

Attractive recruitment signals for migrants

A qualitative study on the attractiveness of public employer signals, targeted recruitment signals, and specific signals for migrants

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Abstract

Migrants (foreign-born individuals) are underrepresented in the workforce of Switzerland's public administrations. Consistent with the theory of representative bureaucracy, this underrepresentation could lead to unfavorable policy outcomes and unequal access to institutions for migrants. If a public administration is not representative of the society it serves, this could lead to lower legitimacy and credibility in society. This underrepresentation has many causes, and one way to counteract this underrepresentation is to tailor the recruitment signals to target migrants to attract them to the public organization. In the early recruitment phase, attractive signals for migrants can be integrated into the recruitment material. However, these attractive signals must first be empirically evaluated. In an exploratory qualitative study using a semi-structured interview guide, five skilled job-seeking migrants residing in Switzerland, originally from different parts of the world, were interviewed. The results show that the two most important and common concerns of these five respondents were language skills and experiences of discrimination. In addition, job security and salary transparency with public employers were important issues that could be used as signals in public recruitment. These findings lay the groundwork for future research in the area of attractive signals in the early recruitment of qualified migrants in the context of public administrations' hiring practices in Switzerland.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Initial position and research question

“[...] für das Thema Diversität zu sensibilisieren und somit gleichberechtigte Teilhabemöglichkeiten für alle Menschen unserer vielfältigen Stadtgesellschaft zu schaffen”¹
(Grüne Hamburg, 2021).

Ms. Haaland will quite likely assume a central role in realizing Mr. Biden’s promise to make racial equity a theme in his administration. Ms. Haaland, a member of the Laguna Pueblo who identifies herself as a 35th-generation New Mexican, will assume control of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Indian Education, where she can address the needs of a population that has suffered from abuse and dislocation at the hands of the United States government for generations
(New York Times, 2021).

“Solothurner Regierung will Menschen mit Behinderungen besser integrieren”²
(Solothurner Zeitung, 2021).

“Der rechte Blogger „Neverforgetniki“ behauptet, Annalena Baerbock wolle „Migranten per Quote als Führungskräfte“ bevorzugen. Korrekt ist jedoch: Die Grünen fordern ein Teilhabegesetz, das den Anteil Beschäftigter mit Migrationshintergrund in der öffentlichen Verwaltung mit verbindlichen Zielvorgaben fördern soll”³
(Jonas, 2021).

What do all these recent news outlets have in common? At their core, they talk about equal access to institutions and equal opportunity to participate in public life for everyone. This discussion is also closely linked to the diversity (management) and inclusion debate, which has

¹ Free translation: Raise awareness of the issue of diversity and thus create equal opportunities for participation for all people in our diverse urban society (Grüne Hamburg, 2021).

² Free translation: Solothurn government wants to better integrate people with disabilities (Solothurner Zeitung, 2021).

³ Free translation: The right-wing blogger “Neverforgetniki” claims that Annalena Baerbock wants to prefer “migrants as executives by quota.” What is correct, however, is that the Greens are calling for a participation law that would promote the proportion of employees with a migration background in public administration with binding targets (Jonas, 2021).

been frequent both in Western society and science in the last few years (Wallner, 2020). In the end, it is about integrating more diverse people into, for example, higher rank positions of public administrations so that public values and public service also satisfy the needs of a diverse society. This idea of representation of all population groups in the public sector and the benefits arising from such a representation is reflected in representative bureaucracy theory (Bradbury & Kellough, 2011; Kingsley, 1944; Mosher, 1968; Schröter, 2019). If the personnel of a bureaucracy is representative of the society it serves, it has higher legitimacy and public credibility (Krislov, 1974), is supposedly more responsive to diverse public needs, and grants equal opportunities to all (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010).

Despite the benefits for society and the bureaucracy itself, many Western bureaucracies are not yet representative of the population they serve (Jankowski et al., 2020). One of the groups that are not yet represented in equal shares in Swiss public administrations is the group of migrants. Migrants, defined as foreign-born individuals in this thesis (Anderson, 2019), are only one-third represented in Swiss public administrations (Bundesamt für Statistik, 2020b, 2021).⁴ While in practice there are different approaches to changing the representation within the public personnel (e.g. Baumann et al., 2019), one way to influence a better representation in public administration is by targeting specific subgroups in the recruitment process as potential future employees. Targeting a specific subgroup means tailoring recruitment material in a way that the targeted group is more attracted to the job and organization (Newman & Lyon, 2009). While there are different stages to recruitment (Ritz & Thom, 2019), several authors have argued that the early stages of recruitment are crucial (Asseburg et al., 2018; Keppeler & Papenfuß, 2020). Practically, jobseekers will not be exposed to subsequent hiring activities if organizations are unable to foster the development of positive organizational attitudes during the initial stage (Barber & Roehling, 1993; Rynes et al., 1991). The early stage of recruitment, the first contact between the recruiter and the jobseeker, can theoretically be examined with an underlying signaling mechanism described by the well-known signaling theory of Spence (1973). Signals are pieces of information that are intentionally sent by the recruiter and received and processed by the job-seeking individual, and this process then results in feedback to the recruiter (Connelly et al., 2011), which can take the form of organization-job-attraction among others (Chapman et al., 2005). Changing recruitment material to emphasize issues of importance to

⁴ One third of the whole migrant population residing in Switzerland (Bundesamt für Statistik, 2020b, 2021).

the targeted group appears to be necessary due to differences in responses of individuals to recruitment material depending on sociodemographic characteristics (Cable & Judge, 1996; Judge & Cable, 1997; Turban & Keon, 1993; Williamson et al., 2008). What signals of Swiss public employers are especially attractive and relevant to job-seeking migrants with relevant qualifications for the work in a public administration has not, to the author's knowledge, been studied, which leads to the guiding research question of this thesis:

What early recruitment signals of public employers are perceived and evaluated as attractive by qualified job-seeking migrants?

1.2 Objective and contribution

This thesis aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion of diversity and inclusion in society and science. This is achieved by identifying a research gap in the field of public administration and human resources (HR) research, where it is not yet known how to attract the target group of migrants as future employees and signaling theory has almost not been used in the context of public recruitment (Korac et al., 2019; Marland et al., 2017; Sivertzen et al., 2013).

The objective is first to generate new knowledge about attractive signals for migrants, which can then lead, for example, to quantitative empirical research, which provides public HR practitioners hands-on insights on how to attract migrants in their recruitment process. Thus, the thesis contributes to the theoretical signaling effect in the recruitment of public employers. Second, the objective is to bring the target group into the discussion because “an employer should be aware that the message it sends is not always the message received. As noted by political consultant Frank Luntz (Colbert Report, 16 August 2011), ‘It’s not what you say; it’s what they hear’” (Goldstein et al., 2017, p. 18). Only when legitimate information about attractive recruitment signals to migrants is collected from migrants can recruiters formulate inclusive recruitment procedures that address the underrepresented group of migrants in Swiss public administrations.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The thesis commences with a theoretical discussion of the representation of migrants in public administrations (2.1), follows on with the embedment of the discussion in the public administration dimension of representative bureaucracy theory (2.1.1), then continues with the delineation of the underrepresentation through statistical insights (2.1.2), and concludes with an emphasis on possible reasons for the underrepresentation of migrants in Swiss public administrations (2.1.4). The signaling situation in recruitment is addressed through an elaboration on the signaling theory (2.2), which is then followed by three thematic chapters that discuss, first, public employer signals (2.2.1), second, targeted recruitment signals (2.2.2), and third, recruitment signals for migrants (2.2.3). The theoretical foundation and the current state of research lead the way to an empirical approach of explorative and qualitative nature with semi-structured interviews (3) due to the identified research gap in the previous chapter, which in summary is that it is not yet clear what signals of public employers are attractive to job-seeking migrants. The empirical instrument and the procedure of data processing are elaborated (3.1–3.4), and the sample is described (3.5). The following chapter (4) is a presentation of the results in accordance with the theoretical considerations of Chapter 2 and newly identified issues of importance to migrants, which might serve as recruitment signals in the future. The thesis is concluded with the discussion (5), which includes a critical discussion of findings (5.1), a delineation of limitations of this thesis (5.2), and major contributions of the thesis and an outlook towards future research projects (5.3).

1.4 Delimitation

The thesis focuses on the early recruitment stage, meaning the first contact between an employer and job-seeking migrants, which mostly happens through job advertisements or employer websites. The focus lies on the labor context that migrants residing in Switzerland face. Recruitment signals, which are pieces of information, that could potentially be relevant and attractive to migrants form the basis of the research interest, with the theoretical basis of signaling theory (Spence, 1973). Within this signaling theory, public employer signals, targeted recruitment signals, and specific signals for migrants can be depicted.

2 Theoretical foundation and current state of research

This theoretical chapter includes two major theories: representational bureaucracy theory (section 2.1.1) and signaling theory (section 2.2). First, the theory of representative bureaucracy lies the groundwork for understanding why migrants should be represented in public administrations, and second, signaling theory addresses a theoretical mechanism for how representation could be established, namely through the emission of attractive early recruitment signals, which reduce information asymmetry of receivers, and appeal to migrants. These attractive signals are in parts also considered to be in connection with the labor market reality that migrants face in Switzerland (section 2.1.3). Therefore, in the first chapter, after delving into representative bureaucracy theory, the author takes a closer look at barriers to the labor market for migrants. Afterward, with the understanding of these barriers, the second chapter elaborates on the theoretical signaling mechanism in recruitment and what potential signals could be attractive to migrants.

2.1 Representation of migrants in public administrations

In this chapter, the underrepresentation of migrants in public administrations is illuminated from different angles. Firstly, theoretical ideas of representative bureaucracy theory are considered, and the thesis is embedded within one dimension of this theory. The theory also provides insights into the benefits resulting from a representative bureaucracy. Secondly, the composition of the Swiss public workforce is examined in terms of the diversity characteristic of being a foreigner, which leads to the conclusion that foreigners are underrepresented in Swiss public administrations. Thirdly, possible causes for this underrepresentation are elaborated. These causes serve for a better understanding of the labor market reality that migrants face in Switzerland and feed the further discussion on potential attractive signals.

2.1.1 Representative Bureaucracy: Theoretical concept and embedment

Under the heading of representative bureaucracy theory, a body of research addresses issues related to the composition of the public workforce. Such research examines the social and demographic characteristics of the public workforce, how its composition relates to the society

it serves, and the benefits of a representative workforce for both the bureaucracy itself and society (Bradbury & Kellough, 2011; Meier & Morton, 2015; Schröter, 2019).

The term *representative bureaucracy* was first mentioned by Donald Kingsley (1944) in critical discussions about class-based dominance in British politics and administration and in the context of discourses about the composition of the civil service (Schröter, 2019). Representation in this context does not signify a bureaucracy that is representative of society, but of the ruling class for the bureaucracy to be an effective administration (Kingsley, 1944). This is also emphasized in the political literature, where the notion of representation lies in the ruling class being represented in civil service, which aids in establishing control and guaranteeing harmony and stability for the state (Kingsley, 1944). This approach to the concept of representative bureaucracy is called “representative bureaucracy as power” by Groeneveld and Van de Walle (2010, p. 241) and represents one of three distinct, but not mutually exclusive, dimensions of the theory of representative bureaucracy. The second dimension is “representative bureaucracy as equal opportunity” (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010, p. 244), found in public administration literature, and the third dimension is “representative bureaucracy as diversity management” (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010, p. 247), which is found in the latest research strand and also applied in public administration research (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010).

