival (Frank, 2003; Kessler & Cohrs, 2008). When self-categorizing and identifying with a group, we develop a subjective sense of identification with that social category, and this tends to promote conformity to group norms and morals (Terry & Hogg, 1996; Jetten, Postmes & McAuliffe, 2002; Oaks, Haslam, & Turner, 1994) that further enhance group identification (Tyler, Degoey, & Smith, 1996).

In addition, stereotypes cause members of a group to evaluate how prototypical others are in terms of the phenotypic/demographic features associated with the group and how prototypical others' norms are in relation to the norms of the group, which is a process known as *normative differentiation* (Kreindler, 2005; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Members that are highly prototypical will encounter positive reactions within the group and members that are perceived as potentially violating group norms are considered to be less prototypical and thereby receive negative reactions (Wenzel, Mummendey, & Waldzus, 2007). For example only having a different name (in relation to an ingroup), can function as a signal of deviation, and therefore be a risk factor of discrimination (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; De Beijl, 2000). From this perspective, outgroup members such as immigrants are perceived as clearly deviating from the ingroup prototype, and as a threat to ingroup norms, privileges and resources. They can therefore more easily be the target of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination (Riek, Mania & Gaertner, 2006; Kessler, Mummendey, Funke, Brown, Binder, Zagefka, Leyens, Demoulin, & Maquil, 2010; Stephan & Renfro, 2002).

## Homogeneity tendencies in organizations and the fit-perspective

The described tendencies reviewed above which contribute to more homogeneous groups have primarily been studied in social psychology, but have also been of interest in organizational psychology research. Homogeneity processes in groups have been suggested to promote adherence to so called *stereotype fit* (Heilman, 2001). Originally this theory proposed an explanation for gender differences in organizational outcomes, but it has later been suggested to explain differences in outcomes based on race and ethnicity as well. The theory postulates for example

that characteristics associated with effective managers are very similar to the cultural stereotypes of men and very different from the cultural stereotypes of women. Therefore men are perceived as fitting into the managerial role but women are not, which in turn leads to less likelihood for women to be hired for managerial positions (Eagly & Karau, 2002). One study that has extended this theory to racial discrimination in organizations, was conducted by Tomkiewicz and colleagues (1998), who studied the experience of White recruiters' rating of managers. African Americans and Whites were rated on a set of traits known to be characteristic of good managers. Results showed that Whites were seen as fitting the managerial role better than African Americans (Tomkiewicz, Brenner, & Adeyemi-Bello, 1998).

The idea that organizations tend to become more homogenous over time has been developed by Ben Schneider (1987) in his theories on "attraction–selection–attrition" (ASA). The ASA model-framework describes three processes that promote homogeneity in organizations (Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995; De Cooman, De Gieter, Pepermans, Jegers, & Van Acker, 2009). The first is that applicants tend to look for organizations that they believe match their own characteristics and values ("attraction"). The second process is that organizations tend to employ individuals which they think will "fit in" with the company's culture ("selection"), and the final process is that individuals who experience that they do not fit in tend to leave (attrition).

**Person-environment fit**. It has been shown that recruiters' perception of compatibility between an individual and the job in question, as well as between the individual and the organization predict hiring recommendations (Kristof-Brown, 2000). Person-environment fit (P-E fit) is a broadly defined concept, consisting of different sub-types of fit between an individual and the environment (Kristof, 1996). Person-job fit (P-J fit) is the most specific form of fit and is defined as a complementary match, the match between an applicant's abilities and the demands of the job (eg. skills, knowledge, abilities and competence; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011). P-J fit has been found to be strongly related to hiring recommendations (Kinicki, Lockwood, Horn, & Griffeth, 1990). In contrast, person-culture fit (P-C fit) and person-organization fit (P-O fit) are the broadest concepts of person-environment fit, and refers to the degree a person has integrated and can display norms, values and behaviours that converge with the cultural norms of the society or the organization in question (Kristof, 1996; Bye, Horverak, Sandal, Sam, & van de Vijver, 2014; Kristof-Brown, 2000). Measures of P-C fit explain variance in individual outcomes such as commitment and social integration (Cable & Judge, 1997; Finegan, 2000) and job performance (Kristof-Brown & Stevens, 2001). P-O fit is operationalized as measuring mainly a similarity between an organizations' culture, values and goals with a persons' values and personality (i.e. supplementary fit, Kristof-Brown, 1996). Person-group fit (P-G fit) concerns the interpersonal match between individuals and their work team and colleagues, regarding values,

norms and behaviours (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996). P-G fit has been related to individual performance in workgroups (Bretz & Judge, 1994) and effective group behaviours (Weldon & Weingart,1993; Klimoski & Jones, 1995; Driskell, Hogan & Salas, 1987). P-C fit is in some literature explained to include crucial P-O fit and P-G fit aspects, a supplementary fit to peers and their goals, values and expected behaviours, which are considered to be of importance in all these fit domains (e.g. Elfenbein & O'Reilly 2005; Kristof, 1996; Vancouver, Millsap, Peters, 1994; Vancouver & Schmitt, 1991). Agreements in group attitudes are suggested to enhance attraction between team members in consistence with the similarity attraction hypothesis (Byrne, 1971), and enhanced attraction leads to improved group socialization, cohesion and communication (Pfeffer, 1983). Negative effects from demographic heterogeneity, such as conflicts, lower levels of social integration and performance, and higher levels of turnover (Milliken & Martins, 1996; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998), is suggested to stem, in part, from a lack of underlying P-C fit (Elfenbein & O'Reilly, 2005). Most studies on P-E fit deal mainly with the actual interview setting, and how different aspects of estimated P-E fit affect hiring recommendations (e.g. Bye, et al., 2014). The theoretical framework and understanding of organizations' strive to match individuals to different aspects of an organization that is offered by the P-E fit theory, has been of significance when constructing the empirical experiments in study I and study II. These experiments are based on the assumption that recruiters' stereotypes of immigrant-applicants are activated and affect their perception of match to different PE-fit aspects.

## Stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination and organizational person-environment fit

Organizations are often viewed as open systems influenced by the environment (Katz & Kahn, 1966; Brodbeck, Hanges, Dickson, Gupta, & Dorfman, 2004). Hence, general social or national norms, such as cultural values, normative prescriptions and behavioural expectations, are suggested to be reflected in organizations. Given the influence from more general social and national cultures on organizational cultures, native job applicants have a higher chance of internalizing and displaying the values and norms dominant on both these cultural levels (Brodbeck, et al., 2004). Additionally, recent studies have concluded that applicants with a different origin who adopt an identity consistent with the majority culture, have significantly higher employment probability than applicants who identify with their ethnic background or minority culture (Battu & Zenou, 2010; Constant & Zimmerman, 2007; Nekby & Rödin, 2010; Derous, Nguyen, & Ryan, 2009). In addition to the above, some attention has been drawn to interview ratings and discrimination against minorities (Huffcutt & Roth, 1998; Bye et al., 2014), concluding that an emphasis on cultural fit could have negative effect on

immigrants' chances of being hired (Bye et al., 2014). For example, Bye and colleagues (2014) showed that low P-C fit can affect perceived fit in organizations negatively, and that the degree of integration into the host society's cultural values can influence hiring recommendations. The authors reason that when immigrant-applicants are perceived as low in broader person environment fit aspects, such as person organization fit (P-O fit) and person culture fit (P-C-fit), they risk to receive lower hireability ratings compared to native applicants and be negatively affected during a recruitment process. Additionally Horverak and colleges (2013) found that managers emphasized P-O fit more than P-J fit aspects when evaluating separated applicants (i.e. applicants that were least integrated). Their conclusion was that immigrants could be at a disadvantage in employment decisions when the focus is on P-O fit. The current thesis further elaborates on previous research on P-E fit and recruitment based on the general hypothesis that applicants from an ethnic outgroup will prompt recruiters to focus more on questions regarding the degree to which the applicants have integrated and can display norms, values and behaviours that converge with the cultural norms of the society in question (person-culture fit; Bye et al., 2014) as well as on the assumed interpersonal match between the applicants and their would-be work team and colleagues (person-group fit; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011). Thus, recruiters' focus on broader P-E fit when exposed to immigrant applicants, might be an expression of activated stereotypes (Cuddy, et al., 2008; Cuddy, et al., 2009), and for recruiters wanting to explore immigrants characteristic and traits. In exploring this, our experiments focus on how applicants' ethnicity influences what person-environment fit aspects are focused on by recruiters when preparing a job interview (study I, study II), and if different focuses have any consequences on hiring intentions (study II).

## Recruitment and Discrimination

As previously stated, substantial gaps between immigrants and natives exist in employment patterns across European countries, where ethnic minorities on average have lower employment rates and occupy less favorable positions on the labor markets (Bassanini & Saint-Martin, 2008). Even when controlling for variations in human capital (such as lower levels of education, language skills and proficiencies compared to host-country language natives), a considerable gap between immigrants and natives still remains (Bassanini & Saint-Martin 2008, Van Tubergen & Kalmijn, 2005). Solely possessing an ethnic name can be an antecedent of employment discrimination (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; De Beijl, 2000). In studying this area, survey research has been used to investigate which groups are discriminated against and the prevalence of employment discrimination (Riach & Rich, 1991; Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Pager & Quillian, 2005; Pager,

Bonikowski, & Western, 2009; Carlsson & Rooth, 2007; Bursell, 2014), whereas experimental studies have focused on different phases of the recruitment process and on different mechanisms underlying the discrimination (Kacmar, Wayne, & Ratcliff, 1994; Sidanius, Pratto, van Laar, & Levin, 2004; Brief, et al., 2000; Petersen & Dietz, 2005; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Derous, et al., 2009). Having participants rate the hireability of job-applicants from a minority group in different contexts, is one way to examine causal relations for discrimination. Inspired by social identity theory, Derous and colleagues (2009) conducted a study where they hypothesised that discrimination is an interaction effect of applicant, job- and rater characteristics. They proposed that discrimination of ethnic groups, such as Arabs, is a complex process were name, degree of affiliations, type of job and subtle forms of prejudice, interact. They found that résumés with Arab name and affiliations, negatively influenced job suitability ratings. However, this was only true when the job cognitive demands and external client contact were limited. Additional, suitability rating of Arab applicants was lowest when raters' implicit prejudice was high. Other studies have focused on how favorably different applicants are rated during recruitment interviews. Whereas some researchers found that discriminated groups were rated more favorably than whites (Campion, Pursell & Brown, 1988) others couldn't find such differences (Bye et al., 2014). The amount of job-relevant information available to the decision makers and the decision makers use of stereotypes, have been suggested as interrelated factors causing discrimination (Campion & Arvey, 1989). Kacmar and colleagues (1994) however found that, even having job-relevant information prior to the interview, on the assumption that this would decrease the influence of automatic stereotype processes and improve ratings of discriminated groups, it did not significantly improve hiring decisions. The authors suggest that while decision makers provided with job-relevant information for applicants recognize and are willing to rate minority applicants as qualified, they still may not be willing to offer them jobs (Kacmar et al., 1994). Researchers studying discrimination during recruitment have tried to explain recruiters' unwillingness to employ outgroup members by applying ideas from theories about subtle prejudice and modern racism (McConhay,, 1986; Petersen & Dietz, 2000; Petersen & Dietz, 2005; Brief, et al., 1995; Brief et al., 2000). The authors argue that their findings support modern racism theory (McConhay, , 1986), which proposes that subtle prejudice leads to discrimination in a context that legitimizes it on the basis of nonprejudicial arguments (such as doing for example what is "good for business"). In this thesis, study I will further build on the idea that contextual antecedents, such as organizational norms, can create justification for recruiters to shift their focus about which person-environment fit aspect they perceive as important when exposed to outgroup applicants compared to when exposed to only ingroup applicants. Additionally, an emphasis and preference for broader P-E fit aspects is believed to be disadvantageous for

immigrants in a recruitment context (Bye et al., 2014, Horverak, et al., 2013), which is further investigated in study II.

Hence, discriminated groups have apparent difficulties to access employment or receive more privileged (high-status) positions (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1996). As we have seen when reviewing the literature, there are numerous suggestions as to why individuals from disadvantaged groups are discriminated against. A question of crucial importance is therefore if there are any methods or strategies that are supported by contemporary research that can help us overcome negative stereotyping and discrimination. In study III we examine the advantages with systematic recruitment, a procedure that decreases the influence of automatic, intuitive selection behaviour. We suggest that when proceeding with recruitment systematically, discriminated groups will have a better chance of being selected. Before summarizing the different experiments, a brief overview of systematic selection decisions is provided below.

## Structured recruitment

When recruiters are to make selection decisions, ideally they should focus on matching applicants' traits, abilities, skills, job relevant knowledge, prior experiences and work performance with the job in question. In doing this, there is consistently unanimity among researchers and evidence that a structured recruitment is preferred (Kuncel, Klieger, Connelly, & Ones, 2013; Dipboye, 1994; Huffcutt & Woehr, 1999). The recommendations are to use structured procedures and to utilize tools designed to help the recruiter to systemize information in all phases of recruitment. Hence, the recruitment process should involve tools such as job analysis, transmission of job content to specific criteria for judgment, collection of information with established methods (such as structured interviews and different knowledge tests) and then base decisions on an algorithm in order to combine the gathered data in an unbiased way. However, despite research evidence and recommendations to use valid and reliable instruments, job-analyses and post-recruitment adjustments (aiding recruiters to make more accurate selection decisions), recruiters mostly do not follow these recommendations (Highhouse, 2008). Recruiters instead use methods that are easy to administer and do not require any special training (e.g. interviews, reference taking, educational level), and base their decisions on more impressionistic, intuitive, and unstructured methods (Highhouse, 2008; Steiner, 2012). This is problematic since unstructured or intuition based recruitment processes and decision making may allow automatic stereotype activation and subjective preferences to influence the process (Meehl, 1954; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974; Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994; Grove, Zald, Lebow, Snitz, & Nelson, 2000). A substantial part of the research on clinical or intuition-based decisions compared to formal or mechanical, support the notion that the later is more

valid and less sensitive to human biases and preferences (Grove, et al., 2000). It seems that humans are susceptible to many errors in clinical judgment, while at the same time being reluctant to abandon intuition based judgments (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). In relation to this, there are studies that examine how a more structured process affects performance assessments in employment interviews and assessment of hireability; with regard to overweight (Kutchner & Bragger, 2004) and pregnant (Bragger, Kutchner, Morgan, & Firth, 2002) applicants, which are groups that are known to be subject of discrimination. These studies consistently indicate that a more structured process leads to less biased assessments. It should be noted however, that the studies do not concern ethnicity nor do they study actual selection decisions where some applicants are selected and others are not.

As reviewed above, several studies have been published independently on either the subject of labour discrimination or on the subject of structured procedures in selection processes. However, to our knowledge, no studies have investigated whether increasing structure during recruitment decreases discrimination based on ethnicity when actually selecting applicants. Given the increased probability for stereotypes and prejudices to influence the recruitment process, the risk for discrimination is imminent in such contexts. In study III we therefore test the advantages of conducting the recruitment in a structured manner. We assumed that when participants use job-analysis and additional tools to systemize the gathered information, they have better chances to select the most skilled applicant, even when the applicant is from a discriminated outgroup.

# General purpose

The aim of the present thesis is to examine factors that may contribute to biased recruitment and factors that can counteract discrimination of immigrants in recruitment contexts. The first two studies seek to provide further understanding of how the initial phases of the recruitment process is affected when recruiters are aware of the applicants' ethnicity. Finally, the third study seeks to examine actual unequal treatment of applicants from an ethnic ingroup compared to applicants from an ethnic outgroup, and whether increased systematicity can counteract such discriminatory behaviour.

# Summary of the studies

## Study I: Company Norms Affect Which Traits are Preferred in Job Candidates and May Cause Employment Discrimination

People are sensitive to detect and comply with existing norms. Social norms have a powerful influence on people's attitudes and research has shown that people's prejudice-related attitudes are influenced by social norms (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005; Pettigrew, 1998). For example, the degree of social acceptability towards the displaying of prejudices against members of stigmatized groups affects people's expressions of prejudice (Crandall, Eshleman, & O'Brien, 2002; Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). Indeed, even a single individual's opinion can influence others' prejudice-related attitudes and responses (Blanchard, Crandall, Brigham, & Vaughn, 1994; Monteith, Deneen & Tooman, 1996). Brief el al., (2000) showed that a single authority figure's business-related instructions influence whether subordinates discriminate against minority group members in an organizational setting. Similarly, subtly prejudiced subordinates discriminated when instructed to maintain an ethnically homogeneous workforce (Petersen & Dietz, 2005), particularly when they are highly committed to the organization (Petersen & Dietz, 2008). These studies convincingly demonstrate the importance of authority figures' normative instructions in relation to employment discrimination. Based on this, in study 1 we explore if it is enough to introduce different company norms (and leave out instructions from an authority figure) to influence which characteristics are perceived as important to focus on in a recruitment situation. Thus, compared to previous research, an even more subtle way to influence recruiters is used in this study. We expect increased preferences for P–G fit (such as social competence) when norms related to workforce cohesion (company requirement to fit in) are introduced and increased preferences for P–J fit when fairness norms related to equal opportunity are introduced. Rather than investigating how the match between personal and organizational characteristics relates to recruitment decisions (such as in Cable & Judge, 1997), we instead investigate how the recruiter's perception of what an employee should be like is affected by descriptions of the workplace. Our general assumption is that, if the company norms emphasize that employees should

"fit in," those already employed may constitute models for what one should be like to function well within the work group, and members of minority groups may be excluded.

## Experiment 1:

***Method.*** In experiment 1 115 participants (mainly students, with a mean age of 29.46 (*SD* = 12.47)) participated. 55 were men and 59 women, and one person did not report sex. Two different jobs were described. One job was as a nurse's assistant and the other was as a salesperson in a paper store. For each job, two different descriptions were formulated. One emphasized the norm of fitting in at the workplace (cohesion manipulation) and the other emphasized equal treatment (fairness manipulation). After the company description, a list of traits was presented. The words in the list were either related to social competence (14 adjectives, e.g., empathetic, kind, social, humble, helpful) or to task competence (14 adjectives, e.g., intelligent, thorough, independent, focused, structured). The traits appeared in a randomized order, and the participant's task was to rate how necessary (1 = not at all necessary, 7 = absolutely necessary) it would be for an employee to have each trait for them to make a hire. Both the job type factor and the norm factor were between subjects factors, so that each participant was randomly assigned to receive only one of the four different company descriptions.

