

## Ethnicized recruiting from a practice theory perspective

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# **Ethnicized Recruiting from a Practice Theory Perspective**

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# **Ethnicized Recruiting from a Practice Theory Perspective**

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Dezember 2011

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Founded in 1963 by two prominent Austrians living in exile – the sociologist Paul F. Lazarsfeld and the economist Oskar Morgenstern – with the financial support from the Ford Foundation, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, and the City of Vienna, the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS) is the first institution for postgraduate education and research in economics and the social sciences in Austria. The **Sociological Series** presents research done at the Department of Sociology and aims to share “work in progress” in a timely way before formal publication. As usual, authors bear full responsibility for the content of their contributions.

Das Institut für Höhere Studien (IHS) wurde im Jahr 1963 von zwei prominenten Exilösterreichern – dem Soziologen Paul F. Lazarsfeld und dem Ökonomen Oskar Morgenstern – mit Hilfe der Ford-Stiftung, des Österreichischen Bundesministeriums für Unterricht und der Stadt Wien gegründet und ist somit die erste nachuniversitäre Lehr- und Forschungsstätte für die Sozial- und Wirtschaftswissenschaften in Österreich. Die **Reihe Soziologie** bietet Einblick in die Forschungsarbeit der Abteilung für Soziologie und verfolgt das Ziel, abteilungsinterne Diskussionsbeiträge einer breiteren fachinternen Öffentlichkeit zugänglich zu machen. Die inhaltliche Verantwortung für die veröffentlichten Beiträge liegt bei den Autoren und Autorinnen.

## **Abstract**

Austria issued in 2010, later than other countries, a “National Action Plan for Integration” and is developing several measures for migrants’ and their children’ inclusion including the labor market. However, several ethnic groups undeniably face limited access to the labor market. The unequal job opportunities of immigrants and minorities can be analyzed from different perspectives. In this paper a practice theory perspective is preferred. Ethnicized recruiting practices, such as in job interviews or other recruiting practices, shape this process of social marginalization of minorities or even exclusion of some social groups. This paper focuses on that issue. Recruiting in job interviews is seen as specific discourse that represent and value persons and/or practices in a specific setting. Job interviews can include doings and sayings that classify persons as a less-worthy “other” or indirectly affect ethnic minorities. Practices can change towards inviting these people to express and communicate in a way that leads to a more inclusive recruitment.

## **Zusammenfassung**

Obwohl der „Nationale Aktionsplan für Integration“ die erfolgreiche Integration als zentrale gesellschaftliche Aufgabe formuliert hat und obwohl in den vergangenen Jahren in Österreich eine ganze Reihe Einzelmaßnahmen auch auf dem Arbeitsmarkt in Angriff genommen wurden, zeigen sich nach wie vor Probleme bei der Erwerbsintegration von MigrantInnen und deren Kindern. Man kann diesen Befund auf der Ebene des nationalen Migrationsregimes erklären, welches ungeachtet seiner Entwicklung im Europäischen Vergleich als nachholbedürftig charakterisiert wird. Hier wird hingegen die Theorie sozialer Praktiken gewählt. Aus dieser Forschungsperspektive wird am Beispiel von Einstellungsgesprächen diskutiert, auf welche Art und Weise inklusive, marginalisierende oder exklusive Bewertungen von MigrantInnen zustande kommen. Besonderes Augenmerk wird auf Bewerbungsgespräche gelegt, in denen die ManagerInnen MigrantInnen nicht bewusst diskriminieren, ein solches Vorgehen sogar ablehnen, in denen aber dennoch die Leistungspotenziale von MigrantInnen abgewertet werden. Unterschieden wird zwischen der Abwertung von Personen mit Migrationshintergrund und der Abwertung von bestimmten Praktiken der Selbstrepräsentation als zwei Formen des „Othering“ in Jobinterviews.

## **Keywords**

Recruitment, job interview, practice, migration, inclusion, integration,

## **Schlagwörter**

Personalmanagement, Bewerbungsgespräche, soziale Praktiken, Migration, Inklusion, Integration



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## 1. Ethnic discourse and ethnic structures

During the last decade of Europeanization of migration policies, national action plans have stated a commitment for integration (EUMC 2006). Austria issued in 2010, later than other countries, a “National Action Plan for Integration”. The plan stated: “The successful integration of migrants to the benefit of the entire society is of central concern to Austria.”<sup>1</sup> (BMI 2009: 3) This includes a necessary inclusion in several social fields such as education, occupation, law and rights, health, social integration, intercultural dialogue and leisure. Inclusion in the occupational system lies among the structural facts that make up the core indicators for effective integration. Those who participate in the labor market earn a livelihood for their families, reach a social status to act on the housing market, receive benefits from the welfare state and develop their own and their families’ occupational capabilities and social contacts (ILO 2006). However, several ethnic groups undeniably face limited access to the labor market. Ethnicized recruiting practices, such as in job interviews or other recruiting practices, shape this process of social marginalization of minorities or even exclusion of some social groups. This paper focuses on that issue.

Varied data describe the structural gap of occupational integration in the different European countries (Byrn et al. 2005, Biffl 2006, OECD 2011, Smoliner 2011). Within this European field, the Austrian case of migrants’ and minorities’ access to the labor market is in the middle range. Just as in all other European countries, in Austria, immigrants and minorities generally have less access to occupational work than natives. In 2010, 1.5 million (19% of the population) people with migration background<sup>2</sup> lived in Austria. They represent 18% of the Austrian labor force (Statistik Austria 2011b: 54). In regards to their citizenship, 64% of foreign residents was employed in 2010 in comparison to 73% of Austrians without migrant background (Statistik Austria 2011a: 26). The risk of unemployment of foreigners (8,9%) is twice high as that of Austrian citizens (3,9%) (Statistik Austria 2011a: 53). This is true in average, but there is a significant gender gap in the employment ratio (Statistik Austria 2009: 37). In particular, Turkish women are with 41% least employed; whereas women from the EU and from the countries of the former Yugoslavia are integrated at the same level as Austrian women. In regards to the matching of skills and occupational position, we also find structural differences (Statistik Austria 2009: 37). Twice as many foreigners (47%) as Austrians (23%) work as blue-collar workers and less than a third work as a public official (4% vs.13%) (Statistik Austria 2011b: 53, Statistik Austria 2009). They often have positions below their educational level. In regards to economic sectors, they are still less employed in modern developing sectors. Immigrants and minorities work twice as much (10% vs. 5%) in the gastronomy and hotel sector and also above average in the building industry (12% vs. 9%) and only slightly above average in the originally guestworker-dominated sector of commodity

<sup>1</sup> *Österreich ist die erfolgreiche Integration von Migrant/innen zum Wohle der gesamten Gesellschaft ein zentrales Anliegen.*

<sup>2</sup> Migration background is defined by different institutions in different ways. Statistik Austria sees people whose two parents are not born in Austria as persons with migration background.

production (17% vs. 16%). Migrant women particularly work above average with health and social services (16% vs. 15%) and often in merchandising, but do not dominate this sector (16% vs 19%) (Statistik Austria 2009:45). However, as new statistics show, we can consider some changes between first and second generation in migrant families<sup>3</sup>. The second generation tends to have increasingly better access to occupations, even though below the Austrian average, and divided between trained and untrained persons. Thus, the percentage of migrants of the second generation in trade, finance and insurance industries and information and communication sector is growing by comparison to the first generation of migrants (Statistik Austria 2011b: 55). These trends are connected with a growing differentiation between businesses that adequately employ immigrants and minorities and those enterprises that underestimate migrants or even deny access. For example, we can find a growing number of businesses practicing some aspects of diversity management. However, even though a growing number claim a shortage of labor, most firms still need to face the problems of discrimination and to appreciate the opportunities from inclusion (Secretary Search 2008). In fact, a wide variation between including and excluding organizations can be found not only in Austria but also other European countries and the USA, the origin of diversity management and inclusion (Dass and Parker 1999, Veuzecom and Boer 2006, Thomas 2008, Thomas et al. 2010). Thus, the Austrian case can be interesting for both the European and the American contexts.

