GENDER DISCRIMINATION AND THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS:
MATCHING PEOPLE AND JOBS IN NANAIMO AND RICHMOND

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the thesis is to examine the nature of recruitment practices in Nanaimo and Richmond, particularly the ways in which recruiters define job requirements, attract applicants, and select a candidate, in order to investigate whether and how recruiters practice direct or indirect discrimination based on gender. To accomplish this, 74 recruiters were interviewed in August 1990 and February 1991, resulting in 84 job vacancies and 151 people hired.

Data were obtained from unstructured interviews with recruiters, who were asked to give an account of the procedure that they followed to fill a recent job vacancy in their organization. Five stages of the recruitment process were examined: job descriptions and advertisements; ideal candidate construction; applicant search methods; narrowing the applicant pool; and the job interview and final candidate selection.

It was found that, throughout the recruitment process, recruiters rarely practiced direct forms of discrimination against applicants based on their sex. However, employers' search methods and the ways that job descriptions were worded usually led to only one sex applying for the vacant positions, with the exception of gender-neutral job vacancies. It was also found that female applicants for female-gendered jobs were evaluated much more than males on the basis of personal characteristics. Ideal candidate construction and the elimination of short-listed applicants were stages where the most
frequent use of covert discrimination on the basis of gender was located. Few personal characteristics were devoid of gendered connotations; yet, most recruiters were unaware of the implications of attaching the need for personal characteristics to the requirements for a job.
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Chapter 1: The Research Question

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the ways in which recruiters may be contributing to a sex-segregated workforce by practicing discrimination during the recruitment process, either deliberately or unconsciously. The central questions of this thesis are whether and how recruiters make recruitment decisions that help to perpetuate a sex-segregated labour force. If recruiters do make decisions based on beliefs about gender, does such discrimination take the form of direct or overt discrimination, or is it indirect and, perhaps, unintentional? To accomplish this, I interviewed 74 recruiters in Nanaimo and Richmond in August 1990 and February 1991 to acquire information on the criteria that they used to fill recent job vacancies in their organizations.

Despite an increase in women's participation in paid employment, sex segregation in the labour market remains worldwide. People in most societies assume that the biological differences between men and women predispose them to perform different tasks, to be evaluated differently, and to have the products of their labour given differential treatment (McLaren, 1988: 17; Sydie, 1988: 7). Until recently, most sociologists have also shared this assumption, perceiving women's subordinate status as natural and inevitable, consequently ignoring their contributions to society. Feminist sociology, however, has focused on, and challenged, the biological assumptions surrounding the place of women in society, resulting in a more
well-rounded discipline that examines the roles of both men and women.

Key concepts examined by feminist sociologists have been, and continue to be, the division of labour by sex, patriarchy and social inequalities. Although the division of labour by sex has been universal through human history, its form has changed in parallel with economic evolution (Fuchs, 1988: 32). With the industrial revolution and the development of capitalist economies, the central difference between male and female work was that male work (paid and, therefore, valued) was performed in the marketplace, while female work (unpaid and not valued) took place in the home.

Sociologists frequently use explanations for the division of labour that feature the concept of patriarchy. Many feminist sociologists claim that relations within the domestic sphere whereby women are, traditionally, dependent upon men economically, physically and socially, have been extended to other areas, most notably, the labour force (Ursel in McLaren, 1988: 109). Just as men have controlled women and their reproductive capacities in the domestic sphere, men continue to control women in their access to the political and economic spheres, resulting in a male-dominated and male-controlled labour force. The consequence of such male control is a labour force in which women are disproportionately employed in low-status, low-income occupations, while men dominate in the high-income, high-status occupations (Wilson, 1986: 103).
There is no dispute that a sex-segregated work force continues. However, until recently, little research has been conducted into the various stages of the recruitment process that may be central to the production of a sex-segregated labour force. No Canadian study explores the discriminatory practices of recruiters. In an attempt to understand how recruiters contribute to a sex-segregated labour force in Canada, this thesis investigates certain ways in which recruiters use gender in forming applicant pools and, ultimately, selecting successful job applicants.

**Sex-Segregation in the Canadian Labour Force**

Although sociological debate continues as to the causes of a sex-segregated labour force, the fact remains that the segregation of jobs by gender continues (Fox and Fox, 1986). In Canada, female participation in the paid labour force grew from 38% to 57% between 1970 and 1988 (Statistics Canada, 1990: 73). However, women continue to enter into occupations that are low paid and of a clerical nature.

In response to continued sex segregation in labour, governments in Canada have enacted federal equal employment legislation focused directly on discrimination in recruitment and work conditions (Calzavara, 1988: 298). A 1951 federal law required employers to give people of both sexes equal pay for equal work in the same organization. The weakness of such legislation is that it applies only to men and women who do similar work in the same establishment, thereby ignoring two-
thirds of women in paid employment who are engaged in female-dominated occupations (Calzavara, 1988: 298).

In 1964, further equal employment legislation was enacted federally to prohibit discrimination in hiring, promotion and work conditions (Calzavara, 1988: 298). However, unfair discrimination can be practiced easily by recruiters, often masked by ostensibly legitimate reasons for not hiring a particular person, and the 1964 law did little to inhibit recruiters from practicing unfair discrimination.

In 1984, the federal Royal Commission on Equality in Employment recommended that legislation was needed to break down labour market divisions that prevented equal employment opportunities for women and to provide "equal pay for work of equal value" (Abella, 1984: 255). Although the effectiveness of such legislation cannot be evaluated yet, it may be that, given the heavily gendered nature of most occupations, with women and men rarely working in the same types of jobs, little has altered in the way of a less segregated labour force.

Both the legal system and the formal political process use a rational-legal or liberal framework in confronting issues of employment (Webb and Liff, 1988: 533). The framework assumes a meritocratic basis for all hiring -- that decisions are based on an evaluation of individual job applicants' abilities compared to the functional requirements of the job (Jenkins, 1986: 1)

Part of the typical process that employers follow to fill a job vacancy is the construction of an ideal job applicant
Recruiters prepare a list of the tasks and responsibilities of the job itself and, from this, develop a profile of the skills and characteristics of the ideal candidate. Indeed, this is the practice recommended in recruitment manuals and in hiring seminars. It is within the construction of both the ideal candidate and the job requirements that broad scope is given for exclusionary practices. As will be demonstrated later, specific socially-ascribed gender attributes are incorporated not only into the ideal job candidate profile but, even more significantly, into the job itself, revealing the presence of systemic, or structural segregation, which clearly limits the pool of qualified applicants before any active recruitment ever takes place.

Definitions

Before continuing, it is important that certain terms used frequently throughout this thesis be clarified. Standard dictionary definitions will first be given to demonstrate the meanings of the words in general usage, followed by the meanings attached to them when used within the realm of sociology.

Recruitment: The word 'recruitment', in general usage and according to the Oxford English Dictionary, refers to "...enlist(ment) for army, regiment, crew, society, party..." (Oxford English Dictionary, 1973). However, sociological definitions restrict the concept of 'recruitment' to what Jewson and Mason describe as
... the entire process of allocating persons to occupational tasks and functions within an institution or organisation (Jewson and Mason, 1986: 44).

Jewson and Mason include within this definition all "... hiring, redundancy[,] ... dismissal[,] ... promotion and grading" (Jewson and Mason, 1986: 44).

Many sociologists differ from Jewson and Mason by confining their definition of 'recruitment' even more sharply to refer to the hiring stage. Although they do not directly define their use of the word 'recruitment', Windolf and Wood, for example, see only three stages in the recruitment process:

(1) defining requirements, (2) attracting candidates, and (3) selecting candidates (Windolf and Wood, 1988: 14).

It is clear that redundancy, dismissal and grading are not included within these parameters. Richard Jenkins, similarly, does not specify precisely how he chooses to use 'recruitment'; instead he refers to three aspects of the recruitment process that serve to illuminate how he perceives recruitment:

... one, the means by which organisations attract applicants; two, the manner in which the process of selection is organised, from the receipt of the applications to the final choice of employee; and three, the organisation and conduct of part of this process, the selection interview itself (Jenkins, 1986: 117).

It is clear that there are some differences in the literature with regard to the meaning of 'recruitment'. Most sociologists do not follow Jewson and Mason by including redundancy and dismissal under the category of 'recruitment'; this is not to say that these areas are unimportant, as job vacancies often
arise as a result of dismissal or promotion. Nevertheless, in this thesis, recruitment includes only the processes of hiring, and not dismissal or redundancy.

**Discrimination:** In general usage, the term, 'discrimination', is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as:

[The setting up or observance of] a difference between, ... distinguish[ing] from another, ... mak[ing] a distinction; ... observ[ation of] distinctions carefully (Oxford English Dictionary, 1973).

However, the phrase 'discrimination against' has a much less neutral definition: "... distinguish[ing] unfavourably" (Oxford English Dictionary, 1973). Clearly, there is a difference between 'discrimination', which refers to distinguishing between or among several entities, and 'discrimination against', in which one or more entities are being excluded in favour of another deemed more acceptable. However, in this paper, 'discrimination' will, in fact, refer to 'discrimination against' a person or persons.

In the hiring process, discrimination (in the neutral sense) is a necessary feature of all recruitment decisions (Hughes, 1985: 224). The question then arises: What is deemed to be fair or unfair discrimination? The answer is found in the ideal recruitment process:
[Fair discrimination] is based upon an assessment of the relationship between the abilities which are deemed to be requisite for the functional performance of the job concerned, and the abilities ... of the individuals concerned (Jenkins, 1986: 1).

Unfair discrimination, or 'discrimination against', on the other hand, is seen to take two general forms: overt and systemic (Gunderson, 1985: 8; Hughes, 1985: 225). Overt discrimination refers to:

... [undisguised] distinctions in favour of or against the person ... on the basis of group, class or category to which the person belongs (Hughes, 1985: 225).

Hughes (1985: 225) claims that it is indirect, or systemic, discrimination that persists in the recruitment process and helps to perpetuate job segregation. Systemic discrimination is often manifest in ostensibly neutral testing or criteria, such as job descriptions or educational requirements, that in reality have a disproportionate impact on certain groups (Hughes, 1985: 232). An often unintended by-product of an organization's hiring policy, systemic discrimination can occur even if recruiters do not intentionally engage in overt, unfair discrimination. A common example is the attachment of stereotypical group characteristics to an individual as a labour-saving selection device (Gunderson, 1985: 4).

Most systemic and overt discrimination can be found at two locations in the recruitment process: informal candidate search methods and the interview stage (Jenkins, 1986: 136; Windolf and Wood: 1988: 4). The first refers to the method used by employers
to fill most low skill or unskilled (manual) jobs, especially during times when unemployment is high. Employers have no need to turn to employment agencies or public advertisements of job vacancies. Word-of-mouth search processes are inexpensive and highly successful ways of acquiring new employees (Jenkins, 1986). Such methods imply a type of pre-screening of employees; recruiters feel that potential employees recommended by incumbents are motivated and in possession of suitable skills. However, the danger of informal search methods is that word of the job only reaches certain people — usually people of the same social group as incumbents — thereby excluding members of all other groups.

The question then arises: How much covert discrimination can be attributed directly to recruiters? And if recruiters do practice covert discrimination, in what forms does it appear? It may be that the discrimination practiced by recruiters is unreflexive, and that recruiters are completely unaware of the stereotypes that they possess about men and women.

**Sex and Gender:** The noun, ‘sex’, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (1973), is "being male or female or hermaphrodite", while ‘gender’, with reference to human beings, is the "appropriate form for accompanying [the two sexes or sexlessness]" (Oxford English Dictionary, 1973). In sociology, the meaning of ‘sex’ is essentially the same as that in common usage; ‘gender’ is typically used to represent the socially-constructed attributes attached to either sex.
In general usage, the two terms are often used interchangeably; however, sociologists usually use them to refer to two particular, albeit connected, concepts. 'Sex' refers to the "biology of maleness and femaleness", and 'gender' is "what is socially recognized as femininity or masculinity" (Mackie, 1991: 2). It is important to acknowledge, however, that it is often difficult to completely separate sex and gender, as physical properties (sex) and culture (gender) are frequently interwoven. Mackie (1987 and 1991) refers to pregnancy, for example, that, although a biological fact, provides different experiences for women depending on where and when the pregnancy occurs:

... being pregnant in medieval England was a different experience from being pregnant in twentieth-century Canada (Mackie, 1987: 3).

Experiences that are based on physical attributes are frequently modified by prevailing attitudes and values.

Although the connections between sex and gender cannot be ignored or denied, it is important to note that sex, determined at conception, stays the same for most people throughout life.¹ Gender, on the other hand, is a constantly changing "continuum of norms and behaviours" (Mackie, 1991: 2), socially formed, reproduced and altered.

A further distinction between sex and gender is that sex is an individual characteristic, while gender represents a system

¹Exceptions are hermaphrodites and transsexuals, for whom sex is not an unchangeable fact throughout their lives (Mackie, 1991: 2).
used to understand human behaviour, and evaluate and control individuals (Mackie, 1991: 2). Consequently, it is not sex that determines the identity of self and others, but gender and the surrounding norms which are used to direct and organize human behaviour.

