

# Online privacy in job recruitment processes? Boundary work among cybervetting recruiters

Christel Backman  and Anna Hedenus

*This article addresses various ways that cybervetting recruiters (re)construct boundaries around the public–private division. Based on interviews with 37 recruiters in Sweden, we show how the practice of cybervetting is legitimised by the recruiters' descriptions and accounts in relation to various notions of privacy and norms of information flow. We present this as a boundary work aided by especially two ways of framing information: the repertoire about accessible information and the repertoire of relevant information. These repertoires help define what information can be conceived of as public or private, and as legitimate versus unethical to search for and to use. Privacy is framed by employers as a responsibility, rather than a right, for social network site users. The findings also underline similarities and differences in jobseekers' and employers' norms of information flow, not least considering the right to online privacy.*

**Keywords:** cybervetting, recruitment, boundary work, privacy, public/private, contextual integrity.

## Introduction

Throughout history, technological development has repeatedly affected the boundaries between home, work and private life. These distinctions between the private and public realms—and those between work and home—are contextual and continually reconstructed (Nippert-Eng, 1996, 2010). Historically, industrialisation and technological development, represented by developments such as factories and clocks, drew a

---

**Christel Backman** (christel.backman@gu.se), University of Gothenburg, Sweden, is an assistant professor in sociology at the Department of Sociology and Work Science, University of Gothenburg. Her main research interest is surveillance studies, with a specific interest in work life issues. She has published in *Surveillance & Society*, *Acta Sociologica*, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, and in various Swedish Journals.

**Anna Hedenus**, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, is an associate professor in sociology at the Department of Sociology and Work Science, University of Gothenburg. Her main research interest are on the effects of digitalization on jobs, work processes and skill requirements, self-selection and selection on the labour market, and work attitudes. She has published in *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *Surveillance & Society*, *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *British Journal of Sociology*, *Acta Sociologica*, *Sociology*, *Gaming Research and Review Journal* and *World Leisure Journal*. In addition, she has contributed with several book chapters and publications in various Swedish Journals.

This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs License, which permits use and distribution in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, the use is non-commercial and no modifications or adaptations are made.

line between (paid) work and non(-paid) work. When modern bureaucracies evolved, a distinct boundary between private and work life became essential to ensure objectivity and resistance to bribery (McDonald and Thompson, 2016). Later, personal computers, mobile phones and the Internet once again reshaped time and spatial boundaries by enabling teleworking, from home and from coffee shops, during vacations and while travelling (Rothbard and Ollier-Malaterre, 2016; Wilner *et al.*, 2017). The development of social media has added to the altering or blurring of boundaries between realms of our lives that were until recently considered separate (Trottier, 2012; McDonald and Thompson, 2016).

In recruitment, the contemporary practice of cybervetting—the use of search engines and social media platforms to evaluate jobseekers—highlights how information previously considered to belong to the private realm is now also relevant in the public work realm (Berkelaar and Buzzanell, 2015; McDonald *et al.*, 2016; Berkelaar, 2017). The case of cybervetting is especially interesting because it concerns not only the boundaries between public and private realms but also issues of privacy. As online interaction—communication, sharing and gathering of information—has affected our understanding of the distinction between private and public realms, it has also affected our notion of ‘privacy’ (cf. Solove, 2008; Trottier, 2012). Social media thus constitute a ‘contested terrain’ where the separating lines between work and home, and between public and private life are drawn and redrawn (McDonald and Thompson, 2016: 69; Van Zoonen *et al.*, 2016). The urge to segregate the private and public realms and the simultaneous difficulty of keeping them separate lay the grounds for the kind of boundary work that we focus on in this text.

Boundary work includes ‘the strategies, principles, and practices we use to create, maintain, and modify cultural categories’ such as the division between home and work (Nippert-Eng, 1996: 7). The term includes the processes through which we ascribe certain things and behaviours to either the public realm or the private realm, the strategies we use to transfer from one realm to the other and our reconstructions of, and negotiations about, what belongs to which realm. It is also the work we do when we uphold norms based on distinctions such as what may be done in public or when someone else’s private information may be gathered.

According to McDonald and Thompson (2016), we still ‘do not know enough about how boundary changes in general, and the role of social media in particular, are perceived and enacted by managers and workers’ (p. 81), and more empirical research is needed to theorise how shifting boundaries relate to associated concepts, such as privacy. By researching recruiters’ use of cybervetting during recruitment processes, this paper contributes empirical findings on this topic. Our aim is to explore the various ways in which cybervetting employers, hiring managers and recruiters construct and reconstruct boundaries around the public–private division during the recruitment process, and the potential consequences such boundary work has for recruiters, employees and jobseekers.

We consider the conceptions of recruiters to be of specific importance because labour market laws offer jobseekers limited protection against cybervetting. In Sweden, for example, job candidates are offered protection by anti-discrimination laws. Other than that, employers are free to hire whoever suits them, and they may base their hiring decisions purely on their (dis)like of a jobseeker rather than on the jobseeker’s competencies. Compared with earlier methods, cybervetting facilitates recruiters’ access to a different kind of information, such as information on family structure, leisure time activities and communications of various kinds. Therefore, a common response to cybervetting of jobseekers is that candidates must be careful what they post online. However, to take care of an online persona, it is vital to understand when and how employers seek information, as well as how they evaluate the information they find. By providing knowledge on employers’ (re)construction of private and public boundaries, we hope to generate interest in the question of what kind of information recruiters’ selection decisions should be based on.

## Theoretical framework

Our theoretical framework consists of boundary theory and discursive psychology. Both of these are concerned with distinctions between things and placing them in categories—that is how the social world is made. When we define certain spaces as ‘home’, ‘public’ or ‘work’, and when we make dichotomies such as private/public, online/offline and home/work, we ‘categorize and formulate the world’ (Edwards and Potter, 2001: 15) and create boundaries between spaces, activities and roles (Zerubavel, 1991). How we distinguish between and categorise spaces, activities and roles differs according to context and may change over time. By combining boundary theory with discursive psychology, we can conceptualise this process of change.

In this section, we also refer to the theoretical discussion on privacy, a concept closely connected to the boundary work around public/private. Based on this discussion, we decided to use Nissenbaum’s (2004) concept of contextual integrity in this article because it highlights the contextual and thus discursive aspects of how privacy is constructed and used.