Austria's particular guestworker policy provides a context for its inconsistent, labor-market structures (Bauböck 1996). Some important changes in the labor market for immigrants and minorities occurred within the context of its admission to the European Union in 1995 and the opening to the Eastern Europe markets. Hence, the equality discourse was mostly focused on people from East European countries and linked to the experiences of skilled employees engaged in the risky processes of entering new markets (Segert 2010). Many entrepreneurs and managers now oppose direct discrimination and outline principles of fairness relative to equal-occupational capabilities and performance. Because any ethnic inequalities increasingly need to be justified, the enduring inequalities are explained by lack of occupational skills. In economic contexts, it has become increasingly unusual to directly blame or explain occupational inequalities on ethnic stereotypes. This is true even though Austria still has direct ethnic othering in media and political public discourse (Weiss 2000, Ter Wal 2002, Herczeg 2009).<sup>4</sup>

The unequal job opportunities of immigrants and minorities can be analyzed from different perspectives. The most important perspective considers the varied forms of discrimination.

<sup>3</sup> Statistik Austria defines the second generation as born in Austria. The first generation is foreign born (Statistik Austria 2009:30).

<sup>4</sup> In my empirical research in changing semantics of ethnic inequalities in private businesses (Segert 2010) I stressed the non-synchronism of changes in the political and economic field and the consequences throughout this for social inequalities. When I now stress contradictions between semantic and structural changes within the economic field, I would not invalidate the previous theses. Both inter-sectional and intra-sectional differences must be considered and they are in some respect interlinked.

Debates about the lasting segregation of the labor market regarding minorities mostly highlights the structural effects of inequality and considers less the different processes that create discrimination. In regards to these processes, some scholars distinguish between “direct discrimination” and “indirect institutional discrimination” to catch internal differences and changes (Wrench 1999). Wrench and later on many other scholars emphasize that discrimination is not only about consciously but also unconsciously acting to offer advantages to the majority and disadvantages to minorities. This notion identifies current changes by differentiating specific forms of exclusion as intended and not intended discrimination.

*Many of these practices of exclusion come under the heading of indirect discrimination: this exists with job requirements or recruitment practices which, although applied equally to all, in practice treat members of one ethnic group more favorably than others. (Wrench 1999: 10)*

Wrench and others mention the fact that the process of constructing a specific requirement as “normal” affects the inclusion or risks of exclusion for immigrants and minorities. However, there is still no adequate answer of how these different forms of discrimination emerge, especially if job recruiters do not intend to discriminate and instead it just somehow happens. Therefore my question is: What is going on by creating “institutional discrimination”? I will discuss this issue through the example of the job interview, which can deny access or offer a more or less appropriate occupational position.

Many ongoing processes influence the current occupational situation of immigrants and minorities. Recruitment plays an important role in this field of occupational positioning. By serving as the doorkeeper, recruitment facilitates a person’s entering of or exclusion from a position that matches skills. Hence, it plays an important role as an intersection of both economic allocation processes as well as of social positioning. For staffing processes, job interviews are considered the most valued form of recruitment. Hiring interviews have been analyzed during the last decades and much research considers their use as an economic or psychological tool to effectively match jobs and employees (Breaugh and Starke 2000, Rynes et al. 2000). However, not only a human-rights perspective for social inclusion provides a critical view on staffing processes. From another perspective, economic researchers are also unsatisfied with recruiting effects; while some sectors increasingly suffer a skill shortage, the economy suffers ongoing losses of skills of some groups of people and job interviews often have too limited effectiveness.

The inclusion barriers in job interviews seem to be linked to their unintended ineffectiveness. To understand how job interviews include or exclude immigrants and minorities, we need to consider several barriers or blind-spots that can result from the usual understandings and procedures of HR managers. Therefore my research question is: What’s going on in job

interviews? What social practices are intermingled in the economic practice of matching skills and positions in job interviews that result in ongoing ethnicized inequality in occupational positioning, even though a growing number of participants deny ethnic discrimination?

## 2. Ethnic groups, ethnicization and boundary-making practices

My answers to the previous questions and the analysis of the recruiting of employees with diverse ethnic roots are based on the debate on ethnicization. It started with the fluid concept of ethnicity as an interactional process (Barth), continued with the conceptualization of ethnicization without ethnic groups (Brubaker), and currently stresses the changes in the process of ethnicization (Wimmer). All their notions made in more general contexts are useful for my specific research question: Even though a growing number of employers deny ethnic discrimination, what's going on in the job interviews that result in continued ethnicized inequality in occupations?

First, Barth (1969) discussed anthropological approaches that define ethnic groups as units and describe them as small-scale discrete cultures: aggregations of people sharing the same culture that distinguishes them from other groups. He asked how ethnic groups are constituted and endure. He then argued:

*“The critical focus of investigation from this point of view becomes the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses.”* (Barth 1969: 15) Therefore, “*ethnic group*” is seen as a “*category of ascription*”. Ethnic groups are made by interactive ascription in terms of a person’s “*basic, most general identity, presumptively determined by his origin and background.*” (Barth 1969: 13)

Thus, a social group is constituted by processes of external attribution and self-ascription; this happens, depending on specific contexts, by signaling and validating specific signs of distinction of included members to excluded outsiders. The working ethnicization is based on the perceptibility of these signs of inclusion and exclusion and on rules governing interethnic social encounters. Thus, the interethnic interactions between ethnic groups are guided and standardized and can avoid conflicts.

Most important for my investigation is the boundary, or so to say, the demarcation as an interactive practice of making boundaries that create ethnic ascriptions to groups. The boundary defines the group rather than the group defining the boundary. This logic also concerns organizations, their members and those excluded from it. Moreover, organizations are characterized not only by their outside bordering but additionally by their diverse internal demarcations. They make boundaries of membership and boundaries between their members or within the workforce. By differentiating between exterior boundary-making that results from limiting access and internal boundary-making that results from limiting adequate positioning within an organization or field, one can conceptualize not only differences between inclusive and exclusive interactions that result in borders, but additional power-structured marginalisation within the organizations and across the field. Hence, employment

seekers can be rejected by many individual businesses and still be integrated at some level in the employment system. They are not completely excluded but marginalized.

