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Recruitment discrimination against Middle Eastern people in Western Australia : The case of accountants

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Recruitment Discrimination against Middle Eastern People in Western Australia:
The Case of Accountants

Tiny Pinkerton

A report submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of Bachelor of
Science (Psychology) Honours, Faculty of Health, Engineering and Science.

Edith Cowan University

Submitted (October 2013)

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Abstract

The population of all Western countries are ageing and humanitarian efforts saw increasing numbers of people from Middle Eastern origin settle in Australia. Whilst older people are encouraged to remain in paid employment longer, it is not clear whether Middle Eastern people and the older population are as readily hired as are Anglo Australians and the younger population. Pairs of fictitious, unsolicited job applications were used to test for age and racial discrimination of Middle Eastern people in the Western Australian labour market. The study employed a 2 x 2 between subjects design with race (Anglo Australian and Middle Eastern) and age (32 and 57) as the independent variables. The dependent variable was the number of responses received by each type of applicant. It was hypothesized that Anglo Australian job applicants would receive more responses than would Middle Eastern job applicants. It was also hypothesized that younger job applicants would receive more responses than would older job applicants. 500 companies were randomly selected for receipt of paired CVs and 165 applicants were responded to. Analyses using Chi-square and Binomial tests of proportions revealed ethnic discrimination in employment recruitment. The results revealed biased treatment against Middle Eastern applicants, the majority of whom were not extended the courtesy of responses that were received by their Anglo Australian counterparts. It was also found that the racial marker of being Middle Eastern was more salient than the traditional age marker. The current study demonstrates how correspondence testing can be used to reveal actual treatment of applicants from minority groups when there is no relevant vacancy available. Evidence from the current study suggest that much is yet to be done to address negative stereotypes held about people of Middle Eastern origins and to encourage the promotion of cultural awareness in reducing their marginalised status and hence contribute to the social cohesion of the multicultural society in Australia.

Tiny Pinkerton

Dr Eyal Gringart

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Recruitment Discrimination Against Middle Eastern People in Western Australia:
The Case of Accountants

Australia is a significant participant in assisting humanitarian refugees and consistently offers the third highest number of places for refugee settlement after United States and Canada. In 2012, Australia's total intake of humanitarian refugees was 13,759 with plans to increase this number to 20,000 places in 2013 (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2012). However, there appears to be a discrepancy between the altruistic veneer of Australia's international commitment to refugee settlement on the one hand and a lack of acceptance of such refugees into everyday interactions that work provides on the other (Fozdar, 2011; Hawthorne, 1997). Qualitative studies have highlighted the persistent inequality of treatment of minority groups, in particular, migrants' access to the labour market (Colic-Peisker, 2009; Fozdar, 2011). This is also reflected in Australian Bureau of Statistics data (ABS) of high unemployment rates (21%) and low participation rates (54%) of migrants from the Middle East and North Africa (ABS, 1998). According to ABS figures, over a quarter of Australia's 22 million people are born overseas (ABS, 2012). Given Australia's ethnic diversity, it would be worth examining if minority populations such as migrants, and in particular, Middle Eastern people, have successfully integrated into the local community.

The objective of the current research was to investigate the possible employment discrimination of Middle Eastern people and older jobseekers in the Western Australian labour market. Specifically, correspondence testing was utilised to test differences in employers' responses to unsolicited job applications across age (32 and 57) and origins (Middle Eastern and Anglo Australian).

The current paper begins with a review of the demographics of Middle Eastern people in Australia, their employment experiences and reasons postulated for their perceived disadvantaged position. A brief look at the history of Australia's policies in the context of migration and how the changing social cultural backdrop may have contributed to the current

situation follows. To explain prejudice and discriminatory behaviour towards minorities, relevant social psychological theories are discussed. Next, a review of the literature provides evidence relating to employment discrimination based on racism and ageism. Following this, the use of correspondence testing as a methodology to investigate actual employment discrimination is presented. A discussion of the meaning of work provides context for the importance of being able to secure employment for both Anglo Australians and those of Middle Eastern origin. Finally, a report of the current study in which clear evidence of discrimination against job applicants of Middle Eastern origin in Western Australia is presented.

Middle Eastern People in Australia

Census data showed marked increases in the number of arrivals into Australia from Iraq since 1991. The key foci of Australia's current Humanitarian Program are the Middle East and South West Asia, in particular Afghanistan and Iraq (DIAC, 2011). Approximately 60% of recently arrived refugees settle in New South Wales (28%) and Victoria (28.7%). Western Australia has the third largest intake of refugees at 13.2% (ABS, 2012).

Concerns regarding people of Middle Eastern descent have been examined in the current research. Middle East is an imprecise term as it is not a continent nor a country and the origins of the label came from a European perspective to depict a geographic point of reference. No natural borders delineate the Middle East as the boundaries are political and have shifted over time (Tristram, n.d.). It is understood to be the region comprising Afghanistan, Libya, Egypt, Iran, Oman, Turkey, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Jordan, Israel, United Arab Emirates, Cyprus and Qatar (Anonymous, 2012). Common features that define countries in the Middle East include the climate, which is mainly hot, dry and desert like; the language, three quarters of the people speak Arabic; and religion, the majority of Middle Easterners practice Islam and are referred to as Muslims (Anonymous, 2012). The current research excluded people from Israel as they are typically not in Australia on humanitarian grounds but as part of the skilled migration intake (ABS, 2008). Furthermore, Israel is distinctly dissimilar to other Middle

Eastern countries in that it is the only liberal democracy in the region, people speak Hebrew in addition to Arabic and Judaism is the dominant religion. Given that Islam is the dominant religion for the majority of Middle Eastern people, it appears Muslims are seen to be synonymous with people of this region. Many Australians do not differentiate between 'Middle Eastern' and 'Muslim' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2004) even though Muslim communities in Australia have come from over 70 countries (Pratt, 2011). It is evident that studies with respect to discrimination post 9/11 have focused on treatment of Muslim people rather than on particular nationalities.

Race is related to a person's physical appearance, such as skin colour, eye colour, hair colour, bone/jaw structure. People of Middle Eastern origins are more often than not easily distinguishable from Anglo Australians. This visibility of Middle Eastern people among a predominantly white nation often singles them out, rendering them vulnerable to discriminatory treatment (Colic-Peisker, 2009). There would be cultural group differences between Anglo Australians and Middle Eastern people, such as extended family systems and patriarchal world view. Terrorist attacks by Islamic extremists on the World Trade Centre in the US on September 11, 2001, seems to have become the catalyst that brought attention to perceived religious disparity between Muslims and Christians and by extrapolation, the difference between Middle Easterns and white Australians. Longitudinal survey of social cohesion in Australia by the Scanlon Foundation reported that the highest level of experiencing discrimination on the basis of religion was reported by those born in the Middle East (Markus, 2010).

The most universally accepted notion of integration into a host country is employment (Colic-Peisker, 2009). However, this is where refugees fare worse than Anglo Australians. Of all migrants arriving after 1970, the highest unemployment rate and the lowest participation rate occurred among migrants from the Middle East and North Africa. A Survey of

Employment and Unemployment Patterns showed that Australian-born jobseekers were more likely to have found employment than migrant job seekers (ABS, 1998). More specifically, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics's 2010 figures, unemployment rate for migrants born in mainly English speaking countries was lower (5%) compared with those born in mainly non English speaking countries (8%). The corollary to this is with labour force participation rates, which are higher for recent migrants born in mainly English speaking countries (84%) than other countries (67%) (Hawthorne, 1997). Longitudinal research conducted over a three-year period with skilled migrants who had fully recognised qualifications pre-migration, support these census data. It demonstrated employer bias favouring migrants from English speaking background to those from Asia or the Middle East (Hawthorne, 1997).