Sex and gender can be analytically distinguished but, in practice, aspects of both are often intertwined. For example, in job segregation, men and women work in different jobs, but the social definitions of those jobs are gendered. The analytical distinction is particularly critical to an examination of why a sex-segregated labour force continues to exist, despite legislation that is designed to inhibit it and, even more importantly, recruiters' rhetoric and procedures that appear, on the surface, devoid of deliberate gender-typing. This thesis will show that it is the socially-ascribed characteristics (gender) of each sex that guide recruiters' decision-making processes.

Gendering: The notion of gendering also requires explanation and clarification. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the verb, "gender", means the same as the verb, "engender", which has the meaning of "bringing about" (Oxford English Dictionary, 1973).² Gendering, in the sociological sense, refers to the ascription of one sex or the other to an

²Interestingly, the language roots of the noun, "gender", and the verb, "engender" or "gender", are different. The noun, "gender", is derived from the Latin genus, while the verb, "gender", has its roots in the Latin generare (generate).
action or a quality, such as a job, a school curriculum, or a personal characteristic (Bradley, 1989: 11). In this thesis, jobs are frequently referred to as "male-gendered" or "female-gendered", meaning that they are dominated by one sex and possess attributes which are thought to be suitable for one or the other sex.

**Thesis Overview**

In subsequent chapters, this thesis will examine the nature of recruitment practices in two locations, Nanaimo and Richmond, particularly the ways in which recruiters define job requirements, attract applicants, and select a candidate, in order to investigate whether and how recruiters practice direct or indirect discrimination based on gender.

Chapter 2 presents a discussion of literature on the sociology of employment, with an emphasis on themes that emerge in such literature that pertain specifically to gender segregation and discrimination in the recruitment process.

In Chapter 3, the research agenda and method used for the Nanaimo and Richmond studies will be outlined, followed, in Chapter 4, by findings of the research. Finally, Chapter 5 will present a discussion and conclusion based on the findings.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Sociologists have studied recruitment under many guises, including unequal pay, job segregation, unfair discriminatory practices and job interviews. A large body of literature exists on how the matching of people to jobs is accomplished. Included in this literature is a growing number of studies on the ways in which recruiters fill job vacancies, thereby perpetuating the segregation of jobs (Bills, 1988; Curran, 1988). Several such studies focus on the screening criteria used by recruiters to short-list applicants (Jenkins, 1986; Windolf and Wood, 1988). Embedded within the screening process in recruitment is the potential for covert discriminatory practices, which can subtly and effectively produce a gendered division of labour and an undervaluation of women’s work. An examination of the recruitment process may uncover the ways in which hiring practices contribute to a labour force segregated by sex in different jobs.

This chapter will provide a broad overview of the dominant themes that emerge in the literature on sex discrimination in employment, especially studies of how employers fill job vacancies, with a focus on gender as a filter to screen applicants. Particular bodies of literature will be examined in order to illustrate some of the more significant explanations for sex discrimination and one of its consequences, sex segregation in employment. Four research studies of discrimination in
employment will be examined. As well, a discussion on employment equity programs, which are designed to reduce gender segregation in the workplace, will be included.

**Gender Discrimination**

According to an ideal model of recruitment, employers make all hiring decisions on the objective basis of applicants' qualifications and potential productivity. Indeed, under the rubric of employment equity programs, this ideal of equality in recruitment practices is institutionalized. An individual's gender (or other personal characteristics) is, therefore, irrelevant (Blau and Ferber, 1986: 229). However, an examination of the labour force suggests this may not be the case. Evidence of continued segregation in employment indicates clearly that many forces are at work that inhibit equal representation across the full range of the division of labour.

Economic sociologists attempt to explain the reasons for gender differences in hiring, as well as why such inequality has persisted over time. Several themes emerge in the literature.

(a) **Taste for Discrimination**

Becker (1957) suggests that employers develop a taste for discrimination, and that they prefer not to hire members of a particular group. The taste for discrimination is usually acquired by employers through socialization (Blau and Ferber, 1986: 244; Calzavara, 1988: 293; England, 1984: 36; England and Farkas, 1986: 159; Gunderson and Reid, 1983: 3). Employers do not gain any financial satisfaction by such discrimination, and
they are willing to lose economically in order to indulge their "tastes". Because employers prefer to hire men for male-gendered jobs, they must, accordingly, pay the higher wages demanded by males. When women are refused such jobs, they are forced to seek work elsewhere in jobs that are, for the most part, female-gendered and paid less (England and Farkas, 1986: 159).

(b) **Statistical and Error Discrimination**

Statistical and error discrimination are practiced by employers who base their hiring decisions on "undesirable but unobservable" (Gunderson and Reid, 1983: 15) assumptions about the differences between men and women as indicators of work performance and productivity (Blau and Ferber, 1986: 251; England and Farkas, 1986: 160; Gunderson and Reid, 1983: 16; Jewson and Mason, 1986: 46). Statistical discrimination occurs when employers attach characteristics based on group averages to all individuals in that group. An example of statistical discrimination is found in employers' common assumption that women possess less mechanical ability than men. Such employers are less likely to hire any woman in a position that requires mechanical knowledge, regardless of the applicant's qualifications or experience (England and Farkas, 1986: 160). An even more common assumption is that women have a high probability of turnover in employment, which leads to employers hesitating to hire any women (Gunderson and Reid, 1983: 16). Not only does such a practice deny women fair access to available jobs; it lowers wages for those women who are allowed entry as:
To induce employers to hire females, a wage differential is necessary to compensate for the expected extra costs (Gunderson and Reid, 1983: 16).

Statistical discrimination is easily practiced by employers as they are able to camouflage their biases with other, more legal, screening mechanisms, such as hours of work that are inhibiting to many women with childcare responsibilities.

Error discrimination is very similar to statistical discrimination in that employers have assumptions about group averages (England, 1984: 37). What differentiates it from statistical discrimination is that employers' perceptions are based on erroneous assumptions, which lead to an incorrect undervaluation of the economic potential of women in men's jobs (England, 1984: 37; England and Farkas, 1986: 159). Women collectively are perceived to be unable to produce as much as men in male-gendered occupations.

(c) Group Monopoly

Based on the belief that majority groups can increase their power by taking advantage of a less-powerful group, group monopoly is a way for male employers and employees, collectively, to keep women out of certain jobs (Calzavara, 1988: 293; England and Farkas, 1986: 160). Male-dominated trade unions and business associations have been accused of monopolistic practices in their attempts to create labour conditions that discourage female participation, such as the use of informal hiring methods and licences that are difficult to obtain unless one is a member of the union (Calzavara, 1988: 293).
It is clear from the foregoing that numerous ways exist for employers to practice unfair discrimination, much of which goes unnoticed through the manipulation of job descriptions and requirements (Lowe, 1988: 119) that appear, on the surface, to be reasonable and egalitarian, but which do contribute to the segregation of the work force by gender. I turn now to a review of the literature that discusses various explanations of sex segregation in the labour force.

Sex Segregation

Women are segregated by occupation in the work force, a situation that has not altered significantly since at least 1900, despite radical changes in the economic structure (Reskin and Hartmann, 1986: 1; Statistics Canada, 1990: 73). Some occupations have become obsolete, while others have been created with technological advancements. As well, some jobs have changed from being "men’s work" to "women’s work", such as bank teller and other clerical occupations (Lowe, 1988: 120). Despite the creation of new jobs, men and women still occupy particular jobs. Although some sociologists consider sex segregation in the work place to be the consequence of both limitations and choice, the former is considered a much stronger force (Reskin and Hartmann, 1986: 5). An examination of some explanations for job segregation reveals the reasons behind its continuation.

Many sociologists claim that the division of labour by sex is almost universal (Bergmann, 1986: 93; Fuchs, 1988: 32; Reskin and Hartmann, 1986: 7; Wilson, 1986: 118). In nearly all
societies, the tasks that women do are compatible, in some
respect, to domestic responsibilities, and have three central
characteristics:

(1) Tasks are not dangerous.
(2) Tasks do not take women far from home.
(3) Tasks are readily interrupted (Reskin and Hartmann, 1986: 7).

A further quality of women’s jobs is that they are less desirable
than those held by men, pay lower wages, and involve less on-the-
job training and fewer opportunities for advancement (Reskin and
Hartmann, 1986: 9). Men leave formerly male-gendered occupations
when a large number of women are hired because of the loss of
prestige and decline in wages (Reskin and Hartmann, 1986: 31).

(a) Beliefs

A predominant explanation often offered to account for sex
segregation in the work place involves beliefs about gender and
work. Such beliefs are invisible, rarely questioned and,
consequently, perceived as natural (Bergmann, 1986: 88; England
and Farkas, 1986: 153; Reskin and Hartmann, 1986: 38). One
belief that restricts women’s activities in the labour force is
that the proper, and natural, place for women to be is the home.
As women and men have different bodies, it is somehow natural
that social differences exist. As a consequence and extension of
their "natural" reproductive capacities, women are suited to
domestic and maternal activities, all of which make use of
women’s natural nurturing characteristics (Sydie, 1988: 7).

A second belief concerns male-female relationships. Women
lack reason and are governed by their emotions (Reskin and
Hartmann, 1986: 38). A consequence of this belief is that male dominance is natural; therefore, men should not be placed in positions that are equal or subordinate to women (Bergmann, 1986: 98). In the labour market, women tend to work only at occupations that are subordinate to those of men. Another effect of this belief is that women’s lack of reason and their sexuality lead to a fear of sexual relations in the work place (Reskin and Hartmann, 1986: 41). By keeping the sexes segregated into particular occupations, employers can retain harmony in the work environment and, consequently, keep productivity high. Such unchallenged beliefs restrict the occupational choices available to women.

The third belief is closely aligned with the others: there are innate differences between the sexes (Fuchs, 1988: 38). As women are less rational and more emotional than men, they are frequently denied occupational positions of authority (Reskin and Hartmann, 1986: 41). Other personal qualities attributed to women that exclude them from such positions are their lack of aggressiveness, strength, endurance and capacity for abstract thought; conversely, women possess greater dexterity and tolerance for tedium, and have more morality than men (Reskin and Hartmann, 1986: 41). Women are naturally suited for repetitive clerical and assembly line factory tasks.

(b) Sex-Role Socialization

Closely linked with beliefs as agents of sex segregation is sex-role socialization (Betz and O’Connell, 1989: 319; England,
People tend to choose occupations that are suited to their gender. Such perceptions develop as a result of various forms of socialization, beginning in early childhood. As children see their parents acting in particular ways, both in and out of the home, they learn very early in life that men and women work at different activities. Consequently, many people enter the work force with expectations that are consistent with prevailing gender segregation in certain jobs.

Education is another source of socialization (Wilson, 1986: 116). Much of the curriculum is heavily sex-biased, with textbooks that stereotype occupations as male or female (Reskin and Hartmann, 1986: 63). Teachers and counsellors also promote sex stereotyping and differential treatment of the sexes, which reinforces sex stereotyping (Reskin and Hartmann, 1986: 63). The school system itself is highly segregated: elementary school teachers are predominantly female, and high school teachers are usually male, as are administrators (Reskin and Hartmann, 1986: 64).

(c) Domestic Responsibilities

Another explanation frequently offered to account for sex segregation is women's domestic responsibilities (England, 1984: 31; Fuchs, 1988: 38; Kemp and Beck, in Berg, 1981: 262; Reskin and Hartmann, 1986: 68; Wilson, 1986: 117). As women continue to be primarily responsible for child care, their occupational
choices are limited. Usually male partners' careers are more important; therefore, promotion based on relocation is extremely unlikely for women with male partners. Domestic responsibilities also restrict the time women can devote to paid work, as well as to education that could lead to better job prospects. Added to this is the lack of adequate and affordable child care, which limits many women to jobs that can accommodate such responsibilities, frequently translating into part-time employment (Reskin and Hartmann, 1986: 73).

**Recruitment**

Literature on recruitment varies from economic analyses of the labour market which usually concentrate on supply (available labour pool), to more sociological accounts of the processes that recruiters use to match people to existing job vacancies. Much of this latter research has been blind to the role that gender plays in the hiring process. The discussion that follows will refer to only those studies that consider gender in the recruitment process.

Several significant claims emerge in most recent sociological accounts of the recruitment process, all of which serve in some way to explain gender segregation in the work place. One dominant claim, mentioned in the first chapter, is the construction of the ideal candidate, achieved by hypothesizing the perfect person to fit a particular job description. Known as the rational-professional model of selection (Curran, 1988: 336), or rational-legal (Jewson and
Mason, 1986: 47), this view of recruitment is embraced by most western democratic legal systems and is, in concept, decidedly fair and rational (Jewson and Mason, 1986: 47). Following this method, recruiters judge all applicants against the ideal model and, ostensibly, seek the applicant who most closely matches the idea of the perfect candidate. In theory, this popular image of the recruitment process is logical and ethical -- the way that all recruitment should operate. In practice, though, the professional model of recruitment ignores the role of personal attributes in candidate selection (Windolf and Wood, 1988: 16).