In Austria, most minorities are not currently excluded from all occupations, but some ethnicized groups such as undocumented people and asylum seekers do not have access. The undocumented immigrants are completely excluded; the asylum seekers are temporarily excluded from employment. Their exclusion does not result from ethnicization, but rather by political segregation caused by foreign citizenship. The criterion is not ethnic, but political; it is a politicization of social exclusion masked by ethnicization. The ethnicization discourse somehow masks this political segregation. Political institutions define this kind of exclusion. They decide whether foreign asylum seekers are allowed to work and they can alter the law. In Austria, for example, the law has been repeatedly changed during the last decades. Official discourses shape these different activities of politicization and ethnicization. Some causes can be found in the historical climate of universal political rights within western nation states. Under these circumstances, the host population may find it easier to accept the exclusion of people by ascribing cultural differences to the foreign persons, which they “brought with” them, than to recognize that their own political system developed the boundary and they should accept responsibility for inclusion or exclusion.

Most people, classified as minorities, in Austria as in other European countries with many immigrants, are included in the employment system, but marginalized while not receiving a position according to their occupational skills and thus forced to accept precarious working conditions. From this point of view, the pure exclusion-inclusion difference is too limited and so is the resulting integration policy of focusing on the most excluded. Using the French discourse on equality, Castell (2009) argues that modern societies cannot be understood by primarily examining their margins. Therefore, he emphasizes that precarization and marginalization are mainstream processes coming from the middle of western societies. They interfuse and perforate all strata and an increasing number of organizations; thus, the erosion of the generally accepted principles of ordering. Hence “the majority” cannot be seen any more as a homogeneous “group” with occupations stratified by “fair” criteria versus the more or less excluded homogeneous minorities. Experiences of occupational decline and/or precarious occupational positions affect not only minorities but also touch the host population. This process is much influenced by economical globalization and by the increasing international migration resulting from the opening of the well bounded national states. Thus, inclusion is increasingly varied. These variations can be described as internal differences of occupational inclusion including marginalization and precarization.

As mentioned previously, according to Barth, focusing on ethnic groups to understand national societies has become problematic. One cannot adequately explain rejecting and accepting applicants for employment by ethnicizing groups.

Thus, I also refer to Brubaker's notion of "*ethnicity without groups*". He criticized the overall frame of "groupism" as:

*to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogenous and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis ... as even unitary collective actors with common purposes. I mean the tendency to represent the social and cultural world as a multichrome mosaic of monochromatic ethnic, racial or cultural blocks (Brubaker 2002: 164).*

He noted that this "*groupism*" is usually used to recode social conflicts as conflicts between "*ethnic groups*" and thus hide their economic or social character by constructing a line of conflict separating ethnic groups. This notion meets Castell's concept of marginalization as a central process of current societies that touches most social groups without separating a secure majority from at-risk minorities. Therefore, ethnicization affect both the center and the margins. These practices marginalize minorities by denying social respect for skills and/or former positions in the country of origin. Additionally, and this is often unobserved, ethnicization forces a false sense of security for the majority and impedes development of a more inclusive, sustainable economy. Hence, ethnicization is something like a proxy war; the core conflicts disappear from the public's sight, but still smolder and, in the long run, the majority's internal consensus will become undermined, so that some conflicts can abruptly break out. No matter which problems underline such conflicts, the previous ethnicizations and the reactions can become the basis for future political conflicts of ethnicized groups.

Asking what behavior makes an "ethnic", if not the intrinsic properties of "group-members" or their behavior, Brubaker argues that it is by framing or coding ethnic groups as entities and cast as actors; i.e. to take groups for granted. Hence, the behavior is ethnicized:

*"Ethnicity" needs to be understood "in terms of practical categories, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, discursive frames, organizational routines, institutional forms, political projects and contingent events. It means thinking of ethnicization ... as political, social, cultural and psychological processes" (Brubaker 2002:167).*

That means ethnicizing as a coding practice is interwoven within other discursive or material practices and cannot be separated from these specific contexts and their conjoint arrangements other than by analyzing it. Thus, ethnicizing always is "collared" by the specific intermingled practices and their concrete arrangements. In consequence, doing ethnicity can be seen as a so-called "*stretched practice of doing inequality*" (Verloo 2010).

As my research interests are not the ethnic or ethnicized conflicts and the public arenas to frame them, as such I cannot continue with a detailed development of Brubaker's argument.



For my research, it is still important to highlight types of actors and types of behavior other than “ethnic struggle of ethnic groups” for doing ethnicization. Hence, ethnicized narrating as well as ethnic clothing or other forms of coding constitute “ethnic groups”, “ethnic violence” and “ethnic struggles”.

So, what constitutes ethnicized occupational marginalization or exclusion in recruitment? The actors involved in job interviews are not ethnic groups, but individuals and representatives of organizations; their talks, reports, narrations are not about groups, but about individual skills and organizational requirements. The most common recruiting tool in private businesses, job interviews, involves the “*applicant*”, the “*recruiter*” and sometimes a “*line manager*”. The applicants represent themselves and possibly their families; the other (two) participants represent specific occupational functions in the business and possibly specific interests of their department(s). They do not struggle for specific ethnic-group interests but rather introduce, represent, inform, ask, answer, evaluate, etc. Sometimes, the recruiter and the applicant could struggle for words, but this is not foreseen in the concept of job interviews.

In open discrimination resulting in direct exclusion, the recruiter usually makes group boundaries clear in the form of “interaction-denying practices”. Not inviting to a job interview allows the interviewer to personally avoid seeing and talking to the excluded person. Personally experiencing the surprising encounter with skilled and civilized persons from the “reverse group” cannot occur and thus ethnicized prejudiced ascriptions will not be questioned. Sometimes open discrimination still occurs directly in the job interview’s interaction, when the recruiter behaves with disrespect and, for example, insultingly mentions skin color or other ascribed “features” as a reason for refusal. In principle, these acts would be liable for a court trial in Austria. Although Austria and other European countries have anti-discrimination laws, it can be difficult to pursue a discrimination case because of a lack of evidence of discrimination in recruiting interviews. However, openly discriminating practices are liable to legal procedures and this is an important deterrent. Unfortunately, the law is less powerful regarding the previously mentioned practices of not offering interviews, because one needs evidence that the lack of an invitation resulted from ethnicization and not from the presence of another, more skilled, applicant. This kind of law does not apply to cases of indirect marginalization or even exclusion. Explanation is needed for these indirect and subtly ethnicized forms of occupational staffing that entail a wide range of variations between inclusive and exclusive positioning. This can be discussed with respect to Wimmer.

Wimmer, like Barth and Brubaker, stresses the creation of ethnic boundaries. He focuses on the apparent variations of ethnic boundaries in different contexts. Similar to Bourdieu, he conceptualizes a multilevel model to explain these variations depending on the specific context of the field, institutional arrangements, the involved actors’ position and alliances, and the strategies for preserving or changing ethnic boundaries (Wimmer 2008b).

Consequently, he notes not only the occurrence and sustaining of boundaries, but focuses the changes in ethnic boundary-making. In doing so, he differentiates some specific strategies, which, in a specific field, can affect remaining or changing boundaries, such as reinforcing, shifting, blurring, crossing and particularization of boundaries (Wimmer 2008a,b).