***Results and discussion.*** The results showed that relative preference for social competence (P-G fit aspect) was stronger in the cohesion condition than in the fairness condition. This provides support for the hypothesis that company norms may affect what a recruiter is looking for in a new employee. Emphasis on cohesion, where the company emphasizes the importance to fit-in the workforce and the company, led to a stronger focus on social competence than emphasis on fairness and the results hold for at least the two different jobs.

To further investigate how the recruiter may be affected by norm descriptions, we conducted a second experiment with two new measures of trait preferences. One measure concerns how the mental construal of an ideal employee may shift as an effect of the norm manipulation, and the other concerns selecting appropriate interview questions. Participants in the cohesion condition were expected to primarily picture a socially competent employee and express a preference for interview questions that have to do with social competence.

## Experiment 2:

***Method.*** The experiment had 67 participants. The stimulus materials described a clothing store hiring a store manager, where two company descriptions were presented. These were identical except for the norm description where one, just as in experiment 1, emphasized the norm of fitting in at the workplace (cohesion manipulation) and the other emphasized the norm of equal treatment (fairness manipulation). The participants' first task was to rate twenty questions on a Likert scale regarding how crucial (1 = not crucial at all, 7 = absolutely crucial) each question would be to ask in an employment interview. Eight questions concerned traits related to social competence, eight concerned traits related to task competence, and the remaining items were fillers. The second task was to describe what would characterize an ideal employee at the company and explain why these particular traits are important to have. The descriptions of the ideal employee were coded by two independent raters into one of three different categories: focus on social competence, focus on task competence, or focus on both. The raters' codings showed perfect agreement. The design and procedure was the same as in the previous experiment.

***Result and discussion.*** The first analysis concerned the ratings of the interview questions. As expected, the results showed that the relative preference for social competence was stronger in the cohesion condition than in the fairness condition. The second analysis concerned the ideal employee. As expected it was more common for the ideal employee to be described in terms of social competence in the cohesion condition and in terms of task competence in the fairness condition. In other words, both analyses provided support for the hypothesis that emphasizing cohesion rather than fairness in an employment ad increases the focus on social competence, despite the job being the same.

## Experiment 3:

***Method.*** The third experiment tested the hypothesis that company norms interact with information concerning the ethnicity of the applicants. It was predicted that when people with a foreign background apply to a workplace where employees are expected to "fit in," there is a preference for social competence (P-G fit), as there is a perceived risk that their lower social and cultural skills may lead to problems. Selection-method preference was used as the dependent variable. It was expected that when it is revealed that some applicants are from an ethnic outgroup, the preference for methods related to social competence increases, particularly if combined with a cohesion description.

***Result and discussion.*** The results showed that participants who made the ratings under a cohesion-related description had a relative preference for selection methods related to social competence (P-G fit). There was no main effect of expecting applicants of a foreign background. More importantly however, the hypothesized interaction was supported. Further analysis of simple effects revealed no significant effect of the norm manipulation for the group that received no information on applicant ethnicity. For the group receiving information that people with foreign backgrounds were expected to apply, participants under a cohesion manipulation, as predicted, had a stronger preference for the social competence-related methods than those under a fairness manipulation.

### Conclusions

As the three experimental studies showed, a mere description of the company norms is enough to affect both the mental construal of the suitable applicant (trait ratings and "ideal employee") and how one pictures going about recruiting this person (interview questions and selection methods). Social competence is a more ambiguous criterion, thus enabling the recruiter to make a more impressionistic assessment of the applicants' skills and abilities, compared to when evaluating more clearly defined job specific criteria and abilities (which were preferred in the fairness condition). Relying on social competence as an important recruitment criterion, in a context when values, culture and norms (P-C/P-G fit) are in focus might be disadvantageous for foreigners if they are seen as lacking these properties.

## Study II: Expected fit: Applicant ethnicity affects which questions that are prepared for a job interview

An important step in the recruitment process where minorities can be discriminated, is the interview phase. The employment interview is one of the most commonly used assessment tools in employee selection (Macan, 2009; Macan & Merritt, 2011; Tross & Maurer, 2008). It is a complex procedure involving an encounter between employment settings (e.g. organizational demands and interviewer characteristics and performance) and the applicant's characteristics, qualifications and performance in the interview setting. Even though the employment interview has been the focus for considerable research, relatively little is known about how stereotypes and biases may influence recruiters when conducting an interview. Instead, research has tended to focus on properties of interviewer ratings, such as

factors influencing their reliability (Conway, Jako, & Goodman, 1995) and criterion-related validity (MacDaniel, Whetzel, Schmith, & Maurer, 1994; Posthuma, Morgeson, & Campion, 2002). A major finding in this research is that interviewer judgments based on structured interviews are more predictive of future job performance than those from unstructured interviews (Conway, Jako, & Goodman, 1995; Huffcutt, Van Iddekinge, & Roth, 2011; Posthuma, et al., 2002), but that recruiters infrequently use them (Klehe, 2004; Simola, Taggar, & Smith, 2007). Instead recruiters typically conduct interviews where they have decided on the general topics beforehand (i.e., moderate level of question standardization; Lievens & De Paepe, 2004), rather than preparing specific questions that are posed to each applicant. Given that biases, stereotypes and prejudices more easily affect behaviours in situations that are less governed by rules and explicit routines, the unstructured and impressionistic way of conducting the interview runs the risk of increasing the likelihood of discriminatory outcomes against perceived outgroups (Huffcutt & Roth, 1998; Bye, et al, 2014). Given this, even though it is of central importance to increase our understanding of direct discriminatory behaviours and practices (for example whether selection decisions or applicant ratings are affected by ethnicity), it is also important to increase our understanding of how perceptions of ethnicity influences the reactions and behaviours of recruiters in phases of the recruitment process where no decisions are made, but which might nevertheless influence future decisions. Hence experiment 1 in study II, aimed at investigating if applicants' ethnicity influences the types of questions prepared by professional Swedish recruiters. We wanted to investigate if variations in the applicants' ethnicity affected which aspects of person-environment fit that the recruiters focused on when preparing interview questions. The hypotheses tested were that Swedish recruiters would suggest more questions related to P-C fit and P-G fit when exposed to "Arabic" applicants, compared to "Swedish" applicants, whereas questions concerning P-J fit were expected to be more common when the applicants were "Swedes". Furthermore, in experiment 2 and 3, the usefulness of the different person-environment fit related questions were explored.

## Experiment 1:

***Method.*** In the first experiment 57 Swedish recruiters, active in private companies, were randomly assigned either to a condition with applicants with male names sounding typically "Swedish" or to a condition with male names sounding typically "Arabic". The dependent variables were the relative preference for questions relating to P-C fit, P-G fit, and P-J fit. After reading a job-description (containing criteria and abilities required for a sales manager position), participants were exposed to one of two different lists of names, one with "Swedish" applicants and one with "Arabic" applicants. Recruiters were then instructed to produce ten

questions that they would like to ask during an interview. The questions produced were categorized as concerning P-C fit, P-G fit, P-J fit or "other". A coder who was blind to which experimental condition the protocols came from conducted the classification of the questions. To estimate the reliability of the classification of the questions, two assistants were provided with protocols from 20 randomly selected recruiters and were instructed to independently code the question into the categories that they belonged to. Inter-rater reliability was calculated using intraclass correlations between the coder and the two assistants as an estimate for the accuracy of the rating process. The intraclass correlation coefficient for P-C fit was .85, for P- G fit .83, and for P-J fit .97. Hence, the results indicate that the raters independently agreed on the question-category relation.

***Result and discussion.*** Our dependent variables were the relative preferences for the three categories; P-C fit, P-G fit, and P-J fit. In accordance with our hypotheses, independent sample *t*-tests indicated that a significantly higher proportion of the questions prepared for the "Arabic" applicants concerned P-G fit and P-C fit. Furthermore, and also in support of our hypotheses, a significantly higher proportion of the questions prepared for the "Swedish" applicants concerned P-J fit when compared to "Arabic" applicants. Thus, the outcome from study 1 supported the hypothesis that applicant ethnicity affects what aspects of person-environment fit that the recruiters focuses on. Next, we wanted to investigate what consequences such a difference might have. Therefore, in experiment 2 and 3, we investigated which fit questions recruiters find most useful and informative, that is which questions they perceive to give the most useful information about the hireability of an applicant

## Experiment 2:

***Method.*** Sixty-nine active recruiters, working with recruitment in private medium-sized companies, participated in experiment 2. A survey was constructed to measure how useful and informative professional recruiters thought that person job-fit and person-culture/person-group fit questions were. Initially, a job-description (identical to the one in experiment 1) was presented. This was followed by 20 questions, 10 P-J fit questions and 10 P-C and P-G fit questions. There were three different versions of the survey, each with 20 unique questions. The questions were constructed and based upon the questions produced by the recruiters in experiment 1. Recruiters were instructed to judge the usefulness of the interview questions in a hiring situation on a scale from not at all useful" (0) to "maximally useful" (20).

***Result and discussion.*** To test the hypothesis that P-J fit questions are perceived as more useful, a paired samples *t*-test was conducted with the average rating for the two question categories (P-C/P-G fit and P-J fit) as dependent variable. The analysis

revealed a significant difference in favor of the P-J fit questions. Thus, the results showed a significant effect in the expected direction, indicating that recruiters perceive questions regarding P-J fit as more useful.

It is reasonable to assume that the choice of interview questions matters for the subsequent selection decision. More specifically, differences in what kinds of questions that are posed are likely to bring about differences in the content of the information that is gathered about the applicants. On this assumption, we next turned to the issue of whether preferences regarding question type extends to preferences regarding information type. More specifically, in Experiment 3 we investigated whether an interview summary containing information indicating a high degree of P-J fit is perceived as a better basis for making a hiring decision than an interview summary containing information indicating a high degree of P-G and P-C fit.

## Experiment 3:

***Method.*** Sixty-six recruiters participated in the study. As in study 1 and 2, all participants were actively working with recruitment in private companies as a regular part of their work assignments. In Experiment 3 we constructed a survey which, as in the previous studies started with a job-description (the same as in the two previous studies), but which was instead followed by two different interview summaries (one emphasizing high P-C/P-G fit qualifications and another emphasizing high P-J fit qualifications), in two different versions. The summaries were randomized across participants to avoid order effects. We were interested in investigating which of the interview summaries that recruiters considered most useful and as providing the best information regarding the hireability of the applicant. Based on the findings of Chuang and Sackett (2005) we hypothesized that participants would prefer the summaries indicating high P-J fit.

***Result and discussion.*** The mean ratings for the three dependent variables were 13.3 (SD = 5.6) for "Best basis for decision", 14.6 (SD = 5.9) for "Most distinct picture" and 13.5 (SD = 5.4) for "Least need to make complementary interview", where values over 10 indicate a preference for the P-J fit summary compared to the P-C/P-G fit summary. To test the hypothesis that P-J fit information is preferred three one-sample *t*-tests were performed comparing the mean from the sample on each variable with 10 (which would be the average value if the summaries were judged to be equally good). The results of the analyses reveal that participants, in support of our hypothesis, significantly preferred the person-job fit summary for all three variables: "Best basis for decision", "Most distinct picture" and "Least need for complementary interview".

## Conclusion

In line with what we expected, the results of the performed studies showed that applicants from an ethnic ingroup prompted recruiters to focus more on questions related to the match between an applicant's abilities and the specific demands of the job (P-J fit; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011), compared to when the applicants were from an ethnic outgroup. The results also supported the hypothesis that applicants from an ethnic outgroup prompts recruiters to focus more on questions related to P-C fit and P-G fit. The focus on P-G fit when exposed to male Arabic applicants might be an expression of the recruiters' uncertainty regarding whether Arab males possess these traits. The current findings are in line with previous research on stereotypes about this social group. Arabs are stereotyped as low in competence, friendliness, agreeableness and empathy (Agerström & Rooth, 2009; Cuddy, et al., 2008; Cuddy, et al., 2007), traits which are typically related to P-G fit. Further, focusing on P-C fit may lead to a focus on deviations or lack of fit between the applicant and the cultural context. If outgroup applicants are perceived to somehow deviate or have low fit with regard to culture and/or group, they might be at a general disadvantage when selection decisions are made. If the recruiter spends more time on aspects related to P-G and P-C fit, another risk during an interview could be that the recruiter is left with less job-specific information about the applicant, and thereby a less clear picture as to whether the applicant possesses job relevant skills or not, which can also be disadvantageous in a hiring situation (Chuang & Sackett, 2005). This claim is supported by the finding that interview summaries emphasizing P-J fit were assessed as providing a better information basis for recruitment decisions, than interview summaries emphasizing P-G and P-C fit.

# Study III: Tools for fairness: Increased structure in the selection process reduces discrimination

While study I and II considered the initial phases in recruitment, and possible discriminatory mechanism in these phases, in study III actual selection behaviour is focused on. Compared to impressionistic decision making, structured procedures are considered by researchers as a more valid way to conduct recruitment and selection (Kuncel, et al., 2013). Structure should encompass: defining specific criteria related to job content (e.g. by means of a job-analysis), gathering and evaluating information (options when choosing and conducting selection instruments, interview, evaluating applications and inquiring for references) and decision-making. Despite extensive evidence that more systematic forms of selection are more valid, recruiters select the more intuitive, impressionistic and

unstructured forms more frequently (Highhouse, 2008; Steiner, 2012). Impressionistic and unstructured decision-making in recruitment may allow biases and subjective preferences to influence the process (Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994) and therefore increase the risk of discrimination on the labor market. To investigate if discrimination can be counteracted, by increased structure during recruitment, we experimentally manipulate structure and investigate how this influences selection outcome. We predict that there will be a difference in job-applicant preferences between those who work in a structured manner and those who do not. We used a fictive job setting where male job-applicants, both Swedes (ingroup) and immigrants with Arabic origin (a discriminated group on the labor market; Carlsson & Rooth, 2007), applied for a sales manager position.

## Experiment 1:

***Method.*** Altogether 249 participants were included in experiment 1. The experiment consisted of two parts: one in which the in-group applicants were the most competent and one in which the outgroup applicants were the most competent. Under both these conditions, we also manipulated the degree of structure, so that half of the participants were aided by tools when selecting job applicants and the other half were not. We expected that participants in the conditions where a structured procedure was employed would select competent applicants to a higher degree than participants in the control conditions. In the control conditions, where no tools for structure were available, we expected participants' selection decisions to be influenced by the processes described in the introduction, and hence select applicants with less actual competence and generally disfavor outgroup applicants. Accordingly, study 1 was designed to test the following main hypothesis:

There should be an interaction between degree of structure and competence (ingroup most competent vs outgroup most competent). Compared to working with an unstructured procedure, working with a structured procedure should lead to selecting more outgroup applicants when they are the most competent and fewer outgroup applicants when they are not.

***Results and discussion.*** Study 1 provided partial support for our hypothesis in that participants working with the structured procedure were better at identifying and selecting applicants of higher quality. As expected, the analysis revealed a strong main effect of competence, indicating that the participants selected more outgroup applicants when the outgroup was the most competent, compared to when the in-group was the most competent. A significant interaction effect between structure and competence was also found. Compared to participants in the unstructured condition, participants in the structured condition (as expected) selected fewer outgroup applicants when the in-group was the most competent, but – contrary to

our expectations - they did not select a significantly higher proportion of outgroup applicants when the outgroup was the most competent.

In addition, and as expected, the results from the performed analysis indicated a significant main effect of structure with a large effect size, where participants in the structured conditions generally selected higher quality applicants (thus applicants with higher competence) than participants in the unstructured conditions. This suggests that structured selection increases the chances of finding the high quality applicants. Contrary to our expectations however, the interaction between structure and competence was non-significant, but rather there was a significant main effect of competence, indicating that the average quality of the selected résumés was higher when the in-group was best compared to when the outgroup was best in both the structured and unstructured conditions.

In experiment 2 we attempted to influence participants' behaviours in the selection context by providing a new piece of instruction informing participants that if they did not involve themselves enough in the selection procedure there would be consequences in the form of a response cost (they would have to do it all over again). This information was assumed to increase the motivation to carry out the selection task more carefully, and should leave less room for individual differences and thereby strengthen the effect of the experimental manipulation

## Experiment 2:

***Method.*** 104 participants conducted experiment 2. All participants were Caucasian Swedish students. In study 2 we tested whether a motivation enhancement increases the effect of working with a structured procedure, in comparison to what was found in study 1. Study 2 had a between-group design with two groups. Participants were randomly assigned to either the experimental condition or to the control condition (where no tools were provided). Prior to reading the CV résumés participants in both conditions were presented to a "response cost" manipulation. As in study 1, we expected that working with the structured procedure would lead to less discrimination (i.e. selecting comparatively more outgroup applicants when they are the most competent). Given that the focus of study 2 is the condition where the outgroup applicants are the most competent, this was the only condition used in study 2 (i.e. there were no conditions where the in-group applicants were best).

***Result and discussion.*** The results supported our hypothesis that the proportion of outgroup applicants selected would be higher in the structured condition than in the unstructured. In addition, as in the previous study, participants who worked with a structured procedure selected applicants with a higher mean quality compared to those who did not. Thus, in comparison to study 1, where no significant differences between the experiment group and control group were found when the outgroup

applicants were the most competent, our "response cost" manipulation appeared to induce a change in performance and increase the effect of the structured procedure. The results support the general hypothesis that enhanced motivation to perform selection tasks carefully increases the effect of a structured procedure.

