Diversity and inclusion at ProRail - How the ideology of meritocracy jeopardizes diversity recruitment

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Abstract

The goal of this study is to discover whether the concepts perceived diversity climate, the perception of inclusion and diversity recruitment have a positive effect on the retention rates of minority trainees at ProRail. This research is a single-case analysis with a qualitative approach. Thirteen in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted, eight with minority trainees and five with recruiters. The results demonstrate that all of the before-mentioned concepts have a positive effect on the retention rates of minority trainees. However, the ideology of meritocracy and the opposition towards bureaucracy threaten the positive influence that diversity recruitment has on retention rates of minorities. These outcomes are both of scientific and societal relevance. Furthermore, the study includes recommendations for future research and policy recommendations for ProRail.

Keywords: ProRail, diversity climate, perception of inclusion, post-hire outcomes, diversity recruitment, affirmative action, meritocracy, bureaucracy, minority retention.

1. Introduction

In 2017 the Dutch broadcasting organisation NOS headlined "White applicant with a criminal record is more promising than an immigrant without one" (NOS, 2017). The article cited from a Dutch study which had revealed that white, Dutch applicants with a criminal record are more likely to be invited for a job interview than applicants with a bicultural background who do not have a criminal record. These study results were only the tip of the iceberg regarding discrimination, racism and unconscious bias in relation to hiring people from minority groups. Three years later, a large study by the University of Amsterdam and the University of Utrecht demonstrated that applicants with a bicultural background are 40% less likely to be invited for an interview than their white counterparts (van der Schrier, 2020). Besides discrimination during the recruitment process, minority employees also regularly face discrimination in the workplace itself. One third of the reports on discrimination is about origin or descent (van der Schrier, 2020). Discrimination of minorities in the workplace leads to feelings of exclusion and eventually affects retention rates. Previous research demonstrates that retention rates of racial minorities are considerably lower than those of white personnel (Mckay et al., 2007). Staff turnover among minority groups is 30% higher than among those who belong to the majority group, due to the invisible barriers they encounter (Mckay et al., 2007). But not only racial minorities face obstacles during the recruitment process and within the workplace. Women still face a 'glass ceiling' when trying to reach higher management positions (Groeneveld, Bakker, & Schmidt, 2020). They are also confronted with the fact that they often do not have the same access to societal resources as their male counterparts (Acker, 2006).

It becomes apparent that these issues must be tackled. The Dutch Government and other public organisations have a leading role in doing so (Rijksoverheid, 2020). The Government should ensure that equal chances and opportunities are created in the recruitment and selection process, they must establish an inclusive organisational culture, they should promote the progression of people with a bicultural background and must pursue an anti-discrimination policy (CBS & SCP, 2020). ProRail, as a semi-public organisation, feels inclined to follow this example and aims to attract a more diverse workforce via diversity recruitment. However, diversity recruitment in itself is not enough to attract and retain minority employees. Fostering a diverse work climate and ensuring that minorities feel included in the organisation, will increase their inclination to stay at the organisation (Cable & Judge, 1996; McKay & Avery, 2005; McKay et al., 2007). Based on previous research, it is expected that if ProRail's perceived diversity climate and perception of inclusion are high and if they successfully implemented diversity recruitment, it will have a positive effect on the retention rates of minorities. But, there

are also two threats that jeopardize the hypothesized positive effect of diversity recruitment on minority retention rates, namely the ideology of meritocracy and the opposition towards bureaucracy (Augoustinos, Tuffin, & Every, 2005; Van den Brink, Benschop, & Jansen, 2010). The ideology of meritocracy is one that is fully permeated in our western societies and is a society model based on individual performance and the beflief that - theoretically – "everyone can climb to the top. One of the most important characteristics of meritocracy is that winners believe they have earned their success fairly, while the losers blame their failure on themselves" (Polak, 2021). This ideology assumes every individual begins at the same starting line, but what it fails to comprehend is the fact that 50% to 60% of an individual's position in society can be predied based on their origin (Augoustinos et al., 2005; Bregman & Frederik, 2016). Arguments that concern merit, are often used to legitimize resistance towards diversity recruitment. The second threat to diversity recruitment, opposition towards bureaucracy, relies on the fact that diversity recruitment and its associated measures are often perceived as bureaucratic by recruiters (Van den Brink et al., 2010). They frequently feel that fixed policies limit their experitise and sponteneity and encourages bureaucracy.

Based on the before-mentioned hypothesized relationships, the following research question was formulated '*How do the perceived diversity climate, diversity recruitment and the perception of inclusion affect retention rates of minority trainees at ProRail?'.* In order to answer the research question, several sub-questions were defined:

- How does the perceived diversity climate influence retention rates of minority trainees at ProRail?
- How does diversity recruitment influence retention rates of minority trainees at ProRail?
- How does the perception of inclusion influence retention rates of minority trainees?
- Do threats to diversity recruitment negatively affect the influence of diversity recruitment on retention rates of minority trainees?

This study is socially relevant for a number of reasons. As has become clear, discrimination during the recruitment and selection process and within the workplace are still the order of the day. Due to a diversifying society and because of societal pressure, organisations both in the private and public sector feel compelled to diversify. Especially (semi)public organisations fulfil a pioneering role in attracting and retaining minority employees. In the past few years ProRail has aimed to create a diverse work climate and has implemented several diversity recruitment measures. The retention of minority employees is vastly complex and dependent on a number of variables. Therefore, it is imperative to provide a deeper understanding of which elements positively affect or threaten the retention of minority employees.

Various previous studies have sought to find which factors influence the retention rates of minorities (Heinz, 2020; Cable & Judge, 1996; Mckay & Avery, 2005; Mckay et al., 2007; Oladapo, 2020). All of these studies indicated that further research is necessary to test whether other variables or contextual elements influence minority retention rates. To identify which factors influence retention rates of minorities, this study will combine multiple variables from previous studies and analyse them in relation to minority retention rates. Furthermore, this study aims to fill a gap in the literature on retention rates of minorities in a Dutch semi-public organisation. The outcomes of this study could provide further insight into this issue and pave the way for future research.

In order to answer the research question, a single-case study with a qualitative approach was conducted. Thirteen in-depth semi-structured interviews with ProRail employees were carried out. The reason for using this method was that it provides a deeper and better understanding of delicate themes and provides insight into and explanation for individuals' attitudes (Britten & Fisher, 1993). Semi-structured interviews as a data collection method, is one of the most often used approaches within qualitative research, as it facilitates reciprocity between the interviewer and the participants (Galletta & Cross, 2013; Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). The interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded using Atlas.ti.

The structure of this thesis is as follows. The second chapter presents the theoretical framework that entails the scientific basis for this study and it offers a conceptual model that comprises all hypothesized relationships. The third chapter consists of the research design of this study and sets out the operationalisation of the variables, a case selection justification, the method used for this study and the validity and reliability. The fourth chapter will give a detailed case description of ProRail, providing the necessary. The fifth chapter outlines the results of the study and the sixth chapter presents a summary of these study results. The thesis ends with the conclusion and discussion, including limitations and providing recommendations for both future research as well as policy recommendations.

2. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, the theoretical framework is set out. It entails the scientific basis which is necessary for this study and to give an insight into theoretical theories that help to answer the research question *'How do the perceived diversity climate, diversity recruitment and the perception of inclusion affect retention rates of minority trainees at ProRail?'*. Different theories, definitions, concepts and models are examined. First, the concept of perceived diversity climate will be discussed. Then, related to the concept of diversity climate, is the

notion of inclusion and post-hire outcomes. Furthermore, the concept diversity recruitment is explained and the organisational motives for diversity recruitment are set out. In addition, the threats to diversity recruitment reviewed and the retention of minorities is explained. Finally, a conceptual model is presented which visualises the expected relationships between the concepts.

2.1 Perceived diversity climate

It appears that the majority of diversity literature discusses the potential effects of a diversity climate on organisations and teams and rarely refers to the definition of diversity. In this study we use the following definition of the term diversity "all characteristics in which people differ from each other. This concerns both visible characteristics, such as gender and cultural background, as well as less visible characteristics such as a disability, chronic illness, sexual preference, norms and values, personal beliefs, talents, work style, education or experience" (SER, 2019). However, the notion of diversity is different from the concept of diversity climate. The latter is one of the primary underlying concepts for the dependent variable, but also provides an essential guideline on which the conceptual model is based. The concept is explained into further detail below.

In order for an organisation to achieve a diverse work climate, it must also implement diversity management. The concept of diversity management is defined as the attraction and selection of "talented employees from minority groups that would not have been found through the everyday recruitment and selection practices" (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). Diversity management values cultural differences amongst employees, it reduces intergroup biases and it makes use of the added value of having different viewpoints and backgrounds (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). Diversity climate is defined as "employees' perceptions that an organisation adheres to fair personnel practices and the degree that minority employees are integrated into the work environment" (McKay et al., 2007, p. 36). They additionally state that the perceptions of diversity climate should have greater consequences for minority employees than for majority employees in establishing their inclination to stay at an organisation (McKay et al., 2007).

Fostering a diverse climate through diversity management is often believed to lead to positive outcomes, such as an increase in creativity due to a wider range of perspectives, the enhancement of decision-making quality, heightened legitimacy, positive employee behaviours and attitudes, boosted organisational performance, a decline in staff turnover, an expansion of the sales market, an increase in financial performance, a decrease in fraud, a lessening in pay gap differences, and a positive effect on corporate social responsibility (Ashikali & Groeneveld,

2015; SER, 2019). Ashikali and Groeneveld (2015) also found that diversity management has a positive effect on employees' affective commitment, which is the emotional connection employees feel with the organisation they work for. As diversity management aims to attract, select, and retain minority employees and because it recognizes and values their differences, it reinforces employees' feeling of belonging (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). If an organisation manages diversity successfully, it should be apparent in the extent to which employees can identify with their organisation. Employees feelings of belonging and their ability to identify with their organisation is elaborated upon into detail in paragraph 2.2 Inclusion. Ely and Thomas (2001) suggest that if team members share common values and goals, cultural diversity will lead to more advantageous outcomes.

Besides fostering positive effects, diversity management should aspire to diminish the negative effects that derive from intergroup biases. Negative consequences of diversity management that might arise are age discrimination, bias, stereotyping, tokenism, isolation, communication issues, and conflicts (SER, 2019; Shore et al., 2009). For this study, it is expected that a perceived diversity climate by the respondents will have a positive influence on the retention rates and therefore the following was hypothesized:

H₁: The perceived diversity climate has a positive effect on the retention rates of minority trainees.

2.2 Inclusion

The concepts diversity and inclusion are interrelated and complement each other. As organisations strive for diverse teams, it is imperative that diverse team members also feel included within their team and feel like an accepted group member. The concept inclusion comprises multiple constructs. In this paragraph the notion of inclusion is defined and explained, the conditions for feeling included are discussed, and the concept of post-hire outcomes are set out.

The notion of inclusion is defined as "the degree to which an employee perceives that he or she is an esteemed member of the work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies his or her needs for belongingness and uniqueness" (Shore et al., 2011, p. 1265). Advantages related to being an accepted group member are the enhancement of the security of individual members due to the trust, cooperation and loyalty among group members (Brewer, 2007). Furthermore, by seeking connection with others and acceptance from group members, isolation can be avoided. Researchers indicate that a diversity climate strengthens the idea that the

organisation acknowledges all its employees. It relates to the exclusion and inclusion of people with diverse backgrounds. Shore and colleagues (2011) argue that uniqueness and belongingness together create the feeling of inclusion. Belongingness is defined as the desire to develop and maintain stable and strong relationships with others while members feel respected and valued, whilst uniqueness is defined as the wish to maintain a differentiated and original sense of self (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Shore et al., 2011). The need to be unique and to belong must be balanced for team members to feel included. A feeling of inclusion is fuelled if members feel that their contributions are valued and that they contribute to organisational goals and success (Davidson & Ferdman, 2002). David and Ferdman (2002), identify that a key aspect of fostering inclusion, is to "treat each situation as new and different, and not to expect others to be just like us, but rather, to expect and value difference" (p. 82). They argue that if employers do so, they allow team members to show themselves and express their own needs and consequently a feeling of belonging is enhanced. When individuals feel that their unique characteristics and contributions to the team are supported, they will experience a high sense of uniqueness (Shore et al., 2011). However, if group members perceive themselves as too similar to one another, the need for uniqueness is not fulfilled. Shore and colleagues (2011) developed an inclusion framework which can be found in Figure 1 below.

	Low Belongingness	High Belongingness
Low Value in Uniqueness	**Exclusion** Individual is not treated as an organizational insider with unique value in the work group but there are other employees or groups who are insiders.	**Assimilation** Individual is treated as an insider in the work group when they conform to organizational/dominant culture norms and downplay uniqueness.
High Value in Uniqueness	**Differentiation** Individual is not treated as an organizational insider in the work group but their unique characteristics are seen as valuable and required for group/ organization success.	**Inclusion** Individual is treated as an insider and also allowed/encouraged to retain uniqueness within the work group.

Figure 1: Inclusion Framework (Shore et al., 2011, p. 1266)

On the other hand, if individuals do not feel they are treated as insiders of the organisation, while other employees are treated as such and they are rejected by team members, exclusion may occur. In the case of exclusion, both uniqueness and belongingness are low. This occurs when individuals feel they are not acknowledged to be a full group member and when

other team members are more appreciated and valued. The psychological impact of this can ultimately lead to an increase in social anxiety, loneliness and depression (Hitlan, Clifton, & DeSoto, 2006).

Additionally, if an employee is solely treated as an insider when he or she accommodates to the prevailing cultural norms within the organisation and has to downplay his or her own uniqueness, this can lead to a state of assimilation (Shore et al., 2011). So in this case, individuals are solely recognized as insiders of a group if they conform to the predominant culture and norms of the group. Consequently, this leads to low uniqueness, but high belongingness.

Finally, if an individual is valued for his unique characteristics for an organisation's success, but is not treated as an insider of the group, differentiation arises. Hence, here belongingness is low, but uniqueness is very high. If the latter is the case, interactions between individuals might be burdened by stereotypes and segregation. Therefore, it is essential to consider both uniqueness and belongingness through inclusion practices.

Based on this framework, it is fair to say that it is of major importance for a team to ensure that all team members have the feeling that they belong and that their uniqueness is valued. Only in that case, they will feel included. Strategies that facilitate inclusion in teams are the possibility to participate in decision making procedures, open information access, procedures that enable conflict resolution, and the facilitation of communication (Shore et al., 2011). According to the Sociaal Economische Raad (SER, 2019) – the Social Economic Council – organisations must meet a number of conditions in order to ensure a successful diversity policy (both gender as well as cultural diversity), namely:

1. There must be commitment from the top of the organisation. High placed managers should continuously emphasize the necessity and urgency of diversity in their organisation. Examples are organising inhouse-days for minority groups and attention to inclusive communication in recruitment.

2. Diversity policies must be embedded in the organisations' protocols, guidelines and strategies. This way, one prevents that diversity policies and measures are dependent on only a few specific people to be carried out.

3. It is crucial to increase the awareness of supervisors and managers about their own organisational culture and how this can be experienced differently by employees.

In addition to the above-mentioned conditions, the SER (2019) identified ten general principles for effective diversity policy within an organisation:

a. Formulate a vision and determine why diversity is valuable for the organisation;

b. Formulate goals;

c. Establish a support base;

d. Make use of effective strategies, measures and instruments to achieve diversity objectives;

e. Leadership is critical;

f. Create an inclusive organisational structure and climate;

g. Monitor and evaluate the results;

h. Communicate both internally and externally about diversity;

i. Expand knowledge and skills with respect to diversity;

j. Monitor and evaluate progress and results.

(SER, 2019, p. 137 – 138).

The perception of inclusion and feelings of belongingness of team members play a crucial role into post-hire outcomes. For this study, it was chosen to use post-hire outcomes as a way to measure participants' feelings of inclusion and its potential effects on retention rates of minorities. Post-hire outcomes can be divided into Person-Organisation fit (P-O fit), Realistic Job Preview (RJP) and Psychological contract. Research demonstrates that the real diversity climate of an organisation will only become apparent to minority candidates after they have been hired. Frequently, the expectations these minorities had during the recruitment process, do not match the reality they encounter when they actually start working (Mckay & Avery, 2005). This has ramifications for employees P-O fit, RJP and Psychological contract.

First, P-O fit relates to the fit between individual level values and organisational level values. A high P-O fit entails that an individual's values are aligned with the values of the organisation. Associated with a high P-O fit are positive results including an enhancement in job choice and organisational attraction, positive organisational attitudes, and a decrease in turnover (Cable & Judge, 1996; Mckay & Avery, 2005). During recruitment, organisations may try to convince minorities of the notion that they value diversity. These notions nourish higher P-O fit expectations among minority candidates which may or may not be met in their job. However, when discriminatory practices are current within a firm, the idea that that firm welcomes diversity will be proven to be false. Mckay and Avery (2005) state "firms that utilize diversity recruitment techniques yet fail to address relevant racial issues will perpetuate a mismatch between prehire and post-hire P-O fit impressions" (p. 332). As a result, turnover of minority employees is likely to be high.

Second, if organisations use RJP's in their communication towards minority candidates, they emphasize both the positive and negative features of the job regarding organisational climate. By doing so, the firm allows candidates to select a job and organisation that will match their values and needs (Mckay & Avery, 2005). Past studies suggest that if organisations use RJP, it decreases their staff turnover because they reduce candidates' unrealistic work expectations. However, if a firm has an unfavourable diversity climate but uses diversity recruitment strategies, they are likely to paint an unrealistically positive picture. This in turn will lead to a higher turnover of minority employees (Mckay & Avery, 2005). Hence, it is fundamental that organisations provide minority candidates with a realistic job preview, because it will enhance employees' commitment to the organisation and their job satisfaction while at the same time diminishing turnover and quit intentions.

Lastly, a psychological contract is defined as the perception of the employee of the organisation and his or her obligations throughout the relationship with his or her employer (Rousseau, 1995). According to Rousseau (1995), an indispensable feature of a psychological contract is "that the individual voluntarily assents to make and accept certain promises as he or she understands them. It is what the individual believes he or she has to agree to, not what that person intends, that makes the contract" (p. 10). Every employees' psychological contract consists of that individual's perception of the agreement. Psychological contracts encompass aspects such as loyalty, time commitment, performance, and advancement opportunities. As long as employees feel their organisations meet their expectations, it is likely that employees regard the relationship as rewarding. Alternatively, it employees have the impression that their employer violates their expectations, for example, by breaking promises, it can lead to job dissatisfaction, neglection of job responsibilities and finally employee turnover (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). Diversity recruitment, in this case, indicates a psychological contract between minority candidates and the organisation. Because the firm uses a diversity recruitment approach to promote a favourable diversity climate to minority job applicants, these candidates will expect to experience positive working conditions when they are hired. If the firm fails to provide such an environment, employees will be confronted with a psychological contract breach by the employer (Mckay & Avery, 2005). Consequently, this might lead to higher minority turnover. Thus, it is expected that if ProRail takes P-O fit, RJP and Psychological contract as perception of inclusion into account, it will have a positive influence on the retention rates of minorities. We therefore hypothesize the following:

H2: The perception of inclusion has a positive effect on the retention rates of minority trainees.

2.3 Diversity recruitment

In 2019, The SER put diversity and inclusion within (public) organisations on the map in the Netherlands. In an extensive report, they set out the importance of a diverse and inclusive climate. However, creating such an environment within organisations is not as straightforward as it might appear. People from minority groups – in this study women and people of colour are considered minorities – encounter significant obstacles when entering the labour market or when trying to climb to higher management positions. In the following paragraphs we set out the impediments they come across, how diversity recruitment can help in overcoming these barriers and what the organisational motives for organisations are to engage in diversity recruitment.

To this day, women are still held back to reach top levels, a phenomenon which is also called 'glass ceiling'. The glass ceiling theory argues that women are underrepresented in leadership positions, both in the private and public sector, and it refers to the hidden but enduring barriers women face when climbing to higher ranks (Groeneveld, Bakker, & Schmidt, 2020; Slack, 1987). This might be caused by widespread stereotypical bias in the workplace (Groeneveld et al., 2020) or men trying to maintain the status quo or actively strengthening existing customs, beliefs and values that benefit men (Grover, 2015). There are two types of gender bias in society: first generation gender bias and second generation gender bias. The first one involves "intentional and visible acts of discrimination against woman in society or the work place" (Grover, 2015, p. 1). Second generation gender bias is concealed and unseen, but the underlying beliefs and values continue to be male-oriented (Grover, 2015). The latter is connected to the obstruction of women to reach top management within organisations. Men are often perceived as more qualified for management roles than women (Heilman, 2012), and as a consequence men are more likely to rise in the ranks than their female colleagues who have equivalent work experience and skills (Groeneveld et al., 2020). According to Van den Brink and colleagues (2010), gender bias is more likely to occur during recruitment activities which are based on vague criteria and when the evaluation process is kept confidential. Acker (2006) argues that supervisory practices are shaped by sexualized and gendered attitudes and assumptions. Although managerial positions are increasingly occupied by women, lower positions in organisations are still primarily filled by women (Acker, 2006).

Furthermore, studies report male managers are more likely to engage in networking activities, since they traditionally have been profiting from so-called 'good old boys' networks (Durbin & Tomlinson, 2010; Meier, O'Toole and Goerdel, 2006). Women generally do not have the same access to societal resources as males. One of the reasons that have reduced

chances to engage in these networks is because women are underrepresented in top management positions, hence female managers have fewer developed networks than their male counterparts. Moreover, they are prone to experiencing isolation. Top positions are nearly always taken by white men especially in prominent and large organisations (Acker, 2006).