Evidence exists that Middle Eastern people, because they are culturally dissimilar to the western context, are subject to everyday racism (Fozdar, 2011). It is conceivable that a link exists between events such as 9/11 in the US and the rise in prejudice and discrimination against Middle-Eastern people in Australia as evidenced by qualitative studies (Pedersen, Dunn, Forrest, & McGarty, 2012). According to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, even after 10 years after migration, the unemployment rate for migrant Muslims (7%) is more than double the Australian (3.4%) average (Fozdar, 2011). Cully (2011) found that the participation rate for overseas-born workers is lower than they are for Australian born employees after controlling for age and gender. Such experiences have not gone unnoticed by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which has expressed concerns regarding ongoing issues of inequities experienced by minority communities in Australia, that is, people of African, Asian and Middle Eastern backgrounds (DIAC, 2011).

Historical context

Historical government policies may have contributed in part to racist attitudes and equal opportunity laws are now in place to address this. Prior to the late 1960's, Australian migration

policy was aimed to exclude anyone not of European descent and migrants were sourced mainly from the United Kingdom and Ireland (DIAC, 2013). The 'White Australia' policy attempted to produce a homogenous white culture in Australia (Stratton, 1998). In 1965 the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was established under the 'International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination' (Banton, 1992). This was the impetus to the abolition of the 'White Australia' policy as it was becoming unacceptable internationally to promote racist ideals inherent in such policies. Furthermore, with labour shortages and declining population numbers, the introduction of a less restrictive immigration policy saw arrivals into Australia from more diverse regions of the globe.

Australia's population during the early colonial years comprised migrants mainly of British, Irish and Scottish origins, hence the derivation of the term, Anglo-Celtic, when referring to the culture of Australia during its infancy (Stratton, 1998). Implicit in this term is the notion of the 'core Australian' culture, which precludes the European migration of the late 1940s. The current paper uses the term Anglo-Australian to describe mainstream Australians who sought a unique identity, based on British heritage. This term not only includes the original Anglo-Celtics but also the ethnically peripheral cultures that have joined following later European migrations (Stratton, 1998).

The early assimilationist ideology preserved a predominantly Anglo-Celtic nation and maintained an unchanging dominant identity by insisting migrants change themselves to fit in (Verkuyten, 2005). This was replaced by Multiculturalism, which recognised the existence of cultural diversity within Australian society with the purpose of preserving and integrating distinct cultures (Hage, 2002; Stratton, 1998). According to Berry (2006), multiculturalism integrates the dominant group with the various ethnic minorities in a dual acculturation process. This is achieved by requiring the adoption of the basic values of the dominant culture by ethnic minorities while at the same time the dominant group meeting the needs of all ethno-cultural groups through adapting national institutions (Berry, 2006). Although the rationale behind

multiculturalism is to foster positive and secure ethnic identities as well as encourage acceptance of others, it may have an unintended negative effect. Research supports the position that ethnic minorities have more to gain from multiculturalism through the formal legitimisation of their cultural norms and are therefore in favour of it; whereas the dominant group, in this case, Anglo-Australians, view it as a cultural threat to the existing concept of 'national identity'. It is argued that multiculturalism is threatening to the dominant group that is more in favour of assimilation (Verkuyten, 2005).

A change in the government's political ideology does not necessarily erase people's mindset. Inherent in implicit cognition is that influential prior experience affect current performance although it may not be readily apparent (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). That is, tradition and history are significant in the construction of people's world-view, sense of national as well as social identities. The government's influence on the construction of a national identity extends back to Australia's predominantly white British origins (Barnes, 2004). For some, perhaps the ideal of Anglo-Celtic Australia remains steadfastly *ingrained*. Hence, culturally distant immigrant groups, such as Middle Easterns, appear incongruous to their notions of the 'national identity' (Klocker, 2004). It is clear that historical ideological context have important implications for ethnic group evaluations (Verkuyten, 2005). This segues into an examination of Henry Tajfel's (1963) social identity theory where, in the Australian context, people of Middle Eastern origin may be categorised as out-groups not only due to their distinct cultural norms and practices, but also because people associate them with hostility. This has been particularly the case since the terror attacks on the World Trade Centre in the US in 2001 and the Bali bombings in 2005.

Social Identity Theory and Stereotypes

Social identity theory explains inter-group relations where a social identity is the knowledge that one belongs to a group to which there is some emotional and value significance (Abrams & Hogg, 2011). Underlying this theory are the concepts of categorisation and self-

enhancement. Categorisation of individuals into groups not only defines their social identity but also sharpens the boundaries by accentuating defining features of group membership (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). Through socialisation individuals learn to define outsiders as those with whom they did not have shared experiences (Banton, 1992). Signals that have been traditionally identified as discrimination markers are sex, race and age (Bonoli & Hinrichs, 2012; Riach and Rich, 2004). If a person's age or race is highly noticeable then one's belief of how such a person behaves, favourable or not, guides decision making (Finkelstein, Burke & Raju, 1995). Therefore, it may be expected that when comparing two highly differentiated races such as a Middle Eastern and an Anglo-Australian as well as two disparate age groups, categorisation based on salient characteristics would be made, attributes associated with the categories are automatically activated and subsequent behaviour is guided by related stereotypes (Casper, Rothermund, & Wentura (2010).

Discriminatory behaviour is explained through a comparison process where differentiation between in-group and out-group is sought in order to maintain a positive identity of one's in-group. (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). Tajfel's (1963) social identity theory explains prejudicial attitudes by suggesting our self-esteem is tied to identification with groups to which we belong. Enhancing one's own group and discriminating the out-group serves to maintain self-esteem (Bendick & Nunes, 2012; Mcleod, 2008). The minimal group paradigm, suggests that even when randomly assigned to groups, people express favouritism to the groups they are in and discriminate against out-group members (Mullin & Hogg, 1998). Therefore, in the employment context, whether consciously or not, in-group bias is likely to lead to hiring decisions that are based on categorisation rather than on applicants' abilities (Bendick & Nunes, 2012). The implications of this are that people of Middle Eastern descent would experience detrimental employment outcomes as they are both visually and culturally categorised as out-group members when compared to the dominant Anglo-Australian population.

The reasons for employment discrimination on the basis of ethnic background can arise from negative beliefs held about the target ethnic group. A stereotype is a shared belief of characteristic features of a social category (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Beliefs about nations of which we know very little are strongly affected by newsworthy events that capture our attention. Dramatic media depiction, for example, of violence in the Middle East, casts negative connotations to people associated with the region (Eagly & Kite, 1987). The media's promulgation of negative stereotypes, in particular, events such as, Cronulla riots in 2005 involving people of Middle Eastern appearance, and Sydney riots in 2012 over anti-Muslim videos, led to the association of violence with this category of people and hence influences judgements (Quillian, 2006). Evidence of negative attitudes in three Australian states were found by Dandy and Pe-Pua (2010), where Arabs, Muslims and Lebanese were found to be the least liked and New Zealander and British, the most liked, in a sample of 740 participants. Although this may be explained by ethnocentrism, given that 66% of the participants were born in Australia and 34% were born overseas, it is consistent with findings of increasing negative sentiments towards people of Middle Eastern descent (Colic-Peisker, 2009; Fozdar, 2011).