## Conclusion

The main contribution from the conducted experiments in study III, is that increasing the degree of structure leads to higher quality in selection decisions. The strongest effect was for average quality of the selected résumés, where working with the structured procedure lead to an improved ability to select more competent applicants in both studies. In experiment 1 we only found an effect on the average quality of selected résumés, and no effect on discrimination. Proportion of outgroup applicants was not higher in the structured condition compared to the unstructured. In order to increase the motivation to conduct the selection task more carefully, information was provided to participants before CVs were presented. The information acted as a "response cost" manipulation and did in fact induce a change in performance and increased the effect of the structured procedure. The results support the general hypothesis that enhanced motivation to perform selection tasks carefully increases the effect of a structured procedure. Our conclusion is accordingly, that unequal treatment of outgroup applicants can be counteracted with increased structure during a recruitment procedure, if the recruiters are requested to proceed the structured recruitment rigorously, with high attention on the task.

# Extended discussion

One of the central aims of the present thesis was to examine if recruiters differ in their assessment concerning aspects related to personal environment fit, when they are aware of the applicants' ethnicity. More specifically, the question we wanted to examine was if recruiters focus on broader fit aspects, such as P-C fit and P-G fit when they are exposed to outgroup applicants compared to when exposed to ingroup applicants. Both study I and II supported our assumptions that P-C and P-G fit questions are preferred more when recruiters encounter applicants from an ethnic outgroup. We also found support for the hypothesis that recruiters generally find P-J fit aspects to be more useful in a selection situation. The other main part of the purpose was to experimentally investigate whether increased structure during the selection process can counteract discrimination, which was tested in the third study. The results supported the hypothesis that increasing structure does help recruiters select the most competent job-applicant, but instructions and incentives to proceed with the structured recruitment procedure carefully is necessary if one wants recruiters to select outgroup applicants when they are the most competent. These results are an extension of the current literature in social psychology dealing with discrimination research, and of the literature on person-environment fit present in the industrial and organization field. Below, an extended discussion is provided to elucidate the theoretical and practical contributions of the conducted studies.

## Theoretical contributions

Research during the last decades has shown that stereotypes, attitudes, and prejudices do impact recruiters preferences and selection decisions concerning ethnic minorities (e.g. Brief, et al., 2000; Rooth, 2007; Carlsson & Rooth, 2007; Agerström & Rooth, 2009; Riach & Rich, 2002). In line with this research, in our studies, we could see that the presence of immigrants among the applicants influenced Swedish recruiters' preferences and the recruiters' choices.

One of the aims of the present thesis has been to examine how norms influence recruiters' preferences in for example what aspects of P-E fit are assessed as important in the initial phases of the recruitment process. In doing this, we found

that organizational norms emphasizing cohesion (instead of fairness) promotes preference of interview questions and traits related to social competence (a P-G fit aspect). Furthermore, when ethnic minorities were present among applicants, recruiters tended to prefer selection methods related to social competence (P-G fit). In addition, we found that, when recruiters were exposed to applicants from an ethnic outgroup (Arabs) they were more prone to focus on P-C/P-G-fit related interview questions (study II). It seems that recruiters were more interested in a match between an applicants' traits/abilities and the broader aspects of person environment fit (P-G/ P-C fit), when they encountered applicants from an ethnic outgroup compared to when they encountered applicants belonging to the ingroup. Indeed, when recruiters instead were exposed to applicants from the ingroup (Swedish applicants), they were more interested in exploring the match between the applicants' job-specific abilities and the requirements for the particular job (P-J fit). These results are in line with previous research which has shown that recruiters during the initial recruitment process, have a tendency to focus broader aspects of person environment fit when encountering outgroup applicants (Horverak, et al., 2013: Bye, et al., 2014). Broader aspect of P-E fit, such as P-C fit and P-O fit, are considered primarily to measure similarity between important characteristics of a person and characteristics of organizations (supplementary-fit, Kristof-Brown, 1996). Recruiters focusing on broader fit aspects in our studies can be an expression of their uncertainty about immigrants' personality, their abilities to cooperate/social competence and their values. This assumption is congruent with previous research based on the stereotype content model (Fiske, et al., 2002), where Arabic men are stereotyped as low in competence, friendliness, agreeableness and empathy (Agerström & Roth 2009; Cuddy, et al., 2008; Cuddy, et al., 2007), personality traits which are typically related to P-G fit. A risk of focusing on P-C and P-G fit may be that it leads to a focus on deviations or lack of fit between the applicant and the cultural and organizational context. If outgroup applicants are perceived to somehow deviate or have low fit with regard to culture and/or group, they might be at a disadvantage in a recruitment context. It would be interesting to in future research examine the relationship between the stereotype content that is activated in recruiters and how this influences recruiters' different P-E fit focus as well as their hiring recommendation and/or selection decisions.

Furthermore, our results resonate well with previous research that P-J fit questions, relative to P-C fit and P-G fit questions, are considered to make a better foundation for recruitment decisions (Kinicki, et al., 1990). Our participants did indeed assess P-J fit questions and interview summaries based on P-J fit aspects, as more informative of an applicants abilities and as better basis for further recruitment decisions. Chuang and Sackett's (2005) study showed similar tendencies, where recruiters assessed P-J fit criteria as more important during the initial phase of a recruitment interview. Given this, when recruiters in our study (study II) initially

focus on broader P-E fit aspects when encountering outgroup members, it is likely to lead to disadvantageous consequences for outgroup members, since these criteria seem not to be as important as P-J fit aspects (which was more in focus in relation to the ingroup) in a recruitment. However, what we still do not know is if this tendency remains as the recruitment proceeds. It is possible that, in an actual interview, recruiters might initially be interested in broader aspects of P-E fit when interviewing immigrants, but eventually shift focus to job specific questions (P-J fit). In future research, it would therefore be interesting to investigate how much time recruiters actually spend on the different P-E fit aspects, as an effect of ethnicity, when doing in-vivo employment interviews. If broader P-E fit aspects are perceived as more important during the recruitment when outgroup members are applying for a job, it would be wise to allow for more time dedicated to recruitment interviews when outgroup members are present among the applicants.

Another contribution to the theoretical literature concerns the observed influence organizational norms had on recruiters' assessment of which abilities that they consider as important for a job (study I). Previous research has revealed that an authority's instruction to maintain a homogeneous workforce, will influence recruiters to select fewer outgroup applicants compared to those who did not received such instructions (Petersen & Dietz, 2000; Petersen & Dietz, 2005; Brief, et al., 1995; Brief, et al., 2000). Compliance to discriminatory behaviours does not have to be related to the obedience of authority, but simply be a result of conformity to more salient social norms or requests (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005; Pettigrew, 1998) by for example a company or an institution. Results from study I can be seen as an extension of previous research on compliance (e.g. Asch, 1951) to external influence on recruiters' overt behaviour (i.e. how company norms affect the perceived importance of different P-E fit aspects), as well as an attempt to integrate compliance theory with P-E fit theory in an intergroup context (i.e. a recruitment context where members of an ingroup assess outgroup applicants). Indeed, our findings suggest that a description of company norms, that emphasize a will to maintain homogenous workgroups, is enough to influence recruiters' preferences of what P-E aspects they perceive as important to consider in a recruitment context. More specifically, company norms emphasizing cohesion, influence recruiters to regard P-G fit aspects, such as social competence, as more important.

As mentioned briefly above, the results from study I might help integrating research on P-E fit and the literature on discrimination. Here, an important assumption is that social competence is a more ambiguous assessment criteria, leaving more room for the recruiters' own biases and preferences (Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994), than specific P-J fit criteria does. A job applicant from an outgroup runs the risk of being dismissed when considered to be deviant and not to fit in with the work group on the basis of perceived lack of social competence (Horverak, et al., 2013; Bye, et al., 2014). Besides, it might be harder to prove that the recruiter, head of board or

authority person are wrong in their assessment of a job-applicants' lack of social competence, than prove them wrong in their judgements of whether applicants possessed necessary job-specific abilities and skills. If any inaccuracy has been present during a recruitment, concrete and tangible standards to match job-applicants against, are easier for an outsider (e.g. discrimination commissionaire or prosecutor) to investigate.

This subtle way of possibly discriminating outgroup applicants (by shifting what is considered as important job-criteria) can be argued to provide some support for McConahays' (1986) modern racism theory, which proposes that subtle prejudice leads to discrimination only in a context that legitimizes it on the basis of non-prejudicial arguments (e.g., doing what is "good for business"). Company norms, such as encouraging or requesting maintenance of a homogenous work-force as was the case in study I, risk justifying a focus on broader P-E fit aspects when outgroup members are among the job-applicants, which, as argued above, can have discriminatory outcomes in relation to outgroup applicants (Bye, at al, 2014, Horverak, et al., 2013). It would be interesting in a future study, to gauge recruiters' subtle and blatant prejudices, in order to find out if they differ in their focus and preferences of P-E fit aspects as an effect of their prejudice. The assumption would be that recruiters high on subtle forms of prejudice would shift their focus when company norms instruct them to maintain a homogenous work force, whereas recruiters high on blatant form of prejudice would not be affected by such information, since they are assumed to be interested in a broader P-E fit independently of company norms.

The increased focus on P-G and P-C-fit, which was observed when outgroup members were applying for the job (study I and II), especially when cohesion and homogeneity was emphasized (study I), could thus be seen as a mechanism in the homogeneity processes in organizations. These findings are in line with previous research on intergroup relations and theories on normative differentiation (Kreindler, 2005; Turner, et al., 1987), which propose that phenotypic/demographic features of outgroup members are by ingroup members, perceived as heuristics for how similar outgroup members' values and norms are to the values and norms of the ingroup. If outgroup members, based on stereotypes, are seen as deviant, lacking in social competence and abilities to cooperate and as having have divergent values and norms, it might not be surprising that recruiters focus on a match between the job and P-G fit and P-C fit when outgoup members are applying for the job. Indeed Arab men were chosen for the studies since previous research has shown that they are perceived as lacking P-G traits and abilities (Agerström & Rooth, 2009; Cuddy, et al., 2008; Cuddy, et al., 2007). Additionally, when the job requires managerial knowledge and abilities, but social competence, values and norms are relatively more focused, this could be mechanisms in a passive harm process that hinders outgroup members to access the sphere of ingroup hegemony and thereby maintain

homogenous groups. Hence, these processes, intentionally or not, hinder outgroup members access to positions and more qualified jobs, and might contribute to discrimination in the labor market.

It should be noted however that we cannot know if the fact that our participants focused different P-E fit aspects, is as an effect of positive attitudes toward the ingroup (activating for example stereotype fit) or an effect of uncertainty, and/or fear of outgroup members (activating for example normative differentiation). More complex experiments in the future might give us answers. It would be interesting for example to investigate stereotype content in a recruitment context, and how different stereotypes affect which P-E fit aspects are focused on during the recruitment.

In addition, our studies do not give us answers concerning why Swedish recruiters have different preferences when exposed to outgroup members compared to when exposed to ingroup members. More experimental studies are necessary in order to identify such mediating mechanisms. We have only begun to investigate the complex intersections of intergroup relations, discrimination and P-E fit theory. A more speculative discussion upon the subject is that our results might be an observation of mechanisms operating during a homogeneity process such as described in ASA model-framework (Schneider, el al., 1995; Terry & Hogg, 1996; Jetten, Postmes, & McAuliffe, 2002; Oaks, Haslam, & Turner, 1994; Tyler, Degoey, & Smith, 1996). A homogeneity process might operate on stereotypes of Arab men as lacking necessary abilities related to P-G fit aspects (Agerström & Rooth, 2009; Cuddy, et al., 2008; Cuddy, et al., 2007), thus consequently perceived as potentially violating ingroup cooperation, cohesion and norms (Kreindler, 2005; Turner, et, al., 1987; Wenzel, et al., 2007). Additionally, to ensure reciprocity among ingroup members, recruiters might be extra interested in how an outgroup member will match ingroup attitudes, values and norms (P-C fit) as well as how they will cooperate with other coworkers (P-G fit). This is in line with previous research revealing that immigrants who have assimilated to the dominant groups' norms have a better chance of employment (Battu & Zenou, 2010; Constant & Zimmerman, 2007; Nekby & Rödin, 2010; Bye, et al., 2014). In sum, even though we cannot conclude whether recruiters' focus on different P-E fit aspects on the basis of the applicants' ethnicity represents intentions to favor the ingroup (Hewstone, et al., 2002; Husnua & Lajunenb, 2014; Mummendey & Otten, 1989), or passively exclude outgroup members (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Cuddy, et al., 2007; Petersen & Dietz, 2005, 2008), it seems plausible that we actually are capturing an ingroup homogeneity mechanism, which could intentionally or unintentionally have discriminatory consequences in recruitment.

When it comes to Study III, the findings yield experimental support for the hypotheses that increasing the degree of structure is a promising way to achieve

higher quality in decisions related to selection as well as to counteract discrimination of members from an ethnic outgroup. The experimental design of the performed experiments in Study III makes causal inferences about the effects of the structured procedure in a selection context possible, hence providing important supplementary information about the effects of structured procedures. The strongest effect was found for average quality of the selected résumés, where working with the structured procedure led to an improved ability to select more competent applicants for the job in question. When it comes to counteracting discrimination, the results were more mixed and warrant further discussion.

The first of the performed experiments that investigated the effects of structured procedures on outgroup discrimination (experiment 1), identified an effect on average quality of the selected résumés, but – contrary to our hypothesis – we found no effect of structure on discrimination (i.e. proportion of outgroup applicants selected). Our main interpretation of these finding was that the failure of the structured procedure employed to counteract discrimination in experiment 1, was due to the amount and complexity of the information that the participants had to process which could affect participants not being motivated enough to make the required effort. Previous research has demonstrated that stereotypes exert greater influence when decisions are made in complex, information overloaded contexts (Bodenhausen & Lichtenstein, 1987; Kacmar, et al., 1994; Davison & Burke, 2000), and information overload is thought to occur when the amount of input, on intensity, diversity and patterning dimensions, to a system exceeds its processing capacity (Milford & Perry, 1977). Researchers from different disciplines have found that information overload decreases decision quality (Abdel-Khalik, 1973; Chewning & Harrell, 1990; Shields, 1980; Snowball, 1980), increases the time required to make a decision, and increases confusion regarding the decision (Cohen, 1980; Jacoby, Speller, & Kohn, 1974; Malhotra, Jain, & Lagakos, 1982). In line with these assumptions, discrimination against outgroup members was not counteracted by employing a structured procedure in experiment 1. Based on the findings from experiment 1 discussed above, we demonstrated a way to increase the effect of the structured procedure. This was done in experiment 2, where we intended to increase participants' motivation to make a serious effort when performing the assigned task. When motivated to put more effort into the selection task, the effect of the structured procedure increased and participants selected outgroup members when dealing with outgroup applicants that were more qualified for the job than ingroup applicants.

Several studies have already validated the general benefits of working with structured procedures when recruiting (e.g. Kuncel, et al., 2013), and previous studies have revealed that structured processes lead to less biased employment interviews and assessment of hireability of applicants in overweight individuals (Kutcher & Bragger, 2004) as well as pregnant women (Bragger, Kutcher, Morgan, & Firth, 2002). Our study gives additional support to the value of structured

procedures during recruitment, as well as to the hypothesis that discrimination against another protected group (ethnicity) can be counteracted with carefully proceeded structured recruitment. Furthermore, our studies indicate that structured procedure during recruitment is not enough, but instructions and incentives to conduct the recruitment and to follow the structured procedures carefully is necessary. These results can be interpreted as an effect of compliance to authority, since instruction from experiment leaders is present, and are hence in line with research on compliance to authority (Milgram, 1963; Petersen & Dietz, 2000; Petersen & Dietz, 2005; Brief, et al., 1995; Brief, et al., 2000). The conclusion is that recruitment tools do work, but the probability to use them are higher when instructions from an authority to mindfully use them is present.

# Practical implications

In the included studies, we have seen how company norms can influence what P-E fit aspects are focused on, and that the presence of outgroup members among job applicants affect which P-E fit aspects are considered as important to emphasize. In Study I and II we could see that recruiters tend to focus broader P-E fit aspects (P-C fit and P-G fit) when facing outgroup applicants, and that company norms do effect recruiters' perception of what P-E aspects are perceived as important (Study I). Furthermore, we could demonstrate in Study III that when the right incentives are present, a structured process during recruitment can help recruiters lessen the effect of biases and perform better and fairer selection decisions. The results from Study III additionally strengthen previous research and recommendations on how recruitment ought to be proceeded (e.g. Kuncel, et al., 2013; Dipboye, 1994; Huffcutt & Woehr, 1999). By means of a more structured or mechanical recruitment procedure, it is possible to prevent recruiters' private, subjective biases to interfere with their judgements, which is in line with results from the vast number of studies on clinical versus mechanical judgement (Meehl, 1954; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974; Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994; Grove, Zald, Lebow, Snitz, & Nelson, 2000). Thus, we do not only increase the quality and validity of recruitment, but can also prevent discrimination, when using more structured, mechanical procedures when recruiting. In our study (experiment 2 in Study III) for example, the use of a structured procedure led to the selection of 22% more outgroup members when they were the most competent. The findings from the conducted studies can function as an encouragement for board of directors and other leaders, to be more aware of the influence of automatic biases, intergroup relations, organizational norms and culture (as well as societal norms and culture) on the recruitment process. A constant evaluation of organizational culture, recruitment routines and equality work is also recommended.

From an organizational point of view for example, one should reflect upon and evaluate what impressions ones company gives to applicants seeking an advertised job. Company norms and culture can appear either including or excluding, and influence how recruiters and other co-workers might approach applicants with divergent ethnic background. An open and including approach can be a way to attract people with different backgrounds, whereas the opposite (a company that emphasize cohesion and homogeneity such as the one in our experiments) might be repelling.

In addition, companies and recruiters are advised to carefully specify the extent to which organizational, as well as work-task related aspects, should be considered in the employment decision, so that valid information regarding both aspects can be included in an advertisement for the job, and later gathered from applicants for evaluation in relation to this explicit criteria. A thorough job-analysis prior to the advertisement, assessment and selection phases should be conducted, in order to clarify what qualifications and competencies are of real importance for the job in question (see for example Aguinis, Mazurkiewicz, & Heggestad, 2009).