People of colour – hence people with a bicultural background – have met with similar impediments in the past. In this study individuals are considered to be bicultural if they "speak both the language of their heritage cultural context and the language of their receiving cultural context, have friends from both cultural backgrounds, and watch television programs and read magazines from both cultural contexts" (Schwartz & Unger, 2010, p. 27). These minority groups have often encountered oppression, domination and discrimination by majority groups. Acker (2006) states that they "were confined to the lowest-level jobs or excluded from all but certain organisations. People of colour were totally excluded from the most powerful (white, male) organisations that were central in shaping the racialized and gendered class structure of the larger society" (p. 445). But not only women and people of colour experience inequality of opportunity within organisations, other bases for inequality are sexual preference age, physical disability, and religion. Although these characteristics also play an important role in creating conscious or unconscious bias, they are not as thoroughly ingrained as gender as race (Acker, 2006). Therefore, in this study we will solely focus on gender and race inequalities with respect to employment opportunities.

Ibarra, (1992, 1997) discovered that male managers tend to be more homophilic than females, who tend to be more heterophilic. Homophily is the inclination of looking for and seeking others who are similar to yourself. Heterophily on the contrary, is the tendency to look for and seek those who are different from oneself. Homophily in organisations can induce homogeneity, which is "the degree to which all people in an organisation are similar to each other" (Somashekahar, 2014). Heterogeneity is the exact opposite. Several studies demonstrate that groups establish and preserve their homogeneity mainly through recruitment (Somashekahar, 2014). Organisations that engaged in homophilous recruitment have received substantial criticism in the past years for not encouraging diversity, as they primarily recruit people who are similar to themselves (Ibarra, 1992; Somashekahar, 2014). Despite the negative connotation we have with homophily, Somashekahar (2014) argues that, in some cases it can also be used to make firms more diverse. It is important to note that in this case, it is necessary that there are already minority employees present at the firm. If not, "the organisation may just recruit new members from the same population niche until it saturates the niche. This highlights

the need to ensure that policies exist so that minorities are in a position to recruit homophilously" (Somashekahar, 2014, p. 15).

An important measure to prevent gender and cultural bias and to avert homogeneity within organisations, is to implement so-called diversity or minority recruitment (hereafter referred to as diversity recruitment). This type of recruitment entails the selection of formerly underrepresented groups, specifically women and minorities (Mckay & Avery, 2005). Its aim is to create a diverse climate. An important component of diversity recruitment, is affirmative action. This is the active endeavour to enhance the representation of minority groups and women in employment, culture and education from which they used to be excluded (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020; Stanford University, 2018). Affirmative action encompasses procedures and policies which are constructed to prevent discrimination within organisations, they redress fundamental inequalities of historically underprivileged groups (Augoustinos et al., 2005; Reskin, 1998). According to Slack (1987), affirmative action refers to "special and exceptional efforts on the part of the public manager to rectify the results of current and previous discriminatory practices and, ultimately, to ensure equal employment opportunity" (p. 199). He characterizes equal employment opportunity (hereafter referred to as EEO) as an environment in which discriminatory hiring processes are absent (Slack, 1987). The difference between EEO and affirmative action, is that EEO prohibits all types of discrimination in the workplace, whereas affirmative action is about levelling the playing field for minority groups. In this study, the focus will be on affirmative action measures. Public organisations are more inclined to adopt affirmative action procedures than private organisations (Reskin, 1998). Research demonstrates that affirmative action enhances the willingness of employers to hire minority candidates and it expands the number of minority candidates as well as minority employees (Holzer & Neumark, 2004). Furthermore, Reskin (1998) argues that affirmative action "does not reduce firms' productivity or profitability" (p. 90). In fact, staffing procedures which are related to affirmative action enhance an organisation's efficiency because employees are appointed to jobs that match their abilities. Although there are costs involved with affirmative action, they are lower than the costs resulting from discrimination (Reskin, 1998). Moreover, studies have found that although affirmative action in hiring might yield some minority employees whose certifications are slightly weaker, performance is generally similar to other employees (Holzer & Neumark, 2004). Employers that make use of affirmative action appear to screen and recruit candidates more extensively; they rely more strongly on formal evaluation measures than informal ones; they are more probable to dismiss stereotypes and often provide training to candidates (Holzer & Neumark, 2004). Companies that have embraced affirmative action, hire more people from

minority groups, and find their performance is as high as that of their colleagues. Affirmative action must not be confused with quotas, which are often binding. Slack (1987) states that "affirmative action goals are objectives which the organisation strives to meet. Failure to do so does not necessarily result in the imposition of penalties" (p. 200).

Generally, companies have coherent motives for recruiting people from minority groups for vacancies. Mckay and Avery (2005), have established four reasons why organisations have aimed for minority recruitment. Firstly, due to shortages in labour, a number of employers was forced to shift their focus on minority recruitment. Secondly, many organisations embarked on minority recruitment to avoid legal investigations. As a result of various substantial racial discrimination trials, a large number of firms was pressured by stakeholders to improve diversity in the workplace (Mckay & Avery, 2005). Thirdly, many companies have felt obliged to start minority recruitment so as to improve their public image. Finally, numerous organisations perceived the recruitment and selection of minority groups as an enhancement of their innovation, creativity, organisational performance and their profit. As Mckay and Avery (2005) argue, "each of these motives is apt to fuel organisational efforts to develop minority recruitment strategies designed to portray organisations as attractive employers of minorities" (p. 331).

In order to turn diversity recruitment into a success, various conditions must be met. First, since both gender and cultural bias is likely to occur if recruitment and selection procedures are based on vague criteria and are kept confidential, it is imperative that the processes are open and transparent (van den Brink et al., 2010). Transparency is believed to reduce bias and increase the probability of a fair process. This entails that information on recruitment and selection procedures is available and coherent for insiders and outsiders of the organisation. This enables outsiders to hold organisations accountable for their procedures and actions (van den Brink et al., 2010). However, a large obstacle that hinders transparency within recruitment and selection processes, is the issue of privacy. To increase transparency information on recruiters themselves, on the candidates, the criteria, and the decision-making process should be disclosed, yet, at the same time, organisations must safeguard the confidentiality of information with respect to candidates (van den Brink et al., 2010). Be that as it may, Van den Brink and colleagues (2010, p. 1466) identified four means by which greater transparency and accountability can be achieved:

1. Organisations should "encourage open recruitment as a means of filling vacancies. This entails placing advertisements so that all potential candidates have the opportunity to learn about and/or apply for the vacancy."

2. The selection criteria must be clear. They must describe the qualities, knowledge, skills and experience that are required for the job. Moreover, interview questions, the evaluation of candidates and the preselection of candidates should be based on these.

3. It is advised an HRM advisor is present during the whole process.

4. The appointment report should be submitted to the organisation's board for approval.

If the abovementioned measures are implemented throughout a firm, it is likely that greater transparency and accountability will be achieved.

Second, it is essential that before firms initiate a diversity recruitment approach, they are subjected to a diversity audit. A diversity audit may offer an organisation information which strategies are key in improving diversity recruitment. This audit might entail sending out questionnaires to determine employees' opinions towards diversity and it informs decisionmakers about departments or areas that might counteract against diversity recruitment and retention of minorities (Mckay & Avery, 2005). Furthermore, it is advised that minority employees are consulted about their experiences in the workplace in order to determine if they have faced discriminatory practices or treatment. This information can be supplemented with data regarding exit interview questionnaires to discover why employees have left the organisation (Mckay & Avery, 2005).

Third, Ferdman and Brody (1996) recommend that firms implement diversity training for recruiters to raise awareness of unconscious bias which fosters discriminatory treatment. Often, conflicts at work occur, because "employees are not aware of how subtle biases and stereotypes affect their behaviour" (Mckay & Avery, 2005, p. 334). Likewise, stereotyping frequently leads to low expectations about the competence of minority employees, which in turn decreases their performance evaluations and ultimately leads to a negative effect on their promotion opportunities. Therefore, diversity training should aim to increase employers' sensitivity with respect to forms of discrimination and should outline how to counterbalance these (Mckay & Avery, 2005).

Moreover, another necessary measure is the development of a recruitment plan to target minority candidates, for instance by consulting various sources such as certain universities and popular (social) media (Thomas, 2005). Also, job advertisements should depict racial diversity and display race-and gender-neutral criteria of competence. Preferably, the recruitment messages and advertisements correspond to the actual workplace environment, which has become visible through the diversity audit (Mckay & Avery, 2005). Further options are changes in screening methods and hiring standards which might be non-traditional, but which help employers to find qualified minority candidates (Holzer & Neumark, 2004). This will result in

a more thorough screening of candidates and a more flexible hiring approach and criteria. By screening applicants more intensively and by selecting a wider range of candidates, the number of minority candidates will be increased. Nevertheless, it might also involve taking on candidates with less-than-perfect credentials (Holzer & Neumark, 2004). Studies do suggest that when firms select more people from minority groups, the likelihood increases that a higher number of underqualified or less-qualified candidates is hired (Holzer & Neumark, 2004). However, if employers provide these candidates with training and use established evaluation systems, the performance of these minority candidates will be up to par. In addition, if organisations lower their hiring standards, more people from minority groups will be eligible for positions within the firm. However, as Reskin (1998) indicates, it is fundamental that employers explicitly do not give preferences to less qualified candidates because of their race or sex as this constitutes illegitimate discrimination. It would be better, for example, to pay less attention to particular indicators of quality, such as previous employment or education. Costs that employers might bear due to affirmative action in the recruitment and selection are "likely to be one-time costs associated with bringing skills up to speed, rather than continuing efficiency costs from the employment of less-productive workers" (Holzer & Neumark, 2004, p. 270).

Summarizing, we can say that organisations that attempt to implement diversity recruitment and selection must safeguard transparency and accountability during this process, they should carry out a diversity audit and they are advised to invest in diversity training to counteract unconscious biases. Furthermore, they should develop a recruitment plan, ensure that job advertisements resemble the genuine workplace environment, and use different screening methods and hiring standards. If these measures are implemented at ProRail, it is anticipated that it will have a positive influence on the retention rates of minority trainees. Hence, we hypothesize:

H3: Diversity recruitment has a positive effect on the retention rates of minority trainees.

2.4 Threats to diversity recruitment

Based on previous studies, we identify two threats to diversity recruitment and affirmative action measures specifically, namely the ideology of meritocracy and the opposition towards bureaucracy (Augoustinos et al., 2005; van den Brink et al., 2010).

The first threat is the ideology of meritocracy, which is "a society model in which the wealth and status of each individual is based on his or her merits" and which is strongly

intertwined in western cultures such as in the Netherlands (Bregman & Frederik, 2016, p. 62). It is a belief that focusses on the candidate's abilities, efforts and talents, rather than their social position or wealth. Advancement of the individual is based on performance and hard work in which gender, race, class and social background are irrelevant (Augoustinos et al., 2005; Bregman & Frederik, 2016; DiAngelo, 2018; Van den Brink et al., 2010). The dominant belief in our meritocratic society in the Netherlands is "success is in your own hands; failure is your own fault" (Wienen, 2021). Arguments regarding merit, are often employed to justify and legitimize resistance to affirmative action and "social and racial disadvantage is perceived by majority group members to be the consequence of certain groups transgressing these values rather than an outcome of structural inequities within society" (Augoustinos et al., 2005, p. 317). This frequently leads to the majority group being less willing to support affirmative action measures, even if these policies could lead to redressing social inequalities that minority groups encounter. According to Augoustinos and colleagues (2005), a vast misconception in meritocratic societies is the belief that all individuals "start at the same baseline" (p. 331). Bregman and Frederik (2016) confirm this, stating that at least 50% to 60% of one's societal position – in other words one's occupation, income and education – can be predicted based on one's descent. Regarding meritocracy, it is often assumed that the access members of the majority group have, is universal to everyone and does not take into account possible barriers to minorities. However, opportunities and chances are not equally distributed across gender, class and race (DiAngelo, 2018). To this day, gender and race inequalities continue to be concealed due to the ideology of meritocracy (Van den Brink et al., 2010). Augoustinos and colleagues (2005), identify various meritocratic arguments which are most often heard and that threaten affirmative action. These arguments will be set out below.

The first argument that is regularly heard by people who adhere to meritocratic beliefs, is 'Everyone must be treated equal' or 'I am taught to treat everyone equal/the same' (Augoustinos et al., 2005; DiAngelo, 2018). This claim rests on the conviction that people are able to do so and that they can thus be fully objective. However, humans are not objective, on the contrary, they are emotional beings and see the world through their cultural lens, and are therefore not able to treat people impartially. Further, as DiAngelo (2018) argues "we would not want to treat everyone the same because people have different needs and different relationships with us" (p. 79). Moreover, this argument invalidates the requirement that minority groups – who have been historically underprivileged – should be treated differently, and it implies that everyone has equal opportunities.

In similar vein, the second frequently mentioned argument is that affirmative action will lead to majority groups 'missing out' on opportunities if minorities would be favoured and that it would not be fair – even discriminatory - as everyone must be treated equally (Augoustinos et al., 2005). Additionally, majority group members often argue that affirmative action measures are an 'easy ride' (Augoustinos et al., 2005). The problem with this argument is that by labelling affirmative action as an 'easy ride', merit would imply individual effort and striving, but it is remarkably difficult to point out what your own merit is (Bregman & Frederik, 2016). It also implies that the majority group puts in effort and the minority group does not. According to supporters of this line of argumentation, it would mean that minorities who have entered an organisation through affirmative action, have not employed effort or individual achievement and consequently lack capability and merit. However, majority group members generally do not acknowledge, or take for granted, that their own social position in society is not solely based on merit, but also their membership of a majority group, also occasionally referred to as 'white privilege' (Augoustinos et al., 2005).

The last argument that is often made in the name of merit, appears to be in the interest of minority members and their psychological well-being, but in fact silences the potentially beneficial and valuable effects of affirmative action, such as balanced representation. This usually translates into comments as 'I would feel worse if I knew I was hired based on who I am instead of my achievements'. According to Augoustinos and colleagues (2005) "this concern over the psychological well-being of the recipients of affirmative action is an argumentative resource that manages to express opposition to such policies, but in the service of the recipients' own interests" (p.326). By doing so, majority group members project their own feelings, if they were to be the beneficiary of these policies, on to the affirmative action measures. If they would feel bad or uncomfortable by such measures, then minorities who had entered the organisation through such policies would feel so as well. This strand of arguments portrays affirmative action as problematic. This psychological argument is also commonly made by minority members themselves, arguing that it undermines applicants self-esteem as they are considered as less praiseworthy by majority members. However, this also cancels out the beneficial effect it may have, namely empowering minorities through employment and educational opportunities. These advantages are indirectly sabotaged, because they are derived from false benefits instead of merit and are therefore perceived as not irrelevant in encouragement for affirmative action measures (Augoustinos et al., 2005).

Overall, it is important to consider that discrimination is embedded in our institutional system and therefore affirmative action measures are necessary to mitigate the effects of

discrimination (Augoustinos et al., 2005; DiAngelo, 2018). The ideology of meritocracy serves in the interest of the existing situation, hence the dominant group in the society. It is thus expected that arguments of meritocracy by recruiters, will negate affirmative action measures.

The second threat to diversity recruitment is the common opposition towards bureaucracy. Generally, employers are critical towards protocols as they are considered too time consuming, bureaucratic and not relevant to the appointment of candidates. They often feel that these protocols exclude their expertise and freedom to select candidates (Van den Brink et al., 2010). Affirmative action measures could be perceived as bureaucratic by recruiters. It is therefore expected that recruiters will reject various proposed measures, such as the implementation of fixed procedures like pre-determined questions for interviewees, because it limits spontaneity and their expertise and it fosters bureaucracy. Consequently, it was hypothesized that:

H4: The influence of diversity recruitment on retention rates of minority trainees is negatively moderated by threats to diversity recruitment.

2.5 Retention rates of minority employees

It has become visible to both corporate and public organisations that a shortage of talented workforce has emerged in the past years. Managers struggle to find and retain talented employees (Oladapo, 2014). This phenomenon is something ProRail currently faces as well and it therefore aims to attract a more diverse workforce – in this case women and people with a bicultural background - to overcome this problem. When organisations aim to attract minorities, as ProRail intends to do, minority retention is inextricably linked to making the work environment more appealing to this group. According to Heinz (2020), minority retention is an organisations' attempts and capability to engage and retain minority employees for a substantial period of time. Also, retention is recognized as an important opportunity for organisations to manage a competitive labour pool (Oladapo, 2020). By keeping track of the organisations' retention rates, employers get a valuable insight into their capability to keep talented workers around (Heinz, 2020). McKay and Avery (2005) argue that in order to retain minority groups, firms must ensure that they create and support a diverse work environment. The latter point of view is confirmed by Oladapo (2014), who states "managing turnover and retention becomes a diversity issue" (p. 22), because research demonstrates that retention rates of racial minorities are substantially lower than retention rates of white personnel (McKay et al., 2007). The turnover staff is 30% higher among minority groups (Mckay et al., 2007). The fact that majority

employees encounter more favourable circumstances than their minority colleagues must be considered as an explanation for this discrepancy (McKay et al., 2007). Ultimately, the higher turnover rates of minority employees will lead to higher costs for organisations. It is therefore essential for organisations such as ProRail – who aim to attract a more diverse workforce – to take retention of their minority employees seriously. As mentioned above, it is thus expected that the perceived diversity climate, diversity recruitment and the perception of inclusion have a positive influence on the retention rates of minority trainees at ProRail. However, it is also anticipated that the influence of diversity recruitment on its retention rates is negatively moderated by threats to diversity recruitment. In Figure 2, the conceptual model of the before-mentioned hypothesis is shown.
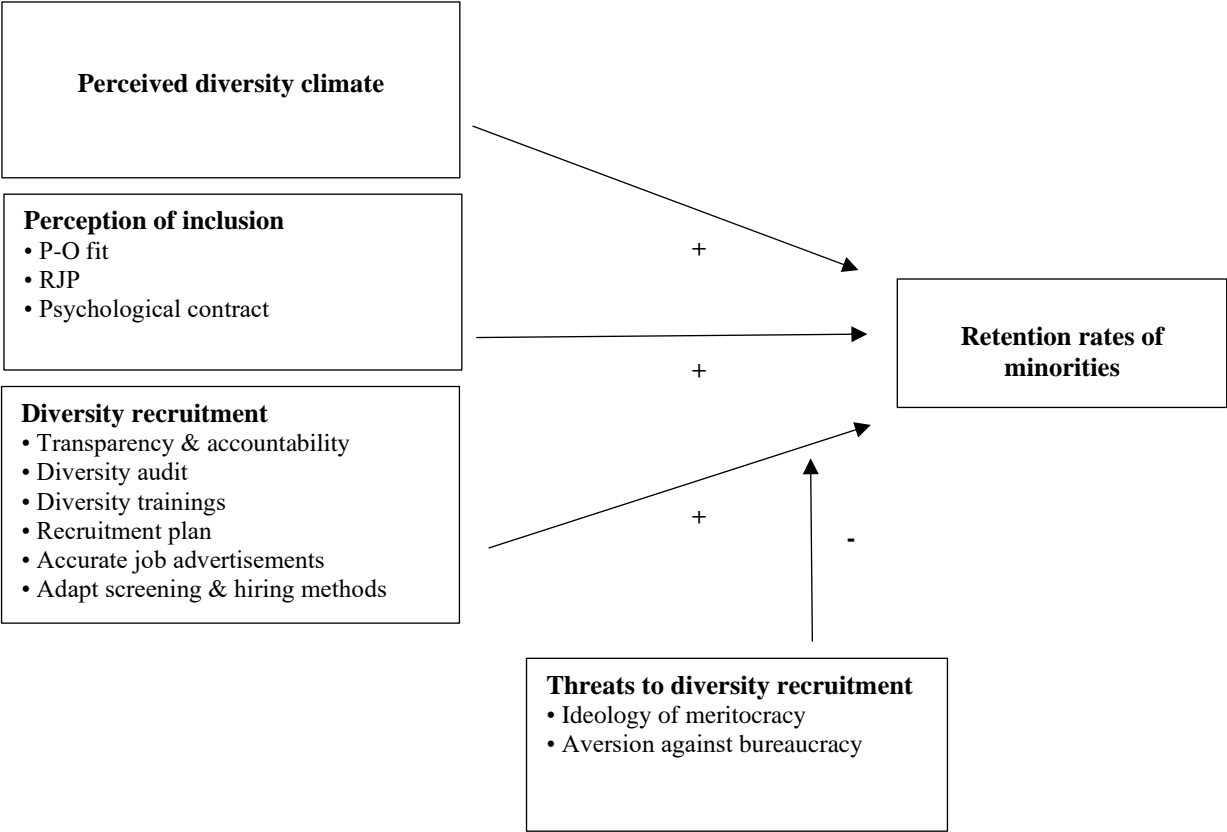
Figure 2: Conceptual model of the hypotheses

3. Research Design

The aim of this chapter is to explain and justify the research design of this study and which methods were used to collect and analyse data. At first, the operationalizations of the variables are discussed. Thereafter, a case description of ProRail is set out. Subsequently, we will elaborate upon the research method, and the validity and reliability of the study.

3.1 Operationalization

The variables that were operationalized are perceived diversity climate, diversity recruitment, perception of inclusion, threats to diversity recruitment, and retention rates of minorities. In order to operationalize these concepts, they have been divided into definitions and indicators. Table 1 below demonstrates how the variables are operationalized. An elaborate description of the concepts can be found below Table 1.