Social identity theory explains favouritism towards one's in-group while the corollary being discriminative behaviour against out-group is further explained by negative stereotyping. Social psychological literature considers that stereotyping can operate automatically, that is, activated outside of conscious awareness but once triggered, influences behaviour (Devine, 1989; Lowery, Hardin, & Sinclair, 2001). When confronted with a member of a stereotyped group or a symbolic equivalent, the tendency is for people to react spontaneously "according to the representation they have in mind" (Lepore & Brown, 1997, p. 285). The mere presence of stimulus cues automatically activate well learned associations despite deliberate attempts to ignore them (Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996; Devine, 1989).

Racially motivated behaviour can be overt or covert. According to Dovidio and Gaertner (2000), the covert form is termed aversive racism where they theorised that these people

profess to be egalitarian, however, their behaviour towards minority groups demonstrates their implicit or subconscious hatred and discrimination. A study by Donders, Correll, and Wittenbrink (2008) linked negative societal stereotypes of black faces to fear-conditioned stimuli resulting in biased attentional allocation. They found that perceived threat-relevant stimuli was related to racially biased attention. The visibility of Middle Eastern people and their association with violence in the region may serve as a fear-conditioned stimulus for racially motivated behaviours. Negative constructions of Middle Eastern people in the media post September 11 may have sealed their position as being the aggressive out-group.

Another theory for the basis of discrimination is the statistical discrimination model as distinct to the above taste-based model. Statistical discrimination explains unequal treatment based on economic theories of the rational decision maker who uses aggregate group characteristics as a proxy for evaluating individual personal qualities (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). For example, when faced with a hundred applicants for only one vacancy, to reduce the time and cost of reviewing a large volume of applicants, employers may eliminate those born overseas on the basis that many of those may not have relevant local experience (Banton, 1992). Although statistical discrimination may indirectly exclude some who are actually qualified, economists regard it as an efficient tool for screening applicants based on exclusion criteria (Bonoli & Hinrichs, 2012). Statistical discrimination is said not to arise from prejudicial biases, but rather to be based on typical group characteristics to inform selection processes (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2011). However, erroneous judgements are possible when there is a mismatch between one's belief about the proxy variable and reality (Bennington & Wein, 2000). Regardless of how employment discrimination arises, the result is that people are not treated based on their merit and this can lead to social problems, in particular, further marginalisation of ethnic minorities. The next section proceeds with evidence of racial discrimination in employment recruitment.

Racial Discrimination in Employment

Experimental studies on recruitment discrimination across the globe have demonstrated that ethnic minorities are systematically discriminated against by employers (Betrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Riach & Rich, 2002). Bursell (2011) examined the experiences of Middle Eastern migrants in Sweden. Like Australia, Sweden has seen a rise in refugee migration in recent times, predominantly from the Middle East and Africa. Negative stereotypes of Middle Eastern people by the media corresponded with survey results that indicated the majority of Swedish population perceived Islam as “threatening and unwilling to embrace values associated with *Swedishness*” (Bursell, 2011, p. 474). Bursell (2011) recruited Middle Eastern participants who changed their names to ones that were identified as Swedish or neutral sounding. That study demonstrated that name changing was a de-stigmatising strategy as 58% of respondents said labour market discrimination was the prime motive for the name change. Interviewees admitted to more positive responses such as “I got a new job soon after and I believed the name change helped” (Bursell, 2011, p. 481).

Qualitative studies in Australia have revealed discrimination of non-Anglo Australian jobseekers (Colic-Peisker, 2009; Fozdar, 2011). A study by Hawthorn (1997) of skilled engineers from both English speaking and non English speaking backgrounds who migrated to Perth, Western Australia in the early 1990s suggested that ethnic origin was the sole significant predictor of employability. Two years after migration, only 18% of those included in the case study were employed. Those of Asian or Middle Eastern origins suffered severe labour market disadvantage despite 38% possessing UK engineering degrees and advanced level of English proficiency (Hawthorne, 1997).

In Australia, the Racial Discrimination Act is designed to protect particular classes of people from being treated less favourably than other classes. Despite the role of legislation in changing discriminatory behaviour, the actual impact on employment discrimination is limited (Bennington & Wein, 2000). As employers have a monopoly over information used to make

hiring decisions, jobseekers are often unaware if they have been unfairly treated. The often unconscious nature of how discriminatory attitudes arise means legislation alone would not be sufficient to reverse discrimination at the recruitment stage. If discrimination in recruitment is to be reduced, a more proactive approach is required including public awareness campaigns and exposure of research findings (Bennington & Wein, 2000).

Australian Bureau of Statistics data (ABS, 2010) indicate that for skilled migrants only 53% were employed in the same occupation group as the ones they nominated as an occupation for their current visa. The implication, therefore, is that almost half of skilled migrants who have found work are not doing jobs in the area in which they are skilled. It is widely known that there exist many instances where professionals such as doctors, lawyers or engineers are driving taxis or courier vans, working in abattoirs or as cleaners and waiters (Colic-Peisker, 2009; Hawthorne, 1997). For those who are highly educated before entering Australia, discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity may be a contributing factor in the difficulty of securing employment (Clarke & Drinkwater, 2008). Other discriminating characteristics, such as older age, may compound the effects of racial discrimination towards ethnic minority jobseekers. The following section reviews evidence of negative attitudes towards older workers, as age is also a prime marker of discrimination.

Age Discrimination in Employment

Longer life expectancy, decreasing mortality rates and abolition of mandatory retirement age has led to an increasing number of older people seeking to participate in the labour market. Researching attitudes towards older workers and gerontological studies are becoming important issues as is evidenced by the volume of complaints received by Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC, 2012). Government policies encourage older workers to remain in the workforce to relieve the pressures of increasing aged pensions, health care and age care costs. These include legislative changes such as tax concessions for workers 55 and over (ABS, 2010). In addition, the Global Financial Crisis was a trigger for older workers to

remain in the workforce longer in order to recover lost superannuation savings (AHRC, 2012). Human rights arguments also compel governments to ensure equitable access to employment by older workers as research reveals the vulnerability of older Australians to poverty and homelessness. The national Age Discrimination Act 2004 was enacted to ensure people are not treated unfairly because of their age in areas such as employment (AHRC, 2012; Riach, 2006).

The decline in the participation rate of older workers not only in Australia but worldwide suggests that age discrimination in employment is prevalent despite demographic trends (ABS, 2010; Encel, 1999). Academic literature supports the view that older workers, “who may be as young as 40” are being discriminated against in the job market in preference of younger workers (Bennington, 2001; Thornton & Luker, 2010, p. 141). Gringart and Helmes’ (2001) quasi-experiment investigating the willingness of employers to hire older workers found evidence of discriminatory hiring practices against older workers.

Involuntary redundancies and coercive retirement is a common reason for premature entry into retirement and for the older worker it is much harder to find employment after losing a job (Thornton & Luker, 2010; Weller, 2007). ABS data reflect that people tend to exit the workforce earlier than intended and the implication of this is that factors are preventing the mature worker from staying in employment. Of all the complaints received by the Australian Human Rights Commission in 2010, the greatest number of complaints is in the area of employment and 50% of these relate to mature age workers (AHRC, 2012).

While physiological deterioration is associated with the ageing process, data from controlled studies have shown that the variability between individuals is considerable (Shen & Kleiner, 2001; Thornton & Luker, 2010). According to the use-it-or-lose-it or the disuse hypothesis, cognitive functioning is enhanced through activities such as those provided by participation in challenging work or exposure to complex environmental conditions. The biological explanation for successful cognitive ageing is the generation of new dendritic branches as a result of stimulating activities, which compensates for decline associated with

normative ageing (Schaie et al., 2011). Furthermore, older workers can draw on experience and tenure to cancel out age related decline in job performance.