Public administration research and the concept of “representative bureaucracy as equal opportunity” (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010, p. 244) focus on representation as a measure of the compatibility of bureaucracy and democracy and accentuate the importance of equal opportunities for all individuals. The definition of representation has shifted away from representation of the ruling class towards representation of society at large (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010). The idea is that only when a bureaucracy is representative of the population does it have legitimacy and public credibility (Krislov, 1974). This approach suggests that a public administration will take greater account of the public interest if the personnel mirrors the public it serves in terms of diversity characteristics such as gender and race.⁵ It furthermore sees access to public sector jobs as a basic democratic right and helps in the social promotion

⁵ Race is “the idea that people can be divided into different groups based on physical characteristics that they are perceived to share such as skin colour, eye shape, etc., or the dividing of people in this way” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021b). The term “race” has a long history and thus many meanings, and the term is strongly associated with the United States (Britannica, 2021).

of disadvantaged groups (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010). A specialty of the representative bureaucracy theory from the perspective of public administration research is the expansion of the theoretical framework developed by Frederick Mosher, a scholar of public administration. In the late 1960s, Mosher (1968) formulated the differentiation between passive and active representation and that is when representative bureaucracy picked up momentum in the academic discourse in the United States (Schröter, 2019); it became omnipresent in the American public administration discourse in the 1970s (Krislov, 1974).

The third dimension of representative bureaucracy is found in the most recent discussions in the field. The discussions connect representative bureaucracy with the terms “diversity” and “diversity management.” In the context of equal opportunities and for democratic reasons, a bureaucracy should reflect the diverse groups found in the population and should manage that diversity in bureaucracies (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010). Formerly, the term diversity, which describes “a characteristic of social grouping that reflects the degree to which objective or subjective differences exist between group members” (van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007, p. 516), was rarely used by proponents of representative bureaucracy theory (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010). However, diversity became a key concept in the 1990s when authors such as Coleman Selden and Selden (2001) and Pitts (2005) connected the two streams. Diversity management deviates from earlier drivers for a representative bureaucracy (providing equal opportunities and representing disadvantaged groups) and focuses on organizational performance, thus highlighting the effects diversity has on the efficiency and effectiveness of public organizations when managed internally (Meier et al., 1999; Pitts, 2005). This advance in the representative bureaucracy literature which focuses on performance can be understood against the background of New Public Management reforms in public sector organizations. These reforms adopted management techniques, such as diversity management, which originated from the private sector to make public institutions more entrepreneurial and efficient (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010). Diversity is understood in the context of New Public Management as a resource to be developed and valued in the public workforce (Ely & Thomas, 2001).

The three dimensions of representative bureaucracy theory identified by Groeneveld and Van de Walle (2010) share two characteristics: Stating that a bureaucracy should be representative, signals that bureaucrats are not neutral in their professional activity, for example when

implementing policies. These individuals represent a particular identity and social group (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010). Also, when a position confers substantial discretion, it might matter who fills a position (Coleman et al., 1998). Value congruence is the second common attribute of all three dimensions. This construct of value congruence means that bureaucrats could hold values like the social group they represent because public administrations deliver services and allocate values, which should, ultimately, benefit the population (Meier, 1993). The concepts of “not being neutral” and “value congruence” stand against the values of an ideal-type bureaucrat, which, according to Weber (1972), are impartiality and merit orientation. Merit orientation signifies that a job should be carried out according to the individual’s performance ability and not based on personal characteristics. Impartiality means that professional activities should be free from any personal beliefs, values, and prejudice (Weber, 1972).

The research topic of this thesis is related to the second dimension of representative bureaucracy literature in public administration research. Thus, it adopts the idea that bureaucracy should represent the population to promote equal opportunities and help in the social promotion of disadvantaged groups. The concept of diversity, as distinct from diversity management, is also relevant to this thesis: The concept is highly topical and provides inputs about what diversity is, what different groups exist in the population, and, hence, what groups should be represented in bureaucracy. The aim of this thesis is to contribute to the research gap identified by Bishu and Kennedy (2020): In a meta-review of 96 peer-reviewed journal articles about representative bureaucracy, they noted that three ascriptive diversity categories, race, ethnicity,⁶ and gender have dominated studies in the context of representative bureaucracy theory. Other diversity characteristics, such as country of origin, age, disability, religion, and gender identity (LGBTQI*), as well as some found on a deeper level, such as preferences and personality traits, have largely been overlooked. Furthermore, most representative bureaucracy research has focused on the geographical context of the United States (Bishu & Kennedy, 2020). Focusing on migrants, thus on country of origin, with the theoretical framework of representative bureaucracy in the Swiss context addresses this identified research gap.

⁶ Ethnicity or an ethnic group is defined as “a large group of people who have the same national, racial, or cultural origins, or the state of belonging to such a group” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021a).

Following on from the discussion of representative bureaucracy in the public administration literature, a description of the distinct concepts of passive and active representation (Mosher, 1968) offers insights about the differing benefits arising from a representative bureaucracy. Passive representation refers to a state in which the public workforce mirrors the diversity traits of the society it serves (Mosher, 1968). When comparing the proportion of a population group with one or more diversity characteristic(s) to the proportion of the group that has the same diversity characteristic(s) within the organization, passive representation can be used as a measure of diversity because it serves as a description of how representative the bureaucracy is (Bowling et al., 2006; Moldovan, 2016). Active representation, on the other hand, reflects a concept whereby individuals who work in a public organization see themselves as advocates of the interests and desires of the social group they represent. By actively representing group interests, they may influence bureaucratic decision-making processes in favor of the group to which they belong. As employees of a public organization, such individuals act in support of their group members (Mosher, 1968). It is noteworthy that active representation is also tied to the degree of discretion granted to individuals in a job (Meier & Bohte, 2001).

Even if there is no active representation, public organizations and society can profit from a passively representative bureaucracy. It has been documented that passive representation of social minorities can enhance administrative performance in their favor. Moreover, it can improve societies' perception of the legitimacy of administrative outputs due to the symbolic representation of society within the bureaucracy, as well as promote civil coproduction (Andrews et al., 2014; Bradbury & Kellough, 2011; Coleman Selden & Selden, 2001; Pitts, 2005). Finally, the state, as an employer, is in the position of a role model for others. Making the workforce diverse and representative, even if only on a passive level, signals openness for and to all people and voices (Baumann et al., 2019).

2.1.2 Underrepresentation of migrants in Swiss public administrations

Despite the positive effects and just nature of a passively representative public workforce, many Western bureaucracies are still not passively representative of the society they serve (Jankowski et al., 2020). One underrepresented group is migrants (OECD/European Union, 2015), who are

defined for the purposes of this thesis as foreign-born individuals (Anderson, 2019).⁷ On average, in the OECD and the European Union, 25%⁸ of long-settled⁹ foreign-born individuals are working as public service employees¹⁰ against 30%¹¹ of native-born individuals (OECD/European Union, 2015).

Switzerland, with around 25% of long-settled foreign-born public employees and 32% of native-born public employees, lies very close to the European average (OECD/European Union, 2015). Eighteen percent¹² of recent immigrants¹³ in Switzerland are public employees (OECD/European Union, 2015). The shares of Swiss and foreign employees in the entire public administration, including legal entities, was 91.8% Swiss employees and 8.2% foreign employees in 2020 (Bundesamt für Statistik, 2021).

These percentages alone do not say anything about the representation of migrants in the public workforce. To understand the passive representation or under-/overrepresentation of migrants in the public administration, the proportions of the group within the public workforce need to be contrasted with the proportions of the group in the population. The population of Switzerland consisted of 74.5% Swiss individuals and 25.5% foreigners at the end of 2020 (Bundesamt für Statistik, 2020b). Contrasting the 25.5% of foreigners living permanently in Switzerland against the 8.2% of migrants working in public administrations and legal entities indicates an underrepresentation of this group in Swiss public bureaucracies.

When looking at changes in absolute numbers of foreigners working in the public administration and legal entities over time and contrasting them with foreign-born individuals living in Switzerland, an uneven development can be noticed: From 2003 to 2020, absolute numbers of foreign-born public employees ranged between 15,000 and 24,000, with the highest number being 24,000 in 2008 (Bundesamt für Statistik, 2021). In 2020, 19,000 foreign-born individuals were working as public employees. In 2003, there were approximately 1,400,000

⁷ It must be noted that the term “migrant” is an umbrella term and no one single definition has been agreed (International Organization on Migration (IOM), 2021). Using the characteristic of foreign-born for the definition of migrants is useful for this thesis, because data are readily available.

⁸ 25% as a percentage of 100% long-settled foreign-born individuals

⁹ At least 10 years of residence in a country (OECD/European Union, 2015).

¹⁰ Includes public administration, social services, healthcare, and education (OECD/European Union, 2015).

¹¹ 30% as a percentage of 100% native-born individuals

¹² 18% as a percentage of 100% recent immigrants

¹³ Less than 10 years of residence

foreign-born individuals residing in Switzerland, and over time this number rose by almost two thirds to reach 2,209,000 in 2019 (Bundesamt für Statistik, 2020a).

Statistical data on how foreign-born individuals working in public administrations are spread across different federal levels in Switzerland do not appear to be readily available. This reality is further supported by the fact that, for example, the municipality of Bern has only recently conducted the first (unpublished) study of diversity in their public workforce, with one measure being foreign-born (Stadt Bern & Mindstep AG, 2020). Extant research from abroad, from England and the USA, suggests that ethnic minorities and immigrants are substantially underrepresented across national and federal levels (Andrews et al., 2014; Lewis et al., 2014).

2.1.3 Reasons for underrepresentation

Representative bureaucracy scholars investigate processes within public organizations, generally focusing on the representation of diverse groups within the workforce. To date, however, such scholars have not extensively focused on drivers for an under- or overrepresentation of certain groups in public administrations. Understanding the causes of the underrepresentation of sociodemographic groups in public administrations is, from a practical perspective, an important precondition for the formulation of policies and recruitment practices which focus on changing the composition of the public workforce towards greater representation (Baekgaard & George, 2018). Delineating the causes of underrepresentation clearly reveals the scope for action by public employers within the recruitment process. An increasing number of scholars is now investigating the causes of the underrepresentation of certain groups in bureaucracies (Baekgaard & George, 2018; Hangartner et al., 2021; Jankowski et al., 2020; Mexi et al., 2021; Zschirnt & Fibbi, 2019). Investigating the legal framework of the labor market integration of foreigners in Switzerland, the political context, the newest scholarly insights from the authors named above, specific challenges faced only by foreigners, individual-level resources, and barriers to labor market integration and employment in the public sector indicate the reasons for the underrepresentation of migrants.

2.1.3.1 *Legal barriers and discrimination*

Raising the numbers of migrants working in Swiss public administrations to establish a representative bureaucracy also overlaps with the topic of integration of migrants into the Swiss labor market. Whether, and under what conditions, a foreign individual is allowed to work in Switzerland depends on the residence permit granted by the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) (Mexi et al., 2021). Furthermore, it is important to understand the context of migrants' labor market integration in Switzerland, as certain aspects of the political, social, and/or legal system may favor or hinder such integration.

Legislative changes in recent years and the implementation of Art. 121a Cst., adopted by popular vote on February 9th 2014, which regulates mass immigration, show that migration and integration are topical and prominent subjects in Switzerland's political arena and society (Mexi et al., 2021). Often, the Swiss media foster anti-immigration sentiments (Boulila, 2019), and "migration has become a matter of *heightened political dispute*" (Mexi et al., 2021, p. 228) even though Switzerland has historically profited from migration. As Mexi et al. (2021) observe, "Migration historically plays an important role in the Swiss economy; foreign population recruitment has contributed to both past and recent economic growth in the country and today Switzerland is recognised as a country of immigration" (p. 213).

One major and controversial change in Swiss migration discussions was the implementation of Art. 121a of the Swiss Constitution after this initiative against mass immigration, launched by the right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP), was accepted. The article introduced annual limits on immigration and quotas for residence permits for individuals coming to Switzerland for gainful employment. Furthermore, it established as principles for immigration that integration matters must always consider Switzerland's economic interest and that Swiss citizens are prioritized on the labor market (Art. 121a para. 3 Cst.).

In contrast to Art. 121a, the Swiss Constitution stipulates fundamental rights on the labor market for anyone admitted to such market, without any restrictions, as well as those individuals who are entitled to a residence permit. These fundamental labor rights are *free choice of occupation* and *free access to an economic activity*, as stated in Art. 27 para. 2 Cst. (Swiss Centre of Expertise in Human Rights, 2015b, 2015b, 2015a).