### A discursive psychology approach to boundary work

Discursive psychology sees language as ‘a dynamic form of social practice which shapes the social world including identities, social relations and understandings of the world’ (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 96). Because language is simultaneously flexible and rigid, we are bound by the available ways of talking about a certain situation or object, yet we are simultaneously free to challenge existing ways by introducing new conceptualisations (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Discursive psychology uses the term ‘interpretive repertoires’ to refer to ‘recurrently used systems of terms used for characterizing and evaluating actions, events and other phenomena’ (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 149). We learn which repertoires to use in different situations, and how we achieve different actions in interaction with others based on which repertoire we choose to use.

For example, Sheller and Urry (2003) concluded that the division between public and private is used in at least five different forms: that is the distinction between public and private interests, public and private spheres (associated with political engagement and citizenship), public and private spaces (related to physical and symbolic spatial boundaries), public and private life, and publicity and privacy. In studies on boundary work around work/non-work, the distinction between public and private life in terms of domestic and non-domestic realms is often used (Nippert-Eng, 1996, 2010; also studied as ‘border work’; see Desrochers and Sargent, 2004; see Rothbard and Ollier-Malaterre, 2016 for an overview of the field). In particular, previous research focused on employees’ construction of boundaries between work and non-work, or between work and family, and explores whether employees integrate or segment work and non-work, as well as their control over their boundaries. The distinction between domestic and non-domestic realms is also essential in relation to the boundary work of cybervetting during the recruitment process, because the recruiter, through online searches, may access photographs and other information showing the job candidate in her/his domestic realm. From our use of this distinction, it follows that we will often discuss our findings in terms of private versus work-related (i.e. public) information.

Changes in society may alter which repertoires appear to be available and what the use of a specific repertoire achieves. For example, as we argue in this article, social media has made information more easily available to recruiters. In this article, we therefore explore which interpretive repertoires are used to (re)construct boundaries around the public/private division online and their consequences, such as effects on the conceptualisation of privacy.

### Privacy and conceptual integrity

The concept of privacy has been difficult to define (Solove, 2006). Privacy has been conceptualised as the opposite of publicity (Sheller and Urry, 2003), the right to be left

alone (Warren and Brandeis, 1890), the right to control the flow of one's own personal information (Westin, 1967), inaccessibility (Nippert-Eng, 2010), the right to a private realm where the state and other citizens are not allowed to intrude (Bennett and Raab, 2007) and as contextual integrity (Nissenbaum, 2004).

Nissenbaum's (2004) concept of 'contextual integrity' opposes the idea of a specific meaning of privacy. For example, a conceptualisation of privacy as a private realm makes it difficult to claim privacy expectations in public, yet we have expectations of certain forms of privacy, even in public realms. Nissenbaum (2004) suggests that the flow of information should be placed in the centre and argues that there are 'no arenas of life *not* governed by *norms of information flow*' (p. 137, italics in original). The norms differ between contexts (e.g. family and work); hence, Nissenbaum (2004) chose the term 'contextual integrity' (p. 138) over privacy.

In line with Nissenbaum's claim that privacy does not have one specific meaning, Nippert-Eng (2010) reminds us that privacy is not an entity in itself. In her work on privacy and publicity, Nippert-Eng (2010) focused on the work of individuals to uphold their privacy in terms of 'relative inaccessibility'. She had a particular interest in how people interact and define objects, places and situations to achieve—or violate—privacy for themselves or others. In other words, it takes work to create and uphold privacy.

According to Nissenbaum (2004), the work we do to uphold privacy is guided by two sets of norms: norms of appropriateness and norms of flow/distribution. Norms of appropriateness regulate the type of information that can be disclosed in different settings without this disclosure being deemed inappropriate. For example, what kind of information is perceived as suitable for a Facebook post if the account is public? Norms of flow include those concerning the people to whom one can pass another's information, for example, concerning whether a headhunter should pass online information about a candidate to the customer. Breaking either or both of these norms involves an intrusion on privacy. It should be noted that these norms regulate and influence the perceived need for boundary work, but they are also transformed along with any boundary work performed.

However, as Nippert-Eng (2010) points out, how performers and audiences frame situations, and therefore, the extent to which they agree on appropriate norms of information flow may differ. Consequently, one party may experience a privacy violation, while the other party does not consider the situation to violate privacy. As we argue in this article, whether online information is framed as public or private has consequences for the extent and forms of jobseeker's information sharing and employers' searches. We also argue that because employers make the decision on whether to offer a job to a jobseeker, it is more likely that jobseekers will adopt employers' information framing, rather than the reverse.

## Previous research on social media and contextual integrity

Previous research on social media use suggests how norms of information flow influence sharing and interaction online. A comparative study of employees in the UK and Australia found that 60 per cent of employees stated that employers should not search for information online, regardless of the privacy settings applied by employees/jobseekers (McDonald *et al.*, 2016). In studies of social network site (SNS) users, three common norms have been identified: information that is too personal should not be shared; it is wrong to be sneaky or stalk other users; and people should not befriend users that they have not met (Trottier, 2012; Miller and Munday, 2015; Vitak *et al.*, 2015).

However, studies have also shown that the norms are subject to moral work and negotiations. For example, some level of spying can be acceptable, even for employers, and can even be considered 'smart' (Miller and Munday, 2015). Trottier (2012) showed how Canadian university students used the norm of individual responsibility to justify breaking the norm of not being sneaky. The students argued that complicated privacy settings, the size of the network, having to manage relationships in different contexts,

and the social benefits of being part of social media networks all make it difficult to manage SNS profiles fully. Nonetheless, responsibility for the content and undesirable consequences was ascribed to the profile owner. Hence, if someone posts information online and does not use privacy settings to protect it, it is acceptable for others to take part of that information. The contradictions and nuances in what is acceptable and what is not show that the norms are contextual and negotiable; hence, they provide challenges in forums where people from different contexts coexist (Trottier, 2012).

Cybervetting recruiters on Facebook are an example of such coexistence and potential clashes of norms. However, most studies on online norms target SNS users in their roles as students and employees, rather than as employers. The importance of also studying the norms of employers becomes clear in a study by Wilner *et al.* (2017: 685) of cases where employees vented frustration or concerns over their work situation online. They found what they termed an 'ambiguity' between private and public realms. It appeared that employers and employees had different understandings of when posts on online forums, blogs or other media were private or public. As we have elaborated elsewhere (Authors, 2017), if jobseekers' online flow of information is outside their control, employers expect jobseekers with 'inappropriate' online information to act proactively and discuss the content of this information with the recruiter. Similarly, Berkelaar *et al.* (2015) argue that employers' expectations for management of online profiles by job-seeking professionals have come to resemble those previously applied primarily to politicians. To better understand the consequences of SNSs in work life, more studies on employers' norms of information flow and perception of and respect for contextual integrity are called for.