Table 1: Operationalization of concepts

Concept	Definition	Indicators	Data sources
Independent variables			
Perceived diversity climate	Diversity climate is defined as "employees' perceptions that an organisation adheres to fair personnel practices and the degree that minority employees are integrated into the work environment" (McKay et al., 2007, p. 36).	Perceived diversity climate is measured through questions which are based on the study by McKay and colleagues (2007) and aimed to measure attitudes of minority trainees regarding their perception of the diversity climate at ProRail. For example, 'Do you have the feeling that within ProRail it is widely promoted that they want more diversity?'	Interviews
Diversity recruitment 1. Affirmative action	"Affirmative action includes any program or policy that attempts to ameliorate past and present inequalities by devoting resources toward ensuring that people are not discriminated against on the basis of their gender or racial group" (Steinbugler et al., 2006, p. 806).	ProRail data on previously implemented affirmative action procedures within the recruitment and selection procedures will be consulted. In addition, attitudes towards affirmative action policies are measured through questions asking the participant for their point of view on potential affirmative action measures such as: a transparent recruitment and	Data provided by ProRail, 2020, internal documents & interviews

		selection procedure, how to overcome unconscious bias during recruitment and selection procedure, and anonymous application procedures.	
Perception of inclusion 1. P-O fit 2. RJP 3. Psychological contract	A high P-O (Person-Organisation) fit indicates "that a person's values are aligned with those of the firm" (Mckay & Avery, 2005, p. 332).	P-O fit will be measured through assessments by employees whether their work environment at ProRail fulfils their needs and expectations. Furthermore, it is taken into consideration whether employees' "personal characteristics are aligned with organisational attributes" (Cable & Judge, 1996). Questions regarding P-O fit are based on the studies by Cable and Judge (1996) and Piasentin and Chapman (2006).	Interviews
	The underlying assumption of the effectiveness of RJP (Realistic Job Preview), is that the message is "received and processed by applicants. That is, in order for RJP to function, applicants must effectively internalize the message being communicated" (Phillips, 1998, p. 673).	RJP is measured through questions that are related to the message ProRail aims to communicate to potential trainee candidates about the organisational environment, but also how minority trainees perceive the work environment after hiring, for example 'Do you remember what the picture was that recruiters painted during your application procedure?' and 'What are negative aspects about the organisation recruiters	Interviews

		touched upon during the application procedure?'.	
	The psychological contract is "an individual belief of the mutual expectations and obligations in the context of a relationship. This belief further shapes the relationship, and governs behaviour" (Freese & Schalk, 2008, p. 270).	Psychological contract is measured through questions that are based on features of psychological contacts as described in the study by Freese and Schalk (2008). Questions focused on obligations and (unrealistic) expectations ProRail has towards its trainees and the implicit and explicit promises ProRail makes to trainees. Moreover, trainees were asked if they felt ProRail kept all of its promises and whether they knew anyone who dropped out of the traineeship prematurely due to the traineeship not meeting his or her expectations.	Interviews
Moderator variable			
Threats to diversity recruitment 1. Ideology of meritocracy 2. Aversion towards bureaucracy	The ideology of meritocracy argues that quality – hence people's individual talent, efforts and abilities – is the only relevant factor, gender and background are trivial, and people's status and wealth are based on their merits (Bregman & Frederik, 2016; van den Brink et al., 2010).	The endorsement of meritocracy is assessed through questions based on the studies by Steinbugler and colleagues (2006) and by McCoy and Major (2007). Recruiters are asked questions so as to establish their attitudes towards meritocracy.	Interviews

	Aversion against bureaucracy stems from employers who argue that protocols which ensure transparent recruitment, are too bureaucratic, too time consuming, and irrelevant to appointment of candidates (Van den Brink et al., 2010).	Recruiters aversion towards bureaucracy is evaluated on the basis of monitoring responses towards proposed affirmative action measures (Van den Brink et al., 2010).	Interviews
Dependent variable			
Retention rates of minorities	Minority retention rate is an organisations' capability to retain minority employees for a period of time (Heinz, 2020). Additionally, it is expressed by the attempts of an employer to engage and retain its employees (Heinz, 2020).	Retention rates of minorities within the organisation will be based on available data and interviews about the retention and turnover of trainees since the first trainee group.	Data provided by ProRail, 2020 & interviews

The first independent variable perceived diversity climate, was measured through asking trainees to describe their work environment and the degree of diversity and inclusion within the traineeship and at ProRail as a whole. Moreover, I asked about their experiences with discrimination and negative encounters at ProRail. Also, trainees were asked if they had suggestions on how to improve diversity and inclusion at the organisation. For questions regarding description of diversity climate, see Appendix I topic 4.

The second independent variable diversity recruitment, was measured via data and internal documents provided by ProRail and on interviews with recruiters. During the interviews various affirmative action measures were proposed and respondents were asked for their point of view. The proposed measures were based on studies that proved they work (Holzer & Neumark, 2004; Mckay & Avery, 2005; Steinbugler et al., 2006; van den Brink et al., 2010). For affirmative action questions, see Appendix II topic 2. Furthermore, recruiters were asked about previously implemented affirmative action measures.

The third independent variable perception of inclusion, was measured through responses by interview participants. After new minority employees have been hired, "the true nature of a

firm's diversity climate will become apparent to minority newcomers" (Mckay & Avery, 2005, p. 332). If minority employees discover that the diversity climate expectations that had during the recruitment process do not match the reality, it can have great implications on post-hire attitudes and thus their feelings of inclusion. These attitudes are described by P-O fit, RJP and Psychological contracts. During the interviews trainees were asked to express how they perceive P-O fit, RJP and Psychological contracts. Questions were based on studies by Cable and Judge (1996), Freese and Schalk (2008), Phillips (1998) and Piasentin and Chapman (2006). The majority of these studies measure respondents attitudes towards the concepts through questionnaires. These questions often comprise statements in which the respondent has to indicate if they disagree or agree very much with the statement on a scale from one to five. As this study makes use of semi-structured interviews, it was not possible to adopt the exact same questions or statements. Therefore, these statements were altered. For example statements regarding P-O fit such as "I feel my values 'match' or fit this organisation and the current employees in this organisation" (Piasentin & Chapman, 2006, p. 208), were modified into questions like: 'What are ProRail's values?', 'To what extent do you feel that the norms and values of the organisation correspond with your own norms and values?', What type of people generally work at ProRail?', 'Do you feel that your personality matches that of your colleagues within the organisation?'. All variables were measured using previous studies and adjusting survey questions or statements into useable questions for the interview. For perception of inclusion questions, see Appendix I topic 1, 2 and 3, and Appendix II topic 4.

The moderator variable threats to diversity recruitment, was assessed by means of the attitudes of recruiters during the interviews. Support for meritocracy was measured through questions which are based on the studies by Steinbugler and colleagues (2006) and McCoy and Major (2007). Aversion against bureaucracy was measured by asking respondents for their point of view towards proposed affirmative action measures by Van den Brink (2010) that limit their freedom and expertise. For questions regarding threats to diversity recruitment, see Appendix II topic 3.

The dependent variable retention rates of minorities, is based on available data provided by ProRail. Since I discovered that the available data were not exhaustive before I started interviewing recruiters, I added questions regarding retention rates in the interview guide. For example 'Is it common for trainees to move on to a position within the organisation after their traineeship?', 'Does it occur that trainees quit their traineeship prematurely? And if so, why?', 'Do you know trainees who initially moved on within ProRail after finishing their traineeship,

but who left ProRail rather shortly afterwards because it did not meet their expectations?' An overview of these questions can be found in Appendix II topic 5.

3.2 Case selection justification

The choice to use ProRail as a case study in this research, had various reasons. First of all, ProRail was still a semi-public organisation in 2020, but was supposed to be transformed into an independent administrative body (zelfstandig bestuursorgaan, ZBO) in January 2021 (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat, 2020). However, due to the fall of the Dutch Government on the 15the of January 2021, the transformation into a ZBO has been postponed indefinitely until further notice.

The aim of this transformation is "to improve the organisation of ProRail in a way that suits the executive public tasks of ProRail, to simplify the management of ProRail and the public accountability for statutory duties, and to strengthen the use of public funds" (Rijksoverheid, 2020, p. 110). By becoming a ZBO, the House of Representatives will gain a better insight into how its funding - ProRail is completely funded by the Government - is spent and public accountability will be ensured more easily. The transformation will not be at the expense of travellers, carriers or the investments in the railways (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat, 2020). Other substantial Dutch ZBO's are Rijkswaterstaat and the UWV. Both as a semi-public organisation and as an independent administrative body with approximately 4984 employees, one could argue ProRail has an exemplary function (ProRail, 2020). Consequently, it is interesting to discover whether the transformation of ProRail to a ZBO and the exemplary function it fulfils, has any ramifications for the organisation's diversity policies and perspectives.

Second, in the past few years, the Dutch government has made important steps towards effective and efficient management of a diverse workforce which in turn might induce a better performing public sector (Çelik, 2014). The government recognizes its exemplary function regarding the limitation of discrimination on the labour market, the promotion of labour market participation of young immigrants, fostering an inclusive workforce within the public and private sector, and creating awareness of ethnic diversity and cultural differences. Additionally, the government emphasises its exemplary role regarding emancipation and equality (Çelik, 2014). Moreover, Çelik (2014) argues that "a heterogenous composition of the civil service contributed to the legitimacy of government actions and, in connections with this, to the image and exemplary role of the national government." A ZBO that has implemented a diversity manifest with the goal of fostering active policies towards diversity and inclusion within the

organisation, is the UWV. The UWV states that it recognises its social responsibility to be a reflection of society by striving for a diverse workforce in which the customer recognizes him- or herself (Manifest Diversiteit & Inclusiviteit, 2017). Although the UWV is a significantly larger public organisation than ProRail - they had 17.553 employees in 2018 (Nederlands Jeugdinstituut, n.d.) - ProRail too experiences the need to diversify. As ProRail (2020) states they "want to be an organisation where employees feel safe and welcome. For the upcoming years, diversity and inclusion is one of ProRail's central points of focus. ProRail strives for a working environment where employees can be themselves and are given the necessary space and appreciation for their talents so that together we can deliver the best possible performance" (p. 70). In order to accomplish a more diverse and inclusive workforce, ProRail seeks to establish a "30% occupation by women in top positions and has also signed the Talent to the Top Charter. This is a public commitment with clear agreements for the realization of male/female diversity at the (sub)top" (ProRail, 2015, p. 32). Overall, the organisation is made up of 25% women (ProRail, 2020). See Figure 3 and 4 below.
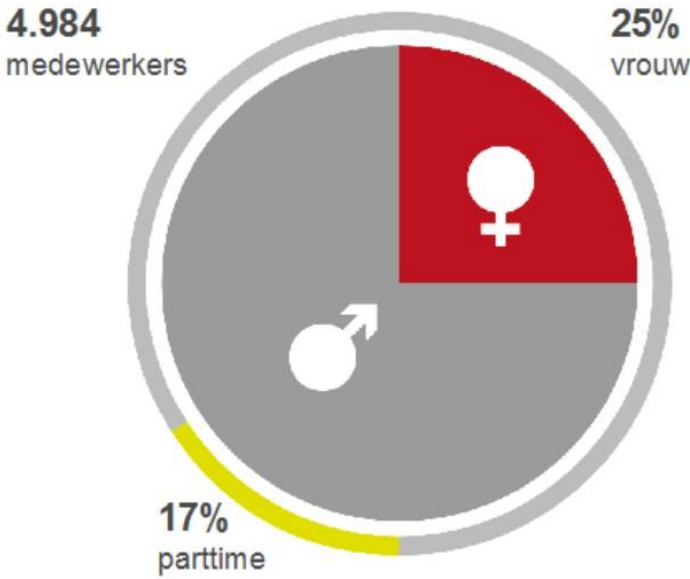

Figure 3: Male/female distribution ProRail in 2019 (Source: ProRail, 2020)
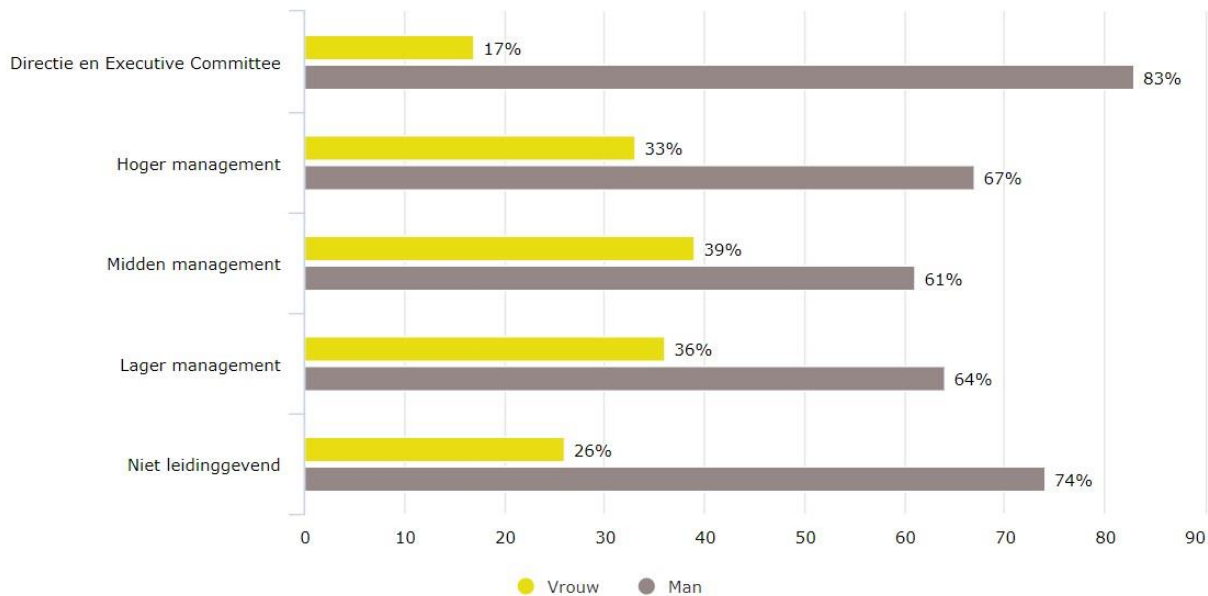
Figure 4: Total number of employees ProRail in 2019 (Source: ProRail, 2020)

Although ProRail has unambiguous targets for a more diverse workforce regarding gender, it does not have a straightforward goal that considers people with a bicultural background. ProRail does however aim to achieve a more diverse work environment through bias-free recruitment and selection processes. A strategy ProRail implemented in 2019 in their recruitment procedure for new trainees. According to its annual report (2020), ProRail states they want every employee to feel they can be themselves, they aim to recognize all talents and connect them to the organisation, they assume to have knowledge of the meaning of 'unconscious bias', and they reckon everyone has unconscious biases. Consequently, they aspire to consciously work against the impact of their prejudices on a daily basis. It is ProRail's ambition to have a bias-free recruitment and selection process in order to keep a close eye on the labour market and on all potential talents that might strengthen the organisation (ProRail, 2020). As ProRail began educating its recruiters with these unconscious bias trainings so as to reduce prejudice and biases towards applicants, it is a logical step to evaluate how recruiters perceive the effectiveness of these trainings and to assess whether it aided in hiring more minority candidates.

Finally, it was decided to focus this study on ProRail's four types of traineeships, namely Legal, Management, Technical and Finance. A schematic overview of the traineeships can be found below in Figure 5. The decision to concentrate on the traineeships, was because of its regular influx of new trainees twice a year, namely in January and October. Additionally, there is a regular outflow of trainees who finished their traineeship and who usually outflow into the organisation. Due to periodic in-and outflow of trainees, it is rather straightforward to monitor data on past and current trainees. Furthermore, the trainees are perceived as the organisation's future management (Interviews, 2020). Hence, by attracting a diverse group of trainees, ProRail hopes to induce more diversity in top management positions in the upcoming years (Interviews, 2020).
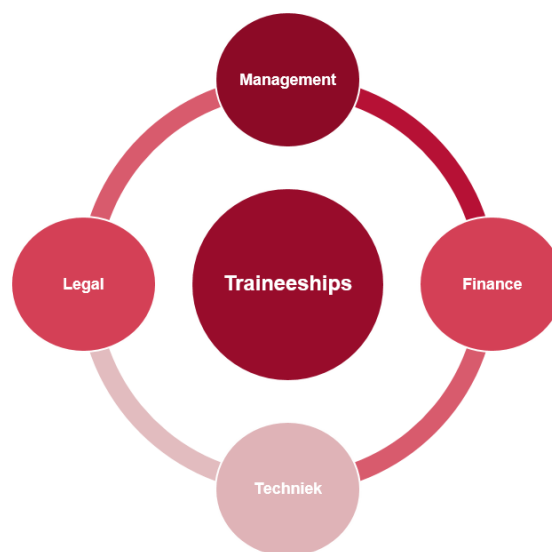
Figure 5: Overview types of traineeships ProRail (Source: Internal documents ProRail)

3.3 Method

This research is a single-case study with a qualitative approach to conduct empirical research. This within-case explanatory research focusses on the relationship between the dependent and independent variables, but also delves into alternative explanations related to this case (Toshkov, 2016). This study concentrates on the traineeships at ProRail how perceived diversity climate, diversity recruitment and the perception of inclusion affect retention rates of minority trainees. Subsequently, we aim to determine if the attitude towards diversity recruitment and specifically affirmative action measures by the organisation, impacts the retention rates of minorities. The decision to focus on qualitative research is based on the fact that it provides valuable insight in individuals' attitudes, whereas quantitative research is unable to demonstrate in-depth understanding of attitudes (Baarda, 2019; Mosley, 2013). Responses by participants

through semi-structured interviews is believed to give a better understanding of the concepts that are measured (Britten & Fisher, 1993). An advantage of semi-structured interviews, compared to structured interviews, is the fact that the order of questions can be altered during the interview (Baarda, 2017). Questions and answers are not fixed in advance of a semi-structured interview, but the topics are. In line with the advice of Baarda (2017), the topics for this study were arranged in a logical order based on the theoretical framework and conceptual model. However, during the interviews it was possible to switch to a different topic whenever that felt more logical based on the responses by the interviewees. Another advantage of using interviews instead of questionnaires, is that respondents were able to elaborate on their attitudes and points of view. Also, it provided the opportunity to explore participants' understanding of certain concepts and ideas. Finally, as Britten and Fisher (1993) state "qualitative methods provide a deeper understanding of sensitive topics, and insights into processes as opposed to outcomes. They can identify the range of attitudes or beliefs on a subject, and provide explanations for behaviour and attitudes" (p. 271).

For this research interviews were held with (former) trainees and (former) recruiters/interviewers and, additionally, access to previously gathered data by the organisation was requested. In order to be selected for an interview as a (former) trainee, participants had to be either female and/or have a bicultural background. Before deciding who to approach for interviewing, a list of potential candidates was drafted together with the program manager of Diversity & Inclusion. It was decided to initially contact the current trainee manager as well as the former trainee manager. The current trainee manager was asked for his participation in the study and was asked to bring me into contact with (former) female trainees or trainees with a bicultural background. Hence, for this study a snowball method was used. Although Mosley (2013) argues that snowball sampling may increase "the possibility of bias, because the original interviewee and subsequent contacts may share similar views on the subject of the interview" (p. 87), for this study it was the only feasible option as the trainee manager was the sole person who had a detailed overview of all current trainees, former trainees who are active in the recruitment procedure and of recruiters who are closely involved in the recruitment and selection process of new trainees. In addition, snowball sampling can adequately uncover networks that were first unknown to the researcher, which consequently broadens the sample frame (Mosely, 2013). Thus, in this study the trainee manager sent out an e-mail asking female trainees and trainees with a bicultural background if they wanted to participate. In order to prevent possible participants from knowing to much in advance of the interview, the e-mail was concise and merely mentioned who I was looking for and that the purpose of the study was to

measure the degree of diversity and inclusion within the traineeship. The e-mail led to several responses of which most trainees that reached out to me were female and several trainees had a bicultural background. However, I knew there were more trainees with a bicultural background than the ones that reached out to me. Therefore, I decided to contact them myself asking if they had time for an interview. As ProRail offers four types of traineeships, I aimed to achieve an acceptable distribution among the traineeship by interviewing a minimum of two trainees per traineeship. Nonetheless, I was unable to find two suitable candidates for the Legal traineeship, since it had only one Legal trainee at the time of the interviews. For an overview of all the interviewees, see Table 2 below. Additionally, the trainee manager recommended to contact various recruiters and former trainees who play a considerable role in the selection procedure of new candidates. Finally, a former trainee, the former trainee manager, the current trainee manager and two recruiters were interviewed. They are all grouped together under the concept of recruiter and interviewer. A total of eight (former) trainees was interviewed and five (former) recruiters/interviewers participated. An overview of the respondents can be found in Table 2. Additionally, an interview log is included an can be found in Table 3 below. All of the contacted respondents participated and therefore the nonresponse rate was zero. In order for respondents to feel fully comfortable to talk about anything, anonymity was promised. For this reason, respondents were allocated a number that was based on the order in which they were interviewed. A list with names of all respondents was confidentially shared with my ProRail supervisor and thesis supervisor. However, the order of names on the provided lists do not match the order that can be seen in Table 3.

Table 2: Overview number of respondents, male/female ratio and bicultural background

Type of respondents	Total of respondents	M/F		Bicultural background
Finance	3	M	1	2
		F	2	
Legal	1	M	-	-
		F	1	
Technical	2	M	1	1
		F	1	
Management	2	M	-	1
		F	1	
Recruiters/interviewers	4	M	4	2
		F	1	

Table 3: Interview log

Interviewee	Type of respondent	Interview date	Number of minutes
Respondent 1	Trainee	04-12-2020	00:48:45
Respondent 2	Trainee	07-12-2020	00:57:30
Respondent 3	Recruiter/interviewer	07-12-2020	00:55:54
Respondent 4	Trainee	08-12-2020	00:54:52
Respondent 5	Trainee	08-12-2020	00:43:46
Respondent 6	Trainee	10-12-2020	01:02:03
Respondent 7	Recruiter/interviewer	11-12-2020	00:35:02
Respondent 8	Trainee	11-12-2020	00:33:49
Respondent 9	Recruiter/interviewer	16-12-2020	00:44:07
Respondent 10	Trainee	16-12-2020	00:59:41
Respondent 11	Recruiter/interviewer	17-12-2020	00:47:03
Respondent 12	Recruiter/interviewer	18-12-2020	01:08:31
Respondent 13	Trainee	05-01-2021	00:53:23

As mentioned before, it was decided that semi-structured interviews would be used as data collection method, since this format is the "most frequently used interview technique in qualitative research" (Kallio et al., 2016, p. 2955). Semi-structured interviews as a data collection method are popular due to their flexibility and versatility. This type of interview has demonstrated to be successful in facilitating reciprocity between the participant and interviewer (Galletta & Cross, 2013). Additionally, it is advantageous that semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to come up with follow-up questions based on the responses by participants (Kallio et al., 2016). Also, this type of interview provides the participants with room for (non-)verbal expressions and the space for expressing their attitudes and perceptions (Barriball & While, 1994). The questions used during the interviews were determined and formulated before the start of the interviews and consisted of both open and closed questions. Although several questions were closed, a follow-up question was always asked to encourage participants to give a descriptive answer. This was done by using questions that started words such as *why, how, when, where, what* or *who* (Chenail, 2011). Most follow-up questions were pre-designed as it is perceived to be "beneficial in increasing the consistency of the subjects covered by interviews" (Kallio et al., 2016, p. 2960). Nevertheless, several follow-up questions that were asked during the interviews were spontaneous. Besides the usage of follow-up questions, I made use of prompts. As Mosley (2013) argues general prompts are preferred as to "avoid putting words in the informants' mouths" (p. 217). Examples of general prompts are *"Could you tell me more"*, *"What do you mean by that"*, but also nodding is a prompt. However, a few times I caught myself using confirmative prompts as *"That is interesting"*. These confirmative prompts may have given off the impression of unwanted conformation.