The criteria governing who is allowed to work without any restrictions in Switzerland and who is permitted a residence permit are stated in the Asylum Act (AsylA, of 26 June 1998) and the FNA (Federal Act of 16 December 2005 on Foreign Nationals (FNA)). The authority responsible for granting asylum at the end of an exhaustive examination procedure is the SEM. Based on such examination, the SEM can render four types of decision: to grant asylum with *permit B*; to grant temporary admission as a refugee with *permit F with refugee status*; to grant temporary admission with *permit F*; and to reject the request for asylum and stipulate *no legal status* (Mexi et al., 2021).

Permit B is granted to members of EU/EFTA states or to third-country individuals with a permit to cross the border. Permit F is granted to non-EU/EFTA nationals for a duration of 12 months with the possibility of extension. The term “temporary admission” can be misunderstood. Fifty percent of foreigners with a permit F/temporary admission stay in the country more than seven years (Mexi et al., 2021).

Third-country individuals fall under the FNA. Individuals of the 28 EU member states and EFTA states fall under the Swiss-EU Bilateral Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons (AFMP, of 21 June 1999) and therefore enjoy a different legal basis for entering the labor market. If a third-country individual wishes to settle in Switzerland, he/she must fulfill very specific criteria (State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), 2018). For example, individuals coming for gainful employment must have been previously hired and have a certain level of specialization and qualification (Mexi et al., 2021).

When foreigners’ residence permits are extended, the degree of integration is examined. This assessment is a novelty in the legal framework that regulates the labor and integration of migrants (Mexi et al., 2021). The assessment of the level of integration looks at four criteria, of which language skills and participation in economic life or educational training (Art. 58a of the Foreign National Integration Act, FNIA) are those relevant to understanding more about labor integration. Furthermore, “information concerning the reception of social assistance or unemployment allowance may be taken into account in assessing the level of integration and the payment of supplementary benefits may constitute a criterion for revoking the residence permit of a person without gainful employment or become an obstacle to family reunification” (Mexi et al., 2021, p. 220). If the level of integration is not sufficient, a long-term residence

permit can be replaced with another, more temporary, permit. This fact highlights the need to have a sufficient level of language skills and be able to participate in economic life, because these are two of the four criteria that define whether a foreigner can keep his/her long-term residence permit. There is a strong connection between residence permits and work integration, because renewals of (long-term) residence permits are linked to ever stricter integration requirements (Kurt, 2017).

In the above paragraph, integration is described from the point of view of the individual duty of foreigners. However, integration is also seen as a political priority that needs to be addressed by authorities at different federal levels (Mexi et al., 2021). The FNIA adds to the existing elements of the FNA (which has been replaced by the FNIA), such as creating favorable conditions for the foreign population, “the protection against discrimination toward foreign population and the avoidance of underuse of the foreign population potential” (Mexi et al., 2021, p. 222), among others. The FNIA is a policy instrument that also regulates the encouragement of foreigners’ integration (Art. 1 FNIA).

The implementation of new measures to protect immigrants against discrimination and avoid underusing immigrants’ potential is supposed to take place in the ordinary, already existing structures, also called the established framework, at different federal levels. While traditional structures are designed to meet the needs of the Swiss population, frequently they cannot address the needs of migrants (Mexi et al., 2021). To address this problem, the cantons have created policy instruments to promote the integration of foreigners in addition to the ordinary structures. However, the cantons have some flexibility and room for maneuver when it comes to creating and implementing policy instruments within the legal mandate for integration. These differences lead to unequal treatment of migrants across cantons. Some cantons’ practice is restrictive and strongly linked to the foreigner’s individual will and responsibility to integrate, and other cantons are rather inclusive in their practice, which results in extensive support and facilitated access to the labor market. The direction of cantonal integration practice depends on political orientations, the cantonal culture of public administrations, and economic and demographic conditions (Probst et al., 2019 cited after Mexi et al., 2021, p. 224).

After delineating some legal aspects of the integration of migrants on the Swiss labor market, it is of interest to critically analyze this legal framework. According to Boillet and Maianin (2016) (cited after Mexi et al., 2021, pp. 226-227), the national labor preference stated in Art.

121a Cst. is a “direct and clear discrimination” against foreign individuals which should be contrasted with the protection against discrimination mentioned in the FNIA. Art. 121a Cst. has been transposed into Art. 21a FNIA, which transforms such direct and clear discrimination into indirect discrimination according to (Boillet & Maianin, 2016 cited after Mexi et al., 2021, pp. 226-227).

The mechanism allowing indirect discrimination to take place is connected with the regional employment offices (RAV) (Mexi et al., 2021). An employer must first check if the organization’s vacancy is on a list established by the Federal Council of professions or sectors with high unemployment rates. If the vacancy is on the list, the employer must first publish the job offer at the RAV and cannot publish the vacancy to the wider public in the following five days. Relevant applicant files are sent to the employer after three days by the RAV. This procedure aims at reducing unemployment in areas highly affected by it by giving priority to individuals registered at the RAV. However, registration at the RAV is easier for Swiss citizens and poses a disadvantage for immigrants because unemployment is considered when granting or renewing residence permits (Boillet & Maianin, 2016 cited after Mexi et al., 2021, pp. 226-227). Hence, the stated indirect discrimination in the labor market takes place at this point.

The absence of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law (Zschirnt & Fibbi, 2019) is also important to mention in this context. Since Switzerland is not part of the European Union, it had no obligation to implement the European Union’s directive on anti-discrimination. Switzerland is still “one of the very few countries without comprehensive anti-discrimination law and equality body with legal standing; a sizeable number of potential victims are poorly protected against racial, ethnic, religious and national discrimination” (Huddleston et al., 2015, p. 40). The question arises of how these legal regulations and political attitudes towards foreigners affect the hiring decisions of Swiss employers and labor market integration (Zschirnt & Fibbi, 2019). Discrimination in the private sector has, to date, been more extensively studied than public employment discrimination (e.g., Weichselbaumer, 2016), but recent scholarly interest in testing hiring discrimination in the public sector has increased.

- Baekgaard and George (2018) examined the hiring preferences of Flemish local politicians in the public sector in regard to candidates for top managerial positions in public administrations. They tested whether the sociodemographic characteristics of

age, gender, and ethnicity influenced politicians' candidate preference. Their findings indicated that ethnic minorities were considered as more qualified candidates for the job by politicians.

- A new methodology to test hiring discrimination was developed by Hangartner et al. (2021). The authors tracked the search behavior of recruiters on the online platform of the Swiss public employment service and found that recruiters' rates of contact were 4–19% lower for individuals belonging to minority ethnic and immigrant groups, depending on their nationality.
- The correspondence test conducted by Zschirnt and Fibbi (2019) in two language regions of Switzerland tested levels of discrimination against job seekers with non-Swiss names in hiring decisions. The results showed that children of immigrant parents with non-Swiss names, dual nationality, but Swiss qualifications needed to send 30% more job applications for apprenticeships to receive a callback for an interview than equally qualified Swiss nationals with a Swiss name. Their study did not only focus on the public sector but on apprenticeship-level occupations more generally, which can also be found in the public sector.

In the context of hiring discrimination, a further disadvantage is linked to residence permits. Because of stigmatization and lack of information concerning the temporary admission F permit, “potential employers may be afraid to hire people they perceive as not being able to stay in the territory in the long term” (Mexi et al., 2021, p. 229) even though 50% of foreigners with an F permit stay more than seven years in Switzerland.

Synthesizing the above discussion shows a mixed image of barriers to and enablers of the labor market integration of migrants. While Swiss populist parties are progressively advocating more restrictive measures for immigration and have promoted controversial initiatives (e.g., the initiative against mass immigration), the Swiss federal and cantonal authorities are focusing on concrete efforts around immigration. More pragmatic measures that take into account social tensions and the existing costs of non-integration of foreigners into the labor market are being implemented (Mexi et al., 2021). Still, the federal character of the Swiss state gives the cantons a wide scope of action in integration issues, which implies unequal treatment of foreigners. Recent research on discrimination in public sector hiring or general discrimination in hiring in Switzerland shows that discrimination in hiring (in the public sector) is possible. Generally, it

is expected that hiring discrimination in the public sector is less likely to occur due to the greater scrutiny of procedures through external and internal forms of control by, for example, politicians and staff councils (Boyne, 2002). However, more research testing for discriminatory hiring practices in the public sector is needed.

2.1.3.2 Additional barriers to labor market integration

In addition to legal barriers and possible hiring discrimination, recognition of qualifications is a challenge that still needs to be overcome and is predominantly present for foreign individuals of third countries. Diplomas acquired and skills learned in third countries are usually considered to be of a lower standard, which makes the recognition of diplomas more difficult (Mexi et al., 2021).

Furthermore, a lack of national language skills poses difficulties to labor market entry through ordinary structures (Mexi et al., 2021). Acquiring language skills fast is made even more difficult in some cantons. National language courses early in the phase of the asylum procedure are only offered by some cantons, while in other cantons asylum seekers have to wait for a positive decision on their residence permit (Mexi et al., 2021). Switzerland is a multilingual state, with German, French, Italian, and Rhaeto-Romanic as official languages. Multilingualism is often asked for in advertisements for job vacancies at the federal level. At the cantonal level, the language criteria depend on whether the canton is bilingual. At the municipal level, good command of the predominant national language of the area is frequently asked for (Delegierte des Bundes für Mehrsprachigkeit, 2020). This specific multilingual characteristic of Switzerland may imply that migrants with a foreign mother tongue have great difficulty obtaining a job at a public administration as they lack Swiss multilingual language skills.

To determine the reasons for underrepresentation in bureaucracies at the level of individual resources, some authors have further researched the social context of sociodemographic groups. Possible reasons for such underrepresentation suggested by the authors are superficial; Nonetheless, they might serve in understanding further obstacles for migrants wishing to integrate into the public labor sector. Baekgaard and George (2018) list possible reasons for the underrepresentation of women in top positions of public organizations and indicate that similar reasons may “apply to other sociodemographic groups, including ethnic minorities” (p. 537). Causes may be “self-selection due to cultural norms,” “stereotypes,” and “lack of support and

exclusion from networks” (p. 537). Exclusion from networks might also be linked to the fact that working-age migrants often have no parents or relatives already working in the public sector of the resident country. Hence, they may give less consideration to working for a public employer, because having parents working in the public sector and belonging to a minority group (ethnic, immigrant, or sexual orientation) has proven to be an important factor in the attractiveness of the public sector as an employer (Korac et al., 2019). Lack of experience of public employment in the broad social environment, which is also linked to a low degree of familiarity in general with public employers, might also lead to a non-consideration of public administrations as employers (Abou-Taam, 2014; Neubach, 2016).

2.1.4 Conclusion and problem statement

This thesis is embedded within public administration research on representative bureaucracy. “Representative bureaucracy as equal opportunities” accentuates the importance of equal opportunities for all individuals (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010, p. 244). According to the theoretical understanding of representative bureaucracy, only when a bureaucracy is representative of the society it serves does it have legitimacy and public credibility (Krislov, 1974). Passive representation is descriptive in nature and a diversity measure. How representative a public organization is of its society can be evaluated by comparing the share of individuals belonging to certain sociodemographic groups with the share of employees in the organization with the same sociodemographic characteristics (Bowling et al., 2006; Moldovan, 2016).

This thesis focuses on the representation of migrants/foreign-born individuals in Swiss public administrations and thereby addresses an identified research gap. The majority of studies focusing on representative bureaucracy have looked at three diversity traits within the context of the United States, namely gender, ethnicity, and race (Bishu & Kennedy, 2020). By focusing on the Swiss context of migrants/foreign-born individuals, the underrepresentation is addressed: Migrants represent 8.2% of employees in public administrations and legal entities against a total of 25.5% of migrants residing in Switzerland (Bundesamt für Statistik, 2020b, 2021). Various reasons for this underrepresentation are discussed. Overall, migrants face barriers to labor market integration due to the legal context, cantonal differences in integration practices (Mexi et al., 2021), and hiring discrimination, which has been empirically shown (Baekgaard & George, 2018; Jankowski et al., 2020; Zschirnt & Fibbi, 2019), and because they

might lack experience of social networks and might have a low degree of familiarity with the public sector as an employer (Abou-Taam, 2014; Baekgaard & George, 2018; Neubach, 2016).