Despite positive perceptions of older workers as being reliable, loyal and hardworking (Gringart, Helmes, & Speelman, 2008), the literature suggests that as a group, more negative traits are associated with older than with younger adults and it is difficult to dispel negative stereotypes (Chasteen, Schwarz, & Park, 2002; Riach, 2007). Using a questionnaire specifically designed to measure attitudes toward older workers, Gringart, Helmes, and Speelman (2005) found systematic negative stereotyping by hiring decision makers in a random sample of employers across Australian industries.

Psychological literature suggests stereotyping as a reason for discrimination as previously discussed. Although individuals possess multiple characteristics, the most salient, is the one that is used as a basis for categorisation such as age, race, sex or physical appearance. However, research suggests that information provided that is inconsistent with stereotypical beliefs will lead to individuation of that person and hence he/she may not be subject to discrimination based on membership categorisation (Finkelstein, Burke, & Raju, 1995). This has grave implications for jobseekers whose initial contact with prospective employers is via a resume. Information on the resume such as the year of an education milestone or even a name can trigger categorisation. Other positive qualities that can be elicited in a job interview, such as a person's vitality as well as energy, and physical health that may render derogatory stereotype obsolete, are not available for impression formation when employers dismiss a candidate based on the activation of negative age stereotypes.

Despite evidence to the contrary, entrenched negative stereotypes of older workers suggest that legislation alone will not be a formidable deterrent against age discrimination (Shen & Kleiner, 2005; Thornton & Luker, 2010). In the current research age was the second variable manipulated in order to explore whether age discrimination in recruitment is as rampant and systemic as research suggests (Bennington, 1998; Thornton & Luker, 2010).

Furthermore, examining the effects of the interaction between race and age would demonstrate whether Anglo Australian applicants are in fact favoured over Middle Eastern applicants above and beyond age. Evidence of systemic racial bias in recruitment can be observed by the use of the quasi-experimental method of correspondence testing as discussed in the next section.

Correspondence Testing

Correspondence testing is a way of examining the extent of hiring discrimination by offering, laboratory like, controlled conditions in a real world setting (Bendick & Nunes, 2012). This quasi-experimental design was devised by Jowell and Prescott-Clarke in the 1970s and has been replicated in the last 35 years in over 10 countries (Riach & Rich, 2002). It involves an element of concealment by mailing out pairs of fictitious curriculum vitae (CVs) to either advertised or unsolicited job vacancies. Pairs of CVs are invented that are closely matched except for the variable under investigation such as race or age, and discrimination is inferred based on group differences in outcomes (Neumark, 2011; Riach & Rich, 2002). As the testing is repeatedly conducted, random factors are eliminated thereby allowing the inference to be made that the outcome reached is attributable to the manipulated variables (Gringart & Helmes, 2001). Although concealment is involved, this mode of testing is more likely to provide a more accurate depiction of possible racial or age discrimination than would the more traditional survey/questionnaire approaches that require participants to self report their own biases (Booth, Leigh, & Varganova, 2012).

As previously discussed, salient characteristics are central in stereotyping and those that are conspicuous act as cues that activate categorisation. If one holds an unfavourable disposition about people of a particular category, then hiring decisions that do not favour such people will likely be made based on the automatic activation of stereotypes rather than on factual information. Correspondence testing allows the researcher to control conditions by making salient the characteristic of interest (Pager & Western, 2012). The use of unsolicited applications in correspondence testing provides flexibility in the choice of professions and

industries in which to conduct the study, thereby allowing for greater generalisability of results (Gringart & Helmes, 2001).

In a large scale investigation of employment discrimination using correspondence testing, Booth, Leigh, and Varganova (2012) sent out over 4,000 fictitious resumes. That study was conducted in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, testing employer attitudes to five ethnic groups, namely Anglo-Australians, Indigenous Australians, Italian Australians, Chinese Australians and Middle Eastern Australians. Using the chi-square test on the number of call backs, they found those CVs with typical Chinese and Middle Eastern names had to submit double the number of applications in order to received the equivalent number of call back as those with Anglo Australian names. Indigenous applicants also suffered significant discrimination although not to the same degree as the Chinese and Middle Eastern. Interestingly, the fictitious Italian applicants observed no discrimination. This could perhaps be attributable to the fact that Europeans were the first migrants outside the Anglo Celtic group that were allowed into Australia as discussed earlier. As the Chinese and Middle Easterns were a later intake, when migration policy was progressively relaxed, this research indicated their status as discriminated against out-groups (Booth, Leigh, and Varganova, 2012).

However, correspondence testing is not without its critics. Heckman and Siegelman (1993) argued that the race effect may be exaggerated due to the fact that other characteristics that may influence the outcome are held constant which, is unlikely to be the case in the real labour market. Furthermore, they assert that the existence of unobservable productivity attributes pertaining to a particular ethnic group may result in over or underestimation of discrimination (Booth, Leigh, & Varganova, 2012; Neumark, 2011). Despite criticisms, correspondence testing provides objective evidence of behavioural patterns in relation to discrimination (Riach & Rich, 2002). When conducted under controlled conditions, correspondence testing offers a more convincing case than other qualitative methods as it

invokes implicit biases that people may not be aware of thereby suggest concealed prejudicial attitudes that exist (Quillian, 2006).

Riach and Rich's (2002) review of published correspondence testing studies, conducted worldwide over a period of 30 years, found compelling evidence of racial discrimination in employment recruitment against "blacks, Asians, and Arabs" (Riach & Rich, 2002, p. 499). The pervasiveness of discrimination at the recruitment stage of non-white applicants as evidenced by correspondence testing studies (E.g. Bendick & Nunes, 2012; Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004), indicates that anti-discrimination legislation is inadequate in addressing challenges this population is facing in attaining work. Work is important not only for economic reasons but is central in many cultures and although cultures holds different values and conceptions of work, it is nevertheless an important and meaningful aspect of daily life (Morin, 2004) to which the discussion now turns.

Meaning of Work

Work is important on many levels. Unemployment impacts subjective well-being not only due to financial stress constraining lifestyle choices but through deprivation of the latent functions, which employment provides such as social contact, sense of purpose and identity, structure and routine to name a few (Ervasti & Venetoklis, 2010). Exploring the meaning of work requires investigating the cultural context as different societies hold unique views that shape values and influence a person's attitudes (Sharabi, 2009).

Traditional Muslim societies are patriarchal, that is, the male is the head of the family and unlike western cultures, are fundamentally collectivistic emphasizing tradition, rigid hierarchy and autocracy (Sharabi, 2009). For a Middle Eastern man, to be unable to financially provide for the family is traditionally perceived as a greater detriment than to an Anglo Australian who would not be as negatively opposed to his wife working until such time as he is able to find work. Due to the strict observation of cultural norms for a Muslim family, in particular women's restrictive lives, commitment to Islamic values and ideals requires that the

men are responsible for finding employment (Siann & Clark, 1992). This suggests that Middle Eastern men rather than women are likely job seekers and that not finding work could be particularly challenging for them. Moreover, difficulty in securing employment erodes opportunities for interaction, limiting improvement in language and cultural awareness thus hampers group boundary permeability (Johnson, Vasey, & Markovic, 2009).

The tendency for older people to be discriminated against in the labour market impacts not only financially but also on their health status. While the ageing process may be associated with declining health, the inability to participate in paid work for unsuccessful older jobseekers further exacerbates this as there is a strong correlation between workforce participation and health status (Ross & Mirowsky, 1995). Working has been found to offer a protective factor against ill-health and research indicates that those working past retirement age have superior health status compared to those who do not work (AHRC, 2012). Surveys have demonstrated a correlation between the age of migrants and levels of unemployment, with advancing age being positively associated with likelihood of being unable to find work (Williams & Murphy, 1996).