His perspective provides inspiration for my research. First, I can use the notion of wide variations of practices of boundary making and therefore of the resulting marginalizations. The structural marginalization of people ascribed to ethnic minorities on the meso level of businesses turns on varying degrees of marginalization, or, as noted by Wimmer, on varying degrees of boundedness. Hence, the question on “the” marginalization/exclusion becomes the question of identifying context-dependent types of marginalization and of inclusion: In which contexts can we more likely find inclusive/exclusive recruiting practices? And, how can they be described? From this point of view, we can analyze varying context-dependent paths, types and degrees of inclusion and marginalization.

Moreover, Wimmer defines boundaries as a double-bounded social phenomena. The differentiation of a categorical and a behavioral dimension of ethnicized boundaries gives more than an in-depth understanding of boundary making; instead it focuses on its transformation (Wimmer 2008b). Changes can be described by weakening, or better to say, by loosening one dimension, while possibly keeping the other.

*A boundary displays both a categorical and a social or behavioral dimension. The former refers to acts of social classification and collective representation; the latter to everyday networks of relationships that result from individual acts of connecting and distancing. On the individual level, the categorical and the behavioral aspects appear as two cognitive schemes. One divides the social world into social groups – into ‘us’ and ‘them’ under given circumstances. Only when the two schemes coincide, ... shall I speak of a social boundary. (Wimmer 2008a: 975)*

Wimmer looks at the issue of (self) identification of ethnic groups in an urban neighborhood. The boundary-making activities of the investigated groups can be distinguished between the broadly transforming categorization of groups that includes (self) ascriptions and the personal everyday social networking, which does not yet reflect these categories. Hence, the boundary can weaken but not completely disappear. A part of the discourse (categorization) is further changed by daily real-life behavior, which itself has a material force because it reproduces certain (limited) social situations that need more time to change. This is, because it is embodied in the implicit knowledge of the participating persons and in their everyday arrangements and practices. These embodied forms of knowledge and practice behavior is much more difficult to transform than talking about “us” and “them”. When considering this, one can differentiate discursive forms of ethnicization and socio-material forms of boundary

making, which also differ in the collective versus the individual level. They all can conform or differ.

My research perspective on ethnicization as variable boundary-making in hiring practices, particularly in job interviews, is embedded in Schatzki's general philosophical approach which points to the "social practice" and the "site of the social". Social phenomena, such as occupational inequalities for ethnic minorities, occur in sites, according to Schatzki's conception, that are specific contexts including a particular spatial location endowed with different entities contextualized by several practices. In providing a context for each other, specific arrangements and practices constitute a moving practice-order-network linked with or overlapped from other practice-order-networks. Thus, a site is constituted where phenomena occur that at least are inherently components of the site. This concept of a mesh of specific practices in specific arrangements helps us understand the process of how minorities are disappointed by the hiring process; in particular, in the job interviews. For my research, I focus on Schatzki's notion of practices:

*In sum, a practice is a temporally evolving, open-ended set of doings and sayings linked by practical understandings, rules, teleoaffective structure, and general understanding. It is important to emphasize that the organization of a practice describes the practice's frontiers: A doing or saying belongs to a given practice if it expresses components of that practice's organization. This delimitation of boundaries entails that practices can overlap. (Schatzki 2002: 87)*

Social phenomena occur at a site as a specific context that mixes arrangements with practices. Arrangements would include elements such as human beings (sometimes other living organisms), specific artifacts and things; practices involve specific doings, "tasks" and "projects". The so-called doings can be first understood as "basic actions", such as sitting down, turning the head, asking, answering, etc. They also include the so-called sayings as a special kind of doings. As actions, they altogether keep a practice moving on. When they aim for specific ends, they can be seen as "integrative doings, for instance in the case of welcoming, which includes to approach, to look at each other, to introduce oneself and/or a third person by name and/or function, shake hands, etc. These actions also can be combined in specific "tasks" and the tasks can be organized to more complex "projects" that aim for more complex ends. When doings, tasks or projects belong to a specific practice, they need to express and to carry out this specific practice.

Thus, the manifold doings of complex bundles of practices can proceed step by step. They are guided, as is well known, by rules, so to say, by explicit regulations on what to do, principles on how to do, legal acts or injunctions. They allow or prohibit specific activities. In addition to these explicit rules, many actions in practices are also organized by an implicit guidance, as from the "practical understanding" of this practice. It governs actions by

specifying what makes sense to do next in the continuous flow of activity to express and to carry out this specific practice and no other. It includes the knowledge of how to do this or that practice as a proceeding of doings, tasks and projects involving specific doings of specific actors involved. Furthermore, the manifold doings of practices are also ordered by its teleoaffective structure, which is defined as a range of normatively charged goals, tasks and projects combined with normatively charged emotions. Schatzki's teleoaffective structure of a practice, or practice bundles regulates which doings, tasks and projects are tolerable and proper or acceptable in an emotional sense. Doing something right in the wrong moment or by the wrong person can thus be devalued or rejected. Hence, to fit their own actions in a given teleoaffective structure of an ongoing practice, people need to express and carry out the practical understanding of this specific practice/practice bundle while also keeping the explicit rules. Complying with official rules is not sufficient for an act to be considered as acceptable practice.

A central suggestion for the social character of job interviews comes from Schatzki's notion that all elements of an arrangement get their meaning not in themselves but rather by their positioning in the arrangement and their continual updating in the respective practice. Applicants become a "member of a minority" through an ethnicizing practice that ascribes a specific identity, that evaluates the identity and that positions this person in a specific way. In other words, the interactive practices in the job interview give the applying person an identity of "normal" or of "minority". A certain combination of perceiving, ascribing and evaluating practices in a single interview can result either in a normalization of diversity or in a discriminatory ascription, but always in the frame of the practical understanding of matching personal skills and organizational requirements.

Another central suggestion for the social character of job interviews comes from Schatzki's notion that every basic or integrative action has to be seen as a part of the ongoing practice and, as such, is prejudiced by it. All these actions can be understood as such while carrying it out and be connected with other actions by the practical understanding and the teleoaffective structure. In case the participant cannot or does not perceive a doing or saying as a part of the ongoing practice, this specific action does not seem as relevant for this practice. In consequence, this performed action can be overlooked or not well accepted or even rejected. A specific doing or saying needs to be understandable in the current practice and intelligible for the other participants, so that it "works" as a part of this practice.

This concept of social site and practice can be used for investigating the order of general inequalities and the particular ethnicized inequalities because they are all constituted by specific practices in specific arrangements. The practice-research approach is detached completely from the previously discussed group approach. Identities and situated acts of doing boundaries are always sited in particular ordered practices in specific arrangements.

No acts of boundary making before or outside any specific practices are situated in specific arrangements.

### 3. Job interviews between othering and including practices

From the practical-theory approach, job interviews are complex episodes in an ordered bundle of discursive, interactional, assessment practices that shape face-to-face settings in economic organizations. These involve different actors such as applicants, personnel managers<sup>5</sup> and sometimes line managers, who participate in these practices that aim to assign persons with specific occupational skills to appropriate positions within this organization. Thus, in job interviews, human resources are allocated with regard to cultural and social capital. Moreover, job interviews, as an episode of assessment practices in a specific arrangement, are linked with other forms of staffing practices in the world of human resources management (HRM).