Understanding what might cause the underrepresentation is the first step towards formulating objectives and programs to change the composition of the public workforce. The following argument evolves from the perspective of public administration hiring practices. Although there may be many possible causes for underrepresentation – structural and not – “at least part of the equation must be how public administrations recruit” (Linos, 2018, p. 67). The recruitment practices of public employers can start with the issues migrants face in the Swiss labor market and develop a recruitment process that is attractive to migrants to change the composition of the public workforce towards greater representation of migrants. This line of enquiry also follows the call of Bishu & Kennedy (2020), who emphasized the question of **how** to change the workforce, stating “future research on representative bureaucracy should consider how to [...] change the workforce by including more people who represent marginalized groups” (p. 15).

An important insight public employers can make use of when adapting the recruitment process, is described by the theoretical mechanism of the well-known signaling theory (Spence, 1973). Signaling certain aspects that might be important and attractive to migrants in the early recruitment process may influence whether migrants are attracted to a public employer. In the following section, this thesis elaborates on the signaling situation in early recruitment as a measure for attracting migrants as future public employees. In doing so, this work combines signaling theory and representative bureaucracy theory and discusses a potential partial solution for raising the passively underrepresented sociodemographic group of migrants in Swiss public administrations. The author recognizes that creating a high attraction for migrants through carefully chosen signals in the early recruitment process is only one part of a broader system of interrelating measures which will help to change the composition of the public workforce over time.

2.2 Signaling theory

In the previous chapter, this thesis framed the possible causes of the underrepresentation of migrants in public administration and outlined, within the scope of representative bureaucracy theory, why it is important to hire more employees with a migration background. Signaling theory complements the theoretical context of representative bureaucracy by focusing on the theoretical signaling mechanism underlying the recruitment process. Thus, signaling theory focuses on the level of HR practice. It is assumed that, through recruitment practices that target diverse individuals, recruiters can steer the diversity of the organization's workforce (Lang, 2020).

Signaling theory, originally named job market signaling theory by Spence (1973), is a well-known theoretical framework which describes an environment in which two entities find themselves in the same situation but with access to different information (Connelly et al., 2011). The two entities are the key components of the theory and are on a signaling timeline, with the sender at point $t = 0$, the signal at $t = 1$, the receiver at $t = 2$, and the feedback given by the receiver at $t = 3$ (Figure 1).

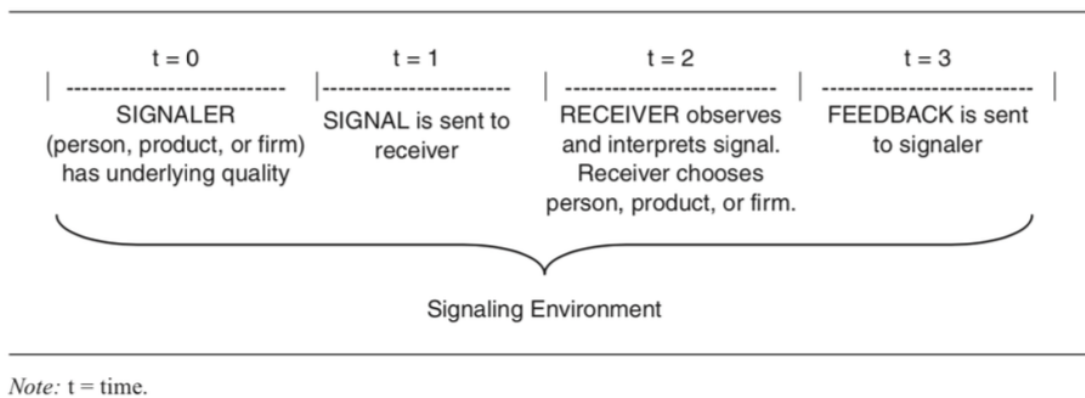


Figure 1: Signaling timeline (Connelly et al., 2011).

The sender, also called the insider, can choose how to signal certain information. Thus, the sender must “undertake actions to signal its underlying quality to other parties” because the recipients come from the outside and have no information about the insider (Connelly et al., 2011, p. 40). Receivers of signals choose the way in which signals are observed and interpreted (Connelly et al., 2011). The fundamental concern of signaling theory is to reduce information

asymmetry in any situation with informational flows going from the sender to the receiver (Spence, 2002). Signals play a key role in any communication, as they contain information, and information affects the decision-making processes of receiving individuals (Connelly et al., 2011).

Signaling theory has been used by scholars of management research, entrepreneurship literature, and diversity research, as well as by scholars of other disciplines, such as anthropology and biology (Connelly et al., 2011). Signaling theory in management has been applied to organizational behavior and HR management streams where the senders are either HR professionals, managers, or employees. In some cases, signals are examined at the firm level, meaning that signals contain information about the firm. One perspective in HR management puts the focus on the recruitment situation and tries to understand how job-seeking individuals, who are on the receiving side of signals, examine firm-level signals to assess unobservable qualities of the firm so they can gain an idea of what it is like working for the firm. In the same situation, recruiters are senders, faced with deciding what signals to send to jobseekers to attract them to the organization or position (Connelly et al., 2011).

As mentioned above, signaling theory suggests a signaling timeline. At the last time point, receivers give feedback about their perception of signals (Connelly et al., 2011). Applying the feedback loop to the early stage of recruitment means that jobseekers send feedback to employers after receiving their signals. Individual-level feedback at the early stage of recruitment is, according to Chapman et al. (2005), *job pursuit intention* and *job-organization attraction*, which these authors define as recruiting outcomes. Organization attraction is a concept defined by Highhouse et al. (2003) as follows: “Company attractiveness is reflected in individuals’ affective and attitudinal thoughts about particular companies as potential places for employment” (p. 989).¹⁴

Understanding the use of signals and what they provoke in receivers is important for recruiters, especially at the earliest stage of recruitment. If potential applicants are not attracted to an organization at the beginning, the chances are that they will not consider it as a possible future employer and will give their limited attention to other organizations (Keppeler & Papenfuß,

¹⁴ Company attractiveness is considered the same thing as organization attraction.

2020). From the employer's perspective, increasing the attention and interest of suitable jobseekers and, ultimately, influencing their attraction to the organization is of relevance. In line with signaling theory, this aspect should be addressed through a careful selection and consideration of signals sent at the early stages of recruitment (Asseburg et al., 2018; Spence, 1973; Walker & Hinojosa, 2013). Recruitment research suggests that employers would do well to modify the presentation of organizational attributes in recruitment material "for the explicit purpose of enhancing the attractiveness of a job to potential applicants" (Rynes & Barber, 1990, p. 294). Employment attributes, as attributes of the organization in general or the job in particular, are considered to have a determining effect on organizational inducements which influences the number and quality of applicants (Ployhart & Kim, 2013). Ultimately, not everything about the organization and employment environment can be transmitted in the recruitment material, but highlighting certain signals can reduce information asymmetry (Spence, 2002).

Even though recruitment research suggests using signals that are attractive, the effects of signals at the first stages of recruitment and how they influence potential recruits' attention and attraction towards the organization is understudied (Keppeler & Papenfuß, 2020). Public administration journals have recently focused on the recruitment situation, but, according to a review by Korac et al. (2019), signaling theory has been used very little in connection with public sector recruitment.

Not only knowing what signals affect individuals' attraction to an organization but going further and understanding which signals affect what kind of target group is relevant for HR practitioners and scholars, because insight from management research proposes that the effectiveness of recruitment signals is influenced in part by the characteristics of receiving individuals (Connelly et al., 2011). However, it remains unclear how the signals sent by public employers influence different target groups (Marland et al., 2017; Sivertzen et al., 2013). Knowing more about how to attract different target groups is of particular importance to public employers, due to their objective of representative bureaucracy and diversity (Linos, 2018; Riccucci et al., 2016).

For jobseekers in general, no matter their membership of a target group, the early stage of the job search represents a period of scarce information about an employer's attributes (Asseburg

et al., 2018). The jobseeker finds themselves in a noisy job market with an overflow of competing public and private employers advertising their vacancies and distinctive employer attributes (Spence, 1973). Jobseekers are eager to imagine what it would be like to work for an organization; therefore, they make inferences about their potential future workplace from the signals they receive (Jones et al., 2016; Rynes et al., 1991). Inferences from the same signals might differ due to the differing characteristics of receiving individuals (Connelly et al., 2011). This assumption is supported by the discussion in section 2.1.3, in which the reality of job-seeking migrants is described. Migrants face different labor market integration barriers in Switzerland than other sociodemographic groups and Swiss nationals (Mexi et al., 2021), which could result in differing inferences from employer signals. Moreover, migrants have spent some of their lives in a different national, social, and cultural context, which might also influence the way they perceive certain signals. To clarify, while labor market integration barriers are structural, the second reason for the differing reality of migrants might be the individual's subjective perception of belonging to the migrant group (or the degree to which they belong) as well as their externally ascribed affiliation to that group (Heinemann, 2014). Additionally, one's sense of self on the basis of membership(s) in groups, as proposed by the social identity theory developed by Tajfel (1974), might influence inferences from recruitment signals.

The question remains which signals a public employer can send to target and attract migrants. Focusing on the organizational side of recruitment signals, or, more precisely, the signals that a public employer can send to attract a specific target group, is especially relevant when looking at the research gaps remaining in this field: The main focus in public administration research has been on personal aspects at the individual level and how they influence public employer preference (Asseburg et al., 2020; Fowler & Birdsall, 2020; Linos, 2018; Wright et al., 2017). Therefore, the following chapters focus on organizational aspects, thus signals, that influence individuals' attraction to an organization, as well as different signals that value diversity and specific signals that address migrants.

2.2.1 Public Employer signals

Differences among employers and their attributes have recently sparked scholarly interest and provoked a debate on whether sectoral employment differences exist (Korac et al., 2019). According to a review by Korac et al. (2019), differences do exist; hence, employment signals

should also be different in order for employers to set themselves apart from their competitors. However, it has yet to be empirically researched which public employer attributes are especially attractive to certain target groups (Marland et al., 2017; Sivertzen et al., 2013). Due to the lack of related empirical evidence, this thesis uses the typical selling points of public employers.

An area that has been studied rather well within the public recruitment and public sector preference field, in contrast to private sector recruitment, is a special motivational disposition of individuals to work for the public sector, also called public service motivation (PSM) (Asseburg et al., 2020). PSM is “an individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations” (Perry & Wise, 1990, p. 368). Studies focusing on the hypothesis that high levels of PSM influence individuals’ attraction to the public sector have found mixed results as to whether the hypothesis holds true or not (Korac et al., 2019; Ritz et al., 2016). Overall, accumulated evidence is rather supportive of the hypothesis that individuals with high levels of PSM are more attracted to public sector jobs (Asseburg et al., 2018), because such jobs enable them to do meaningful work that serves the public (Perry & Wise, 1990). This stream of research suggests that individuals respond well to employment attributes that address or elevate their PSM (Korac et al., 2019). Including employment signals that address and elevate the PSM of individuals is frequently recommended (Ritz et al., 2016), even though empirical evidence for the usefulness of such signals in the recruitment process is scarce (Weske et al., 2020). The effects of recruitment signals indicating meaningful work has been tested with the umbrella term *societal impact* in several studies (e.g., Asseburg et al., 2020; Keppeler & Papenfuß, 2020).

Serving the public and doing meaningful work is one characteristic of public organizations. The public administration research approach to public values is closely linked to societal impact and PSM. Public values represent societies’ consensus about how governments should work, what rights and benefits citizens should and should not be entitled to, and what they owe society in return (Bozeman, 2007). Public values are usually but not uniquely associated with public organizations’ production and activities which contribute to society’s wellbeing (Jorgensen & Bozeman, 2007).¹⁵

¹⁵ Differences in conceptual approach to public value(s): While Moore (1995) talks about public value in the singular, Jorgensen and Bozeman (2007) identified 72 public values in seven major value categories. Moore (1995) sees the public value rising when production of citizens’ desired goods happens in a cost-effective and efficient way, and Jorgensen and Bozeman (2007) also talk about public values existing separately from production.