Another arena to direct recommendations to is the societal institutions. We know that discrimination is illegal, while at the same time we can see that little is done to counteract discrimination in Sweden. Despite strong legislature against discrimination, very few cases are notified as writs by the commissioner for racial equality (Schömer & Svenaeus, 2013). Since 1994 (when ethnicity was included as a protected group in the Swedish discrimination law (Diskrimineringslag (2008:567)), only two cases have led to convictions. Organizational discrimination (e.g. due to routines and recruiters compliance to demands and norms), together with institutional inadequacies (such as lack of fair legacy processes), makes discrimination hard to counteract. Furthermore, most likely applicants are often not even aware of being discriminated against, leaving a vast number of unrecorded cases and thereby poor opportunity to do research and find solutions.

In addition, it is recommended that HR-personnel, recruiters and others in a decision making position are provided with knowledge and are educated about stereotypes, self-categorization, ingroup favoritism, outgroup derogation, implicit and explicit prejudice and discrimination. It is also recommended that both organizations and societal institutions scrutinize their routines, policies and culture in order to reveal in what way they can be discriminatory. In fact, it is an organizational and institutional obligation to work with preventive actions in order to counteract discrimination against protected groups (SFS Diskrimineringslagen, 3 kap, 2008:567). In a recruitment context, besides education and increased knowledge, organizations should look over their recruitment routines, follow research evidence and recommendations for example prescribing the usage of valid and reliable instruments, job-analyses and post-recruitment adjustments. In sum, constructing

tools for fairer recruitment will not have the intended impact if organizations do not use them. Hence, the legal system has to demand usage of them while at the same time increasing the possibilities of protected groups to press charges if they are not used and/or if they are discriminated against.

# Limitations and future research

The process of discrimination is a complex and delicate issue to study. Overall people do not like to be accused of discriminating others, especially when it is illegal. The pressure from social norms to be tolerant and fair is another factor that makes it hard for researchers to capture discriminatory attitudes and behaviours in experiments and surveys. Socially desirable answers are to be expected (e.g., Balcetis & Dunning, 2008; Epley & Dunning, 2000), when participants are exposed to ethnic minorities, who might even be more favorably assessed (especially when students are participating).

Study I and II are limited in that they are restricted to measure intentions and preferences and not actual selection behaviours, even though intentions to select, which was studied in Study II, is a strong predictor for actual behaviour (Sheera, 2002). Given this, the first two studies can contribute to the explanatory research and broaden the theoretical understanding, but does not allow us to draw conclusions about whether recruiters actually focus differently when exposed to outgroup applicants in real life recruitment processes and whether this effects their final decisions. Furthermore, since Study I and II concerned preferences for interview questions, traits, and selection methods rather than measuring actual selection behaviours, we have not demonstrated discrimination per se. We have only demonstrated that company norms (Study I) and the absence of structure when preparing interview questions (Study II) leads to focusing on different P-E aspects as a function of applicant ethnicity. Future research should try to study causal processes in relation to discrimination more directly, for example what actual selection behaviours are found among recruiters when focusing on different P-E fit aspects. In Study II we did actually demonstrate that focusing on P-J fit made recruiters perceive interview questions and interview summaries as more useful, but more needs to be done in this area in terms of research in relation to consequences and actual recruitment decisions.

In contrast, actual selection behaviours were studied in Study III. There are however some important limitations to the performed experiments in this study. The main limitation relates to the external validity of the findings, since all Study III was performed in a laboratory setting and participants were university students, not professional recruiters. In a real selection situation with professional recruiters we

might have seen somewhat different results. We can however lean on previous research on structured procedures in selection, which has shown that even professional recruiters need structured procedures in order to conduct a fair and unbiased selection (Kuncel, et al., 2013; Dipboye, 1994; Huffcutt & Woehr, 1999). It is nevertheless important for future research to experimentally study the effects of increased structure in populations of real recruiters as well as in the context of a real selection situation, to see how well the present results generalize. Besides extending the study to professional recruiters, future research should also examine the effect of different forms and varying degrees of structure at different stages of the recruitment process, since Study III reflects only on an early stage in the recruitment process (i.e. selection of main applicants from a larger sample of applicants), whereas the later steps resulting in the final selection of a specific applicant (e.g. interview, testing, looking up references) remain unexplored.

# Concluding remarks

Despite these limitations, the present thesis provides interesting contributions to psychological research on recruitment and discrimination. The findings provide support for the hypotheses that different P-E fit aspects are focused on when recruiters are exposed to outgroup applicants and that structured recruitment leads to an improved ability to identify and select the most competent applicants. Given this, we strongly believe that structured procedures in personnel selection ought to receive greater impact and a wider spread, both as a focus for future experimental research and – not least importantly – in the everyday practice on the labor market.

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# Study I

*The Journal of Psychology*, 2012, *146*(6), 579–594


# Company Norms Affect Which Traits are Preferred in Job Candidates and May Cause Employment Discrimination

FREDRIK BJÖRKLUND
MARTIN BÄCKSTRÖM
SIMA WOLGAST
*Lund University*

ABSTRACT. This study investigated a possible mechanism behind employment discrimination. Participants completed a recruitment task where emphasis on cohesion (employees should "fit in") versus fairness (everybody should be treated equally) was manipulated by describing the norms of a fictitious company differently. There was a comparatively stronger preference in the cohesion condition for traits and interview questions related to social competence (e.g., friendliness, gregariousness, empathy). Furthermore, participants in the cohesion condition primarily pictured socially competent employees, whereas those in the fairness condition primarily pictured employees possessing productivity-related characteristics (e.g., education, experience, and talent). The norm effect was moderated by participants' awareness of the applicants' ethnicity. When expecting applicants with foreign backgrounds, participants in the cohesion condition showed increased preference for selection methods related to social competence. Implications for recruitment practices are discussed.

Keywords: bias, discrimination, norms, person-organization fit, recruitment

EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION INVOLVES differential treatment and negative outcomes on the labor market for members of particular social categories, and it is widespread despite laws against it (e.g., Bassanini & Saint-Martin, 2008). Most research on employment discrimination is based on surveys concerning which groups are discriminated and to what extent and how, and they are designed in ways that prevent causal conclusions from being drawn (Goldman, Gutek, Stein, & Lewis, 2006). Other research, however, tries to uncover the specific variables involved (e.g., Brief, Dietz, Cohen, Pugh, & Vaslow, 2000; Petersen & Dietz, 2005,

*We are grateful to the Crafoord Foundation for supporting this research (project no. 20091016).*
*Address correspondence to Fredrik Björklund, Department of Psychology, Lund University, Box 213, 221 00 Lund, Sweden; fredrik.bjorklund@psychology.lu.se (e-mail).*

2008). The present study contributes to this by systematically manipulating a factor that is missing from the extant literature: norm descriptions. We examine company norms as an antecedent of unequal treatment by investigating whether they influence the recruitment process. More specifically, we tested whether emphasis on different norms influences which characteristics are preferred in a potential employee, even when the job is the same. If emphasis on particular norms causes a shift toward characteristics that are unrelated to job performance, then there is a risk that individuals from groups not associated with these characteristics are excluded despite being equally qualified for the job.

## Discrimination and Organizations

Social psychologists often explain discrimination in terms of conflict, where benefits received at the expense of another social group lead to rivalry and hostility (e.g., Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961), in terms of social identity concerns, where group members receive preferential treatment simply because they belong to a common category (the "in group"; Tajfel, Flament, Billig, & Bundy, 1971), or in terms of stereotypes and prejudice (Allport, 1954). Organizational psychologists point to complementary factors related to both personality characteristics and the context (e.g., policies, opinions, and demands; Dipboye & Colella, 2005). For example, the "attraction–selection–attrition" (ASA) framework describes how organizations tend to become more homogenous over time (Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995; De Cooman et al., 2009). The homogenization process is explained by several factors: applicants tend to look for organizations they believe match their own characteristics and values, organizations tend to employ individuals who they think will "fit in" with the company culture, and individuals who experience that they do not fit in tend to leave.

## Person–Organizational Fit

The ASA framework has sparked a host of research on different kinds of fit between a person and the environment (Smith, 2008), most notably on person–organizational fit (P–O fit). The P–O fit concerns the extent to which an individual's characteristics are congruent with those of the organization (e.g., values, interests, goals, beliefs, and behavior; c.f., Kristof, 1996) rather than with a specific role or task. The P–O fit may be contrasted with Person–Job fit (P–J fit), which concerns the extent to which an individual's characteristics are congruent with the demands of the job (i.e., the ability to complete the work; Edwards, 1991). The present study involves both kinds of fit. We expect raised concerns for P–O fit when norms related to workforce cohesion are introduced and raised concerns for P–J fit when fairness norms related to equal opportunity are introduced.

## Organizational Culture

An entire research area has evolved around the notion that organizations have cultures, and they may be analyzed in terms of cognitions (values, norms, expectations, and assumptions) that are shared by members of the culture (Rousseau, 1990). Although selection and socialization of employees are pointed out as important determinants of organizational culture (O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991), related research often centers on organizational change, and it uses the organization itself as the unit of analysis (e.g., Smircich, 1983). Research on organizational culture clearly relates to the research question in the present study; however, there is a crucial difference in focus. This research applies a social cognitive perspective to determine how the mental conception of a hirable job candidate shifts as an effect of the norms that the organization chooses to emphasize. More concretely, it concerns the effects of organizational norms on the judgment criteria that personnel recruiters apply when selecting new employees.

## The Present Research

In the current study, we do not relate the concept of fit to attraction or attrition but to selection. Rather than investigating how the match between personal and organizational characteristics relates to recruitment decisions (such as in Cable & Judge, 1997), we instead investigate how the recruiter's perception of what an employee should be like is affected by descriptions of the workplace. If a company emphasizes that employees should "fit in," those already employed may constitute models for what one should be like to function well within the work group, and members of minority groups may be excluded.

Previous studies have manipulated the instructions recruiters receive from their manager but not company norms. Brief et al. (2000) showed that subordinates discriminate against minority group members, provided that the authority figure's justification is business-related. Similarly, subtly prejudiced subordinates discriminate when instructed to maintain an ethnically homogeneous workforce (Petersen & Dietz, 2005), particularly when they are highly committed to the organization (Petersen & Dietz, 2008). These studies convincingly demonstrate the importance of authority figures' behavior in employment discrimination.

We believe that employment discrimination may take even subtler forms. When the organization wants employees who "fit in" and lack a validated recruitment process, minority group members may be excluded even when the recruiter has no direct instructions from an authority figure. Short of a job description which specifies important characteristics, the aim for a homogeneous workforce may make the recruiter rely on impressionistic criteria such as "social competence" when forming a judgment about hireability. This should be disadvantageous to applicants from minority groups, particularly those who are associated with lower cultural skills. The dependent variable in this study is the judgment criteria upon

which selection is based. Our first hypothesis (tested in experiments 1 and 2) states that a company description highlighting cohesion will bias the criteria so that proportionally more emphasis will be placed on the applicants' social competence, making sure the person "fits in" (P–O fit). If, on the other hand, the description highlights fairness, proportionally more emphasis will be placed on the applicants' job related skills (P–J fit). Our second hypothesis (tested in experiment 3) states that the description interacts with information on applicants' cultural backgrounds, such that when a company highlights cohesion and applicants with a foreign background are expected, the preference for selection methods related to social competence will be the strongest. These predictions are examined in three experiments across different jobs (to test the robustness of the norm-effect). Participants role-play as recruiters and are provided with short descriptions of fictive companies with differing norms, and asked what they would look for in a potential employee.

## Experiment 1

### Method

### Participants

One hundred and eighteen participants, mainly students, volunteered to participate in the study without compensation. Three of them correctly guessed the hypothesis of the study and were therefore excluded from the data analysis. The final number of participants was 115 (55 men and 59 women, and one person who did not report sex), with a mean age of 29.46 ($SD = 12.47$).

### Materials

To test the robustness of the norm-effect, we chose two different jobs. One job was as a nurse's assistant and the other was as a salesperson in a paper store. For both of these jobs, callback rates from fictitious applications to real job openings show evidence of discrimination (Carlsson & Rooth, 2007). For each job, we formulated two different descriptions (Appendix). One emphasized the norm of fitting in at the workplace (cohesion manipulation) and the other emphasized equal treatment (fairness manipulation).

After the company description, a list of traits was presented. The words in the list were either related to social competence (14 adjectives, e.g., empathetic, kind, social, humble, helpful; $\alpha = .87$) or to task competence (14 adjectives, e.g., intelligent, thorough, independent, focused, structured; $\alpha = .90$). The traits appeared in a randomized order, and the participant's task was to rate how necessary (1 = not at all necessary, 7 = absolutely necessary) it would be for an employee to have each trait for them to make a hire.

Lastly, participants reported their sex and age and were asked to guess the hypothesis of the study. The criterion for a correct response was that a connection was made between the company norms and the ratings of the traits.

## Procedure

Both the job type factor and the norm factor were between subjects, such that each participant was randomly assigned to receive only one of the four different company descriptions. They were informed that the study concerned recruitment, completed the rating task (which took about 10 minutes), and were then debriefed about the purpose and hypothesis of the study.

## Results and Discussion

As expected, an ANOVA on the relative preference for social competence (ratings of social competence - ratings of task competence; positive values indicating a relative preference for social competence) showed that the relative preference for social competence was stronger in the cohesion condition ($M = 0.52$, $SD = 0.58$) than in the fairness condition ($M = –0.07$, $SD = 0.91$); $F(1, 110) = 12.74$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .10$ (see also Figure 1). This provides support for the hypothesis that company norms, as expressed in the company descriptions, may affect what a recruiter is looking for in a new employee. Emphasis on cohesion led to a stronger focus on social competence than emphasis on fairness. There was no main effect of job type ($F < 1$) and no interaction between job type and norm condition, $F(1, 110), = 1, 10, p = 0.30, \eta^2 = .01$, thus the results hold for at least the two different jobs here.

To further probe how the recruiter may be affected by norm descriptions, we conducted a second experiment with two new measures of trait preferences. One measure concerns how the mental construal of an ideal employee may shift as an effect of the norm manipulation, and the other concerns a preparatory task, selecting appropriate interview questions.

## Experiment 2

The purpose of the second experiment was to extend two aspects of the current findings. First, do norms affect which questions are selected for an employment interview? Second, do norms give rise to particular preferences when one pictures the “ideal employee” for the job at hand (a more open response format than in Experiment 1)? Participants in the cohesion condition were expected to primarily picture a socially competent employee and express a preference for interview questions that have to do with social competence.

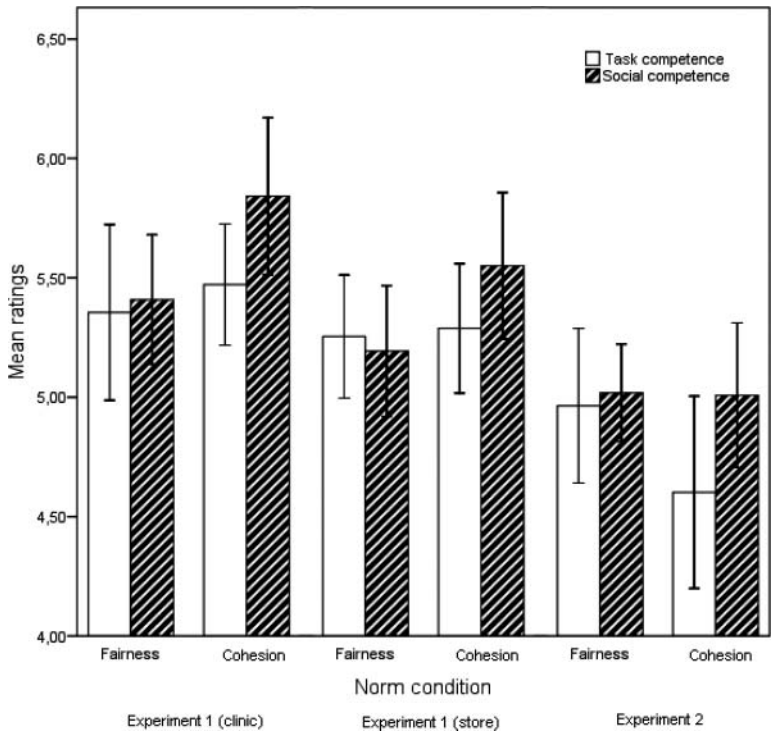


**FIGURE 1. Mean ratings of traits (Experiment 1) and questions (Experiment 2) related to task competence and social competence under different norm conditions. Error bars signify 95% confidence intervals.**

## Method

### Participants

The experiment had 79 participants (22 men and 51 women, and 6 who did not report sex), with a mean age of 25.33 ($SD = 6.0$), although only 67 of them completed the part of the study that concerned the ideal employee. All participants were students at a university in southern Sweden and volunteered to participate without compensation.

### Materials and Procedure

The stimulus materials described a clothing store hiring a store manager. As in the previous experiment, there were two company descriptions. These were

identical except for the norm that was described. The cohesion version emphasized that "Our goal is to keep a family feeling, and we try hard to make successful recruitments of employees who fit well into the company. We want to offer a workplace where each and everyone feels that they are part of the group, so that everybody enjoys each other's company and gets on well with one another." The fairness version instead emphasized that "Our company has a carefully prepared recruitment policy with the goal that all our recruitments should be fair. We value diversity and make sure that everybody has the same opportunity."

The participants' first task was to rate twenty questions on a Likert scale regarding how crucial (1 = not crucial at all, 7 = absolutely crucial) each question would be to ask in an employment interview where one wants to get an impression of the applicant's personality. Eight questions concerned traits related to social competence ($\alpha = .74$), eight concerned traits related to task competence ($\alpha = .86$), and the remainder were fillers.

The second task was to describe what would characterize an ideal employee at the company and explain why these particular traits are important to have. The descriptions of the ideal employee were coded by two independent raters into one of three different categories: focus on social competence, focus on task competence, or focus on both. The raters' codings showed perfect agreement. The design and procedure was the same as in the previous experiment. None of the participants correctly guessed the hypothesis.

## Results and Discussion

The first analysis concerned the ratings of the interview questions. As expected, an ANOVA on the difference variable (social competence–task competence) showed that the relative preference for social competence was stronger in the cohesion condition ($M = 0.51$, $SD = 0.76$) than in the fairness condition ($M = 0.14$, $SD = 0.71$); $F(1, 77) = 5.08$, $p < .03$, $\eta^2 = .06$ (see also Figure 1).