Two semi-structured interview guides were developed as tools that helped the data collection (Kallio et al., 2016). The interview guides offered a structure, but were not followed strictly as it aimed to direct participants on what to talk about (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). It was decided to create two different interview guides, one for (former) trainees and one for (former) recruiters and interviewers. This decision was based on the fact that very different variables had to be measured. For instance, the interview guide for (former) trainees included questions regarding P-O fit, whereas the interview guide for (former) recruiters and interviews comprised questions that corresponded to attitudes towards affirmative action. The questions in the interview guide were based on previous research, as can be seen in Table 1. It was attempted to formulate clearly worded, non-leading, and open-ended questions (Barriball & While, 1994; Kallio et al., 2016). The interview guides can be found in Appendix I and Appendix II.

As it was impossible to conduct the interviews in person due to the Covid-19 restrictions, all interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams. Administering interviews via Teams offered certain advantages. Firstly, all ProRail employees have been working from home and have used Teams on a daily basis since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, all participants were versed in using it. Secondly, interviewing via Teams provided the opportunity to conduct face-to-face interviews even if the participants were geographically dispersed (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). Consequently, any financial and travel time constraints were averted. This was especially beneficial since many ProRail employees live scattered over the country. Although some argue that online interviews do not show subtle non-verbal cues or that body language is limited, it does help to see the less subtle non-verbal cues and facial expressions which would otherwise be missed through a regular phone interview (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). Of course, it was essential that participants turned on their cameras. Furthermore, it is believed that online interviews provide more opportunity to ask sensitive questions than during an in-person interview (Madge & O'Connor, 2004). This could be explained by the fact that participants were able to choose a location where they feel comfortable. However, online interviews do present inconveniences as well. A common problem is a faltering Wi-Fi or internet connection which can cause delays or incomprehensibilities. Technical issues did in some cases occur, leading to sound quality issues (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). During a few interviews background noises were heard due to participants being in the same room as their partners or roommates. I attempted to ignore the distractions and continue with the interview. A final disadvantage of the online interviews, was the fact that I verbally acquired informed consent at the beginning of the interview, which set a slightly formal tone. Despite both the advantages and drawbacks online interviews have, Deakin and Wakefield (2014) argue "there is growing support for the use of online software to conduct interviews for research. It has been argued that the quality of responses gained through online research is much the same as responses produced by more traditional methods" (p. 606).

Before the start of each interview the internet connection was checked and I made sure to be 'present' in the Teams meeting five minutes before the start. As I saw most participants for the first time, the first five minutes were used to break the ice, to get to know one another and to create a relaxed atmosphere (Kallio et al., 2016). This introductory part of the interview was particularly important to gain the trust of the participants, which is necessary to acquire high quality information (Harvey, 2011). Subsequently, I moved on to elaborate on the procedure of the interview as transparently as possible without giving away too much of the research just yet. I explained the order of themes, gave an indication of how long the interview

would approximately take, ensured full anonymity, disclosed how the data would be used, what would happen with the interview recordings and asked permission to start recording the interview both via teams and via a recording application on my phone (Harvey, 2011). During the interview I aimed to find a balance between asking participants to explain statements further and moving on to another question. Occasionally, it was necessary to move away from certain topics that as they were not relevant for this study, for example when participants were going off topic. However, it was not always possible to interrupt the participant due to how Microsoft Teams works. Teams frequently mutes one person if the other is speaking. Hence, if person A attempts to interrupt person B, person A is often not heard by person B. I therefore decided to reduce interruptions as much as possible and let participants finish, even if this led to redundant information. From time to time, I summarized a participants point of view and asked him or her if I had understood them correctly. When I believed an answer by an interviewee to be ambiguous, I asked for clarification. If participants did not understand a question, I reformulated it. Additionally, I made use of silences in the hope that participants would tell me more. During the interviewers I aimed to adjust my interviewing style to the particular interviewee as to make them feel as comfortable as possible. According to Harvey (2011), the latter is important to "not only generate high quality responses, but also in increasing the likelihood of elite members providing other interview opportunities such as additional contacts" (p. 434). At the end of each interview, I thanked the respondent for their time and asked them if they had anything they wanted to add or ask. I then continued to ask the participant how he or she liked the interview and if they had any tips for me. All participants indicated that they experienced the interview as pleasant.

3.4 Validity & Reliability

It is argued that qualitative studies have a high validity due to the extensive knowledge a researcher can acquire, but are not reliable (Britten & Fisher, 1993). In this part we will set out potential problems of reliability and validity. First of all, a general explanation of validity is given. Subsequently, the difference between external validity and internal validity is highlighted. Thereafter, the term reliability is defined.

A common explanation of validity in quantitative research according to Golfashani (2003) is that it "determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are" (p. 599). For qualitative studies, there is no fixed concept of validity. This has resulted in numerous researchers developing their own definition of the term validity. Terms that have often been related to the concept of validity are

trustworthiness, rigour and quality (Golfashani, 2003). In this study, the focus will be on two of the most prevailing types of validity, namely external validity and internal validity. According to Toshkov (2016) external validity "refers to the credibility of the results for the target population, and we could speculate about the potential generalizability of the findings beyond the target population to the broader population as well" (p. 248). Being able to generalize findings to a wider population is "one of the most common tests of validity for quantitative studies" (Golfashani, 2003, p. 603). In this case, it is unlikely that the results of this study on ProRail can be generalised to a broader context, because the sample size is quite small. However, sample sizes in qualitative research tend to be smaller than in quantitative research and are therefore "not chosen to be representative" (Britten & Fisher, 1993, p. 271). Moreover, the study findings might be relevant for management, technical, finance and legal traineeships at other Dutch ZBO's. The interviews were replicated several times and the experiences trainees reported were very similar to one another. At a certain point their reports did not complement each other anymore, but overlapped which meant a level of saturation had been reached. The frequent replication of interviews improves external validity (Cuncic, 2020). Another factor that has increased the external validity of this study, is the fact that inclusion criteria for participating in the interviews were upheld (Cuncic, 2020). Hence, although the study results are probably irrelevant to other organisations and therefore lack external validity, the results are highly relevant to ProRail.

Internal validity is "the extent to which a study establishes a trustworthy cause-and-effect relationship" (Cuncic, 2020) that cannot be justified by other components (Bhandari, 2020). Internal validity relies predominantly on the study procedures and whether they are carried out precisely (Cuncic, 2020). In qualitative research, internal validity is established by questions such as "Do the findings of the study make sense?, Are they credible to the people we study and to our readers?, Do we have an authentic portrait of what we were looking at?" (Meijer, Verloop, & Beijaard, 2002, p. 145). A method that aids in determining internal validity and reliability in qualitative research, is triangulation (Golfashani, 2003; Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011; Mays & Pope, 1995; Meijer, Verloop, & Beijaard, 2002). Firstly, the concept of reliability will be explained, second the notion of triangulation is set out.

According to Toshkov (2016), reliability is achieved if "different researchers were to apply the same measurement approach (or the same researcher at different periods of time) they would get the same or at least very similar results" (p. 117). Notwithstanding, as argued before, ensuring reliability within qualitative research is somewhat problematic and its definition may not even be applicable to qualitative research (Britten & Fisher, 1993; Golfashani, 2003; Mays

& Pope, 1995) Golfashani (2003) states that when "quantitative researchers speak of research validity and reliability, they are usually referring to a research that is credible while the credibility of a qualitative research depends on the ability and effort of the researchers" (p. 600). Mays and Pope's (1995) idea of reliability in qualitative research ties in with the latter, and they argue that to establish reliability in a qualitative study, researchers must keep detailed records of their interviews and document the entire process in detail. Mosley (2013) goes one step further, stating that reliability would considerably be improved if interview transcripts would be posted online, so that others can verify the obtained data. However, putting transcripts of the interviews in this study online, is impossible as anonymity was ensured. Nonetheless, various steps were taken to improve the reliability of this study.

First of all, a thorough description of the context is presented. By providing a comprehensive overview of the research context, statements of interview respondents can be better understood. Second, in order to prevent 'cherry-picking' when quoting interview participants and merely picking out the most striking statements without consideration to its representativeness, I aimed to communicate clearly whether quotes represented the general sentiment or if they were a stand-alone point of view (Mosley, 2013). In addition, to assure as much standardisation as possible, interview guides were developed based on theory and were pre-tested by my ProRail supervisor (Mays & Pope, 1995). This was done to increase the study's objectivity. Furthermore, reliability was increased by recording and transcribing all the interviews, coding them via Atlas.ti and analysing them (Mays & Pope, 1995). The transcripts will be kept one month after this study is completely finished. If necessary, I can provide insight to the thesis supervisor(s) into the interview transcripts. Lastly, two code list that were used during the analysis of the interviews are provided in Appendix III and Appendix IV. By doing so, transparency of the analysing process is enhanced (Mays & Pope, 1995; Middleton, 2019).

In order to improve validity and reliability in qualitative studies, triangulation methods are used. According to Guion and colleagues (2011), triangulation is "a method used by qualitative researchers to check and establish validity in their studies by analysing a research question from multiple perspectives" (p. 2). It is an "approach to data collection in which evidence is deliberately sought from a wide range of different, independent sources and often by different means" (Mays & Pope, 1995, p. 110). By using triangulation as a strategy test, one can evaluate whether the study outcomes are valid and reliable (Golfashani, 2003). In their study, Guion and colleagues (2011), present five types of triangulation: data triangulation; investigator triangulation, theory triangulation; methodological triangulation; environmental triangulation. Meijer and colleagues (2002), distinguish triangulation by data source and

triangulation by data type. For this study, data source triangulation and theory triangulation were used. Data source triangulation is the use of multiple information sources with the aim of enhancing the validity of the research (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011). In this case, various sources were used, namely a number of (former) trainees from all four types of traineeships, several (former) recruiters and interviewers, internal documents of ProRail and data provided by ProRail. During the analysis, comments and feedback received from the interviewees were compared to ascertain "areas of agreement as well as areas of divergence" (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011, p. 1). Theory triangulation includes the "use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data" (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011, p. 2). In other words, theory triangulation is the use of multiple theories to explain results (Meijer, Verloop, & Beijaard, 2002). For this research, many different scientific theories on the concepts in this study were consulted and were used to explain the outcomes of this study. By making use of data source triangulation and theory triangulation, I aimed to increase the validity and reliability of this qualitative study.

4. Case Description ProRail

The aim of examining the case study of ProRail, is to discover what the effects are of affirmative action and post-hire outcomes on the retention rates of minority employees in the traineeship. The use of a case study is expected to provide in-depth explanations of the participants that are involved. Furthermore, case studies are an appropriate tool for broad questions and they aim to outline particular processes by exhaustively studying a set of variables in order to reveal social phenomena (Swanborn, 1996).

ProRail is a "private limited liability company" (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat, 2018), responsible for all maintenance, construction and management of the Dutch railway infrastructure, including signs, overhead lines, signals, level crossings, tunnels and train stations. They also manage and maintain all railway facilities, they are responsible for all rail traffic control, they coordinate calamity response, they ensure safety, they renovate and build new train stations, and they allocate rail capacity (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat, 2018; NS, n.d.). An example of how ProRail aims to assure safety and hopes to prevent accidents from happening, is educating youngsters and/or citizens who live around a rail track on how to move safely on and around the rail tracks. ProRail's exclusive stakeholder is the Dutch state. The organisation is led by the board of directors (Raad van Bestuur) and consists of the CEO, CFO and COO (see the organisational chart in Figure 6 below).

Figure 6: Organisational chart board of directors ProRail

ProRail facilitates 1.1 million train journeys on a daily basis – before Covid-19 - and aims to expand its capacity by 30% in 2030 (ProRail, n.d.-a; ProRail, n.d.-b). ProRail states its mission is to "connect people, cities and companies by rail now and in the future. To make travelling pleasant and make sustainable transport possible" (ProRail, 2019). Additionally, ProRail has three main external ambitions, namely: 1) ProRail connects *(Verbindt)*: ProRail "develops the capacity for the mobility of the future"; 2) ProRail improves *(Verbetert)*: ProRail makes "rail mobility as reliable as possible, now and in the future"; 3) ProRail becomes sustainable *(Verduurzaamt)*: ProRail "makes rail mobility as sustainable as possible" (ProRail, n.d.-a). The organisation has four internal core values regarding their employees and can be seen in Figure 7. They expect their employees to subscribe to the following core values:

1. Passion for railway *(Hart voor het spoor)*: Employees have a passion for railways and the work ProRail does. This dedication can be found in the continuous wish to improve one's performance and the organisation as a whole.
2. Service-oriented *(Servicegericht)*: ProRail staff is service-oriented, honours existing commitments, communicate regularly about the progress of a project, and treats others as they would want to be treated.
3. Goal oriented *(Doelgericht)*: Employees are expected to keep organisational goals in mind, prioritize and to make mistakes a subject of discussion in team meetings.
4. Teamwork *(Samenspel)*: Personnel collaborates respectfully with others to realize common objectives. Employees should not hesitate to ask others for help or ask critical questions.

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(ProRail, 2019).

Figure 7: Core values ProRail
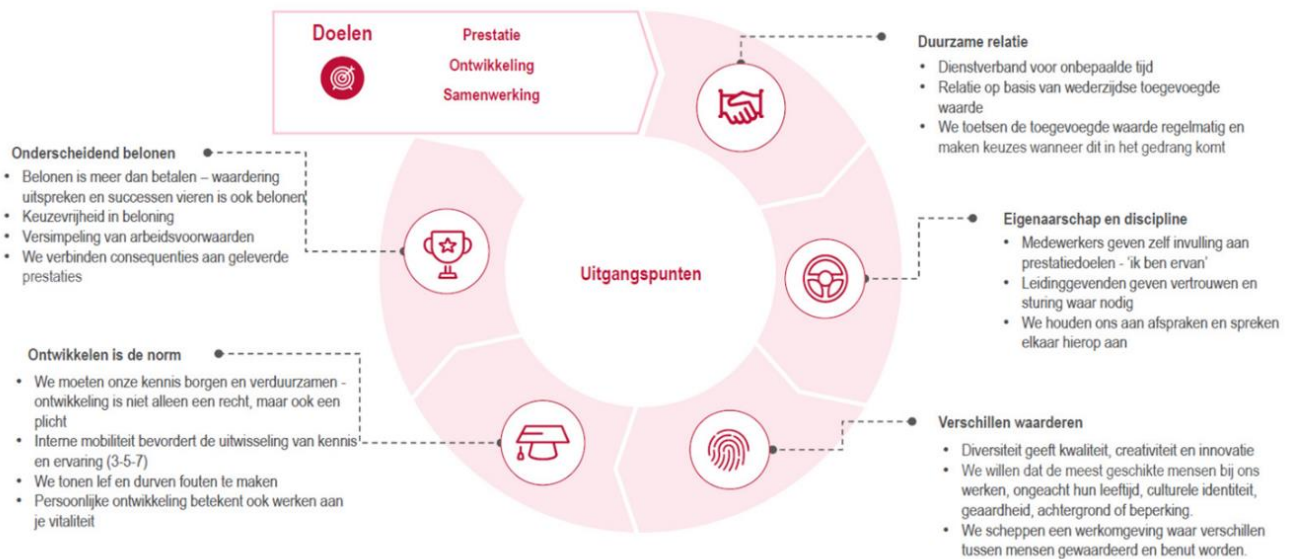
Figure 8: Employee vision ProRail

In addition, ProRail argues that every employee is assessed purely on his or her professional competences, attitudes and behaviour, and receives equal opportunities. Furthermore, ProRail believes it is imperative that everyone should feel safe. Discrimination, aggression, bullying, (sexual) intimidation or any other inappropriate behaviour is repudiated (ProRail, 2019). In 2018 ProRail developed the employee vision (medewerkersvisie), which

describes the contribution of employees to the realization of ProRail's strategy. It also encompasses starting points for its current and future personnel policy (ProRail, 2020). As can be seen in Figure 8, employees are expected to show discipline and ownership and be accountable for their behaviour, actions and performance (ProRail, internal document, n.d.). Likewise, ProRail assumes its employees proactively ask for feedback on their performance and actions, frequently reflect on their own mobility, effectiveness and vitality, and to practice and experiment with new ideas and solutions to continue self-development (ProRail, internal document, n.d.). Finally, employees should work together, contribute to the team and help colleagues, appreciate and consciously celebrate success with colleagues (ProRail, internal document, n.d.).

ProRail has not solely developed an employee vision, but also a leadership vision or leadership profile (leiderschapsvisie) for its managers. This profile aims to enhance employees' development and performance (ProRail, 2020). As can be seen in Figure 9, managers are expected to emphasise team performance and to challenge team members to set the bar high and aim to exceed expectations; managers should coach their personnel, offer them space for personal leadership, offer chances for employees to grow and use their potential and help team members reflect on their behaviour, actions and performance; managers must place confidence in their teams and create a safe working environment (ProRail, internal document, n.d.). Unlike many other organisations, ProRail perceives management as "an essential tie in the development of our employees. Rather than one annual performance review, managers continuously talk to their employees on how they are progressing" (ProRail, 2020, p. 69). Hence, managers are expected to coach their employees in development, performance and collaboration. They should bring teams together and create coherence.
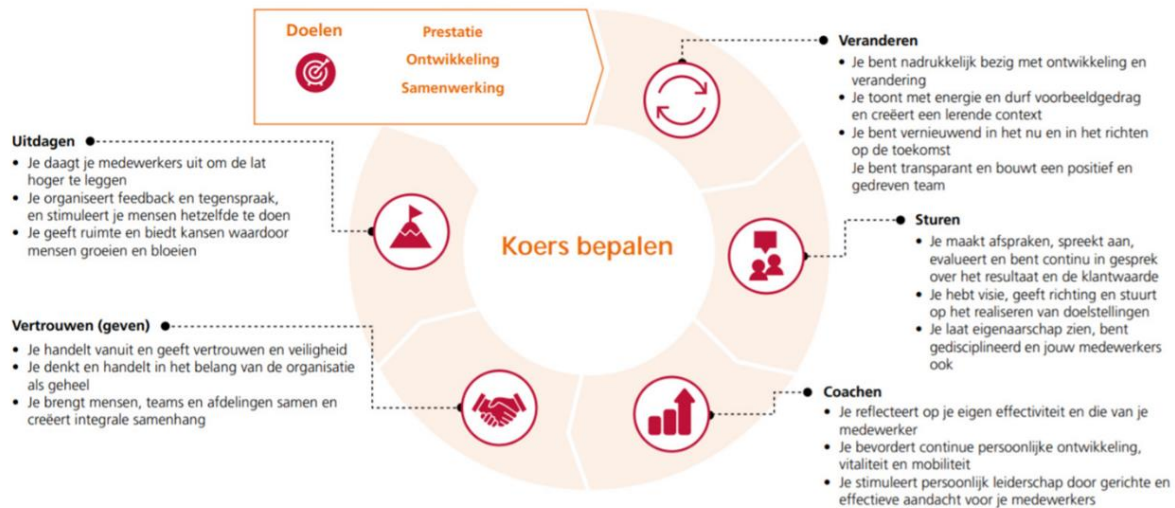
Figure 9: Leadership vision/profile ProRail

5. Results

In the following chapter, the results for both the trainee interviews and recruiter interviews are set out. The results are described per concept. Firstly, the perception of inclusion with respect to P-O fit, RJP and Psychological contract are outlined. Secondly, trainees' perspectives on the diversity climate are summarized. Subsequently, meritocratic beliefs by trainees are set out. Next, the selection and recruitment process is described and affirmative action measures, viewpoints and attitudes towards meritocracy and bureaucracy of recruiters are discussed. Finally, recruiters' description of RJP, Psychological contract and the retention rate of minorities is set out. It is necessary to mention that the anonymity of the respondents was of paramount importance when writing the results. Therefore, it was decided that on a few occasions the number that I allocated to respondents, would not be included as it may provide the possibility to deduce who the participant involved is.