For the public organization as employer, this means that public values might serve as unique attributes of public organizations (Rainey, 1983) and might help to position the employer favorably against private competitors on the labor market. Organizations are diverse in their value focus, which poses a challenge for scholars that study public value(s) in organizations as each organization has a unique mix of value focus (Jorgensen & Bozeman, 2007). One possible solution and approach to this problem lies in the use of traditional values, which leads to a simplification of the dichotomy between public and private values. Traditional public values reflect impartiality, lawfulness, and neutrality, while private values are associated more strongly with private organizations and include efficiency, innovation, profit, and quality (Weske et al., 2020).

One study making use of traditional public values and testing whether using these values in employer branding strategies has an influence on individuals with high levels of one specific dimension of PSM (commitment to public values (CPV)) was conducted by Weske et al. (2020). In their recently published work about future employee attraction, the authors focused on three traditional (or Weberian) public values: impartiality, incorruptibility, and lawfulness. The authors found no “interaction effect between the PSM dimension CPV and the public values treatment to have significant effects on the perceived attractiveness of an employer” (Weske et al., 2020, p. 689). In other words, individuals with high levels of commitment to public values are not significantly more attracted to public employers’ employer branding strategy displaying traditional public values (Weske et al., 2020). Whether or not PSM and organizational public values of public organizations are signals that are attractive to migrants when sent in the early recruitment process remains unclear and has yet to be tested empirically.

PMS and public values are not the only reasons that individuals want to work for public organizations (Asseburg et al., 2020). A call from scholars in the field of public management research asks for a greater consideration of attractive employment factors other than PSM, such as the extrinsic rewards provided by the public sector (Asseburg et al., 2020; Lee & Choi, 2016; Lewis & Frank, 2002; Ritz & Waldner, 2011). Asseburg et al. (2020) found strong and significant positive effects on application intention of extrinsic employment attributes published in job advertisements, such as work benefits, social prestige, and career prospects.¹⁶

¹⁶ Extrinsic employment attributes refer to extrinsic motivation: hence, the reward for the individual does not come from the activity itself but results from the consequences of the activity (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Another categorization found in research about general work motives and employer benefits is the differentiation between instrumental and symbolic benefits (Lievens, 2007; Lievens et al., 2007).

A symbolic benefit arises when subjective and abstract attributions of characteristics to an employer rub off on organizational members and they benefit in this way from an image gain. One example is that a better reputation can result from employment with a prestigious employer (Vogel et al., 2017). Including the prestige of an employer in early recruitment signals is presumably a challenge because the prestige and reputation of an employer are subjective and intangible. The instrumental benefits of an employer are, on the other hand, objective and concrete attributes, such as salary levels and work schedule (Vogel et al., 2017). The instrumental employer attribute of job security (Lee & Choi, 2016; Lewis & Frank, 2002) and the prospect of a “safe future” (Ritz & Waldner, 2011), rather than PSM, are strong predictors for a preference for public employment. For a public employer, this means that signaling the benefit of a secure job and a safe future in recruitment materials might be an important driver for a preference for public sector employment. Generally, instrumental benefits can be more easily included in early recruitment signals and have a far greater explanatory power, at least in Western culture, than the symbolic benefits of an employer (Highhouse et al., 2003; Hoye & Saks, 2011; Lievens et al., 2007).

It remains unknown whether the public sector’s work benefits, social prestige, career prospects, and job security are among the top attractive signals for migrants, because the studies cited above did not test for the birthplace of the individuals but, rather, for other sociodemographic characteristics, such as gender, age, and minority status in general (Asseburg et al., 2020; Keppeler & Papenfuß, 2020; Lewis & Frank, 2002; Ritz & Waldner, 2011; Weske et al., 2020). Nonetheless, when considering the history of migrants and the challenge of integration in a new country, it is assumed that job security and career prospects are very attractive signals to them, because working at a public employer would mean strong integration into the country’s political and governmental system. It also implies successful participation in economic life and independence from social assistance and unemployment aid, which is closely linked to the renewal of (long-term) resident permits (Kurt, 2017; Mexi et al., 2021), as mentioned in section 2.1.3.1.

2.2.2 Targeted recruitment signals

Targeted recruitment tailors recruitment signals to a specific target group and respective labor market segment for members of that group to be more attracted to the job and organization (Newman & Lyon, 2009). The goal of targeted recruitment is to offer information about the organization to a predefined group with specific traits, so they will apply for the position (Volpone et al., 2013). Target groups might differ in terms of race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, and so forth (Volpone et al., 2013). If individuals in the target group view the organization positively, they will more likely perceive a good fit with the organization, because through targeted signals they see that the organization values their unique identity (Avery & McKay, 2006; Volpone et al., 2013). Targeted recruitment is not exclusively used in private or public organizations but is a general term referring to a HR practice. A review of targeted recruitment techniques by Volpone et al. (2013) suggested targeted recruitment signals are, in essence, instruments that value diversity, so they can generally include many different diversity traits and do not focus on one sole diversity trait. This characteristic could make targeted recruitment practices useful to attract migrants.

Empirical research on targeted recruitment is spread across different areas of the literature, such as marketing, psychology, and management, and is sometimes also referred to as minority-focused recruitment, diversity recruitment, and identity-conscious recruitment (Konrad & Linehan, 1995; Volpone et al., 2013; Williamson et al., 2008). This spread makes it harder for practitioners and scholars to find guidance when it comes to techniques that work to attract a diverse applicant pool (Volpone et al., 2013). This thesis makes use of knowledge about existing techniques, which are strongly influenced by American scholars' focus on racial and minority recruitment (Avery & McKay, 2006).

As suggested by signaling theory, jobseekers have a limited amount of information about the employer, especially when they have never worked for the organization before (Rynes et al., 1991; Spence, 1973). Recruitment signals that offer information about the employer might provoke different reactions, depending on the sociodemographic characteristics, identity, and background of the receiving job-seeking individual (Cable & Judge, 1996; Judge & Cable, 1997; Turban & Keon, 1993; Williamson et al., 2008). Studies have shown, for example, that women and racial and ethnic minorities evaluate certain attributes of the organization linked to

valuing diversity differently when considering the organization as a future workplace than white males (Chapman et al., 2005; Freeman, 2003; Thomas & Wise, 1999). Overall, minorities evaluate diversity and organizations that explicitly value diversity in their workforce as more attractive (Avery, 2003; Avery et al., 2004; Walker et al., 2009, 2012).

An organization can show its commitment to diversity in the recruitment material in various ways. One way that has proven effective is the use of visual signals. A visual signal in recruitment is the pictorial representation of a person or a group of individuals in a job advertisement or an employer description (Volpone et al., 2013). The visual representation of diverse individuals sends signals to applicants that the organization has a diverse workforce and values diversity (Avery & McKay, 2006). A general benefit of images in comparison to text is that images tend to have a greater impact on individuals' memories (Cober et al., 2000). Avery et al. (2004) found that including pictures of minorities in a recruitment brochure increased Blacks' and Latinos/as' ratings of organizational attractiveness but had no impact on how attracted non-minorities were to the organization. It appears that job-seeking minorities respond positively to visual cues even when the images depict people who belong to a different minority group (Avery et al., 2004; Rubaii-Barrett & Wise, 2007).

Next to valuing diversity visually, employers can use text to communicate that they value individual differences within their workforce. A frequently studied and practically used textual element in targeted recruitment is the diversity statement. Diversity statements can appear in different forms. Indicating that each individual has equal opportunities in the recruitment process and, later on, in the organization itself, no matter their unique diversity characteristics, seems to garner positive reactions from minority applicants (McNab & Johnston, 2002; Mohamed et al., 1999). Still, research on differing diversity statements has mostly been conducted in the U.S. context or, as in the study by McNab and Johnston (2002), in New Zealand, where management measures such as affirmative action plans and equal employment opportunity (EEO) are used, which cannot directly be applied to the Swiss context.¹⁷

A further text-based signal is the encouragement clause in job advertisements. In a study conducted by Baumann et al. (2019) about the intercultural opening of German public

¹⁷ "EEO is giving everyone the same opportunity to thrive, while affirmative action is actively supporting those who've been consistently deprived of fair and equal treatment" (Workable, 2021).

administrations, the authors found that, within the measures to increase the proportion of employees with a migration background, encouragement clauses have been used most frequently by public administrations. Such encouragement clauses often look like this: *Applications from people with an immigrant background are encouraged and applications from people of all nationalities are welcome.*¹⁸ Empirical findings on the usefulness of this exact signal are, to the author's knowledge, absent.

Another signal that has been studied is the recruiter's sociodemographic characteristic and the effect this has on applicants' evaluation of the organization (Volpone et al., 2013). The assumption behind this signal is that applicants might infer that sociodemographic characteristics of recruiters might reflect the sociodemographic composition of the workforce (Avery et al., 2004; Rynes et al., 1991). Empirical results are mixed as to whether this signal is effective in targeted recruitment (Breaugh & Starke, 2000; Chapman et al., 2005).

Generally, the use of targeted recruitment signals might be useful in early recruitment, as they indicate that the organization values diversity (Avery & McKay, 2006; Volpone et al., 2013). An aspect that must be considered is the prerequisite for the use of visual signals and recruiters' signals. These signals can only be used by an employer if the organization has a diverse workforce that can be represented visually, and if the recruiter also has diversity characteristics that can be packaged into a recruitment signal, such as having a foreign name.

2.2.3 Recruitment signals for migrants

The focus has previously been on targeted recruitment signals which, at their core, often value diversity in general. Sending signals that value diversity is useful when attracting a variety of individuals, including people of immigrant origin. However, more specific signals that particularly attract migrants could be helpful in refining the recruitment strategy used by public organizations to target migrants. Changing recruitment material to emphasize issues of importance to the targeted group appears to be necessary, due to differences in responses depending on the sociodemographic characteristics of individuals (Cable & Judge, 1996; Judge & Cable, 1997; Turban & Keon, 1993; Williamson et al., 2008). To understand what signals,

¹⁸ Statements are freely formulated by the author of this thesis.

other than public employer and targeted recruitment signals, might be attractive specifically to migrants, it is useful to empathize with the reality of job-seeking migrants residing full-time in Switzerland. What problems on the labor market are they confronted with? What is especially important to this labor market segment?

Insight into the reality of job-seeking migrants and challenges to labor market integration have been discussed in section 2.1.3. These insights, in combination with signals used by practitioners and recommendations by scholars about signals for migrants, help outline potentially attractive signals to migrants. Importantly, these are suggestions of possible attractive signals because, to the author's knowledge, the connection between using early recruitment signals to specifically address migrants and the influence these signals have on the perceived attractiveness of a (public) employer have not yet been empirically tested.

First, an important issue to foreigners from non-German-, non-French-, and non-Italian-speaking countries are signals about expected German, French, or Italian language skills in job advertisements. A differentiation in the required national language, according to the requirement profiles of the advertised position, is one of the most used measures to increase the proportion of employees with a migration background in German public administrations' hiring practices (Baumann et al., 2019). It is assumed that clearly indicating the expected national language skills for the job allows migrants to estimate better whether they meet the requirements. It could also send a signal of the organization's sensitivity towards individuals with a foreign-national mother tongue.

One issue that foreigners might face to varying degrees in Switzerland is presumably caused by the preference for Swiss nationals to occupy vacancies and the absence of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law, as well as empirical evidence indicating discrimination against foreigners in public hiring (Baekgaard & George, 2018; Hangartner et al., 2021; Mexi et al., 2021; Zschirnt & Fibbi, 2019). It is assumed that text-based signals which encourage individuals with different diversity traits to apply for a job, on the assumption that all identities are granted equal treatment, help in fostering an inclusive and attractive workplace for migrants, also (or especially) for those who have been confronted with discriminatory experiences.

