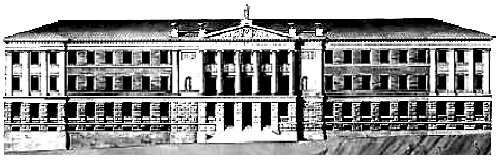
Akhlaq Ahmad

Getting a Job in Finland

The Social Networks of Immigrants from the Indian Subcontinent in the Helsinki Metropolitan Labour Market



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Dedicated to those who have
experienced migration

Abstract

Getting a Job in Finland: The Social Networks of Immigrants from the Indian Subcontinent in the Helsinki Metropolitan Labour Market

This work is linked to studies on the role of social networks in gaining access to the labour market. The aim was to explore the various ways in which the immigrants of this study had entered the job market and the extent to which their personal networks had helped them to locate and obtain employment opportunities during their stay in Finland. The data for the study was collected in two ways. First, the participant-observation method was used in order to obtain first-hand experience of the employment situation of non-nationals in the Finnish labour market. The scope of their opportunities was explored through job information located via impersonal sources such as newspapers and the national employment agency. This objective was realised by answering 400 job advertisements and going through all the processes that a job seeker generally encounters in applying for a particular post. Secondly, 40 semi-structured interviews of an ethnographic and exploratory nature were conducted among immigrants originating from the Indian subcontinent residing in the Helsinki metropolitan area. The aim was to chart the entire occupational histories of the immigrants from the time of their arrival in Finland to the present.

The findings of this study show that, despite the nationwide well-established system of public employment agencies in Finland, and the relatively easy access this formal channel offers to job seekers regarding information about new vacancies, social networks still constitute a substantial source of job information and employment opportunities for immigrants in the Finnish labour market. The significance of these networks is particularly strong for non-nationals who, because of having originated from outside the social system, may find access to employment opportunities rather restricted in the host society. The findings reveal that for the majority of the immigrants included in this study the transmission of job information had occurred through informal channels and reliance on such personal means had persisted throughout most of their occupational careers. In particular, their ethnic friends and kin had often acted as transmitters of job information. Moreover, the role of the immigrants' networks had also been quite significant in securing jobs themselves, as half of the informants' entire employment spells had been obtained with the direct assistance of their social ties. This practical assistance in the provision of job information and in the acquisition of employment had been crucial for the immigrants especially at the beginning of their careers as it had helped get their feet on the ground in the new sociocultural reality.

The findings also point to the dual role that social networks can potentially play in the occupational-attainment process. On the one hand, they acted as a crucial resource-opportunity structure in providing employment opportunities for the immigrants, and on the other hand they operated as constraining factors by channelling them into low-prestige sectors of the labour market. However, notwithstanding the important role of personal networks in landing the immigrants in occupations of low human-capital requirements, the findings also suggest the need to consider the interplay of other factors such as human-capital attributes and structural constraints – including discrimination and

internal labour-market regulations in various sectors – that may also introduce mobility restrictions and thereby affect the life chances of non-nationals in the host society.

Explanation of the prevalence of informal job-search methods among the informants was sought in the fact that jobs are social phenomena arising in a labour market that is socioculturally constructed. By virtue of their sociocultural embeddedness, these phenomena tend to evade the notions according to which the acquisition of jobs is solely a function of human-capital attributes. Based on the empirical evidence, it was argued that such notions are inadequate in understanding the complex nature of the job-finding process. It was therefore contended that the idea of a labour market in which the actors sell and hire labour according to the objective, rational rules of supply and demand is rather open to doubt. Instead, it was suggested that the concept of the labour market could be more fruitfully studied as a socially and culturally constructed rather than an undifferentiated and competitive space in which the rules of supply and demand are shaped by a particular sociocultural reality. In this context, it was also argued that the hiring process driven by abstract or impersonal criteria is much less prevalent than claimed by certain conceptual paradigms geared to the understanding of the economic structure and differential outcomes in the labour market.

Key words: social networks, immigrants, labour markets, employment opportunities, Indian subcontinent, Pakistan, India, job-search methods

Tiivistelmä

Työnsaanti Suomessa: Intian niemimaalta tulleiden maahanmuuttajien sosiaaliset verkostot Helsingin seudun työmarkkinoilla

Väitöskirjassa tarkastellaan sosiaalisten verkostojen roolia työmarkkinoille pääsyssä. Tutkimuksessa käsitellään niitä lukuisia tapoja ja käytäntöjä, joiden avulla maahanmuuttajat ovat päässeet työmarkkinoille sekä sitä, missä laajuudessa heidän sosiaaliset verkostonsa ovat auttaneet heitä paikallistamaan ja saamaan työllistymismahdollisuuksia. Tutkimuksessa käytetty empiirinen aineisto on kerätty kahdella eri menetelmällä; osallistuvalla havainnoinnilla ja puolistrukturoiduilla haastatteluilla. Osallistuvassa havainnoinnissa saatiin ensikäden tietoa maahanmuuttajien työllistymismahdollisuuksista tutkimalla tilanteita, joissa työtä koskeva tieto paikallistettiin muodollisten lähteiden kuten sanomalehti-ilmoitusten ja työvoimatoimiston kautta. Tutkimuksessa vastattiin kaikkiaan 400 työpaikkailmoitukseen ja käytiin läpi kaikki työpaikanhakuun liittyvät prosessit. Tutkimuksen toisessa vaiheessa tehtiin 40 puolistrukturoitua etnografista haastattelua, joissa haastateltiin Intian niemimaalta lähtöisin olevia, pääkaupunkiseudulla asuvia maahanmuuttajia. Haastatteluissa kartoitettiin maahanmuuttajien koko työhistoria maahantulohetkestä nykypäivään.

Valtakunnallinen hyvin organisoitu työvoimatoimistoverkosto tarjoaa tehokkaan muodollisen kanavan vapaita työpaikkoja koskevaan tietoon. Tutkimushavainnot osoittavat kuitenkin, että nimenomaan epämuodolliset sosiaaliset verkostot muodostavat maahanmuuttajien keskeisimmän työtä ja työpaikkoja koskevan tietolähteen. Näiden verkostojen tärkeys saattaa olla erityisen suuri maahanmuuttajien keskuudessa, koska he tulevat sosiaalisen järjestelmän ulkopuolelta ja heidän työtilaisuutensa saattavat olla rajoitetut. Tulokset osoittavat, että tämän tutkimuksen informanttien työpaikkoja koskeva tieto kulkeutui useimmiten epämuodollisten kanavien kautta. Turvautuminen tällaisiin henkilökohtaisiin keinoihin oli ollut ominaista valtaosalle maahanmuuttajia heidän koko työuransa ajan. Erityisesti maahanmuuttajien etniset ystävät ja sukulaiset olivat usein toimineet työpaikkoja koskevan tiedon välittäjinä. Maahanmuuttajien sosiaalisten verkostojen rooli oli usein ollut melko merkittävä myös työpaikkojen saannin kannalta, sillä puolet informanttien työpaikoista oli saatu sosiaalisten siteiden avulla. Tämä käytännöllinen apu työtä koskevan tiedon tarjoamisessa sekä työpaikan saamisessa oli ollut olennaista maahanmuuttajille erityisesti heidän työuriensa alkuvaiheessa, sillä se oli auttanut heitä saamaan otteen uudesta sosiokulttuurisesta todellisuudesta.

Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat myös sen kaksinaisluonteen, mikä sosiaalisilla verkostoilla voi olla uralla etenemisessä. Yhtäältä sosiaaliset verkostot toimivat keskeisinä voimavaroja mahdollistavina rakenteina tarjoamalla maahanmuuttajille työllistymismahdollisuuksia. Toisaalta sosiaaliset verkostot toimivat samalla myös rajoittavina tekijöinä, sillä ne ohjasivat maahanmuuttajat työmarkkinoiden vähemmän arvostetuille sektoreille. Verkostojen ohella myös muut tekijät kuten työnhakijoiden inhimillisen pääoman ominaisuudet tai erilaiset rakenteelliset rajoitukset kuten työsyrjintä ja työmarkkinoiden sisäinen sääntely voivat estää sosiaalista liikkuvuutta ja siten vaikuttaa maahanmuuttajien elinmahdollisuuksiin.

Epämuodollisten työnhakumenetelmien käytön laajuutta pyrittiin tutkimuksessa selittämään sillä, että työ on sosiaalinen ilmiö, joka juontuu sosiokulttuurisesti rakentuneista työmarkkinoista. Sosiokulttuurisen sidonnaisuutensa myötä tämä ilmiö pyrkii karsastamaan tarkastelutapoja, joiden mukaan työpaikkojen saaminen riippuisi pelkästään työnhakijan inhimillisen pääoman ominaisuuksista. Tässä tutkimuksessa kerätyn empiirisen aineiston perusteella tämänkaltaiset tarkastelutavat ovat riittämättömiä työnhakuprosessin moniulotteisen luonteen ymmärtämiseksi. Tutkimuksessa väitetään, että näkemys työmarkkinoista, joilla toimijat myyvät ja ostavat työvoimaa kysynnän ja tarjonnan objektiivisten ja rationaalisten lakien mukaan on kyseenalainen. Pikemminkin työmarkkinoita olisi hedelmällisempää tarkastella sosiaalisena ja kulttuurisena konstruktiona kuin yhtenäisenä, kilpailuun perustuvana tilana, sillä kysynnän ja tarjonnan lait muotoutuvat tietyn sosiokulttuurisen todellisuuden mukaisesti. Samassa yhteydessä esitettiin myös, että abstraktisti tai universaalisti etenevä rekrytointiprosessi on paljon harvinaisempi kuin mitä tietyt talousrakenteen ja eriarvoisia mahdollisuuksia työmarkkinoilla koskevat käsitteelliset viitekehykset esittävät.

Avainsanat: sosiaaliset verkostot, työmarkkinat, työllistymismahdollisuudet, Intian niemimaa, Pakistan, Intia, työnhakumenetelmät

Acknowledgements

In Finland I realised for the first time the value of an often depreciated entity commonly known as taken-for-grantedness. I came to know that, in certain contexts, it may in fact have the potential to become one of the most precious states of mind for an individual. Being in the specific position of a non-native, pursuing first undergraduate and later postgraduate studies over many years, I could scarcely take anything for granted, nor was there any opportunity to do so, although the desire was occasionally difficult to resist. This made me appreciate any assistance and gesture of friendliness, however slight, which may have been taken for granted in other contexts. It is no wonder, then, that I feel as if I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to those who have helped me substantially in accomplishing my thesis work in various direct and indirect ways. First of all, I would like to thank Professor Riitta Jallinoja, who accepted me as a postgraduate student and gave me the opportunity to proceed further after completing my Master's degree in Sociology. I still recall her kindly manner when I went to see her to discuss my research plan. I would naturally like to express my special gratitude to Professor Risto Alapuro, who later acted as my supervisor. His supervision and comments have been of great help in improving the research design and analyses of the study. I particularly appreciate the abundant time he was consistently willing to give me despite his many engagements and responsibilities. I would also like to express my deep indebtedness to Professor Jukka Siikala who, although not my official supervisor, has guided me in multiple ways during these years, and certainly without whose assistance I would not have been writing these words until much later. Thank you! To Professor Risto Heiskala I owe a twofold debt: Not only was he a source of personal encouragement during my undergraduate studies as a foreign student adviser, he was also very helpful in commenting on my research, especially at the beginning of my postgraduate studies. During those years every time I left his room I felt a new wave of optimism flowing over me. I would also like to extend my special thanks to Timo Moilanen for his valuable support and assistance. Knowing him has indeed been a joy throughout my stay in Finland.

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and hard work and the way they had struggled to improve and build their lives in this new country despite several personal and structural impediments.

I would also like to acknowledge some other silent sources, although their contribution to this work has been on a different level: the pine and birch trees outside my window have given me a sense of tranquillity and a trustworthy friendship in all weathers.

Finally, my most heartfelt thanks are due to my dear wife Ayesha and my family for their consistent support, and especially to my mother whose love and prayers have always been a source of certainty in an essentially uncertain world.

Autumn evening of 25 October 2005

Akhlaq Ahmad

CONTENTS

List of Figures

List of Tables

1 Introduction

1.1 The Aims of the Study

The objective of this study is to consider the ways in which immigrants enter the Finnish labour market and to examine the extent to which their social networks act as important resources and strategies that help them to locate and obtain employment opportunities and thereby settle down in their country of arrival. The study aims to explore the various job-search methods immigrants have employed and considers the intensity of use and their relative effectiveness. It offers a detailed investigation into how job information that facilitates employment among immigrants is acquired and disseminated, how the jobs themselves are applied for, and whether their personal contacts play any direct or indirect role in securing them. In addition, the study also considers the impact of immigrants' social networks on occupational attainment. Arguing in vein with the social resources theory, the study explores how the characteristics of the social resources mobilised in job-seeking efforts and the composition of the personal routine networks in which individuals are embedded may potentially shape the kinds of life chances they may eventually attain in the host society.

The study started from the assumption that social networks play as important a role in the acquisition of job opportunities as they do in other areas of life. This assumption was based on the conception of jobs as social rather than natural phenomena arising in a labour market that is socioculturally constructed. In line with this conception, it was assumed that the securing of jobs is not merely a function of human-capital attributes, since a recruitment process driven by abstract criteria or impersonal standards in real-life situations is much less prevalent than claimed by certain conceptual paradigms such as neoclassical and human capital theories. In fact, job-finding behaviour is more than a rational economic process, and is deeply embedded in other social processes that closely constrain and determine its course and results (Granovetter 1974, 1995). It was therefore hypothesised that the idea of the labour market as a neutral and undifferentiated space in which actors sell and hire labour according to the rational rules of supply and demand painted too perfect a picture. Instead, it was suggested that the concept of the labour market could be more fruitfully studied as a socially and culturally constructed space in which the rules of supply and demand are shaped by a particular sociocultural reality.

To date, studies regarding the role of social networks in occupational attainment have predominantly been conducted in the United States. The importance of social networks has often been brought to light with reference to these studies. The significance of networks may vary with respect to different institutional and cultural contexts, however. For example, one crucial respect in which the USA and Finland, and also many other European countries, differ is in the presence of a national employment agency. The USA lacks such an agency, while Finland has a nation-wide extensive system of public employment agencies that employers are required to inform about job openings. Job seekers thus have access to a continuously updated source of information about new employment opportunities at their disposal. This institutional difference in the job-search context between the USA and Finland is relevant to job seekers on two levels – first, in the degree of job information that can be acquired, and secondly in the ease at which this information is available to them. This difference could mean that the importance of

social networks varies in the two countries. Considering the lack of a national employment agency in the USA, social networks could be assumed to matter more there than in Finland. One of the aims of this study, therefore, was to test this assumption by establishing whether and to what extent the role of social networks in the acquisition of employment opportunities differs in Finland with its different institutional and cultural setting.

1.2 Research Design

The scope of the above assumptions was tested by conducting two interrelated studies. For the first study, the participant-observation method was used to empirically investigate the labour-market situation of non-nationals in the Finnish labour market. This was done by considering the range of their employment opportunities through job information located via formal channels such as newspapers and the national employment agency, and by examining the role of various supply-side-related factors in entering the job market. The aim of the second study was to explore how the immigrants under investigation had connected with work opportunities. In order to pursue this, in-depth interviews were conducted with a view to systematically researching the subjects' entire occupational careers from the time of their arrival in Finland to the present.

The empirical findings of this study are therefore based on two data sets. The participant-observation data was collected during 1999-2000, whereas the interviews were carried out in 2003. Before conducting the interviews with the informants, I considered it imperative to have systematic knowledge of the recruitment dynamics facing job seekers of foreign origin in the labour market in order to test the validity of the assumptions that envisage the job market as a unitary and competitive space governed by mere considerations of human capital. I assumed that one of the effective ways of achieving this objective would be to take on the role of a job seeker myself. Hence, I answered 400 job advertisements appearing in the formal sources, including the national employment agency and various kinds of newspapers, and went through all the processes that any candidate, whether national or non-national, encounters in applying for a particular post. This does not imply that prior to conducting this preliminary study I was fully incognizant of the employment situation of non-nationals in Finland, however. In fact, I was rather aware of the prevailing conditions. My acquaintance with the Finnish labour market stretches back more than ten years when I came to pursue my studies in Finland. As I was not entitled to the state study grant to which my national counterparts had the privilege, I had to rely on working in a diverse range of part-time jobs to finance first my undergraduate and later, to some extent, my postgraduate studies. This bestowed upon me some experience of getting acquainted with the functioning of the labour market, and especially the way it is constructed with respect to non-national job seekers. Nevertheless, the nature of my encounter with it was unsystematic and fragmentary. The attainment of thorough experience of its workings necessitated intensive and extensive interaction with it. The participant-observation method successfully afforded me the opportunity to acquire comprehensive knowledge about the typical real-life situations that the non-national workers may come across while seeking employment, and to assess the function of various supply-side-related credentials in gaining access to the labour market.

The results of the participant observation seemed to strengthen my working hypothesis, namely that the notion of the labour market as a neutral and undifferentiated space in which actors sell and hire labour according to the objective and rational rules of supply and demand is rather susceptible to doubt, and that social networks should be of relevance in gaining access to the market. Therefore, the next step was to further test this hypothesis by interviewing immigrants. For this purpose, I carried out 40 semi-structured qualitative interviews with first-generation male immigrants originating from Pakistan and India in order to see how they had entered the labour market during their stay in Finland, and to determine the extent to which their social resources had been effective in linking them with employment opportunities in the host society. The rationale behind conducting these interviews with these particular immigrants is self-evident. First, since I come from the same region, I assumed that the fact that I shared the 'same' culture and also very often common languages would grant me some advantage in terms of access to informants. The degree of correspondence between my expectations and the actual reality indeed proved very significant. In addition, such a choice was also relevant since it was I who employed the participant-observation method, and the responses I received from the employers must have been shaped by the fact of my particular background. Hence, I considered it important to carry out the interviews with immigrants with the same background.

1.3 Structure of the Study

The present study comprises ten chapters and proceeds in the following manner. Chapter one sets out the aims and gives a description of the research design. Chapter two reviews the history of immigration in Finland and the responses it has evoked among the general public. The employment situation of immigrants in the Finnish job market is briefly discussed, and the various factors that have been identified in earlier research and in the media as hampering the effective integration of immigrants into the labour market are described. Chapter three presents the results of the participant-observation research. In the light of the empirical findings, it seeks to discuss the legitimacy of certain notions of the neoclassical and human capital theories that regard labour markets as undifferentiated arenas in which individuals can freely make a choice among a broad spectrum of job options based upon their personal preferences and productive potential. Contrary to these notions, it argues in favour of the sociocultural construction of the labour market by emphasising its fragmented nature and by suggesting the important role of social and institutional influences upon the employment opportunities of non-nationals and other vulnerable social groups. Chapter four reports on the second part of the study, namely the interviews, with a view to establishing a link with the findings from the participant-observation part. It offers a discussion of the role of social networks in the acquisition of employment opportunities. Moreover, it gives a description of the data and methods, presents definitions of the job-search methods used in this work, and introduces a new job-acquisition model for analysing the job-attainment process. This model effectively elucidates different stages of the job-finding process, which has not been done in previous studies. Some of the limitations of the study are also considered. Chapter five discusses the various dynamics of the diffusion of job information. In accordance with the job acquisition model elaborated in the previous chapter, it

investigates the various channels through which the informants had located their employment opportunities, and considers the role of their social resources in this process. It provides an in-depth view of how, and under what circumstances, the job information that facilitated their employment was received and disseminated. It examines the nature of the social relations that provided the informants with the information, reflecting on the fact that, despite the presence of an extensive system of public employment agencies in Finland, for most of them the transmission of job information was through personal sources, thus validating the hypothesis of the study. Chapter six explores the potential impact of the various personal characteristics of the individuals – including their education, length of stay in Finland, age, labour-market experience, Finnish-language skills, network size and job-search context – on the use of certain kinds of job-search methods. Chapter seven, in pursuing the job-acquisition model, further explores the various ways in which the informants applied for their jobs. It assesses the direct and indirect role of their social ties in jobs obtained with assistance from their contacts. It also considers the various factors that the informants described as contributing to job acquisition in cases in which they had contacted the employers or their representatives on their own without any assistance. Chapter eight discusses the impact of the immigrants' social networks on their occupational attainment. It sheds light on the dual role that networks can potentially play in occupational mobility and draws out its implications for immigrants. It is argued that while the informants' networks acted as an important resource-opportunity structure to help get their feet on the ground in a new sociocultural environment, they also introduced mobility restrictions by confining them to certain sectors of the labour market. Arguing in vein with the social resources theory, it draws attention to the importance of the structural characteristics of immigrants' networks in producing specific occupational outcomes. Chapter nine takes a step further: it posits that, although the composition of people's social networks significantly shapes the nature of the employment opportunities that may come their way, discussion on occupational attainment must also consider other factors – including structural constraints such as discrimination and individual human-capital attributes – that may also cause low occupational attainment and limit the life chances of immigrants in the host society. Chapter ten presents the conclusions of the study.

2 Finland: Confronting the Other

2.1 An Overview of Recent Immigration History

The number of non-nationals in Finland has increased exponentially during the last decade. Owing to various historical, geographical and economic factors, the country was relatively ethno-culturally homogeneous and isolated until recently. In fact, from the beginning of the twentieth century until as late as the 1970s Finland had rather experienced a significant outflow of its nationals, who headed off to many economically advanced countries, including Canada and the United States, to provide labour in their mining and forestry industries, for example. In particular, at the end of the 1960s, it also witnessed the large-scale movement of its nationals to Sweden in search of work because of the prevailing poor economic conditions. While the Finns have emigrated to various countries in substantial numbers, foreigners and refugees were for a long time viewed as constituting a threat to the country's security due to its geopolitical position (Paananen 2005). The official policies on immigration have also been characterised by strict border controls, especially following the Winter War between Finland and Russia. A long period of isolation has therefore given rise to a national identity powerfully shaped by cultural homogeneity. The particular historical environment has also perpetuated peripheral thinking that subscribes to the notion that there are many reasons to emigrate from Finland but there can be no sensible or acceptable reasons for immigrating here (Forsander & Trux 2002, 96). It is indicative of the newness of this phenomenon that discussions regarding immigration in the media as well as in related research have often started from the notion of Finland as 'once a country of emigration now a country of immigration.'

Although Finland has a few small endogenous minorities such as the Finland-Swedes, the Romani, the Tartars and the Sami in the North, the number of foreigners[1] in 1990 was still less than one per cent of the total five million population, corresponding to 26,000 people. The current population statistics place the number of foreigners living permanently in the country at approximately 103,700 (Tilastokeskus 2003), which is equal to two per cent of the total population. Finland has thus witnessed a significant increase in immigration during a relatively short period of time. Nevertheless, the overall proportion of the foreign population is still among the lowest in the European Union. The comparative figures for the other Nordic countries stand at around 20 per cent for Sweden, eight per cent for Norway and 8.2 per cent for Denmark[2]. However, according to some projections, the proportion of immigrants in Finland will increase to around five per cent of the total population, or about 250,000 in number by 2021 (Vartia & Yllä-Antilla1996).

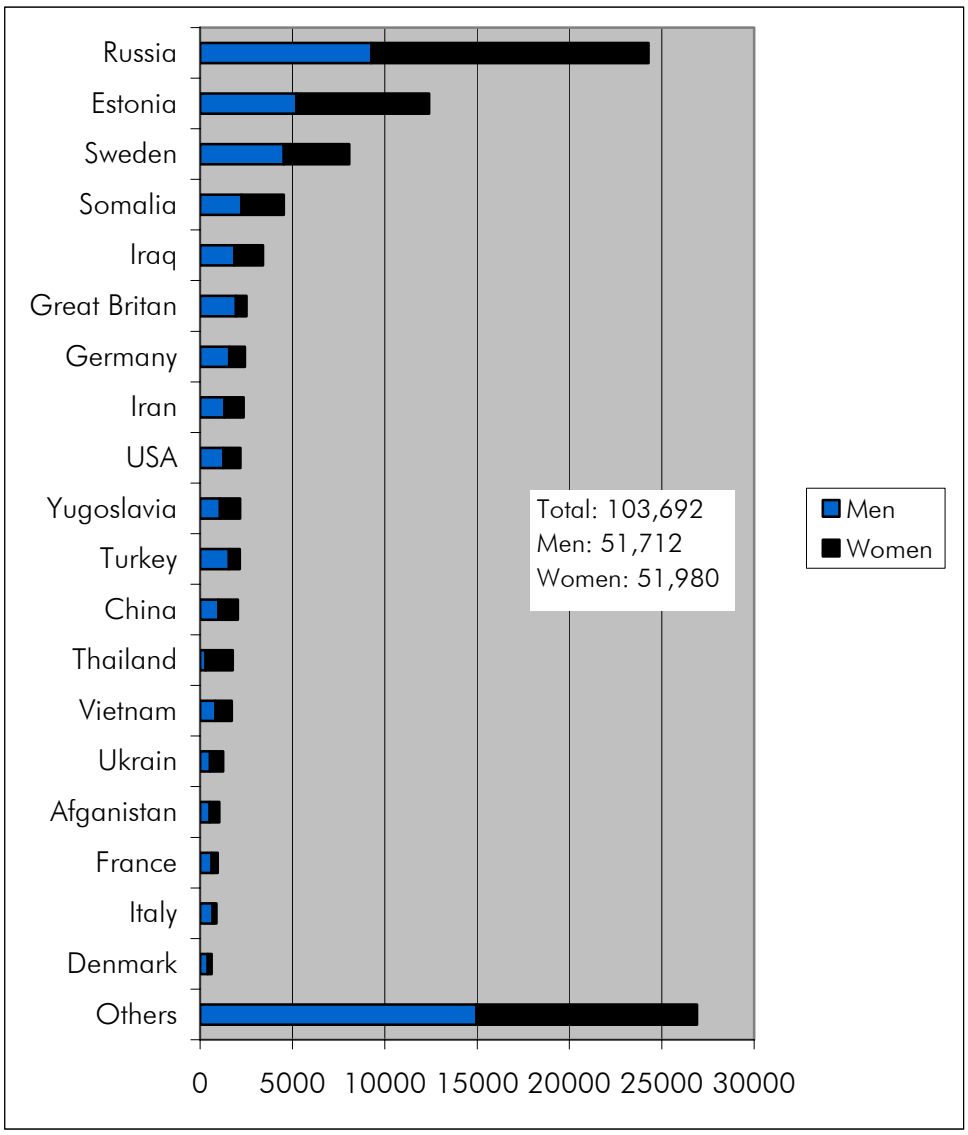
The majority of foreigners in Finland (approximately 69%) originate from the European countries, followed by Asia and Africa, at around 17 and eight per cent respectively. A significant number (17.3%) are nationals of other European Union

[1] The terms 'immigrants,' foreigners' and 'non-nationals' are used interchangeably in this work.

[2] The procedure of considering who is an immigrant may vary in different countries. However, generally an immigrant is defined as a person both of whose parents were born abroad as well as first-generation immigrants. This was the criterion used in figures regarding Sweden and Norway, while in the case of Denmark, the figure also includes refugees.

countries. At the turn of the year 2002-2003, the major groups of foreigners comprised the nationals of Russia (24,277), Estonia (12,405) and Sweden (8,069) respectively (Figure 1). The composition of the immigrants is diverse and includes refugees, asylum seekers, the spouses of Finns and Finnish return migrants from Sweden, as well as ethnic returnees with Finnish roots from the former Soviet Union. Added to these groups are also a number of non-nationals, especially from South and South East Asia, who are employed in the IT industry. Moreover, the number of foreign students in Finnish educational institutions has gradually increased, which may also reflect the diminishing international isolation of Finland.

Figure 1. The numbers of foreigners permanently living in Finland (13.12.2002)



Source: Population Register Centre 2003

Demographically, the age structure of the foreign population is dominated by rather younger cohorts, the single biggest group being those aged 25-34 years (Forsander 2002a). Most of the foreigners are thus of working age. In comparison, according to the population projection statistics for the year 2003, the single largest age group among the

general population comprises those aged 50-59 years (Tilastokeskus 2003). The proportion of males and females among immigrants is roughly the same, comprising 49.9 and 50.1 per cent respectively. The ratio of men and women, however, varies across the different immigrant groups, with conspicuously higher proportions of women among the Thai and Estonian nationals. About one third of the foreigners are estimated to have a higher degree or good vocational training from their country of origin (Rasismin ehkäisy ministeriryhmä 1996).

No statistics on the sectoral distribution of immigrants in the labour market are available. Nevertheless, insights gained from previous studies would suggest that a considerable number of foreigners, especially from the developing countries, are employed in occupations of low human-capital requirements, which as a general rule are also exposed to a greater level of employment volatility in periods of economic recession. The service sector has proved to be one of the main gateways for entry into the labour market, since it is less demanding in terms of language skills and cultural competence (Forsander 2002a). Immigrants are also often employed in ethno-specific jobs such as mother-tongue teacher, interpreter and school helper that necessitate the use of their native language. These professions have come into being as a by-product of immigrant-related services and require command of the language and culture of a particular ethnic group, and often its membership. (Forsander 2002b.)

No Statistics concerning illegal immigration and work are currently available either. Its scope is assumed to be quite limited in Finland (SOPEMI 2003), although in the past few years concerns have been raised in the media over the existence of illegal work in the agricultural and construction sectors (e.g., Helsingin Sanomat 9.2.2002). The majority of the foreigners are concentrated in the larger, especially southern, cities of Finland. Most of those in the southern areas live in the Helsinki metropolitan region (Joronen 2000), and in the year 2002, 43 per cent lived in Helsinki city alone (Joronen 2005). The greater number of employment opportunities available to foreigners in the Helsinki metropolitan area may constitute one of the main reasons for their larger concentration there.

2.2 A Reluctant Handshake or a Resource? General Attitudes towards Immigration in Finland

Issues pertaining to immigration have occupied a significant place in both public and government debate in many western European countries particularly since the 1970s. The standpoint on these issues with regard to enforcing restrictions on immigration has often been one of the major differences among the political parties that has frequently contributed to driving them in and out of power. In fact, the immigration debate seems to have taken precedence over previous issues of contention in the political arena such as public health, welfare spending and the attainment of equality. Although a tough stance may have proved fruitful across the political spectrum in gaining electoral support, the extreme right in particular has capitalised on the apprehensive sentiments of the general public and has proposed more radical measures to combat immigration. As an indirect effect of the increased support for the extreme right, other mainstream parties have also hardened their stance on this issue. As Ogden (1987) notes in the context of France, the

real effect of the National Front has been to reshape the debate on immigration and racism across the political spectrum. The anti-immigration feeling is not only restricted to the new arrivals, who may or may not be illegal immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers. On the general level, it has also created an uneasy environment for immigrant populations, including those who were born in the European countries or have been residing there for many decades. However, the surge in the anti-immigration feeling and the successes of the far-right have simultaneously also fostered anxiety among the public and governments, as they have led to the rise of xenophobia, racism and intolerance in society.

In Finland too, issues concerning immigration have been a persistent focus of attention since the 1990s as a result of the influx of refugees, migrants with Finnish ancestry from the former Soviet Union, and other non-nationals in a hitherto ethnically and culturally homogenous country. After having witnessed emigration up until the 1970s, the host population has therefore responded in various ways to the rapid, although numerically modest, immigration. For some, it has been perceived as a source of cultural enrichment and an economic asset. Furthermore, since the proportions of the younger cohorts of the population have been forecasted to decrease in the coming decades in Finland as in many other European countries because of the low fertility rate, and considering that the incomers are typically younger people, immigration has been suggested as a possible future remedy to invigorate the ageing workforce and to broaden the tax-revenue base for pensioners[3]. For some others, it has meant an unwelcome truth, but reluctantly accepted as an unavoidable part and parcel of the growing internationalisation and globalisation package. Some others have associated immigration with liabilities rather than resources, and have feared that immigrants will displace native workers by taking away their jobs. Concerns have also been expressed that immigrants will depress wage levels among nationals by accepting lower pay for comparable work. For those still aspiring to live in a culturally homogeneous environment, immigration has been akin to the deterioration of the local culture, and fears have centred on preconceived notions about the different cultures and traditions that Muslim immigrants in particular may bring to Finland. As immigration has sometimes been associated, among other things, with the proliferation of diseases in the host society, for some sections of the population this has also been a matter of simmering concern. Responding to this apprehension, an official from the Ministry of Social Affairs therefore stated, "There is no need to fear the spread of exotic contagious diseases." To allay such

[3] Concerns over the ageing of the population and the resulting labour shortages in Europe have been the focus of many reports. According to one of the United Nations' estimates, by the year 2020 the number of people over 60 years will increase from the present 23 per cent to 33 per cent in Europe. This change has been forecasted to occur more quickly in Finland than in many other European countries, the prediction being that by the year 2015 those aged 65 years or over will constitute more than 20 per cent of the total predicted population (Statistics Finland 2001). A report by the Ministry of Labour concludes that a shortage of labour will be a characteristic feature of the Finnish labour market in the coming few decades (Työministeriö 2003). According to some projections, by the year 2020 Finland will require 2.1 million foreign workers if the current support ratio is to be maintained (Wallenius 2001, 12). More recent estimates suggest that by the year 2030 the number of working-age persons will decrease by 300,000, and the number of children aged 0-14 years by 70,000 (Työryhmän ehdotus maahanmuuttopoliittiseksi ohjelmaksi 2005). Moreover, the ageing of the population is also said to create growing regional differences in age structure.

concerns further, he added, "Refugees, asylum seekers and other immigrants generally belong to the healthiest group of the population of their country" (Kaleva 27.09.2001).

Particularly in the early 1990s, debate in the mass media about immigrants and their integration was often accompanied by discussions about cultural collisions and an eroding national identity. Consequently, the emphasis of this debate was more on cultural differences than on cultural commonalities. As the period of rapid immigration closely paralleled a soaring economic recession, it saw the growth of a widespread belief that immigrants constituted an economic burden and further led to the hardening of attitudes. A survey of the attitudes of Finns and Swedes towards foreigners carried out in 1993 indicated that their attitudes had grown more negative during a six-year time period. Negative attitudes were particularly prominent towards foreign workers, and a majority of respondents belonging to the youngest and oldest age groups agreed with the statement, "If unemployment increases, some of the migrants should be sent away from Finland" (Jaakkola 1994a, 61). In another survey, more than 70 per cent of the respondents expressed the opinion that many foreigners came to Finland to use the welfare benefits, and that enjoyment of the higher living standard was the right of the Finns (Jaakkola 1999, 67). Several other studies conducted in the past few years have also documented the varying attitudes of Finns towards non-nationals (e.g., Jaakkola 1995a, 1995b; Söderling 1996a, 1997).

The arrival in the early 1990s of Somali refugees fleeing a civil war in their own country further strengthened the unfavourable sentiments towards immigration. Their different religious and cultural context, and in particular their refugee status, coupled with their being a perceived burden on the welfare system, made them a focus of instant public attention in times of worsening economic depression, and unleashed a heated debate in the mass media. Particularly in connection with this immigrant group, notions of cultural incompatibility often featured in these debates, and in fact triggered a situation that Aallas (1991) referred to as "Somali shock." Especially with reference to Somali immigrants, opinions expressing notions such as "maassa maan tavalla tai maasta ulos" ("When in Rome, do as the Romans do") often surfaced in the discussions in the media, although voices emphasising the need to take the humanistic aspects of the immigrants' situation into account could also be heard. This general unfavourable climate led to the formation and galvanisation of several extreme-right groups such as skinheads in the country, and black foreigners were often the target of their resentment and violence (Sabour 2001). In the media, however, there was a tendency to present racism as limited to a small group of individuals rather than as a social phenomenon (Järvinen 1992). This may have been due to the absence of large-scale ethnic conflicts, which has made it easier to be lulled into the belief that racism does not exist in Finland (Pietikäinen & Luostarinen 1996, 178). In the political domain, a few newly-formed small political parties also attempted to exploit the prevalent apprehensive attitudes towards immigration and tried to attract voters by suggesting more restrictive policies. However, a lightening of attitudes towards immigration could be detected in the mid-1990s when Finland accepted Kosovo Albanian refugees escaping ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia. In fact, they received a rather warm welcome from the general public, a friendly reaction that could also be attributed to the fact that the plight of these particular refugees reminded people of the uprooting of the Karelian Finns who fled to Finland during the Winter War (e.g., Paananen 2005).

The other factor that may have helped to perpetuate disapproving sentiments among the host population was the fact that the bulk of immigration in the 1990s was generally other than labour migration[4]. Family reunions, humanitarian grounds and return migration of people with the Finnish ancestry from the former Soviet Union have commonly constituted the reasons for coming to Finland. While immigrants have received a reluctant handshake from the general population, the authorities have adopted the attitude of 'the less we have of it the better,' towards immigration and have taken several measures to curb the flow, as elsewhere in the EU. For instance, in the case of asylum seekers, the drive towards more restrictive policies has crystallised in the introduction of procedures for accelerating the processing of asylum applications and quick deportation. International agencies such as the United Nations and Council of Europe have criticised Finland for its practices in treating foreigners and asylum seekers, and the latter has even regarded some of them as being in conflict with the Geneva Convention (United Nations 2003a; Council of Europe 2002).

2.3 Immigrants and their Labour-market Participation

The economic crisis in the 1990s marked the onset of widespread unemployment, the consequences of which were more severe for the foreign population. According to Statistics Finland, the unemployment rate of immigrants hit 53 per cent in 1994, while the national average was approximately 20 per cent. The unemployment figures were especially high for third-world immigrants, in particular those from Somalia (92%), Iraq (91%) and Yugoslavia (88%). The exception was immigrants from China (20%), whose labour-market situation in fact was considerably better than that of many immigrant groups. Apart from the Chinese immigrants, the nationals of Germany, the USA and Norway enjoyed the most favourable situations. According to the Ministry of Labour, the unemployment rate among immigrants in 2003 stood at around 29 per cent. Although this indicated a noticeable improvement, this figure is still three times higher than that for the whole workforce (Table 1). The drop in the unemployment rate was brought about in part by the training and subsidised measures introduced by the labour administration (e.g., Forsander & Alitolppa-Niitamo 2000). In general, the occupational careers of immigrants in Finland typically feature alternate spells of temporary work, unemployment and employment (Forsander 2002b).

[4] Finland has never had a policy of labour migration. Presently, apart from the corporate migration in the IT sector, a restricted number of temporary working visas have been issued to allow work in the agriculture and construction sectors, which are suffering from labour shortages. The majority of these workers are nationals of Russia and Estonia.

Table 1. Unemployment rates among immigrants in Finland, according to the regional labour statistics, 1994-2003 (%)

Country of Origin	1994	'95	'96	'97	'98	'99	2000	01	02	03*
Somalia	92	84	81	74	64	68	55	58	59	58
Iraq	91	82	83	79	81	78	74	75	69	72
Yugoslavia	88	82	75	74	67	62	53	59	61	55
Vietnam	63	60	59	60	59	54	45	43	41	47
Russia	79	71	69	64	58	54	46	42	37	..
Iran	78	70	70	69	66	69	57	62	58	59
Turkey	54	48	45	42	37	36	33	32	31	32
Morocco	70	63	63	57	58	52	50	50	43	56
Estonia	63	55	47	40	32	28	24	20	18	19
Poland	28	27	27	24	18	16	15	17	15	12
France	..	25	25	15	15	13	9	10	10	13
Sweden	32	31	29	25	21	20	17	17	17	11
Norway	24	26	24	23	14	18	13	15	15	12
Italy	..	34	31	33	19	18	17	16	15	17
China	20	15	17	17	13	11	10	10	9	9
United Kingdom	25	21	22	17	15	13	11	12	12	13
Germany	19	17	19	17	12	11	10	11	11	9
USA	24	17	18	14	11	11	9	9	11	10
All countries	53	49	48	44	39	37	31	31	28	29
Total population	20*	20*	15	13	11	10	10	9	9	9

.. Data not available

Source: Tilastokeskus, * Ministry of Labour estimate

2.4 Immigrants' Weak Labour-market Performance: A Review of the Factors Outlined

The aim in this section is to give a brief review of some of the factors that are often mentioned as hindering the participation and consequently decreasing the employment opportunities of immigrants in the Finnish labour market. Although a host of factors have been identified apart from the general unemployment level and lack of education and work experience gained in Finland, lower competence in the Finnish language has frequently been referred to as constituting the major cause of their weak labour-market performance. In academic research, this cause is pointed out in the light of evidence from interviews with employers, who assert that often the refusal to consider foreign workers arises from their inadequate language skills. It has also been identified in many other studies carried out by the municipalities and other institutions concerned with the integration of immigrants.

> The basic requirement for immigrant employment is sufficient proficiency in Finnish or Swedish... (Kotkan kaupunki 2003, 15)

> The reasons [for immigrants' high unemployment] include insufficient skills in the Finnish or Swedish language… The unemployment of recently arrived immigrants is high because of meagre Finnish-language skills. (Romakkaniemi & Ruutu 2001, 18)

References to weak language proficiency are also often to be found in the mass media.

> Immigrant unemployment has decreased over the years, even though it is still noticeably higher than in the rest of the population [...] The main barrier to recruitment is weak language proficiency. (Helsingin Sanomat 17.5.2002)

> Proficiency in the Finnish language and vocational skills are the decisive things... (Helsingin Sanomat 30.3.2002)

Deficient language skills have sometimes been identified not only as a barrier to employment but also as the reason for the lack of interaction with the native population[5]. In this, however, the role of other possible factors such as the attitudes of the native population towards building friendships with foreigners and the normative expectations of friendship existing in the culture of the immigrants in question may be ignored. For instance:

> Since they [immigrant women] do not speak Finnish properly, they cannot get work nor are they able to talk with the native people … (Helsingin Sanomat 12.5.2004)

The special emphasis laid on the Finnish language may also have its roots in historical factors. As Paananen (1999, 23) suggests, the Finnish national identity has not traditionally been defined in terms of racial homogeneity. Rather, language and culture have constituted the basis of national unity. He argues that Finnish employers regard the level of the foreign worker's ability to speak Finnish as indicative of his/her level of commitment to work and the Finnish society. However, the emphasis on deficient Finnish-language skills often cited as being the major reason for immigrants' lower job opportunities might be somewhat exaggerated. For example, Forsander & Alitolppa-Niitamo (2000, 14) found out in their research that evidence of the significance of the level of Finnish-language competence in being successful in working life was not unequivocal. For instance, English-speaking informants who had rated their skills in the Finnish language as non-existent had been reasonably successful in working life.

Employers' lack of trust towards non-national workers has also been identified as one of the major factors affecting the employment prospects of immigrants. The discussion surrounding this theme suggests that the unwillingness of employers to recruit immigrants stems from a lack of trust, which prevents them from considering non-national applicants. Occasionally, the discussion may imply that employers as such do

[5] Interestingly, the Finnish language has been put forward as a potential factor in other contexts as well. Some years ago, in response to the Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson's criticism that some countries, like Sweden, accept significantly more refugees than others such as Finland, the then Finnish Interior Minister said that the low number of refugees arriving in Finland was owing to the language and weather conditions rather than Finland's reluctance to accept them.

not treat a certain category of workers differentially. Rather, it is their lack of knowledge about the productive potential or behavioural traits of these workers that makes them circumspect in their recruitment practices. The distinction between a lack of trust and possible reluctance to recruit workers of foreign origin may not always be too evident, however.

A study conducted by the Ministry of Labour concerning the employment conditions of immigrants in the labour market draws attention to the importance of trust in their recruitment.