The self-regulation that this profile management involves is captured in previous research that explores how SNS users manage their own boundaries on social media, so-called online boundary management. Although there are reports that people have consistent online and offline identities that are not affected by the forum (Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013), several studies indicate that SNS users felt a need to 'self-censor', not to post certain content, or to use separate accounts for personal and work-related use (Trottier, 2012; Bosque, 2013: 437; Fieseler *et al.*, 2015; Vitak *et al.*, 2015; Rosengren and Ottosson, 2016; Berkelaar, 2017; Hurrell *et al.*, 2017). Social media thus leads to changed boundaries between work and non-work, as well as to new forms of boundary work conducted in both the public and private realms.

## Method

Because of the novel character of cybervetting in 2014 (when we started our research project) and the scarcity of studies of the phenomenon, we found it important to use an explorative and qualitative approach. In the overall project, we sought to understand how and why cybervetting was used in some recruitment processes and its implications for jobseekers and organisations.

We use discursive psychology as our methodological approach because it provided us with tools to analyse boundary work. In discursive psychology, discourses are seen as 'interpretive repertoires', that is, flexible recourses used in interactions to construct the world and accomplish desired actions and positions (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). By systematically analysing the way people talk about certain events, practices and topics, it is possible to reveal the underlying assumptions that make their talk comprehensible and meaningful, as well as the consequences of their discourse (Talja, 1999). In our analysis, discursive psychology provides us with two important methodological tools: (1) identifying patterns in recruiters' talk about cybervetting, (Potter and Wetherell, 1987), and (2) identifying the underlying assumptions that make their talk comprehensible as well as the consequences of their repertoires (Talja, 1999).

Our analysis is based on the premise that the way people discuss specific events or phenomena is rooted in culturally and locally accessible discourses that reflect the available interpretive repertoires and desired subject positions (Edely, 2001). Hence,



the norms that are (re)produced during the interview situation reflect wider organisational and societal ways of talking about and making sense of recruitment situations, online information, social media and cybervetting. The way people discuss events and phenomena such as their experiences of cybervetting candidates is part of their moral positioning in the interview situation (Baker and Johnson, 1998). To achieve a desirable position *vis-à-vis* the interviewer, for example, to pass as 'professional', the interviewee will engage in specific discourses to convince the interviewer—and themselves—that the proposed norms are sensible and legitimate. In this way, qualitative interviews make it possible to analyse what is considered to be (il)legitimate and (un)problematic in relation to cybervetting.

## Interviews

To explore the discursive practices of cybervetting recruiters, we based our sample procedure on two criteria: that participants had experience of cybervetting during the recruitment process and that they represented a wide variety of organisations. We believe the latter criterion to be important, as we expect the local context, that is, company size, sector and industry, to influence the interpretive repertoires used by the interviewees.

To reach people who met the above criteria, we used various channels to contact potential participants. (1) The participants in an initial pilot study were found when one of the authors gave a series of talks for a human resources (HR) association in Sweden. While the talk was about a previous project on criminal background checks, there was also an opportunity to inform the audience about this project. (2) We sent out information about the project in a newsletter to members in the same HR association. (3) We emailed invitations to alumni of HR management programmes at two Swedish universities to participate in the study. (4) We advertised on an Internet forum for people working in HR. (5) We sent out a questionnaire to all hiring managers in a Swedish municipality, including a request for participants in the interview study. (6) We also wanted to access participants without formal HR training, or those who had not participated in HR forums. Therefore, we sent invitations to the majority of companies advertising for new personnel (and providing contact information) on the Swedish Public Employment Service's website. Because there were already a large number of participants from these sectors, we excluded recruitment agencies and local authorities.

We conducted semi-structured interviews using an interview guide with 10 themes (see the Appendix). The interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. All interviews were transcribed word-for-word using specific software (Atlas.ti) that was also used for coding the transcriptions. Altogether, we interviewed 37 people (21 women and 16 men) on 31 separate occasions during the period 2013–2015 (see Tables A1 and A2 in the Appendix for details). In 2015, we decided to stop the data collection as we had conducted a number of interviews without gaining any additional variations in interviewees' comments on cybervetting, which is a situation sometimes referred to as saturation (Marshall, 2016).

Although we used the same semi-structured interview guide throughout the project, the theme of boundary work is more common in the interviews conducted at the later stage of the project. Most likely, this is the result of us becoming more familiar with the average procedure of cybervetting and the vocabulary of motives used and more interested in the boundary work, which thus affected interactions during the interviews.

The interviews and transcriptions were conducted in Swedish, and the quotations used in this paper have been translated into English by the authors. The extracts that we include have been chosen because they capture the essence of the variations in the interpretive repertoires, with the aim of creating transparency and enabling the reader to engage more fully in the interpretation of the material (Pratt, 2008).

## Coding and analysis

We coded the interviews from the pilot study using initial line-by-line coding, during which we asked ourselves 'what is going on here?' In the first round of coding, each interviewer coded her own interviews. Based on this initial coding, we identified interesting clusters of codes regarding the procedure, the ethics of cybervetting, boundary work, vocabularies of motive, interpretation of findings and evaluation of findings. Each interviewer continued to use line-by-line coding on her own additional interviews and conducted focused coding on the other interviewer's transcripts based on the cluster of codes that we identified as especially interesting in relation to the overall aim of the project.

The theme of boundary work piqued our interest. Although it was sometimes connected to the vocabulary of motive, it was not in general cited as a motive for recruiters to cybervet. However, the boundary work and different ways to categorise information and SNSs as private or public seemed to form a foundation for the interviewees' talk about cybervetting. To explore this category further and to capture instances where interviewees talked about boundary work implicitly, the first author re-read all of the transcripts and conducted preliminary coding (Tuffin and Howard, 2001). The aim of preliminary coding is to retain as much material as possible from the transcripts while excluding text that is not relevant to the analysis (Tuffin and Howard, 2001). During the re-reading of the transcripts, the author looked specifically for any type of boundary work between the private and work-related realms. For example, the author sought not only explicit talk about subjects such as privacy, private information and social media sites that would not be used because of their private nature, but also implicit talk about relevant and irrelevant information, about interviewees' own use of social media, expectations of privacy and how they managed subordinates/superiors on social media (see Potter and Wetherell, 1987).