An empirical examination of actual recruitment processes reveals that there are many hiring techniques, dictated not only by the job, but also the goals of employers and employees (Jewson and Mason, 1986: 43). As Jenkins states:

The realism of characterising recruitment as a process solely ... concerned with matching abilities to jobs is ... highly questionable (Jenkins, 1986: 3). Hiring decisions are made on the basis not only of specific job skills but also personal qualities. In manual or low-skilled jobs, where paper qualifications are frequently unnecessary, personal attributes are the primary criterion for selection (Jenkins, 1986: 52).

Jenkins' notions of suitability and acceptability are the most widely used terms in the recruitment literature and deserve extensive elaboration. Suitability refers to those skills that are functionally specific to the job, such as educational qualifications, training or, in some cases, physical
requirements; acceptability criteria are functionally non-specific, and are more salient to the ability to "fit in" with incumbent employees, or physical characteristics perceived by recruiters to be attractive to potential customers (Jenkins, 1986: 46). It is acceptability skills that are powerful determinants of job segregation and most "labour market outcomes" (Jenkins, 1986: 50).

As most recruiters encounter more than one applicant who has the required qualifications, shortlisting and final decision-making are based on appearance, manner and attitude, speech style, age, sex, marital status, personality and, as previously mentioned, the ability to "fit in" with the organization (Curran, 1988: 337; Jenkins, 1986: 54 - 69; Windolf and Wood, 1988: 3). Another powerful component of acceptability is recruiters' "gut feeling, ... or Gestalt perception of the candidate" which is often based on first impressions of candidates in job interviews (Jenkins, 1986: 62). Recruiters are usually able to offer reasons for including, or excluding, applicants on such personal criteria, but such notions tend to discriminate against certain groups (Jenkins, 1986: 79).

Another significant feature of the recruitment process concerns the method of employee search used by many personnel specialists: word-of-mouth or informal social contacts. When a job vacancy arises, many employers 'spread the word' to colleagues, employees, people who work in similar organizations, and friends and acquaintances. Perceived by recruiters as a very
useful way of accessing the available labour market, the word-of-mouth method is used as a recruitment channel as well as a selection criterion -- applicants are pre-screened (Jenkins, 1986: 135; Reskin and Hartmann, 1986: 51; Windolf and Wood, 1988: 2). The job need not be advertised to the general public through newspapers or employment agencies. Consequently, not only does it reduce the number of applicants with which a recruiter has to deal; it is an inexpensive or even costless method of recruitment. In Jenkins’ (1986) study, 78% of personnel specialists and 86% of managers preferred word-of-mouth search methods. Recruiters feel that the reputation of the person recommending an applicant serves to predict the qualities of the applicant (Jenkins, 1986: 136; Windolf and Wood, 1988: 4). However, the danger to informal search methods is that word of the job only reaches certain people -- usually people of the same social group as incumbents -- thereby excluding members of all other groups, a clear case of systemic discrimination (Gunderson and Reid, 1985: 32).

A final, but critical, element of studies of the recruitment process is the unit of observation. Of the four studies that most profoundly serve as starting-points for this study, two focus on actual job vacancies, rather than relying solely on recruiters’ accounts of their more general processes of recruitment.

In *Racism and Recruitment* (1986), Richard Jenkins analyzes racism in employment by documenting the models held by recruiters
of desirable employees. Jenkins conducted studies in three cities near Birmingham, England. As he wished to control for the influence of sex composition, he chose three industrial sectors: manufacturing, large-scale retailing and public services and utilities. The first two sectors he felt would represent mainly men and women, respectively, while he expected the last sector to employ an even mix of men and women. Between 1980 and 1983, Jenkins interviewed 172 managers (69 personnel specialists and 103 line managers) and questioned them about their general methods of recruitment (Jenkins, 1986: 30). He found that the recruitment process was highly informal, and "potentially and actually discriminatory" (Jenkins, 1986: 150). He claims that the informality of the recruitment process creates preconditions for racist and sexist discrimination, and that such discrimination is difficult to investigate or prevent (Jenkins, 1986: 151).

In "Gender and Recruitment: People and Places in the Labour Market," Margaret Curran (1988) conducted a study of job vacancies in north-east England in order to understand the ways that employers use gender as a screening criterion, as well as the reasons why gender was considered by recruiters to be relevant to the matching of jobs and people. To accomplish this, Curran used job vacancies as units of analysis, drawing her sample from jobs that were advertised in local newspapers and
Jobcentres. She chose only retail sales and non-secretarial clerical jobs in order to investigate job vacancies which she thought would attract both male and female applicants. Curran conducted 101 interviews with recruiters, who hired a total of 138 people (Curran, 1988: 340).

Curran found that recruiters use both gender and a variety of personal attributes and skills in which gender is embedded as functional requirements of the jobs. She also claims that women's position in the labour market is the consequence of jobs which are gendered as women's jobs (Curran, 1988: 348 - 349).

Paul Windolf and Stephen Wood (1988) also focused on actual job vacancies in their comparative study of recruitment and selection in Britain and West Germany: Recruitment and Selection in the Labour Market. The emphasis of their research was the nature of recruitment practices, particularly informal recruitment channels and criteria used by recruiters to screen applicants. In 1980 and early 1981, Windolf and Wood selected three regions from each country on the basis of industrial sector and levels of unemployment. They chose 25 large manufacturing, retailing and finance organizations from each region, and were successful in accessing 90 per cent of the companies (Windolf and Wood, 1988: 4). Members of personnel departments were interviewed, with a focus on recently filled job vacancies.

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3British equivalent of Canada Employment and Immigration (Manpower).
They found that, despite formal methods of recruitment, recruiters rarely follow the organizations' institutionalized procedures for hiring, and that recruiters strongly prefer informal recruitment channels (Windolf and Wood, 1988: 2). Another claim made by Windolf and Wood is that most organizations use all available filters for recruiting (interviews, application forms, references and tests), and that these filters can be manipulated according to the job applicant and his or her desirability to the recruiter (Windolf and Wood, 1988: 3). Windolf and Wood also investigated recruiters' general ideas about recruitment which frequently shed light on discriminatory practices.

I also refer to a fourth study, by David Bills (1988), entitled "Educational Credentials and Hiring Decisions: What Employers Look For in New Employees". Bills investigated the ways that employers in the United States evaluate educational credentials and other factors as hiring criteria (Bills, 1988: 71). Bills' units of analysis were 55 occupational positions gathered from 6 organizations (Bills, 1988: 74). The positions were representative of all occupations found in each business. Bills interviewed not only the person most recently hired for the position, but also the recruiter responsible for the hiring decision.

Bills found that hiring standards are very flexible, due in part to employers' discretion in adjusting standards. He also found that the evaluation of personality is used as a hiring
criterion, although the evaluation differs for male and female candidates (Bills, 1988: 71).

Although I have used these four studies as starting points for my research, I have also modified them, in order to accommodate the limited time available to me to conduct the research, as well as the flaws in each study. The weakness to Jenkins' (1986) study is that he asks recruiters for only their general methods of recruitment which he admits reveals little evidence of either direct or indirect discrimination. A focus on actual job vacancies, as Curran and Windolf and Wood chose, is much more effective in counteracting

... the element of subjectivity and window-dressing in the replies given to our questions. We attempted to overcome this problem by talking about specific selections, to go through application forms, and investigate which particular decision had been made (Windolf and Wood, 1988: 6).

Curran's study, although valuable, is also weakened by her emphasis on retail sales and non-secretarial clerical positions. She claims that both of these occupations are "non-gendered" (Curran, 1988: 339). However, in the discussion of her findings, she contradicts that premise by stating that women were hired for all of the female-gendered jobs, and males were hired for all but three of the male-gendered jobs (Curran, 1988: 348). I suggest that most of the job vacancies that she studied were gendered even before any job applicants were considered, depending upon the organizations, job descriptions or products sold.

Although Windolf and Wood's (1988) study contributes immensely to a better understanding of recruitment processes, the
researchers' accounting of their methods is incomplete. Absent is information on the actual number of organizations accessed, recruiters interviewed, and job vacancies studied, although percentages of each are referred to throughout the article. Exact replication of this study would, consequently, be difficult.

My research on recruitment practices and gender discrimination borrows heavily from the aforementioned studies, with modifications based on the flaws of each study as well as limitations imposed by time.

**Employment Equity Programs**

Employment equity programs have existed in Canada since 1964, but the labour force has continued to be segregated despite legislation. Little has altered in the occupational segregation between men and women. The discrepancy between government policy designed to reduce women's unequal representation in Canada's labour force and the minor changes that have occurred is explained by examining the underlying premise of such legislation.

Central to most employment equity programs is their tendency to formalise the recruitment process, as informal ways of filling job vacancies allow too much scope for gender discrimination (Jewson and Mason, 1986: 43). Much equal opportunities legislation is based on a model of equal opportunity in which

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'Statistics Canada (1990: 81) shows only a modest decline in the gender division of labour between 1978 and 1988.'
employers must judge job applicants objectively on their qualifications, in theory ignoring acceptability skills (Jewson and Mason, 1986: 43; Webb and Liff, 1988: 534).

Although this model of recruitment appears to be the fairest framework within which hiring should operate, it does not take into account the variety of ways in which exclusion of applicants can occur. Nor does it protect job applicants from the economic and organizational contexts within which recruitment exists (Webb and Liff, 1988: 545). Even for employers who advertise their acceptance of equal opportunities policies, the degree of subjective determination and discretion inherent in applying the procedures of this model result in very few changes (Jewson and Mason, 1986: 43; Webb and Liff, 1988: 545). The equal opportunity model of recruitment does very little to protect applicants from covert or systemic gender discrimination, as its formal nature is based on the ideal image of the hiring process (Jewson and Mason, 1986: 43).

As the employment equity model is considered by employers to be both moral (in terms of fairly differentiating amongst job applicants on the basis of qualifications alone) and economically efficient, its formality should result automatically in a work force of men and women evenly distributed in all jobs (Jewson and Mason, 1986: 53). However, Jewson and Mason (1986: 53) argue that such formalisation does not result in such a labour force. They claim that formality is quickly discarded when considerations of efficiency take precedence.
Not only does increased formality in employment equity legislation have little or no effect on reducing job segregation, employment equity programs are also easily circumvented through manipulation and interpretation. Discriminatory practices continue covertly, although the "rhetoric and rituals of formal, rational-legal procedures may be solemnly and ostentatiously followed" (Jewson and Mason, 1986: 54).

The debate continues as to whether equal opportunity policies in their present form are the most viable means of promoting employment equity in the labour force. Any changes brought about by existing legislation have been slow, which leads to the question of whether policies should remain as they are, or should be altered to reflect more accurately the forces that inhibit women's full participation.

Most legislation is based on the assumption that sex segregation is the result of deliberate prejudice and exploitation by employers (Fuchs, 1988: 120). The meagre benefits to women that have resulted from such legislation suggest its inadequacy. More and more, sociologists are investigating other aspects of employment that can be altered in an effort to reduce gender segregation.

By examining women's role, researchers point to women's domestic responsibilities as severe impediments to equal representation (Fuchs, 1988: 120). Constrained by child-care and other family responsibilities, women need to be able to work much more flexibly than men; child-care subsidies and a shorter work

Further suggestions to alter women's status include more active union involvement by women (Wilson, 1986: 124), changes in the education system that would decrease sex-typing that begins in the school system (Calzavara, 1988: 297; Wilson, 1986: 125), and a concerted effort by governments to change employers' attitudes towards women, through programs designed to raise awareness of gender issues (Calzavara, 1988: 299; Wilson, 1986: 125).

Bergmann (1986: 161) says that affirmative action policies are effective in reducing gender inequalities in the labour force. Fuchs (1988: 122) states that they result in nothing more than tokenism. Both look to women's domestic responsibilities as evidence in their arguments. Those who favour affirmative action posit that because of socially constructed ideas about women and domestic responsibilities,

... numerical goals and timetables ... are necessary ... otherwise women will be excluded from many of the better jobs for years to come (Bergmann, 1986: 161).

Those against affirmative action also claim that deliberate discriminatory practices against women by employers are only one cause of sex segregation. Rather than advocating government policies that force employers to fill quotas, opponents to affirmative action state that such procedures would only help a few women, and do little to alter beliefs about women that are
much more to blame for sex segregation in the labour force (Fuchs, 1988: 122).

Sociologists are increasingly focusing on the beliefs and systemic barriers that inhibit women's full participation in the labour force. A redefinition of family roles that includes more involvement in domestic responsibilities by men is crucial (Calzavara, 1988: 296). If women were freer to pursue education and training, then the 'level playing field' assumed by the liberal model of recruitment might allow women access to more and better occupations. As long as specific job skills are not distributed equally between men and women, men will continue to be more suitable for such jobs. As Webb and Liff state:

To suggest to women that if they gain the correct qualifications and experience they will be considered on their merits is dishonest, since it is their biology on which they are being judged (Webb and Liff, 1988: 546).

Along with changes in the roles of family members, occupations themselves need to be critically examined. Sociologists are increasingly focusing on the gendered nature of jobs themselves. As aspects of gender are often established as indicators of suitability, seemingly objective job descriptions are, upon closer examination, filled with requirements deemed appropriate for only one sex (Curran, 1988: 349; Webb and Liff, 1988: 546).