5.1 Perception of inclusion: Post-hire outcomes

First of all, we will dive into trainees' person-organisation fit with the organisation. Overall, the trainees had a very similar image of ProRail before they applied for a traineeship. The majority of trainees indicated they believed the organisation to be largely made up of older male employees. For example, respondent 13 said: *"My expectation of ProRail was that there would be many open sandals and woollen socks types, many old, white men of around 50. And honestly, that is the truth. Although my perception was changed slightly by looking at videos on the website. I got the impression that the organisation has a high acceptance rate."* Other

respondents said they did not know what to expect from ProRail or said they expected the workforce to be old and predominantly male. Most trainees expected ProRail to be quite a sluggish and bureaucratic organisation. It is striking in this respect that when interviewees were asked about the expectations they had during the application procedure and about the organisations' norms and values, they generally had very positive assumptions regarding work atmosphere and the norms and values. For example, respondent 5 stated: *"I remember that I got the feeling that the atmosphere was very good, because people were very open and passionate about what they do. And also that there is a lot of room for personal development and responsibility. They give you the tools, but in the end you have to do it yourself. That open atmosphere and the responsibility they give you, that really appealed to me."* Another trainee, respondent 2, said: *"What I expected from ProRail based on the in-house day, were great colleagues, an open and transparent environment and equality between men and women. It does not matter if you are the CEO or the cleaning lady, everyone is treated the same."* Respondent 13 indicated that she considered ProRail to be a sort of family business. This opinion was echoed by respondent 1, who said: *"I also have the feeling that everyone is welcome at ProRail and everyone is really open to everything. That feels like one big family. I do not feel uncomfortable within the organisation, because I have a different background. I feel that everyone is welcome."* Trainees also pointed out that ProRail fosters a work environment that enhances personal development and upholds a safe atmosphere. Several respondents, however, cautiously mentioned that the train traffic control posts are still known for their distressing work atmosphere. As the large majority of trainees works at one of the departments at the headquarters and not at the control posts, I decided not to pursue the matter further. One trainee remarked that, although ProRail is rather hierarchical, the organisation is relatively flat for trainees. She argued this is due to trainees being placed on a pedestal and it is therefore easier to move freely through the organisation, whereas employees who find themselves lower in the organisation, probably face more difficulty in contacting highly placed managers or directors. When I asked what personality traits ProRail trainees generally have and whether these are similar to those of ProRail employees in general, the unambiguous answer was: personalities of trainees differ significantly from their colleagues within the organisation. The main characteristics that were mentioned where: *"socially strong; fairly extrovert; energetic; honest; ambitious; people with guts; resilient; eager; creative; people who are able to show leadership."* Some trainees emphasized that personalities varied considerably among the different types of traineeships. However, it is fair to say that all trainees possess these personality traits to a certain extent, which is why they were hired in the first place. Not

surprising, respondents indicated they find it easy to connect with their fellow trainees, but at times find it challenging to connect with other, often older and technical colleagues All trainees would definitely recommend doing a traineeship at ProRail, provided that you are open to personal development and are willing to challenge yourself.

The second concept that is set out, is realistic job preview. During this part of the interview, I asked participants what image ProRail and recruiters painted of the organisation during the selection and recruitment process, which positive and negative aspects they mentioned and if this corresponded with the true nature of the organisational work environment. In general, trainees felt that the image presented matches the true work atmosphere. Recruiters are straightforward in mentioning the fact that the organisation is large and processes tend to go slow. Respondent 2 stated: *"Recruiters were very open about ProRail itself. That the organisation is large and slow because it is a governmental organisation. They are very transparent about it. They haven't created an image that is different from reality."* In similar vein, respondent 1 said: *"A recruiter told me 'You have to understand that things can go really slow at ProRail'. It is very bureaucratic and certain procedures can take up a really long time."* Another aspect of working for ProRail that was mentioned by recruiters is the fact that the workforce is predominantly make and the average age is quite high. On the other hand, recruiters emphasized the excellent working conditions and the attention to personal development. Respondent 1 said: *"When I came to work here, I didn't think 'oh I thought it would be different'. Not once."* This sentiment was echoed by the other respondents. None of them ever felt their expectations did not match the reality. For an organisation that aims to diversify on a cultural level, it is remarkable that not one of the recruiters paid attention to the fact that the large majority of the workforce is white. Opinions as to whether this topic merits attention varied. One respondent noted: *"I would find it a bit strange to point it out as a fact. If they would tell me it is a very white organisation, I might wonder if it is something I should care about. Of course it should become more diverse, but it shouldn't matter."* Another trainee thought it is a good idea to monitor the cultural diversity at ProRail and present these numbers during the selection and recruitment process: *"Nowadays it is an issue and it is important to pay attention to it. It only depends on how they do it, because it can also send the wrong signal. (…) I think it's a good thing if they mention that they pay attention to cultural diversity and also give an example of what they do. But I wouldn't mention it as a motivation for hiring someone."* Respondents were also asked to describe both their traineeship and ProRail in three words. An overview of the most mentioned words can be found below.

Traineeship in 3 words:

- (Personal) Development
- Fun
- Challenge
- Diverse group
- Assertive
- Critical
- Supportive
- Refreshing
- Learn how to work
- Versatile
- Content driven
- Analytical
- Networking

ProRail in 3 words:

- Content driven
- Static
- Old
- Typically Dutch
- Slow
- Stiff
- Men
- Traditional
- Challenging
- Fun
- Helpful
- Dynamic

The final concept that was tested during interviews was psychological contract. When asked about pre-hire promises by ProRail, it appeared these mainly related to the conventional guarantees such as work hours, holidays and starting salary. Also, trainees are offered three different assignments of eight months each within the organisation and a great many courses and workshops for their (personal) development. All in all, respondents expressed they felt that ProRail kept its promises. In addition, when asked, multiple trainees declared that the organisation has certain expectations of them, such as making oneself visible in the organisation, developing your competences and devoting one day a week to trainee activities. Despite that, a few respondents indicated that ProRail also set unrealistic expectations, for example setting the bar very high or expecting trainees to make a real change in eight months' time, even though the organisation is fairly large and slow. Lastly, it appears the retention rate of trainees is very high. The number of trainees dropping out because of unmet expectations adds up to two in the past ten years, with one trainee switching to work in a more commercial environment, yet in a later interview one of the recruiters told me this trainee quit due to him not feeling at ease in the organisation due to his bicultural background. There is no data on the reasons why the second trainee dropped out of the traineeship.

5.2 Diversity climate according to trainees

Responses as to what a diverse and inclusive work climate is, were very similar, stressing the importance of: *"A workplace in which everyone feels comfortable to be him or herself. Where everyone is respected and truly treated equally. That it doesn't matter what your background is, whether you have a handicap, but that you are treated equal."* Trainees mentioned almost similar arguments as to why a diverse and inclusive workplace would be advantageous: *"It helps to identify different patterns"* (Respondent 10); *"Even though there might sometimes be small conflicts due to diverse groups of people, at least it brings you further. Otherwise we continue as we always do, because we always agree with each other"* (Respondent 6); *"Diversity helps to broaden perspectives and how you deal with specific issues. I find it a bit more difficult with multicultural diversity, as it brings differences with it"* (Respondent5). On the other hand, trainees identified several difficulties related to a diverse work environment: *"A true cultural difference is something we [red: at ProRail] find difficult to deal with"* (Respondent 13); *"Diversity shouldn't become a reason to hire people. If you are hired because you are culturally diverse, it would be something that will continue bothering you as person"* (Respondent 2); *"A disadvantage could be that it might lead to people being less able to identify with others, which may lead to less understanding"* (Respondent 6).

Regarding the diversity within the traineeships and within the organisation as a whole, respondents were very like-minded. With respect to the traineeship, trainees noted that the group comprises diverse personalities and a good gender balance. However, cultural diversity is still underrepresented since the trainee group is still rather white. As respondent 13 said: *"The atmosphere is there, but it is not yet diverse enough. Everyone really wants diversity, it breathes diversity, it's just not that diverse yet."* This sentiment was echoed by most other respondents who felt more cultural diversity is an issue ProRail should really be paying attention to.

With respect to the diversity within ProRail as an organisation, trainees emphasized the average employee is a 55-year male (Respondent 2, 4, 6 & 10). Respondent 10 observed that ProRail is an organisation that runs on highly educated people over 40 years old. If you look at this age group, there are much less highly educated employees with a bicultural background than there are in younger age groups. People who are over 40 and have a bicultural background are generally lower educated. Hence, they can be found in lower levels of the organisations. This observation was also made by respondent 6, who said that people with a bicultural background tend to be in lower positions within ProRail. Respondent 2 had the following to say about gender diversity in the organisation: *"The organisation still consists primarily of men. On the whole, I feel it's a loss there are so few women, because women have a significantly*

different perspective on things. That could really change the business operations." Although respondents were in agreement about the lack of cultural and gender diversity within the organisation, this did not seem to impact on their feeling that ProRail employees in general are very helpful, sincerely interested in one another, friendly and welcoming.

It was remarkable, however, that the trainees except for one, had encountered some form of adversity on account of either being young or being young and a woman. Some female trainees indicated they had to stand their ground towards male employees and occasionally had to bite back. One female trainee who suffered quite some discriminating and sexists jokes emphasized this was only the case at the executive department which consists largely of lower educated men. None of the trainees have ever faced backlash due to having a different cultural background.

In addition, respondents were asked whether they thought the subject of diversity was widely propagated within ProRail. Overall, trainees feel that the team Diversity & Inclusion at ProRail does it best to promote the issue on social media for example. However, some respondents mention they believe it is mostly promoted at the headquarters and less at the executive departments (Respondent 5, 6 & 10). Respondent 10 added that he believed that the executive departments are exactly the right place to make room for diversity, as the educational requirements are much lower. He argued that it is still the case that people with a bicultural background tend to have lower education. Respondent 1, who also has a bicultural background, said that: *"I've seen quite a bit of promotion on social media from the team D&I. I think it's very important that an organisation communicates to its employees that everyone belongs. Because for me it goes without saying, but I think it's important that it's emphasized."* All trainees agreed that it is of substantial importance that diversity and inclusion are promoted at ProRail. Respondent 2 voiced the opinion however, that the D&I team is too small for such a large organisation. She argued: *"I believe that she [red: the diversity manager] has too big of a task to do alone. It's a really important matter, but she doesn't have the manpower to do it alone and to get others to broadly support it."* This sentiment is one that I came across often in my time at the D&I team. The diversity manager is the only permanent employee that works there. The rest of her team consists of interns. This issue was something we often talked about. Although the diversity manager has asked for years for an extra permanent colleague, higher management does not appear to find it a priority. However, higher management does promote that it is a topic they put a lot of effort in and highly value. Hence, it seems that top management finds itself in a contradictory situation.

A final question that was asked at the end of every interview, was if respondents had ideas on how ProRail can improve diversity within the traineeship and the organisation as a whole. Trainees had very different ideas on how to increase diversity: *"Target specific groups via for example study associations"* (Respondent 10); *"Just start with promoting the advantages of diversity more on the website and be honest about the current diversity within ProRail in the recruitment process"* (Respondent 13); *"Similar as to what the Government [red: Rijksoverheid] does, ProRail could point out on their vacancy page that they find diversity very important"* (Respondent 1); *"Ensure more turnover in the organisation in order for employees not being stuck in the same post for years. This could provide you with the opportunity to hire new, young people"* (Respondent 6); *"Avoid mentioning that you've been accepted for the job because of your cultural background. But do mention that you pay attention to cultural diversity by giving an example"* (Respondent 2).

5.3 Meritocratic views of trainees

Questions regarding meritocracy were not intended to be part of the interviews with trainees. However, unexpectedly, trainees gave multiple statements which could be interpreted as meritocratic views and it was therefore decided to include these in this study. As respondents showed signs of meritocratic opinions, I asked probing follow up questions on the matter. Six out of eight trainees expressed meritocratic beliefs, arguing that when new candidates are selected only the best ones should be considered. Subsequently, they said that a candidate who has a bicultural background but is less qualified than a white counterpart, should not be chosen over the other candidate solely because of their cultural diversity. Hence, biculturalism must not be a reason to hire someone and ProRail should only recruit the most highly qualified trainees. This opinion was voiced by all six trainees. Similarly, respondent 6 said: *"You have to pay attention that everyone gets a fair chance. That you don't necessarily always have precedence as a woman or someone with another cultural background. You must look at someone's qualities."* Corresponding to this belief, respondent 5 stated: *"I do think that as a company you should just hire people who are competent and if these people have a different background, that is fine. But you shouldn't just choose a person because you want to encourage a policy."* Likewise, respondent 10 argued that it is currently ProRail's policy to have at least 50% of its trainees consist of women., but that hiring a less qualified women instead of a fully qualified man might be a rather heavy-handed solution to get a balanced influx of candidates. Furthermore, with respect to the question if it would be an option for ProRail to mention in their traineeship vacancy texts that if candidates are equally suitable, female candidates or candidates

with a bicultural background are preferred, respondents answers varied. Although respondent 1, 2 and 5 believed it could be an option to mention it in a vacancy text, respondent 2 stressed that a candidate must never be told he or she was chosen for this reason. Respondent 4, who was also part of the previous selection days for the traineeship in the role of interviewer, told me: *"If you have two people who are equally good and you have no one with a bicultural background and you have one man too many, we go for the girl with the cultural background instead of the Dutch guy."* Lastly, regarding the objectivity of the recruitment process, respondent 6 said: *"You always have a preference for someone. Recruitment processes are not at all objective. I might have a preference for somebody that is similar to me. Everyone might have that type of preferences."*

5.4 Selection & recruitment process

At ProRail there are two starting dates for traineeships, in October and January. The search for new candidates starts with determining for which type of traineeships (Technical, Legal, Finance and Management) vacancies will be posted on the 'Working at ProRail' page and how many spots are available. Vacancies are usually also posted on the Moongro website, a platform that displays all current traineeships in the Netherlands. During the recruitment phase in October 2020, ProRail actively sought and reached out to potential candidates with a bicultural background. This was a first-time test in which a so-called 'searcher' sought for people on LinkedIn with a financial, technical or legal background who speak a second language that is not Western. In this manner, ProRail attempted to attract a more diverse pool of candidates. In total, 16 potential candidates were reached out to and one of them applied. Although, this strategy has not resulted in any of the potential candidates being hired, respondent 12 argued that this was not a waste of time: "W*e at ProRail have actively reached out to 16 people to whom we said 'we think that ProRail is a nice, interesting organisation for you'. So if you talk about employer branding, this was a very good move."* Respondent 12 indicated that all 16 candidates, in case they would have applied, would go through to the second round of assessments, whereas normally this decision is based on applicants' motivational letters and CV's.

ProRail does not have complete data information on the number of candidates that applied in the past years. However, about five years ago, there was a ratio of 13 technical candidates to over a 100 management candidates. In order to increase the number of applicants on technical traineeships, ProRail began to actively headhunt technical applicants by visiting for example University fairs. The financial traineeship roughly attracts numbers similar to the

technical one, and the legal traineeship was created more recently in 2020. Fortunately, ProRail does have internal data on the number of applicants in 2020. An overview can be found in Table 4 below. The table demonstrates an increase in applicants in the past two years, but the Legal traineeship did not have any applicants in October 2019 as the traineeship did not exist at the time. Also, in October 2020 ProRail did not recruit any candidates for the Finance and Legal traineeships.

Table 4: Number of applicants from 2019 – 2021 based on internal data ProRail

October 2019					
Type of traineeship	**Management**	**Technical**	**Finance**	**Legal**	**Cumulative**
Total number of applicants	81	24	14	-	119
Applicants that were invited to do an e-assessment	52	19	13	-	84
January 2020					
Type of traineeship	**Management**	**Technical**	**Finance**	**Legal**	**Cumulative**
Total number of applicants	76	21	22	26	145
Applicants that were invited to do an e-assessment	34	15	14	14	77
October 2020					
Type of traineeship	**Management**	**Technical**	**Finance**	**Legal**	**Cumulative**
Total number of applicants	334	83	-	-	417
Applicants that were invited to do an e-assessment	101	42	-	-	143
January 2021					
Type of traineeship	**Management**	**Technical**	**Finance**	**Legal**	**Cumulative**
Total number of applicants	182	54	52	60	348
Applicants that were invited to do an e-assessment	70	36	27	24	157

ProRail has certain fixed requirements that candidates must meet, namely they have to have an Academic Master's degree from a recognized University and they cannot have more than one year of work experience. Beyond these strict conditions, the type of trainee ProRail is aiming to attract, is rather fluid. Respondent 3 stressed that it is essential for trainees to be relatively outgoing, as they are expected to take up key positions within the organisation. Hence, candidates should be proactive, social and be able to connect with others (Respondent 3). Similarly, respondent 12 stated that during interviews he searchers for authenticity, the ability to demonstrate resilience and self-reflection, and the capability to convince and influence others. Furthermore, technical and financial trainees should be more analytical. However, technical trainees must be capable of finding creative solutions more than other trainees. Management trainees on the other hand, have to be more communicative and show leadership. Lastly, Legal trainees must possess the ability to distinguish main issues from side issues and they should be able to argue well. Other than that, ProRail looks for applicants that for example come from a multicultural background, speak a non-western language or have distinguished themselves through certain extra-curricular activities.

In order to make a definitive decision whether a candidate is suitable to do a traineeship at ProRail, recruiters and the trainee manager base their verdict on five rounds the candidate has to go through: 1. Motivational letter and CV selection; 2. E-assessment; 3. Pecha Kucha presentation and a case study; 4. First interview; 5. Second interview. From round three and onwards, recruiters write down feedback for the recruiters in the next round. In the end, a committee existing of a few recruiters and the trainee manager evaluate the candidates and take a decision. If the decision is not unanimous, the trainee manager has the last say. Respondent 7 mentioned that in the final interview it is the 'spark' trainees have, their motivation for ProRail and the traineeship and if they tick all the boxes regarding competencies, that will decide whether an applicant is hired or not.

Questions during the interviews are primarily based on a framework that was created to uncover the candidate's competences in the field of leadership, creativity and resilience. When I asked respondent 11 about the type of questions he asks, he stated: *"The example questions we have, are more standard questions. However, I try to be as creative as possible in asking questions. I attempt to vary questions, but with the intention of measuring a skill."* Similar to this, respondent 7 said: *"I often start with the question: If you were us, what would you ask yourself? And answer it right away. I do this, because most people don't expect that question. That way we can check how people deal with unexpected situations."* After each interview, recruiters fill in an evaluation form based on the interview they had with candidates. The first

interview serves as a guideline for the second interview. During the first interview the focus is on the assessment results of candidates. Recruiters personalize each interview since it is not possible to ask all candidates exactly the same questions, as every candidate has different assessment results. In the second interview, the aim is to test candidates' self-reflection. The interviews are always conducted by one recruiter from HRM together with either a (former) trainee, the trainee manager or someone from within the organisation who deals with trainees on a regular bases or is in need of a trainee for his or her department. The trainee manager attempts to ensure that the duo that conducts the interviews also displays diversity. So, for example, a man and a woman, two women or, if there really is no other option, two men. However, if two men conduct the interview, one of these men has a bicultural background.

5.5 Diversity recruitment: Affirmative action measures

In order to get a comprehensive understanding of the previously existing affirmative action measures at ProRail and potential measures that could be implemented, I asked my respondents various descriptive questions.

First of all, respondents were asked whether they aim to attract and enthuse minority candidates. And if so, how they do that and via which channels. Respondent 12 indicated that in order to enthuse female applicants and/or applicants with a bicultural background, a special photoshoot was initiated, with a diverse group of trainees consisting of three female trainees and two male trainees with a bicultural background. These photos are used on the online vacancy page for the traineeships and several other pages, see Figure 10. The photo of the female trainee in Figure 10 wearing a ProRail jacket and a cap, is used frequently to promote female technicians at ProRail. Rather than using anonymous iStock photos, it was decided to use photos of current employees to convey the image of a diverse group. In its attempt to attract more bicultural applicants, recruitment has decided to visit events organised by bicultural study associations at various universities the upcoming year. A yearly event ProRail is always present at, is the so-called 'Technique on Heels' (*Techniek op Hakken)* event at the University of Delft. By attending, ProRail hopes to attract more female technicians.
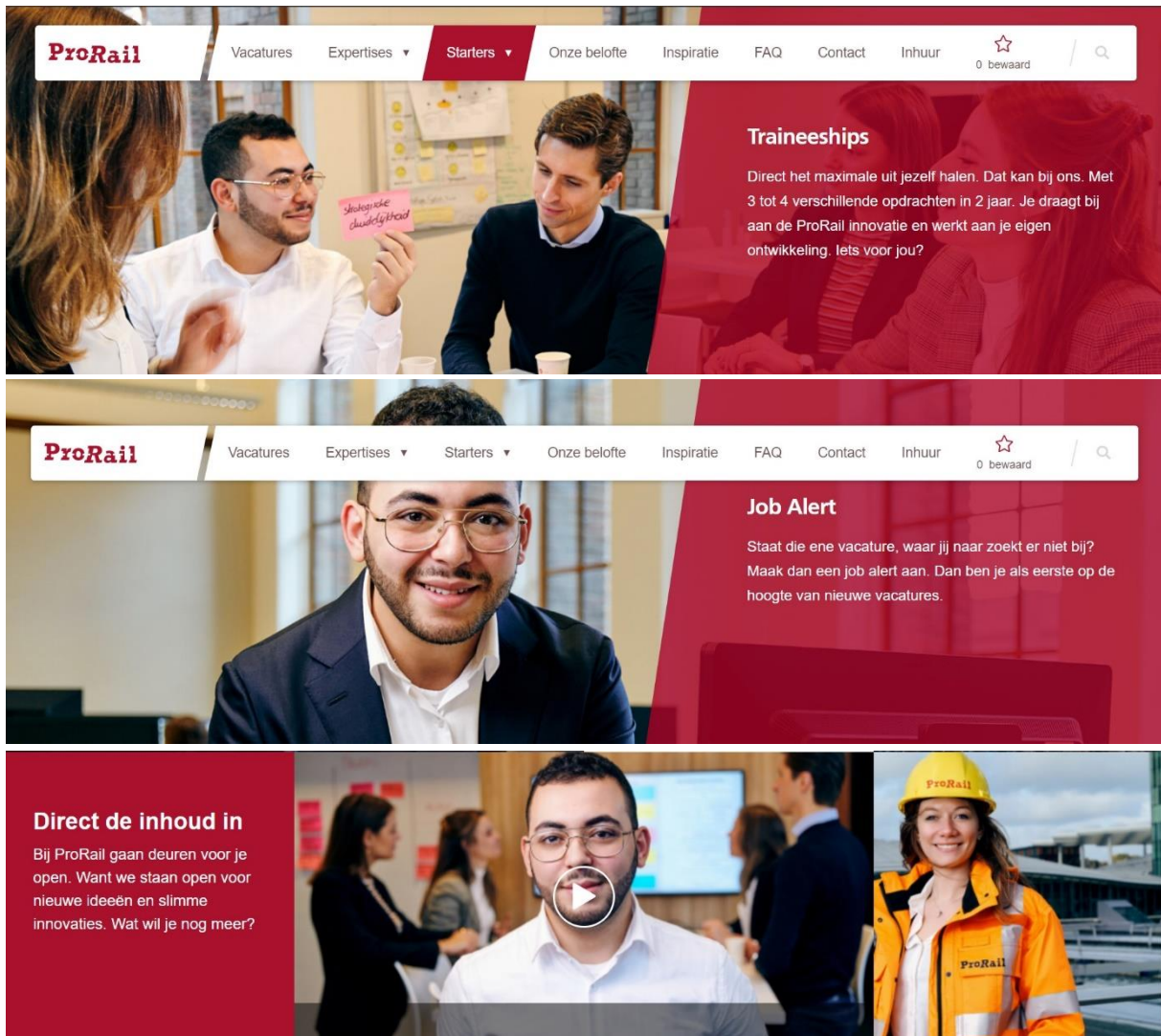
Figure 10: Pictures representing minority trainees (Source: www.prorail.nl)

Secondly, I inquired if recruitment actively tries to prevent unconscious bias during the selection procedures. According to the respondents, a training on unconscious bias was implemented in 2020. It was an annual trajectory organized by the Diversity & Inclusion team in cooperation with the organisation No Labels, a Dutch organisation that offers courses on diversity and inclusion in de workplace. For a whole year, recruiters followed courses and workshops on identifying unconscious biases and how to tackle them. When I asked respondent 9 how he counteracts unconscious biases, he said: *"Initially at the beginning of an interview, you need to label a candidate. Because otherwise you can't see whether it will work out or not. But you have to un-label them very quickly as well. It is just a way of positioning someone and from there on you try to trigger them. Whenever I see a spark in someone's eyes, I move on to the professional part of the interview."* This response was not something that was shared by

other respondents and it is therefore unclear if this is a personal routine, or something other recruiters at ProRail do as well. Respondent 11 explained that during job interviews together with a colleague, he continually attempts to raise awareness about not hiring an *"exact copy of him- or herself."* Although it may be awkward to point out the unconscious biases that a colleague might have, it is imperative to initiate change: *"You notice that at some point they think 'Okay maybe he is right, I need HR's advice on this'. It's a really long process in which you have to guide people in the right direction."*

Some respondents conceded that the recruitment process is also partly subjective and that it is complicated to change it into a completely objective process. Does this mean that respondents felt that it is an emotional process? They had the following to say: *"I definitely think it's a subjective process"* (Respondent 11); *"Absolutely. (...) You have a different perspective of people than I do. That is because of your blue print. The way you have been raised, what you have encountered, what you have studied. Did you join a student association or not? I didn't myself, but I come from a family and a have a lot of friends who were members of one. One time I had an interlocutor that hadn't been a member of a student association. He found certain people rather smug. But I thought that it wasn't that bad. Thus, it shows it's interesting to think about how it affects your decisions."* Although other respondents did not believe the process to be subjective, this does not mean they might not be influenced by their own subjective perspectives.