> As this example shows again, the responsibility for carrying out the job task was given to the immigrants in the particular [cleaning] place. They were trusted. (Timo Jaakkola 2000, 125)

> Based on this research, it can be seen that the execution of independent work [...] also increases trustworthiness... Informal competence increases as the trustworthiness grows. (ibid. 125)

Trux (2002, 195-196) also speaks of the prominence of trust, although in the context of the company's clients rather than of employers. She refers to cleaning supervisors who spoke of the reluctant attitudes of some clients who had stopped using the cleaning company's services because it did not provide workers of a preferred 'race'. While shedding light on the good reputation that immigrant workers have earned in the service industries because of their dedication and cheerful manner, she suggests that "...immigrants can earn the trust of clients in the cleaning industry, too, if they have the opportunity to have face-to-face contacts with them." Referring to the presence of a functional relationship between the employees and the lower-level managers in the cleaning firm, she relates such workable forms of coexistence to trust, which would not have been feasible through any broader-level initiative (ibid. 220). Valtonen (1999, 21) also reflects on the importance of trust. As she points out, "The recommendations given by the authorities or other trustworthy sources often help cross the gulf, which arises due to the employer's lack of trust towards the foreign worker." However, "the lack of trust is not considered a problem once the worker has gotten past the gate into a job." Nevertheless, the building of trust sometimes still remains a problem after several months of employment, as one immigrant suggests in the following extract.

> I had a good job-training place in a bakery. In my opinion, all went very well. I learned to carry out the different tasks, and I really liked my work. I don't believe there was anything to complain about in my work. When the training period ended, I was told that there was no work. A few weeks later, I went to that bakery again and found they had hired three new [Finnish] workers. (Valtonen 1999, 21)

The deficient cultural competence of the host society has also been mentioned as a potential factor that could as well decrease the opportunities of newcomers. The acquisition of employment opportunities and the subsequent progress in occupational career have been suggested as being contingent upon a command of the work community's culture. Culture, as Forsander & Ekholm (2001, 64) point out, lives through countless rules and presumptions, which are never expressed verbally. In order to successfully become part of the work community and thereby advance one needs to look

and sound like one is part of the group. In many professions, they argue, tasks are performed through teamwork, which necessitates knowledge of the culture of particular trade and work community that extends beyond the conventional language and professional demands required for a certain job. Koistinen (1997, 87) further crystallises the idea of cultural competence.

> The question is not just one of knowledge and skills but also mode of behaviour: in order to become a competent export secretary, one also has to think, speak and dress like a Finnish export secretary.

Considering the stated importance of cultural competence for securing employment in the context of immigrants, it is therefore not surprising that employers might regard cultural-suitability requirements as more critical than the skills required for performing the job tasks, as Forsander & Alitolppa-Niitamo (2000, 67) point out.

> The significance of the worker's appropriate attitude towards the workplace culture was emphasised in many interviews even more than the know-how required for the job tasks.
>
> If one is on the management level, then one has to know the Finnish culture and work ethic. These are so different. […] The Finns are so different. One foreign hotel manager applied to us for a job. But no, no, we couldn't take him (Personnel Manager of a hotel and catering company, T. Jaakkola 2000, 125)

However, notwithstanding the crucial significance of a command of the local culture in economic and other areas of life, sometimes the emphasis by employers on Finland-specific cultural and social competence by employers in order to be effectively integrated into the workplace could also be mistakenly and inadvertently used to describe the ordinary social and communicative skills required for any job. Occasionally, the over-emphasis on cultural competence may also lead to interpreting social inequality as arising from cultural differences[6] rather than from other detrimental structural and institutional practices[7].

The technological and organisational restructuring of working life, particularly in the 1990s, and the lack of social networks have also been pointed out as hampering the integration of immigrants into the labour market. Changes in working life are also said to engender changes in the educational and competency requirements needed in work. Structural changes have rendered assembly-line work rather outdated and favoured specialised production, hi-tech industry and teamwork-oriented organisation at the workplace. The new flexible forms of teamwork increasingly demand close cooperation among workers, which requires social as well as language skills. Especially when work is performed in self-managed teams, members of the team work closely together and are responsible for different tasks. The new form of work organisation has also influenced recruitment processes. Employers increasingly rely on recommendations and informal

[6] For a related discussion, see, for example, Schierup (1994).

[7] The theme of cultural competence and informal capital has generally appeared with respect to immigrants having jobs specifically designated in the low-paid sectors of the labour market. Non-nationals who have come to Finland through work agreements in hi-tech companies are generally ignored in the discussion. How prospective companies deal with the 'problems' brought about by their deficient cultural competence has generally escaped the attention of researchers.

social networks, and temporary workers in particular are recruited through these networks since the hiring process is easy and cheap. On the other hand, self-managed teams recruit people who are like themselves. All this may create problems for immigrants who, because of insufficient language skills, are unable to succeed in becoming part of a team[8]. Their recruitment might be further hindered on account of uncertainty arising from cultural differences. (Paananen 1999; Trux 2002.)

Other factors mentioned include internal labour-market protection in various sectors. These protective strategies render qualifications and work experience earned abroad less valuable compared with similar qualifications gained in Finland. For this reason, immigrant engineers and doctors, for instance, have been reported to be working in jobs of lower status than their professional qualifications and previous experience would warrant. It may take up to three years for foreign qualifications to be accepted, especially those gained outside the EU, before the individuals are given a licence to practice or their previous degree is recognised. Employers have also been reported as showing a preference for education received in Finnish institutions and work experience gained in Finland. It has also been pointed out that it is not only the amount and perceived quality of the work experience, but also the country in which such experience and education were obtained that employers consider the most important factor in assessing the qualifications of an immigrant worker (Paananen 1999; Forsander 2002b). A study on the living conditions of employed immigrants originating from Russia, Estonia, Vietnam and Somalia seems to confirm this. The job incumbents who had received their higher or professional degrees abroad were clearly less frequently employed in work commensurate with their education than immigrants of the same origin who had obtained only, or additional, Finnish degrees (Sutela 2005).

Apart from the above-mentioned factors pertaining generally to the supply-side of the labour market, differential treatment in access to employment opportunities has also been referred to as a possible reason for immigrants' weak labour-market performance. Several studies conducted in the past few years have pointed to the existence of discrimination in the Finnish job market. For instance, a study carried out in 2002 among immigrants who had sought work during the previous three years revealed that half of the Somali immigrants and every fourth Russian, Estonian and Vietnamese had encountered discrimination while applying for a job (Pohjanpää et al. 2003). Another survey study by Jasinskaja-Lahti et al. (2002) also points to the existence of prejudice against the employment of non-native applicants. In this study, 81 per cent of the Somali

[8] It is worth mentioning here that the immigrants themselves may not always regard teamwork as their handicap, and they may see things differently. One informant remarked: "I got this job because the employer knew that Pakistani and Indian workers were quite flexible and teamwork-oriented. For example, if more customers came in during lunchtime, we would stay there an extra half an hour or even an hour and often without any demand for extra pay. But the Finnish workers wouldn't do that. They would just change their clothes and go home. For example, if a Finnish worker was working as a cook, he wouldn't give a hand to the waiters if there suddenly came more customers, or when some worker got sick. They just wouldn't do that. They didn't have a team spirit." Another immigrant stated: "It's very hard for me to work with the Finnish workers because they lack a team-work spirit. In my workplace, when I felt that other workers needed my help, I would skip my tea break altogether. Sometimes when the pace of work became more hectic during certain days of the year I even tried to adjust my lunchtime. But my Finnish colleagues wouldn't consider skipping or postponing their tea breaks. And it was very hard to convince them."

and 64 per cent of the Arab respondents reported being discriminated against while seeking work. Based on his interviews with the personnel of the public employment agency, Paananen (1999, 103) reports that some of the employers did not want to employ Somali trainees even free of charge. (For further discussion on discrimination, see also Jasinskaja-Lahti & Liebkind 1997; Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti 1997).

Discrimination has been reported to occur also indirectly when employers demand excessive language competence even though the performance of the job tasks in practice may not require full command of the language. As an example, the requirement of excellent language proficiency has repeatedly been mentioned in advertisements for cleaning jobs. However, as Forsander (2002b, 167) points out, the demand for competence in the Finnish language made by employers could also be so vague that, when needed, it could be used as a reason to reject all the non-native candidates. A report by the Working Group of Integration Project in the Lahti Region also pointed out that unnecessarily high language requirements in application procedures were a common mechanism of indirect discrimination (Vuori 1997). The report further identified that the employers did not perceive immigrant workers as competent and tended to doubt qualifications and skills obtained outside Finland. Similar reluctant attitudes towards immigrant employment were mentioned in another report (Kotkan kaupunki 2003, 12). Furthermore, in their study on unemployment in the Hervanta suburb of Tampere, Aho et al. (2003) also attribute part of the problem of immigrant unemployment to employers' reserved attitudes, or to their perception that their clients have such attitudes.

In an effort to gain a further view of and to examine the situation of immigrants' employment opportunities in the Finnish labour market, a preliminary study was conducted. Apart from the fact that it granted a comprehensive view of their employment situation, carrying it out was especially germane to the theoretical orientation of the whole study, namely to test the assumption of the sociocultural embeddedness of the labour market and to see to what extent it could be considered a unitary and undifferentiated space. The study is described and the results are discussed in the following chapter.

3 The Economic Integration of Immigrants: a Need to Consider the Demand Side of the Labour Market?

The weak labour-market position of immigrants stems from the interplay of a number of factors on both the supply side and the demand side of the labour market. Failing to take into account either of these two dimensions hampers understanding of the problem. However, the debate in Finland, especially in the media, has generally attributed the reasons for immigrants' lower level of employment opportunities to their deficient human-capital attributes. Indeed, it occasionally carries connotations of classic theories of assimilation that assumed a unified economy in which immigrants started their careers at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy and gradually moved up as they acquired social acceptance (Wilson & Portes 1980). As a result, the emphasis has largely been on improving the supply side of the labour market. The particular preliminary study, instead, concentrated on investigating some of the factors that are linked to the demand side of the labour market.

A number of objectives constituted the reasons for carrying out this study. On a general level, the aim was to contribute to the discussion about the various factors that depress the labour-market performance of immigrants in Finland. On a more specific level, the aim was to assess the effectiveness of job information located through formal channels and the role of various supply-side-related factors in securing employment. A further aim was to explore the possible role of the demand side of the labour market in the disproportional access it grants to non-national workers and the kind and degree of employment opportunities it allows them. In addition, before probing the occupational histories of the informants, this particular study served to highlight the sociocultural context of the labour market in which these histories were embedded. Having first-hand knowledge of this context was important as it significantly conditions the scope and nature of the employment opportunities available to job seekers of foreign origin.

On a theoretical level, after having empirical observations, another aim was to review certain assumptions of the neoclassical and human capital theories that view the labour market as a competitive, undifferentiated arena, and that consider differences in employment rates or earnings among individuals or entire social groups to be attributable to differences in their personal qualifications. Starting with a different perspective, the hypothesis of the study regarded that the idea of the labour market in which the actors sell and hire labour according to the objective rules of supply and demand was rather susceptible to doubt. Instead, it was suggested that the concept of the labour market could be more fruitfully studied as a socially and culturally constructed space in which the rules of supply and demand are shaped by a particular sociocultural reality, and that a recruitment process driven by abstract or impersonal criteria is much less prevalent than claimed.

The above objectives were pursued by answering 400 job advertisements appearing in the formal channels including the national employment agency and various newspapers using the participant-observation method. Before proceeding further, some of the theoretical approaches concerned with the differential access of individuals to the labour market are considered insofar as they relate to the objectives of the subsequent discussion.

3.1 Determining the Employment Opportunities of Immigrants: Individual Attributes or Institutional Constraints?

In labour economics, several theoretical perspectives have been employed to account for the economic structure and differential outcomes in the labour market, the most significant of them being the neoclassical and segmented labour market approaches. Both these paradigms often exhibit relatively different points of departure with various subtleties of thought and premises in discussing various issues such as the persistence of income inequality, discrimination, labour-market structures and unemployment. These theoretical explanations are important not only in their own right, but also because they suggest different policy prescriptions for dealing with these issues.

As regards neoclassical theory, it assumes that labour markets are undifferentiated arenas in which individuals can freely make a choice from among a broad spectrum of job options, based upon their personal skills, tastes and preferences. Differences in rewards and employment rates among individuals and social groups are attributed largely to differences in the human-capital endowments or personal attributes of these individuals and social groups. Similarly, their position within the socio-economic hierarchy is viewed as representing their productive potential or worth. As a result, the remedy often suggested for improving their market performance and eliminating differential outcomes is to improve the supply-side of the labour market by providing workers with more marketable skills, the emphasis being placed on public investments in general training and on private investments in specific training (Becker 1964).

The assumptions of the existence of a competitive market, however, face criticism when, in spite of possessing equal human-capital endowments vis-à-vis a host population, certain segments of society, such as racial minorities and ethnic groups, are prevented from having equal access to job opportunities or alternatively are forced to occupy the secondary sector of the labour market, which is characterised by low wages, high labour turnover, poor working conditions, unstable employment, few opportunities for advancement and often strict and arbitrary supervision (Averitt 1968; Doeringer & Piore 1971; Gordon 1972; Edwards 1979). This kind of differential treatment, and consequently differential outcomes, in terms of the equality of employment opportunities and the attainment of essential skills and training are assumed by proponents of the neoclassical theory to be attributable to discrimination, cultural factors and other non-rational criteria such as tastes by employers or workers. However, they regard such situations as aberrations in an otherwise rational and competitive system, which do not impair the basic tenets of the theory.

In conclusion, the basic insight of neoclassical theory is that both workers and employers are rational agents who exercise free and informed choices in a competitive, open-labour-market setting characterised by full access to information for both sides. The final contract that is made between the employers and the labour-force participants is rational and contingent upon the personal skills and qualifications of those individuals (supply side) and the relative requirements of the employers regarding the specific combinations of skills and qualifications of labour (demand side). Briefly, neoclassical labour economics is based on the marginal productivity theory of demand, which

assumes the profit-maximising behaviour of employers, and on supply theory based on the utility maximisation of workers (Cain 1976).

The assumptions of neoclassical theory have been criticised by proponents of the segmented labour market theory who argue that the classical and neoclassical explanations of the workings of the labour market do not explain many key policy issues such as discrimination, income distribution and unemployment. They question the existence of a direct linkage between the productive capacities of an individual and his/her wage and the placement of that individual across the occupational hierarchy, which is implicit in the neoclassical and human capital versions of labour-market theory (Leontaridi 1998). They insist upon the fragmented nature of labour markets and the crucial significance of social and institutional influences on the wages and employment opportunities of individuals and various social groups. They also criticise the orthodox theory for its attachment to a single parameter of marginal productivity (Gordon 1972, pp 28-29). As a result, the supply-side explanations of the human capital theory are disregarded and emphasis is therefore shifted onto the demand side of the labour market.

Contrary to the neoclassical idea of a unitary competitive market, the segmented labour market theory claims that the job market is bifurcated into two sectors: primary and secondary. The returns on human capital differ markedly in these two segments because of the institutional constraints that prohibit individuals and various social groups from benefiting equally from their skills and qualifications. The jobs in the primary sector are characterised by good working conditions, opportunities for career advancement, employment stability and high negotiated wages. In contrast, the secondary sector is marked by employment instability, low wages, few opportunities for upward mobility, poor working conditions and high labour turnover. Mobility from the secondary to the primary sector is relatively non-existent, since the secondary jobs do not train the individual in the skills needed in the primary sector (Lafer 1992). It is argued that minorities, women and other vulnerable groups are more likely to start their careers in the secondary sector because of discrimination, with little chance of being able to break into the primary sector (Gordon 1972). However, the segmented labour theory, has also been criticised for not being able to develop a clear methodology that would consistently produce a specific number of segments, or persuasive criteria for determining the types of segments or the features that differentiate them (Leontaridi 1998).

The segmented labour market theory has often explained the persistent discrimination against minorities and ethnic groups as evidence of the failure of the neoclassical theory of rational competition. In the neoclassical model, the explanations for the discriminatory practices in employment have been described "either as instances of subjective bigotry or as markers for deficient human capital" (Lafer 1992). Kirschenman & Neckerman (1991) distinguish two types of discrimination: pure and statistical. In the former, "employers, employees, or consumers have a 'taste' for discrimination, that is, they will pay a premium to avoid members of another group." In the latter, race is used "as a proxy for aspects of productivity that are relatively expensive or impossible to measure." Cain (1976) also describes the statistical discrimination in which "employers hire, place, and pay workers on the basis of imperfect information

about their true productivity."[9] Both these approaches to discrimination as the cause of unequal access to the job market for different racial and minority groups are criticised by the segmented labour market theory. It is suggested that, even taken together, these explanations for employers' discriminatory practices do not substantially address the causes of discrimination as proposed by the neoclassical theory. For instance, in the case of black Americans, Lafer (1992) regards such practices as providing an economic rationale for employers to exploit cheap labour. Secondly, he further ascribes such practices to the subjective motives of employers which are not fully captured by the notion of white employers' 'taste' for discrimination. Instead, he suggests that employers carry out such practices not just because of "a personal preference but as a much deeper enactment of socially defined roles." Portes & Zhou (1992) also argue against the human-capital model for its exclusive emphasis on individual skills that does not address the question of why the rewards to the human capital of certain groups are consistently lower while some other groups are over-rewarded. They further criticise the model for its lack of attention to the question of why the economic situation of certain groups such as Puerto Ricans and blacks in the USA has continued to decline despite many years of programmatic efforts to improve their individual skills. Howard Wachtel (1972) has also criticised the orthodox theory for its inattention to structural barriers.

> The orthodox research has merely provided estimates of the differential importance of various individual characteristics associated with the poor. This research is quite consistent with the proposition that the poor are poor because of some individual failure, and it has received widespread acceptance and support precisely because it has been conveniently supportive of existing economic arrangements and our prevailing ideology.

In sum, the essential relevance of the segmented labour market theory for the present discussion is that the discrepancy that lies in differential rewards to human capital for certain individuals and social groups and their allocation across occupational hierarchy does not as such stem from their differential skills and education, but rather originates in broad social forces and entrenched institutional rules. The theory therefore challenges the idea of an undifferentiated, competitive labour market and instead suggests the existence of various non-competing sectors. The frequent confinement of the poor, minority and racial groups to the secondary sector of the labour market with few opportunities for intersectoral mobility further contributes to the criticism of the neoclassical and human capital theories since it implies that the markets do not clear.

It is probable that none of the approaches discussed above is sufficient in itself to explain away the disparity in access to employment opportunities that immigrants in the host society confront, since it stems from the interplay of a number of factors, including

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[9] Rydgren (2004b) further explains statistical discrimination. It occurs when employers make their hiring decisions based on their assumed beliefs about typical characteristics of the group the individual belongs to or is believed to belong to. Examples of such beliefs include that 'certain migrant groups are not particularly productive, because they are too often absent due to sickness, or 'they lack the capacity to work in teams.' Regardless of whether these beliefs are true or false, statistical discrimination is always stereotypical in nature, as decisions are made on the grounds of group belonging rather than on the job applicant's personal qualifications. The fact that the mechanism is anchored in stereotypical thinking is important since stereotypes lie beneath a great deal of our everyday thinking, which makes people use them and rely on them without much consideration. (Rydgren 2004a.)

the individual characteristics of the job applicants and the demand side of the labour market, in particular the hiring practices of the gatekeepers who control the vacancies. The role of each of these two factors – job seekers' individual characteristics and employers' practices – may be of lesser or greater relevance in explaining the lower level of employment opportunities among immigrants in different sociocultural contexts and across different time periods. The preliminary study in question offered an opportunity to assess the role of the demand side of the labour market in terms of the access it grants to non-national workers in Finland. Before giving a description of the results, method and data are discussed.

3.2 Method and the Research Procedure

Using the participant-observation method, the researcher gathered the data between September 1999 and May 2000 by testing 400 jobs in the Helsinki-region labour market from a broad spectrum of occupational categories, and going through all the processes that a job seeker generally encounters in applying for a certain post. On the one hand, the participant-observation method offered the opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the job information acquired through impersonal means such as from the public employment agency and newspapers, and the role of various supply-side-related factors such as previous experience and language skills in securing employment. On the other hand, it gave systematic first-hand experience of the typical real-life recruitment dynamics that prevail in the job market. It was essential to use this method, since the nature of information acquired from interviews with immigrants concerning various situations they come across while seeking work is qualitatively indirect, although very important. In addition, job-seeking individuals may not always impartially and successfully assess the nature of the treatment they receive from employers or their representatives because of the subjective element involved in their perception and interpretation of the situation. This subjective element sometimes leads them to either overstate or understate the actual nature of the encounter, since the definition of what is appropriate and what is less appropriate behaviour varies across individuals. Moreover, if the interaction of some individuals with the demand side of the labour market has been generally negative in the host society, the feeling of marginalisation they consequently develop in the course of their stay, which often also becomes an influencing factor in shaping their interaction with the host society, may introduce some distortions in their interpretation of a certain event. The participant-observation method offered the opportunity to observe the behaviour of employers directly as it occurred while simultaneously avoiding the distorting subjective interferences. This is not to claim, however, that the interpretation of every encounter the participant observer had with the gatekeepers of the job market was fully immaculate and precise. Although this can be stated with confidence about the dominant majority of the cases, there may be a few in which the nature of the situation did not fully allow the formation of precise interpretation, because of the brevity of the encounter or the obscurity of the social behaviour, which is after all not always a straightforward affair. It may well be impossible for a participant observer to avoid such situations entirely. Nevertheless, as will be explained later in the description of the categorisation of employers' attitudes, any such cases were classified with due care.

In this study, all the jobs were tested by one applicant, the author of this work who is of Pakistani origin[10]. The entire process of applying for a certain post – including visiting the employment office, searching for and selecting the advertisements in newspapers and sending resumes – was conducted by him alone. As a result, the data for the study took more than six months to collect. Although the study did not include a Finnish comparison group[11], a native Finn cross-checked a considerable number of vacancies in order to see whether there was any difference in the employer responses. The cross-checker matched the author in overall personal attributes. While cross-checking the jobs by telephone, the native applicant described similar personal characteristics as the author had, such as age, previous experience, qualifications and area of residence. He called the employer within five minutes after the author had applied for the particular post by telephone. The results of the cross-checking provide support to the research findings and compensate for the lack of a comparison group, the recruitment of which was beyond the financial scope of the study.

Before the data for the study was collected, tests were carried out on 30 posts in order to find out what kinds of classifications and variables could be constructed. The original number of occupational categories was ten, which was then reduced to seven after the data collection. Some of the categories were combined, since they contained more or less similar types of jobs. Moreover, it also helped to make these categories meet the requirements of statistical significance. The discussions with the employers were written down at the same time as the phone call was being made. In cases in which the applicant was interviewed, the notes were made immediately after the interview had ended.

The vacancies tested in this study varied from unskilled to semi-skilled and skilled jobs. The emphasis nevertheless was on jobs requiring lower-level skills and less experience. The aim was two-fold: first, it was assumed that since the bulk of the immigration had taken place in the early 1990s, which coincided with a severe economic recession, because of their high and prolonged unemployment the immigrants might not possess sufficient experience in various job sectors; secondly, it was also assumed that this would help to minimise the potential excuses of employers for not employing or short-listing the non-native applicant. The main criterion for the number of jobs selected in a particular category was based on discussions with immigrants. The selected advertised positions represented the kind of jobs for which they very often applied. However, the sectoral distribution was also influenced by the nature of the jobs that were advertised during the period of data collection. Although jobs were also taken from national and local newspapers, the main source was the national employment agency.

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[10] It could be argued that the responses of employers might be varying with respect to male and female non-national workers. It should be noted, however, that it is generally men who migrate to Western countries in search of employment, and who compete with natives in the job market (Zegers de Beijl 2000). Therefore, notwithstanding the non-interchangeability of gender for documenting the level of employment opportunities, using a male participant observer to test the jobs did not impose significant limitations in terms of drawing conclusions about the general labour-market situation of immigrants. It can nevertheless be speculated that immigrant women might face more barriers to employment because of gender discrimination.

[11] The technique called situation testing, which includes two or more groups, has its own limitations as such. For instance, it assesses neither the workings of a selection process nor the attitudes of the employers, but merely considers the outcome of a process (Zegers de Bejil 2000).

Of the 400 positions tested, the majority were full-time (76%) and 24 per cent were part-time. Of the part-time jobs, 20 per cent were for 20 or more hours a week, and four per cent for less than 20 hours. According to the information given in the advertisements, the duration of the jobs varied from two weeks to one year, and also jobs that were permanent. In fact, the largest percentage were permanent (49%), followed by jobs lasting 1-3 months (23%), 3-6 months (14%) and 6-12 months (10%). The remainder were of less than one month's duration. The requirement for previous work experience was not mentioned in 36 per cent of the cases, and it was expressly stated in 13 per cent that no previous experience was necessary. Some experienced was preferred in 26 per cent of the cases, and demanded in 25 per cent. It was stated in 54 per cent of the advertisements that the employer was male, in 44 per cent that it was female, and no gender was mentioned in the rest. The majority of the jobs (86%) were in the private sector, followed by municipalities and recruitment companies. Information on the size of the particular establishments is not available, although in a few cases it was referred to in the advertisements. More than half of the jobs (57%) were located in Helsinki city, followed by Vantaa (22%), Espoo (18%) and Kauniainen (4%).

The jobs were applied for in two ways: by telephone and by written applications. Of the 400 advertisements, 284 were applied for by telephone and 116 by applications. An attempt was made to select more jobs for which the applicant was required to telephone the employer. The idea behind this was to obtain in-depth knowledge of the attitudes and practices of the employers towards employing immigrants. The written application was sent only if the particular job specifically required. The better-paid jobs requiring university or other higher education and a considerable amount of previous experience generally involved the submission of a written application, although even some of the low-paid jobs, such as a cleaner, also had this requirement. The resumes were constructed in a manner that most suited the nature and requirements of the job. When jobs were tested by telephone, the applicant told the employers that he had the relevant education and experience. If the opportunity for an interview was granted, the applicant dressed in a manner commensurate with the job he was applying for. If a job offer was made on the spot, he accepted it. He then called the employer back within a few hours to say that he had just received a better offer. He generally told the employers that he lived in the vicinity of the workplace, thereby precluding any potential excuses for not short-listing the applicant on the grounds of area of residence. However, it was not always possible to do this, for example, if the location of the prospective workplace was not mentioned in the advertisement. In these cases, the applicant told the employer that geographical mobility did not cause him any inconvenience.

The nature of the research method did not permit the inclusion of jobs that required particular technical skills, such as for engineers, architects, hairdressers, medical staff, specialised construction workers, various kinds of technicians and other similar positions. Sales jobs paid on commission were also excluded since the employer does not pay a regular salary. As a result, the range of jobs was limited to fields in which the applicant could apply with more confidence and successfully manage the interview process. An extensive range of 64 different jobs tested from seven occupational categories, however, effectively served the research objectives (Table 2).

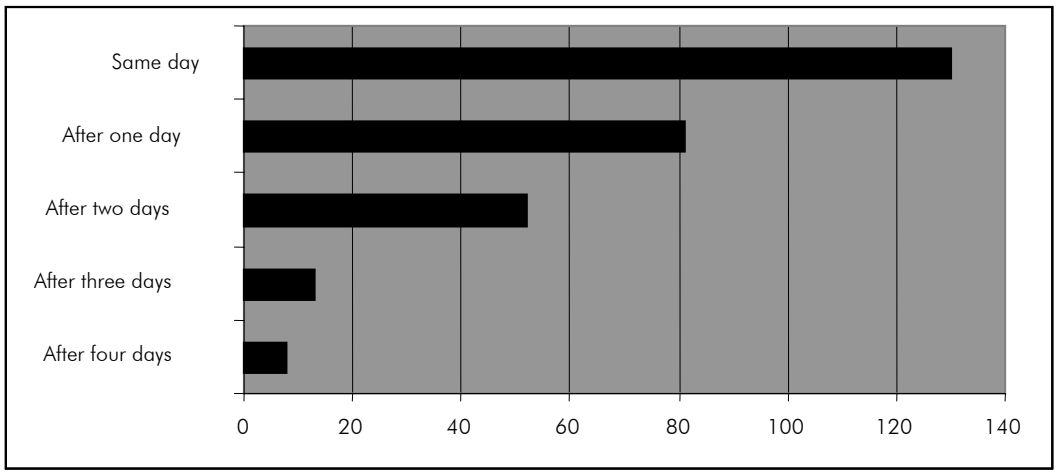
Table 2. Distribution of jobs tested in various economic sectors

	N	%
Warehouse-related work: Store Worker, Packer, Assembler, Container Loader, etc.	106	27
Retail trade: Shop Assistant, Cashier, Service-station Worker, Sales Representative, Fast-food Worker, etc.	59	15
Clerical: Office Assistant, Clerk, Receptionist, Caretaker, Copier, Order Filler, etc.	54	14
Cleaning: Cleaner, Carwash assistant, etc.	48	12
Restaurant and catering: Waiter, Kitchen Worker, Cashier Waiter, Café Worker, Dishwasher, Breakfast waiter, etc.	46	12
Industrial Factory Worker, Production Worker, Assembler, Plant Assistant, Metal Worker, etc.	44	11
Miscellaneous Human-resources Assistant, Gardener, Construction Worker, Interpreter, Employment Counsellor, Social Worker, Language Reviser, etc.	43	11
Total	400	100

Note: Because of rounding error, the percentage total may not show 100.

For the most part the employers were called on the same day on which the jobs were advertised, when application by telephone was stipulated (Figure 2). The aim was to minimise the employers' excuses for not employing or short-listing the non-native applicant on the grounds that the particular job had already been taken. The applicant was frequently among the first three candidates to apply for the position. However, it was not always possible to apply for on the same day either because the employer could not be reached, or because the job had been advertised in the employment agency too late for a call to be placed to the employer on the same day. In these cases, calls were made on the following day and were statistically included in the jobs that were applied for after one day. Almost 46 per cent of the jobs requiring telephone contact were applied for on the same day, often within a few hours of their being advertised, while in 29 per cent contact was made on the following day, and in 18 per cent two days after they were advertised. In some cases the jobs were applied for after four days of the placement of the advertisement because of the coming weekend, the employer being on leave, or official holidays.

Figure 2. The number of days within which the jobs were applied for (Telephone method, N=284)



In terms of attitudes, the employers' responses were divided into "reluctant," "neutral," and "friendly" categories. The neutral category includes the responses in which the employers behaved 'ordinarily', as well as very brief responses when it was difficult to interpret their exact nature. A response was assigned to the reluctant or friendly category when its interpretation involved no doubt. A response was considered reluctant when the applicant found it difficult to present his qualifications and extend the discussion because of the employer's disinterested behaviour, when the employer unfairly avoided short-listing the applicant, untruthfully informed him about the status of the particular post – namely that it had already been filled – or behaved so as to avoid granting the opportunity for an interview. It is important to note here that the employer's reserved or *cold* behaviour was not in itself considered indicative of a reluctant attitude, as the employer may have responded to native applicants in the same manner. Similarly, the employer's politeness as such was not considered indicative of a friendly attitude either, since the employer may have treated the job applicant pleasantly but still have been discriminatory in the actual hiring. There were instances of this in the data. The three examples given below illustrate reluctant behaviour. In the first case, in order to cross-check the employer's response, the Finnish testing person called the particular employer immediately after the non-native applicant had finished the call. The post was still open and he was asked to come for an interview. In the second case, the testing person was short-listed.

Case 1:

Applicant (A): I'm calling about the post of cash-desk person that you advertised today in the employment office. I am extremely interested in this post. Is it still open?

Employer (E): It has not gone yet but, in practice, it has already gone.

A: I'm sorry. Has it already been filled?

E: No. It has not been filled yet. But there are already many applicants for this post. So, in practice, it has already gone.

A: I'm very interested in this post and I also have considerable experience in this field. I can tell you where I have worked and I also have work testimonials with me.

E: But now we have already enough applicants and I'm not taking any more.

Case 2:

Applicant: I'm calling about the post of shop assistant. I'm very interested in this job. Has it already gone?
Employer: *(reluctantly)* Well, so many people have already applied for this job. If I invite all of them here, there'll be too many.
A: So, in practice, the job has already gone then.
E: Yes, I would say so. Do you have any experience?
A: Yes, I do have some experience in this field. I worked as a salesman for six months in a company that did business in books. My job was to sell the books to different companies. I also worked as a salesman in a kiosk for five months, where I sold foodstuffs and other things.
E: Well… I would say this job is more suitable for small girls.

Case 3:

Applicant: I'm calling about the post of gardening worker that was advertised today. I'm extremely interested in this job since I have considerable experience in this field. I hope the job is still open.
Employer: The job has not gone yet but perhaps it won't suit you.
A: Actually, I like this work a lot. I have worked for more than a year as a gardening worker in Helsinki.
E: I think it may not suit you because it also requires other skills and not just previous experience. You may sometimes have to deal with customers as well.
A: That shouldn't be a problem for me because I worked as a salesman in a book company for more than six months. I sold books to various companies in Helsinki by phone as well as going there in person. I also have also a lot of experience of customer service in a hotel. I'm sure I'll be able to do this job quite well. I could come for an interview at any time that's convenient for you.
E: Well, you could give me your phone number. I'll see what the situation is in a few days.

A response was categorised as friendly when the employer showed interest in the applicant by asking about, for instance, his previous credentials, gave him a chance to present his case and did not ask evasive questions. The following three responses were classified as friendly.

Case 1:

Applicant: I'm calling about the position of storekeeper that you advertised today. I'm very interested in this job.
Employer: Well, do you have some prior experience in this area?
A: In fact I do. *(The applicant gives a description of his previous jobs in this area.)*
E: I think you have good experience and this is good enough for this job. Have you been responsible for customer service before because sometimes you might have to post goods to different companies?
A: Yes, especially in my job in my previous company. And of course, if there is something new I'm sure I'll soon learn it.

E: I'm sure it won't be a problem. Can you read English because many of the names of the goods and related information are in English?
A: Yes, I can read and write English reasonably well. If you like, we could speak English now.
E: No, that's fine. I just wanted to ask. Well, I'll take your name and contact number. I'll call you tomorrow in the afternoon and then we'll set a time for a meeting.

Case 2:

Applicant: I'm calling about the post of gardening worker. Is it still open?
Employer: Yes, it is still open. Do you have any previous experience of gardening work?
A: In fact, I have more than one year's experience of gardening worker with a company in Helsinki that also took care of a park.
E: *(in a pleasant way)* This is a good amount of experience. What did you do there?
A: Actually all sorts of work. For example, I put new plants in the ground and prepared beds for various plants. I also mowed the grass with a machine or scythe and also watered and trimmed the plants. Well, that kind of work. Naturally, the nature of the work varied according to the time of the year.
E: Good, good. You have good experience. I'll just take your name and phone number now. The job has just been advertised and you're the first one to call. I'll wait until tomorrow to see what sort of people call about the job. I'll call you later if you're selected for an interview.

In the third case, although the applicant was not offered the job and faced considerable reluctance from one of the employers, as the discussion below reveals, the response was nevertheless classified as friendly. This was done because the first contact person with whom the applicant spoke, and who also invited him for an interview, was friendly in character and allowed him to present his case. The aim behind presenting the following case is also to highlight the fact that the classification of the employers' attitudes into different categories was done with due care. Extracts from the telephone and the interview discussions are given below.

Case 3:

Applicant: I'm calling about the job of sawmill assistant. Is it still open?
Employer1 (first employer): Yes. It's still open. It was only advertised a few hours ago.
A: That's good to hear because I'm extremely interested in this work.
E1: You know this job is in a sawmill and involves transferring different timber materials from one place to another?
A: Yes, I read the job description and I'd be glad of the opportunity for an interview.
E1: Do you have any experience of working with timber or in a sawmill?
A: In my previous warehouse job I also had to assemble hundreds of wooden shelves that were to be dispatched to different shops. I'm sure I can manage this job quite well.
E1: Well, there's nothing difficult in this work. You just have to carry finished planks, boards and laths to the store and put them in. If necessary, you will also help the customers to put these materials into their vehicles and so.
A: I'd try my best to manage this job. Would it be convenient if I came to see you now?
E1: I'd prefer if you could come in two hours....

(Interview discussion)

E1: *(after showing the workplace)* Well, you can see now what sort of work this is.
A: Yes, it's just as it was described in the job ad. I'm very interested in it. If I get this job, I'm ready to start from tomorrow.
E2 (second employer): But have you worked in a sawmill before?
A: No, I haven't.
E1: But he's assembled lots of wooden shelves in his previous job.
E2: *(very reluctantly)* But he has no experience of working in a sawmill.
E1: *(wearily)* Where does he need experience in this work?
E2: It's good to have some experience.
E1: Well, I think he would manage.
A: Yes. I'm very sure I'll be able to manage this work if I'm given a chance. When are you going to decide about this job?
E2: Well, one other person is coming for an interview in the afternoon.
E1: I'll make my decision today. If you call me tomorrow morning, then I can tell you.

The employers occasionally enquired about the origin of the applicant. However, his surname gave some indication of his cultural background, although it may not have conveyed a precise idea about his nationality. Moreover, his accent in the Finnish language revealed from the start that the applicant was a representative of a non-national group. In this regard, the employers' responses were probably influenced by whatever preconceived ideas they had about this group. Before moving on to the findings, however, it would be important to discuss the ethical implications of the particular method used in the study.

3.3 A Note on Ethical Considerations

It is a common expectation in the social sciences that research subjects are aware of their participation in a study. Their informed consent is therefore deemed imperative in a research undertaking. Considered against this practice, the participant-observation method employed in this study may raise some ethical objections. The employers who were contacted, either by telephone or by written application, about the advertised positions were not aware that they were under observation and that the researcher was not a legitimate job applicant. What grounds can be offered to justify the use of this particular method?

First of all, my interest in employing this method stemmed from the fact that I was going to study how immigrants became connected to employment opportunities in the Finnish labour market, and what was the possible role of their social resources in this process. Reliance on social networks among immigrants, I assumed, might be greater because of their having originated outside of the social system, thereby possessing limited locally acquired human capital such as language skills and work experience. Such reliance, however, might also be expected to be greater if access to the labour market is hindered due to factors unrelated to the carrying out of the job tasks, such as discrimination. The discriminatory practices of employers, in turn, may also have an impact on the formation of particular types of networks among immigrants. From the viewpoint of the research objectives, it was therefore quite relevant first to consider the

scope of the employment opportunities of non-national job seekers through job information located via impersonal channels, including public employment agency and various types of newspapers. Hence, before undertaking this study I thought it imperative to have first-hand knowledge of the employment situation of non-national workers prevailing in the labour market, and the participant-observation method, I was convinced, was one of the effective ways, if not the only one, of attaining this objective.

It was naturally possible to enquire of the immigrants about the kind of employment situation they faced in the labour market. However, the information acquired from interviews with immigrants concerning various situations they encounter while seeking employment, although very important, is nevertheless indirect. Based on the insights gained from my conversations with immigrants, it became obvious to me that sometimes they may not impartially judge the treatment meted out to them by employers because of the subjective element involved in their perception and interpretation of the situation. This subjective element may cause them to either overstate or understate the actual encounter with the employer or hiring representative, since the definition of what is desirable and appropriate behaviour varies across individuals. The chances of distortion in the interpretation of some situation may become even greater if the individual has repeatedly received negative treatment from the demand side of the labour market. The participant-observation method, therefore, gave an opportunity to observe the behaviour of the employers directly as it occurred, while at the same time avoiding subjective influences.

Nevertheless, the objectives mentioned above for employing the participant-observation method may not be considered sufficient to avoid the ethical implications, as the employers or their hiring representatives were not aware that they were participating in research and studying their behaviour could be interpreted to have infringed their privacy. However, when I looked at the ethical considerations, and considered the benefits the participant-observation method conferred, I concluded that there were more justifiable grounds for using it than for not doing. First, following Zegers de Beijl (2000, 38), I believe that recruitment is ultimately a public rather than a private act. The jobs that were applied for by telephone and by written application were advertised publicly and the recruitment practices of the employers were regulated by the relevant legislation, as well as by professional codes of conduct, thus highlighting the 'public' nature of the recruitment act.

Secondly, this study did not infringe any employer's or firm's privacy. None of the employers' personal information or identity is exposed. The employers' responses are considered collectively, not individually, and the discussion in no way involves any injury to the reputation of the employer or financial risk to the recruitment organisation. In order to protect the privacy of the hiring firm further, the entire process of applying for a certain job was taken care of by the researcher alone. This included, among other things, visiting the employment office to collect job advertisements, searching for and selecting vacancies in newspapers, sending resumes and feeding the data into the computer. When a native Finnish person cross-checked the jobs, he was not aware of the name of the specific company, unless it was considered necessary. To put it briefly, I have taken various precautions to ensure that no individual employer or enterprise has been singled out or can be identified in any way in this study.

Moreover, in order to reduce the additional impact of the research on the recruitment process, an effort was also made not to affect the supply of legitimate candidates. Therefore, if a job offer was made either as a result of a telephone call or following a written application, the employer was immediately informed that the applicant had obtained a vacancy elsewhere. This practice helped to ensure that the researcher did not stand in the way of some other applicant's recruitment or cause any delay to the employers in the filling of that position. The participant-observation method attempted to investigate the employers' conventional recruitment practices and patterns of behaviour in real-life conditions. In this process, they were not enticed or allured in any manner that would have led them to behave in a particular way or to deviate from their normal recruitment routine. The purpose of the study was to find out what typical situations immigrants encountered while seeking employment in the Finnish labour market through job information located via formal channels. Asking the advance approval of the employers to participate in the study would have self-evidently given rise to unreal and artificial behaviour, and thus would have defeated the object of the study.

On the one hand, from the viewpoint of the research objectives, the particular method effectively allowed evaluation of efficacy of job information located through impersonal sources in terms of entering the labour market. On the other hand, although my aim did not constitute to expose labour-market discrimination as such, this method nonetheless also served to bring to light the attitudes and practices of employers towards the recruitment of workers of foreign origin. It offered an insight into the reality that may remain hidden behind the statistics. In this context, if the issue of ethics is brought up because the employers were unaware that their behaviour was under investigation, it should be a matter of concern to those who treat workers differentially based on illegal grounds than to people who attempt to uncover such unlawful practices. The right to the free choice of employment is protected by legislation for individuals without distinction as to their race, colour or national or ethnic origin. The successful integration of non-nationals into the host society requires equitable access to employment opportunities in the labour market. The measures that help to uncover and reduce processes that hinder such access are therefore relevant and necessary. In the past, methods such as situation testing, which have been extensively employed in various countries and by the ILO, have contributed to remedial action taken against exclusionary practices and have helped in the development of public policies that have created more equitable access to the labour market as well as to other areas in society. While not ignoring its significance in any sense, if the question of ethical considerations is to be raised at all, I assume it should be raised in the context of the purposes the study has served.

3.4 Review of the Results

3.4.1 Jobs Tested by Written Application

As Table 3 shows, of the 116 jobs applied for by written application, in 76 cases, i.e. 65 per cent, the employers did not reply. This lack of response from a considerable number of employers, apart from being a possible indication of a reluctant attitude towards the non-national applicant, may also be due to the time-consuming nature of responding to a large number of applicants. Thirty-seven of the applications, i.e. 32 per cent, attracted a negative written response. Three of the written applications resulted in an interview, and in all three cases the job was offered. All in all, the success rate in obtaining a job offer following a written application stood at three per cent.

Table 3. Responses of the employers when the jobs were tested by written application

Response to the application sent	N	%
Did not reply at all	76	65
'We regret to inform you'	37	32
Applicant invited for an interview and offered the job	3	3
Total	116	100

3.4.2 Jobs Tested by Telephone

As Table 4 indicates, of the 284 jobs tested, 63 were refused to the applicant on various grounds, and 91 positions were said to be already filled. Taken together, the two responses "Job refused for various reasons" and "Job has already gone," constitute 154, i.e. 54 per cent, of the entire 284 jobs applied for by telephone. In the category "Job refused for various reasons," the employers were clearly reluctant, with 52 of the 63 employers exhibiting a strong reluctance towards the foreign applicant. The Finnish native person cross-checked 25 of the jobs to which the employer response was that the vacancy had already been filled: 14 of the 25 jobs were still open. In 105 cases the employer promised to contact the applicant later, but did not call back: they said that they would be in touch with the applicant in about one week's time. Many of the employers belonging to this category were satisfied with the applicant's skills and previous experience. The applicant was interviewed for 25 jobs, of which three were offered to him. All in all, the success rate in obtaining a job offer by telephone was one per cent.