Another suggestion is signaling through an anonymous recruitment process. Rosita Fibbi, a migration sociologist who has devoted herself to research on discrimination in the Swiss labor market, suggests the use of the anonymous application procedure to avoid discrimination based on country of origin. When using this procedure, recruiters see other characteristics (education level, experiences, other skills) of the applicant rather than country of origin (Fibbi, 2021). According to Fibbi (2021), few employers have tried this anonymous procedure in their recruitment. An informative empirical basis on how attractive the use of anonymous application procedures is for migrants is lacking. Still, indicating in job advertisements that the organization's hiring process is based on an anonymous procedure might send an attractive signal to migrant applicants with previous discriminatory experiences, because they might see that the organization makes its recruitment decisions based on other characteristics than their foreigner status.

An issue faced by migrants, especially individuals from third countries, is the recognition of education diplomas and other qualifications in Switzerland (Mexi et al., 2021). Even though public recruiters are not responsible for the recognition of diplomas, they have room for maneuver.¹⁹ One solution suggested by Mexi et al. (2021) is to consider more strongly informal skills and validate and assess practical skills. Furthermore, intercultural competences, for example, are attributed to individuals with migration experience (Baumann et al., 2019) and can also be highlighted as a recruitment signal, if such competencies are required in the job. It could be assumed that sending signals in job advertisements which inform the individual migrant of the appreciation of informal skills and intercultural competencies might influence how attractive the migrant perceives the organization to be, because the chance of gaining the job is not solely determined by having diplomas and certifications.

If an organization implements measures to increase the proportion of migrants in their work staff, for example through educational or mentoring programs for migrants only, or through a special entry-level program, such as an internship (Baumann et al., 2019), such measures could act as signals for migrants. However, whether they are perceived as attractive by job-seeking migrants is unknown.

¹⁹ Switzerland has different contact points which are responsible for the recognition of diplomas (Staatssekretariat für Bildung, Forschung und Innovation, 2021).

2.3 Summary

Signaling theory explains the theoretical mechanism in early recruitment whereby job-seeking migrants are receivers of signals sent by public organizations. Information asymmetry in the recruitment situation is reduced when certain signals for a specific target group are highlighted. Public employers should aim at sending out attractive signals to this target group to meet the goals of representative bureaucracy and diversity (Linos, 2018; Riccucci et al., 2016). First, however, scholarly research should address the research gaps in this field to elaborate on the empirical evidence of early recruitment signaling mechanisms in attracting migrants as a target group to public administrations. An empirical foundation would inform HR practitioners and contribute to the attraction of this underrepresented group to public administrations. Signaling theory has been virtually absent in research about public sector recruitment, and little is known about how specific signals influence the degree to which this particular target group is attracted to public employers (Korac et al., 2019; Marland et al., 2017; Sivertzen et al., 2013). Due to the lack of empirical evidence in that matter, this thesis uses the typical selling points of public employers, a string of research called targeted recruitment, and specific signals that could attract migrants. These theoretical contributions, along with empirical evidence and insight from practitioners, leave room for many assumptions as to what kind of signals are attractive to migrants. This area is further explored empirically through an explorative-qualitative approach, which is described in the next chapter.

3 Research Design

An explorative-qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews with qualified migrants was used to answer the research question: *What early recruitment signals of public employers are perceived and evaluated as attractive by qualified job-seeking migrants?*

The reappraisal of the theoretical considerations concerning early recruitment signals of public employers for the target group of migrants brought a research gap to light—namely, signaling theory has not been applied in public recruitment (Korac et al., 2019), and how recruitment signals influence the target group of migrants has been under studied (Marland et al., 2017; Sivertzen et al., 2013). The research question and the chosen research design address this gap by further exploring signals relevant to job-seeking migrants.

The qualitative approach made it possible to uncover qualified job-seeking migrants' individual perceptions of employer signals. These perceptions helped underpin theoretical considerations with practical examples (Brink, 2013) and expand theoretical ideas of signaling mechanisms regarding targeted recruitment and attraction of migrants in the public sector.

Furthermore, qualitative interviews enabled the interviewees to make themselves heard in the scientific discourse of addressee research despite their otherwise structurally marginalized position. Employer signals, targeted recruitment, and specific signals for migrants are ultimately intended to include and address the migrant population, so the personal perspectives are relevant (Heinemann, 2014).

3.1 Instrument

The chosen instrument of the research design was an interview guide for semi-structured interviews (Appendix C). Using an interview guide guaranteed an ability to both freely explore perceptions of potential new employment signals in the early stages of recruitment and verify already defined signals while maintaining basic comparability between interviews (Schnell et al., 2018).

The interview guide was created with a principle called SPSS following Helfferich (2011). First, all possible questions were collected; second, the importance and relevance of the

questions were examined, and only relevant ones were retained; third, the questions were sorted into categories; and fourth, the questions were subsumed into thematic parts. The interview guide was ultimately expanded based on the theoretical considerations, always keeping the questions open so that interviewees could answer as freely as possible and expand on consciously perceived signals in early recruitment. Unconsciously perceived signals could also have come to light due to the open approach of questions about the recruitment, application process and employers.

The first part of the interview guide consisted of open questions related to the general job situation, preferences of employers, and previous job history of the interviewee. With these questions, the aim was to first generate a situation in which the interviewee felt comfortable to talk freely and, second, to begin uncovering some signals that the interviewee found attractive in employers. The invitation to disclose one's job history and current situation at the beginning of the interview also offered the opportunity to pick up on relevant aspects mentioned at a later stage and gave an initial idea about the reality of the foreign-born individual.

The second, and main, part of the interview guide consisted of several questions regarding migrants' perceptions of employers (public/private), how and whether they perceived differences in recruitment communication by public and private employers, to what kind of employer the interviewees were more attracted, and whether the interviewees had acquaintances or relatives who worked or were working in the public sector. In the second part, one public employer, the municipality of Bern, was selectively taken as an example so that the interviewees were able to concretely relate to one public employer they knew. To delve deeper into targeted recruitment signals, the diversity statement of the municipality of Bern was presented to the interviewees to get their opinions and to stimulate further thinking about specific signals.²⁰ This led to questions regarding other theoretically proposed signals, such as the visual representation of diverse individuals in job advertisements and specific signals for migrants. It was important to get an idea of what the interviewees perceived in early recruitment material, what they found attractive, and what unexplored signals might be.

²⁰ Diversity statement of the municipality of Bern: "Gleichstellung und Integration sind uns wichtig. Die Stadt Bern lebt von der Vielfalt ihrer Mitarbeitenden. Wir setzen alles daran, unsere Talente langfristig zu binden. Ob Religion, Geschlecht oder Herkunft: Wir sehen die Vielfalt als Chance für eine lebendige Unternehmenskultur – und handeln entsprechend. Bei der externen Besetzung von Stellen oder bei internen Karrieren: Alle haben die gleichen Chancen!" (Stadt Bern, 2021b).

The last part consisted of questions related to the perceived affiliation of interviewees with Switzerland and the Bernese population and the desire to contribute to the greater good of society. The idea behind those questions was to get a sense of how integrated the interviewees felt in Switzerland and how strong their desire was to help shape the Swiss public life, which could arguably also be partly related to their PSM.

3.2 Data Collection

Interviews were held in June 2021 at the University of Bern. The design of the interview situation was carefully considered because it was important to create a space where the interviewees felt trusting and safe to speak freely about their previous experiences. This is because leaving one's country of origin and settling down in a new country can have many drivers and causes, of which some are assumed to be connected to pain and sorrow. Furthermore, being confronted with the new reality in Switzerland, the uncertainty of granting resident permits, and the barriers to labor market integration are highly personal experiences.

Before each interview, the topic of the research endeavor was presented to the interviewee. The interview was recorded only with the prior permission of the interviewee, and an interview protocol with details about the interviewee, such as name, education type and level, was made.

3.3 Data Processing

The audio data were transcribed in the transcript program F4 (F4, 2021). In the data processing phase, decisions about completeness and scope (utterance type, type of reproduction of the information) in the transcript needed to be made (Hussy et al., 2013). As it was assumed that not all early recruitment signals are consciously perceived by migrants, the decision for a complete transcript was made because unconscious signals could come to light in the analysis. In the scope of a transcript, linguistic utterances are composed of form (how something is said) and content (what is said) (Hussy et al., 2013). The content of the interviews is the basis of the analysis and sufficiently precise to answer the research question of this thesis. Therefore, transcriptions of voice pitch, pauses, and para-linguistic elements were omitted because they were not part of the interpretation. For the evaluation, it was important "what was said" and not

"how it was said." According to Hussy et al. (2013), transcription guidelines state that transcripts should contain as much information as necessary to answer the research question—but no more, to guarantee readability. The transcript should be simple and easy to read (Dittmar, 2004). Another argument for choosing this type of transcription is that "when it comes to capturing opinions, attitudes, and the reasons behind them, transcribing the content of the utterance is usually sufficient" (Hussy et al., 2013, p. 248).

3.4 Data Analysis

To analyze the transcribed data, a procedure suggested by Lester et al. (2020), which is based on thematic analysis, was chosen and slightly adapted to this thesis. Although "qualitative data analysis is generally described as a nonlinear, iterative process" (Lester et al., 2020, p. 98), and, therefore, qualitative researchers often do not list the analytical steps, it is advisable for both the scholar and the reader to list the steps that were followed. The procedure leaves enough room for exploring new signals and allocating interview statements within already existing codes derived from theory.

The analysis procedure consisted of the following steps (Lester et al., 2020, pp. 98-102):

1. **Becoming familiar with the data:** Reading through the transcripts and marking important passages or missing answers.
2. **Memoing the data:** Writing down initial reflections on and interpretations of the data.
3. **Coding the data:** "A code is simply a short, descriptive word or phrase that assigns meaning to the data related to the researcher's analytic interests" (Lester et al., 2020, p. 100). Codes were inserted into a table, and passages of the interviews that could be assigned to codes were copied and pasted in the corresponding code category. To distinguish between the interviewees' statements, each interviewee was assigned a unique color. After each statement, the time stamp of the transcript was added. Codes were deduced from the theoretical part but also surged from the interview content itself. Ultimately, 16 codes were extracted, which formed the names of the categories: residence permits, job-seeking, discrimination, attractive signals, experience with mentoring programs, language skills, private/public employers, targeted recruitment,

specific signals for migrants, being part of society, participation in social life, diploma/documents, dependence on institutions, representative bureaucracy, and age.

4. **Becoming familiar with statements in categories:** Once the statements were assigned to the categories, the author read through the statements by category to get an overview of the similarities and differences in statements within each category.
5. **Organizing categories into thematic parts:** After the content, organized by categories, was read through, it could be assigned to three major thematic parts:
 - First thematic part: This part contained content that characterized the interview partner in terms of their history, their experience on the job market, and their current perception of integration and participation level in social life.
 - Second thematic part: This part was strongly linked to the first theoretical chapter about representative bureaucracy and the reasons for the underrepresentation of migrants in public administration.
 - Third thematic part: This part was connected to the second theoretical chapter of the signaling mechanism and contained the perceptions and opinions of interviewees about different recruitment signals.
6. **Making the analytic process transparent:** The formation of thematic parts marked the end of the analytical process, because the data were ready to be presented in the results chapter. To guarantee the data protection of interview partners, the transcripts were anonymized. All names, localities, places of work, and other characteristics that could be directly associated with the person were paraphrased and placed in square brackets [...] (Appendix D).

3.5 Sample

The target group of this research consisted of qualified job-seeking migrants with a resident permit that allowed working in Switzerland and at least a good command of German—in particular, a level of B1 to B2 (Europäischer Referenzrahmen, 2021). Qualified, in this case, means a post-compulsory education either completed in the country of origin or the resident country. The characteristic “job-seeking” assured that the migrant knew the Swiss job market to a certain extent and had experience applying for jobs; thus, the content of job advertisements and employer recruitment material were familiar to the migrant.