The second analysis concerned the ideal employee. As expected, a Chi-square test on the descriptions showed that the difference between the norm conditions was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 6.95$, $df = 1$, $p = .031$) and the pattern was clear: It was more common for the ideal employee to be described in terms of social competence in the cohesion condition and in terms of task competence in the fairness condition (Table 1). In other words, both analyses provided support for the hypothesis that emphasizing cohesion rather than fairness in an employment ad increases the focus on social competence, despite the job being the same.

## Experiment 3

The third experiment tested the hypothesis that company norms interact with information concerning the ethnicity of the applicants. More precisely, it was predicted that when people with a foreign background apply to a workplace where

**TABLE 1. Descriptions of the Ideal Employee, Across Norm Condition (Experiment 2)**

| | Norm condition | |
|---|---|---|
| Description of ideal employee | Fairness | Cohesion |
| Focus on social competence | 6 | 13 |
| Focus on task competence | 21 | 9 |
| Equal focus on both | 10 | 8 |

employees are expected to "fit in," there is a preference for social competence, as there is a perceived risk that their lower cultural skills may lead to problems. Selection-method preference was used as the dependent variable. It was expected that when it is revealed that some applicants are non-natives, the preference for methods related to social competence increases, particularly if combined with a cohesion description. There were two reasons for the shift of dependent measure: first, to reduce the risk of socially desirable responding, which is often triggered in studies where ethnic minority groups are concerned, and second, to extend the norm-effect to another tool recruiters make use of in the selection process (not just interview questions).

## Method

### Participants

A convenience sample consisting of 120 persons, mainly students, participated on a voluntary basis. There were 60 men and 60 women, and their mean age was 22.14 ($SD = 8.25$).

### Materials and Procedure

The stimulus materials consisted of a description of a bank office searching for a new departmental head. There were four different versions of the description, in a $2 \times 2$ design. The information regarding applicants was varied such that participants either learned that "persons with different cultural background have shown interest for the job" or received no such information. Information regarding the company norms was varied as in the previous experiments (i.e., cohesion or fairness).

Ten different selection methods were presented. The participant's task was to rate these methods according to how suitable they would be for the recruitment.

They were told that they had a total of 100% to distribute on the ten different methods, and that they could allocate these just as they liked, depending on how important they considered either method to be. It was expected that the more relevant at participant considered a particular method to be, the higher percentage he or she would allocate to this method. Five of the selection methods could be categorized as related to social competence (EQ-test, interview, values test, interaction test, role-play) and five could be categorized as related to task competence (work sample test, creativity test, examination of vitae, education verification, IQ-test). We calculated an index of the percentage that was allocated to social competence and another index of the percentage that was allocated to task competence. Lastly, participants reported their sex and age and were asked to guess the hypothesis of the study, which nobody did.

## Results and Discussion

To test the hypothesis of an interaction between company description and applicant ethnicity-information, a 2 (company description: cohesion vs. fairness) $\times$ 2 (information: immigrants can be expected vs. no such info) ANOVA was conducted on the difference variable (social competence–task competence). There was a main effect of company description. Participants who made the ratings under a cohesion-related description had higher ratings on the difference variable ($M = 10.85$, $SD = 3.66$) than those who made the ratings under a fairness-related description ($M = -1.07$, $SD = 3.60$); $F(1, 106) = 5.40$, $p = .022$, $\eta^2 = .05$, indicating a relative preference for selection methods related to social competence. There was no main effect of expecting applicants of a foreign background ($F < 1$). More importantly, the hypothesized interaction was supported; $F(1, 106) = 3.95$, $p = .05$, $\eta^2 = .04$ (Figure 2). Further analysis of simple effects revealed no significant effect of the norm manipulation for the group that received no information on applicant ethnicity, $F(1, 106) = 0.06$, $p = .81$, $\eta^2 = .001$. For the group receiving information that people with foreign backgrounds were expected to apply, participants under a cohesion manipulation had a stronger preference for the social competence-related methods than those under a fairness manipulation, $F(1, 106) = 8.97$, $p < .003$, $\eta^2 = .08$, as was predicted.

## General Discussion

The present research examined how the norms of a company may influence which characteristics are perceived as important to focus on in a recruitment situation. Across four different jobs (nurse's assistant, salesperson, store manager, and bank director) and four different dependent variables (trait ratings, ratings of interview questions, picturing ideal employee, and preference for selection methods), a cohesion-based company description led to a stronger preference for social competence than a fairness-based description. Apparently, there is no need for a

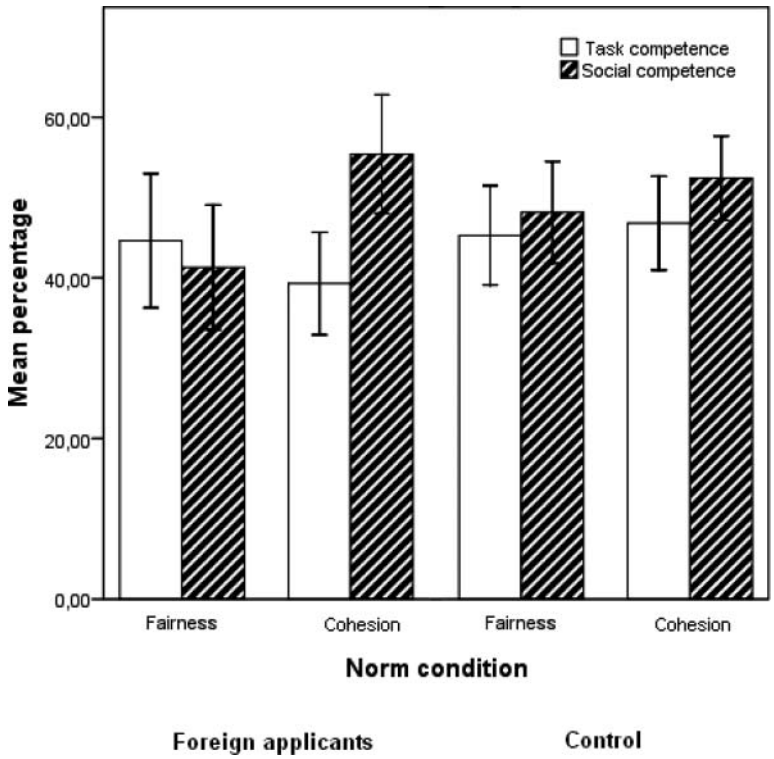


**FIGURE 2. Mean preference for selection methods related to task competence and social competence under different norm conditions (Experiment 3). Error bars signify 95% confidence intervals.**

direct instruction from the leader for this shift in preferences to occur, as simply describing the company norms is enough, and it affects both the mental construal of the suitable applicant (trait ratings and "ideal employee") and how one pictures going about recruiting this person (interview questions and selection methods). Moreover, if the recruiter is unaware of the effect that the norm expression has on his or her preferences, a distinct possibility given our participants did not manage to guess the purpose of the study, it may be hard to avoid.

## Contribution to the Literature

We see the effect of company norms on recruiter preferences as a possible mechanism behind employment discrimination, since applicants from underrepresented social groups risk being excluded. We are not aware of any previous

suggestion in the literature that norm descriptions subtly affect employment discrimination (although direct instructions from a manager may do so; Brief et al., 2000; Petersen & Dietz, 2005, 2008). With regard to P–O research in general, it has mainly concerned issues such as identification with the organization, drop-out rates, and so forth. The most similar to our study is the P–O research concerning how fit between characteristics of the organization and the applicant affect selection decisions (Cable & Judge, 1997), which was not studied here.

It is conceivable that our participants perceived the norm-descriptions as expressing organizational culture, and that they expected a certain category of employees to be desired there. However, our proposed discrimination mechanism remains the same; that is, emphasis on cohesion may raise concerns regarding P–O (rather than P–J) fit and cause a shift in the perceived importance of selection criteria such that applicants who are perceived to be socially competent are favored. Favoring applicants from (stereotypically) socially competent groups has the potential cost of excluding candidates who, in fact, are socially competent. Surface level (demographic) characteristics such as ethnicity are often poor surrogates for more important deeper level (attitudinal) characteristics, which have stronger effects on both group cohesion (Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998) and performance (Elfenbein & O'Reilly, 2007).

## Theoretical Integration

Our findings suggesting relative preference for variables associated with social competence when under the influence of a cohesion norm can be interpreted partially in terms of the "attraction–selection–attrition" (ASA) framework, which assumes that organizations employ people that they perceive "fit in" the organization (Schneider et al., 1995). The new employee is believed to function better in the work group if he or she shares many characteristics and interests with the existing workforce (Cable & Judge, 1997). The extent to which homogeneity at the workplace is desirable or detrimental for organizations is a complex and important research question in itself, and it is much debated in organizational psychology (Smith, 2008). Our results are of little help in resolving that issue, but rather they indicate that if an organization *emphasizes* cohesion, this may result in a shift in selection criteria and provide a basis for unintentional discrimination of individuals from marginalized groups who are perceived to "fit in" less well than individuals from the dominant group. Individuals from minority groups risk exclusion from the labor market, despite being qualified for the job.

On another theoretical note, it appears to us that the importance of people's characteristics for work performance cannot be determined a priori. When recruiting, categorization of characteristics about whether there is a match between a person and the people who comprise the environment (P–O fit) and between the person and the work task (P–J fit) has to be made with respect to the particular workplace and work task. As fit concerns the interplay between the person and

the situation, the issue is interactionist. Thus, a particular characteristic may fit with some workgroups but not others and with some work tasks but not others. Analysis of P–J fit should be relatively feasible, since whether a characteristic is complementary or not can be established through job analysis, and there are established methods for this (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). The level of fit can be determined by comparing criteria derived from the job analysis with estimates of related characteristics in the applicants. Analysis of P–O fit may be somewhat less feasible—in part due to disagreement on how it should be measured (Rousseau, 1990)—though promising pioneering work has been done (O'Reilly et al., 1991).

We have framed our results as a possible mechanism behind employment discrimination, but to the extent that social–competence related P–O and P–J fit can be shown to be independently related to high productivity, satisfaction, low turnover, and so forth, information pertaining to these may be useful for recruiters and for companies when portraying themselves in job ads. Companies and recruiters are well advised to carefully specify the extent to which organizational as well as work-task related aspects should be considered in the employment decision, so that valid information regarding both aspects can be gathered from applicants and evaluated in relation to explicit criteria.

A further note of caution regarding the interpretation of the results: We have argued that when recruiters trade task competence for social competence, they run the risk of excluding applicants from certain groups. It is conceivable, however, that our participants made a rational choice, such that their balancing of criteria would have beneficial outcomes for the organization. For example, putting emphasis on social competence when the workplace seems to emphasize social competence may potentially make the person fit in better, feel more satisfied, stay longer at the job, and so forth. Likewise, although it appears more implausible (and more politically incorrect), increased emphasis on social competence when foreigners apply might be rational, insofar as the stereotypes are accurate.

## Limitations

The extent to which the norm-effect on recruitment preferences can be generalized to a real life recruitment situation is an open question. As the current experiments concerned preferences for traits, interview questions, and selection methods rather than applicants, we have not demonstrated discrimination per se. Rather, what we have shown is that a company description can increase the preference for social competence, and whether the effect holds for actual selection or hireability judgments remains to be seen. Arguably, however, norms may be considered a potential risk factor. Jargon associated with social competence (e.g., that applicants should "fit in") may come with a price.

The fact that our sample consisted exclusively of university students, and that the study was not conducted in the field, puts further limitations on the validity of the results. Although some students from our sample are likely to be involved

in selection and recruitment in the future, as a group they differ both in age and experience from those who make actual recruitments in the labor market. The differences though should not be exaggerated. Although knowledge of recruiter training in general is limited, it stands clear that those working with selection and recruitment in the real world are not always experienced or even trained (Connerley, 1997), and recruitment practices vary widely in how professionally they are carried out (Van der Zee, Bakker, & Bakker, 2002). The validity issue is obviously best settled by further research in the relevant domain, and we now turn to some study proposals.

## Suggestions for Future Research

A study with a similar manipulation of company norms as presented here but with a direct measure of discrimination could be worthwhile, ideally complemented with a correlational study examining how the expression of norms in actual companies is related to how their work force is constituted, for example, in terms of ethnic homogeneity. It may also be worth investigating whether expecting applicants from groups that are stereotyped as low in social competence increases the preference for social competence as a selection criterion. When recruitments are performed professionally and systematically, the recruiter chooses criteria that are relevant for assessing an individual's ability to perform a work related task. But, when the recruitment is unsystematic, which should be common for organizations without access to human resources expertise, there is an increased risk for irrelevant criteria to be introduced.

## Conclusion

The present study showed how recruiters' preferences are subtly shifted by information related to company norms and the ethnicity of applicants. It adds to the increasing list of factors that promote employment discrimination (c.f., Dipboye & Colella, 2005). Recruiters can hardly be asked to keep all these factors in check. We therefore favor a systematic recruitment process, where relevant criteria are specified through job analysis before assessment methods are chosen. Such recruitment leaves less room for bias, and it should contribute to equal opportunities as well as help employers get the right person for the job.

## AUTHOR NOTES

**Fredrik Björklund** and **Martin Bäckström** are both Professors in the Department of Psychology, Lund University. They share a common research interest in social cognition and personality assessment. **Sima Wolgast** is a doctoral student in the Department of Psychology at Lund University and her thesis research concerns employment discrimination.

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*Original manuscript received March 4, 2011*
*Final version accepted January 11, 2012*

## APPENDIX

### The Cohesion Version of the Paper Store Job

The Lindh paper store is an old family owned business that sells office supplies. It was founded in 1890 by MBA Lindh and has since then been passed on to the following generations Lindh. The company is characterized by a family feeling and it is important that all employees feel that they are part of the team and do their share. It is not uncommon that Lindh himself is down in the store to work side by side with his skilled salespersons.

Lindh's paper has recently moved to a new, larger site and is looking for a salesperson who can fit smoothly into the closely knit team. The new salesperson is expected to have the same sound knowledge as the other employees and to be prepared to sometimes enjoy their company outside the workplace too.

### The Fairness Version of the Paper Store Job

The Lindh paper store is an old family owned business that sells office supplies. It was founded in 1890 by MBA Lindh and has recently moved to a new, larger site. The company has a good reputation for treating everybody equally, the employees as well as the customers. The salespersons are skilled and have a sound knowledge within their area. The company is characterized by a spirit of fairness where the individual is put in focus. The company is now looking for a new salesperson. The new salesperson is expected to have the same skills as the

other employees since in this company everybody is judged according to the same criteria.

### The Cohesion Version of the Nurse Job

The Lindh clinic is a family run business. The clinic is characterized by a family feeling and it is important that all employees feel that they are part of the team and do their share. Sometimes senior consultant Lindh himself turns up and assists in receiving new patients. The Lindh clinic has recently moved to a new, larger site and is looking for a new nurse's assistant who smoothly can fit into the closely knit team. The new nurse's assistant is expected to have the same sound knowledge as the other employees and to be prepared to sometimes enjoy their company outside the workplace too.

### The Fairness Version of the Nurse Job

The Lindh clinic offers quality medical treatment and has just moved to a new, larger site. The clinic has a good reputation in the care business for its equal treatment of all employees. The employees have thorough knowledge within their respective area. The clinic is characterized by an equality focus and emphasizes the individual's qualities when looking for a new nurse's assistant. The new nurse's assistant is expected to have the same sound knowledge as the other employees, and everybody is judged according to the same criteria.

# Study II

# Expected fit: Applicant ethnicity affects which questions that are prepared for a job interview

Sima Wolgast, Fredrik Björklund and Martin Bäckström

Department of Psychology, Lund University, Lund, Sweden.

## Abstract

Three experiments on professional recruiters explored how applicants' ethnicity affects questions prepared for a job interview and the implications of this. Experiment 1 revealed that outgroup applicants prompt recruiters to focus more on whether applicants have integrated cultural norms and values fitting the ingroup-norms (Person-Culture fit), as well as the match between the applicants and their would-be work team (Person-Group fit). When applicants were from the ethnic ingroup, recruiters focused more on questions pertaining to the match between the applicants' abilities and the specific demands of the job (Person-Job fit). Experiment 2 and 3 revealed that questions prepared for outgroup applicants were rated as less useful for hireability decisions, and that summaries emphasizing Person-Job fit were perceived as more useful.

*Keywords*: discrimination, ethnicity, recruitment, person-environment fit

Does perceptions of ethnicity influence which questions that are asked in an employment interview? In the present research we study whether recruiters' preferences for different types of interview questions vary as an effect of whether they are exposed to applicants from an ethnic ingroup or outgroup. Understanding of whether recruitment practitioners formulate different interview questions to applicants of different ethnicity, and if so, whether these questions differ with regard to their usefulness in forming an accurate impression of the applicant, is key for improving the recruitment process. Hence, in the current study we do not investigate the selection of applicants, but rather focus on the preceding phases of the recruitment process where information is gathered that serves as the basis for the final selection decision.

## Employment interview

The employment interview is one of the most commonly used assessment tools in employee selection (Macan, 2009; Macan & Merritt, 2011; Tross & Maurer, 2008). It is a complex procedure involving an encounter between employment settings (e.g. organizational demands and interviewer characteristics and performance) and applicant characteristics, qualifications and performance in the interview setting. Even though the employment interview has been the focus of considerable research, relatively little is known about how stereotypes and biases influence recruiters when conducting an interview. Instead, research has tended to focus on properties of interviewer ratings, such as factors influencing their reliability (Conway, Jako & Goodman, 1995) and criterion-related validity (Posthuma, Morgeson & Campion, 2002). Whereas some recent research suggest that there is only a minimal advantages of conducting structured interviews (Kepes, 2012), for a number of years a majority of researchers have claimed that interviewer judgments based on structured interviews are more predictive of future job performance than those from unstructured interviews (Conway et al., 1995; Highhouse, 2008; Huffcutt, Van Iddekinge & Roth, 2011; Posthuma et al., 2002), but that recruiters infrequently use them (Klehe, 2004; Simola, Taggar & Smith, 2007). Instead recruiters typically conduct interviews where they have decided on the general topics beforehand (i.e., moderate level of question standardization; Lievens & De Paepe, 2004), rather than preparing distinct questions that are posed to each applicant. This has been suggested to be one of the most persistent gaps between research and practice in industrial-organizational psychology (Rynes, 2012) and research shows that the lack of structure in non-standardized approaches to selection exposes the selection process to the biases of the decision maker (Judge et al., 2000). In relation to this, some attention has also been drawn to interview ratings and discrimination against minorities (Huffcutt & Roth, 1998; Bye et al., 2014), concluding for example that an emphasis on cultural fit could have negative effect on immigrants' chances of

being hired (Bye et al., 2014) and that there is a selection effect where recruiters tend to give higher ratings to applicants that belong to the same racial group as the recruiter (Lin, Dobbins & Farh, 1992; Prewett-Livingston, Field, Veres & Lewis, 1996).