Table 4. Responses of the employers when the jobs were tested by telephone

Response to the phone call	N	%
Job refused for various reasons	63	22
'*Job has already gone*'	91	32
Employer promised to call later but did not	105	37
Applicant invited for an interview but the job was not offered	22	8
Applicant invited for an interview and the job was offered	3	1
Total	284	100

3.4.3 The Nature of the Jobs Offered

The total number of job offers obtained by both methods after applying for 400 positions was six, giving an overall success rate of 1.5 per cent. These six jobs were those of warehouse worker, furniture assembler, restaurant worker, data entry worker, gardening worker and interpreter/translator. The applicant was the only candidate for two of the jobs, according to the employers. Most of the jobs offered fell within the secondary sector of the labour market. Of the six positions received, two of them required prior experience of that kind of work, two some general experience, and the experience requirement was not mentioned in the remaining two. In terms of duration, two jobs were permanent and the other four were temporary, lasting from two weeks to six months. Five of the jobs were full-time and the remaining one part-time. Four were for private enterprises and two were in municipal organisations. The three job offers following a written application were from female employers, and the other three applied for by telephone were offered by males. Five of the six jobs were located in Helsinki, the sixth one being in Espoo.

3.5 Responses of the Employers Differentiated by Job Sectors

Overall, of the 284 cases in which jobs were applied for by telephone, 30 per cent of the employer responses fell into the reluctant category, 59 per cent into the neutral category and 11 per cent into the friendly category. The reason why the "Neutral" category is relatively inflated is that it also includes responses that were too short to be placed reliably in any other. As Table 5 shows, as the number of reluctant responses decreased, the number of neutral responses tended to increase.

The most reluctant and least neutral attitudes were experienced in the retail trade and in the restaurant and catering branch of the service sector, both of which generally entail dealing with customers. In particular, almost half of the employers advertising the 50 vacancies tested in the retail trade were noticeably reluctant. Only in one case was the applicant granted the opportunity for an interview, although no job was offered. Of the 41 jobs tested in the restaurant and catering field, an interview ensued in two cases, but no job offer was forthcoming.

Table 5. Attitudes of employers in various job sectors when the jobs were tested by telephone (%)

		Attitude of the employer receiving the telephone call				
		Reluctant	Neutral	Friendly	Total	N
Job sector	Retail trade	46	48	6	100	50
	Restaurant and catering	34	54	12	100	41
	Industrial	30	59	11	100	37
	Warehouse-related work	26	59	15	100	80
	Clerical	25	62	13	100	16
	Cleaning	19	76	5	100	38
	Miscellaneous	27	59	14	100	22
Total		30	59	11	100	284

In contrast, the lowest number of reluctant (19%) and the highest number of neutral responses (76%) were in the cleaning sector, which could in part be due to the greater degree of exposure to non-national workers in this sector. However, the level of friendly responses was quite similar to that in the retail-trade sector, which gave the most reluctant responses. It is tempting to suggest that the difference between the two sectors in terms of reluctant and neutral responses could reflect the availability and unavailability of native workers. In the retail trade where there is ample supply of native workers, the lower number of friendly responses corresponds to a greater number of reluctant and a lower number of neutral responses. However, in the cleaning sector, where the supply of native workers has decreased as they are increasingly unwilling to do these low-paid, menial jobs, and also since these days many of the vacancies advertised are part-time, employers have to employ non-native workers who are generally ready to take on these jobs. As a result, unlike in the retail-trade sector, the lowest number of friendly responses does not correspond to a greater number of reluctant and a lower number of neutral responses. The cleaning sector has often been depicted as a niche for immigrants in the labour market. However, no job offer was secured in this field.

In the industrial sector, 37 positions were tested which led to six interviews without any job offer. The employers were generally unwilling to grant the applicant the opportunity for an interview, and on the six occasions when they did, the applicant had insisted on being given the opportunity. Therefore, the fact that a larger number of interviews were granted in a particular sector does not necessarily mean that the employers were more open to the applicant or that there are more employment opportunities for immigrants. In warehouse-related work, in which most of the interviews, i.e. eight out of 25, were offered over the telephone, the employers were slightly more friendly than in the other sectors. Two out of the six job offers received were in this sector. A significant number, i.e. 38 out of 54, of the jobs required the submission of an application in the clerical sector. Therefore, in these cases the direct response of the employers could not be observed. In the remaining 16 positions tested by telephone, the employers were generally neutral in their responses.

Combined in the category "Miscellaneous" are various occupations ranging from employment counsellor, social worker and interpreter to gardening worker, driver and laundry worker. There were not enough cases to form independent categories. Because

of the diverse nature of the jobs, it is difficult to speak about the attitudes of the employers as a whole. For example, the nature of the discussion with the employer with the interpreter's vacancy was very different from the one about the driver's job. Nevertheless, the number of interviews granted in this sector was four, which led to one job offer. If we also take into account the jobs applied for by written application, the total number of job offers stood at three in the miscellaneous category, half of the total of six.

In the end, although the data shows that female employers were slightly more reluctant (33%) than male (28%), there were no statistically significant gender differences in responses (chi square = 0.650). The gender difference was also small in cases in which the employer refused to short-list the applicant for various reasons (see Table 4: 34 women i.e. 54% and 29 men i.e. 46%). However, 10 of the 12 employers who themselves invited the applicant for an interview were women.

3.6 Responses of the Employers Differentiated by Type of Contact

Research shows that the level of employer reluctance in employing immigrants is greater in jobs that involve visual or direct contact with customers (e.g., Smeesters et al. 2000). Some research reports indicate that discriminatory behaviour by employers or their representatives in recruiting immigrants for these occupations could arise more by the assumed prejudices of their customers as by their own prejudices (Zegers de Beijl 2000). According to Wrench (1997a) employers often deem it bad for business to employ immigrants and ethnic workers in these occupations.

Table 6. Responses of the employers with regard to visual and non-visual contact jobs (telephone method) (%)

		Attitude of the employer receiving the telephone call				
		Reluctant	Neutral	Friendly	Total	N
Job requires	Visual Contact	43	48	9	100	90
	No visual contact	24	64	12	100	194
Total		30	59	11	100	284

The results of this study also suggest consistency with these studies. As Table 6 indicates, employers showed more reluctance when the jobs involved visual contact with clients. The data also shows that the chances of securing an interview were fewer in jobs requiring visual contact: the number of interviews secured in visual contact jobs stood at three, whereas 19 were obtained in jobs that did not involve visual contact with customers. Similarly, a significant number of employers refused to short-list the applicant for visual-contact than for non-visual contact jobs (32% vs. 17%). Moreover, 13 out of the 14 jobs cross-checked, when the employer had responded that the job had already gone but in fact it was still open, fell into the category in which direct contact with customers was required. In short, a significant correlation was established between a job that involves visual contact with customers and the chances of being granted an interview or receiving a job offer.

3.7 Previous Experience Essential but…

In this section, it is shown how employers often enquired about the previous experience of the applicant when it was not required as a way of avoiding short-listing him. Secondly, it is argued that the fact that employers often did not ask about previous experience when it was explicitly mentioned in the job advertisement may also show their unwillingness to employ the non-national applicant.

As Table 7 shows, in 49 per cent of the 74 cases in which the requirement for prior experience was not mentioned, in 49 per cent cases the employers asked the applicant about his previous experience. It is difficult to say whether these enquiries were simply a strategy for finding an easier way to reject the applicant. Having relevant skills and qualifications is self-evidently essential in obtaining a job in an increasingly saturated job market. In particular, in a loose labour market situation when finding workers is much easier, employers would naturally prefer to hire someone who was skilled. Therefore, there was nothing unusual in these cases when the applicant was asked about his skills. However, in cases in which the job did not require previous experience, and this was explicitly stated in the advertisement, the employer's insistence on the need for it suggests a lack of genuineness. It is even more questionable when the advertisement further states that "training for the job will be given to the chosen applicant," as was the case in 17 of the 24 jobs tested. In short, no job was offered for which no previous experience was required.

Table 7. Enquiries by employers about the previous experience of the applicant (%)

		Did the employer ask about previous experience?			
		No	Yes	Total	N
Does the job require previous work experience?	Not mentioned	51	49	100	74
	No	29	71	100	24
	Yes	31	69	100	95
Total		38	62	100	193

On the one hand, while employers demanded experience when it was not required, they did not ask about it when it was explicitly mentioned in the advertisement: this happened in 31 per cent of such cases, and it could suggest a lack of interest in the applicant. This argument seemingly runs contrary to the earlier statement in which it was argued that the demand for previous skills was used in order to reject the applicant. However, upon closer inspection, the two statements may not necessarily be inconsistent. In some of the jobs cross-checked by the native Finnish person, the requirement for previous experience was mentioned. While the employers asked in detail about the qualifications and skills of the national applicant, they did not ask anything about the credentials of the non-national applicant in most of these cases.

3.8 Grounds for Rejection

In this section, an attempt is made to examine the grounds given by the employers for not short-listing the applicant, summed up in the category "Job refused for various reasons" in Table 4 and explained in more detail in Table 8. The reluctance to short-list the applicant was expressed in various ways. In almost half of the cases the response was, “The job is still open but in practice it has already gone.” The refusal to short-list the applicant in these cases emerged from the contradictory argument of the employer that, although in principle the post was still open, in practice it had already gone since they had enough candidates. Only a small number of employers, four out of the 30, asked if the applicant had any previous experience in the relevant field, but even in these four cases it was merely another attempt to find grounds for rejection. Three of the four advertisements explicitly stated, “Previous experience is not necessary since training will be given to the chosen applicant.” The applicant, nevertheless, mentioned his experience in the fields concerned. In some cases when the applicant reminded the employer about the text of the advertisement, the employer admitted that no previous experience was needed for the job.

The availability of 10 of the 30 jobs was cross-checked by the native Finnish person, and in seven of the cases the employers short-listed him without any argument. The employer's response was similar that given to the non-national applicant in two cases and in the final case the employer told the native applicant that there were enough candidates but he also asked about his previous experience and added his name to the list for future reference.

Table 8. The grounds given by the employers for not short-listing the applicant

	N
'The job is still open but in practice it has already gone'	30
Gender	10
Language skills	6
Unavailability of transport at night	5
Insufficient skills	4
Miscellaneous	8
Total	63

Gender also proved to be one of the grounds for rejection by some employers. As Table 8 shows, 10 of the 63 jobs were refused on this basis. Although in none of these job advertisements was a gender preference explicitly expressed, many of the employers simply said that the post in question was more suitable for a female worker. Eight of the 10 employers did not enquire about the previous experience of the applicant, but the two who did expressed no reservations about his skills in the concerned fields: this was generally consistent with most of the employers falling within the various categories mentioned in Table 8.

Proficiency in the Finnish language was another ground for rejection for six of the 63 jobs. Although language proficiency was not closely related to job performance in many of these cases, the employers nevertheless insisted that excellent skills in Finnish

were essential. As the discussion below suggests, the main problem may not have been the Finnish-language skills of the applicant, but rather the stiff attitude of the employer.

Applicant: I'm calling about the post of part-time cashier you advertised today in the employment office. I'm extremely interested in this post.
Employer: Do you have any experience?
A: Yes, I do. I worked as a cashier in a clothes shop for almost six months. I've also worked for one company as a cashier and a book salesman for six months. I believe I'd be able to do this job pretty well.
E: This job requires extremely good proficiency in the Finnish language.
A: Could I ask a question? We have already been speaking in Finnish for some time. Do you understand me well?
E: Yes, I do.
A: I'm sure I'm able to do this job pretty well.
E: Older people and pensioners who are hard of hearing come into our shop. They need to be spoken to loudly.
A: I'm sure I can speak loudly and clearly to them.
E: Extremely good Finnish is required for this job.
A: I have lived in Finland for 10 years. I think I understand and speak Finnish well enough to manage this job.
E: Living here for 10 years doesn't mean anything.
A: In my view it's a reasonable period of time in... (*the employer interrupting*)
E: It doesn't mean anything. Because a foreigner is a foreigner.

The unwillingness of the employers to short-list the applicant is revealed in their persistent shifting of position to find new grounds for rejection. The following discussion was with a recruitment-agency representative and concerned the position of an office assistant.

Applicant: Yes, I do have some previous experience in this field. I worked as an office assistant in two schools for almost one-and-a-half years. I took care of various office duties in these places. I've also worked as a salesman, which involved some routine office work as well as dealing with customers.
Employer: Well…did you take care of the switchboard there, I mean telephone transfers?
A: No. I didn't. But I'm sure I could manage that as well.
E: How well do you speak Finnish? What sort of skills in the English language do you have?
A: Yes, I speak English quite well. I'm now speaking Finnish with you and so you might be able to assess what sort of Finnish I speak.
E: But do you write English well?
A: Yes, I write it pretty well.
E: Well, let's be honest. This job won't suit you because it does require a lot of telephone switchboard work and there you really do need very good Finnish. If your English is better than your Finnish, that's not really good, you know, because Finnish is the first language in this work.
A: Could I ask you what do you think about my proficiency in Finnish?
E: Your oral skills are fine but this job does require excellent Finnish. What about your writing skills in Finnish?
A: Well, almost as good.
E: In my view you could apply for some other office work. That would suit you quite well since you already have some experience. You could send us an application

describing your previous experience and so on. Then we could look for some other office work for you.

Another case given below concerned the position of a sales assistant in a photography shop, and here, too, skills in the Finnish language were given as grounds for not short-listing the applicant. The advertisement indicated that training for the job would be given to the successful applicant.

Applicant: I would like to apply for the post of sales assistant that you advertised a few hours ago. Has the job already gone?
Employer: No, it hasn't gone yet.
A: I'm very interested in this post.
E: *(in a rather cold manner)* Well, this job requires extremely good proficiency in the Finnish language. You might speak very good Finnish but it's not good enough. Let me tell you straight! This job is not for you!
A: But I have understood everything you have said so far…
E: (*the employer interrupting)* I don't want to hurt you but it's not enough. This job demands really good skills in the Finnish language. That's why I can't ask you for an interview. I suggest you look for some other type of work.

The position of interpreter was one of the six jobs offered to the applicant after 400 enquiries. This offer may contradict the above-mentioned grounds for rejection given by the particular employers. There is further evidence in the data that would appear to invalidate this excuse: in none of the six jobs offered to the applicant did the employers have any objections to his language skills.

The lack of transport at night was among the grounds for rejection in five of the 63 jobs tested by telephone. The employers argued that a car would be needed for commuting to and from the workplace. This was a valid argument in one of the cases, but not necessarily in the others, as the following excerpt illustrates.

Applicant: I would like to apply for the job of a worker in the fast-food kiosk. Is it still open?
Employer: Yes, it's still open. Do you have any experience?
A: Yes, of course. I have worked for more than a year as a waiter in a restaurant, and also for a few months in the same type of fast-food kiosk. But you mention in the advertisement that previous experience is not required for this job.
E: Yes. Actually, the work does not demand previous experience. Where do you live?
A: I live in Espoo.
E: Then there might be some problem. Since this job starts at 10p.m., buses from Espoo might not run that late at night. You might have problems getting here.
A: Buses run to Helsinki as late as 1.15 a.m. from where I live in Espoo. In fact, I wouldn't have any problems getting to X where this job is situated.
E: But there are no buses that run at 2.00 or 3.00 a.m. when the shift ends. How would you get back to Espoo?
A: There are trains that leave at 3.30 and 4.00 a.m. for Espoo and it takes only 16 minutes to my station. In fact, I wouldn't have any problems in getting to work. Could I come for an interview right now?
E: You could call me tomorrow evening and then we can talk about it further.

The applicant called the employer the following evening, as agreed. However, he was told that the job had already been filled.

The lack of sufficient experience, as the employer saw it, was another reason given for rejection for four of the 63 jobs. One of the employers recruiting a bakery worker for a job involving making sandwiches and the like argued that solid skills in baking were required, and he therefore did not consider the applicant suitable for that job. The applicant had told the employer that he had been preparing sandwiches and similar items while working as a breakfast waiter in a hotel for more than a year. Another employer looking to fill the post of a cleaner argued that six months' experience was not sufficient: a year's experience of cleaning was required before one could be considered for the job.

Some of the employers refused to short-list on various other grounds grouped under the "Miscellaneous" category in Table 8. Eight of the 63 instances fell into this category. In one case involving the post of a warehouse worker the applicant was told that he could not be short-listed because the jobholder may sometimes have to go to the airport customs department to clear the goods, and that it was more for security reasons than anything else that he could be included on the list. It seldom made any difference if the applicant insisted that he was eligible for short-listing, despite reference to his experience in the field concerned, as the following discussion shows.

Applicant: I'm calling about the post of restaurant waiter. I'm extremely interested in this job.
Employer: Have you worked in a restaurant before?
A: Yes, I have a year's experience of working as a breakfast waiter at the Hotel Intercontinental. I'm quite sure I'll be able to manage this job as well.
E: But have you ever worked in a restaurant?
A: No, I haven't.
E: Well, then you won't be able to cope with this job. The Hotel Intercontinental and this restaurant are two different worlds. Things really get busy here. We need someone who could cope with the hectic pace. Are you sure that you could manage this kind of work?
A: Yes, it sounds quite familiar. In the Hotel Intercontinental, too, we sometimes had to cope with up to six hundred customers in a single day, especially in the summer. We really had to be very efficient and were kept running back and forth all the time.
E: Still, I wouldn't really think you could cope with this job.
A: I'll learn quite quickly, especially since I'm very motivated to learn. I'll try my best.
E: I'm sure, you would. But really, this job is quite busy and hectic. I'm not sure that you could manage it.

In the end, despite the impression of reluctant employer attitudes that the preceding discussion in this section may have conveyed, it is important to mention that many employers grouped in the category "The employer promised to call later but did not" in Table 4 were neutral in their attitude, and some were friendly. Regardless of their satisfaction with the applicant's qualifications, however, the outcome in terms of being offered employment was insignificant.

3.9 The Sociocultural Construction of the Labour Market

Having discussed the grounds for rejection, I will now revert to the point I raised at the beginning of this discussion namely that the concept of the labour market could be more fruitfully studied as a socially and culturally constructed, rather than an undifferentiated and competitive, space in which the rules of supply and demand are shaped by a particular sociocultural reality, and a hiring process driven by abstract criteria or impersonal standards is much less prevalent than claimed. In human capital and neoclassical theories, differential access to employment opportunities for individuals and certain social groups has been ascribed to the lack of sufficient human-capital attributes. The possession of previous experience and qualifications should in principle positively forecast the chances of obtaining a job in a certain field. The preceding discussion, however, suggests that the possession of such attributes is often in itself not necessarily sufficient when it is a question of the employment of immigrant workers in Finland. A characteristic that was common to most of the employers was a disregard of the applicant's previous experience and skills in various fields. These attributes had very little effect in terms of securing a job, or even being short-listed. These findings would appear to cast doubt on the notion of labour markets as undifferentiated spaces governed by rational considerations of human capital in which both workers and employers exercise free and informed choices. Rather, they would suggest that the low level of achievement, six job offers out of 400 positions tested, could be attributed to a considerable extent to the underlying preferences of the employers, which exclude a certain category of workers from consideration for employment.

Employers' preferences develop partly as a result of personal motives and partly from sociocultural imperatives. Preferences falling within the dimension of personal motives were often encountered in the job-search efforts. Many cases revealed that the chances of receiving an offer faded into insignificance if there were even one or two native candidates, regardless of the relative strength of the non-native applicant's previous experience. Two of the six jobs obtained were ones for which the applicant happened to be the only candidate, and it could be assumed that his chances of being offered these jobs would have been much smaller had there been a native applicant. In fact, in one of the two cases, it was possible to detect from the discussion with the employer that he had waited for three days in case some national applicants applied for that vacancy. However, no such candidate turned up, probably because the job was only for two weeks. Another case further corroborates this argument. One of the employers invited the applicant for an interview for a job in a paper factory, even before a request for an interview was made. He then told the applicant that he could have the job if commuting to work did not cause a problem, since two people had already turned it down because of the inconvenient bus connections. The applicant said that he would definitely accept the offer if he were selected. When he went to the factory the next morning for an interview, the employer informed him that the particular job had already gone. "A [Finnish] person called this morning and I gave the job to him," he explained. Another response from a female employer provides additional evidence of this trend: "Yes, I could put your name on the list. But naturally I always prefer Finns."

Employers' preferences are not merely indicative of subjective motives, however: they also involve the enactment of larger social expectations. One of the employers asked whether the applicant was Russian. "I'm not against the Russians personally, but other workers don't like to see them at the workplace," he told the applicant. The employer's reluctance towards employing workers of the particular immigrant group did not stem from imperfect information about their true productivity or deficient personal attributes. Rather, it was rooted in broader social attitudes and in the history of Finland's relations with that community.

The labour market is not sealed, however. The findings suggest that, under certain conditions, it is susceptible to penetration. One of the six jobs obtained during this study included that of a gardening worker. Having asked the applicant about his previous experience, the employer was quite satisfied with the fact that he personally knew one of his former employers. He said he would check a few details with this contact and then call the applicant back. He called back and offered the job on the telephone, even without a formal interview. This case is significantly instructive in that it reveals the sociocultural construction of the labour market. It reflects the social dimension of gaining access to the job market. The very fact, that this particular employer knew the previous employer in person, itself becomes the social capital of the applicant, which outweighs the human capital. One could, of course, argue here that it was the particular skills and experience that led to the job offer, but the data refutes this: none of the other fifteen gardening positions tested could be secured, even though the employers were aware of the applicant's experience and skills in this field. In fact, some of these jobs did not require any previous experience and were of a temporary nature. These cases well illustrate the sociocultural embeddedness of the labour market and call into question the notions that regard jobs as natural, rather than social, phenomena governed by mere considerations of human capital and abstract rules.

3.10 How Do Immigrants Get Jobs?

As observed from the discussion in this chapter, job information located through formal sources, including the national employment agency and newspapers, did not yield many job opportunities in the context of this study. The next logical step therefore was to explore how immigrants who had obtained jobs in the Finnish labour market had done so. This would serve a dual purpose in testing how far the assumptions of the study correspond to the empirical reality. This is explored in the following chapters.

4 Social Networks and Occupational Attainment

In sociological studies of labour markets, social networks have been described as mechanisms for accessing limited employment opportunities. They are considered to play a vital role in facilitating the processes of both job search and occupational attainment by operating in conjunction with people's human-capital attributes. Although preceded by some other studies, Mark Granovetter's prominent work (1973, 1974 & 1985) particularly brought to light the role of social networks in social mobility and systematically pointed out that their existence and structure were directly related to job mobility. He further drew attention to the importance of examining social action in relation to how it is embedded in networks of ongoing interpersonal relations. His work, in fact, has provided much of the conceptual basis for the discussion of the significance of contact networks in the job-search process in later research.

Although the role of social networks has been discussed at length and from various perspectives, a coherent theory still remains to be formulated. The idea of the social network has generally been used as a metaphor to denote an individuals' set of relations with other people. For instance, Mitchell (1969) describes social network as a set of direct and indirect social relationships in which a given person is embedded, with the additional property that the general characteristics of these relationships would allow the possibility to interpret the social behaviour of the individuals involved. On the other hand, Coleman (1988) perceives the social network as being defined by its functions. According to him, it is not a single entity but rather a variety of different entities that share two elements: they all comprise some aspect of social structures and they facilitate certain actions by actors, whether persons or corporate actors, within the structure. Like other forms of capital, he sees social capital as productive that makes possible the attainment of certain ends that in its absence would be difficult to achieve. For Burt (1992), social networks are a form of social capital that not only provide resources but are also a means to create new resources such as new networks. In essence, the idea that lies behind the various ways of conceptualising social networks constitutes that an individual's social relationships are resources that facilitate instrumental actions, which can improve conditions of life by providing access to greater and better employment opportunities.

Lin (1999b) offers three explanations with regard to the role of embedded resources in social networks in enhancing the outcomes of actions. The first of these relates to the role networks play in facilitating the flow of job information. In the imperfect situations that generally characterise job markets, social contacts situated in better strategic positions in the occupational hierarchy can effectively serve as the conduits of information about employment opportunities and options, which may otherwise remain inaccessible to individuals. Similarly, these social ties may also inform a certain organisation and its agents about the availability and interest of an otherwise unrecognised person. This information lessens the transaction costs for both sides of the labour market by linking organisations to suitable workers and individuals to better organisations. The second explanation concerns the influence that these social ties may exercise on the agents or decision makers of the organisation, who are instrumental in the hiring or promotion process. By virtue of their critical strategic locations and positions – for instance, by being in authority and acting in a supervisory capacity – some of them possess more effective resources and can substantially affect the hiring decision of the

recruiters, as they have greater asymmetry in dependence vis-à-vis these agents. The third explanation involves the benefits that the social tie resources, as well as their acknowledged relationships with the individual as perceived by the organisation or its hiring agents, may bring in the form of the acknowledgement of the individual's social credentials, since they represent, to some extent, the individual's accessibility to resources through social networks and relations, in other words his/her social capital. By referring the individual, these social contacts also communicate to the organisation or its agents that the individual not only possesses human capital but also social resources that would bring additional resources that may be useful to the organisation as well. (Lin 1999b.)

In the network literature, several characteristics of social networks have been pointed out that may affect the employment opportunities of individuals, of which network structure and network composition have been suggested to be especially important. Network structure refers to attributes such as network size and the relationships that members of a network have among one another, whereas network composition represents the general characteristics of the members of a person's social network. It is assumed that there is a direct relationship between network structure, namely network size, and the probability of obtaining employment, as a larger number of contacts would potentially be a source of more job information, in that they may alert friends or relatives about job openings advertised through impersonal means such as newspapers and employment agencies, or about invisible vacancies distributed through word-of-mouth mechanisms.

Moreover, the relationships that members of a network have among one another are assumed to be significant in terms of explaining the kind of employment opportunities that people acquire and their social mobility. In this regard, one question that has been much discussed is the merit of strong versus weak ties. Strong ties refer to relations, such as family members and close friends, with whom one has frequent interaction or higher level of reciprocity. Weak ties describe relations, such as acquaintances and workmates, that are characterized by infrequent contacts and a lack of emotional closeness (Marsden & Campbell 1984). Both kinds are claimed to link people with different types of jobs and social circles. Granovetter suggests in his seminal work (1973) that it is weak ties that can potentially act as bridges by connecting individuals to new pools of information and networks that were formerly inaccessible. In contrast, people with predominantly strong ties are at a disadvantage in acquiring information from distant parts of the social system, and are restricted to redundant and within-group information (Granovetter 1982). A network consisting of strong ties increases the likelihood that its members will share overlapping ties and consequently similar information. In his study conducted among a random sample of professional, technical and managerial male personnel, Granovetter (1974) found that many of the respondents had acquired job information through their weak ties. He also found that users of weak ties had landed in more satisfactory and high-income jobs than those who had employed strong ties[12]. In fact, Granovetter shifted the emphasis away from strong ties, which were regarded as socially valuable since they promoted group solidarity, and pointed out that

[12] However, Granovetter did not argue that the jobs obtained via weak than strong ties would be of better statuses as such (Granovetter 1995, 148).

as a channel for different and novel information weak ties were also socially valuable (Lin 1999).

Other researchers have also corroborated Granovetter's argument. Using a mathematical model, Boorman (1975) showed that, under certain assumptions, economic agents would minimise their likelihood of unemployment by having a preference for weak over strong ties. In testing the strength of Granovetter's thesis, Friedkin (1980) found that novel information was received through weak or bridge rather than strong ties. According to Lin et al. (1981b), weak ties generate greater labour-market payoffs since they provide bridges to networks with which job seekers would not otherwise be connected. Sprengers & Tazelaar (1988) showed in their Dutch study that weak ties were on average more beneficial in terms of reaching higher levels on the occupational hierarchy than strong ties. They are also said to be associated with a higher reservation wage (for instance, Montgomery 1992). A study conducted by Bian & Ang (1997) among a sample of 512 men and women in Singapore and China showed that weak ties led to higher-status contacts. However, they were not clearly useful as such. Given the stated importance of weak ties in facilitating occupational mobility, some researchers have therefore suggested including the strength of a tie in the dimensions of social capital (Sprengers et al. 1988).

Yet, the empirical support in network research for the 'strength of weak ties' proposition is equivocal and inconsistent. Wegener (1991), for instance, finds the dichotomic conceptualisation of ties into weak and strong as problematic. He argues that most networks are heterogeneous and, hence, that the strength of ties could be seen in terms of both continuity and multidimensionality. By means of factor analysis, he showed that the nature of the ties that existed between job seekers and social contacts was more complex in structure than the weak- and strong-ties dichotomy often used in earlier research. The results of his study suggest that weak ties are more advantageous to individuals with high-status than those with low-status prior jobs. Burt (1992) also argues that emphasis solely on the strength of a tie that bridges two networks is not important as such. Instead, he introduced the concept of a structural hole. According to him, a link between two networks is a structural hole insofar it is the only link between these networks. Once a hole is bridged, it allows information and opportunities to flow across networks. Burt emphasises the strategic location of ties in social networks, and suggests that access to network bridges that connect two or more unconnected clusters often promotes the diffusion of information. Montgomery (1992) also found it more fruitful to focus on the impact of the network structure on occupational outcomes than only on the strength of the tie. Stoloff et al. (1999) also drew similar conclusions. Sanders et al. (2002) contend that the attribution of the social contacts that connect a job seeker to new sources of information to either weak or strong ties may be difficult because job information often passes along a chain of actors some of whom are weakly tied and some of whom are strongly tied to the job seeker. They further argue that the exact details of the transmission of information along the various points of the chain may be difficult to record, and that two persons do not always agree on the strength of their tie. Thus they consider it more difficult to attribute a bridge tie to a certain individual and to assess the strength of the tie than to observe that access to a new social network has been established.

Other empirical studies also contest the usefulness of Granovetter's 'strength of weak ties' hypothesis. Based on a sample of 300 academics, Murray et al.'s study (1981) found that more respondents had first received job information through their strong ties (56%) than through weak ties (9%). It is important to note, however, that the focus of their study was on how the respondents had first learned of the job, not on the process of how it was subsequently obtained. Strong rather than weak ties have also been reported to be more useful in job attainment at the top levels of the occupational hierarchy because of the ceiling effect (for instance, Lin et al. 1981a). Drawing upon data from a sample of a complete cross-section of a metropolitan labour market, Bridges & Villemez (1986) also failed to find a positive relationship between tie strength and wages after controls were added for worker characteristics. Preisindörfer & Voss (1988) showed that strong ties led to new opportunities as often as weak ties among persons working in universities. Hanson & Pratt (1991) reported that women secured better-paid jobs in male-dominated occupations through their male family members. In his study of the impact of social capital on the income attainment of Swedish executive managers in public firms, Meyerson (1994) found that strong rather than weak ties were associated with increases in income levels, while Völker & Flap (1999) reported in their study conducted in the GDR that although weak ties did connect the respondents to jobs of higher prestige, strong ties were important in connecting them to high-prestige contact persons.

The composition of a network, on the other hand, is also considered to affect the social-mobility processes. A social network with higher socio-economic characteristics is said to offer its members more access to individuals who have a greater command of social resources (e.g., Lin et al 1981; Reingold 1999). Greater diversity in a person's social resources would, in turn, allow access to more original or non-redundant information. Moreover, high-status contacts have been suggested to exert a greater influence on behalf of a job seeker by affecting the hiring decision of the employer. In short, a network with higher socio-economic attributes would potentially increase the scope of opportunities for social mobility, since a person with resource-rich contacts would have more chances of finding a better job than someone with resource-deficient contacts. I will discuss the impact of the network in which a person is embedded on the kind of employment opportunities he or she may potentially acquire in more detail in Chapter 8. For now, I will turn to describing previous research on the significance of social networks in connecting people with jobs.

4.1 Social Networks and Employment Opportunities: An Overview of Previous Research

The role of social networks in finding employment opportunities is documented in literature on occupational mobility from earlier days. De Schweinetz (1932), for instance, observed the frequent use of contacts in job-seeking in the United States in the early 1930s. Later systematic studies have also consistently pointed to this. Shapero et al. (1965) showed that 51 per cent of their respondents found their jobs through personal contacts, and 17 per cent by using direct approaches to employers, while 65 per cent of the respondents in Brown's study of college professors (1965) used informal contacts and 19 per cent used the direct-application method. A study carried out by Rees & Shultz

(1970) in Chicago estimated that impersonal channels were involved in more than 80 per cent of all blue-collar recruitment. In Britain, MacKay et al. (1971) found that friends and relatives and casual applications accounted for 53 per cent of recruitment in Glasgow, while the figure for Birmingham stood at 66 per cent. Granovetter's well-known work (1974) comprehensively demonstrated the role of social ties in connecting workers with jobs. Drawing upon data from a random sample of white-collar male professionals, he found that approximately 56 per cent of the respondents had secured their jobs through personal contacts, 18.8 per cent by formal means and 18.8 per cent by directly contacting employers. Corcoran et al. (1980b) showed that 50 per cent of their respondents had used informal search strategies to find their jobs. Further evidence of the prevalence of social ties in job search was revealed by Lin et al. (1981b) in their study conducted among a random sample of persons aged 21-64: 57 per cent of the respondents had used personal contacts to land their first jobs, 22 per cent had employed the direct approach to employers, and 21 per cent had relied on formal sources of job information. The respective figures for their current jobs showed a consistent pattern: 59 per cent, 17 per cent and 24 per cent.

De Graaf & Flap (1988) found in their comparative study that around 33 per cent of men in the Netherlands acquired their jobs through personal contacts. The related figures for the USA in this study stood at around 60 per cent, and for West Germany more than 40 per cent. A study conducted by Marsden & Hurlbert (1988) revealed that 64 per cent of the investigated jobs were mediated by informal contacts. Another study by Marsden & Campbell (1990) also confirmed the use of social relations. Using data collected in 52 manufacturing plants in Indiana in 1982, they found that, on average, 51.4 per cent of workers found their jobs with the help of their friends and relatives, although the figure varied from 23.1 per cent to 89.3 per cent across the plants studied. In Wegener's German study (1991), the proportion of persons who reported having used contacts to find their jobs stood at 32 per cent. This comparatively lower figure than was found in the USA was attributed to the German occupational system, which is strongly characterised by regulatory public employment agencies that tend to lessen the use of informal search mechanisms. Nevertheless, the significant use of social networks has been reported in Sweden, which has a National Labour-Market Board, which employers are required to notify about all vacancies. Korpi (2001) reports that 47 per cent of a sample of unemployed Swedes had used their networks, especially their strong ties, to find work. Another study conducted by Okeke (2001) in Sweden also revealed that between 23 per cent and 40 per cent of job seekers during 1990-1998 had found their jobs through informal job-search methods. In an effort to analyse the returns on social capital in occupational attainment in the former GDR, Volker & Flap (1999) found that almost half of the employed respondents had obtained their jobs through informal sources. This finding contradicted earlier assumptions that the role of social resources in status attainment was less important than an individual's education in industrial communist societies. A study conducted by Zang (2003) examining the role of network resources in job-finding in urban China between 1988 and 2000 also reflects the use of personal resources: 43.4 per cent of the respondents had acquired information about their first jobs through personal contacts, while 45.4 per cent had received assistance from their contacts in obtaining their first jobs. Given the results of the study, it was suggested that the emergence of labour markets in the reform era in urban China had not led to a decline in the use of personal networks in job-finding. A previous study also

conducted in China (Bian 1994a) reported that 42.3 per cent of the respondents had used their contacts' help in securing their employment.

There are comparatively fewer studies that exclusively deal with the role of immigrants' and minorities' social networks and the kinds of job-search methods they have used. Falcon & Melendez (1996) conducted a study on the job-search strategies of Hispanics, Blacks and Whites, and reported that Latinos in Boston were the most likely to use their informal contacts to land their jobs. Falcon (1995), however, showed that the use of personal contacts also led to a drop in earnings among Latinos. This negative effect of contact use was corroborated in Korenman and Turner's study (1996). Green et al. (1999) reported in their study on racial and ethnic differences in job-search strategies in Atlanta, Boston and Los Angeles that nearly 70% of Hispanics had obtained their job via family members and friends, while the figures for blacks[13] and Asians were 39 per cent and 47 per cent respectively.

Some Finnish studies also reflect the significance of social networks in linking immigrants with employment opportunities (e.g., Joronen 1997; Koistinen 1997; Valtonen 2001). Their role in employment among nationals and non-nationals has also been described by Paananen (1993, 1999), who points to the significance of social networks in finding work in the construction sector and reflects on the inadequacy of work testimonials *per se* in the job-finding process. These studies are not directly related to exploring the role of contact networks in job search, however, and do not report on the proportion of jobs found through various search methods.

4.2 Data

In order to explore how immigrants are connected with jobs, and the role of their social networks in securing employment opportunities, data for the second part of this study was collected in the second half of 2003 through in-depth interviews with 40 first-generation male immigrants[14] aged 22-60 originating from Pakistan and India and residing in the greater Helsinki area, representing a local job market in which work-related commuting across the metropolitan area is fairly common. Greater Helsinki houses the majority of the non-national population in Finland, and the same held true for the immigrant groups included in this study. There are 494 immigrants from Pakistan and 1,484 from India living in Finland (Tilastokeskus 2003), of which approximately 46 per cent and 41 per cent respectively reside in the city of Helsinki (Helsingin kaupungin tietokeskus 2003). Interviews were carried out among immigrants who had a permanent

[13] Holzer's study (1987, 1988) suggests that blacks have a higher probability of getting employment when they use formal job-search methods, because formal methods provide more explicit standards by which employers can assess the personal credentials of candidates. He attributes this higher likelihood to employers' informal recruitment practices that may allow race to play a more significant role in the recruitment of blacks and ethnic minorities. A study conducted by Mier & Giloth (1985) in a Hispanic area of Chicago, and Marx & Leicht's analysis (1992) of the job-search strategies of manufacturing workers in Indiana, support Holzer's findings.

[14] By immigrants here I refer to all non-natives who have permanent residence in Finland irrespective of whether or not they are Finnish citizens.

Finnish residence or work permit. Students with a temporary study visa were therefore not included in the study[15].

The data comprised only male informants. As discussed later in the methods section, the selection of informants followed the snowball-sampling procedure where the nominees were suggested by the informants of the preliminary interviews in order to accumulate more research participants. None of the nominees suggested were female, and thus the sample is limited to male informants. There are essentially two major reasons for the absence of females among the nominees proposed. The first of these reflects the cultural practice of sexual segregation in the Indian subcontinent, which may be comparatively more predominant in Pakistan, from which the majority of the informants of this study originated. Since migrants also bring their cultural traditions with them, these particular informants may not have had compatriot female friends in their social circle. The second reason, which is related to the first one, is the relatively insignificant participation of women from the Indian subcontinent in the labour market as they generally stay at home to take care of the domestic sphere of life. This would have also prevented the male informants from building social ties with females in particular at the workplace, and thus suggesting them as nominees.

Although the interviews were ethnographic and exploratory in nature, a structured research design was followed and semi-structured procedures were adopted. The interviews also included some structured questions, which primarily concerned job satisfaction and the informants' opinions regarding the role of various factors that contributed to obtaining a particular job. The interviewees, for instance, were asked to rate the significance of the role of a certain factor in the acquisition of a certain job on a five-point scale ranging from very unimportant to very important. The structured follow-up questions were asked after the informants had already given their qualitative responses to the initial question. The aim was to gauge more precisely their responses concerning the particular issues.

The in-depth interviews attempted to elicit detailed accounts of the immigrants' entire occupational histories in Finland from the time of their arrival to the present. Long discussions of a retrospective nature characterised these interviews. The occupational careers of the immigrants often spanned over an extended period of time, occasionally going back as far as the 1970s. For both practical and theoretical reasons, a number of objectives guided the choice to consider all the employment spells. First, it made it possible to include people of all three occupational statuses – employed, self-employed and unemployed. Secondly, it offered the opportunity to consider the degree to which various factors, especially length of stay, language proficiency and work experience

[15] Also excluded are non-nationals from the Indian subcontinent employed in multinational hi-tech companies such as Nokia, who have moved to Finland through corporate migration. It was assumed that their situation differed in several respects from that of *normal* immigrants. First, the means of social reproduction have already been secured before they enter the country. Secondly, the nature of the sociocultural integration that develops out of a direct encounter with the job market could potentially exhibit different features than the one that springs out of such forms of secured *ready-made* employment. Thirdly, owing to the favourable employment prospects in that particular field of technology in many economically advanced countries, the situation of these people differs from that of normal immigrants, who generally may not afford to move around in a flexible manner.

gained in the host country, had helped immigrants in achieving occupational mobility. Thirdly, it increased the probability of reducing the period-specific character of the research findings and of highlighting the trends. It made it possible to examine the degree to which different job-search methods connecting workers to vacancies were used over different time periods, and to observe whether their distribution had changed over time. Restricting the investigation to the current/last or/and first job of the informant, which was a common pattern in many earlier studies (e.g., Granovetter 1974; Corcoran et al. 1980a; Lin et al.1981a; Lin et al. 981b; De Graaf & Flap 1988; Lai et al. 1998), may not have helped in the fruitful achievement of these objectives. In interviews, both full-time and part-time jobs were considered, the rationale being that getting a job of short duration may constitute for immigrants as big a challenge as a full-time job. Moreover, this choice was also relevant since there was a considerable migration to Finland during the recession years of the 1990s when the proportion of people employed in part-time jobs almost doubled, from 7.2% in 1990 (Tilastokeskus 1992) to 14.1% in 2003 (Tilastokeskus 2004).

Exploring an informant's occupational history often proved to be a time-consuming task as the interviews also included a background questionnaire aimed at drawing out in detail, among other, opinions on issues including the employment situation of immigrants in Finland, and a description of their personal social ties to whom they would turn for help in various situations. Furthermore, elucidating various details of the job-acquisition process required repeated and consistent probing that extended the interview time. The need for consistent probing was particularly required in cases in which the informants regarded certain details as unnecessary or trivial, which were in fact crucial from the perspective of the research objectives, as the following excerpts illustrate.

Excerpt 1

Researcher: So, how did you get this job?
Informant: I just called the employer and got it.
R: Did you already know the employer in person?
I: No, I didn't know him.
R: So, how did you then learn of the job?
I: Does it really matter how I came to know about this job?
R: Yes, it does. I would very much like to know that. Was the job advertised?
I: Yes, it was in the newspaper.
R: But, as you said earlier, you didn't speak Finnish then. Did you read the advertisement yourself?
I: No, my wife read the ad. and told me about it.
R: And then you called the workplace.
I: No, in fact my wife called the employer.
R: So, what did she say to the employer?
I: Is that important, too? Well, she told her that I was her husband and I was looking for work.
R: And after that you called the employer?
I: No, my wife set up a meeting for me with the employer.
R: But did you also talk to the employer yourself?
I: Yes, I called the employer later and went to see him the next day.

Excerpt 2

Researcher: Did you read about this job in the newspaper?
Informant: No, I went to see the employer on my own initiative.
R: Did someone suggest that you might enquire about work there or did you go on your own?
I: Yes, I just went there on my own.
R: Were there any Pakistanis working in that restaurant?
I: Yes, some Pakistanis were already working there.
R: Did any of them suggest that you might enquire about work there?
I: No, they didn't. I just went to see the employer on my own.
R: Then how did the idea of going to this workplace come into your mind in the first place?
I: Well, I didn't have work then and naturally I had to find something in order to survive.
R: But why this workplace and not somewhere else?
I: Actually, one of my acquaintances told me about it.
R: Could I ask who this acquaintance was?
I: Yes, of course. He was not my close friend. I told him that I was looking for work. He told me that some Pakistanis were working in that particular restaurant. He suggested that I should go and see them and get more information about finding work at that place.
R: How did you get to know this acquaintance?
I: I just met him in the city centre.
R: How did you happen to meet him, if I may still ask?
I: There used to be a cafeteria in Helsinki where Pakistanis and other foreigners used to meet. After work, or when they wanted to spend some leisure time, they used to go to that place to meet other people. I met this particular Pakistani in this cafeteria. That's how we got to know each other. The people who were newcomers also used to go there. Pakistanis who had been longer in Finland used to help [the newcomers] by suggesting where they could possibly look for work. Often they told them to look for jobs in the restaurants because it was easier and quicker to find work there, since it didn't require previous experience or vocational training. Anyway, I met that Pakistani acquaintance in that cafeteria as well. He was just an acquaintance and I used to see him only in the cafeteria.
R: That's certainly clear now. Did you meet those Pakistani workers before meeting the employer?
I: Yes, I did.
R: But earlier you said you went to see the employer on your own.
I: No, I met those two Pakistanis first. But of course I went to see the employer on my own. They didn't accompany me.
R: What did they tell you then?
I: They told me that their company had three other restaurants. They also said that their manageress was a good person and that she might give me a job in one of those places.
R: And after that you met the employer?
I: Yes, then I met her and she offered me a job there.
R: When you met her did you tell her that you knew the Pakistani workers there?
I: Yes, I did mention that.
R: What did she say then?