In order for affirmative action measures to be successful, it is important that the organisation's overall attitude towards diversity is positive. To get a grasp of the general stance of ProRail employees, I asked respondents how they experienced people's outlook on diversity at the organisation. Respondent 3 stated colleagues always respond positively whenever a minority trainee was hired, though this was not because of a diversity perspective per se, but more because a young new talent was hired. However, she did mention that some four to five years ago minority employees had at times felt unsafe in the organisation. This was due to their colleagues having (un)conscious biases and approach them from a homogeneous point of view. This led to minority employees having difficulty to connect with their white counterparts. Although all respondents indicate that the work climate has considerably improved, there is no factual evidence to support this. This matter is merely based on respondents' own experiences. Respondent 7 for example, said: *"We have some sort of familial culture, an inclusive culture where everyone is welcome. But we had to take certain steps in recent years. Because the issue is that it is a technical company with more technical men than women."* Likewise, respondent 11 told me he thought that most of his colleagues are positive about diversity and there are only

few who would dismiss it. He noted that this might be due to the time we live in and recent events, such as the Black Lives Matter movement.

Another measure that could increase diversity, is to also offer HBO (University of Applied Sciences) traineeships. It appears to be a measure that recruiters have already thought about in the past. Respondent 3 answered that she had given it a great deal of thought, but stressed that the intention of the traineeships is to prepare trainees to take up key positions within the organisation and those positions are for university graduates. She added: *"How we envisioned the traineeship with the key positions, it was difficult to merge two traineeships together in one. (…) And it might also be the case that people will feel less qualified, because of the difference between WO (Academic) and HBO. So, I decided to continue down the present road, but it may be something for the future. That we create two types of traineeships and two managers that guide them."* Respondent 12 was equally hesitant about merging the two together, but at the same time he was also fairly optimistic that HBO traineeships could function well at ProRail. Yet, he reckoned that careful consideration must be given to the outflow perspectives of HBO trainees. He argued there is still too little known about the needs within the organisation. One respondent who was very confident about the advantages of such traineeship, was respondent 11. When I asked him if he was not apprehensive about potential negative reactions from for example WO trainees, he stated: *"They may think what they like. Opinions are like assholes, everyone got one and everyone thinks the other one stinks. Thus, they are entitled to an opinion, they are allowed to have one. But ProRail also has the right to refuse people and to choose others. So in that respect I think ProRail should also have the balls to clearly state 'We have certain objectives and we want to achieve them'.* I then asked him if he was concerned about a possible division between the trainees. He answered that he would merge the traineeships together to increase the trainee pool. Respondent 7 was also in favour of HBO traineeships to fill up more practical positions in the organisation, such as construction managers and rail system engineers. He remarked that this type of traineeship could also be the solution for the enormous shortage at train traffic control posts, which is made up primarily of people with MBO (Higher Vocational Education) or HBO diplomas. By contrast, respondent 9 was dismissive about HBO traineeships. He argued: *"I think the traineeship should be something where you will find those pearls. You only want the best people, period. But it depends on the intention of the traineeship. What we try to do is make our traineeship an exclusive one. There are not that many spots available, so you only want the best. Hence, the idea is nice, but the execution will be problematic."*

Finally, a method that may reduce discrimination and unconscious bias, is the possibility for candidates to apply anonymously. This means that the first round, which consist of a motivational letter and CV selection, would be completely anonymous. Hence, name, gender, cultural background and photo would not be included. Out of the five recruiters, three were open to this measure, one recruiter was against it and one recruiter answered that the organisation was not ready when she was active in recruitment approximately five years ago. Respondents 7, 11 and 12 who were in favour of trying such procedure, argued that they were open to test it. Respondent 11 added that scientific literature has proven that it is a feasible solution. Respondent 12 made the sidenote that it might lead to unintentionally letting only white males go through to the second round, as one does not know who is behind the CV. He additionally argued: *"When you look at CV's and how they are structured, you often see that bicultural individuals have different CV's and haven't for example been a member of a student association, and still live with their parents. So, if you would anonymise it, you might not select that person. But if you would know that person has a bicultural background, it would be an explanation for the way their CV is build up. Thus, if this is the most fair system, then there is something to be said for it."* On the other hand, respondent 9 was opposed this procedure. He stated: *I don't care if it is a man or woman or what their name is. But at the same time, you recruit for a manager. It isn't discrimination, but in the end it is."* I used several probing questions in order for him to explain his latter statement and to discover whether anonymous applications were definitely not something ProRail could implement. He argued that most ProRail employees are still highly educated, white men around 48 years old, who have a divergent – maybe even limited - view on other cultures. He added: *"You notice in interviews that the way they [red: the managers] react to certain candidates, that their view is limited. Let me put it like that."*

5.6 Threats to diversity recruitment

In order to discover whether recruiters had certain meritocratic views, I asked them for their opinions on quota/target figures, equal suitability, hiring lower educated individuals and the establishment of fixed procedures. A much-heard statement when asking for a diversity quota, was that it should not become the main goal. Respondent 7 expressed his concern by stating: *"I have a bit of concern about that, that a quota may become sacred. Everything you steer towards, has a down side. It might become a goal in itself and I don't think that the diversity really benefits from that. You always have to keep in mind what the goal of the quota is, and that is to bring in a diverse population. That is the goal, that's where we're going. And not some sort of*

'oh we hit the 10% again, now we're okay for a couple of years." Likewise, respondent 9 and 12 were hesitant about quota measures as well. Respondent 9 warned about the potential effect that by implementing quota, minority candidates are given a special status which in turn makes it more complicated to be genuinely part of the team. By contrast, respondent 11 and 3 said to be in favour of a quota. Respondent 3 stated: *"I always find quotas difficult in the sense that people should have the feeling they were hired for their qualities and not so much because they have a different background. And it shouldn't become a goal in itself, but I do think it's important because by doing so, you'll create movement. If you don't do it, you'll leave it up to the organisation. And what I said earlier, people aren't aware of it (…) but I do belief the organisation is open to it."* However, respondent 11 noted: *"It can definitely work, but if you're going to enforce a quota for cultural diversity, you'll have many people who'll get the feeling that it's discrimination. It's a very sensitive topic. (…) So, I personally think it could work. Notwithstanding, it depends on the business unit."* As became clear, respondents were in general rather doubtful of strict quota. However, there appears to be more support for target figures and it is a measure that is already – unofficially - adopted by several recruiters. Respondent 11 declared that he clearly pronounces his preferences when ProRail is recruiting new technical trainees: *"I very clearly indicate that in advance: 'We have a lack of females in technique, so let's choose a young lady who is really motivated and who also has the knowledge and skills'. I certainly speak out."* Correspondingly, respondent 12 disclosed that his personal ambition is to have a trainee group in which 15% has a different cultural background. He added that his supervisor is not bothered how many of the trainees have a bicultural background. Hence, it is own personal intention. As a result of his goals, he also ensured that men/women ratio in the trainee group is not fifty-fifty, but sixty-forty. He told me: *"Just a few more women than men, so that you can contribute a little more to that change."*

A second measure that may diminish discrimination or unconscious bias is that, when two candidates are equally suitable, preference is given to the minority applicant. Respondent 7, 9 and 11 disapproved of the proposed measure. Respondent 9 expressed the following: *"I'm not very much in favour of that unique position. But I also believe that it doesn't go that easy in an organic way, so I understand that you sometimes need to implement such measures. (…) But it also evokes resistance from people, because it is discrimination. It is positive discrimination, but it is still discrimination. I understand the pressure from society is heavy, but it should happen in the right way. You should be hired because of your qualities, not because of your skin colour. I don't think that's a good development."* Likewise, respondent 11 said: *"It will be legally possible, that isn't a problem. You are allowed to expresses a preference.*

However, we must be careful not to discriminate." In contrast, two respondents revealed that this is something they already – quietly – did. One respondent said: *"I secretly already did that, in the sense that when we had two equally suitable candidates, I chose for the minority candidate. That's because I believe that a diverse team, is really, really powerful."* Subsequently, I asked her if she would tell applicants that they were hired based on their minority status. She answered: *I would be careful about telling someone, because that way you talk someone into a box. (...) So you don't have to point that out."* Respondent 12 declared to do the same, but warned that the group must remain heterogeneous: *"Suppose that it would become a group of 17 women and 4 men, then it starts to look more and more like a homogeneous group. So, I don't believe in that either."*

Besides the abovementioned measures, a method could be to hire minorities with a lower educational background and providing them with educational trainings and guidance to ensure that they reach the same level as their colleagues. Regrettably, due to a lack of time in three interviews, I skipped this question. Nonetheless, during the interviews with respondent 3 and 11 I was able to go into depth on this subject. These recruiters responded both keen on this proposed procedure. Respondent 3 stated: *"I very much belief in selecting on qualities and not so much on certificates. I do think however, it is a highly educated organisation, thus we need sharp people, but that has nothing to do with certificates."* Respondent 11 added: *"I believe it fits in the performance and development culture of ProRail, because we have clearly stated that we want people that perform and develop themselves."*

Another potential method could be the implementation of fixed procedures during the selection and recruitment process, such as pre-established questions, to ensure all candidates are asked the same questions. As was discussed in paragraph *5.4 Selection & recruitment process*, recruiters work with a framework that includes questions to expose specific skills. However, all recruiters indicated that they believe it is not possible to ask every applicant exactly the same question due to candidates differing from one another. Recruiters indicate that they aim to personalize every interview, for example by questioning applicants on their personal assessment results. Furthermore, respondent 3 adds: *"I think that's fine in itself, but it's not just about the questions you ask, it's also about how you see people responding. That's where I see diversity."* Respondent 11 however, expressed to be firmly against this measure. He argued: *"I understand the thought behind it, I understand that you want to asses people equally. But people are people and not everyone is equal. That's a part of the literature [red: scientific literature] that isn't emphasized much. (...) It's something really subjective, you can't put numbers on it. You have to rely very much on your gut feeling and how someone comes across, how they speak,*

what their body posture is and their non-verbal communication." Although, respondent 11 had a negative outlook on this proposed method, he did propose a different approach that could improve fair selection of applicants, namely the implementation of a selection committee. This committee would consist of at least one person from HR and would be made up of an odd number of people. The committee may select the applicants for a job interview and will take part in the first interview as well as the second one. He also told me: *"If you look at the regular vacancies at ICT for example, you see a selection commission of five or three people. One person is part of the team, one manager and one person from HR. In that committee every CV is reviewed and discussed. Subsequently, the interests in diversity and inclusion are clearly discussed and represented."*

Finally, several recruiters made – apart from the questions that were asked to get insight into their meritocratic beliefs – comments that could be interpreted as meritocratic views. Specifically, respondent 9 and 12 stated they *"just want the best candidates"* regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religion or sexual preference.

5.7 RJP & Psychological contract

In order to discover if the picture recruiters paint of the organisation, corresponds to the picture trainees have, I asked respondents questions regarding RJP and psychological contract. Recruiters generally described ProRail as an organisation with an open culture in which people are very willing to help. Also, they all mention ProRail's workforce is relatively old, technical and most employees are men. Only respondent 11 tells candidates explicitly that the organisation is relatively white, but also that ProRail is quite open to diverse cultural backgrounds: *"I mainly try to focus on the collaboration. Because if I have learned one thing at ProRail, it's that collaborating is prioritized. If you enthusiastically dive into a topic, you'll find support everywhere and there are various people who want to help you with that. That's the image I create for candidates."* In line with this, I asked respondent 3 if she would tell applicants anything regarding cultural diversity or the lack thereof at ProRail. She responded with the following: *"I am more in favour of promoting that we want to be diverse and try to create opportunities for more diversity."*

In addition, positive aspects recruiters mention during interviews are that the organisation is safe, the work culture is pleasant, that it is rather easy to approach someone from the board, and you get considerable responsibility and opportunities. On the downside, recruiters stress the bureaucracy, the meeting culture, and the fact that the organisation is rather

rigid. When I asked my respondents to describe the traineeship and ProRail in three words, the following was said:

Traineeship in 3 words:
- o Maximal growth
- o Making mistakes
- o Future
- o Challenging
- o Creativity
- o High level
- o Opportunities
- o Chances
- o Learning
- o Failing
- o Development
- o Authenticity

ProRail in 3 words:
- o Maximal growth
- o Making mistakes
- o Very enthusiastic
- o A lot of work
- o Shared commitment
- o Reliable
- o Safe
- o Too nice
- o High level
- o Authenticity
- o Rigidity

Finally, recruiters expected trainees to get the most out of their traineeship, to be open to feedback and to develop, to dare to be vulnerable, stepping out of one's comfort zone, to challenge others and to be critical.

5.8 Retention of minorities
The concept of retention is fairly difficult to measure objectively through interviews, as it is a concept that is based on factual information. First, a brief overview of interview responses on the concept of retention is provided. Second, we will set out internal data that were provided by ProRail on the retention rates of trainees.

Recruiters emphasized that it is the normal course of events for trainees to flow into the organisation after they have finished their traineeship. Respondent 3 added: *"We decided that we aren't going to invest two years into someone, for them to walk out of the door with that amount of experience. Because we invest quite a bit of money in those individuals. So, after those two years of traineeship they have to try and find a job within ProRail for themselves. And if they can't find one, we'll help them of course."* She also stated that when looking at

former trainees, you see they have taken up a lot of different positions within ProRail. They were not stuck in one place. Respondent 3 and 12 mentioned two trainees quit the traineeship in the past ten years due to having different expectations. One of them resigned due to not feeling at ease within the organisation. He had a bicultural background and had difficulty to identify himself with others. At the time: *"the level of diversity was very minimal at ProRail, he felt he couldn't be himself."* Nothing is known about the reason why the other trainee left.

In addition, ProRail does not have any official reports that include the retention of their trainees since the start of the traineeship in February 2007, but it does have an unofficial report with gathered data of trainees retention rates since 2007. Due to this information being confidential, I am not able to share the data in my research. However, ProRail confirmed I am allowed to share a summary of this data in this study, but only if this information may not be traceable to specific individuals. It is essential to remark that a significant amount of data is missing, due to ProRail not actively keeping track of its trainees. Therefore, one should be apprehensive about drawing any definite conclusions from the following data. According to ProRail, 92 people started a traineeship in the period from February 2007 till February 2019. There are no records available for 25 people. That leaves 67 trainees of whom some data are known. Out of the 67 trainees, 58% is male and 42% is female. Only one of these trainees did not have a Dutch nationality. However, this does not mean that others did not have a bicultural background, as nationality does not say anything about a potential bicultural background. The latter is not something ProRail keeps track of. From the 67 trainees, 15 have left the organisation of which two who dropped out of the traineeship before the end. The average number of years in service at ProRail is 5,2 years.

5.9 Diversity climate according to recruiters

For this study, questions regarding perceived diversity climate were specifically targeted at trainees. Notwithstanding, at the end of each interview I asked not only trainees, but also recruiters if they had ideas on how ProRail could become more diverse and inclusive. As these recruiters are recognized as experts in the field of HR, I decided it would be valuable to include their opinions in the study as well.

In correspondence to the theories on post-hire outcomes (Mckay & Avery, 2005), respondent 3 said that it is crucial that ProRail is honest about the level of diversity within the organisation and does not try to portray a more positive picture of the diversity climate, as this will very quickly become apparent to minority candidates after they have been hired and this will feel as *"a rude awakening"*. Further, she added that creating awareness among ProRail

employees is a good start, for example by paying extra attention to different holidays celebrated by employees from a minority background such as the Chinese New Year and the Ramadan. Respondent 9 also talked about creating awareness within the organisation and giving it more attention. Respondent 11 pointed out that it is crucial to include the entire organisation in the process of change, it should not be something that is solely initiated by HR. He argued that this could significantly reduce opposition from within the organisation. But he also told me it is a matter of different communication towards ProRail employees, on how to start the conversation with colleagues on unconscious bias and racism without calling someone racist. Additionally, as mentioned before in *5.6 Threats to diversity recruitment*, he added that implementation of special selection committees would be helpful and increase transparency in the recruitment process.

6. Analysis

In this chapter, we aim to summarize the study findings, attempt to explain these outcomes based on the theoretical framework and conceptual model, pursue to confirm or reject the hypothesized relationships and try to explain these findings.

First of all, minority trainees predominantly had a positive perception of inclusion. Their expectations of the organisation were in line with reality, they felt that recruiters were straightforward and honest during the selection and recruitment phase about the work environment, they feel welcome in the organisation and feel equal to their fellow trainees. Overall, trainees are very positive about the traineeship in general, arguing that it is challenging and there are considerable opportunities for (personal) development. They did indicate however, that ProRail is still rather old, stiff, traditional and primarily made up of men. But trainees mentioned this was also something that recruiters had prepared them for during the interviews. Several trainees mentioned that ProRail has certain unrealistic expectations, such as making a real change in eight months' time. In spite of this, the numbers demonstrate that ProRail's retention rate of trainees is very high. In the past ten years, only two trainees dropped out. However, it is noteworthy that both trainees were members of minority groups, one had a bicultural background and the other one was female. Additionally, the bicultural trainee quit the traineeship due to having difficulty to identify himself with others. One recruiter argued that the level of diversity at ProRail was minimal at the time. Although this trainee quit the organisation due to a negative perception of inclusion, it could be argued that the retention rate of minorities in general is rather high at ProRail with only two trainees leaving in the past ten years. It appears that, overall, minority trainees have a positive perception of inclusion at

ProRail. We could therefore cautiously conclude that the perception of inclusion has a positive effect on the retention rates of minority trainees. Hence, hypothesis two is accepted.

Second, trainees were fairly positive about the diversity within the traineeship, arguing that the group displays of a good gender balance and consists of diverse personalities. However, they did point out that the cultural diversity is still rather low both in the traineeship as well as within the organisation as a whole. Most respondents echoed that ProRail should pay more attention to this issue and argued that it is a loss that the organisation is still primarily made up of white men. Various trainees have encountered some form of adversity on account of either being young or being young and a woman. Despite this form of distress, none of the trainees had ever been confronted with backlash because of their cultural background. Furthermore, respondents felt that the team Diversity & Inclusion does its best to promote the issue on social media and within the organisation, and stresses that it is important to communicate to employees that everyone belongs. Yet, one respondent thought the task for the diversity manager was too big to tackle alone. This view is one that I came across more often, as the diversity manager indicated that she has repeatedly asked top management for extra staff to be able to handle the workload. However, higher management feels that the problem is not lack of staff but lack of prioritization. Also, trainees had a number of ideas on how to increase diversity, such as targeting specific groups via (bicultural) study associations, promoting the advantages of diversity more on the website or pointing out on their vacancy pages that diversity is an important focal point for ProRail, in the same way that the Government. Overall, trainees were positive about the work climate within the traineeship, stating it is rather diverse and they feel included. This would lead us to believe that the perceived diversity climate has a positive effect on retention rates of minorities. However, taking trainees' perception of the diversity climate of the organisation as a whole into consideration, of which they are reasonably critical and negative, one might expect retention rates of minorities to be low. Despite the latter, the data show that trainees generally do not drop out of the traineeship. In the past ten years, only two trainees dropped out, both minority trainees. Consequently, we could carefully accept hypothesis 1 that the perceived diversity climate has a positive effect on the retention rates of minority trainees. Nonetheless, it is important to consider that the true reasons these two trainees dropped out of the traineeship are unclear as they were not interviewed during this study.