If recruitment processes function as the critics maintain, then equal opportunity policies need to be altered; their focus needs to be shifted away from helping women to become integrated
within a male structure of labour. Instead, domestic responsibilities and employment itself need to be redistributed in order to avoid perpetuating a system designed in accordance with the needs of male employers and employees that limit access to competent women (Webb and Liff, 1988: 548).

Before employment can be altered to a form more conducive to women's equal participation, it is imperative to examine the various stages of the job matching process that appear especially vulnerable to discriminatory practices. Jenkins (1986) and Curran (1988) have studied how recruiters contribute to job segregation by their personal biases towards certain minority groups in Great Britain. Windolf and Wood (1988) have investigated the selection process in Great Britain and Germany. No research has been conducted in Canada to examine the screening devices used by recruiters to match applicants to job vacancies. Before any changes in employment in Canada can begin, therefore, it is critical to investigate if gender discrimination occurs in the same manner in Canada that it does in other countries.
Chapter 3: Research and Method

Research Agenda

(a) Main Concerns

The concern of this research is to examine recruiters' selection criteria and the way in which these interact with their concepts of male and female employees. The focus of this research is the demand side of the labour market and the criteria used by employers to fill their employment requirements. My investigation is limited to job vacancies and the mechanisms used to fill them. There is a variety of methods that one could use to investigate this stage of the recruitment process. The focus could be on the perspective of job applicants, or on methods taught to unemployed people on how to survive a job interview. Another method is to ask recruiters about their general experiences in recruiting for jobs.

The goal of this research was to investigate the ways in which recruiters use gender as a screening criterion, and whether such discrimination, if it occurs, is direct or indirect. I focused on a job vacancy that was filled recently, in the hope that the process was still fresh in the recruiter's memory. Had I requested only data on recruiters' general recruitment procedures, I felt that the information I would obtain would reflect only their "gloss" of actual practices. By asking

5Vacancies ranged from those filled one year before the interview to some filled as recently as one week earlier.
recruiters to recount the procedure followed to fill an actual vacancy, evidence of discrimination was more likely to surface.

An example of a commonly-heard response by recruiters when told of my intentions was "well, we don't do anything unusual when hiring. We just advertise the job and hire the most qualified person." But when I asked them to talk about a specific job vacancy, recruiters often prefaced the process with the caveat that "this isn't the way we normally do it." The many times that this comment was uttered by recruiters reveals the rare occasions that they followed the ideal model of recruitment.

The focus on job vacancies reveals the variety of ways at which decisions are arrived. It demonstrates the diversity of search methods used by recruiters to access applicants; most jobs are filled by informal searches. In order to acquire as much information as possible, I have examined a limited number of job vacancies in as much depth as time and recruiters' cooperation permitted.

(b) Organizations and Access

Three main considerations had to be taken into account in deciding on the locations of the research: geographical areas for the research, which types of organizations and which particular organizations.

(i) Geographical Areas

Although the geographical area was not, in itself, critical to the research, I felt that, for the purposes of organization and possibly replication, a clearly defined area with certain
characteristics would be helpful. The geographical area needed to be fairly heterogeneous industrially, in order to allow for the sampling of as many different job vacancies as possible. The area also needed to be urban, with most residents working within its boundaries, and a sufficiently developed and accessible transportation network to allow ready mobility of labour within the area.

Nanaimo was chosen as the site of the first sample as it met all the above requirements, in addition to being fairly representative of a mid-size British Columbia city. With a population of approximately 50,000, it is the second largest city on Vancouver Island after Victoria, which is about 70 miles south. Between Nanaimo and Victoria, and north of Nanaimo, the area is, for the most part, rural. Nanaimo has a large variety of businesses, with employees drawn mostly from within its urban boundaries. Nanaimo has a bus service which meets the requirement for accessible transportation. A further reason for Nanaimo being chosen was that I was able to re-locate to the site for one month with relative ease, as I have friends and family on Vancouver Island.

Richmond was selected more for practical reasons. Having returned to the University of British Columbia, I needed to choose a relatively accessible site. Although Richmond is not an area surrounded by rural communities as Nanaimo is, it is a clearly delineated geographical area, with a population of 121,300 covering an area of 48 square miles (124 square
kilometers). It meets the requirements of having readily available transportation systems (public transit), and a large and varied industrial sector.

(iii) Selection of Types of Organizations

Organizations were chosen using a purposive sample method to ensure a relatively even mix of large, medium and small businesses, as well as a wide range of occupations. Selection was conducted by perusing the Yellow Pages of the telephone book. For the Nanaimo study, the choice of organizations was simplified somewhat since I am a former resident of the city. Between 1975 and 1987, I lived in Nanaimo and worked in a variety of jobs. As a telecommunications operator for the R.C.M.P. and, later, the Nanaimo Fire Department, I became acquainted with a wide variety of people who were employed by local governments, radio and television stations, and other organizations throughout Nanaimo. Consequently, my familiarity with the local labour market allowed me to distinguish among many Nanaimo businesses on size as well as the variety of jobs within organizations. I was able to acquire a sample of businesses that I felt was representative of the range of industries and local governments in Nanaimo.

The process of selection in Richmond was less guided by previous knowledge of the local labour market. I was familiar with very few business organizations at that location. However, as I desired a sample that closely resembled that from Nanaimo, I

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*Data obtained from Municipality of Richmond, and refers to June 1990.*
attempted to select similar types of organizations. For example, as the Nanaimo sample included a radiator shop and a local government, I selected the same organizations in Richmond. Not all organizations could be replicated. B.C. Hydro, for example, was one organization that I selected in Nanaimo. In Richmond, however, there is no B.C. Hydro office.

I did not have the benefit of previous knowledge of organizations in Richmond. Therefore, I could only speculate on business size, although the type and location of organizations frequently provided hints as to their approximate size.  

A further consideration when selecting the sample from both locations was the types of job vacancies likely to be found. I was interested in accessing a wide variety of job vacancies, as well as organizations that would employ not just one gender. As it was not always possible to select types of organizations that I felt would employ both men and women in equal numbers, I attempted to match male-dominated organizations (such as radiator repair shops or car dealerships) with female-dominated businesses (such as beauty salons or banks).

The following table shows the types of organizations chosen, according to their size. In her (1988) study, Curran categorized her organizations’ sizes according to the number of employees, although in a somewhat ambiguous way:

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For example, I was sufficiently familiar with No. 3 Road in Richmond to know that most organizations at the north end were small automotive or industrial repair shops. As well, I knew that most businesses, with the exception of department stores, were small when located in malls.
... a quarter of the vacancies ... were in small firms (more than 25 employees) and 60% were in small establishments (fewer than 25 employees) (Curran, 1988: 340).

Curran does not account for the remaining 15 per cent of organizations. For this research, I decided to modify Curran's criteria for size into the following: Small businesses employed 10 or fewer people; medium organizations employed between 11 and 24 people; and large businesses employed 25 or more people.

Table 1

Types and Sizes of Recruiters' Organizations:

Small

Intercom Installations
Photography Stores (2)
Air Conditioning Installations
Sports Equipment Stores (2)
Autobody Shops (2)
Bookstore
Pub
Bakery
Towing Company
Moving Company
Gas Stations (2)
Bridal Fashions Store
Glass Company
Radiator Shops (3)
Small Appliances Repair Shop
Florist
Scientific Instrument Shop
Retail Electronics Shop

Medium

Modelling and Acting School
Newspapers (2)
Carpet Store
Engineering Firms (2)
Diesel Truck Service Centre
Taxi Company
Industrial Laundry
Industrial Supply Shop
Beauty Salon
Real Estate Firm
In the sample of 74 organizations, 24 were small, 23 were medium and 27 were large, demonstrating a relatively even mix of all three sizes.

(iii) Individual Choice of Organization

Given that there were several businesses listed under the various organizational categories in the Yellow Pages, individual choices of organizations were made somewhat randomly in Richmond and, in cases where all listed organizations were unfamiliar to me, equally randomly in Nanaimo. Again, previous knowledge of the Nanaimo area allowed me to make some selections based on my acquaintance with people in those organizations.

 Occasionally, choice of organization was guided by its proximity to another selected organization. For pragmatic reasons, I chose several small businesses from two shopping malls in Richmond.
For example, if I knew someone who worked at a particular organization, I selected that business as my friendship would allow me easier access to the appropriate recruiter.

However, on no occasion was a business selected because I knew the recruiter -- friendships were used only as access to some organizations. One such example is of a personal friend who knew the name of the personnel officer in the organization where she was employed. By asking directly for that individual when telephoning the organization, I was able to circumvent a large portion of the bureaucratic structure. When attempting to contact personnel officers in large firms, I often had to explain to two or three persons the reason for my telephone call. By directly telephoning the appropriate individual, I reduced the possibility of access being denied.

(c) Representativeness of Sample

An important factor in any research is how far I can generalize the findings -- in this case, how representative of the wider Canadian labour market is my sample? Although this question cannot be answered with any precision, I can claim that, in the absence of indications to the contrary, there is no reason to suspect that the organizations and recruiters are in any major senses exceptional or unrepresentative.

The research design also allows for a check on consistency between the two sites. As such consistency holds, this enhances the generalizability of the results.
Method

The research method used for both the Nanaimo and Richmond research was the same, and began with the selection of organizations from the Yellow Pages of the telephone book. In the Nanaimo study, 90 businesses were selected and each was sent a letter of introduction in July 1990 (Appendix A). The envelope was addressed to the organization, for the attention of "Personnel". From the 90 letters sent, I was successful in interviewing 51 recruiters (56.6% of original sample). The 40 rejections occurred as follows:

13: refusals based on the recruiter being "too busy"
9: businesses not contacted as I ran out of time*
6: no reply to my telephone calls
5: businesses no longer existed
4: a mutually convenient time could not be found for the interview
3: organizations where all hiring was done from head offices outside Nanaimo

Since eight businesses were "ineligible" for the study (e.g., out of business or not recruiting), this left an effective response rate of 62.2% (51/82).

The same process was followed for the Richmond sample in February 1991: 50 organizations were selected and a similar letter sent, resulting in 23 interviews (46% of original sample). Rejections (27) in the Richmond sample resulted for the following reasons:

*I could only stay in Nanaimo for one month -- August 1990 -- due to childcare responsibilities and the resumption of school and university studies.
10: recruiters did not return my calls, which were placed at least three times
5: organizations where all hiring was done from head offices outside Richmond
5: refusals with no explanation
3: refusals based on the recruiter being "too busy"
2: recruiters were recently hired themselves and had not yet hired anyone
1: organization no longer existed
1: a one-person business (no employees)

Nine businesses were "ineligible" for the study (e.g., hiring conducted outside Richmond or organization no longer in existence), in Richmond the effective response rate was 56.1% (23/41).

In total, I interviewed 74 recruiters in Nanaimo and Richmond, which resulted in 84 job vacancies being examined, with a total of 151 people hired.10

Approximately three weeks after the letters of introduction were sent, I telephoned each organization, and asked to speak to the person in charge of hiring. If successful in reaching the appropriate person, I referred to the letter I had mailed previously, and then requested the opportunity to speak with them at their convenience.

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format. After explaining to the recruiter the nature of the research (that I was investigating the ways that recruiters arrived at final hiring decisions), I asked each recruiter to select a job

10 The number of job vacancies is higher than the number of recruiters as a few recruiters offered to give information on more than one recent hiring. The number of people hired from the 84 vacancies is high (151) as several job vacancies were for block hirings, ranging from 2 to 40 people.
vacancy that had been recently filled in their organization. Following this, certain data were obtained about each organization: number of employees, whether the organization was unionized and job title of the recruiter. Data were then obtained about the job vacancy itself: how it arose, hours of work, and wage.

After this initial data-gathering, the interview became much more informal, with generally open-ended questions. I asked recruiters to give a job description. The next question was "What type of person were you looking for?". Following this, I asked each recruiter to give an account of the process that they followed to fill the vacancy, beginning with the way the vacancy was advertised. Next, I asked for the number and sex of applicants. By tracking the recruitment process in this way, I was given numerous opportunities to learn recruiters' opinions on characteristics of the job as well as job applicants that invariably included gender-related attributes.

As well as investigating the way particular job vacancies were filled, I also asked recruiters their more general views on recruitment.

With the data obtained, I was able to construct statistical accounts of those characteristics deemed to be most salient to recruiters in their hiring decisions, as well as quantitative data on employers' search methods. I also use actual verbal accounts given by recruiters on their reasons for retaining or rejecting job applicants, as well as other salient information.
Interpretation of Data

Critical to all research is the element of data being socially constructed and interpreted. The strength of a loosely structured interview style based on open-ended and flexible questions is that it allowed me to alter my methods of interviewing in accordance with the personality of the recruiter. Due to the sensitivity of the phenomenon under investigation, it was critical that I remained alert to any signs of the established rapport breaking down.