I: She said that she had good experiences with Pakistani workers and was very satisfied with them. She also said that even if I didn't have much experience in restaurant work it was fine because I would learn the work quite fast.
R: Did the Pakistani workers you met discuss the possibility of your working there with the employer?
I: Yes, one of them had already told her about my interest in working there.
R: Did you ask them to discuss your case with the employer?
I: Yes, actually, I had requested them to pass on a good word on my behalf to the employer.

Excerpt 3

Researcher: By the way, how did you get to know about this job?
Informant: Well, it was easier to get jobs in the 80s because there was a shortage of workers and you would get the job even if you didn't have any experience.
R: But you must have known first whether the company needed workers. Did somebody tell you that there was a job opening in this company?
I: As I mentioned, there were more jobs than workers then and generally you were able to get work even if you didn't speak much Finnish.
R: How did you know about this company?
I: Well, it was a large company and many foreigners used to work there.
R: So you just went there to ask for work and nobody told you to do so?
I: I myself called the recruitment person, who asked me to come for an interview.
R: But how did you know that the company needed packing workers?
I: I had an Indian friend who worked there last summer. He said if I needed work I might apply for it then since the company recruited workers for the next summer at that time of the year.
R: So it was your friend who told you about this job opening in this company?
I: Yes, it was he who told me about this work opportunity.

Moreover, the interview was lengthened further when the informant had a long occupational career. Consequently, the interview time varied from two-and-a-half to six hours, with an average of three-and-a-half hours[16]. It was not possible to complete the interview in one session in 28 per cent of the cases (11/40), and a second session was thus required.

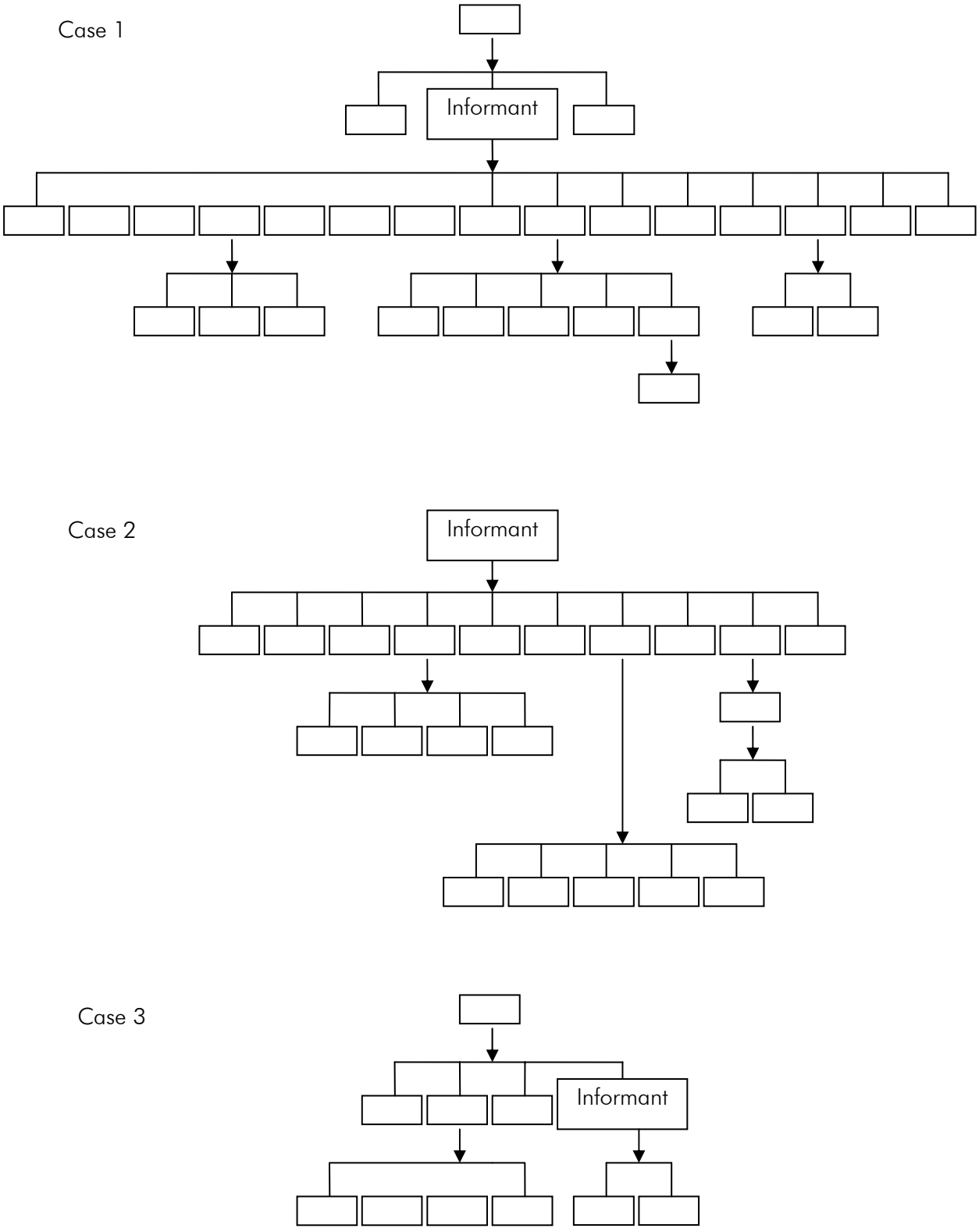
Most of the interviews were conducted in the primary language of the informant, which was Punjabi in the majority of the cases (30/40), followed by English (7/40) and Urdu (3/40). On the occasions when the informant's mother tongue was a language the interviewer could not speak, it was nonetheless possible to use one of these three languages for communication. The transcription of the interviews from Punjabi and Urdu into English was done by the interviewer alone. Most of the interviews (35/40) were conducted at the Department of Sociology at the University of Helsinki. A few of the first meetings took place in a café or some other place of the informant's choice, but it was soon realised that this environment did not create optimal conditions, in particular with regard to sustaining the informant's concentration, which the lengthy nature of the

[16] This interview time includes only the face-to-face discussions. The informants were also contacted later by telephone in order to acquire further information on issues that had remained less explored in the interviews. The time spent on these telephone conversations is not included here, however. If it had been, the average interview time may well have stretched to over 4.5 hours.

discussions required. Furthermore, the noise made taping difficult. The informants were therefore requested to transfer the meetings to the Department, to which they kindly agreed.

Many of the informants had come to Finland through chain migration. Family members, relatives and friends who had been settled here for some years were instrumental in facilitating their overseas journey. As is characteristic of chain migration, the informants who were helped themselves often later helped others to migrate. In cases in which this phenomenon recurred, the number of individuals whose migration was successfully realised generally amounted to between two and five. However, in certain cases in which it was possible to trace the extended in-depth effect of chain migration, interesting patterns emerged. Figure 3 shows the subsequent effect of the migration of three informants, two of whom themselves came to Finland with the assistance of a contact (cases 1 & 3). A visual inspection of Figure 3 also sheds some light on the impact of chain migration on the gradual formation of an ethnic community in a certain host society.

Figure 3. The extended effects of the migration of three informants on the subsequent migration of other immigrants to Finland



Note: In this Figure, each block represents a person. The arrow pointing towards a block or a set of blocks indicates the person or the number of persons whose migration was facilitated by the one from whom the arrow originates.

The contact who facilitated the informant's migration to Finland often assisted him in various ways, including giving material help as well as practical information. In some cases, the friends and relatives of the newcomer subsequently also helped him to set up his own business. In others, the relationships formed after migration led to joint business ventures. Forty per cent of the informants (16/40) had experienced at least one business spell during their stay in Finland. Although this may convey a sense of strong entrepreneurial spirit among immigrants from the Indian subcontinent, it could also be attributed to a lack of opportunities, and also human capital, which pushes immigrants to self-employment. Evidence from other studies also suggests that self-employment among immigrants is widely considered the most likely means of attaining, and of surmounting structural barriers to, economic mobility in the host society (e.g., Portes & Bach 1985; Sanders & Nee 1996; Nee & Sanders 2001).

The forty interviews reported a total of 166 job spells and 18 spells of business ownership. Of the job spells, 146 were experienced by Pakistani and the remaining 20 by Indian immigrants, while 15 of the self-employment spells were experienced by Pakistani and the remaining three by Indian immigrants. Only the job spells are analysed in this study, however. The 166 job spells comprised 80 per cent and 20 per cent full-time and part-time jobs respectively. 120 jobs were located in the common job market while the remaining 46 were in the ethnic job market. The majority (159/166) were located in the Helsinki region, with 132 being situated in Helsinki city alone, and the remaining seven were outside of the Helsinki region. Most of the jobs had not been advertised: 119 as opposed to 47. These figures lend support to the idea that the number of jobs that is being advertised in formal sources, including newspapers and national employment agency, does not necessarily represent the number of vacancies available.

The majority of the jobs did not involve visual contact with customers (104 vs. 57), while five cases involved occasional contact. In 35 per cent of the cases that were located in the common job market there were already ethnic or foreign workers employed in the particular workplace. The majority of the jobs (155/166) were in the private sector, the second largest concentration being in the municipalities. With regard to gender, 120 of the employers were male and 46 were female. The number of job spells per informant ranged from one to 15, with a mean of 4.15 (std. deviation 2.99), and the duration varied from one month to 22 years, with a mean of 1.87 (std. deviation 2.75). The entire job career in Finland at the time of the interview extended from eight months to 22 years, with a mean of 7.37 (std. deviation 5.38)[17]. The length of stay, on the other hand, varied from two to 33 years, with a mean of 14.05 (std. deviation 8.39). Most of the informants (25/40) had used only one method for locating job information, 13 had used two methods and two had used three job-search methods. An overview of the background characteristics of the informants is presented in Table 9.

[17] In measuring job careers, only the primary occupations of an informant were considered. Thus, secondary occupations, generally comprising part-time jobs (15/20), taken on in conjunction with primarily full-time jobs were excluded.

Table 9. Background characteristics of the informants

	N	% of informants
All informants	40	100
Age at the time of the interview (n=40)		
22-30	6	16
31-40	18	48
41-50	12	34
51-60	4	12
Age at the time of arrival in Finland (n=40)		
13-20	5	13
21-30	30	75
32-39	5	13
Marital status (n=40)		
Single	3	8
Married	31	78
Co-habiting	2	5
Divorced	4	10
Education completed in the home country (n=40)		
6-9 years	5	13
10-13 years	13	33
14 or over 14 years	22	55
Year of migration to Finland (n=40)		
1970-1980	7	18
1981-1990	16	40
1991-2001	17	43
Grounds of stay in Finland (n=40)		
Marriage	14	35
Political asylum	10	25
Studies	8	20
Work	8	20
Length of stay in Finland (n=40)		
2-10 years	13	33
11-20 years	20	50
24-33 years	7	18
Employment status (n=40)		
Employed	21	53
Self-employed	12	30
Unemployed	4	10
Outside the labour market	2	5
Pensioner	1	3
Sector of current/last job (n=40)		
Restaurant & catering	21	53
Cleaning	5	13
Construction	3	8
IT	2	5
Transport	2	5
Other	7	18
Sector of occupation before coming to Finland (n=40)		
Studies	18	45
Business	7	18
Engineering and technical work	4	10
Sales work	4	10
Educational work	2	5
Other	5	13
Total length of occupational career in Finland (n=40)		
Under 1 year	2	5
1-3.999 years	12	30
4 -7.999 years	9	23
8-11.999 years	11	28
12 years or more	6	15

Note: Because of rounding error, the percentage total may not show 100.

Pakistani immigrants comprised the majority of the informants (35/40). The main reason for the greater concentration of Pakistani informants stems from the data-collection method. As will be explained later in the methods section, the informants were selected through four preliminary interviews carried out before the data for the present study was gathered using the snowball-sampling procedure. Since only one of these four interviewees was Indian, further accumulation of the Indian informants was relatively low, especially since the turndown rate among them was also somewhat higher. A total of 10 informants refused to participate in the study, six of whom were Indian and four were Pakistani. The main reasons for turndown included a lack of interest and, more frequently, busy work schedules. Some of these persons were running their own businesses, often concentrated in the restaurant sector, and, in order to stay profitable and cost-effective, they had to maintain tight work schedules. In their study on job transitions among Asian immigrants in the metropolitan economy of Los Angeles, Nee et al. (1994) report similar busy work schedules for self-employed Korean entrepreneurs, thus making them less available for interview.

The turndown rate did not cause bias to the data since the overall number of individuals who refused to participate was low and their background characteristics were quite similar to those who were included in the study. It is also important to point out here that including two groups in the data did not constitute any intention to carry out comparative analyses between these groups: it was done because both groups shared ethnic, cultural and linguistic features as they belonged to the same country prior to its partition into India and Pakistan in 1947. Individuals belonging to both these groups frequently include friends and acquaintances from India and Pakistan and are often employed in each other's ethnic businesses. Moreover, the data reveals fairly similar patterns of job-search methods and reliance on interpersonal ties in securing employment opportunities in the two groups. The interviews are therefore analysed collectively.

The number of interviews conducted was, in fact, 45[18], five of which could not be completed. In two of these cases, the interviews had to be broken off because the particular informants had insufficient time: in addition to working in their normal jobs, they were also self-employed. Later attempts to reach them were unsuccessful, however. In another case, the informant expressed his unwillingness to continue his participation in the study: his grounds for refusal were that if the researcher would not help him publish an article he had written for the leading newspaper he would not go on with this interview. In the remaining two cases the interviews were discontinued because the informants felt very uncomfortable about discussing their occupational careers, which were largely concentrated at the low-prestige end of the job spectrum. Discussing their jobs seemed to evoke feelings of humiliation and self-derogation, especially in front of an interviewer who came from the same cultural milieu in which jobs such as cleaning are considered fit only for the downtrodden part of society. Their resentment about their occupational careers may have been further exacerbated by their relatively better educational backgrounds. While discussing one of his low-prestige jobs one of the educated informants who remained in the study remarked.

[18] Prior to carrying out these interviews, four preliminary interviews were also conducted. These are not included in the study.

> I was working in this dishwashing-job only in order to earn some money. My social norms and family background did not allow me to do this kind of work. You don't expect even an illiterate person to do these kinds of jobs. I was rather sad and resentful. People from India and Pakistan come here to make their life situation better not worse. But then I said to myself that some time when I go back [to my country] I would tell them [my family] that I was even doing these kinds of low-status jobs to support myself.

Uneasiness in discussing occupational careers was also encountered in a few other informants. One of them, who had been working in a cleaning job for the previous three years, tried to explain time and again that he was doing that particular work simply because he could not find anything else. Another informant was reluctant to divulge the exact nature of one of his jobs. In order to avoid the connotations of cleaning work, he preferred to use the expression 'construction assistant' to describe his job of a site cleaner. In another case, an informant whose employment career in Finland had also been largely mired in cleaning jobs seemed to be quite resentful.

> I went to the best college in my country, the same college at which Rudyard Kipling and George Orwell had studied. When you have education of that kind and you have to mop floors, and are humiliated simply because you look different, and you don't get the same humane treatment, then it makes you question everything around you. […] By that time I had lost all my self-esteem, personal dignity or whatever you would like call it.

The position of a co-ethnic researcher, then, brought both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages included, among other, the easier access to the informants, the facility with which they were able to discuss wide-ranging and personal issues, and especially their willingness to grant ample time for the interview. The fact of sharing the same cultural background and often languages was naturally of significant help in this process. The disadvantages, on the other hand, were generally linked to the fact that disclosing the low-prestige jobs caused embarrassment, as described above, and perhaps also to the fear that their private business might become known among other ethnic members[19]. In these cases, the element of discomfort would probably have been less strong if the interviewer had been a non-ethnic person. However, there were few such occasions and the advantages seemed to far outweigh the disadvantages.

The informants' views about conducting this study among immigrants from the Indian subcontinent were for the most part positive. Some of them even welcomed the idea, acknowledging its relevance in that, in contrast to many other ethnic groups, the research among these particular immigrants was lacking. The discussions took place in a congenial environment and, especially in view of the lengthy nature of the interviews, their cooperation was extremely commendable. Many of the informants were satisfied with the discussions, as the following extract shows.

[19] The practice was observed in the interviews whereby the identity of the nominator was not revealed to the nominee. This was done in order to protect the privacy of the nominator, which he himself sometimes desired. A few exceptions were made when an informant himself permitted, or thought it useful for his name to be used in order to secure the consent of the nominee. Apart from the occasional curiosity that was aroused among the nominees, this practice of maintaining privacy was generally appreciated.

> I thought you would be asking some typical questions as some media people had occasionally asked me before. But now I think they were very good and interesting questions. I really had to be fully mentally alert here. I enjoyed this discussion.

However, this did not seem to reflect the view of another informant.

> Well, I did enjoy this sitting here with you. Of course, I did. But I can't understand what the purpose of these questions is. First, there were too many of them and then I don't see any relation between them and I don't know how they would benefit the immigrants.

The unintelligibility, or unexpected nature, of the interview questions for this particular informant stems from the perception that a few individuals seemed to have of the interview, namely that it would exclusively explore their views of the labour-market situation of non-nationals and their personal experiences of discrimination. Although one part of the interview did, in fact, address these issues, this was not the main thrust of the study. Questions involving the various rather mundane details of the job-finding process, therefore, may not have been what some people had in mind before the interview. Hence, the lack of comprehension that resulted from the discrepancy between their expectations and the actual conversations on the part of a few informants is fully understandable.

4.3 The Selection of the Informants

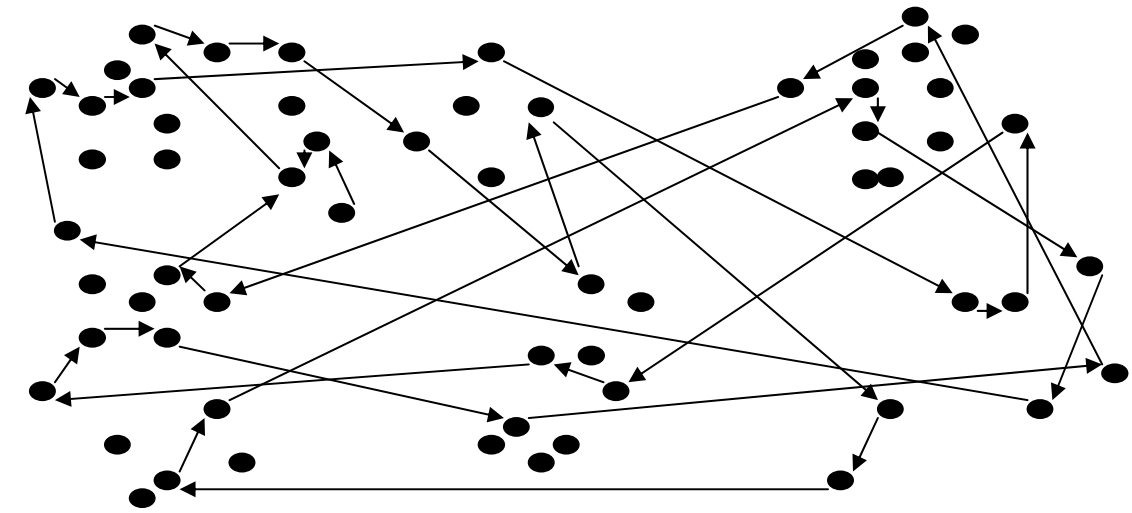
Snowball sampling was used for selecting the informants. The snowballing technique covers a variety of methods all of which are nevertheless based on the basic principle of locating new informants in the target population through referrals from initial contact persons. In traditional practice, all of the new contacts thus located are interviewed, or at least attempts are made. In this study, the traditional application of this method was avoided by introducing an element of dual randomisation. Specifically, this was achieved, first, following a random nominee selection procedure whereby only some of the new referrals were selected for interview. Secondly, in order to promote a still greater element of randomisation, another strategy was adopted: informants were asked to name two types of nominee, those they knew personally and those they knew only remotely. Nominees were then further randomly selected from both of these groups, given that the number of nominees being suggested permitted such a procedure.

These attempts at randomisation were relevant in terms of a number of objectives. First, the aim was to obtain a sample of individuals with different educational backgrounds who, it was assumed, would thus have jobs of varying occupational prestige, including low, medium and high. The idea was to determine whether job-search methods and reliance on network resources varied with respect to various occupations. In the absence of the dual-randomisation strategy mentioned above, and had the usual practice of attempting generally to interview everyone located through the initial contact been followed, the probability of ending up with a situation in which most people were holding jobs of a similar nature would have been greater, given individuals in the same social network are often assumed to share qualitatively similar types of job information and consequently similar types of employment opportunities (for instance, Granovetter

1974). Although this strategy successfully afforded an opportunity to cover informants of various educational backgrounds, as was intended, it did not prove very fruitful in obtaining a sample of occupations of varied statuses as initially expected. Most of the informants' jobs were located in the secondary sector of the labour market irrespective of their diverse educational backgrounds. Nevertheless, this did not reduce the usefulness of the particular technique in this context.

Secondly, and related to the first objective, the randomisation strategy was effective since it was noted prior to the interviews that there seemed to be several cliques within the Indian-subcontinent community despite its relatively small size. Although the constituents of one clique generally knew the members of another one either personally or through another social contact, they did not necessarily have interpersonal ties with them. There were also some cliques whose members had no knowledge of any kind about other cliques. Characteristics such as education, the nature of their occupation and their length of stay in Finland contributed to the structuring of these cliques, although such attributes did not always have an impact on the formation of interpersonal ties. In practical terms, this meant that interviewing only the close ties of some contact person in one social network might have precluded members of a more remote one, which would have prevented individuals of various backgrounds from being included in the data. The dual-randomisation strategy successfully helped to minimise this problem by maximising the inclusion of individuals who were beyond the contact persons' immediate social networks. Figure 4 below represents an attempt to illustrate the anticipated impact of the strategy on the selection of informants.

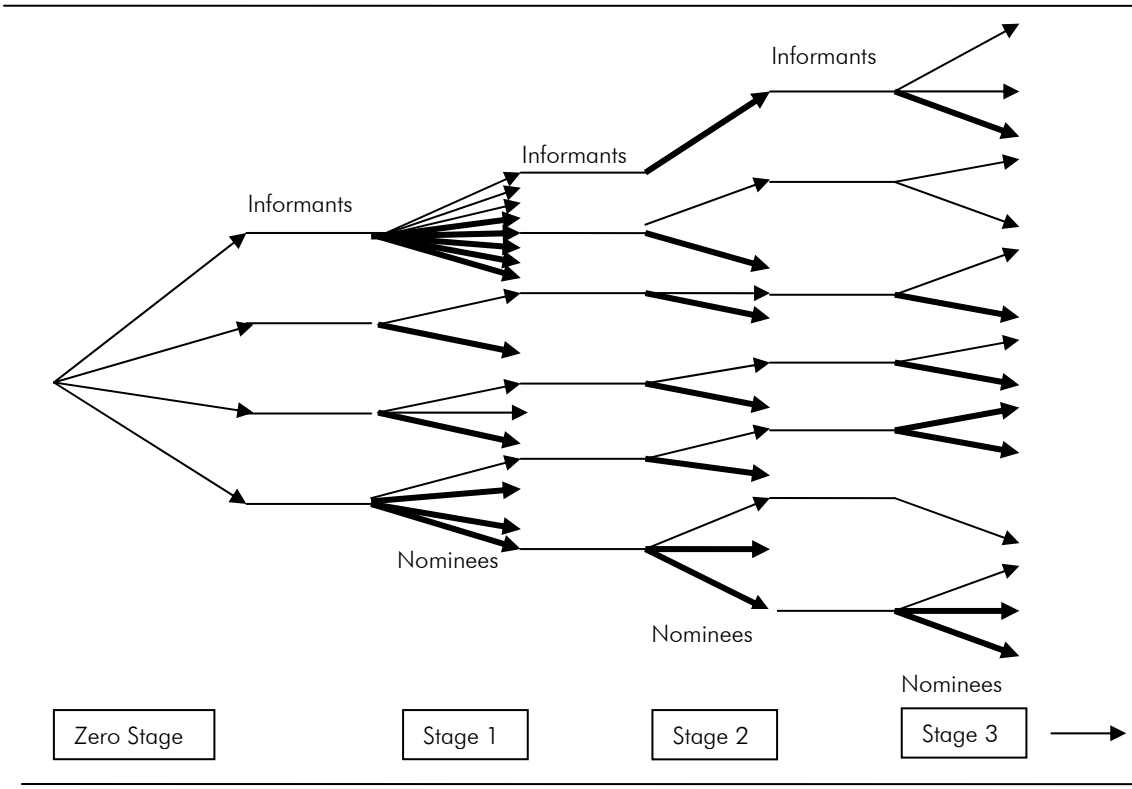
Figure 4. The anticipated impact of the randomisation strategy on the dispersion of the sample to a larger proportion of the population under study



The selection procedure is further elaborated in the following. Before carrying out the interviews for the study, four preliminary interviews with three male informants from Pakistan and one male from India were conducted. Access to these informants was gained through some ethnic-group members who were asked to name some of their ethnics with whom they had personal relations and some with whom they did not.

Having obtained the names, four informants were randomly selected from these personal and non-personal referrals for the preliminary interviews. Apart from the benefits these interviews yielded in improving the research design, the four informants also became a source of the acquisition of further informants for the study. A graphical illustration of the strategy for selecting the informants is given in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Method of selecting the informants by means of snowball sampling



Note: In this Figure, the number of nominees and informants does not correspond to the actual number of nominees and informants.

In Figure 5, the zero stage represents the four informants who were selected for the preliminary interviews[20]. Stage one describes the various nominees, represented by arrows, suggested by these four initial contact persons, the thickness of the arrows representing the quality of the relationship with the nominees: a thick arrow explains that the informant had personal relations with the nominee and a thin arrow indicates that he did not. In the latter instances, the nominator knew the nominee because he had either come across him at a social gathering, had heard of him through some friend or acquaintance, or, as one informant put it, "sooner or later one gets to know other compatriots here because of the relatively small size of the ethnic community." Stage two illustrates the further acquisition of nominees who were located through the informants, who themselves were nominees of the subjects of the preliminary interviews. In stage three, the same procedure was followed.

In accordance with the strategy namely to spread the sample to a larger proportion of the target population, an attempt was made to especially include nominees with whom

[20] As indicated earlier, these four preliminary interviews are not included in the study.

the nominator described his relationship as non-personal[21]. Therefore, in cases in which the informant could only come up with two referrals, a personal and a non-personal one, the non-personal relation was often the preferred choice. In the few cases in which only a single referral of a personal nature was proposed, the nominee was contacted for an interview. In five cases, the number of nominees was zero. In three of the five cases, the informants said that they would suggest the names only after they had secured the approval of their nominees. In these cases, the snowball chains ended. In the remaining two cases interviews were conducted without using the snowball procedure. Access to these informants was gained at social meetings unconnected to the research. Since the interviews with these particular informants were conducted at the end of the data-gathering process, they were not asked for nominees. The total number of nominees obtained was 117. The number of nominees per informant varied from one to 18, giving an average of 3.34 and a standard deviation of 3.13. There were no female nominees, thus no female informant appears in the data.

It would be useful to discuss the element of reflexive bias here. Reflexive bias represents a situation in which referral from one person to another could theoretically increase the chance that the first person is nominated again. This occurred infrequently, however. Only five such cases were noted. The chance of reflexive bias became reduced by the fact that the informants were asked to name contacts of both a personal and a non-personal nature, as described above. Another factor may have been that the nominator had already told the nominee about having been interviewed. The low level of reflexive bias could also imply that the attempt at dispersing the sample to a greater segment of the target population was generally successful. Another form of reflexive bias was sometimes noted. This occurred when an informant suggested a nominee who had already been interviewed. However, there were only three such instances, and in each case the individuals were generally well-known among the majority of the ethnic group. This could, therefore, be attributed more to force-field bias, which explains that because of certain characteristics such as popularity some individuals have a greater chance of being nominated by other persons. In the event of both forms of reflexive bias, the informants were asked to suggest some other nominees.

[21] This should not be in conflict with the randomisation strategy discussed earlier. If some informant proposed, say, six nominees, three of whom were personal and three non-personal relations, two of the former and one of the latter were selected. The selection of nominees within these two groups was random, however.

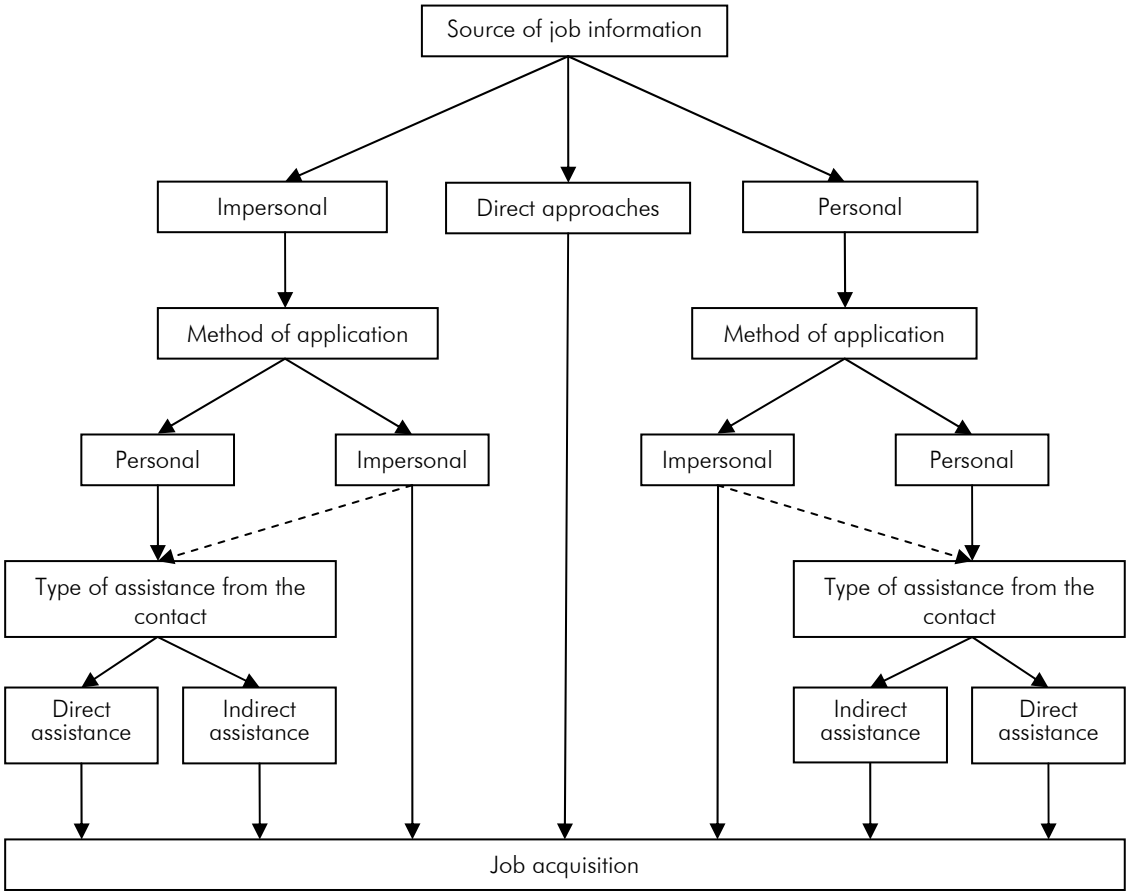
4.4 Job-search Methods

The informants' job-search methods were categorised into three types: impersonal, personal and direct approaches. Although there may be more sub-divisions in practice, this classification usefully served the purpose. Many earlier studies have also employed a similar three-way distinction. However, sometimes there may be slight differences with regard to what kinds of job-acquiring situations were classified under the three particular job-finding techniques. It would therefore be important to give a description of what these methods stand for in the context of the present study. The *impersonal method* refers to cases in which no intermediary was involved in the acquisition of job information or in providing practical assistance in applying for the job. For example, in the former case it implies that job information was either located through newspapers, the public employment service or private recruitment agencies. In the latter case, a job involves the impersonal application method if the individual had applied for it on his own. In other words, the job seeker had contacted a certain employer without any assistance from a relative, friend or acquaintance. In contrast, the *personal method* refers to cases in which the process of information acquisition or job application involved assistance from a social contact. Job information is classified as having been acquired through the personal method when it was passed on by a family member, relative, friend, acquaintance or current or former workmate, for example. Similarly, the job was classified as having been applied for through the personal application method if it involved assistance from a contact who had passed on a good word on his behalf or vouched for his character to the employer or his/her recruitment representative. The contact may have been able to provide this assistance by virtue of currently/previously working at the same place or under the same employer, or because of his/her personal relations with the employer. Finally, the *Direct approaches method* in this study refers to cases in which the particular job was not advertised and the informants contacted the employer directly, either in person or by written application, without any impersonal or personal assistance. In these cases, the job seekers did not have any personal relations with the employer in question.

4.5 The Job Acquisition Model: Multiple Ways of Connecting to Jobs

In order to ascertain systematically how the process of connecting to jobs took place, the researcher in the interviews attempted to explore the job-acquiring process along two dimensions: first, how the information about a certain vacancy had been located, and secondly, how that job had been applied for and obtained. A graphical illustration of this strategy is depicted in Figure 6.

Figure 6. The job acquisition model



The division of the job-acquisition process into two parts allowed more in-depth analysis of its various aspects. Since the aim was to consider the degree to which the social networks of immigrants assisted them in entering the job market, such a division was useful as it permitted more detailed assessment of the kind and level of assistance supplied by a contact in landing a particular job at the stages of both information acquisition and job application. In certain cases it is possible that the transmitter of information and the person who supplied the direct or indirect assistance in applying for the job is the same, as the following excerpts show.

> A friend here, whom I also knew in Pakistan, was the one who helped me secure this job. This job was not advertised. I was working then in a part-time job, and naturally the salary was not sufficient. This friend suggested to me that he would enquire about a job possibility from their foreman, since they often needed workers during the summer season. The foreman asked me to come for an interview. My friend had been working there for some time and he had a good reputation there. His recommendation naturally affected my recruitment. After the contract period was over, this summer job was changed to steady employment.

> One of my [Finnish] acquaintances who was in fact my neighbour helped me connect to this job. Once when I was coming home he met me at the main entrance of the building. As we were chatting, he asked me whether I was working. I told him that I was currently unemployed. He said he would ask his boss about work since their company had plans

> to take on some workers in a few weeks. […] I went with him to see the employer a few days later. The employer interviewed me for a short time and offered me a job.

In the above cases, the source of job information as well as the method of application were personal. Alternatively, a job seeker may locate job information through impersonal means, such as in the newspapers or at the national employment agency, and may also apply for that job through the impersonal method, implying the absence of any assistance from any contact. In other cases, however, while job information source may be impersonal, contact with the employer may involve the personal application method.

> I learned of this job vacancy in the employment office. In fact, the employee in the office gave me a list of jobs that had been notified that day. Before contacting the employer, I asked a friend whether it would be more useful to visit the workplace in person or to answer the job advertisement on phone. He said why didn't I ask X, whose brother was working for the same chain in Espoo. […] I called his brother who agreed to accompany me to a meeting with the employer. It was good to take him with me since it seemed to have a positive effect. He had been working for the same chain for two years. The recruitment person looked quite o.k. and seemed to be satisfied with me […] I got this job finally.

Conversely, the transmission of job information may occur through a friend or acquaintance but the person might approach the prospective employer on his/her own, and secure the job.

> My friend from Somalia told me about this job opportunity. We just happened to meet in the town, without having anything to do with this job. He told me that in his workplace they were going to advertise for a restaurant worker. He said if I were interested I could go to see the restaurant manager. I called the manager the next day and he asked me to come and see him. […] That's how I ended up in this job.

> I heard about this opening from an acquaintance. I met him at a friend's home where we had gathered for a celebration. He told me that X restaurant may need some workers especially at that time of the year. He also told me that one of his friends had got work in the same restaurant last year and that he was going to enquire about work this year as well. I contacted the employer who asked me to come for an interview. […] I worked there for more than four months.

In the above cases, the contact *only* acted as a provider of job information and did not personally accompany the informant or passed on a good word about him. Therefore, the source of job information was classified as personal while the method of job application was considered impersonal.

The cases discussed above represent the forms in which the process of connecting to jobs generally occurred. However, there were occasional further variations. For instance, as marked with the dashed line in Figure 6, a job applied for by the impersonal method sometimes also involved contact assistance. However, such assistance was unexpected, as the following two cases illustrate.

> This job was advertised on the company's website. When I went for an interview I didn't know that one of my workmates, X, in the previous hi-tech company was working there now. During the interview when I was telling him about my experience the recruitment representative asked if I knew Mr X. […] In fact, I was quite glad to hear that he was working there. In the evening I called this workmate and told him about my interview. He promised me to discuss my case with the recruitment person. The next week we went to see him together. I'm sure he had conveyed a good impression of me. […] I was offered a job and am still working there.
>
> I called the employer and she asked me to come for an interview. She took me to see the kitchen and restaurant. While she was still showing me around, I saw a Turkish employee who was employed there as a restaurant worker. I asked him if he could help me get this job and tell the employer that he would help me to learn about this work. He was a nice person. He told the restaurant head waitress that he would really help me if I got the job. The head waitress didn't seem to have anything against this idea.

These cases add further support to the job-acquisition model: the acquisition of a job may involve multiple stages, and job information, whether located through impersonal or personal sources, may be just one of the steps on the way to job acquisition. This model, therefore, yields a better view of the job-finding process. This kind of distinction has not been applied in this manner in earlier studies[22]. Furthermore, although the job-acquisition model has been discussed with reference to immigrants, it is not specific to them and may also be valid in the context of native job seekers.

4.6 The Job as a Unit of Observation

I have generally taken the job rather than the person as the unit of observation in analysing the interview data. What are the methodological implications of such a choice? In certain cases (e.g., Tables 10 and 11 in Chapter 5) whether it was the job or the person that was taken as the unit of observation did not have much significance, while in others (e.g., Table 17 in Chapter 6) it could be argued that it may have resulted in some person being located in more than one category. In other words, an individual, say, with 10-13 years of education who used the impersonal job-search method to locate an employment opportunity may have used the personal method in acquiring information in his other jobs, or vice versa. This, it could be argued, would cause limitations in terms of generalising about what sort of individuals tend to use certain types of job-search methods. The situation would not change even if the unit of observation was a person, however: some of the occupational spells of a certain individual still may have fallen into more than one category because all of his jobs had been taken into account. The location of the same individual in more than one category should not cause a problem because in real life people do use a combination of search methods to link with job opportunities. Previous studies have mostly focused on the first or current/last job, or both, and in the latter case this precludes people who have had only one job. Therefore,

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[22] This kind of division also helps in avoiding coding difficulties, which Granovetter (1995:195) noted while classifying cases that did not fit into his three job-finding categories – personal contact, formal means and direct application method. He found that some cases involving formal or direct application also involved personal contacts. This difficulty arose because the job-acquisition process has not been divided into two parts.

the 'problem,' namely that individuals may be located in more than one category, does not arise. However, these studies were mostly quantitative. The present study is qualitative in nature and the Tables given are meant to serve more as descriptive rather than explanatory references in the strict sense of the term.

4.7 Limitations of the Study

The present part of the study is limited in a number of ways. First, as is inherent in qualitative research, the reliability of the results depends on the accuracy of the informants' accounts. Secondly, although there is comprehensive information on the intensity and effectiveness of the informants' job-search methods in cases in which they have been successful in gaining employment, there is no information on the methods employed in cases in which the outcome was negative. Exploring such cases would indeed have given valuable information, but it was not feasible to collect such information in the present study because of the additional time it would have added to the interviews (average interview time 3.5 hours). Even if it had been possible to collect data on these unsuccessful cases, it would have been limited to jobs in which *active* search was involved. Employment opportunities do not always come along as the result of active and purposeful search, however. Sometimes people take on positions for which they have not actively pursued and about which they learned as a by-product of some social interaction. This is especially true where jobs are acquired through social relations and where contacts disseminate job information in social situations unconnected with job seeking. The informants in the present study received information in this way in nearly 18 per cent of the cases, for example, and collecting information about unsuccessful cases would thus have been limited to a certain type of job-search effort. Moreover, presumably recalling such cases would have been more difficult for the informants and the information less accurate, since the cognitive rationale for retaining minute details of information would suggest that it was much less necessary than when the outcome was successful. This particular limitation is not only a characteristic of the present study but extends to almost all studies investigating the issue in question.

The third limitation concerns the memory aspect. As entire occupational careers were explored, the informants were required to recall minute details of the various aspects of the job-acquisition process, which in some cases went back as far as the 1970s. Cognitive distortions could therefore be expected to have accompanied the recall process. When this occurred in the interviews, it was generally linked to the specific date or month in which a particular job started or ended. Nevertheless, in the course of the interview, the informants were often able to recall or correct the supplied information. Although they were often unable to comprehend the objective of seemingly trivial probes into their job careers, they could remember in significant detail how the process of landing a particular job had unfolded.

Another limitation relates to the representativeness of the findings; how generalisable are the results of this study to the host population or any other immigrant group? Many factors including Finnish-language proficiency, locally gained work experience, and structural constraints such as differential access to the labour market are likely to influence job-search mechanisms and the degree of reliance of immigrants on

their social relations in a new country, thus it may be difficult to directly generalise these findings to the mainstream population. There is a lack of similar studies on the role of social networks and the use of various job-search methods in entering the labour market in Finland that would facilitate some comparison. However, previous research carried out in various institutional contexts suggests more or less consistent patterns in terms of reliance on informal contacts in seeking employment opportunities. Therefore, it could be assumed that the job-search patterns observed among the particular groups involved in this study may not be limited to these groups, and are likely to prevail among the mainstream population as well as other immigrant groups. Nevertheless, further research is needed to test the strength of this assumption, and to consider whether and in what ways particular groups differ from the mainstream population and other immigrant groups in terms of their reliance on different search methods. As far as the target groups of this study are concerned, the findings offer a reliable picture of how they enter the labour market in Finland. Initial analyses were conducted after every ten interviews and a pattern of job-search methods emerged that remained largely consistent throughout the forty interviews. This stability in initial analyses adds reliability to the findings of the study.

Finally, the implications of having only male informants in the study should be considered in terms of the strength of the data and findings. As explained when the data-gathering process was described, certain sociocultural compulsions prevented females from being included and being suggested as nominees by the male informants. However, the absence of female informants should nevertheless not cause much bias to the data since the majority of women from the Indian subcontinent are outside the active labour force as they generally take care of the domestic sphere of life. Moreover, many studies have been conduced only among males in Western countries (e.g., Granovetter 1974; Lin et al. 1981a; Lin et al. 1981b; Lin & Dumin 1986; De Graaf & Flap 1988; Marsden & Hurlbert 1988; Sprengers et al.1988; Lai et al. 1998), and the practice employed in the present study is not exceptional in this respect. In addition, as mentioned in the methods section, the selection of informants was not the researcher's choice. It was the informants themselves who suggested nominees to further augment the research participants. The absence of any females in the nominees only reflects the fact that compatriot females still do not form part of the social networks of the male informants of this study in the current sociocultural reality.