The passages of texts that were found during the re-reading and preliminary coding of the material were then categorised based on the central concern in each passage. Some passages were broken down into smaller parts, while others were placed into more than one category (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Each passage was read carefully and compared with previous passages: if it resembled a previous passage, it was grouped into the same category (Tuffin and Howard, 2001); if it did not, a new category was constructed. Eventually, four main categories were created as follows: (1) constructing boundaries between one's own private life and work life—codes on strategies to maintain boundaries; (2) constructing boundaries between jobseekers' work and private lives—codes on the importance of social fit, reflecting views that private life must not affect work life negatively, that jobseekers have obligations to maintain a boundary and reactions when they do not do so; (3) constructing a distinction between relevant and irrelevant information—codes on what was construed to be relevant or irrelevant information and SNSs; and (4) constructing a distinction between available, open sources and unavailable, deep or secret sources—codes on what types of SNSs and information were classified as available and unavailable, and descriptions of actions either to avoid deep or unavailable sources or to gain access to available sources. In the analysis that followed, we paid particular attention to the construction of the boundary between the public work realm and private life and the function of these boundaries (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Tuffin and Howard, 2001), which resulted in the identification of two interpretative repertoires: the boundary between accessible and inaccessible information and the boundary between relevant and irrelevant information.

To receive feedback from recruiters on the analysis, we used member reflections (Tracy, 2010) to see whether they considered our analysis to be accurate. On some occasions, tentative analyses were presented to and discussed with participants of the study. On other occasions, preliminary findings were discussed with recruiters who had not taken part in the study. The analytical themes were all recognised during member reflections. The key difference between the interview situation and analysis and the discussions during member reflections was that the latter had more critical perspectives. We believe that this may have been a result of the local context of these

meetings, where concerns about reliability, validity and risks of discrimination became much more overt than in the interviews.

## (Re)constructing boundaries

We found two influential repertoires that are used when recruiters construct boundaries between public and private information online. First, if the information is *accessible* online, it is framed as public information. Consequently, inaccessible information, that is, information that requires more effort than googling the jobseeker's name, is more likely to be considered private information. Second, inaccessible information is private unless it can be defined as *relevant*, because information that is relevant to the recruiter is always portrayed as public and legitimate to use. Below, we present the repertoires in depth.

### Accessible information as public information

Information found online is described by some recruiters as public if it is accessible to people in general, for example, in blogs or on personal websites, or on social media sites that are not protected by privacy settings. This argument can be related to Sheller and Urry's (2003) distinction between publicity and privacy, and the quotation below illustrates how the Internet as an entity is positioned in the public realm.

Interviewer: And how do you manage these boundaries? What is private and what is public?  
[speaking simultaneously, inaudible]

Recruiter 1: (sighs)

Recruiter 2: It's not us who manages them, it's the person who shares the information. If you post information on the Internet, it's no longer private. If you find it through a simple search, then it's public information.

Recruiter 1: Yes. (Nos. 25 & 26)

By engaging the repertoire of accessible information as public information, the recruiters consider the jobseeker, not the recruiters, to be accountable if employers find 'private' information online when they cybervet. In this repertoire, if information is available online, it is the jobseeker who has chosen not to uphold the right to privacy through non-disclosure (Sheller and Urry, 2003) and to seek publicity by disclosing private information in public.

In the repertoire of accessible information as public information, privacy is positioned as control over one's private information. As these recruiters argue, information that is publicly available on the Internet cannot be considered to belong to the private realm, and jobseekers should demonstrate that they can manage that boundary by ensuring that they never post private information on public forums; that is, they should be aware of and adhere to common norms of appropriateness. The employers' way of framing the Internet as a public realm resembles the boundary work that Burkell *et al.* (2014) found in their study of university students' perceptions of Facebook as a public rather than private realm. It is also apparent that in this repertoire, the notion of privacy, as a *right* to a private realm (see Bennett and Raab, 2007), becomes reframed as the *responsibility* of the individual.

The repertoire conceptualises *inaccessible* information as private information and reflects expectations that cybervetting recruiters will limit their attempts to find information and respect jobseekers' online privacy. For instance, hacking into someone's private network is described as crossing a line. Information that requires extensive searches is also described as inaccessible. For example, the founder of a family-owned business discussed what would be included in a policy on cybervetting if the business had one. He said that it would include an instruction not to 'dig too deep'. In the quotation below, another business owner talks about why going 'deeper' than a Google search feels uncomfortable.



Business owner: Google is very good/.../I don't think you should, I don't think I want to go deeper than what you can see there/.../

Interviewer: Mm. But why wouldn't you want to go deeper?

Business owner: It feels a bit like a violation in some way. Like, ehm [sighs] well, things are posted by revenge-seeking ex-boyfriends and girlfriends and things like that, that maybe you shouldn't think of as relevant as it is other people's opinions. I'm not really interested in things like that.

Interviewer: No. And you think that it won't pop up if you do a simple search?

Business owner: I don't know, I try to, I usually stop right at, like at Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. And I think that's about where I draw my line. (No. 33)

The business owner explains his choice by stating that it would feel 'like a violation in some way' to search for information beyond 'Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn'. By observing limitations in their search practices and not accessing 'deep' or protected information, the interviewees construct a boundary between public and private and acknowledge the existence of a private realm online. The repertoire thus ascribes responsibility to recruiters to limit their searches for information to public, easily accessed SNSs. By providing examples of private online information that is off-limits for recruiters, the interviewees demonstrate their awareness of these delimitation lines. As long as the recruiters also keep within those lines, cybervetting is presented as a moral and legitimate activity in the recruitment process.

### Relevant information as public information

Although recruiters refer to accessible online information as public, they also distinguish between *relevant* and *irrelevant* information and refrain from searching for information on platforms considered to contain irrelevant information.