Third, recruitment has already adopted various affirmative action measures that increase diversity recruitment. The first policy that ProRail has embraced is intentionally aiming to attract and enthuse minority candidates by visiting for example events organised by bicultural study associations. In October 2020 recruitment also targeted minority candidates via LinkedIn

for the first time. These measures are part of a recruitment plan on how to target minority applicants which, as recruiters have experienced, is met with approval by their colleagues in the organisation. Likewise, recruiters have attended workshops on identifying unconscious bias and how to tackle this. As yet, ProRail has not conducted an official diversity audit, which is something that can offer insight into which strategies are key in improving diversity recruitment. However, ProRail aims for accurate job advertisements on their online vacancy pages for the traineeships. Another affirmative action measure is the adaptation of screening and hiring methods. ProRail does not have such methods in place yet, but four out of five recruiters were positive about the implementation of HBO traineeships. By lowering their hiring standard, more minority group members will be eligible to apply (Holzer & Neumark, 2004). A second option regarding the adaptation of screening methods, is to give applicants the chance to apply anonymously. Three out of five recruiters were in favour of trying such procedure. The last measure that increases diversity recruitment, is greater transparency and accountability of the recruitment process. ProRail partially does so, by having set clear selection criteria, by using a fixed framework of questions and by ensuring that an HR expert is always present during the process. Notwithstanding, the organisation does not have a specific board or committee that oversees the full process. Taking all of these possible affirmative action measures into account, we can conclude that ProRail has implemented the majority of these policies and clearly strives for more diversity recruitment. Although some of these measures were adopted only recently, it is expected that ProRail's diversity recruitment has a positive effect on the retention rates of minority trainees. For the time being, we accept hypothesis 3, but further research must be carried out to prove whether new screening and hiring methods have an evident effect on the retention rates of minorities.

Finally, we have looked at how the ideology of meritocracy and the opposition towards bureaucracy may negatively impact diversity recruitment. Recruiters generally had a positive stance towards the adoption of target figures, multiple respondents indicated that they had already unofficially adopted target figures for the hiring of minority trainees, but they were more hesitant about enforcing quota. Three out of five recruiters disapproved of the proposed measure that when two candidates are equally suitable, preference is given to the minority applicant. They responded with meritocratic views, arguing that it is (positive) discrimination. In contrast, two recruiters revealed that this is something they already do. To measure whether respondents were opposed to bureaucracy, I asked their opinion on the implementation of fixed questions. All of the recruiters dismissed this option as they said every candidate is different and therefore, they cannot be asked the exact same questions. Overall, both recruiters and

trainees demonstrated quite some meritocratic beliefs of which most heard were *"we want to attract the best candidates regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religion or sexual preference"*, *"you should be hired because of your qualities, not because of your skin colour/background"*, *"it is (positive) discrimination"*, *"everyone should get a fair chance"*. As discussed in paragraph *2.4 Threats to diversity recruitment*, these attitudes based on merit, are deeply embedded in our institutional system. Its ideology serves in the interest of the status quo, thus the dominant group in society (Augoustinos et al., 2005). It was expected that respondents would have meritocratic beliefs, as it is an ideology that is strongly intertwined in the Dutch culture (Bregman & Frederik, 2016). In this case, we see that meritocratic arguments are employed to justify opposition towards certain affirmative action measures. We can thus cautiously accept that threats to diversity recruitment – meritocracy and opposition towards bureaucracy – negatively moderate the influence of diversity recruitment on retention rates of minority trainees.

7. Conclusion

This chapter aims to answer the research question and sub-questions, draw conclusions from this study, discusses unexpected results or potential spurious relationships or confounding variables, identifies the limitations of this study and gives recommendations for future research as well as policy recommendations for ProRail.

7.1 Conclusion & Discussion

The purpose of this study was to answer the research question *'How do the perceived diversity climate, diversity recruitment and the perception of inclusion affect retention rates of minority trainees at ProRail?'*. Based on previous studies, it was expected that all of the independent variables would have a positive effect on the dependent variable, and that the moderator variable 'threats to diversity recruitment' would negatively affect the relationship between diversity recruitment and retention rates. In order to answer the research question and to study the hypothesized expectations, a qualitative study was conducted. Thirteen in-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out with eight minority trainees and five recruiters. Based on the interview results we can conclude that trainees perceive the diversity climate in the traineeship as positive, but are critical of the diversity climate within ProRail as a whole. Furthermore, trainees' perception of inclusion is high as overall they responded favourably towards P-O fit, RJP and Psychological contract. In addition, it appeared that ProRail already has some form of diversity recruitment in place since they adopted several affirmative action

measures, namely accurate job advertisements, a recruitment plan, diversity training, and a fairly transparent and accountable recruitment process. Nevertheless, as was expected, respondents – both recruiters as well as trainees – demonstrated numerous signs of meritocratic beliefs. Arguments regarding merit were mostly made to oppose proposed affirmative action measures, thereby threatening diversity recruitment. Although we should be apprehensive about drawing any conclusions from the data ProRail has on the retention rates of its trainees, we could argue that the retention rates are high as only two (minority) trainees dropped out in the past ten years. Taking all of the above into consideration, we may accept all hypothesized relationships meaning that the perceived diversity climate, diversity recruitment and the perception of inclusion have a positive effect on the retention rates of minority trainees at ProRail. Additionally, it appears that threats to diversity recruitment negatively moderate the influence of diversity recruitment on retention rates of minority trainees.

Nonetheless, there are a few points of discussion we should acknowledge. Firstly, it is necessary to note that two recruiters gave statements that were tinged with colour-blind ideology and aversive racism. I expected my respondents to put forward merit-based arguments, however, I did not expect to hear statements that could be considered racist. As racism is a highly complex and nuanced issue and because I want to be careful pointing fingers to anyone, I aim to tread carefully on these allegations. Nevertheless, I believe this topic is so important, it cannot be ignored. According to colour-blind ideology, also called colour-blind racism, white people pretend to not notice race as it is "a simple solution to racial tensions: pretend that we do not see race, and racism will end" (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 41). Whilst colour-blindness may be a well-intended strategy, in reality it renounces the existence of racism and therefore maintains it (DiAngelo, 2018). Statements by respondents that are associated with colour-blind racism were *"I don't care if it is a male or female, or if it has a colour"* and *"I don't care if you are white, black or purple, a Christian, Islamic, whether you like men or women I don't care. I just want the best people"* and *"You can be named Piet or Fatima, I don't give a shit"*. These statements (unconsciously) imply that the respondents do not see and care about colour and are therefore free of racism. They position the interviewees as 'good people' who are free of racism (DiAngelo, 2018). However, according to DiAngelo (2018), in order to tackle racism and unconscious bias, we need to acknowledge we see race and not assume that everyone is 'just like us', as this means we project our white reality onto theirs. Additionally, one recruiter justified the fact that few minorities apply, because the organisation is white: *"ProRail is a white stronghold, highly educated in general, especially when it comes to the head office"*. By doing so, this recruiter demonstrated aversive racism, which is "a manifestation of racism that

well-intentioned people who see themselves as educated and progressive are more likely to exhibit" (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 43). Aversive racism is a very subtle form of racism allowing a person to sustain a favourable self-image, and it suggests that someone might have an unconscious opposition towards diversity efforts of the organisation (McKay et al., 2007). It may be noteworthy, that the recruiters who showed account of colour-blindness and aversive racism, were both white males. This study failed to take racism into consideration as potential confounding variable that could influence the retention rates of minorities, but potentially also the perceived diversity climate by minorities. Further research on this topic would be advised. Although we cannot generalize these findings, it is recommended that ProRail raises more awareness on this issue, and at the same time has a critical look at the current unconscious bias workshops.

Secondly, for this study I did not consider justifications for existing gender inequities and although merely one recruiter showed detailed accounts of this issue, I believe it is critical to mention it. The recruiter said the following regarding the attraction of female trainees to ProRail: *"We can wish very much that the organisation is made up for 50% of women, but if you look at the statistics and you look at how many technical vacancies we have and how many women are already going to the TU Delft, there aren't that many. It is a utopia to strive for that. Apart from the fact that women quit much faster if you start having children when they are 30. Some just stop working altogether."* By deploying the practical considerations such as "the biological inevitability of women bearing children" justifies the still existent gender inequalities (Augoustinos et al., 2005, p. 318). By doing so, this recruiter legitimises the practical complications in accomplishing fair gender relations (Augoustinos et al., 2005).

Thirdly, as was mentioned before, the results of this study are in agreement with the hypothesized relationships. However, it is important to note that this research failed to establish whether perceived diversity climate within the traineeship or within the organisation as a whole, both have equal effect on the retention rates of minorities and if this relationship may be affected by post-hire outcomes. As the perceived diversity climate within the traineeship was rated very positive, but the diversity climate within ProRail was criticized one could expect that retention rates of minorities would be low. However, this is not the case. It is possible that because recruiters are straightforward about the diversity climate at ProRail – or the lack thereof -, trainees are mentally prepared. This could mean, that a spurious relationship exists in which the hypothesized relationship between perceived diversity climate and retention rates of minorities is moderated by perception of inclusion. As this study did not consider this relationship, we must be careful drawing conclusions from this information.

Fourthly, it is imperative to consider that the high retention rates of minority trainees might be caused by the fact that in the past years ProRail has had very few bicultural trainees. It was only more recently that more trainees with a bicultural background were hired and therefore diversity climate and diversity recruitment started to play a greater role.

Finally, this research has demonstrated that the ideology of meritocracy plays an imperative, negative role in the selection of minority applicants, more so than I at first expected. I did not anticipate that minority trainees themselves would so strongly have internalised meritocratic beliefs. However, looking at Dutch society as a whole, it might not be so surprising. The interviewed trainees are all millennials, which DiAngelo (2018) argues "profess more tolerance and a deeper commitment to equality and fairness than previous generations did, but at the same time, millennials are committed to an ideal of colour blindness that leaves them uncomfortable with, and confused about, race and opposed to measures to reduce racial inequalities" (p. 47). I could infer from their statements that trainees all believed very strongly in equal opportunities for everyone. But as mentioned before in paragraph *2.4 Threats to transparent recruitment*, such statements rely on the assumption that everyone has equal opportunities and starts at the same base line. Rather than trying to treat everyone equally by holding them to the same standards, it might be more fair if we recognized that everyone has dissimilar circumstances and that they should be treated differently to achieve an equal outcome. For ProRail this leaves the question whether diversity recruitment truly works, if employees still hold on to meritocratic ideals.

7.2 Limitations

When interpreting the findings of this study, one must consider several limitations. First of all, the sample size of respondents was small. Although interviewees generally expressed similar points of view, the question arises whether the sample size was not too limited. Especially regarding the recruiters, one may wonder if five respondents is not too restricted a sample size. However, due to time restrictions it was not possible to include more people. Additionally, as Britten and Fisher (1993) argue, sample sizes in qualitative research are simply smaller than the ones in quantitative studies and are "not chosen to be representative" (271). Nevertheless, we should be careful generalizing the results from these interviews to a wider population.

Secondly, trainees overall were fairly positive on post-hire outcomes (P-O fit, RJP and Psychological contract). However, it is unclear whether these respondents reacted positively due to a need to remain consistent, a phenomenon called cognitive consistency (Cable & Judge, 1996). It is a possibility that after the first part of the interview – concerning their personal fit

with their organisation's values – respondents may have felt obliged to remain consistent when describing RJP and Psychological contract.

A third limitation of this study, is that none of the trainee candidates were still in the recruitment and selection process. All of the trainees were previously employed at ProRail and might therefore not be able to answer questions about their P-O fit and RJP before they were hired unbiasedly. Questions as *'If you think back before your time at ProRail, what was the image you had of the organisation?'* or *'Do you remember what the image was that recruiters painted of the organisation during the recruitment and selection process?'*, are perhaps challenging to answer for trainees who have been at the organisation for quite some time as they may not remember. Moreover, the study failed to interview minority trainees that dropped out as to discover the reasons why they left the organisation.

Fourth, it is unclear whether interview results were independent from coincidence. As the aim of the study was to primarily measure participants' attitudes and opinions, it may be the case that interviewee responses were based on how participants felt that day. It is possible that if interviews were held at another moment in time, responses would have been different. Hence, this constrains the reliability of the study. Although it is difficult to avert this restrain, it is possible to increase reliability by making sure not to voice your own opinion as it can burden respondents to speak openly (Baarda, 2017). That is why I refrained from voicing my own beliefs until the end of the interview.

A fifth limitation is the fact that I accidently used several leading questions during the interviews, either by using confirmative prompts or questions that included a value judgment. For example, a few times I responded *"that is interesting"* when an interviewee said something. Such a confirmative prompt could give the impression of an unwanted confirmation. Most of these leading questions or prompts were given at the spur of the moment as an automatic, unconscious response. Yet, overall, I believe the use of leading questions and prompts was limited as I was aware of this implication.

Sixthly, at the beginning of two interviews with recruiters, they indicated they had a limited amount of time. This forced me to reduce the number of questions and ultimately may have led to a distorted image. I decided on the spot to limit questions regarding facts, such as what the selection and recruitment process looks like and the retention rates of minorities, and to focus on questions that measured attitudes, such as their stance towards affirmative action measures. Due to time limitations, it was not possible to complete the interview another time.

Seventhly, for this study I decided not to make use of respondent validation. Whilst respondent validation can increase the validity because it gives the interviewee the possibility

to check for accuracy, it can also lead to respondents withdrawing their consent for participating in the study. The latter argument, and the limited scope of time of this study, led me to decide to not validate interview transcripts with my respondents.

Lastly, ProRail does not have conclusive numbers on the retention rates of trainees, nor do they know how many of their former trainees have a bicultural background. This considerably diminishes the reliability of the study. Therefore, we must be apprehensive when drawing any definite conclusions on the hypothesized relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

7.3 Recommendations for future research

However, there are various recommendations for future research. First of all, it is recommended to include a larger sample size even though it does not assure generalisability nor reliability of the research results. However, it would be wise to include a larger sample of respondents if possible. Rather than enlarging the sample size, it could also be an option to adapt the study to a quantitative longitudinal study. Thus to replace in-depth interviews with questionnaires that are sent out various moments over a longer period of time. That way, not only the sample size could be easily expanded, it would also provide researchers with the opportunity to measure participant responses at different moments in time, which in turn may reduce the restraint of the answers being dependent on coincidence. In addition, it could also give researchers the chance of easily measuring the P-O fit and RJP of trainee applicants before they start working and sometime after their start at ProRail and comparing these results. Another benefit of making use of questionnaires, is that it considerably limits the use of leading questions or confirmative prompts. In spite of the potential advantages of quantitative research, such as measuring attitudes of many respondents more easily, it is less practical when aiming to uncover more in-depth information. It is not possible for respondents to ask questions if something is unclear, to elaborate on answers or statements they give when filling out a questionnaire and if it is a possibility to write down their point of view, scientific studies suggest that participants tend to "provide less detailed responses in a questionnaire" (Harvey, 2011, p. 435). Therefore, one might argue that a qualitative approach for this study is preferred.

Second, it is advised for future researchers that if they decide to do in-depth semi-structured interviews and respondents indicate at the beginning of the interview they have less time than was scheduled, they plan an extra interview so to get answers to all the questions. This would improve the study's reliability. Furthermore, it is recommended that future scholars make use of respondent validation as it enhances the research validity. Finally, it is advised that,

before future research dives into the topic of minority retention rates, it is ensured that exact and unambiguous numbers of these retention rates are available. When taking these recommendations into account, it is expected that the reliability of the study will increase substantially.

7.4 Policy recommendations

This study has revealed multiple policy recommendations that ProRail could implement to enhance the diversity climate and simultaneously improve the retention rates of minority trainees.

I. Currently, the online vacancy pages for the traineeships feature a number of photos of trainees from a minority group (i.e. female and/or multicultural), but do not mention diversity explicitly. It is recommended that ProRail signals to potential applicants that diversity is an important topic, in the same way that the online vacancy page of the 'Rijkstraineeship' does, which states: *"Het maakt ons niet uit waar je in gelooft, waar je vandaan komt en van wie je houdt. In Nederland wonen zoveel verschillende mensen en culturen, met zoveel verschillende achtergronden en levensverhalen. Al die verschillen bij elkaar maken Nederland 1 geheel. Juist die diversiteit in denken kan de denkkracht en de maatschappelijke impact van de Rijksoverheid vergroten"* (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). It is recommended to foster diversity by including the issue on all vacancy pages.

II. Following the latter recommendation, it is also advised that recruiters mention that ProRail strives for more diversity, either at the in-house day or during job interviews. Recruiters are honest about the predominant age, race and gender of the average employee, but it might be wise to mention that they therefore strive for a more diverse organisation that is a representation of society.

III. It is advisable to set internal target figures for the number of minority trainees ProRail aims to bring in. Although target figures are flexible and not as rigid as quota are, they do aid in getting recruiters on the same page regarding diversity. Moreover, it may work as a reminder when selecting new candidates.

IV. In addition to the latter recommendation, it might be encouraged to adopt the principle that in case of equal suitability, preference is given to a minority candidate. This measure increases the chances of minority applicants to be hired.

V.   Furthermore, as was suggested by several respondents, it is advised to target specific minority groups, for example via study associations for students with a specific cultural background, rather than focussing solely on large student associations. By specifically focusing on these clubs, chances increase that some of their members might apply for a traineeship in the future.

VI.   Another, relatively controversial, recommendation is to set up an HBO traineeship as well. By providing students with a HBO diploma with the opportunity to apply for a traineeship at ProRail, it is feasible that diversity increases because scientific literature demonstrates that people with a bicultural background are still often lower educated. It is advisable that such an HBO traineeship is not merged with the existing traineeships, but is created as a separate traineeship.

VII.   Additionally, as one of the respondents proposed, it is recommended to create a special selection committee that comprises three or five people of which at least one person is from HR, one person is part of the team that is recruiting, and one person is a manager. This measure is also found in affirmative action literature and enhances both transparency and accountability during the recruitment and selection process. Moreover, it reduces unconscious bias as all applicants are reviewed and discussed by this committee.

VIII.   A proposed action that is somewhat different from the above-mentioned ones, is to provide the trainees with special trainings and workshops focused on unconscious bias, discrimination, racism and meritocracy. ProRail expects their trainees to take up management positions within the organisation in the future. It is for that reason, that it is important to educate trainees on these issues as well. As became evident during the interviews with trainees, most of them have meritocratic attitudes, which is something that may threaten diversity within an organisation. Regarding cultural diversity, it is crucial that white trainees are aware of how their skin colour has formed their lives. Their identities, interests and personalities are the result of a white perspective and white worldview (DiAngelo, 2018). White people must learn to think critically about racism and use their position to assert racial injustice. It is therefore necessary that trainees are aware of their own (unconscious) views, as it is likely they will be more aware of these issues in the future when they are in the position of hiring new people as a manager, but also to start a conversation with their colleagues on racism, discrimination, diversity and inclusion. A good starting point would be to introduce trainees to academic literature on

unconscious bias and racism, discrimination and meritocracy or to include specific workshops on these issues in their traineeship.

IX.   Another advise is to start keeping a track of all the trainees, their backgrounds and their retention. That way, ProRail is able to draw more reliable conclusions as to why trainees drop out early.

X.   Finally, it is imperative that this process of change is not solely initiated by HR, but that the entire organisation is involved. This could immensely diminish resistance from employees who feel these measures are imposed upon them. It is therefore important that employees are informed in an unambiguous, transparent way. Additionally, it is recommended that higher management – such as the Work Council *(Ondernemingsraad)* - sets the right example. According to the SER (2019b), the Work Council can stimulate diversity and one of its tasks is to ensure equal treatment between men and women, and the involvement of people with disabilities and minorities in the organisation. Hence, it is crucial that the Work Council serves as an example for ProRail as a whole and that employees are included in the process of change.

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Appendix I: Interview guide (former) trainees

Interview vragen voor (oud-)trainee

Introductie • Korte introductie van mijzelf • Doel van het interview: Meer te weten komen over de diversiteit en inclusie binnen het traineeprogramma • Opname • Toestemmingsformulier • Garantie van anonimiteit • Vraag geïnterviewde of ze klaar zijn om te beginnen, en benadruk dat ze vragen kunnen stellen als iets niet duidelijk is. • Ik ga je een aantal vragen stellen die betrekking hebben op jouw beeld van het traineeship en de organisatie, en vervolgens zullen nog een aantal vragen gaan over hoe jij diversiteit en inclusie ervaart binnen ProRail. • Maar als eerste, zou je misschien kort kunnen vertellen wie je bent en wat je rol is binnen ProRail? • (Hoe oud ben je, wat is jouw culturele achtergrond, wat is de culturele achtergrond van jouw ouders, wat voor traineeship doe je/heb je gedaan?)	
Topic 1: Description P-O fit Goal: Interviewee describes their view on their person-organisation fit with the organisation.	**Introductie:** Ik zou graag meer te weten komen over jouw beeld en verwachtingen van het traineeship en van de organisatie zowel voordat je bij ProRail aan de slag ging, als nu. **Initiële vraag:** Als je terugdenkt aan de tijd voordat je bij ProRail aan de slag ging, wat voor beeld had je toen van de organisatie? • Toen je eenmaal ging solliciteren, wat waren toen je verwachtingen van ProRail wat betreft de organisatiecultuur? • Welke normen en waarden staat ProRail voor? • In hoeverre heb je het gevoel dat de normen en waarden van de organisatie overeenkomen met jouw eigen normen en waarden? • Is het voor jou noodzakelijk dat dat de organisatie waar je werkt past bij jouw persoonlijkheid, en normen en waarden? • Wat voor soort mensen doen een traineeship volgens jou? • En wat voor soort mensen werken er over het algemeen bij ProRail? • Heb je het gevoel dat jouw persoonlijkheid overeenkomt met die van je collega's binnen de organisatie? • Zou je anderen aanraden om een traineeship bij ProRail te gaan doen?