5 The Acquisition of Job Information: Considering the Various Sources of Employment Opportunities

In line with the job-acquisition model introduced earlier, the aim in this chapter is first to consider the various search methods the immigrants employed to locate job information, and then to look at the role of their interpersonal connections in the job-finding process. Acquiring job information is the crucial first step on the way to obtaining a prospective position. Information is especially important in a tight labour-market situation when the number of vacancies is disproportionate to the individuals who want to fill them. In particular, if one is unemployed in the present-day saturated job market, passing on specific information about invisible vacancies may constitute an important function of social networks.

Table 10 reports on the various sources of job information utilised by the informants. As is clearly noticeable, the use of social ties in entering the labour market in Finland was predominant among the immigrant groups included in this study. Of the 166 spells of employment constituting the entire occupational histories of the 40 immigrants, 120 (72%) were acquired by job information located through personal sources, and 31 (19%) via impersonal means. The direct approaches were employed in 11 (7%) of the cases, and four (2%) fell into the 'Other' category, in which the informants' practical or vocational training led to steady employment.

Table 10. Search methods used for locating job information

	N	%
Impersonal	31	19
Public employment agency	*17*	*55*
Newspaper	*12*	*39*
Company website	*2*	*6*
Personal	120	72
Close relation	*83*	*69*
Acquaintance	*22*	*18*
Work-related	*12*	*10*
Other	*3*	*3*
Direct approaches	11	7
Other	4	2
Total	166	100

Table 10 further identifies the nature of the job-information source within the impersonal and personal methods. The public employment agency was the general source of information for more than half of the cases in the 'Impersonal' category. The more frequent use of this information channel could be attributed largely to the nationwide well-established system of agencies, which employers are required to notify about new vacancies in their respective municipalities. Although this does not guarantee that all vacancies are thus reported, the service does provide a significant amount of continuously updated information about job opportunities. The other impersonal means used by the informants included newspapers and company websites.

The personal sources of job information, on the other hand, covered various types of social relations. Although some information came from acquaintances and ties forged at workplace, the informants' close relations were significantly more important in this respect. Close relations in this context represent the informants' family members, relatives and friends. In almost 70 per cent of the cases they had acted as conduits of information, which reflects the heavy reliance of the informants on such ties for entering the labour market in Finland. Some of the excerpts given below describe the context in which the transmission of information took place through the informants' family members, relatives and friends.

> I got to know about this job from my cousin. He used to work in X restaurant. I told him that I was looking for work. He knew a [Finnish] colleague who was now a manageress in one of the restaurants in this chain. He called her and asked about the possibility of work. Later, he went with me to meet her.

> My [Finnish] wife read this advertisement in a newspaper. She called the recruitment person and told him that I needed a job desperately. She set up an appointment for me with the employer.

> The husband of my [Finnish] wife's sister suggested this job possibility. He knew a friend who had a company that did business in fitting window panes and car windscreens. He told me that he would call him if I were interested in this work. He called his friend and set up an interview for me.

> I located this job through a Pakistani friend. He was already aware that I was looking for work because the company in which I previously worked had gone bankrupt. He was then working in a fast-food kiosk owned by an Indian. He was going to leave his job there, and he asked whether I was interested in it. […] He took me to meet the employer.

In some cases, the informants' workmates and fellow students on vocational courses were the source of job information.

> I got the information from a Spanish workmate who was working with me in my previous job. Once I ran into him in a shop. He told me that his former employer needed a worker in his restaurant. He gave me the number of this employer and asked me to contact him the next day.

> A Pakistani acquaintance told me about this work opportunity. He was my class mate in the vocational course. Since I didn't have a job I asked him if he could help me in finding some work. He had a friend who owned a restaurant in Helsinki. He called him and asked me to see his friend the next day.

In many cases, the acquisition of job information and subsequently the obtaining of the job were related to the chain-employment process in a variety of ways.

> I received information about this job from a Pakistani acquaintance. I occasionally met him in a café where he also used to go to. In fact, my Nepalese friend introduced him to me. I asked him once if he could help me find some work since I was desperately looking for it. He had been working as a cleaner in a company for a few months, but he was going to leave that job. Perhaps because I also came from the Indian subcontinent he

was sympathetic to me. He called me and asked me whether I would like to take over his job. Then he took me to the workplace and showed me how the work should be done. Then he went with me to meet his manageress and recommended me to her.

I got information about this job from an Indian person. I used to go to a restaurant close to my home. This contact used to work there. I didn't know him personally then. One day we started to have a chat. He told me that a worker was leaving his job in the restaurant and they needed to fill his place. He asked me whether I knew anyone who would like a job. I told him that I was not working and was available. Then I called the restaurant manager and he asked me to come for an interview.

I had a Pakistani friend. I told him that I was looking for work and asked if he could help me. He asked a Pakistani friend of his who was working in a cleaning company if it was possible for me to get work there. […] I called my friend's friend the next day. He spoke with his boss about the matter. He set up an appointment with the employer and then took me to meet him.

5.1 The Distribution of Job-search Methods across Different Time Periods

In order to see whether the patterns of locating job information had altered during their occupational careers in Finland, Table 11 presents a comparison of the search methods the informants used in their first and current/last job. The time gap between the first and current/last jobs varied between one and 27 years, with a mean of eight years, and with 19 of the total 33 cases involving a gap of five or more years.

Table 11. A comparison of the search methods used for locating job information in the informants' first and current/last jobs

	First job	Current/last job
Impersonal	1	6
Public employment service		*4*
Newspaper		*2*
Company website	*1*	
Personal	29	22
Close relation	*17*	*17*
Acquaintance	*10*	*3*
Work-related		*2*
Other	*2*	
Direct approaches	3	2
Other		3
Total	33	33

Note: Seven cases were excluded in which the informants had only one job irrespective of whether it was their current or last job.

Personal sources of job information stand prominent against both impersonal sources and direct approaches in the informants' first jobs, comprising 29 of the 33 cases. One probable explanation for this relates to the fact that the immigrants, being newcomers to the host country, lacked skills in the mainstream language, which may have reduced their ability to use more impersonal methods and thereby increased their dependence on

personal contacts in their job-search efforts. However, a lack of language skills may not have been the only reason, as personal sources still represented a considerable number of cases (22/33) in the informants' current/last jobs: this is fairly indicative of the enduring role of social ties for immigrants in entering the Finnish job market. On the other hand, the number of impersonal sources shows a rise in the current/last jobs, which may be accounted for by the fact that, after having stayed and acquired human capital over a certain period of time in the host country, the informants were now better equipped to utilise other channels of information. Cases included in the 'Other' category include those jobs in which the informants' vocational training resulted in steady employment. Various sources of job information were mentioned in the context of the personal method, close relations constituting the majority in the informants' first as well as current/last jobs. In a number of cases (10/33), the diffusion of information occurred through acquaintances in the informants' first jobs, but this number dropped in the current/last jobs. As Table 11 further shows, the incidence of work-related ties, indicating social relations that were formed at the workplace, appears to have been quite minor in both the first and current/last jobs. The same holds true for direct approaches to employers.

An attempt was made above to ascertain whether the patterns of acquiring job information through different sources had changed during the informants' occupational careers by considering their first and current/last jobs. In further pursuance of this goal to determine the extent to which the use of different job-search methods varied with respect to different time periods, their entire occupational careers were taken into account[23]. Table 12 shows the occupational careers over four periods of time.

Table 12. A comparison of the search methods used for locating job information with respect to different time periods

		Time period				
		1970-1979	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2003	N
Job-search	Impersonal	2		16	13	31
Method	Personal	11	30	53	26	120
	Direct approaches	1	2	4	4	11
	Other		1	1	2	4
Total		14	33	74	45	166

As is clear from the table, reliance on personal sources of job information persisted throughout the occupational histories of the informants. In most of the cases (11/14) during the first period, extending from 1970 to 1979, information was disseminated through social ties. Reliance on social contacts is even more evident during the second time period stretching from 1980 to 1989: there was no incidence of impersonal searching during this period, and in the majority of the cases (30/33) the distribution of information occurred through personal means. The lack of any impersonal source,

[23] The term 'occupational career' should be interpreted with caution. It does not mean here that each of the four time periods mentioned in Table 3 covers the jobs of all the informants. Different informants began their careers in different time periods, and those who began them in 2002-2003, for instance, are not included in the previous periods.

however, could also be related to the element of randomness, since a gradual increase in the use of the impersonal method is detectable over the different time periods. The period of 1990-1999, which featured the highest number of immigrant employment spells, and which was characterised by severe economic recession in Finland, was still one in which personal sources of job information continued to show a significant presence (53/74). However, this period also witnessed a visible rise in the number of impersonal sources, accounting for 22 per cent of the cases (16/74). In the last period, covering occupational activity between 2000-2003, reliance on social relations for locating job information characterised still more than half of all the job spells, although there was a decline in the use of such ties compared with the previous time periods. In contrast, the proportion of impersonal sources rose to 29 per cent (13/45). This could be attributed in part to the fact that the likelihood of using a social contact in job search may decrease with an increase in labour-market experience (e.g., Corcoran et al. 1980a; Marsden & Hurlbert 1988). A look at the data would confirm this possible association: the proportion of individuals possessing two or more years of labour-market experience in Finland increased from 35 per cent in 1990-1999 to 73 per cent in 2000-2003. The use of direct approaches generally remained insignificant throughout the four periods.

5.2 The Nature of the Contacts

Following the above discussion on the use of various search methods, an attempt is made in this section to differentiate the nature of the social ties that transmitted the job information. As Table 13 shows, in a sizable proportion of the cases in which the information was acquired through a close relation, the source was one of the informant's friends. The next most frequent source comprised family members such as brother and wife, and relatives such as uncle or cousin. Acquaintances fell into three categories: close, distant and accidental. A close acquaintance in this context relates to a person with whom the informant did not have personal relations but, for instance by virtue of being in the same vocational school or course, they happened to see each other at the time when the particular job information was passed on. A distant acquaintance, in contrast, refers to a social relation with whom the informant did not have personal ties, and with whom contact and social interaction were rare and unintentional. The informants generally came across these acquaintances through their friends and relatives, or at some kind of social gathering. An accidental acquaintance, as the term implies, refers to when the informant accidentally met someone on particular occasion and was given information about a job. One instance was when an informant met the person at a restaurant in which the latter was working; in another, the informant met the contact in a mosque and was told about the particular employment opportunity. As Table 13 indicates, most of the transmitters of information in this group were distant relations.

Table 13. The nature of the contact when job information was acquired through the personal search method

	N	%
Close relation	83	69
Friend	*66*	*80*
Family member/relative	*17*	*20*
Acquaintance	22	18
Close	*2*	*9*
Distant	*17*	*77*
Accidental	*3*	*14*
Work-related	12	10
Former employer	*8*	*67*
Workmate	*4*	*33*
Other	3	3
Total	120	100

Work-related sources of information were essentially of two types: informants' workmates and former employers. Seven of the eight cases in which the information was located through a former employer, this person was also the employer in the new job. On the other hand, in two of the three cases in which workmates acted as providers of specific information they were working at the same place, whereas in the remaining case the contact was a former workmate.

In terms of ethnicity, the majority of the contacts were Pakistani and Indian (76/120), followed by Finns (36/120) and other nationals (8/120), included in the 'Other' category in Table 14. Of the Pakistani/Indian contacts, the majority were Pakistani ties: 65 vs. 11. The smaller representation of Indian contacts may well be attributable to the lower number of Indian informants in the sample as a whole: there would presumably have been more had there been more Indian informants. Although Pakistani and Indian contacts comprised the majority of the informants' close relations and acquaintances, this predominance was not sustained in work-related sources of job information: in 10 out of the 12 job spells the ethnicity of the contact was Finnish.

Table 14. The ethnicity of the contact when job information was acquired through the personal search method

	Pakistani/ Indian	Finnish	Other	N
Close relation	60	17	6	83
Friend	*51*	*9*	*6*	*66*
Family member/relative	*9*	*8*		*17*
Acquaintance	15	6	1	22
Close	*1*	*1*		*2*
Distant	*13*	*4*		*17*
Accidental	*1*	*1*	*1*	*3*
Work-related	1	10	1	12
Former employer		*8*		*8*
Workmate	*1*	*2*	*1*	*4*
Other		3		3
Total	76	36	8	120

5.3 Contexts of Information Transmission

It would also be important to see the situations in which the contacts passed on job information that subsequently led to the recruitment of the informants. As Table 15 shows, the process of acquiring job information occurred in various contexts. There were several instances when it resulted from active job search and when it was passed on by their contacts voluntarily. However, in the majority of cases (51/120) the contacts mentioned a certain employment opportunity on their own initiative. Job information was conveyed without the contacts being aware of whether or not the particular informant was seeking work. The transmitters were chiefly his friends. As close ties, they probably felt obliged to share information about job opportunities available to immigrants, which were otherwise limited, when the opportunities arose. In many other cases (39/120), the informants themselves actively sought assistance from their contacts in finding a job. Although such assistance was generally requested from close relations, a slight rise in the frequency of acquaintances can be discerned, compared with the previous situation in which the contacts themselves passed on the information: 28 per cent vs. 16 per cent. This increase in the use of acquaintances could be attributed to the crucial need for finding work, which may have required the mobilisation of all kinds of personal resources. While the difference is not significant, it may suggest that close relations rather than acquaintances would be more motivated to help on their own initiative.

Sometimes the contact himself/herself passed on information to the informant (22/120) since s/he knew that the informant was seeking a job. The contact was cognisant of the informant's employment situation mainly for the reason because the informant was often his/her family member, relative or friend or, in some cases, acquaintance. In a few cases (2/120), the contact approached the informant because he had heard through some person that the informant was looking for work. When it

occurred, the contact himself was the employer and offered the informant a job in his own company. The category other (6/120) includes mostly those cases where the contacts were the informants' former employers, often in their previous summer jobs, who had told the informants to enquire about the possibility of work also later.

Table 15. Various contexts in which the informants acquired job information

		Type of contact				
		Close relation	Acquain-tance	Work-related	Other	N
Nature of context	The informant told the contact that he was looking for a job	24	11	3	1	39
	Someone told the contact that the informant was looking for a job	2				2
	The contact was already aware that the informant was looking for a job	19	3			22
	The contact himself/herself told the informant about the job opportunity	38	8	4	1	51
	Other			5	1	6
Total		83	22	12	3	120

Table 15 shows a few cases (3/120) in which the type of contact was categorised as 'Other'. The transmission of job information in these cases took place in various forms. In one case it was fortuitous, and immediately led to the employment.

> I called about the position of a cleaner in a certain company. However, I accidentally called the wrong number, which happened to be a café. I told the person that in fact I was calling a cleaning firm to enquire about work. The person said that if I needed a job I could come to work in their café. That's how I got this job.

Another case reflects how job seeking could be embedded in ongoing social interaction, rather than being a planned activity.

> Once I was passing by a taxi stand in town and I just asked a taxi-driver there whether anyone needed a taxi-driver since I had a driving licence. This taxi-driver, who himself owned a taxi, took my phone number. He called me some days later and told me that I could take the night shift.

Sometimes the information about work was sought in an exceptional environment, as the following case illustrates.

> My brother, who was travelling home from Norway, had a transit flight at Helsinki airport. On the flight from Oslo to Helsinki he became acquainted with Finn who owned a restaurant in Helsinki. My brother asked him whether it would be possible for him to obtain a work permit for his younger brother who wanted to come to Europe for a while. He said that he did, in fact, need workers and would organise a work permit for him.

5.4 Contacts and Job Information

After having considered the contacts through which the informants acquired job information, I will now describe the various ways in which the contacts themselves became connected with the job information they supplied to the informants. The predominance of the personal ways of acquiring information can be seen in Table 16. Excluding the cases in which the contact himself/herself was the employer of the informant, in almost 69 per cent of the remaining cases in which the contact was only a transmitter of job information, that information had been acquired through personal means. This figure is quite close to that noted earlier (72%) when the informants had received information through interpersonal ties. This finding may further substantiate the idea that reliance on personal networks was one of the dominant mechanisms for securing job information among the immigrant groups focused on in this study. In contrast, in only five per cent of the cases had the contacts acquired information through impersonal sources: they had read about the vacancy in a newspaper or at an employment agency, and had subsequently told the informants about the job opportunity.

Table 16. The contact's relation to the job information

	N
The contact was working at the same place	45
The employer was a friend/relative of the informant	16
The contact was an acquaintance of the employer	14
The contact was the previous employer himself/herself	14
The contact was a friend/relative of the employer	13
The contact had previously worked with the employer	7
The contact located the information through impersonal means	6
The contact received the information from his friend	1
I don't know/can't recall	4
Total	120

Overall, in the majority of the cases the contacts acquired the job information by virtue of working in their current jobs and, in this sense, the subsequent recruitment of the informants could be attributed to the chain-employment process. In other cases, they had received information from their former employers. Sometimes the contacts located information from employers who were their acquaintances, whom they came to know through friends or at a social gathering. In some cases the access to information occurred when the contacts themselves enquired about the possibility of employment on behalf of the informant. In others, the employers informed the contacts that they needed workers, or then the contacts knew that the firm in which they were currently employed would need them.

In sum, this chapter has provided ample evidence of the reliance of immigrants on their social networks in the acquisition of job information: such networks constitute the main source of instrumental help. This evidence is instructive in that, despite the existence of an extensive system of public employment agencies at the informants' disposal, the importance of personal networks remained significant in the diffusion and

provision of vital job information throughout their occupational histories in Finland. The role of personal networks in facilitating information was particularly prominent for the informants in the immediate post-immigration period as they lacked locally gained human capital. Generally, their ethnic friends and kin were their chief sources of information. Another point of note is that the prevalence of personal sources of job information was not limited to the informants of this study: the transmitters of job information often themselves connected with the information through personal means, including via their friends and acquaintances, again reflecting the importance of immigrants' social networks in entering the labour market in the host society. The frequency of the use of the personal job-search method among the informants and the contacts was quite similar (72% and 69% respectively). This observation again substantiates the evidence that the use of informal search strategies in linking with employment opportunities was a common phenomenon among the particular immigrant groups included in this study.

Impersonal sources were also used as a gateway to the labour market, although to a lesser extent. Nevertheless, the use of such sources seems to be gradually increasing with the passing of time. As suggested previously, this could be attributable to the gradual acquisition of locally gained human capital, such as work experience and language skills. The use of direct contacts with employers, on the other hand, was quite low throughout the informants' occupational careers. The same holds true for the number of jobs that subsequently resulted from practical or vocational training measures.

Finally, before proceeding further, it is important to note here that the discussion in this chapter has focused on job information that ultimately led to employment. This is not to say that the notions of job information and applying for and obtaining the job are used synonymously. This did apply in cases in which the information itself resulted in employment, such as when the contact himself/herself sometimes also happened to be the informant's employer, or vouched for his character, which had a critical role in his getting the job. In other cases, the contact's role was limited *only* to that of the provider of information and the informant contacted the employer on his own and gained employment. In short, in accordance with the job-acquisition model, both steps involved in obtaining a job – including the acquisition of information and application process – are analysed separately in this work.

6 Job-search Methods and Individual Characteristics

In the previous chapter, my aim was to highlight the significant role of social networks in the dispersion of job information. However, it is one thing to demonstrate that the immigrants investigated in this study had often secured job information via social contacts in Finland but it is quite another to establish what kinds of persons tended to use certain job-search methods, and which individual characteristics potentially affected the use of different search techniques. Several individual attributes could be hypothesised to affect the tendency to search for employment opportunities in certain ways, including education, length of stay in Finland, age, labour market-experience, Finnish-language proficiency, size of personal networks and job-search context. As the subsequent discussion shows, although some of these factors tended to influence the choice of certain methods more than others, they also operated in combination with one another. The impact of various individual attributes on the different search techniques used is discussed in the following with particular reference to personal and impersonal search methods.

6.1 The Effect of Education

I will first explore the effect of educational background on the methods the informants used for securing job information. The level of education here refers to the number of years of education completed in the country of origin. All the informants were the first-generation immigrants who had migrated to Finland generally in their twenties. They had not studied in Finland since their arrival although in a few cases they had taken vocational courses. In some cases in which the main purpose of the overseas journey was educational, they pursued their studies in Finland for a certain period of time. These studies were generally left incomplete because of the constraints brought by working life, however. Therefore, only the years of education completed in the home country are taken into account.

Table 17. The effect of the informant's educational background on the use of different methods of acquiring job information

		Job-search method				
		Impersonal	Personal	Direct approaches	Other	N
Educational level	6-9 years	1	18	4		23
	10-13 years	8	42		3	53
	14 years or over	22	60	7	1	90
Total		31	120	11	4	166

As Table 17 shows, of the entire 166 employment spells under consideration, the educational background seems to have had a visible effect on the use of certain methods of acquiring job information. Although reliance on social ties was common to informants with various educational backgrounds, an association between higher levels of education and the greater use of impersonal sources was evident. Education seemed to function as an enabling mechanism that allowed the individual to expand his job-search efforts into

the formal domain and beyond reliance on personal contacts only. Informants with 14 or more years of education[24] used formal means the most and relied least on interpersonal ties, while those with minimal education, i.e. six to nine years of schooling, used formal sources such as the public employment agency or newspapers the least to find information about employment opportunities. Almost all of their jobs were obtained as a result of information disseminated by their contacts. The use of direct approaches to employers was also more common among these individuals than among those with a high level of education (17% vs. 8%). There was no difference in terms of reliance on personal ties for locating job information between individuals with six and nine, and 10 and 13 years of education. Nevertheless, education offered the latter group more opportunities to utilise impersonal job-search means. Moreover, the role of education was also apparent in occupational attainment when the prestige of the jobs was assessed (not shown in Table 17). Of the total of 19 employment spells of high and medium prestige, 16 were reported by informants with 14 or more years, and three with 10-13 years of education, whereas individuals with a low level of education (6-9 years) had none.

In sum, the effect of education on the use of different job-search methods is clearly discernible. There was a positive association between higher levels of education and the greater use of impersonal means of acquiring job information: those with a higher educational level were the most frequent users of impersonal sources. Although individuals with a medium level of education used the impersonal method more than those with a low level, the difference between them in terms of reliance on personal contacts was insignificant.

6.2 The Effect of Length of Stay

The length of stay in a country after migration is presumably an important factor in terms of being able to explore and increase familiarity with the sociocultural realms of the host society. The longer the duration of time, the better immigrants should become acquainted with the workings of the local labour market. Increased familiarisation with the labour market would, in turn, expand their knowledge of the diverse sources of job opportunities. In order to assess its effect on the use of different methods, length of stay was controlled for by measuring the amount of time spent in Finland at the time a particular job was obtained (Table 18). There does appear to be an effect on the use of certain job-search methods. Informants who had been less than one year in Finland were the most likely to rely on their contacts compared with those who had been here for eight years or longer (80% vs. 63%). On the other hand, the frequency of using impersonal means of acquiring job information was lower among the informants with the shortest stay in Finland than among those with the longest stay (9% vs. 24%). Moreover, although the use of impersonal sources increased with a rise in length of stay, the differences between those with one to under four years, four to under eight years, and eight or more years of residence were less significant (20%, 22% & 24%). Although there was a decrease as the length of time increased, the differences in using the personal

[24] In the subsequent discussion, the expressions low, medium and high educational levels are used interchangeably to describe 6-9, 10-13 and 14 or more years of education, respectively.

search method between individuals with one to under four years and four to under eight years of residence were not significant either (75% vs. 72%). However, as mentioned above, difference was more visible (63%) among who those had been in Finland the longest.

Table 18. The effect of the informant's length of stay on the use of different methods of acquiring job information

		Job-search method				
		Impersonal	Personal	Direct approaches	Other	N
Length of stay	Under 1 year	4	35	5		44
at the time of	1-3.999 years	8	30		2	40
obtaining the	4-7.999 years	8	26	1	1	36
job	8 years or over	11	29	5	1	46
Total		31	120	11	4	166

On the whole, it could be stated that the length of stay did have some impact on the use of different job-search methods, and that this was more detectable between those who had been the least and the longest time in Finland. Having recently arrived and still in the process of getting acquainted with the institutions of the host country, those with less than one year of stay relied most heavily on their social connections in entering the Finnish labour market, regardless of their educational backgrounds. For instance, those in this category with between six and nine and 10-13 years of education had not used any formal means, while those with 14 or more years of education had relied on such means in only a few cases (14%): this nevertheless reflects the important role of education in expanding access to varied sources of information. The use of formal channels in connecting to job opportunities, however, begins to increase generally after two years of residence. Again, the role of education is visible here: the tendency to use formal sources increases quickly with an increase in the number of years of education regardless of the length of stay. For example, among the three educational groups mentioned above (i.e. 6-9, 10-13 & 14 years or over), of those who had been in Finland for eight or more years at the time of the job acquisition, reliance on formal sources of job information represented nine per cent, 23 per cent and 32 per cent respectively. In the two latter groups (those with six to nine years of education showed no reliance), the difference was also visible among those with one to under four years of residence: 12 per cent and 29 per cent respectively. This observation reflects the mutual reinforcing effect of the length of stay and education on the use of different job-search methods.

6.3 The Effect of Age

The next step was to assess the effect of age on the kinds of job-search methods the informants employed. The age factor might be assumed to affect the use of search methods in different ways. First, the use of impersonal means such as the national employment agency or newspapers to seek job opportunities may be greater among younger immigrants, who may *benefit* from the potential preferences of employers for younger workers, who they may consider more productive. Nevertheless, if these

younger individuals have not been in the country for a sufficient period of time, they may not possess enough knowledge of the local labour market, which in turn may promote their reliance on personal contacts in their job-search efforts. Those who have been there longer would presumably have more experience and better knowledge of the various sources of job information, and hence would be more frequent users of formal sources. On the other hand, the use of formal sources among older individuals may be less because of the age factor, which may again provoke the need to activate personal networks.

Table 19. The effect of the informant's age on the use of different methods of acquiring job information

		Job-search method				
		Impersonal	Personal	Direct approaches	Other	N
Age at the time of obtaining the job	19-25 years	5	43	7		55
	26-35 years	18	60	4	1	83
	36-45 years	8	11		3	22
	Over 45 years		6			6
Total		31	120	11	4	166

As Table 19 shows, the effect of age on the search methods used seems to confirm to some degree the assumptions discussed above. The informants in the youngest (19-25) and those in the oldest (over 45) age groups were the biggest beneficiaries of personal contacts. The greater use of personal sources over impersonal sources (78% vs. 9%) among the younger immigrants was consonant with the assumption that their lower level of labour-market knowledge, generally on account of their shorter length of stay, would encourage them to rely on their personal contacts. The data adds support to this argument: more than half of the informants (55%) in the 19-25 age group had been less than one year in Finland at the time they obtained that particular job, while a lower proportion had been in the country for four years or more (12%). Similarly, the assumption that those in the oldest age group (over 45) would be greater users of informal channels in gaining access to the labour market owing to age-related constraints was also confirmed[25]. Although they had all resided in Finland for eight or more years, they all located their jobs through friends and acquaintances.

The most frequent users of impersonal means, in turn, seemed to be those aged 36-45 (36%) who had been in Finland for eight or more years (68%). They were also the ones who made the least use of social ties in acquiring job information (50%). Their greater use of impersonal method may have been affected by their greater length of stay, on account of which they would have accumulated more knowledge of the local labour market, which in turn would expand their access to more diverse job-search sources. The role of education may also have had an effect here: all those concerned were equally distributed among the groups having 10-13 and 14 or more years of education. Those in the 26-35 age group were the next biggest users of impersonal sources (22%). At the time of finding their job, most of them had lived from four to under eight years (37%) in

[25] Arguably, the greater reliance on personal search method could also be attributed to the greater number of personal contacts they had accumulated over their longer period of stay.

Finland, followed by those with eight or more years and one to under 4 years of residence (25% & 22% respectively). Once again, the role of education is noteworthy: the majority of these users of impersonal means (14/18) had 14 or more years of education. The direct approaches to employers had generally been used by immigrants belonging to the youngest age group.

In general, age had some effect on the use of certain search methods. In this particular immigrant context, however, this effect seemed to manifest itself in conjunction with other factors, including length of stay and education, both of which promote familiarity with the institutions of the host society and knowledge of the local labour market

6.4 The Effect of Labour-market Experience

The aim in this section is to consider the effect of labour-market experience on the use of different job-search techniques. Labour-market experience here represents the amount of time a certain individual had worked in Finland at the time they obtained a certain job. In other words, it stands for accumulated work experience[26]. Presumably, the less experience an immigrant has the more he will rely on personal networks, while greater experience will contribute to using a wider range of search methods and, consequently, to the reduction of dependence on personal contacts. At the same time, however, an increase in experience by virtue of having worked in different places might also be expected to lead to the augmentation of social ties, which in turn would further increase the likelihood of acquiring job information through personal contacts. The effect of labour-market experience is described in Table 20.

[26] One point needs to be clarified here, however. In cases such as when someone was doing at the same time two jobs say for five months, only the duration of one of them (five rather ten months) was taken into account in the measurement of work experience. If the amount of time spent working on all simultaneous jobs had been calculated separately, the work experience in some cases may have exceeded the person's length of stay in Finland. Another point is also worth mentioning. It would have been useful to include the informant's experience gained in the country of origin. This was not done for two main reasons. First, it would have entailed collecting further data on occupational careers experienced in the home country, and would have considerably extended the length of an interview that was already extensive. Secondly, as has often been pointed out in research, experience and qualifications earned outside Finland are rarely appreciated by Finnish employers (e.g., Koistinen 1997; Forsander & Alitolppa-Niitamo 2000; also Valtonen 2001; Forsander 2002b; Sutela 2005), thus it would not have had much impact in terms of obtaining a particular job, as the data collected for the present study also reveals.

Table 20. The effect of the informant's labour-market experience on the use of different methods of acquiring job information

		Job-search method				
		Impersonal	Personal	Direct approaches	Other	N
Labour-market experience at the time of obtaining the job	No experience	2	33	5		40
	Under 1 year	7	15	1		23
	1-1.999 years	6	12	1	1	20
	2-3.999 years	7	21	3		31
	4-5.999 years	3	11		2	16
	6 years or over	6	28	1	1	36
Total		31	120	11	4	166

Table 20 shows that the immigrants with no work experience in Finland relied most on personal search methods, with 83 per cent of their jobs being located through social ties as opposed to five per cent through impersonal means. This reliance on interpersonal connections was mostly independent of educational background. These 40 employment spells were the first of their occupational careers in Finland, which, not surprisingly, rendered them dependent on their friends and acquaintances for job information. In addition, since their migration was often realised through social networks, the contacts who facilitated that could be expected to help with finding their first jobs in particular. In a number of cases in which it was possible to decipher this connection, due note was taken (14/40). Moreover, a lack of Finnish-language skills would also have hindered their entry into the job market through formal means, thereby increasing reliance on interpersonal ties. The informants with no experience also made most use of the direct approaches to employers. The adoption of these unsolicited job-search strategies could be attributed to a lack of contacts, as in more than half of these cases (3/5) the migration of the particular immigrants to Finland did not involve chain migration. The time period could also be a relevant factor here. For instance, in the 1980s when the service sector in particular was suffering from a shortage of workers, the direct application method proved effective in connecting to jobs, as the interviews also reveal.

Individuals with six or more years of experience showed the next most significance reliance (78%) on personal sources for acquiring job information. As suggested earlier, this may have arisen because extensive labour-market experience increases the likelihood of a greater accumulation of personal contacts. Arguably, there may be counter-effects, too: a higher level of experience should in principle also result in the use of more varied search techniques. This does not occur in the data, however. One might assume that reliance on personal networks among people with six or more years of work experience would reflect their lower educational levels, as informants with less education have been found previously to use less formal means. This assumption is not supported by the data, however, since over one-third of these informants (36%) had 14 or more years of education, and a similar number (39%) had 10-13 years. Age may possibly have more relevance, as less than half of them (43%) were over 36 years old, and half of this number were over 45.

Informants with less than one year's work experience and those with one and less than two years showed the highest degree of reliance on impersonal sources of job information (30% each), the latter showing the least use of personal contacts (60%). It seems that, having gained some experience, immigrants start to explore different types of search mechanisms. The experience acquired in their initial jobs provides them with the knowledge and skills to utilise other means than personal networks. However, education, again, seems to be exerting a conspicuous effect on the use of formal strategies. A higher level of education prompted the use of impersonal channels much earlier: among immigrants with less than one year of experience, while those with six to nine years of education had not used any formal methods to locate job information, those with 10-13 years had used the public employment agency and newspapers for a quarter of their jobs (25%). The equivalent figure for those possessing 14 or more years of education rose even more sharply (42%). The role of education is also evident among informants with one and less than two years of experience: while those with six to nine years of education again reported no use of formal search methods, the respective figures for those with 10-13 and 14 or more years of education stood at 33 per cent and 29 per cent. The use of formal sources gradually began to decrease after two years of experience had been accumulated, and the presence of informal ties had become more visible. This increase in the use of personal search strategies, as pointed out earlier, may be partly related to growing labour-market experience and the subsequent potential to expand the size of personal networks.

In sum, the use of the personal job-search method was most predominant among immigrants with no work experience in Finland regardless of educational background. With a few exceptions concerning those with a high educational level, they all relied on personal contacts in locating their first jobs. Nevertheless, an increase in labour-market experience of less than two years engendered the highest use of impersonal job-search methods, and accordingly lessened the use of personal contacts. The role of education was noticeable among informants with less than two years of experience: the higher the level of education accomplished the more prominent was the use of the formal search method. There was less use of impersonal sources after two years of experience, and the use of personal search strategies began to increase. This could also be construed in terms of an enlargement of the individual network. However, age may also affect the use of personal contacts for those with six or more years of work experience because of the constraints it brings.

6.5 The Effect of Finnish-language Skills

This section explores the effect of Finnish-language skills on the use of different job-search methods. The skill under consideration is the oral language proficiency an informant possessed at the time the job was obtained. Command of the mainstream language is self-evidently crucial to the effective integration of immigrants into the labour market, and also expands access to information about employment opportunities advertised publicly. The significance of the ability to speak the host language therefore cannot be under-emphasised.

Before this, however, it would be important to discuss several limitations that constrain the effectiveness of the present analysis. First, unlike the previously discussed factors, the assessment of language skills was the personal evaluation of the individual concerned, and they could not be tested objectively. Only in a few cases was it possible to assess the correspondence between the personal judgement of an informant and its objective value – such as with one informant who had worked as an interpreter of Finnish for some years. If he had chosen the rating "Good" for his language proficiency on a scale from "None/poor" to "Excellent skills," there would be some correspondence between his personal assessment and its objective value, as good skills are required for interpretation work. Nevertheless, there was occasional disparity when an individual seemed to overrate his language command. A discrepancy of another type was also noted when someone underrated his skills. For instance, one informant whose language skills could be assessed as "Excellent" rated his skills as "Good." Awareness of these kinds of discrepancies, among other, became possible by the fact that some of the interviews took place in public places such as a café. During them or afterwards, interaction with Finns in certain contexts effectively divulged the language command of the informants. This was not the only way of assessing their skills, however. Other factors such as the nature of the skills required in a particular job were also taken into account, and while this cannot always convey immigrants' real language competence, it may also give some clue as to the objective value of the personal evaluations.

Another limitation concerns the time aspect of the jobs in question. Since the entire occupational careers of the informants were explored sometimes going back to the 1970s, it might have been difficult for them to gauge their language skills with reference to a job that was acquired in 1985, for instance. Such attempts at evaluating skills may appear even more unsound given the fact that the individuals concerned often could not appraise their present language skills accurately, as discussed earlier. In sum, the skills referred to here represent the personal assessments of the individuals and they cannot necessarily be regarded as objective appraisals. Moreover, the time factor in the cases in which the employment spells occurred a long time previously introduces further limitations to the empirical value of the informants' personal evaluations.

Table 21. The effect of the informant's oral Finnish-language proficiency on the use of different methods of acquiring job information

		Job-search method				
		Impersonal	Personal	Direct approaches	Other	N
Oral Finnish language-skills at the time of obtaining the job	None/poor	6	53	9		68
	Satisfactory	13	49	1	2	65
	Good	12	14	1	2	29
	Excellent		4			4
Total		31	120	11	4	166

Table 21 shows the effect of language skills on the use of different job-search methods. Given the limitations of the analysis, this effect is visible. Excluding those who considered their skills as excellent, the use of impersonal sources begins to increase as the skills increase, and there is a corresponding counter-effect on the use of personal contacts.

Informants with no or poor language skills relied most on social ties for job information (78%), and in the majority of these 68 cases it was their first and second job (54% & 19% respectively). Not unexpectedly, the lack of language skills combined with deficient local work experience meant that reliance on interpersonal connections for entry into the Finnish labour market was most common among these immigrants. In terms of age, a significant number (41%) were aged 19-25 at the time they obtained their jobs. Only in a few cases did those with no or poor language skills rely on impersonal means (9%), and they all had a high educational level (14 or more years). As also previously observed in other contexts, this reflects the important role of education in expanding immigrants' access to more diverse sources of job information even when their command of the mainstream language is meagre. It is nevertheless worth mentioning that half of those with no or poor language skills who relied on the personal job-search method also belonged to the group with a high educational level. The aim was to emphasise the fact that only the most educated immigrants had been able to utilise formal sources of job information without having the requisite language skills.

Informants who rated their skills as satisfactory were the next biggest users of formal means (20%), and used personal means less (75%). Although there was a difference in the use of impersonal search strategies between those with no or poor skills and those with satisfactory skills, the two groups were quite similar in terms of reliance on personal contacts. Of the informants with satisfactory language skills, those with a high educational level also showed the highest frequency in using impersonal means, although the difference between individuals with six to nine and 10-13 years of education was not significant. Those possessing good language skills made the most use of impersonal means such as the national employment agency and newspapers in locating their jobs (41%), and the least use of social ties (48%). The more extensive use of impersonal sources among this group was consistent with the expectation that better language skills would facilitate access to varied means of job information. However, labour-market experience may also have influenced the higher use of impersonal sources in conjunction with the language skills: the majority of these individuals had four or more years of experience. Moreover, in terms of educational level, none of those with a low level had good skills, and those with 14 or more years of education constituted three quarters of these cases. In a few employment spells in which the informants had rated their skills as excellent they had mobilised their social resources in finding their jobs. All of these people had a high educational level. In line with the pattern noted earlier, the use of the impersonal method might be expected to be higher in this group. This was not the case, however. All the individuals concerned had four or more years of labour-market experience.

In sum, excluding immigrants with excellent skills, a higher level of language proficiency appeared to correspond with a greater use of impersonal channels in getting connected to jobs. Similarly, the use of personal sources of job information also decreased in correspondence with a rise in language skills, with a few exceptions among those with excellent skills. This analysis remains tentative, however, owing to a number of limitations concerning the generally subjective nature of the informants' evaluations of their language competence, and to the time-specific constraints engendered by situations in which the informants had to assess their language skills in the context of jobs they had obtained a long time previously.

6.6 The Effect of Network Size

The effect of network size on the use of different job-search methods is analysed in this section. The network size here represents the total number of ethnic and Finnish ties including family members, relatives, friends and acquaintances. These ties mainly involved friends and acquaintances of the informants. As with the effect of Finnish-language skills, although different in nature, some limitations tend to characterise this analysis as well. The network size in question was the number of ties an informant reported at the time of the interview rather than when he experienced a certain employment spell. The size of his network may not, therefore, be the same as when the job was secured, say in the 1980s. Notwithstanding this constraint, the interviews also seemed to reveal a pattern indicating that individuals often exhibited a rather stable tendency to develop an extended or restricted number of social relationships[27]. The network size generally seemed to stabilise after a few years of stay in the country. For example, an informant who migrated to Finland in the mid 1980s reported having a network size of around 50 persons during his three-year initial stay, and this had increased to 60 persons at the time of the interview in 2003. On the other hand, another informant whose total number of social relationships comprised only two contacts fifteen years previously told he had gathered only two more members in his network at the time of the interview. Other instances of a similar nature were also recorded[28]. Given the extent to which these observations reliably describe the general patterns of people's preferences in terms of their network size, the fluctuations might be assumed to be less over time. However, despite these observations, the limitations of the analysis must be taken into consideration. Before proceeding further, it should be pointed out that it is not assumed in the above that network size is driven by people's personal preferences solely. In fact, several other factors also tend to facilitate or inhibit the size of networks. However, people's disposition does play a significant role.

Table 22. The effect of the informant's network size on the use of different methods of acquiring job information

		Job-search method				
		Impersonal	Personal	Direct approaches	Other	N
Network size at the time of obtaining the job	1-10	9	27	3		39
	11-20	6	18		1	25
	21-50	5	26	4	1	36
	Over 50	11	49	4	2	66
Total		31	120	11	4	166

As Table 22 shows, the effect of network size on the use of the personal job-search method is rather similar across all of the groups. However, informants with a network size of over 50 persons were the principal users of informal sources of job search, having relied on network assistance in 74 per cent of their job spells. Half of these 49 informants belonged to the 19-25 age group and most of the other half fell into the next group aged

[27] Social relationships here stand for relations with people other than family members, which one naturally cannot choose.
[28] Undoubtedly, there may also be a reduction in a person's network size.

26-35. Almost one third of them did not have any labour-market experience, presumably because they had been in Finland for less than one year when they obtained that particular job. A significant number of the informants (39%) with a network of 50 persons who relied on the personal search method possessed no or poor skills in the Finnish language, while nearly half of them reported having satisfactory skills.

In comparison, the informants making the least use of personal contacts (69%) were those with a network size of 1-10 persons, although this difference is not very significant. They also made almost as much use of impersonal job-search channels as those with a network size of 11-20 people (23% & 24% respectively). This higher use of impersonal sources cannot not be attributed to competence in Finnish in this particular group since it contained even greater number of individuals with no or poor skills than the group showing the most use of personal contacts (44% vs. 39%). However, significantly more of these informants had four or more years of labour-market experience than those in the group relying most on network assistance (44% vs. 22%). The greater use of formal means among these individuals may not be attributable to a greater amount of work experience as such: as noted in the discussion on the effect of work experience, the use of formal sources was most prevalent among those in the two groups with less than two years of experience. It would be useful to consider whether education is exerting its effect here. The data suggests that it may well be the case: all of the nine instances involving the use of the impersonal search techniques were those with 14 or more years of education. Furthermore, the users of formal means in the group with a network size of 11-20 constituted those possessing 10-13 years of education and more, while none of those with between six and nine years of education appear to have used such means. Education also played a role among those with a network size of 21-50 people: four out of the five informants who had relied on impersonal means for acquiring job information had 14 or more years of education, and none were in the low educational group.

The direct approaches to employers were mostly used by those having a network size of larger than 20 persons. Irrespective of the network size, however, those who had employed this method of locating employment opportunities were generally young people aged 19-25, and many of them also had the high educational level. There was no association between the use of this particular method and length of stay: almost half of these informants had stayed in Finland for less than one year and the other half for eight or more years when they obtained these jobs.

In general, the effect of network size did not seem to have a strong effect on the use of different search methods, although informants with a network size of 20 people or less made the most use of impersonal means. This may have been attributable more to educational level than to network size, however. On the other hand, the frequency of use of personal contacts appears consistent regardless of network size[29].

[29] Separate analyses were conducted in order to ascertain whether the constitution of Finnish and non-Finnish ties in the personal networks had any impact on the tendency to use certain job-search methods. Those with Finnish ties and a network size of over 50 people had employed impersonal job-finding strategies the most, followed by those showing a network size of 1-10 persons. In comparison, almost all of those with a network size of 11-20 people had relied on personal contacts. In the case of non-Finnish ties, those with a network size of 1-10 persons showed the highest use of formal channels, followed by those

6.7 The Effect of Job-search Context

Finally in this section, it would be useful to see whether the context in which the informants secured job information exerted any effect on their use of different job-search methods. The acquisition of job information could be assumed to occur in three situations. In the first case, an individual may be actively searching for a job. The presence of active search would generally imply that the job seeker is out of work or is dissatisfied with his/her present job, thus looking for a new opportunity. In the second case, although a person may not be actively searching, s/he may still be keeping an eye open for opportunities. In this case, the nature of the search is less active, and the person may be employed but interested in finding another job or type of work for some reason even if there is no pressing need for doing so. In the last case, a person may become aware of a job opportunity while s/he is not seeking work at all.