*Person-environment fit and ethnic background*

The importance of the matching or "fit" between individuals and the characteristics of the job and the organization has been acknowledged in the literature for decades (Schneider, 1987). Person-environment fit (P-E fit) is a broadly defined concept, consisting of different sub-types of fit between an individual and the environment (Kristof, 1996). It has been shown that recruiters' perception of compatibility between an individual and the job in question as well as between the individual and the organization predict hiring recommendations (Kristof-Brown, 2000). Person-job (P-J fit) is the most specific form of fit and is defined as the match between an applicant's abilities and the demands of the job (eg. skills, knowledge, abilities) (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011). In contrast, person-culture fit (P-C fit) is the broadest concept of person-environment fit, and refers to the degree a person has integrated and can display norms, values and behaviors that converge with the cultural norms of the society in question (Bye et al., 2014).

Person-group fit (P-G fit) concerns the interpersonal match between individuals and their work team and colleagues, and has been related to individual performance in workgroups (Bretz & Judge, 1994) and effective group behaviors (Weldon & Weingart, 1993; Klimoski & Jones, 1995). Consistent with the similarity attraction hypothesis (Byrne, 1971) agreement in group attitudes is suggested to enhance attraction between team members and to lead to improved group socialization, cohesion and communication (Pfeffer, 1983).

Most studies on person-environment fit concern the interview setting itself, and how estimated person-environment fit affects hiring recommendations. From the organization's point of view, an applicant's fit with the specific job (i.e. P-J fit) is the most important criterion to fulfill (Chuang & Sackett, 2005). However, recruiters tend to focus more on fit aspects related to congruence with norms and values when the selection process is unstructured and they expect to work together with, rather than apart from, the applicant they are hiring (Nolan, Langhammer & Salter, 2016). To our knowledge however, there has been no research on the extent to which applicants' ethnicity affects what aspects of person-environment fit that is in focus during the selection process.

*Purpose of the present studies*

Given that the employment interview is one of the methods of selection that recruiters rely most heavily upon (Macan, 2009; Macan & Merritt, 2011) and the findings indicating that recruiters typically conduct interviews where they have

decided on the general topics beforehand (Lievens & De Paepe, 2004), we aim to explore if applicant ethnicity influences what interview questions recruiters prefer to focus on when planning an interview and if differences in questions preferences leads to differences in information pertaining to assessment of hireability. Our general hypothesis is that applicant ethnicity influences what aspects of person-environment fit that are chosen for the interview. Males with Arabic sounding names are used as ethnic outgroup applicants, due to the fact that research has shown that they are subjected to extensive discrimination on the labor market (Agerström & Rooth, 2009) and negatively valenced stereotypes (Agerström & Rooth, 2009; Cuddy, Fiske, Kwan, Glick, Demoulin & Leyens, 2009). Our general assumption is that when the applicants are from an ethnic outgroup, stereotypes about minorities and associated evaluations will be activated (Devine, 1989), influencing recruiters' preferences of interview questions and leading to an increased tendency to focus on broader categories of fit, such as person-culture fit and person-group fit, compared to when the applicants are from the ethnic majority, where we expect a more direct focus on person-job fit. This tendency is assumed to be particularly strong in relation to males with Arabic sounding names. They are stereotyped as low in friendliness, agreeableness and empathy (Cuddy et al., 2009), traits which are typically related to person-group fit. Arguably, questions regarding person-culture fit are more likely be posed to applicants when assumptions about lower person-culture fit might be made, for example due to the applicants having a different ethnic and/or cultural origin compared to the majority in the specific context. Another purpose is to examine the possible consequences of focusing on different fit-aspects for different groups, when assessing hireability. Here, based on the findings from Chuang and Sackett (2005), it can be assumed that questions and information relating to person-job fit will be perceived as more specific and relevant to the job in question. If one has information suggesting high person-job fit but less information regarding person-group and person-culture fit, this may be perceived as providing a better basis for hireability judgments as compared to when the opposite is true (i.e. having information suggesting high person-group and person-culture fit and less information regarding person-job fit). In the present studies, we examine the validity of a model where we assume that there is a tendency to focus more on person-job fit when preparing interviews with members of an ethnic ingroup, and that such a difference in interview focus is likely to be related to differences in the information that is used to assess hireability, favoring situations where the recruiters have more person-job fit information. To test these assumptions, we performed three separate studies which are reported below.

## Study 1

Study 1 aimed at investigating if applicants' ethnicity influences the types of questions prepared by professional recruiters. We wanted to investigate if variations in the applicants' ethnicity affected which aspects of person-environment fit that was focused on by Swedish recruiters when preparing interview questions. The hypotheses tested were that recruiters would suggest more questions related to Person-group fit and Person-culture fit when exposed to "Arabic" applicants, compared to "Swedish" applicants, whereas questions concerning person-job fit were expected to be more common when the applicants were "Swedes".

# Method

**Participants.** There were 57 participants in the study, 24 females and 33 males, with a mean age of 40.9 years (*SD* = 7.4). All were working actively with recruitment in private companies as a regular part of their work assignments. On average, participants had worked with recruitment for 11.1 years (*SD* = 6.9). The average age was 40.9 years (SD = 7.4). Participants (professional recruiters with typically Swedish sounding names) in the study were found by means of internet, either on municipality homepages where local companies were presented or on the companies' homepages. The recruiters, at mainly medium-sized companies in southern Sweden were contacted by phone. If agreeing to participate, they received an e-mail with a link to an internet-page where they took part in the study. Participation was voluntary and all participants were compensated with a movie ticket.

**Design.** The experiment had a between-group design with two conditions. Participants were randomly assigned either to a condition with applicants with male names sounding typically "Swedish" or to a condition with male names sounding "Arabic". The dependent variables were the relative preference for questions relating to P-C fit, P-G fit, and P-J fit.

**Materials and procedure.** The participants were provided with a job-description, where information about job characteristics for a first-line supervisor (O*NET: First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers) for a furnishing store company, was described. After reading the job-description participants were exposed to one of two different lists of names, one with "Swedish" applicants (i.e. typically traditionally sounding native Swedish names: Samuel Jönsson, Leif Svensson, Carl Persson, Jens Högmark, Henrik Ask, Pål Karlsson) and one with "Arab" applicants (i.e. names sounding as if originating in Arabic part of the middle east: Abdul Haleem, Mahmud Khabati, Ali Husseini, Reza Akrami, Hassan Khalil, Ehmed Shockruollah ).

Recruiters were then instructed to produce ten questions that they would like to ask during an interview.

The questions produced were categorized as either concerning P-C fit, P-G fit or P-J fit. Questions that did not relate to any of the types of fit were classified as "other". We defined the category "PC-fit" to include questions related to broader concepts, such as questions about for example values, norms and personality traits, which captured general information about the applicant (e.g. "Cultural understanding?"; "Basic values?"; "Attitudes to our cultural values?", "Moral standards?", "View of human beings?"; "Describe yourself?"; "What are your traits?"; "Who are you?"); PG-fit to include questions about social competence, cooperation in work-team and communication skills, capturing performance in group (e.g. "How do you function in groups?"; "What are your experiences from cooperating with colleagues?"; "Ability to handle social situations and cooperation?"; "Are you socially competent?"; What does cooperation means to you?"; "How do you function with others in groups?"); and person-job fit to include questions about specific job related competences and skills such as coaching skills, supervision skills, stress management, retail- and service skills, conflict management and organizing skills ("What actions do you take when coaching others and specifically coworkers?"; "How do you feel about managing others? Previous experiences?"; "How would you describe your leadership?"; "What do you consider as most important in your leadership?"; "What would you need/need to develop in order to organize your leadership in a satisfying way?"; "How do you function under stress?"; "Can you give me an example when you solved a conflict situation?"; "How do you handle criticism from customers?"; "Do you have experience when it comes to managing unsatisfied customers? If yes, how do you do this?"; "What is your experience in retailing?"; "Are you good at organizing your work?").

The classification of the questions was conducted by a coder who was blind to which experimental condition the protocols came from. To estimate the reliability of the classification of the questions, two assistants were provided with protocols from 20 randomly selected recruiters and were instructed to independently code the question into the categories that they belonged to, which were then compared to the codes of the main coder. Inter-rater reliability was calculated using intraclass correlaions between the main coder and the two assistants as an estimate for the accuracy of the rating process. The intraclass correlation coefficient for P-C fit was .85, for P- G fit .83, and for P-J fit .97. Hence, the results indicate that raters independently agreed on the question-category relation. When all questions had been classified, relative preferences for the different categories of fit were calculated for each participant by dividing the number of questions in a specific category with the total number of questions relating to any of the fit-categories. This was done in order to control for the fact that the participants varied considerably in total number of questions posed.

# Results and discussion

To test the hypotheses, independent *t*-tests were conducted with applicant ethnicity as the independent variable. Our dependent variables were the relative preferences for the three categories; P-C fit, P-G fit, and P-J fit. Descriptive statistics are presented in Figure 1. In accordance with our hypotheses, the analyses indicated that a significantly higher proportion of the questions prepared for the "Arabic" applicants concerned P-G fit, $t(54) = 2.28$, $p = .020$, $d = 0.62$ and P-C fit: $t(54) = 3.44$, $p = .001$, $d = 0.94$, when compared to the "Swedish" applicants. In addition, and also in support of our hypotheses, a significantly higher proportion of the questions prepared for the "Swedish" applicants concerned P-J fit when compared to "Arabic" applicants, $t(54) = 5.12$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.39$. Thus, the outcome from study 1 supported the hypothesis that applicant ethnicity affects what aspects of person-environment fit that the recruiters focuses on. Even if our hypotheses were supported, it should be noted that a substantial part of the questions prepared also for outgroup candidates, were related to PJ-fit (47 percent of the produced questions). Hence, the effect we observe is not an "all-or-nothing" response to the manipulation of the composition of the applicant group, but rather a relative shift in focus depending on whether the questions are prepared for outgoup or ingroup applicants.

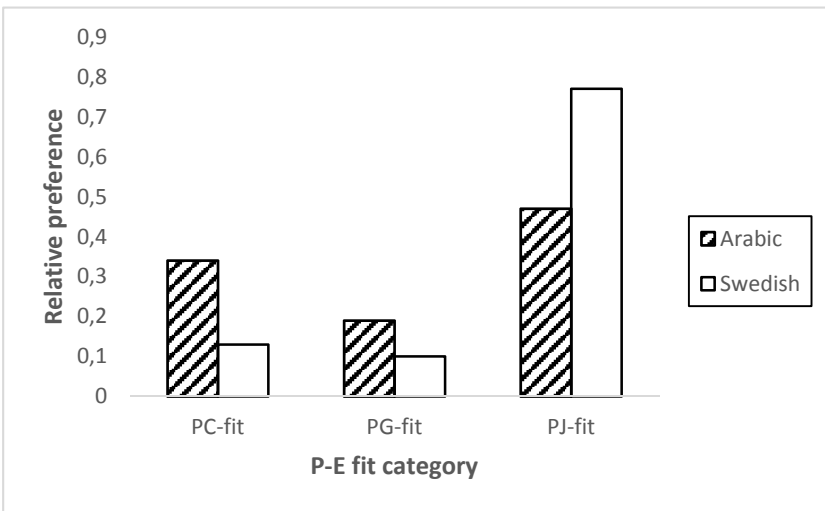


*Figure 1.* Relative preference for different fit categories as a function of applicant ethnicity.

Given that a difference in focus exists, we next wanted to investigate what consequences such a difference might have. For example, if certain types of questions are perceived as more useful when assessing hireability, a difference in interview focus due to ethnicity might lead to a situation where there is a group

based difference in the extent to which recruiters pose useful questions and collect relevant information. Therefore, in study 2, we investigated whether recruiters perceive P-J fit or P-C/P-G fit questions as more useful in an interview context.

### Study 2

Study 2 aimed to investigate if recruiters find questions relating to person-job fit and questions relating to person-culture/person-group fit different with regard to their usefulness in relation to assessing the hireability of an applicant. Based on the findings of Chuang and Sackett (2005) we hypothesized that professional recruiters perceived questions regarding person-job fit as more relevant than person-culture and person-group fit questions.

## Method

**Participants.** 69 recruiters participated in the study, 52 females and 17 males, with a mean age of 36.6 (*SD* = 11.1). All of them worked with recruitment in private companies as a regular part of their work assignments. Their average recruitment experience was 7.9 years (*SD* = 8.2). Most of the participants were employed at medium-sized companies in southern Sweden. As in study 1, they were found either on municipality homepages where local companies were presented or on the companies' own homepages. They were contacted by email, and if agreeing to participate they could do so by following a link to an online survey.

**Materials and procedure.** The survey was constructed to measure how useful and informative professional recruiters think that person job-fit and person-culture/person-group fit questions are. Initially, a job-description containing criteria and abilities required for a sales manager position (identical to the one in study 1), was presented. This was followed by 20 questions, 10 P-J fit questions and 10 P-C and P-G fit questions. The order of the questions was randomized to avoid order effects. There were three different versions of the survey, each with 20 unique questions. For all three versions, the questions were sampled from those produced by the recruiters in study 1 and from another set of questions generated by active recruiters working with the same job description. Recruiters were instructed to judge the usefulness of the interview questions in a hiring situation on a scale from not at all useful" (0) to "maximally useful" (20).

# Results and discussion

To test the hypothesis that PJ-fit questions are perceived as more useful, a paired samples *t*-test was conducted with the average rating for the two question categories (P-C/P-G fit and P-J fit) as dependent variable. The average rating of the P-J fit questions was 14.4 (*SD* = 2.2) and the average rating of the P-C/P-G fit questions was 13.6 (*SD* = 2.9). The analysis revealed a significant difference in favor of the P-J fit questions, $t(68) = 2.06$, $p = .043$, $d = 0.31$. Thus, the results showed a significant effect in the expected direction, indicating that recruiters perceive questions regarding person-job fit as more useful.

It is reasonable to assume that the choice of interview questions matters for the subsequent selection decision. More specifically, differences in what kinds of questions that are posed are likely to bring about differences in the content of the information that is gathered about the applicants. On this assumption, we next turned to the issue of whether preferences regarding question type extends to preferences regarding information type. More specifically, in Study 3 we investigated whether an interview summary containing information indicating a high degree of P-J fit is perceived as a better basis for making a hiring decision than an interview summary containing information indicating a high degree of person-group and person-culture fit.

## Study 3

In study 3 we constructed a survey which as in the previous studies started with a job-description (the same as in the two previous studies), but which was instead followed by two different interview summaries (one emphasizing high P-C/P-G fit qualifications and another emphasizing high P-J fit qualifications). We were interested in investigating which of the two interview summaries that recruiters considered most useful and providing the best information regarding the hireability of the applicant. Based on the findings of Chuang and Sackett (2005) we hypothesized that participants would prefer the summaries indicating high person-job fit.

# Method

**Participants.** 66 participants were included in the study, 47 females and 19 males, with a mean age of 38.9 years (*SD* = 10.1). As in study 1 and 2, all participants were actively working with recruitment in private companies as a regular part of their work assignments. On average, they had worked with recruitment for 9.2 years (*SD* = 8.3). The participants were found either on municipality homepages where local companies were presented or on the companies' homepages. They were contacted by e-mail, and if agreeing to participate, they could do so by following a link to an internet-page.

**Materials and procedure.** The two interview summaries either emphasized person-job fit or person-group/person-culture fit qualifications. They were based upon formulations taken from the questions produced by the recruiters in study 1. Translated into English, two examples of summaries read approximately as follows:

(Summary 1 – PG/PC-fit)

> It is clear from the interview that the applicant has a set of values, a way of relating to others, and a view of humanity which is in accordance with the values and attitudes that the organization holds as important and which characterizes the work team. The applicant has experience from working in teams and has displayed good ability to cooperate with colleagues in previous employments. All references also confirm the applicant's ability to keep open and flexible with regard to the culture and values that characterize the work team and organization that the applicant belongs to. The applicant also has favorable experiences and capabilities with regards to stress management and of coaching others. I regard the applicant as a strong candidate for the position.

(Summary 2 – PJ-fit)

> It is clear from the interview that the applicant is able to stand stress and capable of operating efficiently and making well-reasoned decisions also under pressure. The candidate is also a good communicator, with clear oral and written communication, and has good references from previous employments in service and sales. Both the applicant and the references that were contacted attest that the applicant has good capabilities in assisting others in their professional development, and handling conflicts and difficult situations in the workplace and work teams. The applicant also functions well in groups and has been an appreciated colleague in precious employments. In my opinion the applicant is a strong candidate for the position.

The order in which the two summaries were presented were randomized across participants to avoid order effects. Furthermore, to control for possible effects of the phrasings in the summaries that did not pertain to fit, two new versions were written such that these phrasings were counterbalanced. The participants were instructed to

indicate the degree to which they preferred either of two interview summaries on a VAS-scale with a moveable bar, where the P-G/P-C fit interview summary represented on one endpoint of the scale and the P-J fit interview summary the other. The response scale was scored from 0 to 20, with scores close to 0 indicating a strong preference for the P-C/P-G fit summary, scores close to 20 indicating a strong preference for the P-J fit summary, and scores close to 10 indicating that the two summaries were rated as equally good. The questions that the participants had to form an opinion on were: which of the summaries gives the best basis for making a hiring decision; which one gives the most distinct picture of the applicant and her/his qualifications; and which one gives the least need to make a complementary interview with the applicant.