The weakness of unstructured interviewing is the selective attention of the interviewer. The interviewer must resist the temptation to ignore certain utterances and only record those statements that appear particularly salient to the research. To avoid this, I wrote everything that recruiters said verbatim.\(^{11}\)

A further weakness of the informal interview is that the interviewer must be aware that the types of questions asked impose constraints on the kinds of responses. In some cases, a single question from me elicited lengthy and informative responses. In others, recruiters responded with either a "yes" or a "no", necessitating further questions designed to access more fruitful responses. I attempted to elicit as much information as possible by asking about many different issues, and confirmed my understanding of their responses by repeating their comments back to them. This was particularly necessary for

\(^{11}\)I was able to do this easily as, fortunately, I have developed a unique version of abbreviated words combined with residual knowledge of Pitman Shorthand.
those recruiters who had a tendency to lapse into business-specific jargon which I occasionally had difficulty in comprehending.\textsuperscript{12}

I shall now relate four broad categories into which all recruiters fell, in terms of their attitudes towards me and possible constraints on data gathering.

(i) Some recruiters seemed content in their belief that their hiring procedures were fair and normal. These recruiters were extremely co-operative and complacent, and frequently revealed much ignorance (or lack of awareness) about the kinds of situations which some more informed recruiters might interpret as discriminatory on the basis of gender.

(ii) A few recruiters were quite hostile, which led me to wonder why they had agreed to be interviewed at all. These were often the most difficult interviews, and had to begin with a strong effort on my part to establish credibility, sincerity and, eventually, rapport. However, a very few recruiters never did completely relax, and gave monosyllabic responses to most questions.

(iii) Some recruiters were aware of sex segregation in employment and were vocal in their concern about it. They often expressed helplessness in their efforts to avoid perpetuating it, and asked me for advice on what they could do to help eliminate it. In

\textsuperscript{12}I also found that this practice often had the effect of removing the cloak of bureaucratic jargon, loosening up the subjects' style of speaking, and eliciting even more informal comments that reflected recruiters' personal views, rather than company policies.
many cases, they gave me two versions of the recruitment process: how the organization perceives it, and how they, as recruiters, actually interpret it, demonstrating the conflict between ideal and actual methods of recruitment.

(iv) Many recruiters were almost too co-operative: they seemed to welcome the chance to have an interesting chat and fill up an hour of their day. It was often very difficult to keep these recruiters on the point.

**Gaining Access to Recruiters**

Gaining access to the organizations and the appropriate recruiters frequently required me to exercise much patience and persistence. Some recruiters told me that they had been anticipating my telephone call to set up an interview and were eager to co-operate. These recruiters were curious about the research, and told me they looked forward to speaking with me. It was very easy to set up a mutually convenient time for interviews with recruiters who displayed this attitude.

Many others, however, were reluctant to co-operate during the initial telephone conversations which I had with them. They were suspicious about the nature of the research and stated that they were too busy, or that they really had nothing to contribute to the research. However, I persisted, politely and firmly, and insisted that I was sure they would be able to provide valuable data. In many cases, the only way that I could acquire an interview with these recruiters was to promise that the interview would take no more than half an hour of their time. The
interviews with reluctant recruiters often began with me assuring them of the nature of the research and, as a way of making them feel more comfortable, I asked them why they were suspicious of me. Many researchers stated that they feared I was a salesperson, or a representative from a rival company who was attempting to access information on their organization.

One recruiter was initially co-operative on the telephone, although for an entirely different reason. He contacted me before I was able to telephone him and eagerly requested that we set up an interview. Upon my arrival at his organization, he demanded proof of my identity and my affiliation with the University of British Columbia. I showed him my student card and, as he was still not satisfied, I suggested he contact my supervisor at the university. I told him he was under no obligation to co-operate with me if he was not satisfied or comfortable with the situation. Finally, he confided that his organization was currently involved in a Human Rights case in which a former employee was claiming that she was fired because she was a woman. The recruiter suspected that I was a representative from the Human Rights Coalition, under the guise of a university student, and that I was trying to acquire information on the company and its hiring policies. After I assured him that I was not, he finally relaxed and agreed to be interviewed.

Although the case mentioned above was unusual, it does demonstrate the need for flexibility and understanding in
conducting research on what is, to many recruiters, a highly sensitive topic. In all instances, it was imperative that I adjust my speaking style and manner in accordance with the attitude of the recruiter, in order to achieve a level of mutual comfort that was conducive to willing participation on the part of the recruiter. During my academic work and also, on occasion, my work in the secretarial field\textsuperscript{13}, I acquired extensive experience in interviewing. As well, my secretarial work took place in a wide variety of organizations, and I developed the ability to adjust easily to a diversity of individuals, all of which was advantageous for the kind of interviewing skills necessary for this thesis.

\textbf{Rapport}

One of the most important elements of research that rests on personal interviews is the establishment of "co-membership" (Jenkins, 1988: 35) with the individual concerned. Bills also suggests that conducting research with recruiters entails many obstacles as "employers conceivably have reason to be guarded or evasive about personnel matters" (Bills, 1988: 93). As I was able to establish in advance some indication of the type of individual with whom I would be speaking, I was able to prepare accordingly in various ways.

Recruiters themselves ranged from bureaucratic Human Resources Managers, to department managers, to owners-managers of

\textsuperscript{13}My job in a fire department (secretary and radio/alarm-operator) included hosting a weekly television program for which I interviewed various firefighters and fire safety personnel.
small businesses who effectively controlled the entire organization. I attempted to dress in accordance with the expected attire of the recruiter. For example, when I interviewed owners or managers of automotive shops, I dressed casually in jeans, and used a knapsack: owners of small businesses often appeared initially intimidated by someone from the academic world expressing interest in them. On the other hand, my attire for interviews with top level executives was much more professional -- a suit or dress and a briefcase -- which appeared congruent with such recruiters' expectations. Occasionally, I had scheduled interviews with both types of organizations consecutively; I found that exchanging a jean jacket for a suit jacket served the same purpose.

I altered my attitude towards recruiters depending on their position in the organization, as well as the organizational type. In small businesses, I was able to be quite informal, and began the interview by generally chatting about getting lost on the freeway or commiserating about the weather. With upper level management recruiters, I maintained a more professional-bureaucratic approach, and proceeded in a more business-like manner. In all cases, the object was to establish rapport, an essential element of this type of research. A ploy that I often

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14 Another reason for such casual attire was that, in early interviews with recruiters at small automotive or welding organizations, I was mistaken for a salesperson when I wore a dress and carried a briefcase, and was treated with disdain. Upon realizing their error, such recruiters were embarrassed, and the interviews began with many apologies.
used to find common ground was to comment on photographs of
family members that many recruiters had on their desks,
compliment them on their office decor, or express interest in the
products sold in their organization.

**Interviewer Effects**

As I was the only person conducting the research for this
thesis, it is impossible to know if the results would have been
different had someone else had also been conducting interviews.
As well, the interviews were, for the most part, unstructured:
as mentioned above, I varied my style of interviewing according
to the individual.

Therefore, although there is no way to evaluate the effects
that I may have had on subjects, I can claim that, if there is
consistency in the data, and if the data concurs with the
findings of other researchers, no interviewer effects have
distorted the data.

**Data Collection Methods**

I used a notebook, rather than a tape recorder, to record
the data. During the first interview, I used both methods, but
found that I was too worried that the tape recorder might not be
functioning properly. Fortunately, I also used a notebook, and
found it to be much more effective. For the most part, I wrote
recruiters' comments verbatim, which provided colourful and
interesting data. By asking a question and then bending intently
towards my notebook, recruiters tended to speak freely.

The need to maintain a neutral countenance was also
essential in this type of research. Occasionally, some recruiters made blatantly offensive comments about their perceptions of women in the labour force. Although I was personally offended to hear my sex maligned, I was careful not to show my distaste. I hasten to add that my joy was often difficult to conceal whenever recruiters voiced strong opinions concerning gender-neutrality, or the need to place more women in male-gendered jobs.

The length of interviews varied widely from twenty minutes to nearly two hours, although most interviews lasted about forty-five minutes. The shorter interviews often resulted from job vacancies that were filled by the first person who walked into the organization or recruiters' reluctance to speak at any great length about their opinions on the recruitment process. Longer interviews occurred when the hiring process included many different stages or levels. In some cases, particularly in large organizations, the recruitment process was complex and involved a panel of recruiters. In others, a variety of search methods was used, resulting in a series of applicant pools, which prolonged the recruitment process.

Summary

The goal of the research was to explore, and attempt to understand, more about recruitment, particularly with regard to gender as a screen in decision-making -- whether and how recruiters used gender to discriminate, either directly or indirectly, against job applicants. To this end, interviews were
conducted in Nanaimo and Richmond, resulting in a total of 74 interviews with recruiters.

The focus of each interview was a job vacancy, chosen by the recruiter, that was recently filled in each organization. After certain data were obtained on the organization and job description, the process followed by each recruiter was tracked, from the time the vacancy arose, through to the vacancy being filled. Throughout the interview, questions were asked for information on why certain applicants were eliminated or retained at various stages in the recruitment process, eliciting the recruiters' reasons. The following chapter provides an account of the study.
Chapter 4: Data and Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to investigate whether or not recruiters practice discrimination on the basis of gender, either directly and indirectly, when matching candidates to job vacancies. Since by law recruiters are inhibited from directly discriminating against applicants on the basis of gender, it may be that discrimination takes place in more subtle, indirect forms. Consequently, I examined the following stages of the job matching process for evidence of gender being used as a screening criterion by recruiters, both directly and indirectly:

- Job descriptions and advertisements
- Ideal candidate construction
- Applicant search methods
- Narrowing the applicant pool
- The job interview and final candidate selection

Throughout this chapter, I provide tables of statistical data, as well as examples of statements made by recruiters that are illustrative of the findings.

I. Job Descriptions and Advertisements

Recruiters were first asked to select a recently-filled job vacancy and provide a job description -- a list of the duties that the incumbent would be required to perform. For most job applicants (other than those reached through word-of-mouth), the job description was the first information that they received about the vacancy, culled from job advertisements in newspapers, Canada Employment Centres or private employment agencies.

Employment equity legislation does not permit employers to word
advertisements in such a way that a particular gender (among other criteria) is targeted directly. However, although recruiters are well aware of these guidelines, advertisements may still be worded by recruiters or agencies in such a way as to attract people from the appropriate gender.

In 7 out of the 84 job vacancies (8.3%), recruiters used a written job description to answer my question. Recruiters for the other 77 job vacancies relied on their memories. All recruiters were able to give a detailed verbal account of the functional requirements for the jobs. I did not analyze job advertisements in this thesis as many of the jobs were not advertised and, for those that were, many recruiters could not recall the exact words used in the advertisement, nor could they provide written copy.

Job descriptions for only 5 of the 84 vacancies (5.9%) included references to appearance and the ability to work with other employees. This demonstrates that the use of personal characteristics as job requirements was rarely used by recruiters in job descriptions. One recruiter did, however, explicitly include gender in the functional requirements: "Just a number cruncher, which eliminates males. It's ideal for females ... gets their brains ticking again" (R.10).

Through company policy or acknowledgment of employment equity legislation, employers rarely included any explicit

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15Quotations from recruiters are referred to by a letter/number code. R = Richmond and N = Nanaimo, and the numbers refer to the number given to the interview.
references to gender in job descriptions. The ostensibly objective nature of most job descriptions reveals the strength behind the rational-legal theory of hiring -- that all decisions are based on the functional performance of the job and the abilities of individuals (Blau and Ferber, 1986; Jenkins, 1986).

As Jenkins (1986) and Windolf and Wood (1988) point out, the role of the professional (rational-legal) model of recruitment is only peripheral in the recruitment process, which is largely informal, despite often highly specialized personnel acquisition procedures. Indeed, despite the elaborate trappings of "Personnel Departments" and "Policy Manuals", even in large companies recruitment decisions were often described in terms of informal criteria being central. However, I located few overt barriers to one gender or the other in recruiters’ job descriptions.

Although recruiters rarely mentioned gender in their recounting of job descriptions, it was implicated in a more subtle form: The lists of functional requirements included activities that are typically regarded as the sole domain of one or the other gender, adding validity to Hughes’ claim that job descriptions are worded in a way that discourages certain groups from applying for them (Hughes, 1985: 233).

An example of this was found in the case of a recruiter who wished to hire an office assistant. He provided me with a job description that included a mixture of duties -- they ranged from typing to warehouse work. He knew exactly what type of person he
wanted to hire: "a woman with kids in school" (R.09). The Canada Employment Centre refused to specify this stipulation, but helped the recruiter word an advertisement that would attract just that kind of person: "... computer skills, typing, office routines, school hours 9 - 3 , $7.00/hour". By wording the advertisement this way, the recruiter hoped to attract women in their mid-thirties to early-forties who only wanted part-time work\footnote{Ironically, the recruiter finally hired a young, unmarried, childless woman who worked in a nearby office and had heard of the vacancy through word-of-mouth. None of the applicants that he received through the Canada Employment Centre had computer skills, as their experiences in the labour force, prior to the birth of their children, took place in offices that did not have computers.} -- the Canada Employment Centre advertisement providing an example of what Lowe refers to as "manipulated job requirements" (Lowe, 1988: 119).

The ways that job descriptions and advertisements were worded often attracted predominantly members of a particular gender, limiting the choice a recruiter could make even if he/she actively advocated gender-free selection criteria.