As is apparent from Table 23, most of the jobs acquired by the informants of this study were the result of active search. If the first two categories are taken together, only a few cases remain in which the informants had landed in their jobs without any search. The prominence of deliberate search is quite congruent with the expectation that the lower scope of employment opportunities available to immigrants requires them to seek employment actively. The need for active search among the informants of this study is even more comprehensible given the fact that the majority of the employment spells (74/166) were experienced during the recession years of the 1990s when entering the labour market proved particularly difficult for non-nationals.

Table 23. The effect of various job-search contexts on the use of different methods of acquiring job information

		Job-search method				
		Impersonal	Personal	Direct approaches	Other	N
Informants' job-search context	Active Search	29	95	9		133
	No active search	1	18	1		20
	No search	1	7	1		9
	Other				4	4
Total		31	120	11	4	166

Contextualising the argument, in almost all of the cases in which the informants turned to impersonal channels, they did so in the interest of active job search although in an even greater number of cases they relied on social ties rather than formal sources (71% vs. 22% respectively). Most of the direct approaches to employers were also taken when the informants were seeking employment actively. The urgent need to find employment, especially for those who are unemployed, would naturally force people to explore means other than personal networks, which may not always be able to provide them with job opportunities. Nevertheless, it would still be informative to see what kinds of individuals

having a network size of over 50, while informants with a network size of 11-20 had relied most on contact assistance. On the whole, when other factors were taken into account, generally education and Finnish-language proficiency seemed to explain the higher use of the formal method among individuals within both Finnish and non-Finnish networks.

resorted to the use of impersonal search. As before, the role of education is discernible: a significant number were those who had the high educational level (20/29), followed by individuals with the medium level (8/29). In only one case did the person with the low educational level resort to impersonal means for locating job information. Seven of the 11 informants who employed the direct approaches were also in the most educated group. In sum, only those with better educational backgrounds were able to use the national employment agency and newspapers to search for employment when a pressing need arose.

In this chapter, an attempt was made to assess the impact of various factors on the use of different job-search methods. For this purpose, the role of several factors – including the informants' education, length of stay in Finland, age, labour-market experience, network size and job-search context – was explored especially with regard to personal and impersonal search methods. These factors generally seemed to operate in conjunction with one another. However, certain individual attributes appeared to exert a greater impact on the tendency to use diversified job-search strategies than others: education being one of them. The importance of education manifested itself in direct and indirect ways and in various contexts. Although reliance on social networks in accessing employment opportunities was pervasive throughout the informants, generally those with higher levels of education had been able to enter the labour market having located job information via impersonal channels, including the public employment agency and national and local newspapers and company websites.

The effect of length of stay on the use of different methods was also noted. The informants with less than one year of stay in Finland had relied most abundantly on their interpersonal connections to acquire job information: a short duration of stay in the host country characterised by weak familiarity with its social institutions and insufficient locally gained human capital expectedly pushed them to seek network assistance. This was valid for those with different educational backgrounds, although the few individuals in this group who sought information through formal sources had a high educational level. Although the number of cases is insignificant, it nonetheless reflects the enabling potential of education to expand access to more diverse means of locating employment opportunities even when the length of stay is brief and knowledge of the host society is limited. Generally, the use of impersonal channels began to rise after two years in the country, and the tendency to search for job opportunities through formal channels increased sharply with a rise in the educational level regardless of the length of stay: for example, for those who had been in Finland for eight or more years, the differences among immigrants with low, medium and high educational levels corresponded to nine, 23 and 32 per cent respectively.

Age also seemed to have some effect: those in the youngest (19-25 years) and in the oldest (over 50 years) age groups showed the highest amount of reliance on personal contacts. An explanation put forward for this similarity in the use of the personal search method was that the younger immigrants would be less well acquainted with the workings of the Finnish labour market owing to their shorter period of stay, which would make them resort to their personal contacts for help, while the total reliance on social ties among the latter group was related to their greater age, which may have rendered them

less attractive to employers who generally tend to have a preference for younger workers. A further explanation could relate to their extensive personal networks as they had been in the country for eight years or more at the time of obtaining the particular job. In contrast, the most extensive users of impersonal means were those aged 36-45. The role of education is once again visible: they all possessed 10 or more years of education. In general, the effect of age manifested itself in combination with the factors of education and length of stay.

Labour-market experience also seemed to affect the use of different job-search methods. As expected, the use of personal contacts was most common among those with no experience and this was applicable to immigrants of all educational backgrounds. The few exceptions concerned those with the highest educational level. In comparison, those with less than two years of experience revealed the highest use of formal strategies to penetrate the labour market, and those with a higher level of education made more use of formal sources of job information. The use of these sources decreased after an accumulation of two years of labour-market experience, however, and more informal sources began to be exploited. This was assumed to be the result of a possible increase in the size of the personal network, although age could also have exerted some effect.

In terms of Finnish-language skills, an association between higher levels of language proficiency and an increased use of impersonal methods was observed, although a few exceptions involving those with excellent skills were also noted. Informants with no or poor language skills were found to rely most on social ties, and in most cases this concerned their first and second jobs. Reliance on social ties could therefore be assumed to be essential because of a lack of language skills and of local work experience. In contrast, the use of impersonal sources of information acquisition was most prevalent among those with good language skills, which is consonant with the expectation that better language competence will result in broader access to varied sources of employment opportunities. The majority of those with good language skills had a high educational level. The assessment of the effect of language skills was nevertheless constrained by a few limitations arising from the subjective nature of the informants' evaluations of their language proficiency and from the time-specific restrictions brought about by the fact they were asked to rate their language skills in the context of jobs they had acquired long ago.

The effect of network size was also explored, but there was little evidence of any impact on the use of different job-search techniques. The use of the personal approach was rather similar across all groups with different network sizes, although informants with a network size of over 50 people were the main users. In contrast, those with a network size of up to 20 people showed the highest use of formal job-search channels, although this was more likely a result of their higher educational level than the network size as such. Some limitations also characterised this analysis, since the network size in question referred to the time of the interview and not to when a certain job was obtained.

In addition, the effect of various job-search contexts was also assessed. High reliance on social relations within different contexts was noted. Nevertheless, almost all of the instances when informants had resorted to the use of impersonal channels occurred

in the context of active job search, and the majority of those who were able to utilise these means had a high educational background.

Finally, the factors discussed above may not be the only ones that influence the use of different job-search methods. As this discussion has shown, reliance on social networks in entering the Finnish labour market generally remained predominant among informants with different individual attributes. As was noted earlier in Chapter 3, the greater frequency of contact use may also stem from the fact that access to the labour market through formal means may be inhibited by employer preferences, which may render non-Finnish workers less desirable. The abundant reliance on personal contacts should also be considered an obvious mode of job-seeking for one principal reason: jobs are social phenomena that take place in a labour market that is socioculturally constructed. This sociocultural embeddedness also tends to question the conceptual paradigms that regard labour markets as spaces of perfect competition driven by abstract and universalistic criteria.

An attempt was made earlier in Chapter 5 to explore the various mechanisms through which the process of connecting with job information had occurred. The next chapter considers the various ways in which the informants of this study had applied for the jobs in question.

7 Applying for the Job: Various Ways of Contacting Employers

In this chapter, following the next stage of the job-acquisition model, I further seek to consider the various ways in which the informants applied for their jobs after having located the information. As described earlier, the job-acquisition process was divided into two parts, namely how the job information was located and how the job itself was applied for and obtained. Previous studies do not differentiate these two stages. A job is often classified as having been acquired through personal methods if it resulted from information that was transmitted by social relations. However, although it is a vital step on the way to employment, information may not necessarily lead to the securing of a job as such. Therefore, while the information may have been acquired through personal means, the particular job could be applied for through the impersonal application method. Similarly, information located through impersonal means may involve the personal method of job application. Table 24 clarifies this argument. Of the total 120 spells of employment for which the information was located through social ties, 26 (22%) cases involved the impersonal method of application. In these cases, the job informant's role was limited to the transmission of information and the job seeker himself contacted the employer without any further assistance from the social tie. Table 24 further confirms the point made earlier: of the 31 cases in which the information was formally located, five (16%) constituted the personal application method. These observations give support to the model.

Table 24. Methods of locating job information by methods of job application.

		Method of job application				
		Impersonal	Personal	Direct approaches	Other	N
Job-search method	Impersonal	26	5			31
	Personal	26	94			120
	Direct approaches			11		11
	Other				4	4
Total		52	99	11	4	166

7.1 Employee Referral and Job Acquisition

Before turning to review the various ways in which the informants contacted their prospective employers, it would be useful to briefly consider first the potential role that the current or former employee recommendation might play in obtaining the jobs or improving the job seekers' employment prospects. It is relevant to consider it since many of the informants' employment spells were secured through contacts who were working at the same place, or had formerly worked there where the informants' jobs were located. Many studies reflect on the impact of current employee referral on the success of a job applicant in the recruitment process. For instance, Fernandez and Weinberg (1997) in their study in a large retail bank suggest that job applicants with referrals from current employees enjoy an advantage over non-referral candidates for a number of reasons. First, hiring through referrals functions as a remedy for solving temporary labour-shortage problems. Using the current employees, employers can obtain a pool of job applicants in

a rather swift and inexpensive manner. A second explanation lies in the organisational policy of promoting "bottom-up" employee involvement in the functioning of the bank. By giving employees' recommendations due consideration in the recruitment process, apart from enhancing employees' feelings of empowerment, the organisation is also essentially utilising their personal networks to its own advantage. The third explanation of referral candidates' advantage could be attributed to post-recruitment outcomes. Employees conferring referrals can provide additional information to both sides of the labour market. On the one hand, they can provide employers with information about various attributes of the applicant that are relevant to the execution of the job at work such as skills, experience and industriousness – all of which are difficult to judge before a candidate has in fact taken on a position. On the other hand, they would be also able to supply the applicant with more information about the job itself, which otherwise would be difficult to procure through formal channels. This would enable the applicant to make a more considered decision when accepting a job offer, which in turn may also decrease the likelihood of quitting. Related to the third, the final explanation concerns the obligations that would induce the new employee to show better performance and dedication to work, since s/he would be cognisant of the fact that his/her job behaviour would be likely to affect the reputation of the person making the recommendation. By the same logic, the person giving the referral may also feel some obligation to assist and monitor the newcomer in becoming integrated into and successful at the new workplace.

Many other studies also refer to the common use and utility of employee referrals. For instance, Granovetter (1974) suggests that employers prefer personal search methods because they generate more information about the candidates. In her survey of fish processing in Aberdeen, Grieco (1978) found that current employees played a central role in the recruitment of new employees, irrespective of the size of the firm involved. Holzer (1996) points out that employers prefer to use recommendations from their current employees because they result in the supply of better-quality workers in contrast to other sources of information[30]. In their longitudinal study among students who completed their higher vocational training and their employers in the Netherlands, Flap & Boxman (1996) showed that employers preferred the informal recruitment method if jobs involved the type of work in which mistakes and employing the wrong workers might cause considerable damage, and when the jobs also involved considerable investments in employees. In these cases, employers need to be certain about the qualities of the prospective workers, and hiring through personal contacts or current employees can provide them with in-depth information about the candidates. Based on a nationally representative sample of employers, The National Organizations Study found that 36.7 per cent of employers often used employee recommendations in recruiting new workers (Kalleberg et al. 1996). Explicating the usefulness of the referral method,

[30] However, Marsden (1994) also draws attention to the drawbacks of informal recruitment practices. For example, current employees or other contacts who pass on job information about new vacancies through impersonal channels are likely to transmit it to individuals with similar social characteristics. This would make it difficult for organisations that recruit informally to connect with heterogeneous candidates. This is disadvantageous to the extent that they would miss opportunities to attract qualified applicants. Furthermore, informal recruitment practices may create problems in environments in which employers are expected to comply with equal-employment-opportunity regulations. In addition, the size of the potential candidate pools that can be reached through informal recruitment procedures is restricted since the applicants cannot be hired from a broad geographical region. (Marsden 1994.)

Fernandez et al. (2000) show that employers can gain considerable economic returns by being receptive to referrals from their current workers. Ekström (2001) also reports the predominant use of informal channels (approximately 67%) by employers in recruiting new workers in Sweden. Hiring through employee referrals was also identified as a common practice in earlier systematic studies of labour markets (e.g., Myres & Shultz 1951; Rees & Shultz 1970). For job seekers too, the use of personal search methods is rational as they are relatively low-cost in terms of time and money, and they are likely to generate a quick response that would allow the search process to be either terminated or redirected towards other employers (Mallier & Bailey 1997).

7.2 Multiple Ways of Contacting Employers

Informants contacted the employers through various ways. When they used the impersonal application method, their most common way of approaching the employer was by telephone, comprising 28 of the total of 52 cases. The next most common practice was to visit the workplace in person (18 cases). In the remaining six cases, the jobs were applied for by written application. The personal application method, on the other hand, included a variety of ways in which the informants contacted the prospective employers, or the process of connecting to the jobs occurred. These are summarised in Table 25.

Table 25. Various ways in which informants using the personal job-application method contacted employers

	N
The contact accompanied the informant to a meeting with the employer	48
The employer was a friend/relative	16
The informant had previously worked under the employer	14
The employer was approached following a contact's recommendation	12
The employer organised a work contract before the informant came to Finland	3
The informant's wife set up the meeting with the employer	3
Other	3
Total	99

The informants generally approached the employers through their ethnic contacts, who in nearly half of the cases (48/99) also accompanied them to a meeting with the employer. In 58 per cent of these cases the contact was also working at the same place and often passed on a good word for the informant. The following extracts describe how the contacts helped in the job-application process.

> I told my friend about this particular job opening that was advertised at the employment agency. He told me that although he didn't know the hiring representative personally, he had worked last year in that company as a warehouse worker. He also said that his workmates were pleasant people. The next morning he called the contact person mentioned in the job ad., and this person asked us to go to see him that day. My friend told him that I was a hardworking fellow and that I would like to work there for many years if it was possible. […] I was hired and I think without my friend's assistance it would have been quite difficult.

> My friend was working as a waiter in X hotel. In fact, he had been working there for many years. I had recently come to Finland and really didn't know what was going on. I didn't speak much Finnish then, although I had taken a basic Finnish course. I asked him if he could ask his head waiter about a job opportunity. He talked to the head waiter. Later, I called her myself and she asked me to come for an interview. My friend, who also accompanied me to this meeting, told her that he would personally help me to learn the work. Well, how difficult could it be to learn a waiter's job! But it isn't easy for an immigrant to get into any job. My friend helped me get my foot in the door.
>
> This job was advertised on the company's website. When I went for an interview I didn't know that one of my workmates from the hi-tech company I used to work in was working there now. During the interview when I was talking about my work experience in that particular company, the hiring representative asked if I knew Mr X. […] In fact, I was quite glad to hear that he was working there. In the evening I called this workmate and told him about my interview. He promised to discuss my case with the hiring person. The next week we went to see him together. I'm sure he had conveyed a good impression of me. […] I was offered a job and am still working there.
>
> I used to see this particular workmate only during the lunch time. He told me that he was going to move to X company in a few weeks time and asked whether I would like to move there with him. He knew the managing director of the company personally. My company at the time was going through a process of restructuring and the situation was getting increasingly uncertain. So I thought it wise to try in the other company. My workmate discussed a job opportunity for me with the manager. We both went to see him later. […] Of course, I had many years of experience. But naturally experience as such does not always help. Without this colleague's personal relations with the manager it would have been more difficult for me to secure this good job.
>
> One of my friends who was working in this large [cleaning] company helped me to get this job. I decided to try my luck here because I had been repeatedly refused work for the previous four months. Nothing seemed to work really, despite going to the employment office daily. Anyway, this friend asked me to come with him to see the cleaning manager. He told him that I was very punctual and motivated to learn this work. The manager told my friend that I could have the job if we worked together. I think he meant that I would learn the work faster if my friend was there to help me.

In some cases the employers were their own friends or relatives, with friends comprising the majority of these relations. In these instances, access to employers naturally did not involve any intermediaries. Being close relations, they often knew the informant's employment situation as in the majority of these cases (11/16) the person was actively searching for work. However, in some cases they also told the informant about a job possibility. Sometimes earlier employment in a certain company also led to the acquisition of a job there later. Having secured the opportunity to work in the company once made the subsequent entry easier. These employers sometimes even asked the informants to contact them later about job opportunities. According to the informants, the employers were often very satisfied with their performance and the swift manner in which they took care of various tasks. This good reputation subsequently also assisted in the employment of their friends, as employers asked them to bring more workers when they needed additional labour, as the following case demonstrates.

> An Indian friend who was my former roommate helped me to get this job. He had been working there for some years and had a good reputation. When my job ended, I called him to ask whether he knew if they needed any workers in his restaurant. He was on good terms with the restaurant manager. He asked the manager about a job for me. Having got the green light, he then set up an interview for me. Well, the manager was a polite and pleasant person. He was already quite satisfied with the way my friend was working. He said that I could even start working the same day, which in fact I did. I worked even harder than my friend. The manager was quite happy with me. Later I also helped another four [ethnic] friends get work there.

Sometimes the informants approached the employers on the recommendation of their contacts, who in these cases did not personally go with them to meet the employer. These contacts included various social relations such as teachers, friends, relatives, co-workers and former employers. In a few cases, contacts who had earlier worked under the same employer had telephoned him/her and recommended the job seeker. Sometimes the employer had provided the informant with a work contract, which then also constituted the reason for his migration to Finland. In two cases, these employers were friends of the informant's friends. Occasionally, informants' Finnish wives were also instrumental in exploring employment opportunities for them. They saw the job advertisements in newspapers or picked out the name of the company from the telephone directory. They sometimes also contacted the employer themselves and set up a meeting for their husbands, even accompanying them to the interview on some occasions. According to the informants, their presence had a positive effect on the employer's decision to hire them. The 'Other' category in Table 25 includes miscellaneous cases such as an employer accidentally meeting the informant in a restaurant and offering him work in his company, or an informant asking someone about work and being offered a job.

As can be noted in Table 24, some of the jobs were applied for by direct-approaches method. In these cases, the vacancy had not been advertised and no personal or impersonal intermediary of any type was involved in the acquisition of job information or in helping, such as by putting in a good word for, the informant in obtaining the job. Instead, the informant went straight to the workplace to enquire about a job possibility without any prior knowledge of whether the company needed any workers. In the cases in which the informants adopted these unsolicited approaches they did so primarily because they knew of many ethnic friends and acquaintances who were already working in the sectors concerned. Since all of these cases involved entry-level jobs, which were located in the restaurant sector in seven out of the 11 cases, the informants also assumed that the entry threshold would be comparatively lower. Moreover, the time period was also a factor in jobs that were obtained in the 1980s, for example, when the shortage of labour was especially acute in the service sector, and this led the informants to contact companies directly, as is evident from the following extracts.

> When I came I didn't take any Finnish-language or vocational courses. In those days it was quite easy to find work in restaurants. There was a shortage of labour and employers were desperately looking for workers. They said just come and work and get wages, and you'll automatically learn the Finnish language.

> But then they needed workers and it didn't matter much whether or not you spoke Finnish. The country's economy was flourishing and the Finns wanted to take only the better jobs. The restaurant sector, where you didn't need many qualifications, was left for the foreigners. […] So they went to work in the restaurants.

Another informant expressed a similar view.

> My first job was that of a kitchen helper in X restaurant. One day when I was coming back from meeting a friend, I just popped in to enquire about work. I'm now talking about the 80s. The head waiter asked whether I had previously worked in a kitchen. I said no because I had only come to Finland some months earlier and I was trying to learn the Finnish language. She offered me a part-time job that turned into full-time work after a few months.

In times of short labour supply, employers sometimes even rewarded employees for supplying workers, as one informant explains.

> When I came here the situation was very different. The demand for workers was quite high. In my company the employer would even pay 300 marks to the employee if he brought in another worker.

For some informants the direct application method was also the right way of finding a job.

> I just went straight to ask whether they had any jobs. This is my way of looking for jobs. I don't read newspapers or go to employment offices. So I just went there straight to enquire about work. The lady said there was a gardening job available. I said I was very interested in it. She told me to fill in the application form and asked when I could start working. I said I could start the very next day.

> I always think it's better just to drop in somewhere and ask if they need any worker. As I see it, this is more productive than searching for advertisements in the employment agency. […] I went to see the manager of this petrol station that was quite close to my home. He was Swedish-speaking and I told him that I was looking for work. I said if I got the [cashier's] job it would be good for them as well since I was young and I knew how to tackle groups of young people that used to hang around the station and sometimes created small disturbances. […] I got work there.

In a few cases the informants enquired about work in a particular company quite spontaneously. One informant just dropped into an ethnic restaurant that was on his way home and was given a job there. Another went with his friend to have a cup of coffee in a well-known café in Helsinki. He asked the waiter whether there was any possibility of getting a job there. The waiter took the informant to meet the head waiter. The ensuing discussion was conducted in English since the informant who had recently arrived in Finland did not speak Finnish, and the head waiter offered him work in the café. This was his first job and it was in the mid-80s. The acquisition of this job again reflects how the repeatedly emphasised demands of employers – such as for previous experience, language skills and cultural competence – might be considerably relaxed in times of labour shortage only to assume their former significance in tight labour-market conditions. The above case also suggests that the lack of human capital may not be an

adequate explanation to account for the lower level of opportunities of non-nationals in the job market.

7.3 Contact Assistance and Job Acquisition

After having discussed the various ways in which the informants contacted the prospective employers, I will now summarise the impact of the assistance of contacts on the acquisition of the jobs themselves in this section. As Table 26 shows, of the 99 cases involving personal application method, in only 83 of them was the contact's assistance considered to have directly affected the hiring decision of the employer. Direct assistance here means that the contact's passing on of a good word or vouching for the informant's character strongly influenced his chances of getting a certain employment opportunity by virtue of the fact that the contact was working in the same company, or because of his/her personal relations with the person responsible for recruitment. In the remaining 16 cases the nature of assistance offered was considered rather indirect, as the role of the contact was generally limited to ringing the employer or occasionally personally introducing the job seeker. Although introducing or recommending a job seeker may have a strong effect on the job-acquisition process, as observed earlier, the degree and nature of assistance received in these cases was not considered significant enough to secure the particular job.

Table 26. The role of the contact's assistance in obtaining jobs applied for by different methods.

		Job acquisition involves the contact's			
		Direct assistance	Indirect assistance	No assistance	N
Method of job application	Impersonal			52	52
	Personal	83	16		99
	Direct approaches			11	11
	Other			4	4
Total		83	16	67	166

Generally, the classification of the contact's assistance as direct or indirect coincided with the informant's assessment, although occasionally it was at variance with the informant's evaluation: in less than ten instances there was such a discrepancy. For example, when a contact's assistance was found to have exerted a strong effect on the job acquisition, the informant sometimes regarded its role as less significant. This generally stemmed from the informant's tendency, although often unintentional, to undervalue the contact's contribution in order to emphasise his own personal credentials. Moreover, in some cases the informant was not able to accurately assess the role of the contact's referral or character reference in securing the job. In the following extract an informant describes how he obtained one of his jobs, in which the role of the contact was classified as direct.

> I had a Pakistani friend who was working in X1 restaurant. I told him that I was looking for a job and that I would like to come to work there, too, if there was any possibility. [...] In the meanwhile, I read in the employment office about a job opening in X2 restaurant, where I had also applied for work earlier. I told my friend about this job ad. He advised

> me to go to the restaurant and fill in the application form, as it was said in the ad. The person doing the recruiting turned out to have been a colleague of my friend in their former workplace. He called him and told him that I had left my job application with him. After a few days we both went to meet him. […] Well, he seemed to be a nice person and offered me the job.

When asked what he thought about the role of his friend's assistance, the informant replied that he had obtained this job on his own and would consider his friend's assistance useful but not crucial. The role of the contact's assistance may have been greater than the informant considered it, however. The categorisation of this job as having been obtained through direct assistance was based on the observation that the informant had already applied for the same job through written application three times on his own initiative but without any favourable outcome. Furthermore, when he was given the job it was despite having relatively little previous experience in this field.

In further support of the above argument, an attempt is made in the following to assess how cognisant the informants were of the contribution of their social relations in their job-search efforts. One of the structured questions in the interviews aimed at exploring the informants' opinion concerning the role their personal contacts had played in securing employment opportunities throughout their occupational careers in Finland. An analysis of their responses with respect to the use of the personal job-application method is given in Table 27.

Table 27. Informants' opinions about the significance of their personal contacts in obtaining jobs throughout their occupational careers (usable cases 35)

		Degree of informants' reliance on social ties in applying for jobs			
		At least once	In at least half of the jobs	In all of the jobs	N
Informant's	Not very /not at all important	4	8	5	17
Opinion	Somewhat important	1	3	3	7
	Fairly/very important	2	6	3	11
Total		7	17	11	35

Note: In this Table, the person is used as the unit of analysis.

A discrepancy between the views expressed by the informants and the role played by their social ties is discernable. Although about one third of the informants (11/35) regarded it quite important, nearly half of them (17/35) assessed the role of their social ties as quite insignificant in terms of obtaining employment, even though the majority (13/17) had relied on them to a considerable extent in applying for jobs. Their opinions were thus inconsistent with the previously reported empirical findings regarding the role of social resources in entering the job market, but nevertheless in concordance with the above argument that the informants were occasionally unable to accurately assess the role of their personal contacts in acquiring work opportunities.

7.4 The Impersonal Application Method and Job Acquisition

After exploring the role of contact assistance in job attainment, it would also be important to consider the factors that the informants described as facilitating the acquisition of jobs that were applied for through the impersonal application method. In other words, these are the employment spells when informants contacted employers or their hiring representatives on their own initiative without any involvement from their social intermediaries. The aim is to see to what factors the informants attributed their success and in what ways their various personal qualifications, including education and previous work experience, assisted them in the job-acquisition process. This is not to imply here that the role of human-capital attributes can be ignored when the informants gained employment via social relations. Nevertheless, assistance from contacts considerably influenced their chances of employment. The important contribution of such assistance was evident in cases in which an informant with sufficient education and previous work experience had applied several times to the same company for a job but without any fruitful outcome. However, he subsequently gained employment there when a contact's assistance was secured. The role of social relations was again visible when a job seeker was hired even though he possessed no prior experience in the particular field despite the fact that this was explicitly mentioned as a requirement in the job advertisement. The crucial function of ethnic contacts in particular was also observed in a case in which a job seeker who had repeatedly been refused work by native employers on the grounds of insufficient language skills obtained the same position in an ethnic enterprise and served its Finnish customers without any difficulty. There were also a few cases in which informants who had arrived in the country only a few weeks previously were taken on by ethnic employers in positions requiring direct dealing with customers. In brief, the aim is to suggest that, notwithstanding the significant role of human capital, the acquisition of many employment opportunities in the absence of social capital may have been rather an arduous affair for the informants.

The informants were asked to describe the main factor that, in their view, might have helped them to secure employment. A variety of factors were mentioned. Table 28 summarises the responses.

Table 28. Factors described by the informants in obtaining jobs applied for through the impersonal application method

	N	%
Personal attributes	27	40
Job-related	20	30
Employer-related	16	24
Other	4	6
Total	67	100

Generally, the informants tended to attribute the securing of a job to their own personal credentials, and in particular often referred to their previous experience (12/27). Finnish-language skills were also mentioned by some as the chief factor, and a few related their success to their education. Some expressed that their own personality and behaviour were influential factors, while others ascribed their success to their vocational training for trades such as plumber, waiter and bus or taxi driver. A few informants referred to their

good health and to the reputation of Indian subcontinent immigrants as hard workers, while one assigned his success to his being in the right place at the right time.

Among the factors falling into the job-related category, the majority of the informants (16/20) owed their success to a shortage of labour in a certain field when a particular job was applied for. Some further added that they had obtained those jobs only because no one else wanted them. A few also pointed out the short hours and the inconvenient, often late-night working combined with a low salary, which made native workers unwilling to accept them, but which the informants accepted because they had no other option at the time. In a few cases, the nature of the jobs themselves was considered as either necessitating a mother-tongue speaker, such as interpretation work, or requiring an immigrant as an instructor to lead immigrant youth in various activities.

The informants also cited various employer-related factors that led to their employment in a certain enterprise. Over half of them (9/16) attributed the positive outcome of their job-finding effort to the mere fact that the particular employer was a friendly individual. In response to the question how they perceived the role of their own personal credentials in this process, they stated that it was rather negligible. They referred to various instances in which the possession of relevant experience and education did not matter much due to the uncooperative attitude of the employers. On the other hand, the employer's sympathetic attitude was also referred to in various ways in many of the rest of the cases. For example, one informant owed his success to the fact that his prospective employer had lived abroad for several years, and that this had endowed him with multicultural experience and a tolerant attitude towards immigrant recruitment. Another argued along similar lines: his employer often used to travel abroad because of his work, and that granted him the opportunity to get used to the diversity of people. Among other employer-related factors, one informant suggested that he had secured his job simply because Finnish employers considered foreign workers to be docile and exploitable. He went on to explain in detail the various forms in which he had been taken advantage of during his stay in Finland. A few other individuals attributed their success to the fact that the particular employers were of ethnic origin.

The factors discussed above were the ones spontaneously mentioned in response to the question of what they thought had contributed most to their recruitment that did not constitute contact assistance. After having obtained their spontaneous reactions first, they were then presented with a list of factors and were asked to rate their potential significance in securing their job on a five-point scale ranging from very unimportant to very important[31]. A description of their responses is given in Table 29.

[31] In Table 29, the responses "very important" and "fairly important" are combined, as are the responses very and fairly unimportant.

Table 29. Informants' evaluations of various factors that helped in securing jobs applied for through the impersonal application method

	Very/fairly unimportant	Somewhat important	Very/fairly important	Total
Finnish-language skills	33	13	21	67
Previous work experience	37	11	19	67
Education	53	4	10	67
Age	36	14	17	67
Shortage of labour	22	13	32	67
Friendly attitude of the employer	28	16	23	67

As regards Finnish-language proficiency, almost half of the informants considered its role unimportant in terms of obtaining their jobs. Of those, 61 per cent (20/33) described their own language skills as either non-existent or insignificant at the time of job attainment. The lower significance attached to the role of Finnish-language skills may be somewhat related to these informants' shorter length of stay in Finland, as in 39 per cent of the cases (13/33) they had stayed in the country for less than one year, and in a third of the cases (11/33) this was their first jobs. Given their shorter stay, they may well not have had a good command of the language, which consequently would not have contributed much to their gaining employment. However, a similar number (13/33) who regarded the role of language as insignificant had also resided in Finland for four or more years, and the majority (11/13) for eight or more years. Thus the length of stay may not as such be directly related to the informants' lower ratings attached to knowledge of the Finnish language. Educational background may not be very relevant either, as the majority of these informants had a high educational level (22/33), and only five had lower levels of education. In contrast, the majority of informants who considered the role of language skills to be very/fairly important also had a high educational level (16/21), although the proportion of informants showing no or poor language skills was lower than among those who rated the role of language skills unimportant (19% vs. 61% respectively): the proportion of individuals with good language skills was also higher (27% vs. 12% respectively). In brief, the better command of Finnish among this group that regarded the role of language as important may have had an effect on their higher evaluation. The level of language skills required in the jobs also may have been slightly higher as these people had fewer number of low-prestige and more medium-prestige jobs. However, the actual differences between the two groups in terms of having low- and medium-prestige jobs were not significant.

The factor of previous work experience was also assigned a lower value in terms of securing a job. A larger number of informants (37/67) considered its role unimportant, and with more frequency, than the other two responses, "somewhat important" and "very/fairly important," taken together. Of those who held this view, many (14/37) did not have any previous work experience in Finland when they obtained the particular job, while a few (4/37) possessed less than one year of experience. It is therefore understandable that they did not attach significance to work experience. The remaining informants had one year or more of experience, and a larger proportion (13/37 or 35%) had two or more. In contrast, among those who cited the role of previous experience as very/fairly important, the comparable figure stood at 58 per cent (11/19). Moreover, there was only one person with no experience in this group, while there were more in the

former. It would be useful to find out whether the nature of the informants' jobs could have provoked the different responses from the two groups. Of those who considered prior experience to be very/fairly important, fewer had jobs of low occupational prestige than among those attaching little or no importance to previous experience (63% vs. 92%), and more had jobs carrying a medium level of occupational prestige. Therefore, the importance attributed to previous experience by informants could have been partly linked to the degree of skills required in their jobs.

The role of education was considered the most unimportant and the least important of all of the factors. A significantly higher number of informants pointed out that their education was not related to their job acquisition in any way than those who considered its role important (53 vs. 10 respectively). Similarly, it was also ranked lowest in terms of being somewhat important. The majority of informants who regarded education unimportant had a high educational level (29/53), followed by those with a medium level (18/53) and a low level (6/53). In contrast, almost all of those who considered education as an important factor in effecting a positive outcome (9/10) had a high educational level. Their reason for ascribing higher significance to education could possibly be attributed to the fact that nearly all of these employment spells (9/10) were jobs of medium or high occupational status. The need for higher education is presumably essential in high-prestige jobs, as some of these employment spells involved engineering and technical work. In comparison, almost all of the spells in which the informants (52/53) who regarded the role of education as unimportant were of low prestige situated in the secondary sector of the labour market.

The factor of age was also regarded by many of the informants (36/67) as having an insignificant role in job attainment, although significant numbers considered it somewhat important (19/67) and very/fairly important (17/67). Of those who considered age factor unimportant, the majority were aged 26-35 (19/36), followed by those aged 19-25 (10/36), and 36 or over (7/36). In contrast, 16 of the 17 informants who viewed age as very/fairly important were proportionally slightly younger, in the age group 19-35. Those who rated age as somewhat important were more or less similar in age structure to those in the former group.

A shortage of labour was described by many informants (32/67) as affecting the recruitment process. In fact, this was the only factor considered very/fairly important by more people than considered it unimportant. As also discussed earlier with reference to where the informants spontaneously pointed out the reasons for their recruitment, many indicated that they were able to secure their jobs because of a lack of workers in a particular sector at the time. Some of them also remarked that if there was no shortage of labour they would not have been given an opportunity to work, even though these were low-paid and entry-level jobs and essentially required no previous experience to perform the job tasks. Informants who rated the shortage of labour as a prime reason for their employment were proportionally better educated than those who regarded that particular factor unimportant.

Finally, the informants were also asked to express their opinions about the potential role of the employer's friendly attitude in their recruitment. There were more people who considered it to be unrelated but it was ranked second after a shortage of labour by those

who viewed its role very/fairly important. This higher value attached to the employer's friendly attitude was consistent with the informants' spontaneous responses discussed earlier. The significance of this factor is further highlighted in the light of the number of people that regarded its role as somewhat important: it appeared to be the highest among all the factors considered (16/67).

7.5 Job application Methods and Job Satisfaction

This chapter closes with an inspection of informants' job satisfaction in jobs applied for through different methods. Earlier studies seem to suggest that employees hired through personal contacts are a better match to jobs, and thereby they are considered to be less likely to quit (e.g., Decker & Cornelius 1979; Wanous 1980; Datcher 1983). Moreover, they are also said to have lower rates of absenteeism and higher performance evaluations (e.g., Breaugh 1981; Taylor & Schmidt 1983; Breaugh & Mann 1984; Swaroff et al. 1985). In other words, the results of these studies seem to imply that employees hired via personal contacts are more satisfied in their jobs. It would be useful to test the findings of the above studies in the light of the present study. One way of doing this would be to look at the job-satisfaction levels of the informants in jobs applied for through different methods. Table 30 represents an attempt to capture these levels.

Table 30. Job-application methods by the informants' levels of job satisfaction

		Job-satisfaction level			
		Very/fairly satisfied	Neutral	Very/fairly dissatisfied	N
Job-application method	Impersonal	21	15	16	52
	Personal	63	7	29	99
	Direct approaches	5	4	2	11
	Other	2	2		4
Total		91	28	47	166

A preliminary inspection of Table 30 appears to confirm the indirect implications of the above studies: the informants seemed to be significantly more satisfied with the jobs they applied for with the assistance of their contacts than those obtained through the impersonal application method (64% vs. 40%). The number of informants who reported a neutral level of satisfaction, namely they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, was also considerably lower when the personal rather than the impersonal method was used (7% vs. 29%). On the other hand, there was an almost equal amount of dissatisfaction with jobs applied for via personal and impersonal channels (29% vs. 31%). As far as direct contact was concerned, the unsolicited approaches to employers resulted in higher levels of satisfaction. In short, in cases involving personal and impersonal methods of job application, higher levels of job satisfaction were expressed when employers had been contacted through social ties.

However, when controls were added for whether the informant was in a certain job because of his "own choice" or whether he had "no other option," fluctuations in job-satisfaction levels could be noted (not shown in Table 30). Of the job incumbents who were working through own choice (N=106), satisfaction level with regard to the personal

and impersonal application methods stood at 82 per cent and 53 per cent respectively, which represents a visible increase compared with the earlier figures when controls were not added. Correspondingly, the number of dissatisfied cases also dropped to roughly half of the previous levels (12% and 17% respectively). Use of the direct approaches also resulted in a higher number of satisfied cases, while there were no instances of dissatisfaction.

In comparison, of the informants who reported that they were working in certain jobs simply because no other option was available at the time (N=60), the number who were satisfied with their jobs decreased sharply, although employment spells obtained via the personal method granted slightly more job satisfaction than those applied for via the impersonal method (27% and 23% respectively). Accordingly, there was also a visible increase in the proportion of dissatisfied cases (64% and 50% respectively). Unlike the previous patterns, however, the level of dissatisfaction was higher in jobs in which personal contacts rather than the impersonal method was employed. The direct approaches to employers resulted in job dissatisfaction in 50 per cent of the cases and in a neutral level of satisfaction in the remaining 50 per cent.

Before proceeding further, it would be informative to see whether a person's educational background has exerted any effect on the level of job satisfaction. An association between a higher level of education and a lower level of job satisfaction could be observed (not shown in Table 30). Among the informants who were in their jobs from their own choice, the proportion of people expressing satisfaction decreased with an increase in level of education. The difference between individuals with low and high educational levels (6-9 and 14 or more years of education) was especially noticeable: 95 per cent vs. 61 per cent respectively. In contrast, while no one at the lowest educational level expressed dissatisfaction, those at the highest level were the most dissatisfied (17%). On the other hand, when the lack of any other option was expressed as the chief reason for being in a job, the level of satisfaction again decreased with a rise in educational level (67%, 29% and 17% respectively) for those with 6-9, 10-13 and 14 or more years. Similarly, the level of dissatisfaction grew visibly with an increase in educational level (33%, 48% and 64% respectively).

In general, those who were working from choice often expressed more job satisfaction, and significantly more with jobs involving assistance from social ties, while those with no other option were much less satisfied in their work and the difference between jobs obtained through the personal and impersonal method was quite small. In this group job dissatisfaction was also noticeably higher. However, within both of these groups of informants – those who were working from choice and those who had no choice – jobs applied for through personal contacts led to greater satisfaction. Presumably, this should also result in lower employee turnover and lower rate of absenteeism, and in this respect, it is consistent with the indirect implications of the earlier studies mentioned above. Yet, the significant disparity in job satisfaction between informants working from own choice and those who had no other option could also indicate that the degree of enjoyment of a certain job may be more important than the method of job application as such in the context of the present study. Moreover, when the effect of education was also taken into account, the fact that it was significant reinforces the foregoing argument that the nature of the job-application method may not be the main determinant of job satisfaction. As

noted, the job-satisfaction level declined considerably with an increase in educational level, irrespective of whether the job was offer was taken up from choice or because of the lack of other employment opportunities. The higher presence of dissatisfaction among the educated immigrants could be explained by their greater discontent over non-commensurate employment, as many of them had job histories in Finland marred with low occupational prestige.

In sum, the aim in this chapter was to reflect on the various ways in which the immigrant participants of this study had connected with their prospective employers following the job-acquisition model elaborated earlier. The majority had used the personal application method (99/166), followed by those who used the impersonal method (52/166). A few (11/166) had employed the direct approaches to employers. In approximately half of the cases incorporating the personal approach, the contacts had themselves accompanied the job applicants when they went to see the employers. They were often employed in the same place and had passed on a good word about the job seeker to the decision makers. In other cases the contacts were able to provide assistance because they were friends/relatives of the employers or had previously worked for them. In other cases the contact assistance was in the form of recommendations. In over half of the cases in which the informants had contacted the employers using the impersonal application method, the initial contact was made by telephone.

This chapter has also considered the nature of the assistance the informants secured from their contacts. In most of the cases, the jobs were secured with the direct assistance from their job informants (83/99) and the remainder were classified as constituting indirect help. The classification of assistance as direct or indirect was occasionally at variance with the view expressed by the informants. This was attributed to the fact that they were unable to assess the real impact of the contact assistance.

An effort was also made to outline the various factors that the informants viewed as contributing to the acquisition of jobs applied for using the impersonal application method. A wide range of spontaneous responses were received. In the majority of cases, they attributed their success to their own personal qualifications, including previous experience, Finnish-language competence and education. Job-related factors were also mentioned, the shortage of labour being especially highlighted as the principle reason for the prospective employer's decision to recruit them. Some people also referred to the friendly attitude of the employer as the sole reason for their success, an opinion that was based on the fact that numerous previous attempts had remained largely unfruitful because of the employer's reluctant behaviour, even though the qualifications required for the jobs were the same. After having explored their spontaneous opinions, the informants were then asked to rate the significance of various factors in job acquisition on a five-point scale ranging from very unimportant to very important. A specific attempt was made to compare groups that regarded a certain factor as unimportant or important. These factors included supply-side attributes such as Finnish-language skills, prior work experience, education and age, as well as those linked to the demand side of the labour market such as shortage of labour and employer attitudes. Of them, the highest number of informants regarded the shortage of labour as the main factor for their success, followed by the employer's friendly and tolerant attitude. The greater significance

attached to the above two factors was generally in congruence with the visible emphasis laid on them in the informants' spontaneous responses. Other factors such as education, work experience and Finnish-language skills were considered by the majority of the informants to be insignificant in terms of job attainment. The lesser significance ascribed to these factors may be partly related to the larger proportion of low-prestige jobs held by these individuals, including those of cleaner, warehouse worker, kitchen assistant, shop assistant and gardening worker. Those who viewed the particular factors as exerting a strong effect generally had more jobs of better socio-economic status in which the requirements for higher education and previous experience could be expected to be greater.

As discussed earlier, most of the jobs acquired by the informants through personal contacts were of low socio-economic status. In the next chapter I will examine to what degree the structure and composition of personal networks may also affect the nature of the employment opportunities.

8 Cutting Both Ways? The Dual Role of Social Networks in Occupational Attainment

In this chapter, the aim is to discuss the impact of immigrants' social networks on their occupational attainment. Specifically, in the context of employment opportunities located through informal job-search strategies, an attempt is made to explore the effect of the contact status on the status of the job acquired and to assess the extent to which they are positively related. A further aim is to examine how the composition of an individual's social network may affect the kinds of opportunities one may potentially access through one's social contacts. Finally, it would also be useful to see whether the strength of tie (Granovetter 1973, 1974) between the social contact and the job seeker has any effect on the status of the job obtained.

Drawing on the suggestive patterns emerged in the data, this chapter reflects on the dual role of social networks in occupational attainment. It underlines the importance of the structural characteristics of immigrants' routine networks in producing specific occupational outcomes. It is argued that, while personal networks act as a crucial resource-opportunity structure for immigrants to help get their feet on the ground in a new sociocultural environment, at the same time they could also operate as constraining factors by channelling them to certain sectors of the labour market. The network of social relations in which a person is embedded is therefore suggested as one of the explanatory factors in the kinds of employment opportunities an individual may eventually gain. Analysis of the structural characteristics of a network is essential, as it reveals the extent to which access to effective resource-rich social ties and, consequently, to prestigious positions in the occupational hierarchy can be acquired, and thereby the chances to improve one's conditions of life.