Practices in job interviews proceed in arrangements that differ from other assessment settings and differ much more from other practices in other societal fields that carry out inclusion, marginalization and exclusion. These particular arrangements contextualize the doings of inclusive, marginalizing and exclusive recruiting. Hence, actors interested in changes need to consider this specific context. Job interviews as contextualized by unique staffing practices and arrangements include specific types of participants (personnel specialist, applicant and sometimes a line manager), typical locations (offices, conference room) and various documents (application papers, lists of applicants, job descriptions).

Concepts to increase fair recruiting practices need to refer to all three types of possible participants in the interview: applicants, personnel experts and managers of all levels. In fact, members of an employee-seeking department, who usually do not participate in the job interview, also need to be included. Some scholars stress this point in a broader sense. Measures that change an organization's inner culture towards becoming more inclusive can generally empower minorities for testing situations, including job interviews in other organizations. They do so by changing the daily experiences of minorities and expanding their social capabilities (Steel 1999).

Job interviews, due to their face-to-face interactional character, need a less-engineered, special setting than other economic practices. They do not need specific locations or technical equipment. In contrast to evaluating highly trained applicants in assessment centers that use computers and other technology, recruiting practices in job interviews can be done quickly and easily in any multifunctional rooms such as conference rooms or offices. The arrangement is also characterized by simple informational equipment. It is usually helpful to have the applicant's documents at hand. A list, a survey or summary of the applicants, is used when conducting interviews with many applicants to the same job. Internet access could be in the room, although it is not necessary. Thus, both the recruiter and the applicant can apparently carry out a job interview easily; both sides can apparently

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<sup>5</sup> Middle-sized and small businesses can involve the owners.

influence/shape the process easily. Several studies indicate that job interviews are very popular between applicants and recruiters, much more than formal recruiting tests (for example, intelligence test) and more than the assessment center. This is due to an interview's mix of formal and informal practices and the hope for immediate perception and reaction to avoid misunderstandings or misinformation.

However, job interviews are usually situated in a room within the business, the applicant is subject to the organization's authority just before becoming a member. That means the interaction between recruiter and applicant is not only influenced by general rules of labor-market behavior. Unspoken rules of behavior in the specific business also shape the interview. They start with the usual dress code in the sector or the business, continues with the usual manners between employees and managers and does not end with the routine procedure of carrying out the recruiting practices in a given business. All these conventions have emerged over time and the established staff has become an insider in this informal world; hence, they are well known to the recruiter and the other manager and less to applicants and frequently still less known to non-native applicants.

As a result, the applicant faces a continually disproportion knowledge gap of unspoken rules and requirements for sufficient confidence-building with the sayings and doings in the beginning of the interaction. By institutionalizing adequate tools as "normal" proceedings in all job interviews, unfamiliarity with a particular business would not be automatically perceived as a problem related to suitability for employment. It can be perceived as a "temporary tentativeness", which is expected in job interviews and which can be overcome by interaction. Assuming the normality of the incompleteness of knowledge about internal dynamics of an organization could benefit skilled persons not yet familiar, for whatever reason, with the specific business situation and the inner rules. In knowledge societies, rules and requirements differ not only between businesses, but also are transforming more quickly within businesses. Thus, job interviews are required to standardize interaction tools that examine abilities of "becoming" familiar with unknown rules in a short time, rather than that of "being" familiar. However, it seems to be easier to skip such tests when some applicants usually do not need it and to favor these applicants in the evaluation. It seems to spare time and misunderstandings, thus it seems to be effective.

However, all participants, experienced or not, native or not, know the basic connection between HR managers and employees in general. The recruiter mostly asks and the applicant mostly answers. A possibly participating line manager is a mostly silent third person. The job interview is an unequal power-structured situation. The recruiter has a more powerful position; however, complementary interests link all participants.

In addition, the applicant's position in a specific job interview is influenced by the specific competitive relationship to the other pre-selected applicants. The position of one applicant is

the weaker, as the other applicants are more powerful. Thus, the applicant's position in the interview depends on a particular standing in the field. The recruiters' position, on the other hand, is influenced by functioning as an internal-service provider to the operating departments (Wunderer/Arx 2002). As a service provider, the recruiter mediates between the department and the employee. The recruiters usually do not have the last word in the hiring decision, even when they guide the recruitment procedure and function as gatekeeper to the applicant. Those pre-rejected by the recruiter are out of the game. Those invited to the interview or even suggested by the recruiter are not necessarily hired. In the end, the department could veto the hiring decision. Thus, the connection between the recruiter and the applicant in a specific job interview is linked with their connections to other actors and their position in the business field. That influences all applicants. In situations of long-lasting skills shortage, skilled applicants with diverse backgrounds have better chances, even if the business usually has been rejecting persons ascribed to their particular minority group. In a labor market with a surplus supply, businesses will be less likely to give a chance to applicants who are ascribed to a minority group. However, the pure economic context of recruitment practices does not itself determine their development towards inclusive or discourage marginalizing and exclusive recruitment practices.

Characterizing job interviews as episodes of specific kinds of practices in specific arrangements means describing the doings and sayings of the participants and investigating how they are organized. Based on several empirical research projects, we could include actions that constitute job interviews such activities as introducing, watching and listening to the participants, evaluating, gathering and keeping in mind and documenting information about the applicant, the business and the job. In addition, actions include sayings such as asking and responding on issues of occupational skills and experiences, agreeing on further doings or making decisions, saying goodbye and leaving. These heterogeneous actions can be summarized as discursive presenting-practices and evaluation-practices to match an employee to the appropriate occupational position by both acting on official rules and by carrying out the practical and general understanding and teleoaffective structure of these practices.

In general, all adult people can participate in these presenting and examining practices in job interviews, especially if they are well educated and can talk in an understandable language. Some foreigners speak fluently only in their mother tongue. Due to the high valuation of the dominant language, it is hardly possible to get a skilled position even if possessing the necessary skills. It seems to be, so to say, a "natural" outcome that neglects non-native speaking persons. Due to a historically developed staffing practice, a native speaker usually has better chances than a non-native speaker who may even have better technical skills. Discursive assessments for middle-ranged jobs have been done by talking in the national language; for example, in Austria, the German language. However, job interviews in which high-potential applicants are evaluated increasingly are done in the world-language English.



Recruiters in Austria more frequently speak English because of their dependence on international business, in particular, recruiters hiring personnel for higher positions. In contrast to this practice, the interviews for middle or lower-ranked positions usually are held in German. Hence, except for advanced professionals, English-speaking persons from third countries are overlooked. Many recruiters speak English, so excluding English-speaking applicants from third countries may not be because of a recruiter's insurmountable language deficiency but because of the traditional recruiting practice and the non-English-speaking work habits in many departments. Thus, the departments do not usually provide a time for adopting language; this is reflected in fixed language-tests in job interviews.