Conclusion

In conclusion, theoretical discussions above together with findings from studies worldwide of unequal treatment of minorities in recruitment suggest that, ethnic minority groups, such as Middle Eastern people and the older population, continue to be discriminated against in the recruitment process. Reasons postulated include social psychological explanations of age and race related minority groups categorised as “out-group” members. In addition, the association of ethnic groups with unstable political world events (e.g. Gulf War, 9/11 and the Bali bombings) have conflated the distinction between Islamic extremists/Muslims/Middle Eastern people. Middle Eastern job seekers’ perceived disadvantage in the labour market is further compounded by age as a result of stereotypes held by employers regarding age related decline and lesser productivity compared to younger workers.

Inequality between groups in the labour market can be attributable to one of two factors: Differences in human capital (such as experience and qualifications) or differential treatment

(Hawthorne, 1997). The current study attempted to uncover the extent of differential treatment against minority applicants employing correspondence testing, ensuring that the human capital elements were comparable except for the variables under consideration, that is, racial background and age.

As previously discussed, correspondence testing studies typically assess differential treatment towards job applicants by comparing the success of applications. As argued by Riach and Rich (2004), the design of such studies do not allow concluding whether the behavior of employers is due to “taste, statistical, or social custom” discrimination (Riach & Rich, 2004, p. 474). Improving on past practice, the current research provided a novel approach interpreting the number of overall responses received by both groups of applicants. Using unsolicited job applications, the likelihood of receiving an invitation for an interview is unlikely. Therefore, it is anticipated that responses to unsolicited applications would mostly reflect variations of the rejection communications. The interpretation of the manner and numbers of responses received by each group of applicant could be more indicative of attitudes of employers as it reflects a decision to respond to a type of person and the manner in which to do so. Therefore, comparisons between the overall numbers of responses to a minority applicant, such a Middle Eastern with those of an Anglo Australian could be evidence of actual discrimination.

The current research partially replicated Gringart and Helmes’ 2001 study of discrimination that used correspondence testing assessing age and gender. The current study investigated race and age. Where Gringart and Helmes (2001) looked at the case for accounting assistants, here the study went beyond entry-level occupation and investigated accounting professionals. To ensure accurate assessment of hiring behaviour, Heckman and Siegelman (1993) argued the need to sample a range of skill levels as correspondence testing have primarily targeted entry-level jobs or low skilled occupations (Riach & Rich, 2002). By application of experimental principles such as matching CVs with comparable human capital and random assignment of a large sample, correspondence testing provides an explicit measure of discrimination.

The current research included age as the second variable as the analysis of the interaction between race and age was thought to indicate whether and how these two variables have an effect on employer responses. Examining the effects of race at the two age levels would strengthen the direction of the results more than looking at race alone. As previously stated, ageism studies have found evidence of employment discrimination and negative stereotyping towards older workers (E.g. Bennington, 2001; Encel, 1999; Gringart, Helmes, & Speelman, 2005), as such, if employers consistently chose the older Anglo Australian applicant in favour of the younger Middle Eastern applicant, this would suggest that race is perceived to be more of a discriminator than age.

Research Hypotheses

The above review of the literature leads to the following research questions: Are people of Middle Eastern descent discriminated against in the recruitment process compared with Anglo Australians and are older job seekers discriminated against compared to younger job seekers? It was hypothesised that Anglo Australian job applicants would receive more favourable responses compared with Middle Eastern job applicants. It was also hypothesised that younger job applicants would receive more favourable responses than older job applicants.

Method

Research Design

The current study employed a 2 (Race: Anglo-Australian and Middle Eastern) x 2 (Age: 32 years and 57 years) between subjects design. Hence, the two independent variables, each with two levels, were age (32 years and 57 years) and race (Anglo-Australian and Middle Eastern). The dependent variable was the total number of responses received by Old Anglo-Australian, Young Anglo-Australian, Old Middle Eastern and Young Middle Eastern. A chi-square goodness for fit test was applied because the sampling method was simple random sampling, the population was at least 10 times greater than the sample, the variable under study was categorical, and the expected frequency count was at least five.

The dependent variables of time to receipt of a positive response and time to receipt of a negative response as measured by Gringart and Helmes (2001) were not applicable in this study due to a methodological difference employed. Although this research was a partial replication of Gringart and Helmes' (2001) correspondence testing, the mode of delivery of the CVs was via email rather than Australia post, in line with contemporary employment practices. As a result, the times to receipt of a positive or negative response was less meaningful as email etiquette sees that mail is usually responded to within 24 hours. Observation of the time to respond in the majority of the cases was in fact 24 hours. In addition, the number of positive and number of negative responses was not meaningful as the CVs were unsolicited and responses reflected different ways of rejection. The variations in responses thus demonstrated degrees of negativity rather than positive and negative responses. Consequently, the dependent variable to be analysed was the total number of responses received by Anglo Australian and Middle Eastern applicants, both young and old.

Participants

The participants comprised a random sample of 500 small Western Australian private sector organisations blind tested using correspondence testing. ABS defines small companies as having up to 20 employees whereas medium size companies as having up to 200 employees. According to the ABS (2011), of all employing businesses in Australia, 89.5% employed less than 20 employees. The sample was thus limited to small companies because unsolicited resumes are more likely to be sent to them.

Organisations were randomly selected by Accountable List Brokers (<http://www.listbroker.com.au>) using the following criteria: Small companies as defined by up to 20 employees, non-government, private sector organisations located in Western Australia. Accountable List Brokers continually update their databases of business listings and claim to have 90% of active businesses. Not-for-profit organizations were also excluded as their replies to unsolicited resumes would likely be standard and reflect anti-discrimination policy.

Non-government organisations/private companies only formed the sample. As the promotion of equal employment opportunity has long since been entrenched in the public sector since its inception in 1975 it cannot be seen to be in breach of anti-discriminatory laws (Encel, 1999). Although these laws apply to all employers, discriminatory practices are less easily scrutinised in non-government organizations. The current study did not target multi-national or large organisations because, firstly, their high profile required transparency in their conduct of corporate governance and hence imperative that they uphold themselves to be law abiding. This means that unsolicited job applications would be responded to in accord with anti-discriminatory policy. Secondly, being large usually mean they have complex bureaucratic processes and therefore decision making is sometimes far-removed from senior management. As such, procedures and policies are usually enacted to ensure adherence of behaviours that promote compliance to internal and external requirements.

Materials

Four fictitious resumes with covering letters were designed (See Appendix A and Appendix B). Accounting was the chosen profession as it is a gender-neutral occupation that is found across industries. Since the introduction of self-assessment by the Australian Taxation Office with the BAS system, all organisations are required to be conversant with statutory requirements and meet all lodgement obligations. As such, accountants tend to be employed across all industries in most organisations in order to maintain all company compliance procedures.

According to the ABS, people over the age of 45 are defined as ‘mature age’ workers and those 55 and over as being ‘older workers’. In the current research 57 was chosen as the age of the older job-seeker. The age of the younger candidate for comparison has been chosen as 32. If one considers the normative developmental stage where a student progresses from high school into university, by the time they reach their early 30s, he/she could have accumulated ten years of work experience. In the current instance two age groups with ten

years experience in the same field were compared. Furthermore, this was the age chosen by Gringart and Helmes (2001) and similarly replicated by Bendick and Nunes (2012).