*Relevant* information is described as that which is valuable for the recruitment process and the evaluation of the candidate even if it is not easily accessible for the recruiters. The recruiters often express the belief that it is in their interest to have 'as much information as possible' before making a hiring decision, implicitly defining all information as relevant for the job, the organisation or the group. *Irrelevant* information is described as that which is not useful for evaluating jobseekers' competencies and capacities. Irrelevant information is often considered to be 'private'. Employers adapting this repertoire do boundary work by avoiding certain SNSs, such as Instagram or Facebook, or by disregarding information that they define as private. The recognition that people on these sites act and share information in accordance with norms of appropriateness that differ from those of the professional sphere is plausible grounds for recruiters to perceive such boundaries around certain SNSs. The next quotation illustrates an example of information being construed as private by using the repertoire of irrelevance. An HR manager describes Facebook as irrelevant because it is 'too private' with pictures of family members and everyday life.

HR manager: I believe in Facebook; it's often a bit too private to be of interest; that's what I think. Like, from an employer's perspective, it's rare that people's Facebook profiles are of interest.

Interviewer: But is it that they are uninteresting, or does it feel like a sort of violation of privacy?

HR manager: Well yes, maybe a little. Or maybe just that they are not really relevant. There is after all a lot of family members, friends, children, and their food, and [laughs] And like, things that you feel ... Well, maybe a bit of both.

Despite the private information being considered irrelevant, the HR manager in this interview had previously discussed searching for blogposts and personal websites with the explicit aim of finding personal information. Therefore, the interviewer continued the interview by asking whether there was private information to be found on these sites.

Interviewer: In your experience, how much of that appears on these other ... as you say, like private blogs and similar?

HR manager: It depends on what those blogs are about, so to speak. A lot of people blog about their exercise, for example [laughs] But that doesn't feel that private. It is private though, but maybe not as ...

Interviewer: But is that something you can interpret as somehow work related then? And if so, how is that done?

HR manager: No... Really, to me this search is very much about getting to know people. You need to understand who this person is. Can this person fit in with us? Has this person anything to contribute, except professionally, so to speak?/.../And then you might find this out, for example about exercising, or if they blog. It might be something else, some hobby they have and so on. Then you can see 'well, here's a person that's up to the same thing; then they will have something to talk about over lunch'. Because it *is* important. It's not like, we only want to hire exactly similar people, but it's still important that you have something in common, to get on. (No. 13)

Private information and the spaces where it is found are said to be irrelevant to her. Nevertheless, she emphasises that personal information on spare-time activities *is* important because employees get on better and feel better at work if they 'have something to talk about over lunch'. The spare-time activities are not presented as competencies that fit the job description.

The HR manager's way of emphasising that '*it is important*' can be interpreted as a challenge to the discourse on competency-based recruitment, which is introduced by the interviewer. Competency-based recruitment is a popular recruitment model in Sweden (Lindelöw, 2016). It is based on the psychometric model, which uses a strict formalised procedure and advocates that employers' hiring decisions should only be based on capacities and competencies directly related to work tasks. The candidate's competencies are measured through interviews, psychometric tests and work samples (e.g. Herriot, 1992; Syed and Kramar, 2017). The emphasis on formal competences and psychometric evaluation in competency-based recruitment clearly separates the work and private realms as distinct segments of life, and information relating to the private realm generally has no bearing on the selection process.

However, the HR manager quoted engages in a discourse on person–organisation (p–o) fit. This model criticises the assumptions that underlie the psychometric model. It challenges the idea that objective job analyses and neutral evaluations of jobseekers' competencies are possible. Instead, the candidate is seen as a person who evolves, adapts and learns new skills, and the recruitment process is perceived as a process of social interaction between the jobseeker and the organisation (Herriot, 1992). Recruitment becomes a matter of parties coming to know one another, and the goal for both parties is to make an informed decision on whether to engage in a relationship.

In the p–o-fit model, it is not possible to make a clear-cut distinction between an irrelevant domestic realm and a relevant work-related public realm. Information concerning the jobseeker's spare-time activities, family situation, hobbies and values may all be seen as important parts of the person that may influence whether and how the jobseeker will fit in with the organisation as well as with other employees. In the quotation above, the HR manager stresses the benefits of having employees who have 'things in common' and get along. This is in line with McDonald and Thompson's (2016: 75) description of a trend for employers to 'draw on qualities that may have previously been seen as residing in the private sphere'. The HR manager constructs a boundary between work and the private realms, but at the same time it is made legitimate to cross that boundary to retrieve personal information that will improve the evaluation of the jobseeker's fit in the work sphere. It is the employer who decides what type of personal information is relevant to evaluate p–o-fit, and what information is too personal.

When information is considered to be relevant, it is more likely that the recruiters will construe it to be legitimate to access. The quotation below is from recruiters for an entertainment organisation discussing how they take advantage of overlapping networks in the business to access closed Facebook profiles.

Recruiter 1: After all, today many limit access to their Facebook profiles and suchlike. So, it's not super easy to get in, unless... You can always ask if someone knows/.../We have a lot of employees. If someone knows someone they can always go in and have a look.

Interviewer: And you do that? Like, ask and try to find ways around?

Recruiter 1: Mm.

Interviewer: Mm.

Recruiter 1: Especially in some departments that are more... Well, security for example, where a lot of people know each other. Because they move around a lot within the business. So, if someone applies for a job here, and they work at a restaurant in [the restaurant district], there's always some of our employees who have also worked at those restaurants, and then you can always ...

Recruiter 2: They have, like, their own community.

Recruiter 1: Mm, and then you can always go in and, well, ask them to check the candidates' Facebook. Or something like that. It happens.

[Recruiters 1 and 2 laugh]:

Recruiter 1: [laughs] You feel a bit sneaky about what you do, but ...

Recruiter 2: Mm, but for certain positions it's also very important how you come across. And security is one of these; you want to see a serious profile. (Nos. 8 & 9)

The practice of accessing profiles of people with whom one is not friends is not unknown. SNS users have described using others' accounts with permission or engaging in 'over the shoulder' browsing as something a Facebook user expects (Burkell *et al.*, 2014: 980f). The recruiter's expression of feeling 'sneaky' (the English word used during the interview) may be interpreted as an acknowledgement of trespassing into a private realm; it is something that should not be done. This is in line with the repertoire in which inaccessible information equals private information and ought not to be sought by recruiters. However, the practice of using employees to access information protected by privacy settings is defended in the quotation above by the colleague who refers to the company's expectations and needs from someone in a position in the organisation's security division. By defining the information as relevant for the recruitment process, private information is reconstructed as public, or at least as legitimate to use. In other words, the repertoire of relevance trumps the repertoire of easy access.