These varied recruiting practices for different occupational levels indicate that if businesses need to open new labor market sectors, then English could become a recruitment language also offered for middle-range positions,. This would require several changes within the whole range of staffing practices. For example, advertisements need to be in both German and English, some international channels need to be found and some recruiters need to further develop their language skills. This would especially help immigrants who could learn German after being hired. It would also affect new immigrants who usually speak English and their mother tongue but are learning German. A practice theory perspective brings to the fore all these changes of specific doings and sayings in job interviews.

The historical order of recruiting practices including job interviews is legally framed on the national level and influenced by the EU anti-discrimination policy and acts (Blosfeld et al. 2007). In Austria, the laws for the job market are clear for Austrian citizens, but studies have revealed the application of laws and regulations are unequal and not transparent for different groups of different status and are always changing for immigrants and ethnic minorities (Nowotny 2007, Vogl 2007). Thus, the situation is problematic or risky for both sides: recruiters and applicants. They both need to do additional work to become informed about what they are allowed or must do when non-citizens or their children or grandchild seek work. One of the most important problems is the high barrier for acceptance of skills certificates gained in other countries.

Difficult bureaucratic procedures result in many certificates not being officially recognized in Austria. Because formally documented skills and knowledge dominate the Austrian hiring process, recruiters and employees must handle, in their specific staffing actions, this double frame of formulized access and limited recognition of certificates. They must decide how to consider applications lacking Austrian-certified qualifications, whether or how to explain the "difference" and under which circumstances this will be accepted.

For Austrian-born citizens with foreign parents and with an Austrian occupational certificate or degree, access to the labor market should seem clear; nevertheless, they are less likely to get an appropriate job than citizens with Austrian parents. In these cases, problems arise not

from legal exclusion but from the unspoken historically developed recruitment rules; on the one hand, preference for Austrians with German as a mother tongue and, on the other hand, privileges arising from certain self-representation and evaluation practices. Everyone needs to accept these risks and evolve appropriate responses. It is not sufficient to only follow the official rules in recurring situations of formally unclear situations; businesses need to develop practices to handle this according to their specific requirements.

These internal business conventions in doing recruitment in job interviews are organized by a practical understanding of how to do it. Thus, job interviews are understood as an episode linking particular core practices of the world of staffing practices pursued as a way to match appropriate employees to appropriate occupational positions. Recruiters, other managers, as well as applicants share this goal of matching. Thus, several specific projects and many tasks are necessary before and during the job interview and frequently after it. The applicant's usual goal is to have the job, the recruiter would like to find satisfying reasons to fill a specific staff position with an applicant and the line manager seeks a skilled and socially complementary colleague/associate. These projects vary in their specific understanding of what needs to be matched, but they all point in the same direction: appropriate matching of competence and position.

These interlinked projects are done by carrying out several tasks, such as organizing the meeting(s) with pre-evaluated and pre-selected applicants. The applicant's central task is to build confidence in their skills and willingness to perform well in the job. Linked to this task is to build a positive self-profile related to the job and to the business. Another task is to have in-depth discussions on these issues, to negotiate job-related issues, to evaluate the presentation and to make and/or to accept some decisions.

The practical understanding of job interviews can be understood in more detail by considering the research of Campbell and Roberts (2005) and Campbell (2007). They pointed out that ethnic minorities face systematic disadvantages in job interviews; these disadvantages result not only from directly othering a person because of a foreign background, but also by asking for a specific behavior.

They argue that the economic system's changes to post-Fordism have transformed the working condition and influenced the job interviews. The job interview and work increasingly require an individualized synthesis of institutionalized and personal identity. Every applicant is expected in the job interview to combine a personalized knowledge of the institution with a professionalized self-expression. The person must authentically express an exclusive concern for this business, but at the same time behave with a high measure of self control in order to simultaneously fit the highly standardized evaluation from the recruiter's side. Campbell shows that exclusion results from these expectations and reproduction of specific

forms of behavior and knowledge. Therefore, those lacking the necessary specific skills are excluded not only because of the usually discussed forms of direct “*grouping*” of minorities.

When considering this research from the practice theory perspective, we need to understand that exclusive and marginalizing recruiting in job interviews comes along with encoding not only people but also by encoding doings and sayings of applicants as non-standardized practices or as not useful for a required practice and its practical understanding. In other words, they are marked not as a new variation of the practice of self-presentation in job interviews, but rather as deviant and thus as not trustworthy for further successful participation and work in this institution. For example, a profile perceived as too informal or as not linked in the expected way with the business will be valued as “hybrid”, which means inconsistent or vague and therefore not capable, powerful or productive. Because the general economic criterion is to be valued as productive, people who cannot or do not carry out their self-presentation in this way do not need to be linked with an outsider group. The doings and sayings they carried out in the presentation are instead coded as non-standardized practice; therefore, their further working practices would be labeled as deviant and not useful. Hence, the deviant practice is rejected; nobody can deny the rationale of only accepting the standard. The personal consequences are actually only an indirect statistical effect, in fact not intended and surprising for all who see this standard as given and necessary for productivity.

Applicants who want to avoid an evaluation as “hybrid” and not trustworthy and who want to compete for the job need to prepare extensively. Those who cannot do this because of family responsibilities or for cultural or health reasons often will not apply for a job or invest less in preparation. These conditions often apply to immigrants and ethnic minorities. Because they apply after extensive unemployment or from marginalized working positions, they have had different job or cultural experiences or they miss recognition of their foreign diplomas and qualifications.

These practice standards in job interviews also affect people in difficult personal situations, people with family-care duties, people with different perceptions of life or people with limited health. As previously noted, Castell identifies this marginalization in the middle of the societies not only at the margins. Minorities are affected much more by these phenomena in job interviews, but the majority is not left secure. This form of exclusion does not make clear boundaries between insider and outsider groups. It crosses all groups including the ethnic majority. All applicants need to greatly invest in a specific form of work. Usually, a person has to apply at several places because particular hiring expectations cannot be met unless one has insider knowledge. Even those willing to professionalize their capabilities will soon meet limits, when many organizations require that applicants have a standard identity. The consequence is personal exhaustion or even burnout.

Campel and Roberts have researched boundary making that does not have a personal or a purely ethnic character. This kind of boundary making does not regard personal ascriptions as family background or mother tongue or color of skin. Therefore, it cannot be specified as ethnicization or ethnic othering. The effect of this kind of othering is not a well-defined group, which can be described by the ethnic dimension of inequalities. The excluded or marginalized persons do not constitute an ethnic group. Nevertheless, exclusion and marginalization remains.

From the practice theory perspective, this kind of making of boundaries can be noted as “normalizing boundary making”. Othering is carried out in these cases as “othering practices” rather than that of groups. Doings and sayings create a context of understanding a functional practice. The general understanding of othering practices is a tendency of an “excluding standardization”. That means the required practices, the tasks and the duties to be performed are defined as institutionally specific. From this viewpoint, new behavior is problematic when it does not obviously fit into the specified expectations. Consequently, this new behavior has to be marked as debased or substandard. Othering practices do not consider lifelong learning as a possibility. Organizations require potential employees to take the responsibility of being perfect. Applicants have to assure employers of their own competence before entering the evaluation.

Therefore, organizations use this form of practice related to othering as a dismissal strategy, rather than a strategy to integrate people within a boundary. It is a kind of outsourcing of the costs of learning and developing skills. This results in the loss of unknown human potential, for example, from many immigrants, women, disabled and the long-term unemployed.