The method of sending out paired resumes operates by the *ceteris paribus* conceptual experiment, varying race and age but keeping other variables similar and comparable. To control for confounds, paired resumes have similar characteristics so that in essence only race and age were manipulated. Both applicants presented 10 years accounting experience preceded by tertiary education, with the older applicant having changed careers 10 years earlier. Both applicants were male, married and living in neighbouring suburbs. Two street addresses were provided in neighbouring and comparable suburbs in terms of socioeconomic status to add realism and minimise distance from place of employment as being discriminating factors.

Brief covering letters conveyed the applicants as jobseekers. The CVs implied the applicants were currently employed to minimise stereotyped preconceptions about unemployed people. Furthermore, discretion and confidentiality was requested and references were offered upon request in order to avoid the possibility of companies directly contacting the organisations included in the CVs.

Male was the gender of choice for the current research. As previously discussed, the cultural norms for Middle Eastern family dictates that Middle Eastern men are likely to be jobseekers. Furthermore, census data indicate that 70% of Australian resident females born in Iraq, Lebanon and Syria were not in the labour force (ABS, 2008). This suggests that, Middle Eastern men are more likely to be seeking employment than Middle Eastern women. In keeping with ensuring equivalence in the CVs and to minimise confounds from gender preferences both applicants must therefore be male.

Procedure

Following receipt of ethics approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee at Edith Cowan University, unsolicited paired CVs were emailed to a random sample of 500 small organisations. This was a departure from the mode of correspondence testing conducted by

Gringart and Helmes (2001), in which job applications were mailed via Australia post. Research by Schullery, Ickes, and Schullery (2009), found that the most preferred mode of receiving CVs was via email. Email addresses were set up using Gmail accounts. Each CV contained its own email address, street address and a mobile telephone number with message bank.

A total of four types of CVs were required to uniquely present an older and a younger Middle Eastern and an older and a younger Anglo Australian applicants. CVs for each applicant contained work experience from organisations that actually existed to avoid raising suspicions of employers. Each pair of CVs was created visually different in format, such as, font and layout to minimise demand characteristics raising suspicion of employers. In order to accommodate for possible employer preferences to font and layout the format of the CVs were counter-balanced across all conditions. Therefore, the four types of CVs were reproduced in duplicates but with the alternate format resulting in eight CVs in total.

Paired CVs were sent in the combination of a Middle Eastern and an Australian male. The following combinations were sent: Old Middle Eastern paired with old Australian, old Middle Eastern paired with young Australian, young Middle Eastern paired with old Australian, young Middle Eastern paired with young Australian.

Only one name representative of each ethnic group was required as the pairs of CVs compared ethnicity with the interaction of age as the moderator variable. Booth, Leigh, and Varganova (2011) undertook a similar study in Australia testing labour market discrimination with four different ethnic groups. Ethnically distinguishable names were produced by consulting the website <http://www.behindthename.com>. Booth, Leigh, and Varganova (2012) published a sample of names typical of each category that they utilised from that website. Following the success of correspondence testing undertaken by that study, the current research selected one of the names used from the same sample to denote people of Middle Eastern extraction. To ensure participating companies were in no doubt as to the origins of the Middle

Eastern applicant, educational and early job experiences were situated in the Middle Eastern region, specifically, Jordan.

Separate mobile telephone numbers were established for the following four identities: Old Middle Eastern, young Middle Eastern, old Anglo Australian and young Anglo Australian. This was to ensure that responses from participating companies could be related back to the CV that was sent. Recorded messages on mobile phone message bank had a distinctly male Australian accent on one and a distinctly male Middle Eastern accent on the other. It was ensured that the two male confederates recruited for this purpose were raised in Australia and the Middle East respectively until at least middle adulthood and hence have retained a distinguishable accent. All four mobile telephones were activated with message bank throughout the two weeks data collection period and were checked daily after business hours.

For correspondence testing, only responses from employers were considered valid cases. No response whatsoever is considered an excluded case. Data were collated and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20.

Results

Of the 500 companies, randomly selected for receipt of paired CVs, 165 applicants were responded to by 114 companies. This yields a response rate of 23%. As the data were in the form of count of responses received, a chi-square test for goodness of fit was conducted to assess whether the number of responses received by each category of applicants was influenced by membership in a particular racial and/or age group. The data satisfied the assumptions of independence as each company received only one set of paired CVs and were not influenced by the participation of other companies. The chi-square SPSS Statistics output indicated that 0% of categories had expected frequencies lower than 5, therefore the expected frequencies assumption was satisfied as well.

The chi-square test for goodness of fit (with $\alpha = .05$) was used to assess whether a person's race (Anglo Australian or Middle Eastern) and age (32 or 57) were related to

employers' responses to the unsolicited CVs. Table 1 depicts the summary of responses received by each category of applicants.

Table 1

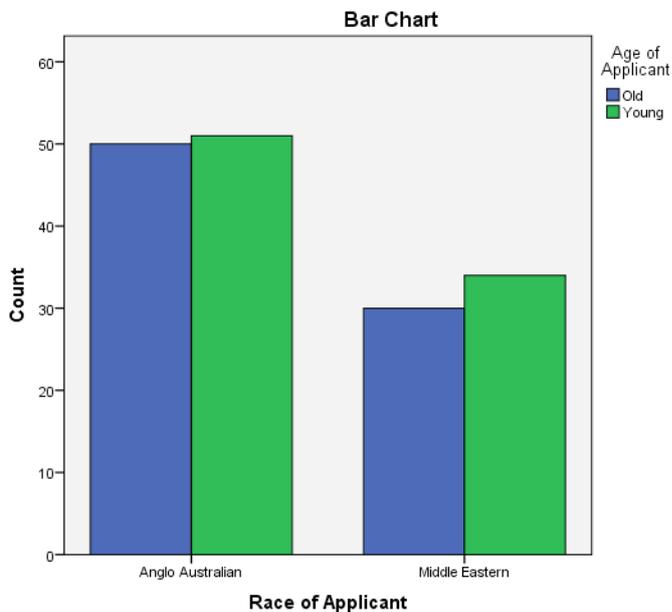
Summary of Responses Received across the Four Categories of Applicants (N = 165)

Type of Applicant	No. of Responses	% of Sample
Young Anglo Australian	51	31
Old Anglo Australian	50	30
Young Middle Eastern	34	21
Old Middle Eastern	30	18
Total	165	100

The chi-square test was statistically significant, $\chi^2(3, N = 165) = 8.50, p < .05$, indicating that some of the applicants were responded to with significantly greater frequency than others. An index of effect size, Cohen's ω of 0.23 was calculated. Although considered to be a small effect according to Cohen's (1988) classification, it is nevertheless, significant when considered in the context of the impact on the actual population of people of Middle Eastern descent in Australia. Considering that about 300 participants per group would be required in order to detect a statistically significant difference, at a power of .99 (Kraemer & Thiemann, 1989) with such as an effect size, it is clear that such magnitude of discrimination would be detrimental in the lives of Middle Eastern job seekers in Western Australia. Figure 1 below graphically depicts the data pertaining to the four categories of applicants.

Figure 1

Bar Chart of Employer Responses to Middle Eastern and Anglo Australian Applicants both Young and Old



Binomial tests of proportions were performed to further explore the significant difference found in the omnibus chi-square test. As the difference in the number of employer responses received within race groups was minimal (51 and 50 for young and old Anglo Australians respectively; 34 and 30 for young and old Middle Easterns respectively), binomial tests were performed on pairings of Old Anglo Australian with Old Middle Eastern, Old Anglo Australian with Young Middle Eastern, Young Anglo Australian with Old Middle Eastern and Young Anglo Australian with Young Middle Eastern.