To find qualified job-seeking migrants, several institutions and experts in the field that aim at supporting migrants in the labor integration process were contacted. Between the first of May and the end of May 2021, the institutions and experts in the field listed in Table 1, which offer programs or coaching for the target group, were contacted first via e-mail, which included an interview address, and then through a follow-up phone call.²¹

Institutions/experts	Number of potential interview partners	Number of individuals who participated in interviews
Bernetz	18	1
Diaconis Integra	No suitable candidate	-
HEKS MosaiQ	8	-
Feminist Peace Organization (cfd)	21	-
STEPS	No suitable candidate	-
Expert working in the career counseling service	No suitable candidate	-
BIZ	No suitable candidate	-
RAV	No suitable candidate	-
Retired expert of the immigration field	6	4

Table 1: Sources of interview partners

Of all possible interview partners who were contacted through institutions and experts in the field, five interview partners were obtained. As the methodological approach to answer the research questions was of qualitative nature, the representativeness of the sample was not sought. The focus lay more on the saturation of the information obtained from the interviews.

Interview partners migrated from countries in East Europe, Southeast Europe, Eurasia, North Africa, and Western Asia to Switzerland. The shortest period of residence in Switzerland was 8 years and the longest period 23 years. All the interviewees had completed post-compulsory education either in their country of origin or in Switzerland and had a bachelor's degree or

²¹ Interview address and further descriptions of institutions and experts are found in Appendix A and B.

higher. Degrees were completed in the broad fields of education, economics, law, diplomatic studies, and finance. Four out of five interviewees were female. All interviewees had a good to very good command of German. None of the interviewees were working in their profession or field of study, and all had extensive job-search experience.

4 Results

The methodological chapter explained the procedure of transforming the raw audio data into written data, which then were categorized for analysis. There are connections and overlaps between categories, but, overall, three main parts could be formed.

4.1 Getting to know the interviewees

All interviewees had extensive job search and job application experience. The following examples demonstrate these experiences: One interviewee applied for internships for two years, another sent 60 applications in one month, and yet another had been searching for a job for 10 years (Interviewee 1, personal communication, 2021, #11:93; Interviewee 3, personal communication, 2021, #11:43; Interviewee 4, personal communication, 2021, #23:03). Interviewees also participated in labor market mentoring programs, such as Bernetz, and continued improving their language skills and education (Interviewee 1, personal communication, 2021; Interviewee 4, personal communication, 2021). Some followed a different career path due to not getting a job in their professional field. Three out of five participants had applied to vacancies of one or more public administrations (EDA, SECO, municipality of Bern, SEM) and to the Swiss Post (Interviewee 1, personal communication, 2021, #15:47; Interviewee 3, personal communication, 2021, #11:43; Interviewee 4, personal communication, 2021, #32:21). At the time of the interviews, no interviewee was working in a public institution or in the field in which they had previously obtained a degree.

Concerning their perception of integration in Switzerland based on whether they felt part of the Swiss society and whether they desired to contribute to the society, one interviewee felt good in Switzerland and wanted to contribute (Interviewee 3, personal communication, 2021, #54:09). Another interviewee felt like a part of Switzerland due to her kids growing up there and because she invested her free time into volunteering for intercultural and family clubs, where she took over childcare and translation services (Interviewee 1, personal communication, 2021, #27:57).

4.2 Importance of and perceived barriers to representation

The interview guide was constructed in a way that left room for further important topics that arose in the interviews. One of those topics was the benefits arising from the inclusion of migrants in public administrations, mentioned by one interviewee. The interviewee mentioned the benefit arising when a person with a migration background works in public administration because this, then, means that the public administration has more control over this part of the population (Interviewee 3, personal communication, 2021, #18:51). The interviewee mentioned that understanding the circumstances of a migrant in Switzerland was easier for her than for a Swiss citizen due to her own migration history (#44:48). It was important to the interviewee that migrants work in areas of public administration where migrants are among the client group because they see issues that Swiss citizens do not see (#01:04). Furthermore, the interviewee perceived that there was no connection between public administration and society. If more migrants worked in public administration, they would likely represent the bridge between public administration and the population group of migrants (Interviewee 3, personal communication, 2021, #18:52, #44:48).

Causes for the underrepresentation of migrants in bureaucracies were either mentioned independently by interviewees or were queried by the interviewer. The answers were categorized by age, recognition of diploma, resident permits, and dependence on supporting institutions like the RAV or the social assistance office. Two out of five interviewees mentioned age as one of the greatest hindrances to successful integration into the labor market. Age in combination with non-recognition of diplomas meant that migrants had little chance to work in their learned profession. If a migrant migrates to Switzerland at an early age, there is still time to undergo an apprenticeship or study and obtain a Swiss diploma to then be able to work in Switzerland (Interviewee 2, personal communication, 2021, #06:01; Interviewee 5, personal communication, 2021, #10:09). Three out of five interviewees mentioned that the non-recognition of their diploma or the absence of certificates meant that it took more time to settle into Switzerland and the labor market (Interviewee 2, personal communication, 2021, #06:01; Interviewee 4, personal communication, 2021, #03:17; Interviewee 5, personal communication, 2021, #5:14).

The topic of residence permits was brought up independently and casually by two out of five interviewees. One mentioned that having an F permit poses restrictions on finding a flat and traveling, among other things. This came up in the context of a friend of the interviewee who underwent a Swiss apprenticeship after having worked as an engineer in their country of origin; this person still could not find a job, partly because of the F permit, “because this means that you cannot do anything” (Interviewee 2, personal communication, 2021, #10:18).²² The other interviewee was very clear about the negative consequences an unemployment status or only working part time for a longer period had on the possibility of naturalization (Interviewee 1, personal communication, 2021, #30:37).

Four out of five interviewees mentioned the topic of dependence on supporting agencies, like the RAV or the social assistance office. One interviewee was proud of being independent from social assistance and able to tell other people that he worked (Interviewee 2, personal communication, 2021, #08:03). This view was shared by another interviewee, who also believed that it was not necessary to depend on either the RAV or social assistance because she had a Swiss university degree in law. This also provoked a lack of understanding why she had not found a job in 10 years (Interviewee 3, personal communication, 2021, #11:43). One interviewee felt ashamed of her appointments at the social assistance office and frequently asked if her social worker could meet her outside of working hours or in a restaurant so that she would not be related to social assistance. Once her family was independent of social assistance, she was very relieved (Interviewee 5, personal communication, 2021, #34:24). The fourth interviewee saw the issue that, when migrants are not working, they will be disadvantaged and even criminalized if they depend on social assistance, even though they desire to work but cannot find a job. She also pointed out that her understanding of what the SEM saw as a priority integration matter was labor market integration (Interviewee 1, personal communication, 2021, #29:51).

In the context of cantonal differences in migrant operations, one interviewee told the story of her husband, who organized financial aid for a German language course independently but, ultimately, could not attend the course because the municipality told him he had to work instead and could not be absent from work (Interviewee 5, personal communication, 2021, #28:30).

²² Free translation by the author of this thesis.

Another interviewee stated that cantonal differences lead to different outcomes for the same permit application (Interviewee 3, personal communication, 2021, #39:46).

One topic that was mentioned independently and repeatedly by four out of five interviewees was the experience with discrimination in the labor market or different treatment due to their foreigner status or identity. Statements were about: the preference of EU/EFTA foreigners over third-country foreigners when occupying a vacancy (Interviewee 1, personal communication, 2021, #32:12) and that many individuals, whether neighbors or individuals on the job, when meeting foreigners who have migrated for various reasons, say “STOP” and they act hesitantly, and, at the beginning, there is always a perceived interpersonal boundary due to their foreigner status (Interviewee 2, personal communication, 2021, #12:04). Three out of five interviewees described their perception as being below everyone else (Interviewee 2, personal communication, 2021, #24:38) or being in the far back and below, feeling forced to do more and make a better impression (Interviewee 4, personal communication, 2021, #20:38), feeling not wanted (Interviewee 3, personal communication, 2021, #11:43), and having to invest double the energy because there are certain barriers (Interviewee 3, personal communication, 2021, #54:09). In this context, language skills were also mentioned. One interviewee mentioned the answer of a recruiter after getting far in the recruitment process: The interviewee was not selected for the job due to her mother tongue not being German. The interviewee asserted that this was an unchangeable aspect of her identity and that she felt discriminated against (Interviewee 4, personal communication, 2021, #47:17). One example of different treatment was given by an interviewee with a headscarf. While the personal motive for wearing the headscarf was not discussed in the interview, it is assumed that it was an expression of the interviewee’s identity, which stood in connection to her country of origin, meaning to the dominant religious stream in her country of origin. The headscarf had been commented on and discussed extensively at one of her jobs in an institution, which focused as a prior aim on supporting and informing foreigners in Switzerland. The coworkers’ comments also touched on the topics of terrorism and Muslims, to the degree that the interviewee felt uncomfortable and reported to the head of the institution (Interviewee 1, personal communication, 2021, #7:46, #8:32).

Level of language skills was a topic that was frequently mentioned among four out of five interviewees. One interviewee mentioned that migrants cannot apply or do not get a chance

when the job advertisement states French or German mother tongue as a language requirement (Interviewee 1, personal communication, 2021, #13:00). One interviewee indicated that language skills are always viewed as a priority, but recruiters should instead weigh the personal characteristics of the applicant more heavily. Taking language skills as a priority was also problematic to the interviewee, because when it comes to language skill level, there is great uncertainty regarding actual skills. The interviewee mentioned that language skill is an estimation, and if an applicant writes in their CV that their German language skills are on a C1 level, recruiters cannot deduce the actual language skills of the applicant. The interviewee asserted that if fewer language skill requirements were in place, and, instead, other skills were in focus, more migrants would feel courageous and apply for jobs (Interviewee 4, personal communication, 2021, #42:59, #44:33, #47:27). The interviewee suggested that employers could offer language courses (e.g., German or French) during working hours, which would be offered to everyone no matter their background. She had seen this done by some German employers (Interviewee 4, personal communication, 2021, #55:07).

Perceptions of private and public employers were briefly discussed. One interviewee believed that public employers had more entry barriers than private employers. She assumed that all requirements, like language skills and experience, must be fulfilled at public employers but not all at private-sector employers (Interviewee 1, personal communication, 2021, #15:45). One interviewee saw the difference between public and private employers in career opportunities. He claimed that, with employment in the public sector, migrants could climb the career ladder faster. In contrast, at a private employer, migrants always stay on the same level, and it could be more difficult for them to move up in the hierarchy (Interviewee 2, personal communication, 2021, #31:35). Nonetheless, he stated that it is difficult for migrants to find a job in the public sector because of missing (German) certificates and diplomas and a lack of language skills (Interviewee 2, personal communication, 2021, #33:14).

4.3 Perceived attractive employer signals

Having presented the interviewees' statements about inclusion and integration, representation in public administrations, and barriers to labor market integration, the current section explores the obvious recruitment signals discussed during the interviews. Interviewees were presented with the employer's diversity statement of the municipality of Bern and asked for their opinions.

One interviewee believed that not everyone gets the same chance—that that is simply not true (Interviewee 1, personal communication, 2021, #20:46). Nevertheless, when employers indicate that, for example, they invite women with a migration background to apply, she feels like she could apply and has a chance (#21:16). One interviewee believed that those diversity statements are only theoretical, and many employers use them in writing, but they are not applied in practice. She would love to work for an organization in which she knows that they are open to diverse people—people of different nationalities, religions, and orientations (Interviewee 3, personal communication, 2021, #33:10). On the other hand, a diversity statement conveyed a sense of “everyone gets a chance” to one interviewee. She felt attracted when reading said statement because the employer indicated openness (Interviewee 4, personal communication, 2021, #32:21). If the job advertisement had a pictorial representation of a diverse group of people, one interviewee felt positive about this and appreciated the diversity portrayed (Interviewee 1, personal communication, 2021, #22:10). When one interviewee was asked about her opinion on the recruiter’s name being foreign, she said that she had noticed a recruiter’s name being of her own nationality, and this gave her the feeling that she might have a better chance, but, in the end, she did not pay much attention to that signal (Interviewee 4, personal communication, 2021, #33:14, #35:19).