The impact of people's social networks on instrumental actions and outcomes has been extensively discussed in micromobility research, which, in contrast to the neo-classical and human capital theories' labour markets of perfect competition, concentrates on structures that hinder the free movement of supply (Wegener 1991). Within this field, the effect of personal networks on status attainment is especially discussed by the social resources theory. Before proceeding to the analysis, therefore, I will describe the main features of this theory.

8.1 Social Resources and Status Attainment

The theory of social resources discusses the effects of social resources on socio-economic attainment. Conceptually elaborated by Lin (1982, 1990) and Lin et al. (1978, 1981a, 1981b, 1986), the theory states that individuals' embedded resources in social networks act as a significant contributory factor in the occupational-attainment process beyond that accounted for by personal resources such as education and parental status. Assuming labour markets as imperfect spaces of interaction, it proposes that the characteristics of social resources in personal networks affect and explain variations in the kinds of occupational statuses individuals ultimately achieve. The theory posits that individuals possessing certain personal and structural attributes would have better reach to social resources, which would in turn enable them to gain access to better occupational

opportunities. It, therefore, introduces social resources as an important intervening variable between the ascribed status and the achieved status of an individual. Given this crucial role of social capital, the theory conceives particularism rather than universalism as a more fruitful way of determining social mobility in society.

Social resources, in this context, describe the wealth, status, power and the social connections of contact persons who have direct or indirect relations with an individual (Lin 1981a; 1999b). They are valued goods embedded in the individual's network, which can be accessed via social ties such as kin, friends and acquaintances (Lin 1982; Lin & Dumin 1986). A later formulation by Lai et al. (1998) views social resources as a collection of available resources that are situated in the structure of an individual's social relations, which can be mobilised in order to achieve some instrumental objective. Social resources differ from personal resources; in contrast to the personal resources, which can be employed and utilised according to the choice of a particular individual, social resources cannot be dispensed with individual freedom, as they are not an individual's first-order possession. Rather, they are embedded in a person's social contacts and, in this sense, they can be considered second-order resources (Boissevain 1974; Völker & Flap 1999). For instance, in certain instrumental actions such as job-seeking, they can be mobilised by evoking a social relation that may potentially improve the likelihood of a successful outcome, either by providing job information or/and influencing the hiring decision of the employer. Given their nature, access to these resources is contingent upon the willingness of the social contact. Social resources are therefore temporary and borrowed in nature (Lin 1999a).

The social resources theory envisages the macro-social structure of society as consisting of positions that are ranked hierarchically in terms of prestige attributes such as wealth, status and power. According to Lin (1999a), this structure is pyramidal in shape and access to and control of these positions is also hierarchical in nature. This structure affords advantages to those situated near the top of the structure, as there are fewer occupants as well as more accessibility to positions. Individuals pursue their instrumental objectives within the constraints and opportunities engendered by this structure. They have more chances of realising their instrumental goals, such as landing a better job, if they have access to contacts who are located higher up the prestige hierarchy. These contacts would be better able to influence the allocation of position, for instance by affecting the hiring decision of the employer. The theory also proposes that access to higher-status contacts may be facilitated if a person employs weaker rather than stronger ties, which may potentially reach out more vertically than horizontally in the hierarchical structure (Lin & Dumin 1986), and thereby link to a broader spectrum of job options. As discussed earlier, weak ties include social relations such as acquaintances and work-related contacts, to whom one is weakly tied, while strong ties refer to relations including family members, relatives and close friends.

Combining the notions of social capital and social resources[32], the social resources theory therefore advances three propositions with regard to access to and the use of

[32] The terms social capital and social resources are generally used synonymously. However, Lin (1999) makes a slight distinction between the two terms. Social capital is that part of social resources a person mobilises in order to achieve some instrumental objective such as finding a job. Alternatively, he also views

these resources: the social resources proposition, the strength-of-positions proposition and the strength-of-ties proposition (Lin 1982). The first proposition constitutes that social resources such as those embedded in individuals' social networks affect the outcome of instrumental action. In other words, it implies that a person with access to a more resource-rich social contact has greater chances of landing a prestigious job than one with a resource-deficient contact. The second proposition states that social resources are, in turn, affected by the initial position of an individual such as education and family background factors. The higher structural advantages in terms of access to more beneficial social resources are considered contingent upon these initial socio-economic statuses. The better initial positions increase the chances of individuals to form resource-rich social ties through homophily or like-me principle (Homans 1950; Laumann 1966; see also Burt 1992, 2002; Lin 2001), which assumes that individuals with similar socio-economic attributes tend to interact and form relationships with one another. Following Granovetter's seminal 'strength of weak ties' argument (1973), the third proposition holds that social resources are affected by the use of weaker rather than stronger ties. Individuals with similar initial positions are said to benefit more from weak ties, which are assumed to link people with different and better social resources than those in one's own social circle. These social resources would potentially be a source of novel job information and influence, and would thereby enhance opportunities to acquire more prestigious jobs. Nevertheless, for individuals with already prestigious statuses, the proposition suggests, their strong ties should lead to as equally effective or better social resources as weak ties because of the potential ceiling effect. In fact, as Lin et al. (1981b) point out, weak ties may be more beneficial to individuals with lower original positions in accessing higher-status contacts. This third proposition, namely the association between the strength of positions and the strength of ties has not found consistent support from empirical investigations, however. For instance, based on life history data from Germany, Wegener (1991) found that weak ties were more useful for persons with high-prestige than low-prestige previous jobs. A variation of this proposition developed later therefore takes into account the need for considering the extensity of both strong and weak ties in exerting an effect on social resources.

As Lin (1999a) points out, research aimed at considering the relationship between social resources and status attainment studies two processes. The first process attempts to examine the access to social capital embedded in an individual's social network. Several factors – including human-capital attributes represented by education and work experience, original positions such as parental or previous job statuses and an individual's social contacts – are measured to establish the scope of resources that a certain person can access through his/her network. Such factors, in turn, are thought to affect occupational status, income levels and the securing of prestigious positions. Lin identifies this model as the accessed social capital model. The second process considers the mobilisation of social capital in the pursuit of accomplishing some instrumental objective such as status attainment. In other words, it involves the use of social tie and the resources offered by the social tie in finding a job. The occupational status of the social contact, in conjunction with the individual's human-capital attributes and initial positions, is hypothesised to exert a strong effect on the prestige of the job acquired. The

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social capital as the "investment and use of embedded resources in social resources for expected returns" (Lin 2000).

contact status, in turn, is said to be influenced by education, social resources and the nature of tie existing between the contact and the individual. This model is identified by Lin as the mobilised social capital model.

A later discussion in the social resources theory has centred on the issue of conceptualisation and measurement of social resources. In particular, it concentrates on whether it is more appropriate to measure social resources in terms of the social tie evoked in a job-seeking effort, i.e. contact resources, or in relation to the general attributes of an individual's routine social network, i.e. network resources (Lai et al. 1998). The distinction between network resources and contact resources implies the distinction between *access to* and *use of* social resources. In attaining some instrumental objective, the presence of both these elements is assumed to be essential for realising a successful outcome. Previous research has typically examined the 'use of' social resources compared with the 'access to' social resources (ibid.). In studies related with the use of social resources, an attempt is made to measure the various characteristics of the social tie that connected the job seeker to a job, such as his/her occupational prestige, industrial sector and authority position. An attempt is further made to assess the impact of such contact attributes on the position obtained by the job seeker, such as the occupational prestige, wages, industrial sector and firm size. This way of conceptualising and measuring social resources is known as the contact resources approach. A corollary of this approach would suggest that the impact of social resources on a successful outcome, such as the acquisition of a better job, can be attributed to the direct result of contacting a prestigious social tie in an individual's network.

In the second approach, called the network resources approach, the focus is on the identification of a person's social resources that are available in his/her everyday social network. Consisting of a variety of social relations, the routine social network offers a resource-opportunity structure that an individual can resort to when the need for this arises. The network resources approach attempts to investigate the characteristics of these routine networks and resources of its members, by teasing out the diversity and range of these resources. As mentioned earlier, past research has been more engaged in analyses of the effect of social resources on instrumental actions using the contact resources approach. However, recently more studies have been exploring the impact of network resources on the occupational-attainment process.

The social resources theory is, in fact, a continuation of an earlier discussion initiated by Blau and Duncan's seminal work (1967) that attempted to assess the determinants of occupational attainment. However, in the social resources theory the incorporation of social resources as the intervening variable between the ascribed status and achieved status was in contrast to the Blau and Duncan's model of social mobility and its subsequent extensions in which an individual's education was considered as the mediating variable between ascription and achievement. On the basis of the results of their study, Blau and Duncan argued that the effects of education and previous occupational status were more important than family background in predicting the eventual status attained by an individual. Their model further showed that a greater degree of the influence of education was independent of social origins. Moreover, it also implied that education was the main source not only of social mobility but also of social reproduction, much of which is transmitted through education (Ganzeboom et al. 1991).

Implying unrestricted labour markets as an ideal, Blau and Duncan's work therefore emphasised the primacy of achieved status over ascribed status in American society. In contrast to the social resources perspective that engages itself more with the neo-Weberian sociology, according to which an individual's greater social resources are associated with higher levels of social mobility, Blau and Duncan's model stands closer to the functionalist stratification view, which holds that universalistic criteria govern the allocation of positions and rewards in industrial societies. This view assumes that industrialisation advances the role of achievement, and by implication meritocracy, which diminishes the significance of ascription (Parsons 1940; Lenski 1966). Therefore, the direct impact of family background on a person's education and on the prestige of the current job is assumed to be less significant in countries with greater, than with lower, levels of economic development (e.g., Treiman 1970).

8.2 Previous Studies on Social Resources Thesis

However, many empirical studies on social resources in micromobility research have demonstrated that when the mediated effects of parental socio-economic background through social resources are considered, the significance of ascribed status in occupational attainment may be equally, or more, crucial than achieved status such as education. De Graaf & Flap (1988) tended to question the functionalist ideas about the primacy of universalism in advanced industrial societies. They argue that the observation that many people are connected to jobs through informal search methods, at least in the sense that the transmission of job information occurs through personal contacts, contradicts functionalist assertions. In addition, the observation that the prestige of the jobs found has a significant relation to the occupational prestige of the contact persons, and that the original effect of education on occupational attainment can be attributed in part to the effect of individuals' social resources, further cast doubt on the prevalence of universalism in industrial societies.

Several other studies have also lent support to the social resources theory, especially with regard to the social resources proposition. Based on a sample of 400 employed males who had used contacts to find their first and current jobs, Lin et al. (1981a, 1981b) found that the prestige of the social contact had a substantial positive relation to the occupational prestige of the job obtained by the respondent. The effect of contact status on the respondent's attained status remained significant even after controlling for parental status and education effects. Their results further showed a positive relation between the contact's and father's status, although the former was negatively affected by the strength of ties between the respondent and the contact. Marsden & Hurlbert's study (1988) also confirmed an association between the contact status and the acquired status of the respondent. In their study, they analysed the transition of 456 male respondents to their current jobs. Drawing on their findings, they suggested that social network resources mainly functioned as outcome specific measures: the prestige of the job contact was significantly related to the prestige of the job obtained

by the respondent, and the industrial sector of the contact was considerably related to the industrial sector of the job acquired[33].

In their comparative study, De Graaf & Flap (1988) also reported a positive relationship between the higher occupational prestige of the contact and the likelihood of landing a better job. Moreover, they found that the contact's prestige exerted a positive influence on income, although its effect was not significant. Sprengers et al. (1988) attempted to explore access to social capital. In their study conducted among a group of 242 Dutch unemployed men aged 40-50, they found that persons with better social resources had more chances of obtaining a job within a year of becoming unemployed, particularly in cases in which access to social resources occurred via weak ties. However, better social resources did not result in better occupational outcomes in terms of job prestige and wages, although such resources led to greater optimism among respondents about their chances of re-entering the labour market sooner. Drawing on a data set of 604 males and females aged 32 and 42 in Germany, Wegener (1991) confirmed the strong impact of contact status on the prestige of the job acquired. A study by Bian & Ang (1997) carried out in Singapore found that contact status was significantly related to the occupational status of the job obtained. Based on a sample of working males in a metropolitan area in upstate New York, Lai et al. (1998) showed that current job status, in addition to education, was also considerably influenced by contact status. A similar strong association was also reported by Völker & Flap (1999) in their study conducted in the cities of Leipzig and Dresden in the former industrial communist society of the GDR. They found that – although universalism seemed to prevail in the status-attainment process, suggesting the importance of an individual's education over his parental background – informal means of recruitment accounted for almost half of the respondents' jobs. Furthermore, the occupational prestige of the contact person had a significant effect on the prestige of the job found. Drawing on the results of their study, they suggested that part of the effect of social resources on occupational attainment could be related to the effect of an individual's higher-status social contact.

8.3 The Measurement of Occupational Prestige

As the aim of this chapter is to consider the potential effect of social resources on the kind of employment opportunities the immigrants investigated in this study obtained, it would be important first to determine the occupational prestige of the informants and their contact persons. This is measured here according to three categories: high, medium and low. Occupations categorised as high-prestige include those of university teacher, electronic engineer, doctor and product manager, and those classified as medium-prestige consist of positions such as administrative official, logistics technical operator and laboratory assistant. Jobs such as restaurant worker, dish washer, warehouse worker and stall-holder were categorised as having low occupational prestige. Given the rather narrow range of occupations of the informants and the contact persons observed in the data, this particular three-way classification proved sufficiently useful in the allocation to

[33] However, as Marsden & Hurlbert (1988) and also Bridges & Villemez (1986) explain, there is little evidence available as to whether such a positive relationship obtains when other factors relevant to mobility are controlled.

different prestige categories. I based this classification on the socio-economic scale constructed by Statistics Finland (1989) that attempted to distribute the population into different groups based on their social and economic standings[34]. This scale is somewhat old as it was constructed in the 1980s, but there have been no recent attempts to construct a more up-to-date one. Although more recent scales constructed in other countries were also available, I did not consider it useful to employ them since the prestige indices are based on national surveys conducted in those countries. The level of prestige assigned to certain occupations may not be the same in Finland as, say, in the United States. Hence, despite its being slightly old, this Finnish scale was preferred for measuring occupational prestige.

8.4 Occupational Prestige of the Jobs Attained

Before turning to consider the relevance of the social resources theory to the present study, I will describe the characteristics of the jobs acquired through the use of social contacts. Of the 120 spells of employment, more than half of the jobs (77/120) were situated in the restaurant and catering sector of the labour market, waiter and restaurant assistant being the most common. The next biggest concentration of occupations was in the cleaning sector (15/120), which has often been depicted as a niche for immigrants in Finland. Some of the jobs (5/120) were located in the IT sector, and a similar number in construction. The rest covered diverse occupations ranging from laboratory and office assistant to warehouse worker and newspaper deliverer. When the occupational status of these jobs was assessed, the data revealed that reliance on social ties had predominantly led to jobs of low human-capital requirements. This was generally true of immigrants with high as well as low levels of education, and also regardless of their length of stay in Finland. The majority of the jobs (109/120) were characterised by low occupational prestige, and few were of medium or high occupational status (six and five cases respectively).

8.5 The Effect of Contact Status on the Job Obtained

The aim in the following sections is to consider the relevance of the social resources theory in as far as the present data allows such an investigation. The data will grant investigation mainly on a general level because it was not collected with a view to specifically examining the propositions set out in the social resources theory. First, an effort is made to assess the extent to which there was a positive association between the contact resources and the status of the job acquired by the informant. Contact resources are measured by the occupational prestige of the contact person. Ample confirmation of a positive association is to be observed in Table 31. Overall, of the 120 employment

[34] Different indices have been used to measure occupational prestige in studies on social resources. The Duncan socio-economic occupational-prestige index (SEI) has generally been employed in North America, and the Hodge-Siegel-Rossi NORC scale has also been used. Some other studies, especially in Germany, have adopted Treiman's prestige scale (Treiman 1977), while a scale constructed by Sixma and Ultee (1984) has also been employed in the Netherlands. Other scales have been developed in different countries that were considered more appropriate for determining occupational prestige in those countries. The scales mentioned above have been regularly updated from the time they were originally introduced.

spells under consideration, in the majority of the cases (103/120) the occupational prestige of the informant matched that of the social contact, signifying the impact of contact resources on the status of the employment obtained. When the figures were further analysed according to different prestige categories, in nearly all of the jobs (96/98) in which the social contact had a low occupational prestige, the prestige of the job found was also low. Eighteen of the 96 jobs were acquired by informants with between six and nine years of schooling. It is evident that the kind of employment opportunities secured with this level of education cannot be expected to be located in the better areas of the labour market. However, even for informants with 14 or more years of education, 52 of the jobs they obtained were still low in prestige. In more than half of these cases (31/52), the informants had rated their language skills as either good or excellent at the time they obtained the job, and in 23 of the cases their labour-market experience ranged from two to 12 years. A higher level of education, better language skills and labour-market experience apparently did not lead to positions of better status. This could be related to the impact of contacts' own occupational status, as they were themselves located in jobs of low human-capital requirements. The kind of job information that flowed from these contacts probably concerned opportunities of a similar nature, even if the conduits of the information had higher educational backgrounds. This reflects how processes of social mobility will be affected by the nature of the personal resources mobilised in instrumental actions.

The predominance of low-paid jobs among the informants could also stem from factors other than the effect of contact resources. For instance, in a number of cases (19/96) these low-prestige jobs were the first jobs in their occupational careers in Finland. Thus it can be expected that, owing to their probable lack of local work experience, their lower level of proficiency in the new language and employers' preferential practices, these immigrants would generally have had fewer chances of securing jobs situated higher on the occupational hierarchy even if they possessed better education and previous work experience acquired in the country of origin. In addition, internal labour-market regulations in different sectors would further retard the transition to jobs of better prestige, especially at the beginning of their careers.

Table 31. The relationship between the occupational prestige of the contact and that of the job acquired by the informant

		Informant's job prestige			
		High	Medium	Low	Total
Contact's job prestige	High	5	2	5	12
	Medium		2	8	10
	Low		2	96	98
Total		5	6	109	120

On the other hand, in two of the 10 cases in which the contact's job was of medium occupational prestige the informant had the same job status as the social contact, while in the remaining eight cases they differed. The level of correspondence was thus lower than observed in the low-prestige category. This greater discrepancy in part could be attributed to the fact that half of the informants' low prestige jobs (4/8) were their first jobs in Finland. In all these four cases, the informants had 14 or more years of education. As

mentioned earlier, it would have been difficult for them to obtain better-status jobs in the immediate post-immigration period due to deficiency in locally acquired human capital. Thus several cases could be noted in the data in which, for instance, a social contact working as an administrative official assisted the recently-arrived informant with a high academic degree and university-level teaching experience to obtain a job as a kitchen assistant in a restaurant. In another case, a contact helped an informant with a high academic degree and previous experience in journalism and social work to acquire his first job of shop assistant. As Table 31 further shows, when the social contact had a high occupational status, five of the 12 jobs obtained by the informants were also characterised by high job prestige, highlighting that it was only through high-status contacts that the informants were able to find more prestigious positions. These observations therefore give reasons to suggest that the accrual of high-status jobs would necessitate having access to contacts who are situated at the better end of the job spectrum. Three of the five spells of low prestige were first jobs of the informants. This again is in line with the pattern noted earlier: the first jobs of immigrants are likely to be situated in the secondary sector of the labour market.

A further evidence of the impact of contact status on the likelihood of obtaining a certain type of job can be found in the data: in more than half (66/120) of the employment spells investigated, the nature of the informant's occupation was the same as that of the social contact. In other words, a contact who was working as a warehouse worker, for example, passed on information about, or helped the informant to acquire a position as a warehouse worker. Likewise, an IT engineer helped the informants to obtain a similar position in the same or different company. A study by Marsden and Hurlbert (1988) found a significant positive relationship between the industrial sector of the social contact and that of the respondent. The present study also suggests a strong association. In the majority of the cases (97/120), the contacts and the informants worked in the same occupational sector. Examples include the restaurant manager who assisted an informant to obtain a waiter's job, and the technical logistics foreman in a construction firm who helped another informant to get a job as a construction worker.

It would also be informative to find out whether there was any connection between the ethnicity of the contact and the status of the job acquired (Table 32). Notwithstanding the fact that the overall number of high- and medium-prestige jobs among the informants was low, nonetheless, the impact of Finnish connections on the attainment of better-status jobs is visible: the acquisition of all of the high-prestige jobs (5/120) and half of the medium-prestige jobs had occurred through the Finnish ties. This observation is indicative of the fact that the ethnic ties generally would not be able to reach higher up on the occupational hierarchy, especially in Finland where the history of immigration is rather short, and where, with a few exceptions, no large viable ethnic communities exist at present that could offer their members more desirable positions[35]. Access to employment opportunities that are more commensurate with immigrants' education and previous skills would therefore require them to extend their networks beyond the restricted circle of their ethnic relationships.

[35] When taken into account all the employment spells (166), in nearly all of the high-prestige jobs (6/7) the ethnicity of the employers was Finnish, and 10 of the total 12 medium-prestige jobs were also offered by Finnish employers. These observations add credence to the point made above.

Table 32. The relationship between the ethnicity of the contact and the occupational prestige of the job acquired by the informant

		Informant's job prestige			
		High	Medium	Low	Total
Ethnicity of the contact	Finnish	5	3	28	36
	Non-Finnish		3	81	84
Total		5	6	109	120

Note: In this Table, some of the non-Finnish ties (8/84) also include social relations who were not Indian or Pakistani in origin, including contacts from Bangladesh, Iraq and Spain.

8.6 The Effect of Network Resources on Occupational Attainment

Another way of assessing the impact of social networks on the nature and scope of the employment opportunities they may offer is to look at their composition. An individual who is a member of a network that includes people of higher socio-economic characteristics is considered to have more chances of finding a better job by using a contact of higher social status rather than one with a low-status contact. Moreover, an individual with more contacts located higher up the occupational hierarchy could be expected to have more knowledge about job openings that are filled informally, since such contacts are in positions that may have easy access to new employment opportunities, and at the same time may be in a position to influence the hiring decision of the employer. High-status contacts could also act as role models in the job-finding process, such as by providing assistance with interviewing and job-seeking techniques (Reingold 1999). The structural characteristics of a network, therefore, may affect the social mobility of its members by limiting or expanding their access to qualitatively better job information, and consequently to better employment opportunities.

The informants were asked in the interviews about the social ties with whom they had frequent contact and on which they relied for different kinds of assistance.[36] An attempt was made to investigate the various characteristics of these social ties. One of the characteristics being explored was the occupational prestige of these interpersonal relations. The objective of this probing was to assess the nature of the available resources that the informants could potentially access through these social ties when the need to mobilise these resources arose. The number of contacts to whom they turned for various types of assistance varied between three and five, and occasionally six. Most of them mentioned only three close personal contacts, however, notwithstanding the fact that many of them had a larger pool of friends and acquaintances.

[36] The informants' dependence on friends for assistance was explored in various areas of life, such as in finding work, borrowing money, borrowing expensive items such as a car as well as smaller items for domestic use such as kitchen utensils, moving house, finding lodgings, and in bureaucratic tasks including correspondence with authorities and consultation with lawyers. They were also asked questions on issues such as with whom they liked to spend their leisure time and engage in recreational activities, share political, social and religious views, and discuss work/business-related problems, from whom they sought emotional support in times of adversity and with whom they talked about children/family-related problems and discussed their future plans. They were also asked who might influence them in making crucial decisions in life, and who they might similarly influence.

As it is easily discernible from Table 33, social ties with low-prestige jobs were prevalent in all of the five categories of close social relations. Many of the informants' contact networks did not disperse throughout the occupational structure. Rather, they tended to cluster in specific economic sectors, mainly restaurant and catering. Overall, three quarters of all the informants' ties (114/164) had jobs of low occupational prestige. Presumably, the job information they might generally provide is likely to concern employment at the low-prestige end of the labour market. There was much less concentration (30/164) of social ties with medium occupational prestige, less than half of which (12/30) were ethnic ties who were restaurant owners. As the interviews revealed, the quality of job information that flowed from these contacts largely concerned vacancies that were located relatively low in the occupational hierarchy. In fact, reliance on such relations had led some immigrants with rather a high level of education being permanently caught in low-paid restaurant jobs. As it can be further noted, contacts with high-prestige jobs were the least common of the personal contacts (20/164). The lack of such ties prevented the informants from building 'vertical networks' (Newman 1995), which could have potentially connected them to jobs of higher socio-economic status.

Table 33. The occupational prestige of the five close social ties on which the informants relied for various types of assistance[37]

	High	Medium	Low	Total	No tie
First close tie	3	10	26	39	1
Second close tie	4	7	26	37	3
Third close tie	6	9	20	35	5
Fourth close tie	4	2	22	28	12
Fifth close tie	3	2	20	25	15
Total	20	30	114	164	36

Apart from exploring their close ties, the informants were also asked about the potential size of their social networks, namely the number of various types of relations such as friends and acquaintances they had in Finland. The aim was to see whether the size of a network was more advantageous in terms of the acquisition of prestigious jobs[38]. In this particular investigation, however, it was not feasible to enquire about the occupational status of the network members. A considerable variation in network size was noted, varying from four to 372 social contacts for the 40 informants (with a mode and standard deviation of 6 and 69.09 respectively). These contacts included both ethnic and Finnish ties. As Table 34 illustrates, the differences between individuals with smaller and larger networks in terms of the chances of obtaining better-status jobs did not seem to be very significant, although a network of a larger size would potentially facilitate a greater flow of job information and employment opportunities. Regardless of their network size, most of the informants had jobs in the secondary sector of the labour market characterised by low occupational status. The very small proportion of jobs carrying high occupational

[37] Reliance on social contacts was not present in all cases. The figures in the 'No tie' column refer to the number of cases in which the informants did not have a close tie.

[38] Here it is important to be attentive to certain methodological problems that such an analysis may entail as the composition – indicating the general socio-economic characteristics of individuals in a personal network – and size of the network may vary over time. Its implications have already been discussed in the section 6.6.

prestige seem to be concentrated among the informants whose network size included 21-50 persons. However, it is doubtful that this was related to network size as such, since the acquisition of these high-prestige jobs could be largely attributed to contact status as most of them (5/7) had been obtained through high-status contacts. Although a thorough analysis would require in-depth data on the range of occupational statuses of the network members, one of the inferences from the above observations would allow us to suggest that the socio-economic characteristics of a network in terms of access to resource-rich social ties may be more relevant to occupational attainment than mere network size.

Table 34. The relationship between an informant's network size and the occupational prestige of the job acquired

		Informant's job prestige			
		High	Medium	Low	Total
Size of the informant's network	1-10		3	36	39
	11-20	4		21	25
	21-50	3	2	31	36
	Over 50		7	59	66
Total		7	12	147	166

Note: Table includes all jobs that were located and obtained through different job-search methods.

It would also be important to consider further the direct and indirect impact of networks on occupational mobility through the accounts of the informants. In the interviews, they often reflected on the role their networks played either in channelling them into or motivating them to seek employment opportunities in certain areas of the labour market. After having commenced their careers in a certain sector, however, in many cases they remained restricted to that field in their entire careers, very often regardless of their educational background. For instance, one informant who migrated to Finland in the 1970s remarked.

> Since many of my friends were working in the restaurant sector, they were also looking for jobs for me in the same area. But once I had entered this area, I didn't have any time to think about or explore any other field, even though I had education and three years of previous experience in a technical field. Most of the immigrants from the Indian subcontinent are concentrated in the restaurant sector. It has become a kind of tradition that whoever arrives in Finland sooner or later ends up in the same field. This is why examples from other areas are lacking.

A similar view was expressed by another informant.

> I don't know precisely the reason [why many people are concentrated in the restaurant sector]. But whatever the reason it has been the trend for a long time that whoever comes from Pakistan goes straight to the restaurant sector. Perhaps he already knows someone who is working there. This person somehow helps him get job there as well. Then he doesn't have any time left to look for other opportunities elsewhere. He just gets lost in the restaurant sector.

The view of the above informant was corroborated by yet another one.

> Well, I guess [why I have been working in the restaurant for the last six years] it could be due to the fact that my friend [who helped facilitate my migration] was also working as a waiter in that particular restaurant when I came to Finland. I think that was the only place where he could help me get some work because he had connections there.

In many instances, the contacts told the informants about certain available opportunities and facilitated their meeting with the employer. This help in the acquisition of job opportunities was especially valuable for the newly arrived immigrants for whom entering the labour market entailed several barriers because of different language and sociocultural conditions. One educated informant stated.

> I was fairly satisfied with this [first restaurant] job, which I found with the help of one of my friends. There were many reasons [to be satisfied]. First of all, the job gave me a secure start from the beginning in a new country where I found things to be quite different from my own country, and where the local language felt like Hebrew to me. The job brought certainty and economic independence to my life. Apart from this crucial economic aspect, it gave me a platform from where I was able to learn and explore Finnish culture and interact with Finnish people.

However, the impact of their initial jobs on their subsequent occupational careers in terms of status attainment was often non-conducive.

> I didn't have a job for several months, and I was quite worried. I didn't want to resort to social welfare. This was the last thing I wanted. One of my friends asked an acquaintance of his, who was working as a cleaner in a company, about a job possibility. This acquaintance took me to meet the cleaning manager. That's how I got this job. I worked for three years in this X company. Later, I changed my job because the shift working didn't suit me. Now I'm working in X [cleaning] company.
>
> A friend recommended me to apply for a job with this [restaurant] chain. Well, there was nothing else available and I knew that my education was not going to be of much use. So I went with him to the company's recruitment office and we filled in the application form there. I'm still working there after more than seven years.

Even when the acquisition of the job did not involve direct help from a contact, the indirect effect of friends and acquaintances in terms of their being *role models* or sources of suggestions also induced the informants to seek employment in certain areas of the labour market.

> No, I didn't ask anybody to help me acquire this [cleaning] job. I applied for this job on my own. But of course I knew many friends who were working in this large company. And through them I also had knowledge of what sort of [employment] situation prevailed there. So I just went to the company's recruitment office to fill in the application form.
>
> When I came to Finland I didn't know many people at first. Two of my acquaintances who were working as waiters in the X restaurant suggested that I should apply for a job there since they thought I would have more chances of getting work.

> I met this friend at a party. I had just finished my summer job in one company. When he found out that I didn't have work he advised me to enquire about store work with X firm. […] That job lasted for more than a year.

The above observations add credence to the argument that the general attributes of social network would largely shape the nature of employment chances that an individual may acquire in the occupational hierarchy in both direct and indirect ways.

8.7 The Strength of Tie and Occupational Attainment

This chapter closes with an examination of whether the nature of a tie existing between an informant and the contact person had any effect on the nature of employment opportunities obtained by the informant. A description of weak and strong ties, and various views with regard to their significance, was given in Chapter 4[39]. Both ties are claimed to link people with different types of jobs and social circles. For instance, Granovetter (1973, 1974), who was the first to systematically draw attention to this issue, suggested that it was weak ties that could potentially act as bridges by connecting individuals to new networks and, consequently, new pools of information to which they formerly did not have access. In contrast, individuals with predominantly strong ties are at a disadvantage since they cannot acquire information from distant parts of the social system and are confined to redundant and within-group information (ibid. 1982). A network consisting of only strong ties is said to increase the likelihood that its members share overlapping ties, which also increases the probability that the job information being received by the job seeker is not new as it has already been shared with other members. Hence, weak ties are assumed to be *strong* since they are strong in facilitating access to novel job information and better occupational opportunities by linking individuals with new social networks. Putting it differently, they have a greater potential to bridge social cleavages. As pointed out earlier, many later studies have tended to corroborate Granovetter's thesis (e.g., Boorman 1975; Lin et al. 1981a, 1981b; Sprengers & Tazelaar 1988), although several studies also contest its usefulness (e.g., Murray et al. 1981; Presindörfer & Voss 1988; Hanson & Pratt 1991; Sanders et al. 2002).

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[39] The procedure of assessing the tie strength, whether strong or weak, is not unproblematic. Social relations with relatives and friends are not always close or warm, and, similarly, relations with acquaintances and workmates may not always be distant. Social relationships also vary in terms of duration, frequency of interaction and motives, which are not taken into account when social ties are classified based on kinship bonds. (Wegener 1991.) Moreover, the individual with whom a relationship exists does not explain the focus of that relationship (Verbrugge 1977; Fischer 1982a; Fischer 1982b). In measuring the tie strength, I took into account two parameters – the frequency of interaction and the level of intimacy between the informant and the contact at the time when a certain job was acquired. In determining the frequency of interaction I used the following categories: "once a week or more"; "once a month or more"; "once in six months"; once a year"; "rarely". As far as the degree of intimacy was concerned, the informants were asked to respond on a five-point social-distance scale ranging from "distant" to "very close" how close they felt to the contacts when the job acquisition took place. Additional questions were also asked in order to ensure that the classification of a tie as weak or strong was accurate.

Table 35. The effect of the strength of a tie between the contact and the informant on the occupational prestige of the job obtained

		Informant's job prestige			
		High	Medium	Low	Total
Strength of tie	Strong	1	6	76	83
	Weak	4		33	37
Total		5	6	109	120

Contextualising the argument, an effort is made here to determine whether there was any positive relationship between the strength of tie and the prestige of the job acquired by the informant. As Table 35 informs, there was no significant effect. Whether located or obtained through strong or weak ties, the informants' jobs were mostly mired in low-prestige areas of the labour market. Nevertheless, almost all of the high-status jobs obtained were acquired through acquaintances, which reflects the importance of weak ties. Yet, it may not allow for any attempt to make a sustainable generalisation in favour of the weak-ties hypothesis in the context of the present study. The general conclusion would suggest that the tie strength in itself and of itself should not be assumed to have a direct impact on status outcomes (e.g., Lin 1999). What is more important is in what kind of network the tie, whether weak or strong, is situated.

In sum, in this chapter I have drawn attention to the impact of immigrants' social resources on instrumental actions and occupational outcomes in the Finnish labour market. I have done this by considering, first, the relationship between the occupational status of the social contact through whom a certain employment opportunity was located and the status of the job acquired. I further pursued my objective by examining the potential effect of the informants' network composition and network size, as well as the significance of strong versus weak ties in the status-attainment process. The results of the study seem to be in concordance with some of the assumptions of the social resources theory.

Drawing on the empirical observations, my aim in the preceding discussion was to emphasise the dual role of social networks in occupational mobility. The data shows that, while the informants' networks acted as an important resource-opportunity structure in terms of facilitating job opportunities, they also engendered constraints on occupational attainment. As the interviews revealed, the employment careers of the informants were largely concentrated in the secondary sector of the labour market. Reliance on social ties has primarily led to jobs of low human-capital requirements. The composition of their social networks reflects connections that do not reach well to the better areas of the labour market. The occupational mobility attained through these social ties, therefore, was most commonly along horizontal rather than vertical lines. In other words, it occurred within the low-prestige occupations and often within the same sector, such as moving from a kitchen assistant to a restaurant waiter, and from a restaurant waiter to a worker in a pizzeria. As the data shows, this was generally true of the informants with higher and lower levels of education, and when their language skills and length of stay in Finland were taken into account. These observations point towards the need to consider how the attributes of social relations, rather than simply the attributes of individuals,

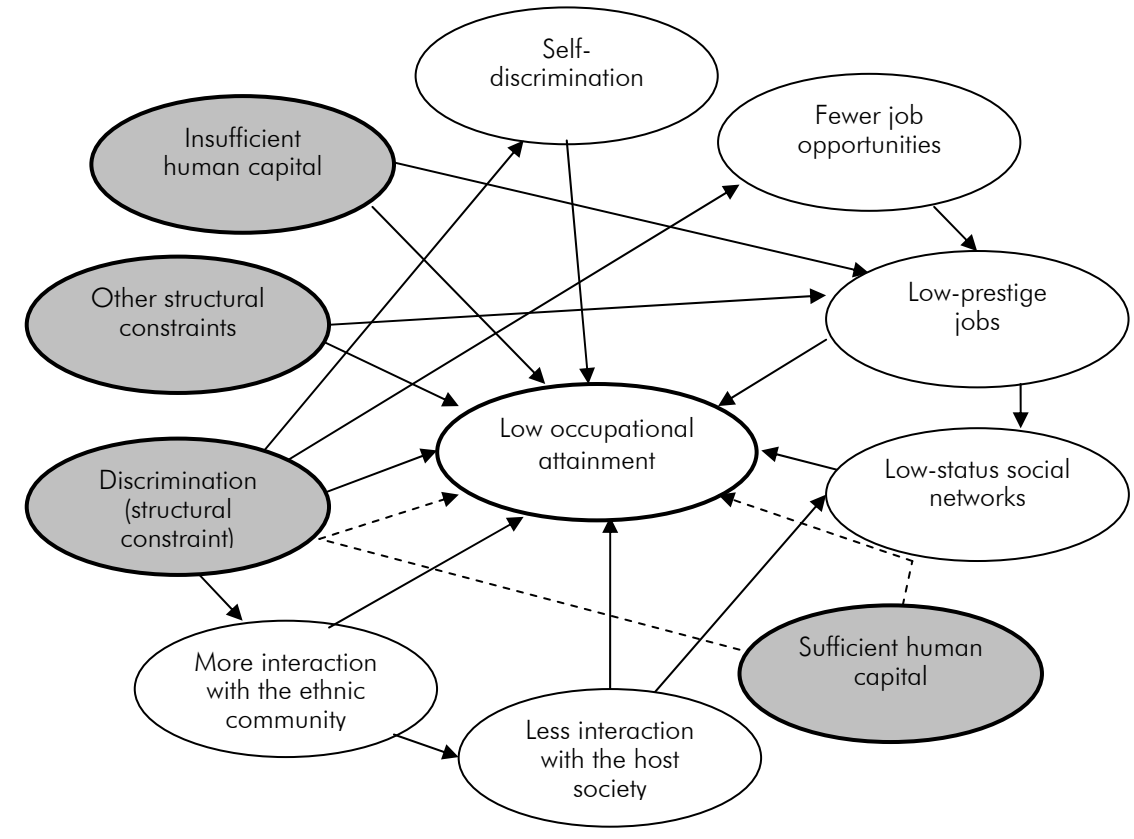
could affect the opportunities of immigrants in their new country (for instance, see Portes & Sensenbrenner 1993; Waldinger 1996b; also Reitz 1990, 138-139; Powell & Smith-Doer 1994; Light & Gold 2000, 125-127). They give credence to the assumption that personal resources in the absence of effective social resources would not yield better labour-market pay-offs. The diversity and quality of the social resources available to an individual through a personal network would potentially determine the extent to which access to better employment opportunities could be gained in the new sociocultural reality.

In the foregoing discussion, I have specifically attempted to shed some light on the significance of social networks in occupational attainment. A thorough analysis of the reasons for the lower level of status attainment among immigrants would also necessitate looking in more depth into the impact of other factors – including individual human-capital attributes and structural constraints such as discrimination (see e.g., Esmail & Everington 1993; Parekh 2000, 196-198; Zegers de Beijl 2000; Ahmad 2002; Rydgren 2004b) – which could also create mobility barriers and consequently depress the employment opportunities of non-nationals in the host society. I will turn to this in the next chapter.

9 Occupational Attainment among Non-Nationals: Social Networks, Human Capital and Structural Constraints

In the preceding chapter, I have attempted to accentuate the role of social networks in the occupational-attainment process, and suggested the need to take into consideration that the nature of employment opportunities that individuals acquire can often be shaped by the composition of their routine networks. The relatively greater concentration of low-prestige jobs in the employment histories of the informants was, to an important degree, proposed to be the outcome of their particular networks. Notwithstanding their crucial role, however, social networks may constitute just one dimension in the stagnation of occupational careers. The lower level of commensurate employment among immigrants could also stem from the interplay of a number of other factors – including individual human-capital attributes and structural constraints – that could as well introduce mobility restrictions and thereby affect the life chances of non-nationals in the host society. In fact, it would be important to see what role these factors potentially themselves play in the formation and structuring of social networks of lower socio-economic characteristics, since networks are not established in a vacuum. Rather, their formation is a process that is embedded, and structured by various factors, in the surrounding sociocultural environment. It would be therefore essential to consider in what ways these different factors might affect low occupational attainment. A graphical illustration of these various factors is attempted in Figure 7.

Figure 7. The potential effect of various factors on low occupational attainment



From Figure 7 we can see that the low occupational attainment may be a function of the effect of several factors. However, among these factors, some are the effect of other factors that act like causes such as insufficient human capital and discrimination. It is naturally evident that the personal qualifications including command of the local language, work experience and professional skills are essential for better integration into the labour market. The absence of these qualifications would lead to low-prestige jobs, which would in turn cause low occupational attainment. A lower level of commensurate employment can also be expected among recently arrived immigrants who may not possess adequate proficiency in the mainstream language, and may not be familiar with the workings of the local labour market and the institutions of the host society. Yet, the possession of sufficient human capital in the context of non-nationals may not always guarantee access to better positions either. Several structural constraints, such as internal labour-market regulations in different sectors and discrimination, may also erect barriers to occupational mobility among immigrants. The internal labour-market protective strategies may render foreign qualifications and work experience less valuable vis-à-vis similar qualifications acquired in the country of immigration, thus creating job-mismatch. Therefore, many cases can be noted in Finland where, for instance, non-national engineers and doctors have been reported to be working in occupations lower than what their professional competency would actually demand. In order for the foreign qualifications to be accepted, particularly those that have been obtained outside the EU, it may take up to three years before a licence for practicing can be received or the previous degree recognised.

Discrimination, on the other hand, could also lead to low occupational attainment in various direct and indirect ways. Its presence would result in a lower level of employment opportunities for immigrant job seekers. A smaller scope of job opportunities would also potentially increase the likelihood of obtaining low-status jobs. If the majority of the members of some ethnic group are concentrated in the secondary sector of the labour market, the probability that their personal social networks would also be characterised with low socio-economic attributes would be significantly higher. Furthermore, discrimination would also induce non-nationals to rely more on their ethnic community, which again could also lead to the acquisition of low-status jobs given the fact that the ethnic group generally cannot provide employment opportunities situated higher on the occupational hierarchy. A narrowly restricted interaction within the ethnic community would further reduce interaction with the mainstream society, which would in turn facilitate the formation and strengthening of resource-deficient social networks. Interaction with the members of the host society is self-evidently vital in that it would enable an individual to acquire access to networks of better socio-economic status and to attain indispensable cultural knowledge, language skills and familiarity with the institutions of the host society. This may be particularly true in the case of Finland, where increased immigration is a recent phenomenon, and which lacks large viable ethnic communities that could provide their members with a more diverse range of opportunities.

However, although originally caused by discrimination, in certain cases barriers to occupational mobility may stem from within the individual himself/herself. Based on the insights gained from the interviews, sometimes individuals after having been repeatedly unsuccessful in obtaining jobs that may have been more commensurate with their

education and skills lose hope and motivation and cease to strive for their goals. They further develop a low self-esteem syndrome, lose confidence in themselves and begin to downgrade their own abilities and personal credentials. As goals are perceived unattainable and the scope of available options too thin, they become content with low-prestige jobs, given that even these jobs are available, which is not always a self-evident affair as can be inferred from Chapter 3. This gradual process of reconciliation was also referred to by the informants.

> The only reason [for the existing big job mismatch] is that I could not find any better job despite my consistent efforts. What I was able to find was a total 'no'! The response from the employers was quite cold, if not fully negative and untrustworthy. Sometimes you felt that the jobs had already gone even before they were advertised. Finally, you get disheartened and then no longer even try. In fact, you forget the whole business.

> I initially tried to find a job that I thought would match to my abilities and personal credentials at least somewhat. I was educated at an institution that is well-known for its academic excellence in my country. I also had many years of previous experience in some good companies. But it was not possible to find even cleaning work, let alone a job where one could use even a small amount of one's education. In the end, you become tired of applying for jobs again and again. Then you take whatever comes along.