Curran (1988: 345) and Webb and Liff (1988: 542) also note that job descriptions contain requirements that are deemed by recruiters and job applicants to be appropriate for one gender only. My study shows that all clerical job descriptions included typing, filing, answering office telephones and dealing with the public -- all female-gendered activities (Calzavara, 1988: 296; Lowe, 1988: 119). Frequent allusions to what women and men could not do illustrate this: "Men don’t type" (N.35); "I needed a
part-time office girl" (R.09); and "Not much value in clerical work for men" (R.16). An example of a typical job description considered by recruiters to be female-gendered is:

- Part-time bookkeeping
- Need computer literacy
- Must be welcoming to customers and make them feel at home
- Must be able to get along with other employees
- Must be patient and flexible (N.15).

The only functional requirements in the above job description refer to bookkeeping and computer knowledge. All the other job description "duties" refer to female-gendered personal qualities.

Most male-gendered jobs contained functional requirements that also served to discourage females from applying, due to the nature of the duties that frequently required skills not traditionally learned by women, such as mechanical knowledge or sales in products usually used only by men. Rarely, however, were personal characteristics included in job descriptions. An example of a job description worded in a way that discourages female applicants was "Change tires. Be physically strong" (R.19). The vacancy was for a tire changer in a tire shop, and the recruiter advertised at the Canada Employment Centre. He received 20 applicants, all of whom were male, despite the advertisement being placed in a location accessible to both sexes.

Job descriptions, therefore, contained very little in the way of direct discrimination against one or the other gender; the job requirements, however, did contain covert, or indirect, discrimination in the form of gendered duties and, occasionally,
references to gendered personal characteristics, particularly in the case of female-gendered jobs.

II. Ideal Candidate Construction

After recruiters gave job descriptions, I asked them the question: "What type of person were you looking for?", designed to access recruiters' perceptions of the ideal candidate for the job and their qualifications. All recruiters were able to offer a list of specifications of the ideal candidate, consistent with the findings of Curran (1988) and Windolf and Wood (1988).

The variety of qualities given by recruiters in response to the open-ended question is shown in Table 2:

Table 2
Recruiters' responses to "What type of person were you looking for?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;Type of Person&quot;</th>
<th>Number of Job Vacancies</th>
<th>Percentage of Recruiters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Related Experience</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Qualities</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Relevant Experience</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compatibility with Other Employees</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Appearance</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Age</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to Deal with the Public</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Requirements</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17These figures represent the numbers of job vacancies for which recruiters used specific attributes in describing the ideal candidate.

18This figure represents the percentage of recruiters who mentioned each attribute. All recruiters mentioned more than one attribute.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telephone Manner</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum Age</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver’s Licence</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live near Worksite</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family or Domestic Responsibilities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job History</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English-speaking Ability</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodical Approach</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Known to Recruiter</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the table demonstrates, the three characteristics most salient to recruiters in their perception of the ideal candidate were general related experience, personal qualities and specific relevant experience. General related experience refers to recruiters’ preference for candidates with some experience in the wider field of the job. For example, a recruiter for a vacant sales position in a department store required a candidate with "some sales experience", although not necessarily in the specific department or product. Personal qualities included such traits as "good-natured", "confident", "upbeat", "aggressive" or "pleasant", as well as numerous other characteristics. Those recruiters who required specific relevant experience were looking for candidates with experience in the actual product or type of organization. An example of this is found in a sales position vacancy in a retail electronics store. The recruiter required the incumbent to have not just sales experience, but experience selling electronic products.

In his study on recruiters’ hiring decisions, Bills asked employers to give the three most important criteria required for job candidate considerations. Experience was found to be the
most important criterion in his study also, followed by job history and personality. To explain the difference between Bills' findings and mine concerning job history, I suggest that job history is closely connected with experience, and the data obtained by Bills and me might have been subject to different interpretations.

Although applicants' gender was rarely mentioned (12 percent) by recruiters as a significant element in their construction of an ideal candidate, the three criteria mentioned most frequently by recruiters (particularly personal qualities) do contain potential gender-related traits.

(1) General Related Experience: General related experience refers to previous experience in a similar occupation, such as prior office or sales experience. If a job applicant has little or no experience in a field, he or she is immediately removed from the candidate pool. In the case of a female applying for a male-gendered job, or vice versa, a candidate could be immediately rejected on the basis of lack of experience, despite a high level of paper qualifications. The use of prior experience as a screening mechanism, therefore, may act, indirectly, to reproduce the existing sex-segregated labour force, although it may be a legitimate means of eliminating a candidate.

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Bills defines job history as "disparaging comments about a previous employer or a history of job-hopping" (Bills, 1988: 82).
(2) **Specific Relevant Experience:** The same potential for an applicant's gender to be used against him or her exists even more strongly for those recruiters who require candidates to have specific relevant experience. In the example given above, a recruiter wanted someone who had experience in electronics sales, as he perceived it to be a highly specialized area. The elimination of candidates on the basis of lack of specific experience may be legitimate. However, the possibility of elimination exists more strongly for a candidate of the non-traditional gender if he/she has little or no previous specific related experience, such hiring criteria thus perpetuating the cycle of sex-segregated occupations. Even those candidates who have expertise in electronics, and experience in sales, may be eliminated by the need for experience of working in a retail electronics store.

(3) **Gender-Specific Personal Qualities:** It is within the category of personal qualities, however, that the greatest potential exists for candidates to be excluded on the basis of gender. It is difficult to separate personality preferences from gender preferences. As Bills states:

> ... untangling the relationship between applicant gender, occupational sex-typing and employer preferences for personality would be difficult (Bills, 1988: 84).

Curran also notes the ambiguity implicit in personal qualities:

> ... personal qualities ... are not amenable to precise measurement, and indeed are entirely dependent on the subjective judgment of the interviewer (Curran, 342: 1988).
Most recruiters are unaware of language that implies the construction of gender and they rarely reflect on their choices of words and the implications of a socially-constructed world. Many words and phrases give information on not just personal qualities, but also on gender. For example, many recruiters, when describing the type of person preferred for a clerical position, used words like "bubbly" or "chirpy", both clearly female-gendered adjectives. Although personal qualities were used by recruiters less frequently when describing ideal candidates for male-gendered jobs (which will be discussed later), certain words and phrases did emerge: "aggressive" or "able to get along with the other guys" -- both male-gendered characteristics.

Required personal qualities included a wide variety of personality traits and mannerisms. Whether these traits were perceived by recruiters as positive or negative frequently depended on the gender of the applicant. Bills notes in his study on recruitment that recruiters look for different characteristics in males and females. In his study, he found that two-thirds of the responses for women reflected traits oriented to getting along with other people; two-thirds of responses for men reflected getting ahead (Bills, 1988: 84).

In my study, recruiters perceived aggression, for example, as a positive attribute for males (N.28; R.19), but negative for females (N.33; N.39): one recruiter referred to an aggressive female as having "a bra made of steel" (N.13). Recruiters
considered a mild or shy personality as preferable for females, but inadequate for male applicants. Positive personal qualities that were consistent for both genders were enthusiasm (N.37; R.05), ability to smile readily (N.38), and motivation (R.05; N.19).

A critical finding of the research was that the recruitment processes used to fill female-gendered jobs involved a much greater use of personal qualities by recruiters in their consideration of applicants. Many of the male-gendered jobs did not include contact with the general public, especially contact that also involved selling products or representing the organization. However, most of the female-gendered jobs did include frequent contact with the public, as well as working with large numbers of other employees, which is no doubt why personal qualities were considered more often. Words like "bubbly" (N.22), "giggly" (N.31), "chatty" (N.31), "pleasant personality" (N.38) and "outgoing" (R.01) were used by recruiters in their discussions of applicants for female-gendered jobs. Male applicants for male-gendered jobs were scrutinized more by recruiters on their paper qualifications and evidence that they were capable of performing the functional requirements, rather than their personal qualities. This finding is consistent with Bills who also noted in his study that "women ... are evaluated more on the basis on their personalities than on their years of schooling" (Bills, 1988: 84).
III. Employers’ Search Methods

After recruiters were asked what type of person they were looking for, the process followed by each recruiter to fill the job vacancy was documented, including the way that the job vacancy was made known to job seekers. Methods of recruitment varied widely. Some recruiters, unconstrained by company policies or union demands, simply hired the first person to walk in the door, especially in the case of low- or no-skill jobs. The owner of a taxi company said he would hire anyone "not carrying a white cane" (N.50). Others advertised widely and followed an elaborate, highly complex and time-consuming selection process, complete with charts that rated applicants numerically on various criteria, aptitude tests, panel interviews and lengthy reference checks. The following table shows the variety of search methods used by recruiters, as well as the percentage of recruiters who used each method. Most recruiters used multiple search methods, either concurrently or consecutively.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employers’ Search Methods</th>
<th>Number of Vacancies</th>
<th>Percentage of Recruiters 20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of Mouth</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications on File</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Posting</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEIC (Canada Manpower)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20This refers to the percentage of recruiters who used each method to access job applicants.
As the table demonstrates, many recruiters used newspaper advertising and word of mouth to search for applicants. Richmond recruiters who used newspapers advertised in the Vancouver Sun and Vancouver Province; Nanaimo recruiters used the local Nanaimo paper, the Daily Free Press. Some Nanaimo recruiters also advertised in the Vancouver Sun, Vancouver Province and, occasionally, the Globe and Mail, when the job vacancies were for extremely specialized positions (such as golf course manager) for which recruiters felt no one suitable would be found locally.

Many recruiters considered word-of-mouth to be the best method of screening and acquiring new employees, which adds validity to similar claims by Jenkins (1986), Reskin and Hartmann (1986), and Windolf and Wood (1988). Several recruiters claimed that this informal search method produced a smaller candidate pool, which reduced their workload tremendously. Others preferred to hire someone who was known to themselves or their associates, socially or professionally, as they felt such candidates would possess personal characteristics similar to themselves or to incumbents, which is in keeping with Gunderson’s (1985: 8) claim that the word of mouth search method reaches people of the same social group as incumbents.

However, when this method alone is used to acquire a candidate pool, it serves to limit knowledge of the job vacancy to few people, as word-of-mouth applicants are perceived as an
extension of the internal labour market (Jenkins, 1986: 120). Such people are not only known to the recruiter or incumbents, but are usually of the same gender as incumbents, as particular skills and occupations are usually dominated by one gender (Calzavara, 1988: 296). Consequently, barriers are erected to those of the non-traditional gender who may be well qualified to apply for the vacancy, but who never learn of its existence (Gunderson, 1985: 8).

IV. Narrowing the Applicant Pool

Applicant pools ranged in size from two or three people to over 100. After asking how an applicant pool was formed, I questioned recruiters as to how and why certain applicants were eliminated. Recruiters gave reasons for rejecting people, which revealed a pattern of recruitment that was consistent in nearly all employers' searches: recruitment was mostly a process of elimination of candidates, rather than selection of the most qualified individuals. In fact, the only evidence of the most qualified applicants being deliberately selected was in the initial screening of candidates to form a short-listed candidate pool, as outlined in Table 2.

After the initial screening, the remaining applicants were eliminated by recruiters on the basis of much more personal criteria, during job interviews. The successful applicant was usually the one who survived this elimination process. In a few cases, recruiters stated that a particular applicant simply stood out, but recruiters could never give an immediate reason for this
prominence. The table which follows shows the criteria by which candidates were judged in terms of their qualifications for the vacant jobs. These data were obtained by asking recruiters the reasons for eliminating short-listed applicants and why the successful candidate was selected.

Recruiters often had difficulty providing the information on why certain candidates were retained or rejected. After giving me the number of candidates in the short-listed applicant pool, recruiters frequently stated "We hired so-and-so because they seemed the best person." I then asked them to give reasons why that particular candidate was chosen, and why the others were eliminated. Although recruiters were able to give information on the successful candidate’s qualities, they often had to search their memories for information on the remaining candidates, when asked to provide more information, other than simply "well, they just weren’t right for the job." The reasons given by recruiters for retention or elimination follow.

Table 4

Reasons why Job Candidates were Retained or Excluded:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Number of Vacancies</th>
<th>Percentage of Recruiters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Qualities</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Related Experience</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Appearance</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Relevant Experience</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compatibility with Employees</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to Deal with the Public</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family &amp; Domestic Resp.</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job History</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As the table demonstrates, 93 per cent of recruiters mentioned personal qualities as the basis for eliminating or retaining job applicants, which confirms a comment made by a recruiter with many years' experience that "90 per cent of the time, people fail because of attitude, not qualifications" (N.07). As well, this statistic adds validity to Curran's finding that 78 per cent of the recruiters in her study cited personal qualities as a skill sought in a candidate (Curran, 1988: 341), and Jenkins' claim that recruiters perceive personal attributes as the primary criterion (Jenkins, 1986: 52). Bills also states that 86 per cent of the recruiters in his study mentioned personality as salient to their final hiring decisions (Bills, 1988: 83).

**Gender:** While only 12% of recruiters mentioned gender in their construction of the ideal candidate (Table 2), 69% considered gender in the elimination of candidates from the larger applicant pool (Table 4), revealed in comments such as: "I needed a part-time office girl" (R.09) or "we wanted a girl for the front desk" (N.08) -- clear evidence of the job being gendered despite job descriptions and ideal candidate
constructions that did not include gender-specific references. The distinction also reveals recruiters' unconscious beliefs about gender that appear more readily in discussions about actual job applicants, rather than in their constructions of the ideal candidate.