Topic 2: Description Realistic Job Preview	Introductie: Daarnaast zou ik graag te weten willen komen wat voor soort beeld ProRail probeert uit te stralen en of dit strookt met de realiteit.
Goal: Interviewee describes their view on RJP.	Initiële vraag: Kan jij je nog herinneren wat het beeld is dat recruiters/interviewers schetsten van de organisatie tijdens je sollicitatieprocedure?
	• Zo ja, wat voor beeld was dat?
	• Wat zijn positieve punten die recruiters/interviewers benadrukken in de sollicitatiegesprekken?
	• Wat zijn negatieve punten die recruiters/interviewers benadrukken in de sollicitatiegesprekken?
	• De gemiddelde leeftijd is momenteel 48,6 jaar en 72% van de werknemers is man. Is dit ook het beeld dat wordt geschetst tijdens de sollicitatieprocedure?
	• Wat zijn de eisen waar trainees aan moeten voldoen volgens jou? Wat voor eigenschappen of talenten moeten zij bezitten?
	• Denk jij dat je voldoet aan die eisen/dat je die eigenschappen bezit?
	• Als je in 3 woorden het traineeship zou omschrijven, welke zouden dat dan zijn?
	• En als je ProRail in 3 woorden zou omschrijven, welke zouden dat dan zijn?
Topic 3: Description psychological contract	Introductie: Ook zou ik nog kort willen ingaan op de mogelijkheden die ProRail jou biedt en de verplichtingen die je aan gaat ten aanzien van de organisatie.
Goal: Interviewee describes his/her attitude towards psychological contracts.	Initiële vraag: Meestal maken bedrijven bij het begin van een nieuw contract/nieuwe baan verschillende beloftes, denk bijv. aan het ontwikkelen van nieuwe competenties of skills. Wat voor expliciete beloftes heeft ProRail jou gedaan toen jij aan je traineeship begon?
	• Heb je het gevoel dat ProRail deze beloftes is nagekomen? Waarom wel/niet?
	• Wat zijn verplichtingen die ProRail aan jou als trainee stelt? Of wat zijn verwachtingen die ProRail van jou heeft? (bijv. tijd commitment, loyaliteit, prestaties)
	• Ken jij collega's die gestopt zijn met hun traineeship omdat het toch niet voldeed aan hun verwachtingen?
	• Wat zijn ongeschreven regels binnen ProRail waar jij denkt dat je aan moet voldoen?

	• Wat zijn dingen die je mist binnen het aanbod van ProRail, dat niet wordt aangeboden?
	• Heb je het gevoel dat ProRail soms onrealistische verwachtingen stelt aan zijn werknemers/trainees? Waarom wel/niet?
Topic 4: Description of diversity climate Goal: Interviewee describes his/her attitude towards the diversity climate.	**Introductie:** Tenslotte zou ik graag jouw mening horen over de mate van diversiteit en inclusie binnen het traineeship. **Initiële vraag:** Wat is een diverse en inclusieve werksfeer volgens jou? • Wat zijn voordelen die verbonden zijn aan een hoge mate van diversiteit en inclusie binnen een organisatie? • En wat zijn nadelen ervan? • Is het voor jou van belang dat er binnen de organisatie waar je werkt een diverse en inclusieve werksfeer hangt? Waarom wel/niet? • Vind je dat er binnen het traineeship zelf een diverse en inclusieve sfeer hangt? • En binnen ProRail in zijn geheel? • Heb jij het gevoel dat ProRail breed wordt uitgedragen dat we meer diversiteit willen? • Heb jij zelf het gevoel dat je erbij hoort? • Heb jij wel eens negatieve of discriminerende opmerkingen gekregen ten aanzien van wie jij bent? Of heb je van andere collega's gehoord dat ze hier wel eens mee in aanraking zijn gekomen? • Heb je tenslotte zelf nog ideeën hoe ProRail de diversiteit en inclusie kan vergroten zowel binnen het traineeship als binnen de organisatie?

Afronden van het interview
Dit waren alle onderwerpen die ik met je wilde bespreken. Heb jij nog dingen die je zou willen toevoegen? Of die je mij zou willen vragen?

Hoe heb je dit interview ervaren? Heb je nog tips voor mij?

Ontzettend bedankt voor je tijd en je input! Dit is ontzettend waardevol voor mij!

Appendix II: Interview guide (former) recruiters/interviewers

Interview vragen voor recruiters/interviewers

Introductie
- Korte introductie van mijzelf   - Doel van het interview: Meer te weten komen over de diversiteit en inclusie binnen het traineeprogramma   - Opname   - Toestemmingsformulier   - Garantie van anonimiteit   - Vraag geïnterviewde of ze klaar zijn om te beginnen, en benadruk dat ze vragen kunnen stellen als iets niet duidelijk is.   - In dit interview zal ik het regelmatig hebben over minderheidsgroepen of minderheden, hiermee bedoel ik in dit geval vrouwen en personen met een bi-culturele achtergrond. Ik ga je een aantal vragen stellen die betrekking hebben op de gang van zaken van het recruitment en selectieproces, daarna zullen een aantal vragen gaan over hoe jullie omgaan met diversiteit en inclusie, vervolgens zal ik een paar vragen stellen over het image van ProRail, en ten slotte zal ik wat vragen stellen over de door-en uitstroom van trainees.   - Maar als eerste, zou je misschien kort kunnen vertellen wie je bent en wat je rol is binnen ProRail?   - Mag ik je nog vragen wat jouw culturele achtergrond is? (En die van je ouders?)

Topic 1: Description selection and recruitment process Goal: Interviewee describes what the selection and recruitment process of new trainees entails.	**Introductie:** Ik zou graag meer te weten komen over hoe het werving en selectieproces voor nieuwe trainees eruitziet. **Initiële vraag:** Zou je mij kunnen vertellen hoe jullie opzoek gaan naar nieuwe trainees? - Hoeveel mensen solliciteren er gemiddeld? Zitten er grote verschillen in de hoeveelheid sollicitanten per jaar? - Naar wat voor soort kandidaten zijn jullie opzoek? Aan wat voor vereisten moet een kandidaat voldoen? - En staan deze vereisten/criteria vast? - Hoe bepaal je uiteindelijk of een kandidaat geschikt is voor het traineeship? - Hoe ziet een sollicitatiegesprek er met een kandidaat over het algemeen uit? (Zijn deze gestructureerd of zijn interviewers daar vrij in?) - Krijgen sollicitanten allemaal dezelfde vragen gesteld tijdens de sollicitatiegesprekken? - Wie voeren de sollicitatiegesprekken met de kandidaten? - Is er altijd iemand van HR bij tijdens de sollicitatiegesprekken?

Topic 2: Description affirmative action Goal: Interviewee describes what types of affirmative action are already used and he/she gives his/her opinion on affirmative action measures.	**Introductie:** Daarnaast zou ik graag te weten willen komen wat jullie doen om diversere kandidaten aan te trekken. Dus denk aan kandidaten met een bi-culturele achtergrond. **Initiële vraag:** Op wat voor manier proberen jullie vrouwelijke kandidaten of kandidaten met een bi-culturele achtergrond te enthousiasmeren om te solliciteren? → Hebben jullie hier een vooropgesteld plan voor? • Is het werving en selectieproces een transparant proces? In de zin, hebben andere mensen binnen de organisatie hier zicht op of kunnen zij informatie opvragen hierover? • Via welke kanalen/media worden openstaande vacatures voor het traineeship gepromoot? • Hoe gaan jullie onbewuste vooroordelen tijdens het werving en selectieproces tegen? (diversiteitstraining voor recruiters) • Hoe ziet zo'n diversiteitstraining eruit? • Weet jij hoe werknemers van ProRail aankijken tegen meer diversiteit binnen ProRail? Wat is de algemene tendens? • Bij het plaatsen van een trainee met bijv. een bi-culturele achtergrond binnen een afdeling, wordt er dan rekening gehouden met welke afdelingen een lage vertegenwoordig van minderheden hebben? Dus wordt zo'n trainee daar dan juist geplaatst? • Ik ga dat er op de vacature pagina voor het traineeship een foto staat met een aantal mannen en vrouwen met verschillende culturele achtergronden. Is hier bewust voor gekozen? Zo ja, waarom? • Hoe worden recruitment teksten/advertenties geschreven? (bezig met inclusieve teksten?) • Hebben jullie wel eens nagedacht over het aanbieden van traineeships voor hbo-afgestudeerden? Waarom wel/niet? • Hebben jullie wel eens overwogen om anoniem solliciteren uit te proberen?
Topic 3: Description of attitude towards meritocracy and bureaucracy Goal: Interviewee describes his/her attitude towards meritocracy and bureaucracy.	**Introductie:** Er zijn ook mogelijkheden om ervoor te zorgen dat er meer mensen van minderheidsgroepen worden aangenomen. Dat kan op verschillende manier. Ik ben benieuwd hoe jij hiertegen aan kijkt. **Initiële vraag:** Een manier is bijvoorbeeld om een soortement van quotum instellen voor het aannemen van minderheden. Hoe kijk jij hiertegen aan? (→ streefcijfers)

	• Zou het voor jullie een optie zijn om bij gelijke geschiktheid de voorkeur uit te laten gaan naar een vrouwelijke kandidaat of een kandidaat met een bi-culturele achtergrond?
	• Je zou ook kunnen denken aan het opstellen van vaste procedures, zoals bijvoorbeeld ervoor te zorgen dat alle kandidaten exact dezelfde vragen worden gesteld. Daarin is er misschien geen ruimte voor spontaniteit, maar op die manier zorg je er wel voor dat alle kandidaten dezelfde vragen krijgen. Wat vind jij hiervan?
	• Een ander voorbeeld is bijvoorbeeld het aannemen van minderheden met een wat lagere studie achtergrond. Om ervoor te zorgen dat zij op hetzelfde niveau komen als hun collega's zou je hen extra training en begeleiding kunnen bieden. Hoe kijk jij hiertegen aan?
Topic 4: Description of RJP and psychological contract Goal: Interviewee describes his/her attitude towards RJP and psychological contract.	**Introductie:** Nu zou ik graag nog kort willen ingaan op het beeld dat je van ProRail schetst tijdens sollicitaties en wat eventuele verwachtingen van zijn ten aanzien van trainees. **Initiële vraag:** Wat is het beeld dat jij schets over ProRail ten aanzien van werksfeer en werkomgeving? • Hoe omschrijf jij de mate van diversiteit en inclusie binnen de organisatie tegenover sollicitanten? • Wat zijn positieve punten over ProRail die je benadrukt in sollicitatiegesprekken? • En welke negatieve punten belicht je in gesprekken? • Als je in 3 woorden het traineeship zou omschrijven, welke zouden dat dan zijn? • En als je ProRail in z'n geheel in 3 woorden zou omschrijven? • Wat zijn verwachtingen die jullie hebben van trainees tijdens het traineeship?
Topic 5: Retention of minorities Goal: Interviewee describes the retention of minority trainees.	**Introductie:** Tenslotte, wil ik het nog hebben over de doorstroom en eventuele uitstroom van trainees. **Initiële vraag:** Is het gebruikelijk dat trainees na hun traineeship doorstromen naar een functie binnen de organisatie? • Komt het wel eens voor dat trainees voortijdig stoppen met hun traineeship? Zo ja, waarom?

	• Ken jij trainees die in eerste instantie na hun traineeship zijn doorgestroomd binnen ProRail, maar toch vrij kort daarna zijn gestopt omdat het niet voldeed aan hun verwachtingen?
	• Heb jij een idee hoelang trainees over het algemeen bij ProRail blijven werken na hun traineeship?

Afronden van het interview
Dit waren alle onderwerpen die ik met je wilde bespreken. Heb jij nog dingen die je zou willen toevoegen? Of die je mij zou willen vragen?

→ Hoe heb je dit interview ervaren? Heb je nog tips voor mij?

Ontzettend bedankt voor je tijd en je input! Dit is ontzettend waardevol voor mij!

Appendix III: Codebook trainee interviews

Actor	Coded synonym
Person-Organisation fit	
P-O fit beeld ProRail vóór solliciteren	Trainee beschrijft zijn/haar beeld van ProRail voordat hij/zij er ging solliciteren.
P-O fit verwachtingen van ProRail tijdens sollicitatie	Trainee beschrijft zijn/haar verwachtingen van ProRail toen hij/zij ging solliciteren.
P-O fit normen/waarden	Trainee beschrijft de normen en waarden van ProRail.
P-O fit persoonlijkheid/soort trainees	Trainee beschrijft wat voor soort mensen het traineeship doen/wat kenmerkend is in hun persoonlijkheid (zoals overeenkomsten en verschillen).
P-O fit persoonlijkheid/soort mensen bij ProRail	Trainee beschrijft wat voor soort mensen er over het algemeen bij ProRail werken/wat kenmerkend is in hun persoonlijkheid.
P-O fit aanraden traineeship positief	Trainee zou anderen aanraden een traineeship te gaan doen bij ProRail.
P-O fit aanraden traineeship negatief	Trainee zou anderen niet aanraden een traineeship te gaan doen bij ProRail
Realistic Job Preview	
RJP beeld geschetst door recruiters tijdens sollicitatie	Trainee beschrijft het beeld dat recruiters schetsten tijdens zijn/haar sollicitatie.
RJP positief beeld geschetst tijdens sollicitatie	Trainee omschrijft positieve punten die recruiters tijdens de sollicitatiegesprekken benoemden.
RJP negatief beeld geschetst tijdens sollicitatie	Trainee omschrijft negatieve punten die recruiters tijdens de sollicitatiegesprekken benoemden.
RJP realistisch geschetst beeld ProRail	Trainee beschrijft of de realiteit (gem. leeftijd 48,6 jaar, 72% man & witte organisatie) overeenkomt met beeld dat werd geschetst tijdens sollicitatiegesprekken.
RJP beschrijving eigen beeld ProRail	Trainee beschrijft zijn of haar eigen beeld van ProRail ten aanzien van werksfeer/werkomgeving/werkcultuur.
RJP eisen/eigenschappen voor trainees	Trainee beschrijft eisen/eigenschappen/talenten die je moet bezitten als trainee bij ProRail.
RJP omschrijving traineeship in 3 woorden	Trainee omschrijft het traineeship in 3 woorden.
RJP omschrijving ProRail in 3 woorden	Trainee omschrijft ProRail in 3 woorden.

Psychological contract	
Psychological contract beloftes algemeen	Trainee beschrijft de beloftes die ProRail heeft gedaan bij aanvang van het traineeship.
Psychological contract positief	Trainee heeft het gevoel dat ProRail beloftes nakomt, dat verwachtingen realistisch zijn of dat het aanbod afdoende is.
Psychological contract negatief	Trainee heeft niet het gevoel dat ProRail beloftes nakomt, dat verwachtingen onrealistisch zijn of dat het aanbod niet afdoende is.
Psychological contract verplichtingen/verwachtingen t.a.v. trainees	Trainee beschrijft wat voor verplichtingen hij/zij denkt dat ProRail aan hem/haar stelt als trainee of aan wat voor verwachtingen hij/zij moet voldoen.
Psychological contract voortijdig stoppen door andere verwachtingen	Trainee geeft aan of hij/zij andere trainees kent die voortijdig met hun traineeship zijn gestopt omdat het traineeship niet voldeed aan hun verwachtingen.
Psychological contract ongeschreven regels	Trainee omschrijft ongeschreven regels binnen ProRail waar hij/zij aan moet voldoen.
Psychological contract aanbod ProRail	Trainee geeft aan of hij/zij dingen mist in het aanbod van ProRail.
Psychological contract onrealistische verwachtingen	Trainee omschrijft of ProRail onrealistische verwachtingen stelt aan zijn trainees/werknemers.
Diversity climate	
Diversity climate: Beschrijving begrip diverse en inclusieve werksfeer	Trainee beschrijft in wat hij/zij denkt/vindt dat een diverse en inclusieve werksfeer is.
Diversity climate: Voordelen diversiteit	Trainee beschrijft voordelen van een diverse en inclusieve werksfeer.
Diversity climate: Nadelen diversiteit	Trainee beschrijft nadelen van een diverse en inclusieve werksfeer.
Diversity climate: Persoonlijk belang diverse/inclusieve werksfeer	Trainee beschrijft of hij/zij het persoonlijk belangrijk vindt dat er een inclusieve en diverse werksfeer hangt binnen de organisatie.
Diversity climate: Beschrijving diversiteit/inclusie traineeship	Trainee beschrijft de mate van diversiteit/inclusie binnen het traineeship.
Diversity climate: Beschrijving diversiteit/inclusie ProRail	Trainee beschrijft de mate van diversiteit/inclusie binnen ProRail in zijn geheel.

Diversity climate: Diversiteit breed uitgedragen ProRail	Trainee beschrijft of hij/zij vindt dat diversiteit breed wordt uitgedragen binnen ProRail.
Diversity climate: Ervaring discriminatie/negatieve opmerkingen	Trainee heeft negatieve of discrimineren opmerkingen gekregen ten aanzien van wie hij/zij is. Of heeft ervaren dat andere collega's hiermee in aanraking zijn gekomen.
Diversity climate: Ideeën vergroten t.a.v. diversiteit en inclusie	Trainee draagt ideeën aan hoe het traineeship en/of ProRail diverser en inclusiever kan worden.

Appendix IV: Codebook recruiter interviews

Actor	Coded synonym
Selection and recruitment process	
Recruitment proces: Zoektocht naar nieuwe trainees	Recruiter beschrijft hoe ProRail opzoek gaat naar nieuwe trainees.
Recruitment proces: Gemiddeld aantal sollicitanten	Recruiter beschrijft hoeveel sollicitanten er gemiddeld zijn voor de traineeships.
Recruitment proces: Soort kandidaten/vereisten	Recruiter beschrijft naar wat voor kandidaten ze opzoek zijn/aan wat voor vereisten een kandidaat moet voldoen.
Recruitment proces: Definitieve geschiktheid kandidaat	Recruiter beschrijft wanneer een kandidaat definitief geschikt is voor het traineeship.
Recruitment proces: Insteek sollicitatiegesprek	Recruiter beschrijft hoe een sollicitatiegesprek met een kandidaat voor een traineeship er over het algemeen uitziet.
Affirmative action	
Affirmative action: Beschrijving aantrekken kandidaten van minderheidsgroepen	Recruiter beschrijft hoe zij vrouwelijke kandidaten en kandidaten met een bi-culturele achtergrond proberen te trekken/te enthousiasmeren om te solliciteren.
Affirmative action: Promotie traineeship kanalen/media	Recruiter beschrijft via welke kanalen/media openstaande vacatures voor traineeships worden gepromoot.
Affirmative action: Tegengaan onbewuste vooroordelen	Recruiter beschrijft hoe onbewuste vooroordelen tijdens werving en selectie proces worden tegengegaan.
Affirmative action: Algemene tendens ProRailers t.a.v. diversiteit	Recruiter beschrijft de algemene tendens binnen ProRail ten aanzien van diversiteit.
Affirmative action: Bewuste keuzes foto's en teksten op website	Recruiter beschrijft hoe foto's en advertentie teksten tot stand komen.
Affirmative action: Aanbod HBO traineeships	Recruiter beschrijft of het een overweging zou zijn om ook HBO traineeships aan te bieden.
Affirmative action: Mogelijkheid anoniem solliciteren	Recruiter geeft zijn/haar mening over de mogelijkheid van anoniem solliciteren binnen ProRail voor traineeships.

Meritocracy & bureaucracy	
Houding meritocratie & bureaucratie: Quotum/streefcijfers	Recruiter beschrijft hoe hij/zij aankijkt tegen het instellen van een quotum of streefcijfer voor minderheden.
Houding meritocratie & bureaucratie: Gelijke geschiktheid	Recruiter beschrijft de optie om bij gelijke geschiktheid de voorkeur uit te laten gaan naar iemand van een minderheidsgroep.
Houding meritocratie & bureaucratie: Vaste procedures	Recruiter beschrijft hoe hij/zij aankijkt tegen het instellen van vaste procedures tijdens het werving en selectieproces.
Houding meritocratie & bureaucratie: Aannemen minderheden lagere studieachtergrond	Recruiter beschrijft hoe hij/zij aankijkt tegen het aannemen van minderheden met een lagere studieachtergrond.
Houding meritocratie & bureaucratie: Argumenten vóór meritocratie	Geïnterviewde geeft argumenten vóór meritocratie.
RJP & Psychological contract	
RJP & Psychological contract: Beeld ProRail tijdens sollicitaties	Recruiter beschrijft het beeld dat hij/zij schetst van ProRail tijdens sollicitaties ten aanzien van werksfeer en werkomgeving.
RJP & Psychological contract: Beeld diversiteit & inclusie	Recruiter omschrijft hoe hij/zij de diversiteit en inclusie binnen ProRail beschrijft tegenover sollicitanten.
RJP & Psychological contract: Positieve punten ProRail	Recruiter beschrijft welke positieve punten van ProRail hij/zij benadrukt in sollicitatiegesprekken.
RJP & Psychological contract: Negatieve punten ProRail	Recruiter beschrijft welke negatieve punten van ProRail hij/zij belicht tijdens sollicitatiegesprekken.
RJP & Psychological contract: 3 woorden traineeship	Recruiter geeft aan met welke 3 woorden hij/zij het traineeship zou omschrijven.
RJP & Psychological contract: 3 woorden ProRail	Recruiter geeft aan met welke 3 woorden hij/zij het ProRail zou omschrijven.
RJP & Psychological contract: Verwachtingen van trainees	Recruiter beschrijft de verwachtingen die zij hebben/die ProRail heeft van haar trainees tijdens het traineeship.
Retention minorities	

Retention minorities: Doorstroom binnen ProRail	Recruiter beschrijft of het gebruikelijk is dat trainees na hun traineeship doorstromen naar een functie binnen ProRail.
Retention minorities: Voortijdig stoppen	Recruiter beschrijft of trainees wel eens voortijdig stoppen met hun traineeship. En zo ja, waarom.
Retention minorities: Andere verwachtingen	Recruiter beschrijft of er wel eens trainees na het doorstromen binnen ProRail kort daarna zijn gestopt omdat het niet voldeed aan hun verwachtingen.
Retention minorities: Retentie na traineeship	Recruiter beschrijft hoelang trainees over het algemeen bij ProRail blijven werken na hun traineeship.