### Consequences of the repertoires

The interpretive repertoires presented above have implications for both jobseekers and recruiters. The majority of the recruiters interviewed are themselves employees and users of SNSs. Hence, it is possible for us to analyse how they as social media users describe the consequences of the repertoires around public and private. The repertoires regulate the recruiters' online activities, and the recruiters' standards influence their expressed expectations for jobseekers' online boundary management.

The interviewees use the repertoire of accessible information as public information when they describe how they either refrain from expressing personal views and political opinions or have left those SNSs that they do not ascribe to the work realm. In the following quotation, a business owner describes how cybervetting has made him aware of the kind of (private) information others can find about him online.

Business owner: I've become much, much more aware, I think it's since I started to do these [online] searches. It made me aware of what's visible, so I'm very careful with what I post. Politics and such things, I'm very low key when it comes to that, nowadays/.../[Previously,] I could definitely vent my views in a different way, compared with how I do it now, and that is likely a result of ...

Interviewer: That you conduct searches yourself?

Business owner: Yes. (No. 33)

As a consequence of this awareness, he no longer expresses his political views online in the way that he used to. In other words, political opinions, in some traditions defined as belonging to the public sphere (Sheller and Urry, 2003), are considered too personal to share online.

The fact that online information may become publicly available is also seen as a risk of damaging one's professional performance. Restrictions are then described as required by one's occupation or position, as shown by the two quotations below:

Hiring manager: But I actually consider what I post...a lot I would say. I constantly look at, like 'oh, this was fun', and [to] post comments. But then I think: 'Can I do that?/.../If it were a headline in the local newspaper, what would the text say?' Absolutely. And I think that you can expect this from employees of public authorities too. (No. 20)

...:

Partner: I'm much more careful today than I used to be. I've left Facebook; I'm only on LinkedIn. I have no other accounts. And that is all related to my choice of occupation. (No. 32)

The hiring manager in the first quotation above says that the kind of precaution that he takes is what 'you can expect' of people who work in the public service; that is, it applies not just to him but also to those he employs. Work is presented as influencing how one can behave in the private realm, and online interactions easily become too personal if one acts merely on the joy of online interaction. The restriction of online engagement to activities and comments that are in line with professional roles has also been found to be part of many company policies on social media usage (Johnston, 2015).

The partner in the second quotation above describes how his position has caused him to leave SNSs where he would not act in his professional role. The bureaucratic ideal of the objective civil servant and the need for a strong boundary between the domestic realm and work life are used to account for why recruiters and jobseekers alike should restrict the information they share online (McDonald and Thompson, 2016).

Furthermore, in their talk about their own boundary work, the recruiters set a standard for maintaining the separation between personal and public lives. This standard affects their attitudes to cybervetting as well as their evaluations of jobseekers' online activities. The way they maintain their own boundaries makes it possible for them to express and reproduce the repertoire of accessible public information and thus legitimate for the recruiters to use. In the next quotation, an HR specialist uses her own behaviour as a standard and simultaneously underlines this norm of appropriateness: to uphold privacy by keeping control over one's private information.

HR specialist: But I might, like, make a mental note that 'well it was a bit odd that the person had an open Facebook profile', I may think. But that is more like my personal evaluation; I don't think you should have that at all, because you never know who might read it. But that is also in my professional role, because if I had one, it could be used against me because I have a disciplinary role in some instances, and that's not good. So, I guess I believe that no one should have one [an open Facebook profile]! (No. 29)

The HR specialist makes a general norm out of her own decision to use Facebook's privacy settings for keeping control of her information, by referring to that 'no one should have one!' (see Pomerantz, 1986). She also evokes the bureaucratic ideal of objectivity to further strengthen the norm of individual responsibility for controlling private information. Although she talks about it as her 'personal opinion', she seems to argue that jobseekers with a public Facebook profile behave inappropriately online by not upholding the boundary between public and private life. Thus, the recruiters' decisions on their own online boundary management become a norm for jobseekers' online behaviour.

## Discussion

Although some scholars claim that it is no longer useful to distinguish between private and public (Sheller and Urry, 2003), this boundary is still important for users of SNSs (Berkelaar, 2017; Hurrell *et al.*, 2017). As we show in this paper, it is also essential for recruiters who engage in cybervetting. However, the categorisation of SNSs and information found online—that is, the extent to which information should be seen as public or private and where the line should be drawn—is still contested and ambiguous (Wilner *et al.*, 2017).

Therefore, in this article, we have explored how cybervetting recruiters construct and reconstruct boundaries around the public–private division and how the boundary work affects the conceptualisation of privacy.

To summarise the findings, the understanding of ‘private’ as that which is inaccessible (Nippert-Eng, 2010; to people in general) is used when the recruiters talk about their cybervetting practices. Accordingly, they use a conceptualisation of privacy as control over one’s own private information. The recruiters’ understanding of privacy as control over private information—even as a *duty* to do so—differs from common classifications such as privacy as the *right* to be left alone (Warren and Brandeis, 1890), and the *right* to a private realm where others are not allowed to intrude (Bennett and Raab, 2007). It is a variation of the classical definition of privacy as the *right* to control the flow of one’s own personal information (Westin, 1967). However, the recruiters refer to it less as a right and more as a moral obligation. Although the recruiters’ boundary work primarily emphasises jobseekers’ responsibility (and that of social media users in general) to control their information, the recruiters also talked about not accessing SNSs that contained irrelevant private information and to not engage in excessively extensive searches for information online.

If we use Nissenbaum’s (2004) concept of contextual integrity as a framework to talk about the norms that the recruiters use to make cybervetting legitimate, we can conceptualise the imperative ‘control your information and uphold your privacy’ as one of two norms of appropriate behaviour online that are visible in the interviews. The second one can be formulated as ‘act online in accordance with your organisational role’. The norms of information flow can be summarised as ‘don’t dig too deep’ and ‘bypass privacy settings if the position requires it’, that is the relevance requirement. In other words, even though it is jobseekers’ (and social media users’) responsibility to keep control of their private information and keep it inaccessible, the recruiters help by not engaging in excessive searches and by refraining from visiting some sites. However, it is possible to use the rule of relevance to make it legitimate not to follow the norms of flow.

The function and effect of people’s talk is of vital concern for discursive psychology (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). One function of the use of the repertoire on accessible/inaccessible information is that recruiters make it morally acceptable and legitimate to use cybervetting as a part of their recruitment processes. A function of the relevant/irrelevant repertoire is that with the help of the p-o-fit model, employers can decide that private information is relevant and thus acceptable for them to search for and use in the recruitment process.