Yet another informant also pointed to this process.

> I knew that it would not be possible to get a reasonable job at first. My aim then was essentially to get into the system and see how it worked. I used to think that after gaining some experience and learning the language it would become easier to find better work. But that was a misplaced assumption. They really didn't help. […] Gradually, I became an expert job seeker but only a job seeker without a [good] job. But there is a limit to how much you can invest your energy. I then also started to think that my education was not good enough and it didn't match the Finnish standard. Well, I simply gave up.

Reconciliation with the current reality may take still another form, as is apparent from the excerpt of a well-educated informant.

> Being educated also means that you act like an educated person, not just being [employed] in good jobs. So although I have mostly worked in café or restaurant jobs, which I didn't necessarily want to do but did out of a lack of any other choice, I have made use of my education inside the workplace. I mean you behave like an educated person. You differentiate right from wrong.

The same mechanism seemed to be operating among other immigrants as well. Therefore, one informant, who had a high academic degree and who largely seemed to have resigned himself to the idea that better employment was unachievable in Finland, had become quite content with his current situation. This contentment was based on the fact that he had been promoted to the position of a waiter after having worked for four years as a restaurant assistant, and he regarded his new position as a rather good achievement. Another educated informant also expressed weary satisfaction with the addition of new responsibility to his physically demanding warehouse worker's job in

which he had been employed for two years. "I now also take care of some office work in the warehouse and I get a chance to sit on the chair," he indicated. A sense of achievement also seemed to prevail in the case of another individual. While exploring his employment history, which was also characterised by significant job-mismatch, he especially wanted to draw the attention of the interviewer to his occupational attainment: "Please do note! This job is not that of restaurant assistant, but that of restaurant assistant-cook!" A similar feeling of contentment was also evident in another case in which the informant explicitly pointed out to the interviewer: "Look! This time my job was not merely confined to filling the balloons behind the balloon stall, I was also given the task of selling them to the customers."

Occasionally, enquiring about the reasons for the stagnation of their employment careers created uncomfortable situations for the informants. Therefore, in response to the question about why he had been in the same barman's job for the last seven years and why he did not try to find some other work, one educated informant who was rather irritated with this probing remarked: "Well, I doubt whether you yourself [the interviewer] could even get this job." Another who had also been employed in the restaurant sector for the previous eight years replied in a similar manner: "Just tell me how many foreigners can get a café worker's job!" Yet another informant who had been working in the cleaning sector for the previous three years appeared quite uncomfortable when asked about his employment history.

> No, no, this job is not my choice at all. Of course, I wouldn't do this kind of work if it was up to me. I just couldn't find anything else. That's why I'm doing it. I'm sure you understand! My education and family background do not allow me to do this kind of work. But I have no other option.

Nevertheless, for some, abandoning the struggle for better employment is one thing, but avoiding feelings of resentment quite another. This resentment may reveal itself in various forms – from symbols and acts of outward expression, disliking for and disapproval of the norms of the host culture and asserting one's own cultural identity to gradually drifting towards one's ethnic community. The outward expression of resentment is manifest in forms such as when an informant with a largely secular and liberal world-view grows a religious beard. The beard, in this context, symbolises an individual's strategy for taking revenge on the host society for perceived unfair exclusion that the person has experienced in the fulfilment of personally meaningful goals. This particular outward symbol of agitation is one that the individual, in his own perception, thinks would irritate members of the host society most because of certain unfavourable images associated with it when it is worn by people of a certain religious background[40]. Incurring unfavourable responses from the local people would not help the individual in pursuing and attaining his personal ambitions though. This is not the objective behind growing the beard, however, as personal goals are already perceived to be beyond reach after a long struggle. The idea is to cause more resentment within oneself by incurring unfavourable responses, so that one could inflict, in turn, more revenge on the host

[40] An incident illustrating these perceptions was also described by one informant, concerning his friend who had a beard. This friend went to enquire about work in a restaurant chain in Helsinki. The recruitment person told him that he should shave his beard first and then come back to apply for a job. He had to trim the beard very short before he was offered work in the restaurant kitchen.

society, as the entire relationship with society has settled into a form of sullen resentment. The outward expression of resentment may also manifest itself in more desperate forms such as when an informant, who has become fully convinced of the non-attainability of even modest life goals in the host society, shows his utter despair by sitting on the uppermost railing of a bridge, thus potentially risking his life, only to be taken away by the authorities.

The disenchantment resulting from resentment may also have consequences for an individual in other forms, such as "a permanent floating feeling of non-belonging that follows you wherever you go," as one informant put it. Another one said.

> You feel tired and constantly depressed. You don't feel relaxed. There's always some feeling of lingering tension inside you. Let's say you simply lose concentration on things, on life.

Yet another one expressed.

> No, it doesn't feel good. You never feel good if you aren't accepted as part of society, if you're denied access to your ambitions. In fact, you feel humiliated. Humiliated because you feel all your genuine wishes to form a good relationship with society are met with sheer aloofness. Then people accuse foreigners of not integrating. [...] I feel it's always been a one-sided relationship. But I'm tired now. Actually, I don't even feel the need to have any relationship. I now want to keep myself even more aloof from society than what society has so far kept itself from me.

A similar idea was also explicit in the comments of another individual whose response seemed to correspond to the notion of an immigrant described long ago by Georg Simmel (1950) as a "stranger" – physically present in a community but not part of it.

> In the beginning, oddly enough, I never thought of myself as someone who did not belong here. In fact, I felt at home. I liked the culture and the people. […] But the longer I have lived here, the more disillusioned I've become. In fact, I find myself a perfect stranger in the Finnish sense of the word[41]. I think of myself a true outsider."

The response of another two informants also carried similar connotations.

> You asked how meaningful I find my life here. Well, this is something about which I think when I'm alone. I have seen a new generation being born in the country and children turning into grown-ups and every day I'm still being asked where I come from. That, in fact, should answer your question how I find my existence here on the emotional level. Whether it's something wrong with me or with society, I can't say.
>
> Of course, I do know it's important to learn the language of the people where you live. And, in my own view, I do speak the language well enough. But even if I didn't, it shouldn't be used as an excuse to throw me in the dustbin and dismiss my education and skills as useless entities. [Speaking] less well does not make me an emotionless human being, a person who has no ambitions and no right to aspire to anything other than mopping the floors of some shops. The jobs that I've done so far in this country

[41] *Muukalainen.*

> would be better suited to a mentally retarded person. What kind of integration is that when you have to accept jobs that no one else wants! […] Well, I just feel like a non-entity, if that's what you want to know!

Another informant also showed his exasperation with the excessive emphasis on language skills for employment in the job market.

> Well, my experience is that whatever [the level of] language you speak it's not enough and it never seems to satisfy the demands of those who give out the jobs. When I came here ten years ago, I was told that I didn't speak Finnish. So I couldn't be short-listed or even considered a job applicant, although my needs in life were the same and as important as any other person's who could speak this strange language. Now ten years have gone by and I still get the same answer, if the job in question is slightly better than a cleaner's or a warehouse worker's. […] Actually, I have now become so fed up that I don't even want to speak the [Finnish] language anymore. I think I detest it. It has turned me into a non-human being[42].

The unnecessary insistence on language competence by employers was also equated with the non-acceptance of immigrants in general.

> The kind of demand for the Finnish language that employers insist upon is something that you cannot really fulfil. It's like asking you to catch a rabbit that you couldn't catch very easily, if at all. And even if you managed to catch it somehow, they wouldn't accept it – they would ask you to catch some other rabbit. […] Anyway, the result is that you will keep on either packing in some warehouse or collecting empty glasses from tables in some restaurant, or you might even start driving buses. But if you ask me, this insistence [on the Finnish language] is just another way of saying that we don't accept you in this country! But this we already know!

In addition to the Finnish language, the employers' lack of trust towards foreign workers was also mentioned as an unsound explanation for their reluctance to recruit them and a sign of the non-acceptance of non-nationals.

> You also often hear that employers don't give jobs to foreigners because they don't trust them. How can you prove that you are trustworthy if you aren't even given a chance? To me, it's like putting the cart before the horse. How can you prove that you are trustworthy if you don't even qualify for an interview? How can you show that you are hardworking if you're told that the job has already gone? Of course, you can find plenty of excuses if you are reluctant to take on, if you want to exclude foreigners.

In some cases, as the following excerpt suggests, the extensive sense of disenchantment and perceived exclusion, resulting originally from real discrimination, may lead someone to interpret certain phenomena in ways that may not necessarily be congruent with the reality. The accumulation of experiences of exclusion and perceived exclusion may make society seem like a place enclosed within lofty walls of impersonality and apathy.

> People don't like you here [in this country]. They don't want to see you around here. You can see dislike in their eyes when you walk outside in the street. You can see dislike

[42] Forsander (2002b, 164) also draws attention to the potential impact of discriminatory experiences in everyday life on immigrants' motivation to improve their Finnish-language skills.

> in their eyes when you sit in buses. They [the Finns] don't even want to sit near you. That's why so many people [immigrants] have bought their own cars even though they can't afford them. They don't want to travel in buses because they have become so sensitive. It's so uncomfortable when people stare at you. They don't want to face the cruelty of the people when they travel in buses. They feel nobody cares about them. And even when they [the local people] show any concern, they look even angrier because it's difficult for them to conceal their dislike behind their [artificial] concern. They're angry because you are an outsider and unwanted. That's why they [the immigrants] have bought cars. They don't want to face the cruelty of people.

A similar idea was also echoed in the comments of another informant. However, consolation for the lack of acceptance was sought in the fact of having originated outside the country of immigration.

> Yes, everywhere. You can find non-acceptance [of foreigners] everywhere. For example, when you're in shops, I feel some people don't like you. Sometimes when you're in a bus, you find that some people don't like you. They don't want to sit near you. […] I find that there's no liking in their eyes. But I know I'm not in my country, I'm in Finland. So, I generally try not to think about it.

In certain cases, the consequences of the prolonged state of dejection that the non-fulfilment of personal goals and resentment may cause may be more profound.

> Every new day brought more exhaustion and tiredness with it. Nothing seemed to work really. The system had successfully managed to break me down. I felt I could not take any more. I had to be admitted to the mental hospital for a week.

The forms of disenchantment described above were relatively more prevalent among the informants with higher educational backgrounds, who found it rather difficult to accept the various forms of exclusion and to reconcile with the non-fulfilment of their personal ambitions.

> Those who aren't educated are satisfied with what they can get and what they can earn. But when an educated person is being shut off from society, he feels more miserable. He protests more, as he finds it hard to be turned into nothingness.

The ethnic community may offer a social space for personally meaningful social interaction, especially to those who are disillusioned with the mainstream society because of actual and perceived exclusion. The situation could be more unpleasant for those who are reluctant to drift towards their own community, however, and who also find gestures of acceptance from the mainstream society absent. From the insights gained from the discussions with the informants, as well as with other immigrants, it appeared that there was a reluctance to drift towards the ethnic community among certain kinds of educated immigrants who seemed to have a sharp understanding of and a very open attitude towards the cultural norms of the host society. Their interaction with their own ethnic members appeared to be rather non-existent and neither did they seem to aspire to such interaction *per se*. Their ethnic community largely did not have much significance for them. In fact, in a few cases their conscious effort to detach themselves from their ethnic group could be considered a kind of discrimination against their own community. These people had, for the most part, sought to interact with members of the mainstream

society. However, this does not necessarily mean that they were always able to form meaningful human relationships with the local people, nor does it imply that their openness to, respect for and acceptance of the norms of the host society had led to the fulfilment of their personal goals. Their resentment and frustration resulting from a perceived lack of respect from the host society for their genuine understanding of it were apparent from the discussions, although an attempt on the part of these particular immigrants not to explicitly show such resentment or to speak about the unwelcome truths could also be observed. Their disappointment nevertheless does not lead them to drift towards their own community given their lack of interest, and especially because of a sense of defeat that compels them to interpret such drifting as a form of personal failure.

Discrimination – actual and perceived – would also gradually incline individuals to interact more with members of their own ethnic group. This may also lead to the strengthening of networks of inadequate social resources, as mentioned earlier. In certain cases, the disenchantment resulting from the failure to attain personal goals or from various forms of social exclusion may also create disenchantment with the cultural norms of the host society, which may further result in increased assertion of one's own cultural identity. This may, therefore, lead some people to emphasise the notions of 'us and them', and differences rather than similarities between people.

> I'm not sure whether there is any acceptance for foreigners or for us here. But I don't care any more whether or not they accept me or like me. I have lots of friends from [my own country]. And they are enough for me. I don't think I need to have relations with Finnish people. They are also culturally very different from us.
>
> Well, I prefer to interact with people from my own country. My experience with Finnish society has generally been negative and disappointing. […] You know I don't drink. If you have Finnish friends, they'll ask you to have a glass of beer or something, which I won't do. And there are also so many cultural differences between us.
>
> You can't find close personal relationships with the Finns the way you can with your own people. How many Finns would invite you to their homes and would like to share things with you? I have found that there is no acceptance of me in this society, and my experiences are witness to that. Well, I actually don't think much about this nowadays. I know plenty of [ethnic] people here in Finland. In fact, I find my own culture much more meaningful than the Finnish culture. And my own [ethnic] friends are more than enough for me.

Nevertheless, the wall of differences raised by experiences of exclusion could occasionally also crumble with only a small gesture of friendliness from members of the mainstream society. This was noticed when the researcher was walking with one of the informants who was carrying his small child, and who had earlier expressed particularly critical opinions about the host society because of his experiences in the social arena and the labour market during his stay in Finland. A native couple coming from the opposite direction stopped. They looked at the child, smiled and said: "What a beautiful baby she is!" After they had gone, the informant, whose face had lit up following this experience and who seemed to have forgotten the disapproving views he had expressed a little earlier, exclaimed: "The Finns are such nice people!" Whatever the degree of positive consequences this experience may bestow on the individual's existing relationship with

the host society, and however long its effect may last, this observation is fairly indicative of the meaning and significance that acceptance, in its various forms, on the part of the host society may have for non-national individuals in particular, and in the long run for society in general. One informant who had experienced a number of instances of exclusion in various forms in his social life also pointed out its importance.

> It's not sufficient that efforts should concentrate only on improving the employment situation [of the non-nationals]. They should also think about improving their situation in their social life, I mean participation in ordinary social life. Because if you don't give them jobs they have an alternative – they can resort to the social-welfare services. But what is the alternative to social acceptance?

Although the various forms of actual and perceived exclusion would potentially increase its intensity, higher interaction with one's ethnic community does not merely arise from discrimination and disillusionment. In fact, this interaction may be valuable for several reasons. The ethnic community may provide help, for instance, with employment, with job-finding, taking loans, borrowing various items of consumption and/or accommodation. Its crucial role in the acquisition of job information and employment opportunities was noted earlier in this work. Interaction with the ethnic community may also satisfy the yearning for a familiar cultural environment among those who are away from their home country. Therefore, in addition to other events of various kinds, the frequent celebratory gatherings among the informants were observed to be one of the ways of reproducing that familiar cultural reality. For the newcomers in particular, interaction with the ethnic community may also facilitate adaptation to the new sociocultural reality by providing knowledge and information about the way local institutions function and the effective management of routine affairs, for instance, and thereby reducing the strain caused by a different social environment. This interaction may also provide a meaningful occasion for many individuals to share their everyday personal problems and concerns, such as those related to their children's education and upbringing. This often came out in the discussions with the informants.

In addition to the above, some people may prefer to form relationships with their own ethnic members because of differences in normative expectations from friendship as perceived in their culture. The way in which these normative expectations could significantly differ from those prevalent in the mainstream culture was crystallised in the words of one informant who was asked how often he relied on help from ethnic friends in everyday life.

> Naturally, I do ask for help from my [ethnic] friends. But that's not help. It's is my right![43]

[43] Asking for and expecting help, at least explicitly, from friends is something that is generally avoided in the Finnish culture. In her dissertation work, Castrèn (2001, 127-132) reflects on the various differences and similarities in expectations from friendship existing among teachers in Helsinki and St. Petersburg. Mutual help and assisting in everyday problems was not found to be an essential element or prerequisite in the Helsinki teachers' conceptions of friendship, as it was among the St. Petersburg informants. In fact, discussing this subject seemed to cause uneasiness in the Finnish informants, who often tended to use rather indirect and veiled expressions to reveal their expectations regarding the role of a friend in the event of a need for material help in everyday life in particular.

The culturally constructed ideal of friendship was further elaborated by another informant.

> My idea of friendship is when you need help, the friend is there for you. When I feel pain, he feels pain, too. This sort of friendship you can only expect from an ethnic friend.
>
> If you need assistance from a Finnish friend, you may have to wait for many days before you can see him, while the matter in question may necessitate an earlier meeting. An ethnic friend, on the other hand, will come to help you as soon as he can. He would get to you within the hour if he could.

Some other informants also seemed to have different expectations of their friends.

> I don't have close Finnish friends because I don't find the Finns emotionally warm. You can't share deeper feelings with them. They don't even realise what things are important to me. They aren't even interested in asking how my life is going. You mostly have superficial conversations with them. With ethnic friends, on the other hand, I can share everything[44].
>
> You know we can't have good friendships with Finns. […] If you're in a situation where you need help, you can't rely on them, expecting that they would be there for you. Even though I really helped my two Finnish friends when they desperately needed it, they didn't care when I was in a bad situation and needed their help. They just told me that it was my own choice to help them, and they had not forced me to do it. That's why I don't trust in their friendship. My [ethnic] friends would never have said that. I can call them even at 12 o' clock at night if I need their help. Can you call a Finnish person [that late at night]? The other thing is I find the Finns very cold. They are very reserved, whereas we are very open and social.

Notwithstanding the extent of the disparity that may prevail between the above-mentioned ideals of friendship and the actual reality, culturally constructed notions of friendship may also affect individuals' considerations about building deeper relationships with members of the host society[45].

The lower level of occupational attainment could also stem from reasons other than the direct and indirect effects of various factors considered thus far. For instance, many immigrants have an obligation to financially support their families, and in some cases also their relatives, in the country of origin where extended families are the dominant norm. Obtaining somewhat commensurate employment may require consistent efforts and a considerable amount of time, which they may not afford given these compelling obligations. Hence, they may take on jobs that are below their educational level and the

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[44] One of the informants, however, also expressed a different view: "You cannot discuss your problems openly with your ethnic friends. You don't feel comfortable doing that. It's easier to discuss them with my Finnish friends."

[45] A lack of skills in the Finnish language has often been mentioned as a reason for the lower level of interaction between Finns and immigrants. Self-evidently, command of the local language is essential in communicating with members of the mainstream society. However, as the particular descriptions show, the lack of interaction may involve more than a lack of language skills, and therefore may defy easy generalisation.

occupational status they had in their home country. The pressure to provide financial support may also prevent them from investing in human capital, such as taking part in language and vocational courses that would increase their chances of acquiring better employment opportunities. One informant also pointed to the possibility of such a constraint.

> Of course I wanted to take the Finnish-language courses when I came here. In fact, I did the first course but naturally that wasn't enough. It was very difficult to carry on because I was working at the same time and these courses often overlapped with my work. The other thing is that when you have so many family obligations back at home, what you just want is to get a job and fulfil your responsibilities, not to think about the courses or anything else.

Occasionally, the lack of commensurate employment may also stem from the logic that since the main purpose of migration is to earn money and the stay in the host country is temporary, the nature of the employment being acquired is of secondary importance.

> Well, naturally, it would be good to have a better job if one could find one. And who wouldn't like to have a better job! But I'm not too concerned about it. I had a rather good job in my own country, and I wouldn't be able to find one like it here. There's no point wasting time on things that you'll never get. I left my country to improve my own and my family's financial situation. I moved here temporarily and I'm not going to stay very long. I want to earn as much money as I can and as quickly as I can. And if that means having a bad job or a good job, or having many jobs at the same time, it really does not matter to me.

Apart from these factors, as the interviews reflect, the occupational mobility could also be hindered when people migrate through chain migration. If those who help to facilitate the migration of newcomers are themselves entrenched in networks of insufficient socio-economic attributes, despite their higher education and other valuable qualifications the newcomers will also go straight into these already established resource-deficient networks. This idea is further elaborated in Figure 8.

Figure 8. The potential impact of the migration facilitator's network on the subsequent occupational attainment of the migrant

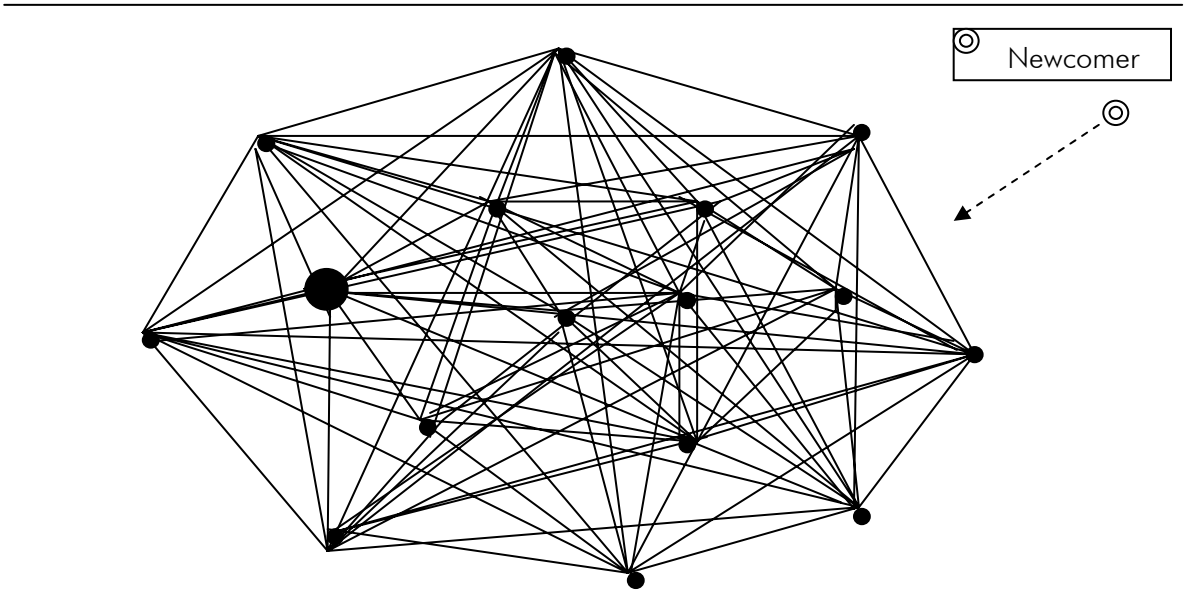

Figure 8 represents a network of one informant, which consists of his 16 close friends and acquaintances. All the members of this network know one another[46]. Almost all of these relations (15/16) were working in low-prestige jobs primarily in the restaurant sector. Only one of the informant's ties had a job of medium prestige, represented by the larger node in the figure. This particular informant had recently helped to facilitate the migration of one of his friends from his home country to Finland. This new migrant had a higher degree and business and other work experience. He had landed in a network of relations that was overwhelmingly characterised by low socio-economic status. His chances of becoming embedded in this network were significantly higher as the informant who had facilitated his migration would be the one to expose him to new people in the new country. These new people would be those with whom the informant himself was personally tied. The likelihood of the new arrival seeking better employment or at least embracing upon a path that might eventually lead him to employment that was commensurate with his education and previous experience was rather thin.

The data offers some support for the above argument. Figure 3 in Chapter 4 depicted the extended effect of the migration of three informants on the subsequent migration of other immigrants to Finland. The three informants in question were further asked about the nature of the current employment of the people they had directly helped (amounting to 15, 10 and two persons respectively). None of them revealed occupation of medium prestige, as all were located in secondary jobs. This observation could be related, among other, to the impact of the migration facilitators' own networks on the particular kind of integration of these individuals into the labour market, since the migration facilitators were themselves embedded in networks of deficient socio-economic attributes.

[46] Here knowing one another does not mean having a close relationship.

The impact of the migration facilitator on the subsequent integration of the migrant could be discerned in other ways as well. The informants, especially those who had come to Finland through chain migration and had higher education, were asked in the interviews how often they had explored certain cultural realms in the host society, such as visiting museums and going to the theatre and musical concerts. Many of them had never visited the Finnish National Museum, or any other museum, or been to a concert of classical music, for instance, although they had been in the country sometimes for more than fifteen years. There were a few exceptions, nevertheless, which gave credence to the argument made earlier. For example, one of the informants said he had been to the Finnish National Museum within a week of his arrival in Finland, and another had also been round the Atheneum museum within the first two weeks of his arrival. This relatively rapid familiarisation with the higher cultural realms of the host society owed much to their migration facilitators, who themselves had high occupational status and whose composition of routine networks exhibited higher socio-economic characteristics. The earlier socialisation of these informants into resource-rich networks and the accumulation of cultural capital had exerted a positive effect on their occupational attainment, as they acquired a significantly higher number of better-status jobs than other immigrants of this study. It is nevertheless important to mention here, too, that some of the informants who came to Finland through chain migration had striven to find better opportunities that differed from the ones their migration facilitators and most of the members of their personal networks had been offered. However, the majority of these informants had stuck with entry-level jobs in their employment careers because of their earlier embeddedness in networks of low socio-economic status.

10 Conclusions

In this work I have considered the role of social networks in connecting non-national job seekers with employment opportunities in Finland. The study was undertaken among immigrants originating from the Indian subcontinent residing in the Helsinki metropolitan area, and is based on two data sets, the first having been collected during 1999-2000 and the second in 2003. The participant-observation method was used in the first part of the study in order to investigate the employment situation of non-national workers in the Finnish labour market. The objective was to assess, in particular, the effectiveness of job information located through impersonal sources and the function of various supply-side-related factors in gaining employment. The second part consisted of semi-structured qualitative interviews with immigrants. The aim was to explore the various ways in which the informants had acquired their jobs during their entire occupational careers in Finland. These careers often spanned an extended period of time, occasionally stretching backwards as far as the 1970s.

Studies that comprehensively and systematically examine the job-search strategies of immigrants and investigate the role of their social networks in entering the job market are lacking in Finland. The present study represented an attempt to fill this gap. The role of social networks in the process of connecting to jobs was explored with the help of a new job-acquisition model. This model sought to investigate the job-finding process along two dimensions: first, how information about a certain job was located, and secondly how the job itself was applied for and obtained. This division of the job-finding process into two parts was essential, since connecting to some vacancy may take various forms and involve more than one step. For example, in certain cases the contact who provided job information to the job seeker and the person who supplied the direct or indirect assistance in applying for the job may be the same. This might occur when, for instance, a friend of the job seeker becomes aware of a potential job opening in his/her current workplace. Apart from communicating this information, the contact also assists by taking the job seeker to meet the employer and by passing on a good word on his/her behalf. Thus, the person through whom the job was located and through whose assistance it was applied for and obtained comprises the same source. In this case the method of job search as well as of job application will be considered personal, and the acquisition of the job consists of a one-step procedure.

However, as the subsequent cases show, the process of connecting to a vacancy may take other forms and comprise more than one step. For example, although a job seeker may have located job information through impersonal means, contacting the prospective employer may constitute the personal job-application method. Such a situation would arise, for instance, when a job seeker who has learned about an opening from a newspaper or the public employment agency is able to secure assistance from a friend or acquaintance in applying for the job. The contact in question may be able to help the job seeker either by virtue of working at the same place or for the same chain, or alternatively he or she may know some other person who is in a position to influence the recruitment decision of the employer. Yet the securing of employment may take another form: while the acquisition of job information may occur via some contact person, the job seeker may apply for and obtain the job on his/her own. The role of the contact person in this case is limited to that of provider of information and does not contribute to

the job-application process itself. Thus in this case the job-search method is personal, whereas the job-application method is considered impersonal.

Apart from the various aforementioned forms in which the process of linking to employment opportunities may take place, there may be occasional further variations. For example, having located information through an impersonal source, a job seeker may apply for a job in a certain company, and then may accidentally come across a former workmate who currently happens to work in the same place and who subsequently assists the job seeker in obtaining that job. The contact assistance secured in these kinds of cases will be thus unexpected in nature. All the various ways of connecting to employment opportunities discussed so far appeared in the data, although they differed in frequency.

Hence, the job-acquisition model adopted in this study effectively elucidated the various stages in the job-finding process and permitted a more in-depth analysis of the kind and degree of contact assistance involved at a certain point in the securing of the job. The lack of such a model in previous studies on labour markets has prevented them from examining the job-finding mechanism in more detail, and has made it difficult to assess the actual degree and point of assistance from personal social resources. Previous studies do not clearly spell out the criteria against which a job has been considered to have been acquired through personal networks either. By implication, a job is considered to have been acquired via social networks if the information that led to the job acquisition was located through personal channels. However, as noted above, the acquisition process may comprise multiple stages, and job information, whether located through impersonal or personal means, may constitute just one of the steps on the way to landing a certain job.

The findings of this study draw attention to the significance of immigrants' social networks in the exploitation of employment opportunities. The findings reflect the fact that, despite the presence of an effective nationwide system of public employment agencies in Finland, social networks still play an important role in linking job seekers to the world of work. They demonstrate that the informants' networks, being generally composed of kin and ethnic friends, have acted as an important resource-opportunity structure on which they could rely in an effort to improve their social and economic conditions in the new country. The role of these networks was especially vital in the immediate post-immigration period, because as newcomers to the host society they lacked locally acquired human and social capital. The findings further reveal that reliance on social networks in locating and obtaining job opportunities persisted throughout the occupational histories of the informants under loose as well as tight job-market conditions. In particular, for the majority of the immigrants of this study the process of the dissemination of job information occurred through their personal sources. The transmitters of information were often their strong ties such as kin and ethnic friends, who had generally themselves learned about the particular job opportunities from their own friends and acquaintances, an observation which again substantiates the use of networks in the dispersion of job information. In other cases, the process of connecting to work assumed the form of chain employment, where friends and acquaintances, by virtue of currently working in the same firm, took the job seekers to the workplace and passed on a good word about them to the employers.

By way of contrast, reliance on impersonal job-search channels – the public employment agency and newspapers – to locate opportunities was found to be much less prevalent, although the use of these formal job-finding mechanisms did seem to have increased over the years. This increase could be partly attributed to the gradual accumulation of locally augmented human capital such as command of the mainstream language and work experience. Nevertheless, the higher educational level of the informants was also noticeably associated with a greater use of impersonal job-information channels, even at the very beginning of their careers, suggesting the indispensable role of education in expanding access to diverse sources of work opportunities. Given the fact that education was measured in terms of the amount of schooling attained in the country of origin, education acquired in the host country would further enable immigrants to more effectively utilise formal sources of job opportunities.

The findings of the study also throw light on how the structure of personal routine networks can simultaneously empower and constrain people in social mobility. The empirical observations revealed that while the informants' networks served as a lubricant in enabling them to locate and obtain job opportunities, they also operated as constraints on occupational attainment. The employment careers of the majority of the informants were largely mired in the secondary sector of the labour market. Reliance on social relations primarily landed them in occupations of low human-capital requirements. This could be effectively ascribed to the composition of their social networks, which included contacts that were themselves situated in jobs of low prestige. Hence, the occupational mobility attained through these social ties was generally along horizontal rather than vertical lines, entailing mobility within secondary occupations and often within the same sector, such as moving from a job as kitchen assistant to become a restaurant waiter, and from there to working in a pizzeria worker. This principally held among both educated and less-educated informants. In cases in which they were able to connect with jobs exhibiting higher socio-economic characteristics through contact networks, the social ties that facilitated this higher mobility were also situated on the better side of the occupational spectrum. These observations, therefore, call attention to the need to examine how the attributes of social relations rather than mere individual attributes might affect the kinds of life chances that non-nationals acquire in their host society.

However, any investigation aimed at exploring the reasons for a lower level of occupational attainment would also require taking account of the impact of other factors – including individual human-capital characteristics and structural constraints – that may also shrink the scope of immigrants' opportunities and erect barriers to job mobility. Personal qualifications including command of the local language, work experience and professional skills are self-evidently essential for better integration into the labour market. Deficiency in these terms inevitably leads to low-prestige jobs that would allow only a lower level of occupational attainment, which would again facilitate networks of low socio-economic status. Yet, the possession of sufficient human capital may not always permit access by non-nationals to the better end of the occupational hierarchy either. Several structural constraints such as internal labour-market regulations in different sectors and discrimination may also create barriers to occupational mobility.

Indeed, it is important to consider what role marginalisation in the labour market itself might play in the formation of particular types of networks among immigrants. Experiences of exclusion increase, *inter alia*, the tendency to assert one's own cultural norms vis-à-vis the mainstream culture, and to drift towards one's own ethnic community, which may serve as a palliative to the feelings of alienation. Such experiences further prevent non-nationals from building a sense of belonging to the host society. Particularly for educated immigrants, exclusion in the economic sphere of life and the resulting failure to fulfil personal aspirations can potentially create a considerable sense of disenchantment on the personal level, which in turn has a powerful influence on their relations with the host society. Experiences of exclusion may also give rise to perceived exclusion, which may lead people to interpret certain acts and phenomena that are not necessarily discriminatory in nature as exclusionary. Putting it differently, the nature of the treatment meted out in the labour market may well provide the basis for structuring encounters with society at large. The absence of interaction with the national population could further result in the strengthening of networks of inadequate socio-economic attributes. Interaction with the mainstream society is indispensable not only from the perspective of long-term and meaningful multi-faceted integration but also in terms of higher occupational mobility. As the findings show, the acquisition of nearly all of the better-status jobs was facilitated by Finnish contacts. Advancement in careers in terms of obtaining jobs that are somewhat commensurate with their education and skills would therefore require immigrants to expand their networks beyond the restricted context of their ethnic relationships.

On the theoretical level, the findings of the study also draw attention to the need to consider jobs as social rather than natural phenomena, whose acquisition may require more than the possession of human-capital attributes. They appear to question the notions according to which labour markets are arenas in which actors sell and hire labour according to the objective and universalistic rules of supply and demand. Instead, they suggest that a more fruitful conceptualisation would be to perceive the market as a socially and culturally constructed, rather than an undifferentiated and competitive, space in which the rules of supply and demand are shaped by a particular sociocultural reality. The findings underscore that the recruitment process governed by abstract or impersonal criteria is much less common than claimed by certain conceptual paradigms geared to the understanding of the economic structure and differential outcomes in the labour market.

The empirical evidence emerging from both data sets lends support to the above argument. As the findings of the participant-observation research propose, differential access to the labour market in the context of immigrants may not be readily explained simply in terms of supply-side variables, but may also be attributed to demand-side factors namely the underlying preferences of employers that significantly determine the employment opportunities open to non-national workers. The evidence from the interviews also corroborates this argument, suggesting that the recruitment process is not always driven by impersonal standards. In a few cases informants were refused jobs for which they had applied after having located them through formal sources, but were later able to obtain the same jobs from the same employers when these employers were approached through the informants' contacts. The implications of the foregoing observations are two-fold. On the one hand, such observations reflect the sociocultural

construction of the labour market, explaining how economic action is embedded in other social processes and communicating the continuing presence of particularism in industrial societies. On the other hand, they suggest that – notwithstanding the fact that the nature of individual characteristics such as education, language competence and professional skills constitute essential conditions for the labour-market integration of immigrants – without considering the significance of the sociocultural and political context in which the labour markets operate and are embedded, efforts aimed at creating equal employment opportunities for immigrants and vulnerable social groups are unlikely to bear fruit.

In Finland, spurred by concerns of their eventual employability, authorities concerned with the integration of immigrants have taken several initiatives to facilitate their transition into the labour market. These efforts have commonly started off by directing language and vocational training at non-nationals. Although these measures are self-evidently very important in improving their labour-market situation, these initiatives have not generally proved sufficient to achieve the objectives. The following sample of correspondence with one immigrant throws light on the level of disparity that may also prevail between expectations and achievements in the context of these initiatives.

> As a foreigner […] struggling [to find work] here in Finland, I suspect oblique hiring practices are taking place. After few interviews, many rejections, no replies or no interest shown in a simple phone conversation, I feel apprehensive with each effort I put forth. To be frank, I am tired of the Finnish employment services pushing for more courses; I am not sure how many will ever be enough!

Empirical evidence from several European and North American countries also cautions against excessive optimism over the efficacy of the above initiatives alone. In these countries, initiatives aimed at improving the language and vocational skills of immigrants have not proved very fruitful in increasing their access to the labour market (e.g., Abell 1997; Portes & Zhou 1992). Even second-generation immigrants who possess sufficient relevant skills and speak the mainstream language often as a first language and, in the context of certain ethnic groups, are often more likely to complete secondary and tertiary levels of education than nationals, are significantly over-represented among the ranks of the unemployed (Zegers de Beijl 2000; De Prada et al. 1996; see also Ekholm 2001, 181-182). Labour force surveys in Britain have shown that Asian and black school leavers have less success in gaining employment than their white counterparts. This remains valid even when all relevant variables, including educational attainment, are held constant (Parekh 2000, 197). In Sweden, Rydgren (2004) reports a large discrepancy in labour-market outcomes between migrants and native Swedes, and shows that differences, although reduced, still remain after controlling for human-capital factors. In Finland, Forsander (2002b) reflects on the importance of an individual's ethnic background, which can also be used by employers as a criterion to judge the labour-market competence of a job seeker. Moreover, the earning levels of immigrants may often be significantly lower than those of the majority population with comparable educational levels (e.g., Zhou & Kamo 1994; Hurh & Kim 1989).

The disparity between expectations and achievements in terms of initiatives taken in Finland also lies in the fact that the particular efforts have paid insufficient attention to the sociocultural dimension of the labour market, namely the practices of employers who

effectively control the job vacancies. Hence, measures directed only at immigrants will achieve fewer anticipated goals unless accompanied by effective measures directed at the gatekeepers of the job market, who exercise their own, adopting Paananen's terminology (1999), small-scale foreign policy. A change in their behaviour and raising their level of reflexivity would more significantly contribute to ameliorating the employment situation of immigrants than directing various measures at them as such.

If, as this study suggests, social networks serve as one of the effective means whereby immigrants acquire work in the host society, what implications do these findings constitute for policy approaches committed to improving their employment situation and prospects? One solution could be to introduce measures that would help to expand the networks of immigrants, and especially those efforts that would enhance their connections with the national population. However, disadvantages in terms of networks of friends and acquaintances are difficult to surmount through policies. Although networks are an important source of employment opportunities and social mobility, effective networks in real life are rarely based on utilitarian premises. Instead, they are rooted in the structure of ongoing social relations encompassing various spheres of social life. This means that relationships formed in one context, such as through common hobbies or interests, may yield benefits in other contexts, for instance in the accrual of job information. In fact, relations perceived as formed on utilitarian grounds have the potential to seriously backfire rather than to bring in any benefits, thus highlighting the fact that meaningful social relationships extend well beyond the realm of the job market. The creation of social networks and the expanding of individual relations to various social contexts, therefore, are tasks that official policies cannot be expected to be addressing.

In Finland certain suggestions have been put forward proposing the engagement of Finnish nationals to act on behalf of immigrant job seekers as personal recommenders to employers. In fact, initiatives incorporating similar suggestions are already under experimentation in some municipalities. On the one hand, the idea behind these kinds of suggestions and initiatives may constitute an effort to lower the level of 'foreignness' of the job seeker by inducing trust among employers by engaging a local recommender. This particular way of fostering trust may not be too fruitful for two reasons. First, a state of trust is difficult to cultivate through these artificial means, as it generally occurs through spontaneous interaction between actors rather than as a planned activity. It would be useful in this connection to recall the incident described in the section 3.9, when the employer offered the vacancy to the job applicant on the telephone, even without any face-to-face meeting or formal interview. The securing of this job was attributed to the fact that the particular employer happened to know the previous employer of the job applicant in person. He realised this while the applicant was giving him a description of his previous experience in different companies. The entire process of learning about the previous employer and the creation of the state of trust was therefore the result of spontaneous ongoing interaction.

Secondly, the notion of the lack of trust – with regard to the productive potential or behavioural characteristics of foreign workers – that is often pointed out in various contexts as a reason why employers hesitate to recruit them, affords us only a very restricted view of the dynamics of hiring practices and bypasses other important realities.

Trust cannot be generated without giving employment opportunities to non-national workers. In the words of one informant, asking for trust before offering a job is like putting the cart before the horse. Some of the instances described by the informants effectively illustrate this point. One of them was able to secure a waiter's job in a hotel in Helsinki. He was the first foreign worker of that particular origin to be employed in this enterprise. After a period of two months the hotel manager, who was very pleased with his work and efficiency, asked him if he could bring in two more workers. Within a year, this immigrant had been the source of recruitment of ten more ethnic workers in that place, who were employed in various positions. The hotel manager, who was then about to be transferred to another branch in the Helsinki region, asked this group of non-national workers, the ones who were working as waiters, if they wanted to move with him as he was very satisfied with them. Over half of them moved with the manager to the new hotel. In some other instances, a few informants mentioned that the employers entrusted them, rather than Finnish workers, with the keys of the restaurant alcohol store, since they considered them more trustworthy. Two others recalled cases in which they had even helped their Finnish friends to get jobs in their workplace. These observations add credence to the above argument that trust in workers of foreign origin cannot be created without giving them job opportunities. They further throw light on the need to recognise the existence of possible exclusionary dimensions that may lie behind demands for trust.

On the other hand, the idea behind the suggestions and initiatives proposing the engagement of Finnish persons as recommenders may constitute an expectation that such a strategy would facilitate interaction between an immigrant job seeker and a Finnish employer as though it had taken place via 'ordinary' networking. However useful it may be, this idea would not bestow much in the way of fruitful outcomes, since it would appear to communicate another form of 'soft' bureaucracy, and thereby differ from 'real' social networks. Furthermore, such an idea can only be put into practice among a negligible proportion of non-nationals. In the past, the personnel in the national employment agencies have recommended unemployed immigrants to employers who had advertised positions there. Their assistance did not prove to be of much help in connecting job seekers to job vacancies, however. Some cases have also been reported in which employers have refused to accept job seekers from a certain ethnic group even if their employment would have been fully subsidised.

What, then, would help to improve the situation of immigrants in the labour market? This is indeed a question that defies easy answers. The function of social networks as a gateway to the job market is a commonly observed phenomenon in various institutional contexts. The role of networks in forging links with the world of work has also come out quite unequivocally in this study. Yet, access to employment opportunities through formal channels is unquestionably also imperative. Besides offering a source of information about a diverse range of opportunities of varying socio-economic characteristics that are not necessarily reachable through immigrant contact networks, it also constitutes an important indicator of the acceptance and equitable life chances of non-nationals in the host society. Regulations aimed at combating discrimination and promoting equal-opportunity policies and by introducing language- and vocational-training initiatives are some of the effective ways of improving the employment situation of immigrants on the governmental level. However, the concept of the effective and

meaningful integration of non-nationals extends well beyond the realms of government institutions, as it is enmeshed in a complex set of factors in society in which ethnicity, entrenched traditions and existing sociocultural hierarchies play an important role in determining the opportunities of minorities and various immigrant groups. Successful integration is a two-way process: not only do immigrants adapt to the host society by learning its language, culture and customs, the host society also adapts to the immigrants by opening itself to their culture and by accommodating differences. The measures enacted will thus be thwarted from attaining their full potential in the absence of a change in attitudes towards non-nationals in society at large. Structural openness would create a tolerant environment that would allow meaningful interaction between nationals and non-nationals on the micro-level, and this, in turn, would facilitate the formation of multi-dimensional relationships and networks.

Change in attitudes is nonetheless a slow process that does not lend itself to any sustainable predictions, particularly when it is effectively susceptible to the various socio-political contingencies and economic conditions that prevail in the country. The common perception among the host population that non-nationals are an economic burden and job takers, not to mention the bearers of an alien culture, does not contribute to the process of change either. Nevertheless, there is no other alternative than actively to foster a change in attitudes and to promote tolerance on various levels of society. Change on the broader level is essential, since – to express it through common-sense knowledge and by referring to a Punjabi proverb – "if you have room for your guest in your heart, it is easier to make room for the guest in your home, too." This is a basic fact of life. And yet it so often tends to evade our attention.

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