**Further Evidence of Gender Bias:** Those recruiters who did not mention gender explicitly in recounting their recruitment processes were asked if they would consider a member of the non-traditional gender for the job, especially in cases where only one gender was represented in the applicant pool. A few emphatically stated that an applicant's gender was irrelevant in their consideration of candidates. Others, however, revealed their gender biases in a variety of forms. Recruiters frequently mentioned physical limitations as rationales for not hiring women for some jobs: "Females have to have the right build" (R.07) stated one recruiter. Another recruiter said that the job vacancy in his organization was "no good for females ... too physically demanding" (N.17).

Some recruiters offered their opinions on why only one gender applies for a particular occupation. "Women don’t want to fix the truck and load furniture" (N.27), declared one recruiter. Another recruiter said that "men don’t type" (N.35) in response to my query about whether men ever applied for clerical jobs, both examples of statistical discrimination (England and Farkas, 1986: 160).

Other stereotypes about women and men emerged as responses
to whether the non-traditional gender would be considered, revealing the strength of beliefs about gender which are rarely questioned and are perceived as natural (Bergmann, 1986: 88; England and Farkas, 1986: 153; Reskin and Hartmann, 1986: 38). One recruiter said that women were "chattering, gossiping ... bitchy ... backstabbing" (R.17). Another considered men more appropriate because:

Males can handle the job ... girls aren't responsible, call in sick easier ... a man is more dependable ... better at handling arguments ... men are more interested in the merchandise (R.23).

Bergmann claims that a belief concerning gender is that men should not be in positions subordinate or equal to women in the workplace (Bergmann, 1986: 98), evidence of which is found in this quotation from a recruiter concerning male superiority:

Male tellers aren't happy being little ... don't like to take supervision from a lady ... gotta give them male work ... gotta keep them happy (R.21).

Another recruiter had mixed feelings about male and female workers that resounded with beliefs about gender:

Women don't stay ... follow their husbands. Males have difficulty separating hormones from work ... sex dominates their thinking, especially the lesser intelligent males. Women need to learn the drive that men have. Not much value in clerical work for men ... doesn't pay enough. ... I always ask females if they have adequate domestic arrangements because the office will suffer. Women's biological needs take precedence over their work needs (R.16).

A similar diatribe against women was offered by a recruiter when asked if women ever applied at his organization, and whether
he would consider a woman for the male-gendered jobs at his company:

Too many women in the workplace 'cause it's good for their psyche ... yes, women find working a good therapy ... women are taking jobs away from younger people ... women should be growing flowers at home ... it's getting worse. There's a woman here [secretary] but that's OK because we're small, but in the bigger places, they don't belong. Women are needed to look after the kids ... there's lots of heavy work here ... not women's work. Any woman who wants to work in the mechanical trade is doing it for the bucks, not because they want to ... women's work is in the office, light work (N.18).

Comments such as these demonstrate that, although recruiters did not specify gender as critical to their hiring decisions, in their constructions of the ideal candidate and reasons for applicants to be retained or eliminated, evidence of their beliefs about gender emerged when I questioned them about hiring the non-traditional gender.

Separating Gender from Other Attributes: Recruiters' references to gender when considering job applicants were revealed in a variety of ways, frequently embedded within personal qualities and domestic responsibilities. In many cases, I documented a single comment made by a recruiter in two categories. For example, a recruiter stated he required "someone who's re-entering the work force after the kids are in school" (R.09). This was interpreted as referring to both gender and family/domestic circumstances in his consideration of job applicants. No recruiter mentioned the need for adequate child care, or made any reference to children being of school-age, when
discussing male applicants for male-gendered jobs. A similar example is a comment made by a recruiter that he wanted an "aggressive guy" (R.15) for his vacant salesperson position. Both sex and personal qualities were noted in this case.

**Observed Gendered Divisions of Labour:** Further evidence of gender being a significant screening mechanism, despite certain recruiters' declarations to the contrary, was found in my own observations. The recruiter of a large hotel admitted that a "nice hunk of boy or girl in a bar attracts people ... sex appeal is important" (N.30). If both sexes were hired in equal numbers and placed in all jobs, perhaps this recruiter could not be accused of discriminating on the basis of gender. However, I observed that one bar, upstairs in the hotel, had only young, attractive, female waitresses. This bar caters mainly to hotel patrons: middle-aged businessmen. Downstairs in the hotel, and accessible from the sidewalk, is a neighbourhood pub-style bar which employs only young, attractive males, designed to appeal to both male and female customers.

A similar contradiction between a recruiter's claims and my observations was located in another organization. When asked what type of person was sought for the job vacancy, the recruiter said that "gender and race were irrelevant" (R.22). However, I observed a gendered division of labour at the establishment: all the cashiers are young white females, and all the callers\(^2\) are

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\(^2\)The organization was a wholesale grocery store. Callers work alongside the cashiers, calling out item numbers to the cashiers, and packing customers' purchases into boxes.
young white males. Although the recruiter did not admit to his
gender preferences, he did state that he liked to hire college
students and that "a thirty-five year old lady can't lift bags of
sugar day in day out", which is evidence of both gender and age
discrimination.

**Contradictory Declarations of Gender Preference:**
Recruiters frequently contradicted themselves regarding gender
neutrality, revealing their beliefs about gender. One recruiter
stated "I never think on gender terms" (R.02), when asked about
the gender composition of the initial response to an
advertisement. Later in the interview, during a discussion about
the selection of the successful candidate, she stated "I hired
Val ... I would prefer to hire a woman". Another recruiter said
that he would consider hiring a woman if one ever applied at his
organization. However, during an informal chat with him after
the interview, he stated that "women can't work in a labour-
intensive job, but there's lots of things they can do that men
can't" (R.19). A recruiter for a tire shop responded to my
question about possible female applicants by ensuring me he would
consider a woman, pausing, and then stating "but, this is no
place for a female, is it?" (N.09). Another recruiter said that
a woman had applied for a welding job recently, but she was not
even interviewed as he could tell "she wouldn't fit in with all
the guys" (N.29).

V. **The Job Interview and Final Candidate Selection**

Many recruiters offered, voluntarily, their opinions on
interviewing job candidates: most considered it a highly unpleasant and stressful experience, fraught with "the fear of the unknown" (R.04). One recruiter stated that filling a job vacancy is "like buying paint - it's often not the same colour at home as it was in the store" (N.13). Another recruiter disliked hiring as she "hate[s] to hurt people's feelings when you can't offer them a job" (N.47).

Recruiters practiced a variety of methods of gaining insight into applicants' personalities and attitudes during job interviews, in their quest for indications of applicants' personal characteristics, a finding consistent with Jenkins who noted that:

Managers rely on certain common-sensical stereotypical models of acceptability, or on highly idiosyncratic conceptions of the same attribute (Jenkins, 1986: 235).

Physical Cues: Eye contact was mentioned by most recruiters as critical. One recruiter stated that no eye contact means that applicants "live in another world, want no contact with this world" (N.10). Another stated that "if they don't look at you, gaze into space, they're not interested in the job" (R.20). Although gender was not implicated directly in recruiters' comments on eye contact, this method of acquiring insight into applicants' personalities was particularly common among recruiters interviewing women for female-gendered jobs which, again, is consistent with Bills' claim that women are evaluated more on their personalities than their education (Bills, 1988: 84).
Recruiters were clearly divided in their opinions on handshakes. Some considered handshakes irrelevant; one recruiter said that "some of our best people have a limp handshake" (N.10). Others saw the type of handshake as highly significant: "a good, strong handshake means the person has confidence" (R.23). The linkage between handshakes and gender is located in the sex of applicants for whom recruiters used this signal: Nearly all male recruiters who had interviewed male applicants for male-gendered jobs mentioned handshakes as salient to their recruitment decisions, albeit in a minor way.

A few recruiters liked to watch the way an applicant walks to gain clues about his/her job suitability. One recruiter stated:

I like to walk with people. If they're four miles behind me, or exude no energy, I'm usually right. It's bad for a sales person ... they need to move quickly (N.36).

Another recruiter said that an older personnel officer once told her to "watch the way they walk ... if slow, they're a plodder ... if brisk, they move more quickly in the job" (N.05). This was yet another sex-specific signal to recruiters; only female recruiters mentioned this method of acquiring information about female candidates.

Comparison with Predecessor: Another method used by recruiters is to compare applicants to the last person who held the job. If the previous incumbent was a good employee, "you have a tendency to look for their clone" (N.21). Conversely, if the previous employee had some bad qualities, evidence of these
qualities is sought in job applicants. For example, one recruiter was particularly sensitive to applicants' personalities as the previous incumbent, although strong on experience, "did lousy in p.r." (R.07). It was usually personal characteristics of the previous incumbents that were the focus of such a comparison -- not employee performance or skills. If the previous employee had a character trait deemed by the recruiter to be incompatible with incumbents, or distasteful to the recruiter, evidence of such an attribute would be sought in job applicants. Although an applicant's sex may not, in itself, have been used as a screening mechanism to this end, gendered personal characteristics assigned to men and women by the recruiter may inadvertently have led to an erroneous decision based on preconceptions about the gendered nature of those characteristics.

**Comparison with Other Employees:** Many recruiters also keep in mind the personalities of employees with whom the successful applicant must work, and seek a compatible person. One recruiter stated that:

... you want a general mix in the office ... someone chatty and upbeat, and someone quiet and shy ... it's like a hockey club ... you look at what you've got and what you need (R.21).

If a job applicant is of the non-traditional gender, recruiters may easily eliminate the applicant on the basis of lack of qualities that are conducive to workplace harmony. A recruiter for a vacant purchasing clerk position stated that she had difficulty deciding on the successful applicant, because the job
involved both clerical duties as well as the ability to lift heavy boxes, the latter requiring an employee in good physical condition. Although most of the applicants were female, one male received the highest score on the recruiter’s rating system. The deciding factor to the recruiter was the applicant’s personality as he had to work in close proximity to 14 women. She hired the man because he had the "right personality ... not overly aggressive"; she stated she would have eliminated him, despite his good qualifications and high ratings, had he not possessed the suitable personal qualities conducive to harmony in the office (N.10).

**Gut Feeling:** Most successful candidate selections were based on one criterion: recruiters’ "gut feelings" about applicants, usually tied in with applicants’ abilities to "fit in" to the organization, which confirms Jenkins’ (1986) findings that recruiters ultimately rely on their instincts in forming a "Gestalt" impression of applicants. Windolf and Wood also claimed that, in their study, "many personnel managers trusted their feelings" (Windolf and Wood, 1988: 200). As one recruiter stated, "the longer you deal with people, the more you realize it’s a judgment call and you have to rely on your experience and judgment" (N.08). Another recruiter declared that hiring is:

... a struggle. You search for the ideal candidate and settle for the best fit you can find ... it has to be done ... you go with your instinct and choose the candidate you’re happy with (R.20).

Recruiters were divided in their responses to first impressions of candidates -- "gut feelings" about applicants’
personalities and ability to "fit in" to the organization -- that developed within the first few minutes of interviewing applicants. Many perceive it as a conflict between emotion and common sense. Some recruiters rely very strongly on their first impressions of candidates, whether positive or negative: "I make my decision within the first fifteen minutes of the interview" (N.40). Others try to ignore their emotional responses to candidates and attempt to reserve judgment until the interview is completed. One recruiter retained her first impressions and "spent the rest of the interview trying to look for evidence against that impression" (N.10).

Many recruiters were cynical about the recruitment process in general. As one recruiter stated, "you might as well just flip a coin" (N.24). Recruiters viewed resumes and application forms frequently with suspicion: "A resume can be manipulated to apply to whatever job is being applied for" (N.03). Such recruiters acknowledged that they had had several experiences with hiring someone in the past who turned out to be the wrong person for the job. Consequently, they view all candidates with suspicion and treat them as "guilty until proven innocent" (N.10) because "what you see on paper does not always arrive in person" (N.08).

Implicit in this reliance on "gut feeling" is the most hidden and, therefore, powerful opportunity for recruiters to use gender as a screening mechanism. Unless recruiters are consciously and actively committed to gender-free selection
processes, any job candidate who is not of the socially-expected gender will be subjected to most recruiters' "gut feeling" that this candidate may not be the right one for the job. Although a few recruiters readily admitted their gender preferences to me, the majority camouflaged the elimination of certain job applicants by referring to this "gut feeling", or reference to particular personal characteristics normally ascribed to the non-traditional gender that were incompatible with the candidate they were seeking, revealing the "managerial discretion" (Bills, 1988: 87) inherent in most recruitment processes.

Gendered Jobs

The format of this chapter was an elaboration on the process followed by recruiters to fill a recent job vacancy. Part of the entire process was the gendered nature of the job vacancies. As the jobs themselves are clearly gendered even before any applicants are ever considered, due to a variety of systemic, economic and socially-constructed forces mentioned in Chapter 2 of this thesis, the discussion on job gendering that now follows is deliberately placed as a form of epilogue to the recruitment processes discussed.