Two of the binomial tests of proportion reached statistical significance. These were Old Anglo Australian paired with Old Middle Eastern ($p = .03$) and Young Anglo Australian paired with Old Middle Eastern ($p = .03$). Appendix C contains tables pertaining to the results of the above four sets of binomial tests.

As can be seen from Figure 1, the difference in employer responses was most pronounced across race. As the age of the applicants yielded a similar number of responses

across race (for young applicants = 85, for old applicants = 80), applicants' age was collapsed and a further binomial test was performed comparing race only. The result of the binomial tests of proportion, depicted in table 2, was significant ($p < .05$), indicating that employer responses to CVs were dependent on the race of the applicant.

Table 2

Binomial Test of Proportions - Race

	Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Exact Sig. (2-tailed)
Responses Received	Anglo Aust	101	.61	.50	.01
	Middle East	64	.39		
		165	1.0		

Discussion

The first hypothesis predicting that applicants of Middle Eastern descent would be discriminated against in the recruitment process compared with Anglo Australians was supported by the results of the current research. The second hypothesis that younger job applicants would receive more favourable treatment than would older job applicants was supported by the results across, but not within race. That is, within each racial group, although the younger applicants received more responses than the older applicant, it was not statistically significant. Statistical significance was found when comparing the younger Anglo Australian applicant to the older Middle Eastern applicants.

Being unsolicited job applications, receiving an invitation for an interview was unlikely unless the companies were in fact seeking a new accountant. Therefore, the number of responses received was utilised as a measure of the employers' responses. Although all the emailed responses from employers informed the applicants that there were no current vacancies, there were, however, different degrees in the negative responses received. These

included minimal response, indicating no vacancy; responses that provided the current circumstances of the company in explaining the no vacancy; responses that advised the applicant to re-apply at some specified period in the future; responses that included referring the applicant to other organisations that were known to be recruiting; and advising that the resumes will be kept on file. However, these variations in the characteristics of responses were insufficient in numbers to be used meaningfully in the analysis. Furthermore, as the responses were all negative, but differed in the degree of negativity, it was less relevant whether the data were analysed in totality or grouped into types of negative responses. Therefore, counting the overall number of responses received by each racial group is more meaningful as it clearly shows to which applicant employers have taken the time and effort to respond. This then provides an indication of preferential treatment in employer responses.

Past studies of race discrimination have consistently demonstrated unequal treatment of ethnic minorities at the point of recruitment (E.g. Beattie & Johnson, 2012; Riach & Rich, 2002). The findings of the current study are in accord with this trend as well as with extensive local qualitative studies undertaken in Perth, Western Australia on the treatment received by Middle Eastern migrants (Colic-Peisker, 2009; Fozdar, 2011).

Various reasons are postulated for the small effect size observed in the current study. Although 500 companies were sampled, there were a noticeable number of emails from Gmail after the end of the two-week data collection period, advising that mail could not be delivered. In their correspondence testing study of employer attitudes towards Middle Eastern migrants in Sweden, Carlsson and Rooth (2012) used a random sample of 5,657 companies. As mentioned earlier, in an Australian study, Booth, Leigh, and Varganova (2012) sent CVs to over 4,000 companies. Both studies used the correspondence testing experiment and results from chi-square tests found discrimination against Middle Eastern people. Secondly, this could also be due to artifacts of the experiment such as detection of the experiment by selection officials, employer responses to differences between resumes designed to be equivalent, CVs lost due to non-deliverables, or identified as spam and went straight to junk mail folder, which would not have

happened with posted applications. In addition, the depiction of race was made purely by a name and place of birth chosen to elicit a salient characteristic, which may have gone unnoticed by some employers who failed to recognise the racial context.

The binomial test of proportions examining race only was statistically significant indicating the race of the applicant had an effect on whether employers responded to the CVs. It is noteworthy that one employer's response to the older Anglo Australian applicant was, "Thanks for your resume. I hate admin, and if I could afford it I'd snap you up! Unfortunately mine is a small one-man band. Good luck with your endeavours". However, the counterpart CV of the young Middle Eastern applicant did not receive a response at all from this particular employer. This demonstrates that in principle, correspondence testing with paired CVs makes responses meaningful as the decision to respond to one applicant and not the other suggests a preference made by a comparison imposed on the decision maker (Gringart & Helmes, 2001).

The observed proportions of 61% (Anglo Australian) and 39% (Middle Eastern) found in the binomial test comparing race (Table 2) indicate that a significantly larger proportion of Anglo Australians were responded to while the equally qualified Middle Easterns did not get a response. The order of sending of the CVs to employers was counter-balanced to address confounding order effects. The order of receipt of the CVs by employers was counter-balanced so that across trials employers viewing one CV first do not confound their decision to whether or not respond to the second due to, laziness, demand characteristics, or irritation from receiving unsolicited CVs. The findings from the current study suggest that employers do respond to stimuli such as a name and appear to differentiate applicants when deciding whether and/or how to reply.

Although there was minimal variation in the number of responses received between the young and old applicants within groups (refer Figure 1), the binomial tests of proportions across race and age suggest that age does have an effect but this effect is masked by the salience of race. The two binomial tests comparing Old Middle Eastern with Old Anglo

Australian and Old Middle Eastern with Young Anglo Australian were both statistically significantly in favour of the Anglo Australian applicant. The fact that more responses were received by the Young Anglo Australian applicant compared to the Old Middle Eastern applicant is consistent with findings from age studies, which demonstrate persistent disadvantage of older jobseekers (Bennington, 2001; Thornton & Luker, 2010). The significant difference found between the Old Anglo Australian and the Old Middle Eastern in favour of the Anglo Australian applicant indicates a race effect as both applicants presented the same age and equivalent qualifications. This suggests that being old and Middle Eastern places an applicant in double jeopardy, being discriminated against on both race and age. The non-significant result found comparing the Young Middle Eastern with the Old Anglo Australian, where the latter received more responses, is particularly telling because age studies overwhelmingly find discrimination against the older population as previously mentioned. In the current study being younger was not advantageous when the applicant was Middle Eastern, as it seems that the race effect predominated the age effect. It appears that in the current study race was more salient in the minds of employers than was age.

In the current study, it was noted that only two telephone messages were recorded on one of the four mobile telephone accounts set up and this was to seek further information from the applicants. Both employers were interested in speaking with the young Anglo Australian applicant. This anecdotal evidence supports both hypotheses as it demonstrates employers' bias towards younger people and Anglo Australian applicants.

The insignificant discrimination against older workers within racial groups in the present study can be explained by the methodological design employed. Each employer was only presented with the CV of an Anglo Australian applicant paired with a CV of a Middle Eastern applicant across age combinations. The results demonstrate that employers found race more distinguishing than age. However, if the experiment was designed to provide employers with a pair of Anglo Australian applicants of differing age and a pair of Middle Eastern

applicant of differing age, the age variable may have shown a greater effect. In the current study employers were not exposed to pairs of CV's with applicants of the same race.

Anti-discrimination legislation may have contributed to challenging discriminatory practices but it must be noted that the current study used unsolicited job applications. If the current study was to target actual job advertisements, rather than behaviour of employers when there was no vacancy, the results may have conveyed a more dramatic outcome against minority applicants. The decision to select a candidate for potential employment may differ considerably to responding to unsolicited applications. When there is not a requirement to hire, then there is no consequence to the way the response is made to the applicants, that is, declining in a positive or negative fashion, or whether to respond at all. This makes correspondence testing a useful tool, which gives the researcher the flexibility to choose the type of behaviour investigated.