By this study, we contribute to the understanding of how recruiters construct boundaries around public/private Internet use and how this affects their understanding of privacy. In comparison with previous studies on employees (McDonald *et al.*, 2016; Wilner *et al.*, 2017), we can conclude that the recruiters in our study—despite that many of them were themselves employees—have a different understanding of online contextual integrity, which gives more room for the employers to collect and interpret data on jobseekers and employees. This might be explained by their position within the organisation. As recruiters, they represent the employer and it is perhaps not surprising that they therefore tend to see to the employers’ interest rather than jobseekers. Although additional studies are necessary to verify it, there are indications that one’s position within an organisation influence one’s understanding of the boundaries between private and public. For example, corroborating our results, McDonald *et al.* (2016) found that educated males, working as supervisors and managers, were more likely to consider employers to be entitled to cybervet than other employees were. Moreover, we can conclude that technological



developments where information is posted online by individual users has had implications for how the notion of privacy is understood. It is now framed as a responsibility for the individual user rather than a right that others should respect (see also Trottier, 2012).

A potential consequence of the use of cybervetting in recruitment processes is that people become less able to participate in public discussions where they reveal personal opinions and information. When norms of information flow are based on local contexts and the kinds of information that employers deem relevant in different situations, as opposed to being based on legal regulations or collective agreements, it becomes difficult for jobseekers to know what to expect. Therefore, the safest option for Internet users is to be as cautious as possible in sharing information (cf. Solove, 2008; Bosque, 2013). For some of the recruiters in our study, we can see that this is already the case.

Whether this caution is a desirable development should be discussed. It relates to the philosophical and normative discussion of integration or segmentation of different roles and realms of life (Nippert-Eng, 2010). Should recruiters' norms in favour of cybervetting be allowed to define the line between online public and private information, and what constitutes a breach of privacy? How could jobseekers' and employees' norms of information flow be taken into account? As a first step in addressing these questions, we hope that studies such as this one help raise awareness among unions and jobseekers of how employers conceptualise the division between the private and work realms, to allow them to contest the definitions applied by recruiters, if doing so is seen as beneficial.

## References

- Baker, C.D. and G. Johnson (1998), 'Interview Talk as Professional Practice', *Language and Education* **12**, 4, 229–242.
- Bennett, C. and C. Raab (2007), 'The Privacy Paradigm', in S.P. Hier and J. Greenberg (eds), *The Surveillance Studies Reader* (Maidenhead: Open University Press), pp. 337–353.
- Berkelaar, B.L. (2017), 'How Implicit Theories Help Differentiate Approaches to Online Impression Management: A Preliminary Typology', *New Media & Society* **19**, 12, 2039–2058.
- Berkelaar, B.L. and P.M. Buzzanell (2015), 'Online Employment Screening and Digital Career Capital Exploring Employers' Use of Online Information for Personnel Selection', *Management Communication Quarterly* **29**, 1, 84–113.
- Berkelaar, B.L., J.M. Scacco and J.L. Birdsell (2015), 'The Worker as Politician: How Online Information and Electoral Heuristics Shape Personnel Selection and Careers', *New Media & Society* **17**, 8, 1377–1396.
- Bosque, D.D. (2013), 'Will You Be My Friend? Social Networking in the Workplace', *New Library World* **114**, 9/10, 428–442.
- Bullingham, L. and A.C. Vasconcelos (2013), 'The Presentation of Self in the Online World: Goffman and the Study of Online Identities', *Journal of Information Science* **39**, 1, 101–112.
- Burkell, J., A. Fortier, L.Y.C. Wong and J.L. Simpson (2014), 'Facebook: Public Space, or Private Space?', *Information, Communication & Society* **17**, 8, 974–985.
- Desrochers, S. and L.D. Sargent (2004), 'Boundary/Border Theory and Work-Family Integration', *Organization Management Journal* **1**, 1, 40–48.
- Edely, N. (2001), 'Analysing Masculinity: Interpretative Repertoires, Ideological Dilemmas and Subject Positions', in M. Wetherell, S. Taylor, and S.Y. Yates (eds), *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis* (London: Sage), pp. 189–228.
- Edwards, D. and J. Potter (2001), 'Discursive Psychology', in A. McHoul and M. Rapley (eds), *How to Analyze Talk in Institutional Settings: A Casebook of Methods* (London: Continuum), pp. 12–24.
- Fieseler, C., M. Meckel and G. Ranzini (2015), 'Professional Personae—How Organizational Identification Shapes Online Identity in the Workplace', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* **20**, 2, 153–170.
- Hedenus, A. and B. Christel (2017), 'Explaining the Data Double: Confessions and Self-Examinations in Job Recruitments', *Surveillance & Society* **15**, 640–54. <https://doi.org/10.24908/ss.v15i5.6380>.
- Herriot, P. (1992), 'Selection: The Two Subcultures', *The European Work and Organizational Psychologist* **2**, 2, 129–140.
- Hurrell, S.A., D. Scholarios and J. Richards (2017), 'The Kids are Alert': Generation Y Responses to Employer Use and Monitoring of Social Networking Sites', *New Technology, Work and Employment* **32**, 1, 64–83.