As a result, the social outcome of practice-related, boundary making is the general uncertainty of a growing part of the human population that includes various minorities and the majority. In fact, almost everybody will sometime become a job seeker. When the job seeker cannot use previous expectation and knowledge because of restructuring in the economy or because of a move to another town or country or a long unemployment due to family, illness, or other causes; that person can be threatened by those doing “othering practices”.

Othering practices in job interviews integrates the permanent staff by empowering their common identity as regularly employed personnel. At the same time, occupationally skilled newcomers may feel weakened by their status as applicants under this kind of evaluation. In contrast to the ethnic boundary-making by grouping, this othering practice may miss the indirect integrating effect of the majority. This is true even more in changing labor markets where the border between regularly established staff and temporary staff is increasingly porous.

The power of these exclusionary practices can be understood by everybody who has experienced rejection when trying to do something first in a round of self-styled “masters” of a practice. In such an atmosphere, for example, children sometimes miss learning to sing or to present a paper or other creative tasks. They begin to feel like a nonentity or an also-ran and this feeling forecloses the search for a place where these practices would be required. Thus, focusing on the special recruiting practice teaches us a great deal about shifting social inequalities.

Job interviews not characterized by “othering” of groups or practices, of course, still try to match skills with positions. In these job interviews, the required core skills are still defined, but differences are perceived as potentially interesting or as something to enrich the business personnel. They include many more actions to give feedback, to understand comments and to resolve possible misunderstandings. This needs time and must be included in the practical understanding of job interview. From a practice theory perspective, these forms of recruiting can be understood as a “balanced turn towards unfamiliar practices” in changing contexts or, more briefly, as “including recruiting practices” or “inviting practices”. In other words, inclusion emerges from becoming involved in unfamiliar practices. It has as much to do with the potential employer as with the applicant. Hence it denotes an interactional practice of mutual opening.

The most known balanced-recruiting practices are embedded in concepts of diversity management (Cox 1991, Dass and Parker 1999, Burke 2001), which include diverse persons to take advantage of their diverse performances and skills. The recruiter and line manager need many skills to carry out recruiting practices as part of diversity management. However, if diversity-management policy is publicized and well known among a diverse public, it invites many more people to turn towards this specific organization. Hence, it can win a competitive edge.

Nevertheless, strategic concepts cannot cover all practices that create effective openness. These practices arise in a specific situation and need to be assured in several subsequent job interviews. Otherwise, the practice gets lost before becoming a standard for similar situations. Here it becomes clear that all matching practices include standards. The difference is not formalized versus informal recruiting practice. The difference is rather that of “othering standards” versus “balancing standards” and they both can be more or less formalized or informal.

In job interviews dominate semi-formalized and brief recruiting practices. Within this context, the most effective interactive techniques have to be discovered to understand an unfamiliar mix of skills and to test whether the applicant could fit the required position better than previously expected. Obviously, the limited time and awkwardness of an initial meeting of strangers makes it difficult to do “balancing practical openness”. When considering these

difficulties, businesses can favor different recruiting practices in different arrangements to match employees to job positions. Employees and recruiters could develop another bundle of recruiting practices, different from such in job interviews.

On this issue, the research of Granovetter (1984, 1985) as well as that of Marsden and Gorman (2001), need to be considered. They stressed the important influence of employers' networks on the chances for occupational inclusion in skilled positions. Personal networks not necessarily established for job matching, nevertheless, can bring knowledge about specific businesses, required behavior in specific jobs and particularly for possible recruitment situations. Such networks are even used by HR managers and line managers to recruit people who know the conventions and the needed skills of the particular business. These hiring networks seem to be an informal complement to all forms of formalized recruiting practices, including the popular semi-formalized job interviews. Marsden and Gorman (2001) use various studies to show the breadth of this recruiting practice. Network hiring occurs as a gradual process mediated through acquaintances that combines weak long-term information ties with the possibility to react quickly for a specific job opportunity. Trusted acquaintances informally share information on available jobs and also the skills of potential applicants. What the job interview must do in only one step based on formalized employment documents, the network can prepare without obligation and hold in waiting until it is needed. Thus, the network saves time for all sides. Furthermore, it saves information work for the business – not so much for the employee, because the information work is only extended over time.

Nevertheless, network hiring is efficient for both sides. This is true for native employee networks that have minimal breadth. Otherwise, the outcome for the businesses is secure, but of even less quality. This is not true for foreign-born networks, because they lack the ties to people in positions with access to the necessary information. As Betoui (2008) showed with the example of the Swedish labor-market, immigrants search less through networks for jobs than do natives. Moreover, if immigrants search for employment through networks, they are less successful than natives. They usually are less involved in mixed networks with natives who have access to useful occupational information. Thus, all forms of social inclusion of people with diverse ethnic background in mixed networks are helpful so that they do not rely exclusively on minorities' networks.

Hiring through social networks is the silently favored recruiting practice for businesses and for well connected persons. This is not only because it saves time. Hiring through networks especially decreases the risk of employing persons who only "seemed" to be the best "employee", because they raised expectations through formal skills certificates plus the interview performance (Barrick et al 2009). To decrease this difference between sayings about further work and the real doing, it is good to know that the applicant is somehow familiar with the business conventions and also has an intercessor known to both the

applicant and the business. As a result, network hiring appears to be a superior and more secure strategy to get trustworthy capabilities, rather than the most efficient way for getting the best skills.

This can be better understood by considering another practice dimension of job interviews: their inner teleoaffective structure by which the ordered actions in job interviews are tied with specific emotions. This can help us to understand why “othering practices” is evolving and spreading and how difficult it is to spread “including practices”. In job interviews, the teleoaffective structure relates normative emotions to ordered ends, projects and tasks.

For job interviews, this means that the sector-specific labor markets and legal regulations contextualize a specifically arranged bundle of complex staffing practices. The opening of the European labor-market increased the competitive pressures both between employees and between businesses facing market fluctuations. Hence, all sides face more uncertainty. In this context, recruiting practices in job interviews increase their specific teleoaffective structure and subsequent communication and decisions become more risky or, so to say, the little episode of matching practices become a testing situation with momentous consequences for all participants.

For the applicants, the test situation can gain existential importance; while the recruiter has an internal reputation to maintain in the business; for the line manager, hiring an unproductive employee could mean decreasing output or workplace incompatibility. Decisions in a job interview have long-lasting results; thus, they require the best care and attention. The high risk for failing in job interviews also results from the participants generally meeting for the first time. This increases the stress and the need to protect against possible risks. The participants need to go into the interaction with a leap of faith, even though or even because they do not know each other.

Recruiting practices in job interviews involve limited, but risky, communication that allows the participants to gain or to increase the necessary trust developed through prior experiences. In this situation, the most important task is not, as often mistakenly believed, to exchange information. The most important task is to create trust. However, if recruiting practices are assumed to be an exchange of information, this shifts the understanding of the most important tasks to before the job interview. The importance of writing, sending, reading and evaluating the application documents, makes the job interview, in the true sense, only a small contribution to decision making. In fact, studies show that such practices are spread. From the applicants' documents, the recruiter finds the most specific information on the applicant's certified skills, life experiences and, through the application letter, the motivation to join the organization. The decision has already been made during the reading; they will only be verified at the interview. However, the recruiter has a lot of knowledge about the

applicant but does not know the person. That is why, in fact, the job interview is so popular, but is less popular than network hiring.