When asked for their opinion of specific signals for migrants, the interviewees’ perceptions were mixed. One interviewee generally saw internships or educational programs for migrants as positive but suggested that pre-internships would be a good and accessible option, because internships, in her opinion, already have high requirements (Interviewee 1, personal communication, 2021, #23:28). She also found it attractive when employers offer courses during the (pre-)internship, like, for example, language or IT courses (#23:57). On the other hand, one interviewee did not agree with those kinds of special offers for migrants and found these signals unattractive. She did not understand these programs because they indicate that migrants are different from other people and that they need special support. As a foreigner, she stated that she brought the same knowledge or experience as other Swiss candidates and did not want to be treated differently due to her foreigner status (Interviewee 4, personal communication, 2021, 37:07). Instead, she suggested an approach that made more sense to her because it does not discriminate between individuals. This approach is implemented by the RAV and grants individuals who have been hired by a company a longer introductory period, paid for by the RAV (#41:03). Another special signal that was discussed was the sensitization

of the workforce to diversity and the intercultural education of the personnel. One interviewee found this to be a positive and attractive signal but added that every migrant has a unique method and process of getting where they are. Every migrant has been challenged by different barriers (Interviewee 1, personal communication, 2021, #25:21). This elaboration on the unique path of each migrant in connection with the asked question suggests that educating the personnel about diversity and interculturality might not do the reality of the individual process of migrants justice due to its heterogeneity.

Not only signals specific to migrants were discussed, but general attractive employer signals were also mentioned.

- An attractive signal for one interviewee was work schedule flexibility (Interviewee 1, personal communication, 2021, #33:51) and the compatibility of family and professional life (Interviewee 1, personal communication, 2021, #31:55), which is linked to the possibility of part-time positions (Interviewee 4, personal communication, 2021, #27:32; Interviewee 3, personal communication, 2021, #26:46).
- One out of five interviewees wished that employers would give more chances to people with different backgrounds, less experience, or even gaps in their CV due to formation of a family (Interviewee 1, personal communication, 2021, #37:13).
- Two out of five interviewees mentioned that they found it attractive when they saw that employers were concerned with the equality of women and men and if they addressed specific topics for women or individuals with disabilities (Interviewee 1, personal communication, 2021, #33:51; Interviewee 3, personal communication, 2021, #26:46).
- The transparency of salaries and equal pay for men and women were appreciated by interviewees and perceived as attractive employer assets (Interviewee 1, personal communication, 2021, #37:13; Interviewee 4, personal communication, 2021, #06:36).
- One interviewee considered it attractive when employers signaled that they were tolerant. In her case, she referred to the tolerance concerning headscarves (Interviewee 1, personal communication, 2021, #18:37).

5 Discussion

This thesis started with an analysis of the theory of representative bureaucracy and the more detailed treatment of the underlying theoretical signaling effect in the early recruitment process, as well as the thematic classification in the state of research. From the examination of the theories and the state of research, a research gap was identified: Attractive signals for migrants in the early recruitment process of public administrations is an under researched area. This thesis addresses the research gap, and contributions are made through an explorative-qualitative empirical approach to explore the signals perceived as attractive by qualified job-seeking migrants. In this chapter, the results of the empirical part are discussed, and the research question is answered. This is followed by a critical examination of the methodology, and further limitations are presented. The thesis concludes with contributions and an outlook.

5.1 Discussion of findings

After presenting the results along three main parts, it is now of interest to critically interpret the results and put them in context with the theoretical considerations. Overall, the second and third thematic parts of the results contribute to answering the research question: *What early recruitment signals of public employers are perceived and evaluated as attractive by qualified job-seeking migrants?*

The interviewees mentioned employer attributes they find attractive but did not link them to public employers per se. Nevertheless, job security, a safe future and salary transparency can arguably be linked to public employers because job security (Lee & Choi, 2016; Lewis & Frank, 2002) and the prospect of a “safe future” (Ritz & Waldner, 2011) are strong predictors of public employment preference. Job security was not mentioned directly by the interviewees, but statements regarding their dependence on social assistance or the RAV and their wish to be independent (Interviewee 2, personal communication, 2021, #08:03; Interviewee 3, personal communication, 2021, #11:43) indicate a desire for a secure job in the long run. Therefore, a job that is unlikely they can lose again would provide them with this independence. Arguably,

job security is attractive to the interviewees. Furthermore, transparency of salaries is a characteristic of public sector employment, evidenced by publicly available pay tables.²³

An aspect that came up during the interviews was the use of targeted recruitment signals. After comparing all the answers, it can be said that these signals are generally considered as positive and attractive. However, there is skepticism toward signals that indicate equal chances for everyone because from the interviewees' experiences, not everyone has the same chance. Hence, there is a discrepancy between what is written and what happens in practice. To change the interviewees' perception of this discrepancy over time, employers should choose wisely what they write or present in their recruitment materials to meet expectations of job-seeking individuals.

Signals specifically for migrants raised mixed opinions. On the one hand, these specific signals were appreciated and, for example, special programs for migrants (such as a preinternship) were evaluated as a good and attractive option. On the other hand, these programs provoked a misunderstanding of why migrants should be treated differently than the rest of the population. Generally, there is a notable desire for more tolerance and openness toward diverse people coming from employers.

Discrimination and language skills turned out to be among the more important topics, with a consensus among the interviewees. To a certain extent, they all feel treated as different in society and on the job market and have experienced discriminatory behavior from others. What could possibly work in early recruitment is to inform job applicants that they will go through an anonymous recruitment process in which country of origin, name and so on do not influence recruiters' decisions, as suggested by Fibbi (2021). This anonymous recruitment process could send a signal to migrants about the employer. Language skills were linked to the interviewees' discriminatory experiences due to preference for individuals with a German or French mother tongue. Employers could consider reducing language skill requirements. This recommendation is doubtful for employers in the public sector, where multilingualism is often requested.

²³ An example can be seen on the website of the finance department of the Canton of Berne (Finanzdirektion Kanton Bern, 2021).

However, other measures could be taken, such as language courses offered by the employer for everyone.

On the one hand, it can be observed from the data and the interpretation that there are existing attractive signals for the interviewed migrants that public employers could use. These signals include highlighting job security; signaling the possibility of family and career compatibility, depending on the job; and underscoring transparency of salaries. Targeted recruitment signals, as listed in the theoretical part, appear to be a good option for use in early recruitment material because they indicate openness to diverse individuals. However, it is arguably not as central for interviewees as, for example, language skills and factual equal treatment of all individuals.

On the other hand, public employers could adjust their recruitment process to minimize the chances of discrimination and improve their internal offering of promotional measures to support the development of, for example, language skills and consider more strongly informal and practical skills and intercultural competencies, as suggested by Mexi et al. (2021), instead of focusing on the availability of diplomas and certificates only. This could also help older migrants, who cannot undergo a second education or spend a significant amount of time taking language courses. These improvements could ultimately contribute to a more representative staff. However, these adaptations must first be made within the organization, and only then can they be used as attractive signals for migrants in the recruitment process.

Overall, it must be noted that during the interviews, it was strongly evident that the interviewed qualified job-seeking migrants were not directly concerned with employment in a specific sector but with first finding a job. It appears that due to their circumstances, they could not afford to be overparticular in their job search. This further emphasizes the importance of first changing the recruitment process and internal offerings for diverse people, thereby enabling the signaling of these changes in recruitment material. This could hopefully contribute to a change in the circumstances of qualified job-seeking migrants in Switzerland so that they have more possibilities of being particular regarding where they want to work.

5.2 Limitations

In an explorative-qualitative empirical approach, representativeness of the sample is not sought. More so, a saturation of information conceived during interviews is central. Arguably, saturation was not entirely achieved in this study with its sample size of five interviewees. Presumably, achieving information saturation could not have been easily achieved, given the resources available and the context of this thesis, because of two issues: Assumed reservations toward this study and the heterogeneity of the population group.

The first reasoning about the reservation of migrants to participate in this study is not based on obvious knowledge but on the interpretation of responses to the call for participation in the interview. Interview partners were addressed through intermediary individuals that either worked for a program in which job-seeking migrants participated or were experts in that field and knew potential interview partners personally.²⁴ This seemed to be a valid and promising way to recruit interview partners. Instead, the response rate was small, and four out of five interview partners were recruited through personal contacts of experts.

Regarding heterogeneity, even though there was some overlap in topics addressed by the interviewees, all their stories and experiences were unique, which might indicate that with each additional interview, new information concerning the attractiveness of public employers and their signals would come to light. Along with heterogeneity in their experience as migrants, other diversity factors, such as gender and age, had an influence on their experiences of the labor market and their emphasis on topics during the interview. This means that the results of this thesis can be taken as examples and insights of five migrants. More so, they provide insights of what public employers could consider changing in their recruitment process and offer future research directions.

Even though the diversity of the sample (consisting of five migrants from three different continents and two different areas in Europe) was strongly appreciated by the author and reflects the heterogenous migrant population in Switzerland, it led to an additional limitation in connection with the interview guide. While the interview guide was a helpful orientation

²⁴ Direct contact with qualified job-seeking migrants participating in programs was impossible due to strict data security measures.

material, the interviewer was not able to follow through with all the questions in the order suggested in it due to the heterogeneous history and experiences of interviewees. While there were recurring topics, such as hiring discrimination and language issues, questions had to be adapted to the individual context. Furthermore, it was noted during the interviews that for interviewees, it was easier to discuss negative experiences or perceptions rather than situations influencing their attraction to employers. Therefore, the interviewer gave room for these negative experiences because in the end, they indicate the areas employers can improve their recruitment or internal processes, which can then be packaged into attractive early recruitment signals.

In connection with the heterogeneity of the sample and the migrant group in general stands the difficulty in defining a migrant. During the conceptual process of this thesis, the question of how to define such a heterogeneous group arose because the term can be roughly differentiated between a migrant in public debate, in data, and in law and policy. A migrant in data is usually defined as foreign born. This offers little information about whether the migrant is perceived as a migrant in public debate or if the presence of the migrant is considered a problem, as crudely witnessed in political debates (Anderson, 2019). Defining migrants as foreign-born individuals does not capture the essence of the heterogeneity of this group. For example, there are differences in language skills, diploma recognition and perhaps even ascribed migrant status between an individual who migrated from Germany to Switzerland and another individual who migrated to Switzerland from Asia. Still, in the context of this thesis, they are both migrants because they are foreign born. While the definition of such a heterogeneous group must be critically analyzed, there is still one major benefit to it, which ultimately led to the definition used in this thesis: Data on foreign-born individuals residing in Switzerland and working in Swiss public administrations are readily available, making it possible to evaluate this group's degree of representation in public administrations.

5.3 Contributions and outlook

This thesis contributes to public administration research in three ways:

- It focuses on representative bureaucracy in a new context—the representation of society in Swiss public administrations with emphasis on the representation of migrants as foreign-born individuals.
- It connects public sector recruitment with the well-known signaling theory, which has been scarcely researched (Korac et al., 2019).
- It offers ideas about how signals of public employers influence one certain target group.

These contributions are relevant for the theoretical development of the signaling effect in early public recruitment for a specific target group and have a share in public administrations becoming more equitable through the representation of all population groups in their work force. The insights of this thesis lay the groundwork for future research. It is advisable for future research in the field to focus on signals in early recruitment and test them with a quantitative empirical approach. A promising way to test whether certain signals in early recruitment are attractive to job-seeking migrants is through an experiment. Future research could, for example, design vignettes, which will allow testing of the causal relationship between independent variables and a dependent variable (or variables) in an experimental setting.²⁵ The independent variables could be different early employment signals in job advertisements based on the insights of this thesis. The dependent variable could then be organizational attraction. As this thesis has brought forward different attractive signals for migrants in early recruitment, vignettes could vary based on these signals. For example, a vignette could be a job advertisement with targeted recruitment signals, such as a pictorial representation of diverse people and an encouragement clause; another vignette could contain the same job description but explain to the job-seeking migrants that the recruitment procedure will be anonymous; and yet another could include signals containing information about benefits from public employers, such as job security and salary transparency.

²⁵ A vignette is “a short, carefully constructed description of a person, object, or situation representing a systematic combination of characteristics” (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010, p. 128).

Insights into the casual relationship between early recruitment signals for migrants and migrants' perceptions of attractiveness of these signals not only contribute to public administration research but also inform practitioners in public recruitment on how to adapt their recruitment to address and contribute to representativeness of this target group in public administration. Furthermore, the insights center the discussion on a marginalized group in society.

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