- Johnston, J. (2015), '“Loose Tweets Sink Fleets” and Other Sage Advice: Social Media Governance, Policies and Guidelines', *Journal of Public Affairs* **15**, 2, 175–187.
- Jørgensen, M. and L. Phillips (2002), *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (London: Sage).
- Lindelöw, M. (2016), *Kompetensbaserad Personalstrategi* (Stockholm: Natur & Kultur).
- Marshall, C. (2016), *Designing Qualitative Research*, 6th edn (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications).
- McDonald, P. and P. Thompson (2016), 'Social Media(Tion) and the Reshaping of Public/Private Boundaries in Employment Relations', *International Journal of Management Reviews* **18**, 1, 69–84.
- McDonald, P., P. Thompson and P. O'Connor (2016), 'Profiling Employees Online: Shifting Public-Private Boundaries in Organisational Life', *Human Resource Management Journal* **26**, 4, 541–556.
- Miller, B. and P. Munday (2015), 'Follow the Rules and No One Will Get Hurt: Performing Boundary Work to Avoid Negative Interactions When Using Social Network Sites', *Information, Communication & Society* **18**, 2, 187–201.
- Nippert-Eng, C.E. (1996), *Home and Work: Negotiating Boundaries Through Everyday Life* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press).
- Nippert-Eng, C.E. (2010), *Islands of Privacy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press).
- Nissenbaum, H. (2004), 'Privacy as Contextual Integrity', *Washington Law Review* **79**, 119–158.
- Pomerantz, A. (1986), 'Extreme Case Formulations: A way of Legitimizing Claims', *Human Studies* **9**, 2–3, 219–229.
- Potter, J. and M. Wetherell (1987), *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour* (London: Sage).
- Pratt, M.G. (2008), 'Fitting Oval Pegs Into Round Holes: Tensions in Evaluating and Publishing Qualitative Research in Top-Tier North American Journals', *Organizational Research Methods* **11**, 3, 481–509.
- Rosengren, C. and M. Ottosson (2016), 'Employee Monitoring in a Digital Context', in J. Daniels, K. Gregory, and T.M. Cottom (eds) *Digital Sociologies* (Bristol: Policy Press), pp. 181–194.
- Rothbard, N.P. and A. Ollier-Malaterre (2016), 'Boundary Management', in T.D. Allen and L.T. Eby (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Work and Family Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 109–122.
- Sheller, M. and J. Urry (2003), 'Mobile Transformations of “Public” and “Private Life”', *Theory, Culture & Society* **20**, 3, 107–125.
- Solove, D.J. (2006), 'A Taxonomy of Privacy', *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* **154**, 477–564.
- Solove, D.J. (2008), *Understanding Privacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
- Syed, J. and R. Kramar (2017), *Human Resource Management: A Global and Critical Perspective* (London: Palgrave).
- Talja, S. (1999), 'Analyzing Qualitative Interview Data: The Discourse Analytic Method', *Library & Information Science Research* **21**, 4, 459–477.
- Tracy, S.J. (2010), 'Qualitative Quality: Eight “Big-Tent” Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research', *Qualitative Inquiry* **16**, 10, 837–851.
- Trottier, D. (2012), *Social Media as Surveillance: Rethinking Visibility in a Converging World* (Farnham: Ashgate).
- Tuffin, K. and C. Howard (2001), 'Demystifying Discourse Analysis: Theory, Method and Practice', in A. McHoul and M. Rapley (eds), *How to Analyse Talk in Institutional Settings: A Casebook of Methods* (New York, NY: Continuum), pp. 196–205.
- Vitak, J., S. Blasiola, S. Patil and E. Litt (2015), 'Balancing Audience and Privacy Tensions on Social Network Sites: Strategies of Highly Engaged Users', *International Journal of Communication* **9**, 20, 1485–1504.
- Warren, S.D. and L.D. Brandeis (1890), 'The Right to Privacy', *Harvard Law Review* **4**, 5, 193–220.
- Westin, A.F. (1967), *Privacy and Freedom* (New York, NY: Atheneum for the Assoc. of the Bar of the City of New York).
- Wilner, A., T.P. Christopoulos and M.A. Alves (2017), 'The Online Unmanaged Organization: Control and Resistance in a Space With Blurred Boundaries', *Journal of Business Ethics* **141**, 4, 677–691.
- van Zoonen, W., J.W.M. Verhoeven and R. Vliegthart (2016), 'Social Media's Dark Side: Inducing Boundary Conflicts', *Journal of Managerial Psychology* **31**, 8, 1297–1311.
- Zerubavel, E. (1991), *The Fine Line* (New York: Free Press).

# Appendix

## Interview guide

1. Can you tell me about your role in recruitment processes at your company?
  2. Can you describe how you proceed, practically speaking, when you search for online information during recruitment?
    - How often do you conduct these searches?
    - For what type of positions?
    - When in the process are they conducted?
    - What search channels, key words and sites do you use?
    - Why do you conduct the searches?
    - Do you talk to the candidate about the findings?
    - Do you document your results?
    - Are there any sites that you don't look at? why not?
    - Are there any sites that you don't consider reliable or relevant? why not?
    - How do online searches relate to the requirements for the position?
  3. How do you assess the information you find?
    - To what extent do you consider context?
    - To what extent do you consider the reliability of the sources?
    - What significance do you give to photos versus text?
    - What if you don't find anything? How do you act upon or interpret this?
    - Do different positions involve different kinds of examination and evaluation of online findings?
  4. Can you give an example of a result that changed your perception of the candidate in a positive direction?
  5. Can you give an example of a result that changed your perception of the candidate in a negative direction?
    - How often does your evaluation of the findings advantage or disadvantage the candidate?
  6. In your opinion, what are the pros and cons of this method?
    - What does this method add that other methods can't contribute?
    - Do Internet searches replace some other method or step in the process, or have you expanded the amount of time spent on each candidate/recruitment process?
  7. Have you any thoughts about the ethical aspects of Internet searches?
    - Do you ask for the candidate's permission to conduct the search?
    - Do you inform the candidate that these searches will be/have been conducted?
    - Have you found information that you have found difficult to handle?
    - How do you relate to the risk of discrimination?
  8. Do you have a company policy that regulates how you search for information online during the recruitment process?
    - Do you find it useful?
    - In your opinion, does anything in it need to be revised?
- If not:
- Do you feel that you need one?
  - What would it look like?

9. How do you imagine your process will look in the future?
10. Have you googled me?
11. How do you feel about being googled by others?
  - How do you handle your online persona?
  - Do you use privacy settings?

*Table A1: Description of interviewees*

Participants' gender	
Women	21
Men	16
Type of business	
Local authorities	10
State-run authorities and companies	5
Private businesses:	22
Consultants (environment, law, IT, technical)	9
Recruitment agencies, incl. headhunting	7
Transportation and logistics	2
Restaurant and the food industry	2
Trading (fast-moving consumer goods)	1
Telemarketing	1
Participants' position	
HR specialist	15
HR manager	8
Owner/partner	6
Hiring manager	6
Other	2
Size of organisations by number of employees	
>10	6
10–40	5
41–100	5
101–500	7
>500	7
Unknown	7

*Table A2: Number of interviews per interview type*

Single interviews	24
Face-to-face	21
At interviewee's workplace	19
In interviewee's home	1
Other place	1
Skype	2
Telephone	1
Group interviews (2–5 participants)	5
Observations	2
Observations with interviews	2