Hence, the central project in job interviews is not to verify the information given in the application documents. The most important communication goal is to gain trust and particularly trust relating to the specific job. The point is to minimize the risk of mismatching by gaining and giving a good impression. In fact, it is more important to give and get an image to prove confidence than to exchange in-depth information.

Based on this teleoaffective structure of the interaction in recruiting interview, it is understandable why, firstly, network hiring is widespread, and, secondly, job interviews are favored over more formal recruiting practices. In semi-informal recruiting practices like in job interviews, informal interactions can reduce misunderstandings immediately. The participants have the impression of influencing the communication and thus create a fair matching of the applicant with the job.

On the other side, the informal interview could be a disadvantage to persons without the expected knowledge of embodied practice and presentation skills. As pointed out previously, minorities frequently suffer this disadvantage. However, this unequal starting point can be minimized by practices, within the job interview, that build confidence to express personal qualities as well as particular skills for the position. Additionally, businesses and organizations can proactively address unequal starting points. For example, they can develop practices of evaluating diverse staff as well as of unfamiliar practices in several contexts. In addition, employees can be empowered to experiment with new business practices. Failed efforts can be considered as a “normal” cost of an innovative working culture. Hence, the point is to open the process to persons with diverse experiences and also unknown initiatives and unfamiliar practices. This is a good context of equalizing chances by “opening to unfamiliar practices”.

Outside of the businesses, equality can be improved with increased occupational and self-confidence training for minorities. At the same time, all kinds of institutions must develop an open climate to unfamiliar practices and to skills that can deal with new social or cultural contexts. This seems a utopian project because cutthroat competition is increasing in various sectors. However, due to the previously mentioned othering practices that also, in specific contexts, destabilize the majority, some alliances could advance a common position in specific fields.



## 4. Conclusion and discussion

In organizations, job interviews are a specific episode in an ordered bundle of discursive, interactional assessment-practices in a face-to-face setting with the intent to match people with the appropriate occupational positions. The interviews can be carried out in an excluding, marginalizing or in an inclusive fair way. These interviews and the resulting staffing decisions significantly affect foreign-born people, ethnic-minorities or those facing other exclusionary ascriptions. The limited occupational chances for immigrants and ethnic minorities are influenced by the general understanding of staffing as well as by the specific practical understanding of doing job interviews, and by the context-specific interaction in a particular job interview. This can be analyzed by a practice theory approach.

Universal occupational inclusion in recruiting practices occurs as a “balanced turning to unfamiliar practices” particularly with self-presentation. This happens, so to say, as a wide range of openings to new actions or practices, as “inviting unfamiliar actions” or “including unfamiliar practices”. Such openings take place when unusual doings and sayings are noticed as expressing and promoting the practical understanding of the shared practice and belonging to its teleoaffective structure. In consequence, occupationally inclusive practices occur towards different aspects of the ongoing practice in a specific arrangement; they always refer to such ongoing practices as well as to the current situation. Thus, inclusive practices cannot be predicted in their specific form except they become routine and the unfamiliar newcomer’s actions do differ just marginally.

Exclusion and marginalization in recruiting practices are developed when limited groups or practices are preferred. Thus, they are inclusive for the one and exclusive or marginalizing for others. As indicated, they occur either by “othering persons” as belonging to an “unimportant” minority or by “othering practices”. Both kinds of othering can also be performed in varied practices and arrangements for hiring new staff. Scholars have extensively researched othering as a practice of ethnicization of groups or as an ethnic boundary-making. The anti-discrimination acts in the European Union and the resulting sensibilization on the issue have resulted in some success, while practices of othering minorities still remain, even if it is not the only form of marginalization. Thus, the changes have hardly resulted in equal chances for appropriate hiring and development of all people. Therefore, we need to consider new practices of exclusion and marginalization far from the traditional “grouping” process. They must be investigated to explain the remaining social unfairness, which most actors want to avoid.

This kind of boundary making can be labeled as “practice-related boundary making”. In these cases, othering is carried out as “othering practices” rather than through a clear decision to exclude from a group. It is practiced in doings and sayings contextualized by the practical understanding of the respective functional practice. The general understanding of othering

practices is a tendency to use standardization for excluding or marginalizing. From this perspective, unfamiliar practices of self-presentations are perceived as a problem when they do not “obviously” fit into the specified expectations. Such practices will disproportionately often be marked as debased or substandard. As a result, applicants who performed in such unfamiliar ways are not hired.

The decision does not result directly from the applicant’s lack of skills but results from the applicant not performing the expected doings and sayings. Perceiving and evaluating the acts as not fitting the norm has the result of excluding or marginalizing the people (frequently minorities) who performed the acts. At the same time, this practice of excluding standardization significantly misses the organizational goal of matching the best skilled person to the job. This problem arises because the recruiting practice in job interviews is discursive, while further work requires more varied occupational skills and knowledge that cannot be standardized. Sometimes, the best-skilled person’s unfamiliar job-interview performance would be valued as substandard and the person would be rejected.

These unintended and indirectly marginalizing or even exclusionary practices come from an individual’s doings within a functional organizational context. The result is a somehow ethnicized occupational positioning. However, it is not reproduced by a direct ethnicization but rather by amalgamated coding practices, which convey ethnicization by preferring or denying specific functional standards within a functional setting.

Excluding or marginalizing standardizations in job interviews occur even when the participants believe in both economic-effective and socially fair recruiting. This contextualization occurs during the asking and answering of occupational questions. Job interviews are discursive evaluating practices that seek to match occupationally relevant skills to appropriate occupational positions. They do not carry out the practical doings needed in the further position; instead, the interview involves a discursive self-presentation valued by the recruiter: a socially “correct” asking and answering about former education, trainings, studies, works, tasks and skills. Therefore, inside information about the business, recruiting interview and discursive skills are crucial for performing well. People with problems of adequately expressing themselves in the expected way are rejected not because they lack job-related skills but because they do not demonstrate the specific practices requested in a job interview. During a job interview, understood as a prejudicing standardization, non-natives are more likely to be perceived as less occupationally skilled than natives. This usually occurs under time pressure and with the risk of not knowing the skills and ties to this specific business instead of practical experience and skills.

By distinguishing fair or inclusive forms of positioning from the two forms of exclusion/marginalization that create ethnicized occupational positioning, one can also understand the widely varying structures of business workforces. At the same time, we can

find diverse businesses with more or less mixed staffs at all levels, businesses with exceptional or with token immigrants in skilled positions or others that include them only in marginalized positions, and, last but not least, businesses without any persons of a different ethnic background. This differentiation of occupational structures is rooted in different recruiting practices, which are affected by their general understanding as a part of staffing, by their inter-office practical understanding and their teleoaffective structures as well as by the actors and resources involved. Competition in different industries and changing legal frameworks affect these contexts, which therefore may vary in benefiting from inclusive recruiting practices.

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