# Results and discussion

The mean ratings for the three dependent variables were 13.3 (*SD* = 5.6) for "Best basis for decision", 14.6 (*SD* = 5.9) for "Most distinct picture" and 13.5 (*SD* = 5.4) for "Least need to make complementary interview", where values over 10 indicate a preference for the P-J fit summary compared to the P-C-/P-G-fit summary. To test the hypothesis that PJ-fit information is preferred, three one-sample *t*-tests were performed comparing the mean from the sample on each variable with 10 (which would be the average value if the summaries were judged to be equally good). The results of the analyses reveal that participants, in support of our hypothesis, significantly preferred the person-job fit summary for all three variables; "Best basis for decision", $t(65) = 4.73$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.59$, "Most distinct picture", $t(65) = 7.69$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.78$ and "Least need for complementary interview", $t(65) = 5.18$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.65$.

# General Discussion

In line with what we expected, the results of the studies showed that applicants from an ethnic ingroup prompted recruiters to focus relatively more on questions related to the match between an applicant's abilities and the specific demands of the job (person-job fit; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011), compared to when the applicants were from an ethnic outgroup. The results also supported the hypothesis that applicants from an ethnic outgroup prompts recruiters to focus more on questions related to person-culture fit (i.e. the degree to which the applicants have integrated and can display norms, values and behaviors that converge with the cultural norms of the society in question, Bye et al., 2014) as well as on the assumed interpersonal

match between the applicants and their would-be work team and colleagues (person-group fit; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011). Given previous studies suggesting that the employment interview is one of the most frequently used recruitment methods (Macan, 2009; Macan & Merritt, 2011; Tross & Maurer, 2008) and that recruiters generally conduct interviews where they have decided on the general topics beforehand (Lievens & De Paepe, 2004; Macan, 2009), these findings have interesting potential implications for our understanding of differential treatment of in-groups and out-groups in a recruitment context. Even though study 1 did not study discrimination directly, one potential implication of the results is that differential selection of job interview questions might contribute to discriminatory outcomes in the recruitment process. There are at least two possibilities by which this might appear, one is that a focus on P-C fit may lead to a situation where the recruiter is more likely to detect deviations or lack of fit between the applicant and the cultural context (see for example Bye et al., 2014). Indeed, the increased focus and attentiveness towards such deviations might make the recruiter more prone to notice, react to and put weight on signs of such deviations that might have been missed, ignored or deemed less important with another interview focus (attention biases; Bar-Haim, Lamy, Pergamin, Bakermans-Kranenburg & van Ijzendoorn, 2007). In other words, differential outcome can be related to circumstances in which the applicant is perceived to somehow deviate or have low fit with regard to culture and/or group.

The second possible pathway to a differential outcome based on applicant ethnicity relates to the mere presence of different interview focus and – as a consequence - the different information this renders about the participants. Consider two interviews which are the same in all aspects (the applicant, the time at hand, etc.) except for the kind of fit that is in focus. The interview where issues related to person-culture fit and person-group fit have been in focus (and the applicant is perceived to have performed well on these) may leave the recruiter with an impression of the applicant as a someone who is likely to fit the group. In contrast, the interview which has focused more on person job-fit, and where person-culture fit and person-group fit to a higher extent has possibly been assumed or taken for granted, might produce a clearer and more concrete impression of the applicant as competent in relation to the specific job and in possession of important job related skills. The effect of this difference in fit-focus is thus that the choice appears to be between two different persons, where both appear to be able to fit the group and cooperate, but where one in addition has provided the recruiter with a clearer impression of job relevant skills. To test these assertions, in study 2 and 3, we aimed to investigate possible consequences of focusing different fit aspects during a recruitment interview. Indeed, as expected based on the findings from Chuang and Sackett (2005), we found that recruiters do judge person-job fit information as more informative and useful in a hiring situation, compared to person- group/person-

culture fit information. These findings support the concern that the mere presence of group related differences in terms of what aspects of P-E-fit that are in focus when collecting information regarding the applicants might be a part of the causal chain leading to the discrimination of applicants from an ethnic outgroup.

## Practical contributions

In addition to the above, there are some possible practical implications of the studies that warrant further discussion. Given that the results indicated that the focus of the interview questions differed significantly merely due to variations in the perceived ethnicity of the applicants, the results can be related to the recommendations made in previous research regarding the utility of a structured interview procedure when it comes to counteracting bias in that part of the recruitment process (Macan, 2009). In this context, the results of the performed studies suggest that a structured approach to the employment interview, based on a thorough job-analysis focusing primarily on person-job fit, would ensure that the most relevant topics are addressed in relation to all applicants. This should imply that the interviewers are less affected by biases or stereotypes when conducting the interview (Posthuma et al., 2002; Aguinis, Mazurkiewicz & Heggestad, 2009).

## Limitations and directions for future research

As always, there are limitations to the reported studies that should be taken into account when interpreting the results. It is a strength of the present study that the participants were professional recruiters, and this contributes to the external validity of the results. However, the information that the recruiters worked with did not concern an actual recruitment. Gathering such data in future research would be valuable, particularly from an applied perspective. It would also be valuable to extend the present research by studying how applicant ethnicity affects what topics that are in focus during the actual interview, as well as what fit-related factors that are given weight when making hireability judgments. Also, the present study used male names sounding typically "Swedish" or "Arabic". In future studies, it would be relevant to investigate whether the results replicate or are moderated by other variations of the applicants' cultural or ethnic backgrounds as well as of their gender. Further, it is a limitation of the generalizability of the results from study I that recruiters rarely are confronted with an applicant list consisting of only applicants with Arabic male candidates or with only Swedish male candidates. Although homogeneous lists sometimes occur, because of e.g. highly segregated

advertising or strategically directed geographic distribution of ads, mixed lists should be more common. However, in the present study we were primarily interested in the possible priming effect of having ethnic out-group versus in-group applicants on the relative focus on PE-fit aspects. We found support that this is the case, with medium to large effect size, but note that the effect might have been weaker if the lists were more heterogeneous.

Finally, it should be noticed once again that the present research did not intend to study discriminatory outcomes, because no decisions were made or behaviors performed that relate directly to e.g. differential selection patterns due to differences in ethnicity. Nevertheless, understanding of the processes and mechanisms involved in the complex causal chains that lead up to discriminatory practices are key, not only with regard to reducing discrimination but also to avoiding that biases in general affect the recruitment process . The studies reported here attempted to do just this. They revealed that professional recruiters suggest more PJ-fit questions for applicants from the ethnic ingroup, as well as some relevant implications of the practice of posing different questions to different groups of applicants.

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# Study III

# Tools for fairness: Increased structure in the selection process reduces discrimination


## Abstract

Can increasing the degree of structure when selecting applicants increase fairness? Students were asked to perform a computerized selection task and were either provided with tools for systematizing information about the applicants (structured selection) or no such tools (unstructured selection). We hypothesized and found that a structured process, where employing recruitment tools rather than the recruiter's impressionistic judgment is key, improves the ability to identify job-relevant criteria and hence selecting more qualified applicants, even when in-group favoritism is tempting (e.g. when the outgroup applicants are more competent). Increasing structure helped recruiters select more competent applicants and reduced ethnic discrimination. Increasing the motivation to carefully follow the structured procedure strengthened these effects further. We conclude that structure pays off, and that motivational factors should be taken into account in order for it to have the optimal effect.



*Keywords:* personnel selection, structure, discrimination, organizational psychology


This research seeks to identify means for optimizing selection and counteracting discrimination. While several papers have appeared independently on either the subject of labor discrimination or on the subject of structured procedures in personnel selection, to our knowledge none has investigated whether increasing structure decreases discriminatory behavior when selecting applicants (i.e. not simply providing lower ratings, but actually failing to choose the most qualified applicants). We reports on two laboratory experiments investigating whether relying more on structured procedures in the selection process can make recruiters' decisions less biased.

# Discrimination in Recruitment and Selection

Despite indications that there has been a decline in racist attitudes, differential treatment based on ethnicity continues to be a problem in employment decisions (Maass, Castelli, & Arcuri, 2000). Decision makers discriminate in favor of applicants of their own ethnic group (e.g. Pager & Shepherd, 2008; Pager, Bonikowski, & Western, 2009) and ethnic minorities are often subject to discrimination in hiring (Riach & Rich, 2002; Pager & Quillian, 2005; Oreopoulos, 2011).

A common way of studying the prevalence of discrimination in the recruitment process has been field experiments, most notably using correspondence testing, where fictitious job applications are sent to real job-openings. The fictitious applicants have either native-sounding names or foreign-sounding names, and the researchers compare the call back rate between immigrants and natives. Using this method, ethnic discrimination has been detected in several countries in Europe (Andriessen, Nievers, Dagevos, & Faulk, 2012; Bovenkerk, Gras, & Ramsoedh, 1994; Carlsson & Rooth 2007), in the United States (e.g., Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Pager & Quillian, 2005; Pager, Bonikowski, & Western, 2009; Widner & Chicoine, 2011), in Canada (Henry & Ginzberg, 1985; Oreopoulos, 2011) and Australia (Riach & Rich, 1991). Hence, the evidence of discrimination on the labor market is remarkably solid.

The current study concerns how discrimination can be counteracted by altering the procedure the recruiter uses. We focus on discrimination in selection rather than recruitment, i.e. on the process of deciding whom to select among an existing group of applicants, a process which is susceptible to bias when there are immigrants among the applicants.

# Stereotyping, Biases and Discrimination

Selection situations where immigrants are involved are susceptible to bias. For example, mere categorization can create negative bias toward an outgroup, promote in-group favoritism, and result in exclusion of outgroup members (Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002).

Furthermore, perceived interference with the dominant groups' goals and competition for resources such as jobs may promote a more active discrimination against members of the outgroup, when compared to discrimination based on implicit attitudes and mere categorization (Sidanius, Pratto, van Laar, & Levin, 2004). The amount of information available regarding the applicants influences

outcomes too. In low information conditions, decision makers rely more on stereotypes (Kacmar, Wayne, & Ratcliff, 1994; Davison & Burke, 2000). The present study extends the previous literature in that it investigates whether structured procedures counteract discrimination. What is being manipulated is not the amount of job-relevant information, but rather how the selection process is set up and conducted.

# Structured Procedures and Biases in Personnel Selection

There is a consensus among researches that we should strive for structured procedures in recruitment and selection (e.g. Campion, Palmer, & Campion, 1997; Dipboye, 1994; Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994; Huffcutt & Woehr, 1999; Kuncel, Klieger, Connelly, & Ones, 2013; McDaniel, Whetzel, Schmidt, & Maurer, 1994). This is clear not least in the Principles for the validation and use of personnel selection procedures from the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP, division 14 of the American Psychological Association), and ISO-standard 10667 – 1:2011 Assessment service delivery – Procedures and methods to assess people in work and organizational settings, which are broadly acknowledged documents with guidance on how to conduct an optimal selection process. Structured procedures should encompass: defining specific criteria related to job content by means of a job-analysis, gathering and evaluating information (options when choosing and conducting selection instruments, interview, evaluating applications and inquiring for references) and decision making.

Despite extensive evidence that structured forms of selection are more valid, recruiters more frequently use the more intuitive, impressionistic and unstructured forms (Highhouse, 2008; Klehe, 2004; Kuncel et al, 2013; Lievens & De Paepe, 2004; Simola, Taggar, & Smith, 2007; Van der Zee, Bakker, & Bakker, 2002). This allows for biases and subjective preferences to influence the process (Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994) and thereby increases the risk of discrimination on the labor market. Conversely, a more structured process leads to less biased performance- and hireability assessment of applicants who are overweight (Kutcher & Bragger, 2004) or pregnant (Bragger, Kutcher, Morgan, & Firth, 2002). It should be noted however that these studies do not concern ethnicity, nor decisions where some applicants are selected and others are not. Thus, although the existing research indicates that structured selection produces more valid selection decisions, there is a lack of research on the effect of structured procedures on selection discrimination. Nevertheless, since previous research has shown that structure reduces bias (Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994; Dipboye, 1994; Aguinis, Mazurkiewicz & Heggestad,

2009; Kacmar et al., 1994; Bragger et al., 2002; Kutcher, & Bragger, 2004), it appears reasonable to predict that structure should decrease selection discrimination too. Our aim with the present research is to investigate experimentally whether employing a structured procedure (by means of tools for rating and ranking applicants) reduces discrimination against outgroup members. In doing this, we will not study judgements of hireability, which is standard in social psychology research, but rather selection decision behavior. This is important, since discrimination per definition concerns explicit behaviour (such as exclusion) whereas judgments and assessments do not.

There are different ways to increase systematicity in the selection process. In the current research, we will provide some participants with a tool related to job-analysis as a way of increasing systematicity. Job-analysis is a broad term for procedures for examining, documenting, and making inferences about work activities, worker attributes, and work contexts, in order to identify relevant criteria and characteristics for a particular job (Sackett, Wamsley, & Laczo, 2013). The job-analysis tool in the present study focuses on the tasks, skills, and characteristics needed to manage the specific job. It helps the recruiter specify relevant tasks and duties, as well as the characteristics needed to achieve them. This should be useful since it helps the recruiter to identify relevant skills, knowledge and abilities possessed by job-applicants, and decrease the risk of relying on idiosyncratic beliefs about job requirements or the recruiters' own personality traits and attitudes (as identified in e.g. Dipboye, 1994; Aguinis, Mazurkiewicz, & Heggestad, 2009). In sum, job-analysis is a way of decreasing the recruiters' reliance on preexisting fixed categories when processing information about the applicants, automatic processing which is known to increase the risk of stereotyping and discrimination (Kacmar et al., 1994). Instead, the information processing is more controlled and hence possibly less biased. In the current study, participants in the systematic condition will be working actively with the contents of the job (by means of the job analysis tool) and the CV-reading, which should increase the availability and accessibility of the job-relevant criteria.

Personnel selection involves large amounts of information and puts high demands of the recruiter's information processing capabilities. In order to help systematize the outcome from the processing of the information regarding the applicants, some participants in the current study will (in addition to the job-analysis tool) be provided with a tool for summing their judgments of individual target persons. Together, the job analysis tool and the calculation tool should lead to less bias related to e.g. applicant's ethnic group belonging and thereby reduce discrimination.

# Overview of the Studies

Arguably, structured procedures should facilitate fair selection. To investigate whether this is so, we experimentally manipulate structure and investigate how this influences selection outcome. We predict that there will be a difference in job-applicant preferences between those who work structured (experimental condition) and those who do not (control condition). We used a fictive job setting where male job-applicants, both Swedes (in-group) and immigrants from the Middle East (a discriminated group on the labor market; Carlsson & Rooth, 2007), applied for a sales manager position.

Furthermore, the average competence level of the in-group and outgroup differed from each other, allowing for investigation of whether the participants reacted differently depending on whether in-group members or outgroup members were the most competent, and if structured selection has similar effects under these different conditions. The unequally distributed competence level across in-group and outgroup applicants circumvents the reactance effects that often appear in discrimination studies. Participants who are motivated to control their biases tend to overrate target persons that belong to the outgroup (Wegener & Petty, 1995). With the current design, which allowed for selecting both in-group and outgroup applicants for the same job opening, the cues of possible bias are weaker than if only one applicant was to be selected or if competence was equally distributed across applicants.

## Study 1

Study 1 had a 2 (structured or unstructured) x 2 (competence: outgroup or ingroup) between group design. In the structured condition participants were aided by tools when selecting job applicants, which was not provided in the unstructured condition. We also manipulated applicant competence, where either the ingroup applicant were the most competent or the outgroup were the most competent. We expected that participants in the conditions where a structured procedure was employed would select competent applicants to a higher degree than participants in the control conditions. In the control conditions, where no tools for structure were available, we expected participants' selection decisions to be influenced by the processes described in the introduction, and hence select applicants with less actual competence and generally disfavor outgroup applicants. Accordingly, study 1 was designed to test the following main hypothesis:

There should be an interaction between degree of structure and competence (in-group most competent vs outgroup most competent). Compared to working with an

unstructured procedure, working with a structured procedure should lead to selecting more outgroup applicants when they are the most competent and fewer outgroup applicants when they are not.

# Method

**Participants**. Altogether 249 participants, 121 men and 128 women, were included in study 1. They were all Caucasian Swedish students at Lund University. The average age was 23.5 years (*SD* = 3.3).

**Design.** We used a 2 (structure or unstructured) X 2 (competence: outgroup or ingroup) between group design. We used two dependent variables: proportion of outgroup applicants selected and average competence of the selected applicants.

# Materials

***Computer application***. A computer application was designed to create a fictive personnel selection setting where the participants acted as recruiters. There were two different conditions. Participants in the structured condition read a work description, and responded to questions about the content of the job. The idea was to mimic a structured recruitment process (with a job-analysis). There were 32 questions, half of which were job-relevant and half job-irrelevant. To make sure that they processed the job-description sufficiently, participants had to spend at least nine minutes reading it and responding to the questions. Participants in the unstructured condition were not provided with any tool for job-analysis, but only with a job-description.

The two conditions also differed in whether or not participants were provided with tools to systemize the information about the candidates. In the structured condition, they were provided with a rating and calculation tool. While reading the CV résumés (see below) they had to rate to what extent they thought the candidates fitted with the job-description. They were also helped calculating sum scores for each applicant, by the computer application, to simplify comparison between applicants. In the unstructured condition, they only read the CV résumés and were not provided with this tool. Participants in the structured conditions had the opportunity to make selection decisions based on explicit job-relevant criteria, whereas participants in the unstructured conditions lacked tools to make these comparisons.

The other factor that was manipulated was the level of competence of applicants. There were two levels: in-group more competent or out-group more competent.

High competence and low competence CV résumés were unequally distributed over in-group and out-group applicants. In the first condition the in-group applicants were more competent, the eight ingroup applicants (Swedes) all had high or average competence, whereas the 4 out-group (Middle East) applicants had low competence. In the other condition, instead, out-group applicants were more competent, where the 4 out-group candidates had high competence and the 8 in-group applicants had average or low competence.