In essence, the crux of the current study revealed the treatment afforded to unsolicited Middle Eastern job seekers by employers. Correspondence testing as a methodology was originally conceived to test the extent of prejudicial attitudes towards minorities as equal opportunities legislation has led to more covert forms of discrimination. However, where traditional correspondence testing research tested for racial discrimination against minority applicants by comparing success rates in securing an interview of Anglo applicants and inferred prejudicial behaviour from labour market outcomes, their results could be explained by statistical discrimination, which precludes prejudice and racial biases. The current study may have been a more accurate indicator of the level of prejudicial attitudes among employers as it highlights the behaviour towards minority applicants who are not extended the same courtesy of response to unsolicited job applications where in the majority of the cases, the Anglo Australian applicants are granted one. The current study's conceptualisation of correspondence testing could be valuable for future studies.

The potential ethical dilemma of the concealment involved in the current study has been considered by assuring complete anonymity of the companies involved and that the experiment was conducted with confidentiality. Any inconvenience imposed on employers or genuine

applicants was minimal by promptly declining any offers of interview. Furthermore, it is considered that the benefits gained by exposure of research findings outweigh the minimal inconvenience caused (Riach & Rich, 2004).

Limitations of the current study include the fact that only the accounting profession was chosen. Although the study was purposeful in targeting jobs requiring tertiary educated applicants, as many past correspondence studies testing discrimination used entry-level jobs, future studies could test a range of professions. Accounting, however, is found across industries which allowed varied and random sampling. Furthermore, generalisability of the findings are limited to small, private companies as opposed to large, multi-nationals and government organisations. Given that 90% of businesses in Australia employ less than 20 employees, testing with small companies would, nevertheless provide an indicative sample for investigating the behaviour of recruiters.

Future research into hiring bias could investigate how non-responses could also be meaningful. As Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004) suggests, employers may use a lexicographic search, that is, they may use heuristics and read no further after reading a foreign name in order to get through all their emails. Future correspondence testing studies could also manipulate the human capital variable by depicting the minority applicant as being more qualified. This was alluded to by Neumark (2011) where a correspondence test of this type would result in a more compelling case if the better quality CV belonging to the minority applicant is rejected in favour of the Anglo candidate. In order to further assess the results of correspondence testing, future research could include triangulating these findings with other methods to explore the experiences of Middle Eastern people in their efforts to gain employment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the current study not only corroborates trends found in qualitative research examining hiring bias of employers against people of Middle Eastern descent but also provides a compelling indicator of the prevailing negative attitude towards this population. In spite of equal

employment opportunity legislation, it seems that belonging to a racial minority (in this case, Middle Eastern) could be determinative in achieving employment success.

The results of the current study suggest that the Middle Eastern migrant population suffer an exaggerated effect beyond that of traditional markers of categorisation such as age. The applied value of the current study includes contributing to an understanding of hiring bias not only through raising awareness of social trends but through generating speculations of the causes and stimulating discussion on the best method of investigating and minimising this behavior. Dissemination of such research findings will add to the body of knowledge informing the effectiveness of Australian Governments' programs such as Social Inclusion initiatives, designed to meet the needs of the disadvantaged. The current research provides evidence that Middle Eastern migrants are still disadvantaged through prejudicial attitudes and therefore more proactive strategies are required in policy formulation to encourage the promotion of cultural awareness in reducing their marginalised status and hence contribute to the social cohesion of multicultural Australia.

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Appendix A

Sample Fictitious CV

Ahmed Hassan Kassir

Address: 126 Fourth Avenue
Mt Lawley 6050
Telephone: 049 819 5314
Email: Ahksallam@gmail.com
DOB: 5 July 1981
Marital Status: Married

Employment History

2005 – Current Neltronics – Senior Accountant

Produce timely year end financials, monthly accounts & reconciliations, cashflow budgets, BAS lodgements, payroll, supervise accounting assistants

2006 -2008 Empire Holdings Company Ltd – Acting Chief Accounting

Overseeing the accounting functions of the company, cashflow projections, budgets, variance analysis.

2002 -2005 Raswa Company Ltd (SWARCO Group) – Senior Accountant

Preparation of financial statements, monthly management reports

2002 -2002 Gulliver’s Travel Agency – Accountant

Preparation of reconciliation statements, accounts payables/receivables. Monthend procedures.

2000 – 2001 Jordan Phosphate Mines Company

Bookkeeper and administration duties

Education

Yarmouk University, Irbed – Jordan 2003

BA, Administrative Sciences with a major in Accounting and a minor in Financial Banking Science (Study in English language)

De La Salle College Frere – Jordan 1999

Jordan General Secondary Education Certificate Exam (Tawjehi)

Computer Skills

Computer literate, with good experience using Microsoft Office (Powerpoint, Word, Excel). Experienced with a variety of in-house accounting packages. Sunsystem, Miracle Accounting System

Personal Qualities

Self confident, highly motivated and responsible, eager to learn, capable to teach and provide on-job training and can work under pressure. Organised and able to manage time efficiently. Fluent in written and spoken Arabic and English.

For discretion, references will be supplied upon request.

Appendix B

Sample Fictitious CV Curriculum Vitae

Christopher Wilson

31 Sopwith Elbow

Maylands

T: 045 598 5996

E: chrisandjanewilson@hotmail.com

Personal Details

Date of Birth: 28 September 1956

Marital Status: Married

Education

Bachelor of Business
Curtin University 2003

High School Certificate

Greenwood Senior High School 1974

Work Experience

2005 to 2013 Portman Mining Limited

Management accountant for operating mines. Maintained all aspects of accounting function including monthly management reports, yearly financial budgets, cashflow and capital expenditure of the company. Supervised accounts receivables and accounts payable functions, liaise with mine site staff for results, assist external auditor.

2003 to 2005 Moore Stephens Chartered Accountants

Graduate accountant. Duties included: client accounting for a range of clients of varying turnover and industries. Data entry to production of annual accounts. ASIC annual returns and tax returns for companies, partnerships and trust accounts.

1999 to 2003 Flower Design School

Bookkeeper. Duties include: Updated fees collected for each term, managing payment plans, accounts payables, assisting accountant with production of monthly profit & loss.

1975 to 1998 Williams BJ Trucking

Worked in the family business driving trucks; some administration functions.

Skills

Possess strong analytical and problem solving skills, attention to detail and ability to work under tight schedules. Fully conversant with most computer software packages, eg. Solution 6 accounting, MYOB, Microsoft Office.

Hobbies & Interests

Football, sports, movies, hiking

References on request.

Appendix C

Binomial Test of Proportions – Old Anglo Australian and Old Middle Eastern

	Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Exact Sig. (2-tailed)
Responses	Old Anglo Aust	50	.63	.50	.033
Received	Old Middle East	30	.37		
		80	1.0		

Binomial Test of Proportions – Old Anglo Australian and Young Middle Eastern

	Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Exact Sig. (2-tailed)
Responses	Old Anglo Aust	50	.60	.50	.101
Received	Young Middle East	34	.40		
		84	1.0		

Binomial Test of Proportions – Young Anglo Australian and Old Middle Eastern

	Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Exact Sig. (2-tailed)
Responses	Young Anglo Aust	51	.63	.50	.026
Received	Old Middle East	30	.37		
		81	1.0		

Binomial Test of Proportions – Young Anglo Australian and Young Middle Eastern

	Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Exact Sig. (2-tailed)
Responses	Young Anglo Aust	51	.60	.50	.082
Received	Young Middle East	34	.40		
		85	1.0		