

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**SELECTION BIAS OPERATING AGAINST SKILLED
CANDIDATES FROM
COUNTRIES-OF-ORIGIN OTHER THAN
NEW ZEALAND**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in Psychology

at Massey University, Albany, New Zealand

Kim Michele Coates

2003

ABSTRACT

New Zealand is opening up its borders to attract skilled migrants to fill occupational shortages highlighted as important for New Zealand's economic and social development. Despite highly skilled immigrants gaining residency, many are unable to secure employment in their area of expertise. This logjam suggests that there are specific human factors such as selection biases operating against candidates from certain countries in the New Zealand employment context.) The issue of selection bias was addressed by examining the perceived similarity between country-of-origin to country-of-destination, and the perceived social dominance of country-of-origin vis-à-vis country-of-destination. Eighty Subject Matter Experts with approximately 10 years experience participating in/watching selection panels completed a scenario format that elicited their estimates of Human Resource and Line Managers' selection preferences for jobs in twelve key occupations. Candidates were presented as coming from countries-of-origin that varied from Australia to Southern and South East Asian, Southern African, and Pacific Island nations, but were otherwise equally skilled, qualified for the given job, and costly to employ. Despite this equality of match to the job, there were significant biases for and against different countries-of-origin. Specifically, candidates from countries-of-origin perceived to be more similar to New Zealand, and candidates from countries-of-origin perceived to be socially dominant, were preferred over candidates from countries-of-origin less similar and subordinate. The discussion focuses on improving the methodology, and opening up the discussion field for future research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the midst of a new addition to our family, and a shift from one major city to another, this project has only been able to be completed with the help and support of some key people. I would like to express my sincere gratitude and warm thanks to my supervisor, Dr Stuart Carr. His encouragement, interest, and continual good humour has enabled me to finally complete this thesis. My gratitude also goes out to the members of the Human Resource Institute of New Zealand (HRINZ), and consultants from Horner & Partners Executive Search & Selection, Manpower Services (NZ) Ltd., Opal Consulting Group, and TMP/Hudson Worldwide, who participated in this project. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends, and in particular my husband, Phil, who has continually supported and encouraged me throughout my studies.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES	vi
CHAPTER 1.....	1
Introduction.....	1
<i>Immigration Policy.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Psychological Theories</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Similarity Attraction Theory.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Similarity Attraction and Inter-Group Relationships.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Inverse-Resonance.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Social Identity Theory</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Realistic Group Conflict.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Social Dominance Theory</i>	<i>19</i>
CHAPTER 2.....	25
Method.....	25
<i>Participants</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Materials</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Procedure</i>	<i>31</i>
CHAPTER 3.....	34
Results.....	34
<i>Criteria for Inclusion in the Returned Research</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Mean Ranking.....</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Similarity Attraction Theory (H1)</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Social Dominance Theory (H2).....</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>Qualitative Responses to the Research Questionnaire.....</i>	<i>44</i>

CHAPTER 4.....	55
Discussion	55
<i>Summary of Main Findings</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>Links to Theory.....</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>Limitations of the Study.....</i>	<i>62</i>
<i>Future Directions</i>	<i>65</i>
<i>Conclusion.....</i>	<i>67</i>
APPENDICES	68
Appendix I: Questionnaire	68
Appendix II: Summary of Qualitative Responses	76
REFERENCES.....	87

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

TABLES

Table 1: *Mean Ranking for Each Profession by Country-of-Origin*..... 38

Table 2: *Binomial Tests of Occupations by Country-of-Origin:*
Non-Significant Comparisons..... 40

Table 3: *Sign Tests for Comparing Pairs of Countries-of-Origin*..... 42

Table 4: *The Principle Reasons for the Perceived Rank Order by*
Country-of-Origin estimated by the SMEs..... 45

Table 5: *The Principle Reasons for the Perceived Similarity Mean by*
Country-of-Origin estimated by the SMEs..... 49

Table 6: *The Principle Reasons for the Perceived Social Dominance Mean by*
Country-of-Origin estimated by the SMEs..... 52

FIGURES

Figure 1: *Similarity Attraction Slope*..... 41

Figure 2: *Social Dominance Slope*..... 43