***Job-applicants and their résumés***. The applicants were presented with CV résumés with information pertaining to their education, past experience and recommendations from managers from former workplaces. The résumés were constructed in relation to six relevant (e.g. establish and maintain interpersonal relationships) and six less relevant (e.g. training and educating others) criteria for the sales manager position, as specified by O*NET. Each résumé belonged to one of three different competence levels (high, average or low). To construct the levels we created a large number of sentences describing applicant competences. These were deliberately created to differ in relevance to the job but also in relation to the level of competence that was depicted. The sentences were rated by a group of students who had read the work description, both on level of competence and relevance, and based on these ratings they were categorized into nine groups, from high competence and high relevance, to low competence and low relevance. To make a résumé of a high level applicant, we selected two sentences with high competence and high relevance, two with average level of competence and average relevance, and two with low level of competence and low relevance. In other words, a high-level applicant was more competent on relevant criteria. A low-level applicant was created by selecting two sentences with high competence and low relevance, two with average level of competence and average relevance, and two with low competence and high relevance. The middle group had a combination of high and low relevance combined with high and low competence such that their total competence was in between the low and high-level applicants. In this way, all applicants appeared to have about the same level of general competence, but in relation to the job the high-level applicants were more competent on the relevant criteria.

The origin of the applicants (in-group or out-group) was signalled by means of photographs. The study included 8 in-group (Swedes) and 4 outgroup (from the Middle East) applicants, all were males around age thirty. The photographs were evaluated by 50 students to be equally attractive.

# Procedure

In the lab, an assistant introduced to the procedure to the participants. The task was to select the four applicants that they judged to be most qualified for the job. Participants were randomly assigned to either the structured or the unstructured condition, and the computer application guided them through the recruiting task.

***Structured Condition***. In the structured condition, three modules were presented:

1. The first module introduced a job-description, listing the central tasks and the key required abilities for the job.
2. The second module introduced the tool for job-analysis, where the task was to rate how important each kind of content was in relation to the job-description. This produced a list of competence criteria, to be used when choosing applicants.
3. The third module introduced the 12 applicants. Participants clicked on each photograph to read the corresponding résumé and assess the applicants' qualifications (0-100) with regard to the competence criteria from the job-analysis. The mean rating of each applicant was shown on the screen. Finally, participants were asked to select the four applicants that they believed to be the most competent, and rank-order them.

***Unstructured condition***. In the unstructured condition there was no tool for job-analysis. The following modules were presented:

1. The first module introduced the same job-description as module 1 in the structured condition.
2. The second module was the same as module three in the structured condition, but lacked the rating tool

**Statistical analysis**. The hypothesis was tested with factorial ANOVA, since we were interested in the interaction between structure of the recruitment and the level of competence of the in-group and outgroup. The interaction should reveal if a systematic recruitment leads to a fairer selection of applicants, i.e. that the participants in the systematic group are less influenced by applicants origin in comparison with the less systematic group.

Two dependent variables were used to test the hypothesis. The proportion of selected outgroup applicants provides a direct estimate of whether there was an influence from the ingroup out-group competence factor on the selection. The expected number of selected outgroup applicants is .33 because of the unequal number of in-group and out-group applicants. The quality of the selected résumés is the second dependent variable and will indicate if the participants' performance

was affected by the fact that the competence of the in-group and the outgroup differed.

# Results and Discussion

The proportion of outgroup applicants selected was tested in a factorial ANOVA with competence (in-group or outgroup most competent) and structure (structured or unstructured procedure) as factors and proportion of outgroup applicants selected as dependent variable. Here we expected a significant main effect of competence and a significant interaction effect of structure and competence. As expected, the analysis revealed a strong main effect of competence, $F(1, 245) = 82.1$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .25$, indicating that the participants selected more outgroup applicants when the outgroup was the most competent ($M = .47$, $SD = .17$), compared to when the in-group was the most competent ($M = .28$, $SD = .18$). As hypothesized, the ANOVA also indicated a significant interaction effect between structure and competence, $F(1, 245) = 25.0$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .09$. Simple effect analyses revealed that, compared to participants in the unstructured condition, participants in the structured condition (as expected) selected fewer outgroup applicants when the in-group was the most competent ($M_{Diff} = -.18$, $p < .001$), but – contrary to our expectations - they did not select a significantly higher proportion of outgroup applicants when the outgroup was the most competent ($M_{Diff} = .03$, $p > 0.05$).

Concerning average quality of the selected résumés, we expected a main effect of structure (participants in the structured condition would chose applicants of higher competence) as well as an interaction effect between structure and competence (that the difference between the average quality of the selected résumés would be larger when the outgroup applicants were the most competent compared to when the in-group applicants were the most competent). As expected, the results from the performed analysis indicated a significant main effect of structure, $F(1,245) = 31.17$, $p < .001$, with a large effect size, partial $\eta^2 = 0.71$, where participants in the structured conditions generally selected higher quality applicants ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 0.32$) than participants in the unstructured conditions ($M = 3.09$, SD = 0.32). This suggests that structured selection increases the chances of finding the high quality applicants. Contrary to our expectations however, the interaction between structure and competence was non-significant, $F(1, 245) = 0.012$, $p > .05$, but rather there was a significant main effect of competence, $F(1,245) = 19.68$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.52$, indicating that the average quality of the selected résumés was higher when the in-group was best ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 0.32$) compared to when the outgroup was best ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.34$) in both the structured and unstructured conditions.

Thus, in sum, study 1 provided partial support for our hypothesis in that participants working with the structured procedure were better at identifying and selecting applicants of higher quality. Contrary to our expectations however, we found no support for the assumption that working with a structured procedure leads to less discrimination of applicants from the outgroup, since participants in the structured condition did not select more outgroup applicants when they were the most competent compared to participants in the unstructured condition. Instead, in both the structured and unstructured conditions there was a tendency to select applicants of less quality when the outgroup was the most competent, thus favoring the in-group applicants. There are several possible explanations to these results:

In study 1 we used 12 résumés where four were of "average competence". By doing this we created a not so clearly differentiated set of applicant-résumés, since it was more difficult to distinguish the most competent applicants from the average ones than from the low competence ones. The difficulty to distinguish the most competent applicants from the rest of the applicants could explain why participants in the structured conditions, despite working with a structured procedure did not perform better than the unstructured group. This effect may in part be due to information overload causing participants to make their choices based on stereotypes, instead of on data driven processing strategies (Kacmar et al., 1994; Davison & Burke, 2000). In the present study, it might be the case that, when having difficulties processing all information, participants instead relied on their attitudes about the outgroup. Additionally, it should be noted that all résumés of average quality were paired with in-group applicants (there were always eight in-group and four outgroup applicants). This created an asymmetry between the conditions where the in-group applicants were the most competent compared to when the outgroup applicants were the most competent that may partially explain the results when it comes to proportion of outgroup applicants selected: Difficulties to differentiate the most competent applicants from those of average competence always led to the selection of more in-group applicants. In the conditions where the outgroup was the most competent, selection of average quality applicants necessarily led to selection of applicants of the "wrong" ethnicity, whereas the same selection pattern in the conditions where the ingroup applicants were the most competent resulted in the selection of applicants of the "right" ethnicity. It should be noted however, that this can only partially explain the results, since the average quality of the selected résumés was higher when the in-group was best compared to when the outgroup was best in both the structured and unstructured conditions.

Follow-up analyses revealed that one obvious difference between the structured and the unstructured conditions was the time they spent on the task. Almost all participants in the structured condition spent longer time reading and processing the CV résumés than the participants in the unstructured condition (mean times per CV was 109 sec. vs 57 sec.). Can the time spent on reading CVs contribute to explain

the success of the participants in performing the selection task? It was found that a significant association between time spent on the task and performance was present only in the structured group when the out-group was best. The correlation was $r$ = .35, $p$ = .005 between time spent reading CVs and the quality of the selected applicants, and $r$ = .36, $p$ = .004 between time spent reading CV and rating of the four best applicants. There was also a close to significant correlation between time spent reading CVs and the quality of the selected CV in the unstructured condition when the outgroup was best, $r$ = .245, $p$ = .057. This suggests that, at least in some situations, those who spent more time performed better, which in turn might reflect how motivated they were to perform the task. This hypothesis will be tested in study 2. The correlation between CV reading time and selection performance can be taken to suggest that those who put time and effort into the task perform better than those who care less about their performance. Introducing a motivation manipulation that provides a response cost to working carelessly should make recruiters more prone to increase their effort to go about the selection task in the intended way. This was tested in study 2. Additionally, since the structured procedure in study 1 had the expected effect when the in-group was best, in study 2, we only used the stimulus material where the outgroup was best (and where the structured procedure did not work in study 1).

## Study 2

The structured procedure did not lead to the selection of more outgroup applicants in study 1. In study 2 we attempted to influence participants' behaviors in the selection context by providing a new piece of instruction. Drawing on the idea that a behavior can be controlled by antecedents, when a relationship between the behavior and a consequence is described (Skinner, 1989; Schlinger & Blakely, 1987), we introduced an instruction which informed the participants that if they did not involve themselves enough in the selection procedure there would be consequences in the form of a response cost (they would have to do it all over again).

Increasing the motivation to carry out the selection task carefully should leave less room for individual differences and thereby strengthen the effect of the experimental manipulation. In related research, increasing the accountability of raters does indeed increase the accuracy in performance appraisal tasks, through increased attentiveness and notetaking (Mero, Motowidlo, & Anna, 2003). Hence, in study 2 we tested whether a motivation enhancement increases the effect of working with a structured procedure, in comparison to what was found in study 1. As in study 1, we expected that working with the structured procedure would lead to less discrimination (i.e. selecting comparatively more outgroup applicants when they are the most competent). Given that the focus of study 2 is the condition where the

outgroup applicants are the most competent, this was the only condition used in study 2 (i.e. there were no conditions where the in-group applicants were best).

# Method

**Participants**. There were 104 participants (51 male and 53 female). All participants were Caucasian Swedish students at Lund University. The average age of the participants was 23.8 years (*SD* = 3.3).

**Design**. Study 2 had a between-group design with two groups. Participants were randomly assigned to either the experimental condition or to the control condition (where no tools were provided).

**Materials**. The same computer application, photographs of job-applicants, and CV résumés were used as in the part of study 1 where the outgroup applicants were the most competent. Thus, the four outgroup applicants had résumés indicating high competence and the four in-group applicants had résumés indicating average competence. Prior to reading the CV résumés participants in both conditions were presented to a "response cost" manipulation:

> Your next task takes at least 30 minutes. It is important not to be careless when working on it. For the results of your effort to be useful, you need to reach a certain level of performance. If you are careless and do not reach a satisfactory level, you will unfortunately have to do the complete task again.

# Results and Discussion

The results supported our hypothesis that the proportion of outgroup applicants selected would be higher in the structured condition ($M$ = .56, $SD$ = 0.18) than in the unstructured ($M$ = .46, $SD$ = 0.18); $F(1, 101) = 7.94$, $p$ = .006, $d$ = 0.56. In addition, as in the previous study, participants who worked with a structured procedure ($M$ = 3.47, $SD$ = 0.27) selected applicants with a higher mean quality compared to those who did not ($M$ = 3.24, $SD$ = 0.33); $F(1, 101) = 15{,}51$, $p < .001$, $d$ = 0.77). Thus, in comparison to study 1, where no significant differences between the experiment group and control group were found when the outgroup applicants were the most competent, our "response cost" manipulation appeared to induce a change in performance and increase the effect of the structured procedure. The results support the general hypothesis that enhanced motivation to perform selection tasks carefully increases the effect of a structured procedure.

# General discussion

Our studies aimed at experimentally investigating the possible benefits of a structured procedure in selection as a means to counteract discrimination. In the following sections, we discuss the major contributions of the performed studies, as well their central limitations and some recommendations for future research.

# Theoretical and Empirical Contributions

Several studies have already validated the general benefits of working with structured procedures when recruiting (e.g. Kuncel, Klieger, Connelly, & Ones, 2013), but to our knowledge none have studied the effects of structured procedures on discrimination experimentally. The experimental design of our studies allows for causal inferences about the effects of the structured procedure in a selection context, hence providing an important addition to a field where the emphasis has been on ecologically valid yet correlational research. Furthermore, our studies employed a novel method for conducting recruitment experiments, based on a computer application. It was designed to resemble an actual selection situation but also enabled structuring information and recording the behavior of the participants, which are clear advantages in comparison to more traditional (e.g. paper-and pencil) methods.

Regarding findings, the main contribution is that they provide experimental support for the hypotheses that increasing the degree of structure leads to higher quality in selection decisions, and counteracts discrimination. The strongest effect was for average quality of the selected résumés. Working with the structured procedure lead to an improved ability to select more competent applicants in both studies. The results regarding counteracting discrimination were somewhat more mixed and warrant further discussion.

In our first study of the effects of structured procedures on outgroup discrimination (study 1), we found an effect on average quality of the selected résumés, but – contrary to our hypothesis – no effect on discrimination (i.e. proportion of outgroup applicants selected). We interpret the failure of the structured procedure to counteract discrimination as due to the amount and complexity of the information that the participants had to process, but also that the participants were not motivated enough to make the required effort. Previous research has demonstrated that stereotypes exert greater influence when decisions are made in complex, information-loaded contexts (Bodenhausen & Lichtenstein, 1987; Kacmar et al., 1994; Davison & Burke, 2000). Information load decreases decision quality (Abdel-

Khalik, 1973; Chewning & Harrell, 1990; Shields, 1980; Snowball, 1980), increases the time required to make a decision, and increases confusion regarding the decision (Cohen, 1980; Malhotra, Jain, & Lagakos, 1982). Accordingly, discrimination against outgroup members was not counteracted by the structured procedure in study 1, where the job-applicants' qualifications were more difficult to differentiate and the participants were likely overloaded with information. When in study 2, we put participants' behavior under verbal stimulus control, informing them about a response cost if not involving themselves in the task enough, they were motivated to put more effort into the selection task. This increased the effect of the structured procedure and participants selected outgroup members even when dealing with the same number of résumés as in study 1, and confronted applicants who were difficult to distinguish with regard to qualifications. The effect of motivation on selection outcome is a key finding of the current research, and points to the importance of sticking to the procedure when selecting personnel.

# Practical Contributions

The main practical contribution of the current research concerns the experimental approach to investigating the effects of structured procedures on decision quality and discrimination in a selection context. The findings that an increased degree of structure enhances the ability to select competent applicants as well as reducing discrimination of outgroup applicants, lends clear support for the recommendations in *Principles for the validation and use of personnel selection procedures* from Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP, division 14 of the American Psychological Association), and ISO-standard 10667 – 1:2011 *Assessment service delivery – Procedures and methods to assess people in work and organizational settings*, which are broadly acknowledged guidelines on how to conduct an optimal selection process. Given that our studies provide (causal) experimental support of the effectiveness of these guidelines, they provide professional recruiters with even stronger reasons than before to employ structured and objective procedures.

Further, an implication of the motivation-related findings in study 2 is that organizations are well advised to ensure that recruiters adhere to the procedures, performing the tasks carefully and "by the book". Our results suggest that it pays off to use structured procedures. The probability of selecting the most competent applicants is significantly higher. Undesirable effects of individual biases are reduced. A perhaps even stronger incentive to adhere to structured procedures is legislation, prescribing the conduct of fair recruitment and selection processes.

# Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Although providing important theoretical, empirical and practical contributions to the study of selection discrimination, there are some limitations to the performed studies that need to be taken into account. The main limitation relates to the external validity of the findings. All studies were conducted in a laboratory setting with convenience samples of university students as participants. This puts limits on the possibility to generalize the results to real selection situations on the labor market. It is important for future research to study the effects of increased structure in the population of professional recruiters too, preferably in real selection situations, to see how well the present results generalize. Since discrimination on the basis of ethnicity is a well-established fact in the modern labor market, it would appear that even professional recruiters need structured procedures in order to conduct a fair and unbiased selection. Many professional recruiters are reluctant to base their selection decision on tools and instead rely on their own personal impressions and judgements (Highhouse, 2008; Klehe, 2004; Kuncel et al., 2013; Lievens & De Paepe, 2004; Simola, Taggar, & Smith, 2007; Van der Zee, Bakker, & Bakker, 2002).

Another limitation concerns the fact the present studies examined the effect of specific forms of structure. It is unclear whether adding further structured procedures would increase the effect of structure and be successful in contexts where the structured procedures employed in the present studies proved insufficient. Finally, the current research only concerns an early stage in the recruitment process, selection of applicants from a larger sample. The succeeding steps resulting in the final selection of a specific applicant (e.g. interview, testing, looking up references, etc; Smith, 2012) remain to be examined. It is thus important that future research examines the effect of different forms and varying degrees of procedural structure at different stages of the recruitment process. Despite these limitations, the findings are promising in that they provide support for the hypothesis that increased procedural structure in applicant selection improves the ability to identify the most competent applicants, while at the same time counteracting discriminatory behavior.

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# How does the job applicants' ethnicity affect the selection process?

My name is Sima Wolgast. I took my license in clinical psychology 2007. After graduation, I worked as a clinician a couple of years, before engaging in social psychological research. 2013 I began my doctoral studies in a project about discrimination in the labor market. The recent years have been quite an adventurous time, were I in many ways feel re-educated, but at the same time have deepened my knowledge about the human mind. My previous understanding has been extended, from intra-individual processes, where the focus has foremost been to help individuals to functionally approach their stressful cognitions and behaviors, to an increased understanding of intra- and intergroup relations. Unsurprisingly, clinical psychologists and social psychologists study similar processes but in different contexts and relations. We are for example quite often, both in an individual sphere and in social contexts, influenced by the effects of negatively reinforced avoidance behaviors. We tend to arrange our behaviors in order to avoid threats, real ones or made up ones. We also like to take shortcuts instead of making more complex analyses. These two traits make us vulnerable to both our own pathology and societal pathologies, such as discrimination. Discrimination is serious problem which may often involve dehumanization and rights violation. In order to combat it one has to make it visible and to suggest solutions. I hope that my thesis can be a contribution to understanding and counteracting discriminatory practices in the labor market.

Printed by Media-Tryck, Lund 2017 NORDIC ECOLABEL 3041 0903

LUND UNIVERSITY

Lund University
Faculty of Social Sciences
Department of Psychology
ISBN 978-91-7753-424-5