As mentioned above, only 5.9% of the job descriptions given by recruiters contained references to gender-specific personal characteristics. But most recruiters' screening processes, at the levels of both initial candidate pool formation and subsequent elimination of applicants, did include the consideration of personal qualities and gender, revealing the
limitations imposed on both male and female applicants which result in sex segregation in labour (Reskin and Hartmann, 1986: 53). It is within these processes, therefore, that the gender-specificity of occupations is revealed.

The gendering of jobs in this study appeared to be based on one of two factors (and occasionally both): perceived emotional and physical characteristics of one gender being appropriate to the job; and/or the products involved in the job (such as sales) that were felt to be the exclusive domain of one gender. This finding is consistent with that of numerous sociologists that employers believe that most jobs require characteristics felt to be possessed by one sex (Curran, 1988: 349; Fuchs, 1988: 39; Lowe, 1988: 119; Reskin and Hartmann, 1986: 3).

I categorized the jobs studied in this research according to Levinson's definition that:

... occupations can be described as 'sex-typed' when a very large majority of those in them are of one sex and when there is an associated normative expectation that this is as it should be (Levinson, 1975: 534).

Based on my own observations and questioning of recruiters, I found that of the 151 job vacancies examined, 62 per cent of the jobs were male-gendered: 96 per cent of these jobs were filled by male applicants. Female-gendered jobs accounted for 28 per cent of all job vacancies; these vacancies were filled 100 per cent by females. A very few gender-neutral (androgynous)

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22In Curran's study, women were also appointed to all of the jobs which had been gendered female, and three of the male jobs were filled by women (Curran, 1988:348).
jobs were examined: 10 per cent of all vacancies. Gender-neutral jobs were filled evenly by males and females. Table 5 shows the job vacancies and their gender status.

Table 5

Gender Status of Jobs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male-Gendered</th>
<th>Female-Gendered</th>
<th>Gender-Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>Secretaries</td>
<td>Rehabilitation Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automotive Mechanic</td>
<td>Bank Teller</td>
<td>Reporter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warehouse Worker</td>
<td>Office Clerks</td>
<td>Photography Sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic Sales</td>
<td>Accounting Clerk</td>
<td>Liquor Store Clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports Store Sales</td>
<td>Modelling School Sales</td>
<td>Tax Prep. Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas Station Attendant</td>
<td></td>
<td>Photo. Lab Person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Management</td>
<td></td>
<td>Line Cook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific Instrument Sales</td>
<td>Cashiers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welder</td>
<td>Hairdresser</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truck Driver</td>
<td>Bookkeepers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf Club Manager</td>
<td>Florist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxi Driver</td>
<td>Linen Sales</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Station Sales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Garage Cleanup Person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tow Truck Driver</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus Driver</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Electronic Technician</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table demonstrates recruiters' perceptions of the gendered status of most of the job vacancies analyzed which, in conjunction with recruiters' beliefs about applicants' gender, helps to guide them in their decisions about ideal and actual job applicants, thereby contributing to a sex-segregated labour force.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined a variety of steps in which gender is a significant filter in the recruitment process, used by recruiters in a largely unconscious way. In job descriptions and
advertisements, recruiters rarely specified a particular gender, but were able to access the appropriate gender through a list of gendered functional job requirements. Only in a very few cases was this manipulation deliberate.

Although applicants' gender was specified by only 12% of recruiters in their ideal candidate construction, 59% of recruiters mentioned personal qualities in which gender is frequently implied. Curran also noted that, in her study,

... gender and a variety of personal attributes ... in which gender is embedded, are regarded by many employers as specific and functional attributes and as requirements for the effective performance of particular jobs (Curran, 1988: 348).

Employers' applicant search methods also revealed opportunities for gender to be used as a screening criterion. The word-of-mouth method, used by 34% of the recruiters, serves to limit knowledge of the job vacancy to very few people, usually those of the same gender as incumbents.

It was within the stage of narrowing the applicant pool that gender had significant implications for recruiters' choice of retained applicants. 93% of recruiters cited personal characteristics as salient to their decision to eliminate candidates, and 69% explicitly pointed to an applicant's gender as relevant to their decision-making.

In the stage of the job interview and final candidate selection, the significance of applicants' gender was clearly demonstrated. Through the discussions of physical cues, comparison with other employees and recruiters' gut feelings,
stereotypes about men and women emerged strongly, as recruiters attempted to gain insight into applicants' ability to fit in to the organizations. Recruiters' "gut feelings" were particularly rife with references to applicants' gender. Even those recruiters who were highly-trained human resources specialists commented that the impression a candidate made upon first entering their office was never ignored.

No protection is in place to inhibit recruiters from using gender as a screening mechanism. In fact, I found that recruiters are essentially doing nothing to alter the process in such a way as to make applicants' gender irrelevant, due to the covert, and unconscious, way that such discrimination takes place by recruiters.

In only a few instances did I find evidence of direct, or brutal discrimination against job applicants based on their gender. However, throughout the recruitment process, I located a variety of ways in which recruiters practice indirect, or covert, discrimination, most of which was contained in the language that recruiters use to describe candidates and jobs.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

Purpose of the Research:

The purpose of this research is to investigate if and, if so, how recruiters contribute to a sex-segregated labour force by practicing direct or indirect discrimination against job applicants based on applicants' gender. To accomplish this, I interviewed 74 recruiters in Nanaimo and Richmond in 1990 and 1991, resulting in interview material covering a total of 84 job vacancies which were filled by 151 people. I asked recruiters to recount the process that they used to fill each job vacancy, beginning with the ways that they searched for job applicants, and ending with their final candidate selection.

Findings:

I found that, throughout the recruitment process, recruiters rarely practiced direct, or deliberate, forms of discrimination against applicants based on their sex. In many cases, recruiters had no choice but to hire an applicant of the sex suitable for the position, as the applicant pool was composed of only one sex. However, this is not to say that recruiters had no control over the formation of that applicant pool. Employers' search methods and the ways that job descriptions were worded usually led to only one sex applying for the vacant position, with the exception of gender-neutral job vacancies which attracted both male and female applicants in equal numbers. I also found that female applicants for female-gendered jobs were evaluated much more than males on the basis of personal characteristics.
In most cases, recruiters were unaware of the limitations imposed on the available labour force by the use of informal search methods and job descriptions that included references, not only to gendered work activities but also, on occasion, to specific personal characteristics required for the job that had gendered implications.

Ideal candidate construction and the elimination of short-listed applicants were stages in which I found the most frequent use of covert discrimination on the basis of gender. Applicants were eliminated or retained on the basis of personal qualities by 93% of recruiters, and it is within the category of personal qualities that gender is implicated most strongly. Few personal characteristics are devoid of gendered connotations; yet, most recruiters were unaware of the implications of attaching the need for personal characteristics to the requirements for a job.

Although empirical research studies of recruitment are relatively rare in the sociological literature, my results are consistent with the findings of Bills (1988), Curran (1988), Windolf and Wood (1988), and Jenkins (1986). Sex segregation in the labour force is perpetuated, in part, by recruiters who are not sensitive to a variety of gender-related distinctions that they routinely employ to screen job applicants and arrive at final hiring decisions.

**Suggestions for Improvements:**

The study could have been improved with a larger sample, in order to increase the generalizability of the findings. As well,
I could have enhanced the research by a more thorough examination of job advertisements, which would have necessitated giving recruiters enough time to look back into their files and locate the actual wording used.

With a larger sample, the effect of unions could also have been examined. Other than entry-level jobs, most unions hire from within the ranks and, often, strictly on the basis of seniority. As so few of the job vacancies in this research were union positions, I did not include a discussion of union hiring practices. In fact, most of the union job vacancies were for entry-level jobs and so they were advertised externally.

Further Research:

Similar research could be conducted with a comparative dimension: rural areas compared with urban areas. It may be the case that employers in urban areas have access to a larger pool of available labour, which may in turn aid in perpetuating covert discrimination on the basis of gender. Recruiters who must choose one successful applicant out of a large number of applicants employ a variety of ways to eliminate candidates and arrive at a final hiring decisions. In rural areas, however, the applicant pools may not be as large, as the population would be smaller and more geographically diverse, resulting in smaller applicant pools.

Another direction that could be taken to enhance research into recruitment practices is a comparative study of areas based on their economy. Both Nanaimo and Richmond are currently
enjoying an economic boom, with both jobs and applicants in plentiful supply. However, some of the smaller resource towns in British Columbia, particularly those reliant upon single industries, are still in a recession, with few jobs and a great many unemployed people. Recruitment practices in such locations may rely even less on formal procedures, as word of a vacant job would, no doubt, spread rapidly in the affected communities, and recruiters would have a large applicant pool from which to select. I also suggest that there may be more evidence of direct discrimination in such communities as recruiters in single-industry towns may not be as enlightened in terms of gender inequality as some of their urban counterparts.

Research into recruiters' gender and implications for gender discrimination might also help illuminate the recruitment process. In the Nanaimo and Richmond research for this thesis, I found that male recruiters were far more likely to practice covert discrimination against female applicants for male-gendered jobs. Female recruiters were more aware of employment equity legislation as well as the presence of indirect discrimination. Frequently having been the recipients of it themselves, they were often quite vocal about concerns about employment equity.

Another distinction that I noticed in the Nanaimo and Richmond research was that most female recruiters, although fewer in number than male recruiters, held top personnel positions -- Human Resources or Personnel Managers -- and had taken many courses and attended seminars on hiring. Most male recruiters
were owners-managers of small- or medium-sized organizations, who had not taken any courses or read any books about hiring. Although most courses and seminars are based on the ideal model of recruitment, many of the female recruiters told me that they knew that the recruitment process was much more discretionary than the "experts" claimed.

On the other hand, some female recruiters who held management positions told me that they have little sympathy for female job-seekers as they feel that women themselves are the engineers of their own inferior position. These recruiters felt that as they had succeeded in the business world by their own determination, so could any other woman. When I mentioned the limitations imposed upon many women by childcare responsibilities, these female recruiters responded by stating that they had managed and, therefore, so could any woman. The attitude that such recruiters showed was much more harsh and openly discriminatory against women than most male recruiters, whose discrimination was revealed in more covert, and unconscious, forms.

Similar to the gender differences between recruiters, I would also suggest an investigation into a correlation between age of recruiter and their beliefs about gender differences. In the Nanaimo and Richmond research, I observed that the older the

23I read numerous books written for recruiters about hiring techniques, and also attended two seminars: one which taught recruiters how to hire the "best person", and one entitled "How to survive a job interview".
recruiter (especially male recruiters), the more entrenched and easily-detectable the discrimination. This was most evident in some interviews in Nanaimo in which the job vacancy being examined was filled by an applicant who was interviewed by a panel in larger organizations. Panels usually consisted of a Personnel Manager (whom I interviewed), one or two department managers and, occasionally, a union representative. With the exception of the Personnel Manager, all panel members were usually older and male. Recruiters invariably told me that the process of deciding which applicants to retain and which to eliminate was often very difficult as the older panel members relied strongly on their stereotypes of males and females, and resisted strongly attempts on the part of the Personnel Manager to make them see beyond applicants' personal attributes.

Research that focuses on entry-level jobs might also reveal ways that a sex-segregated labour force is perpetuated. Most unionized organizations have very few entry-level positions, or ports of entry. From the few entry-level jobs examined in this thesis, I found that recruiters preferred young applicants, with little or no experience. Applicant pools for entry-level positions were usually very large, and recruiters tended to focus strongly on applicants' personal characteristics and their potential for "fitting in" to the organization. This thesis demonstrates that recruiters' perceptions of applicants' gender, combined with the gendered nature of most jobs, helps to perpetuate a sex-segregated labour force. It may be the case
that entry-level job vacancies are even more vulnerable to recruiters' stereotypes of male and female jobs, as the criteria of previous experience is rarely considered by recruiters.

Conclusion:

This thesis has shown that recruiters practice indirect discrimination on the basis of gender at several stages of the recruitment processes. In a few cases, I also found that recruiters displayed more brutal forms of discrimination, particularly against women. The findings of this research demonstrate why current federal employment equity legislation, in its present form, may be powerless in its attempt to inhibit the perpetuation of a gender-segregated labour force, as recruiters are able to practice discrimination, unconsciously and indirectly, based on their beliefs about the gender of both applicants and jobs.

Canadian employment equity legislation, which has a quota focus that requires employers to establish hiring targets for selected groups (e.g., women and visible minorities), is a more plausible strategy for achieving gender parity in the labour force. However, such legislation is criticised because it favours ascriptive criteria (e.g., sex) and not principles of merit (e.g., education) in decision-making (Fuchs, 1988: 122). As well, such affirmative action programs may help only a few members of the selected groups. Until recruiters' (and others') beliefs about men and women in employment alter, the quota system will be, for the part, tokenism (Fuchs, 1988: 122).
This thesis has also shown that even direct discrimination can easily be practiced by recruiters in the deliberate manipulation of job requirements and the wording of job advertisements, which can easily target one or the other gender.

Before discrimination, either direct or indirect, can be reduced, recruiters need to be informed about the power of language and the beliefs that they hold, often unconsciously, about gender. As well, more research into the various stages of the recruitment process as well as recruiters themselves needs to be conducted in order to arrive at some practical suggestions for improvement which will, eventually, lead to recruitment decisions that are based less on an evaluation of applicants' gender-related personal attributes, and more on the functional requirements of the job.
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