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SELF-PRESENTATION IN "UNSUITABLE" RESUMES: A CASE FROM SERBIA[2]

Samopredstavljanje u „neodgovarajućim" radnim biografijama: primer iz Srbije

ABSTRACT *The main goal of this research was to explore the ways people portray themselves in resumes, labelled as "unsuitable" after the first review of the recruiters in a manufacturing company in Serbia. The form and the content of fifty resumes were analyzed using qualitative content analysis, inductive approach. Personal life stories described in an intimate and submissive tone were predominantly present in resumes, compared to the description of work experience and competencies. Concerning the content of the resumes, two core categories emerged – I as a worker and Employment needs. Finding support in the literature dealing with postsocialist transformation in Serbia and Hofstede's theory, results are interpreted as pointing to the opposition of two value systems in Serbia: that of the authors of "unsuitable" resumes, reflecting collectivistic and feminine values and that of the job market in Serbia, reflecting manly individualistic and masculine values. The authors of "unsuitable" resumes display interdependent self-construal, use defensive impression management strategies and their need to work is exclusively financial in nature. Finally, the need for better understanding between job candidates and employers, having different value systems, especially in the context of actual socio-economic changes in Serbia is discussed.*
KEY WORDS *resume, self-presentation, values, impression management, qualitative content analysis*

APSTRAKT *Osnovni cilj ovog istraživanja bio je utvrditi načine na koje ljudi opisuju sebe u rezumeima označenim kao „neprikladni "nakon prvog pregleda regrutera jedne proizvodne kompanije u Srbiji. Forma i sadržaj pedeset rezimea analizirani su kvalitativnom analizom sadržaja, induktivnim pristupom. Lične životne priče opisane intimnim, submisivnim tonom dominirale su u rezimeima, u poređenju sa opisom radnog iskustva i kompetencija. Kada je reč o sadržaju rezime, utvrđene su dve sržne kategorije – Ja kao zaposleni i Potrebe zadovoljene zaposlenjem. Pronalazeći podršku u literaturi koja se bavila postsocijalističkom transformacijom u Srbiji, kao i u teoriji Hofsteda, pokazano je da postoji sukob dva vrednosna sistema u Srbiji – onog koji poseduju autori „neprikladnih" rezimea, a koji odražava kolektivističke i feminine vrednosti, i onog koji je karakterističan za tržište rada u*

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*Srbiji, a koji odražava individualističke i maskuline vrednosti. Autore „neodgovarajućih"
režimea odlikuje međuzavisno konstruisanje selfa, primena defanzivnih strategija
upravljanja utiscima, a potreba za radom je isključivo finansijske prirode. Najzad, ukazuje
se na potrebu za boljim sporazumevanjem kandidata za posao i poslodavaca koji imaju
različite vrednosne sisteme, pogotovo u kontekstu aktuelnih socio-ekonomskih promena u
Srbiji.*
KLJUČNE REČI *rezime, samopredstavljanje, vrednosti, upravljanje utiscima, kvalitativna
analiza sadržaja*

        People who have worked in the recruitment sector and the selection of job
candidates are familiar with the fact that the selection process mainly starts with the
review of candidate's resume (or *curriculum vitae* – CV), short account of one's
career and qualifications (Merriam-Webster, 2003). They reveal significant
information, which later determines whether the candidate would be invited to the
next round of selection or if he/she would be immediately rejected.

        The resume is a significant tool in the assessment of candidates' essential
qualifications (Ross & Young, 2005), although the estimate of candidates'
qualifications does not represent the sole factor which influences the recruiter's
decision. There are numerous factors that influence the assessment of resume
adequacy – the assessment of adequate length of resume (Blackburn-Brockman &
Belenger, 2001; Ross & Young, 2005), the recruiter's preference to a certain type of
resumes (Ross & Young, 2005; Schullery, Ickes & Schullery, 2009), the preference
to the manner of resume delivery (Elgin & Claphman, 2004; Schullery et al., 2009),
the preference to the incorporation of certain categories of information into resume
(Ross & Young, 2005), etc. Resumes are expected to be brief, focused on essential
information relevant for jobs on which one applies (Instructions for using the
Europass curriculum vitae, 2013). Additionally, resumes are expected to have a
strict structure that implies inspected presentation of personal information,
description of work experiences, education and training and elaborate inventory of
candidate's competencies. All information should be presented in form of short
sentences that are rather formulated impersonally.

        As an argument for the fact that one should pay attention to formal
characteristics of resumes, Bohn (1994) claims that the recruiter does not spend
more than half a minute on reviewing a resume. All of the above points out the fact
that the recruiter's decision may be considerably affected by the way in which the
information is presented in resumes (Davis & Muir, 2003; Amare and Manning,
2009; Tyler & McCollough, 2009), and that the resume can act as a powerful tool
for self-presentation. Only a small number of papers, however, directly address the
topic of resumes as a self-presentation communicative tool (Tyler & McCollough,
2009).

        Therefore, our aim was to analyze one group of specific resumes in order to
understand how the form and the content of these resumes served as a self-
presentation communicative tool and how they shaped their destiny. The results are

interpreted in the light of Hofstede's (1980; 2001) theory, impression management strategies and employment needs, with the special regard to the socio-economic context of the research. Although the interpretations are based on the small sample of resumes in Serbia, we believe they could be relevant for other post-socialist countries that experience the long process of transformation from collectivistic values and centrally planned economy to the individualistic values and free market.

Self-presentation and cultural context

Vohs, Ciarocco & Baumeister (2005) mention self-presentation as a crucial skill in human social life. It refers to the individual efforts to shape self-image that is revealed to others (Scheeren, Begeer, Banerjee, Terwogt and Koot, 2010). These efforts aim to control other people's behaviour and especially the way in which others react to that person (Goffman, 1971). In order to achieve this goal, the participant in communication aims to skilfully manage the impression that he or she leaves on others (Higgins & Judge, 2004; Vohs et al., 2005; Bolino, Kacmar, Turnley and Gilstrap, 2008; Swider, Barrick, Harris & Stoverink, 2011).

People use different impression management (IM) tactics as the kind of self-presentation tools. According to Bolino and colleagues (2007), it is possible to distinguish tactics that a person is using in order to highlight positive characteristics and behaviour and minimize negative characteristics and behaviour. Maximization of positive characteristics is achieved through assertive IM tactics, such as enhancements (highlighting the special value of one's own achievements) or self-promotion (highlighting one's own skills, so that the individual would appear more competent). On the other hand, in order to minimize negative characteristics or underachievement, a person can use some of the defensive IM tactics such as apologies, excuses, justifications or self-handicapping (a behaviour which aims to provide external explanation for bad performance).

The manner in which people present themselves in a particular situation depends among other things on their cultural background (Davis & Muir, 2003; Khilji, Zeidman, Drory, Tirmizi and Srinivas, 2010; Mast, Frauendorfer and Popović, 2011), while the effectiveness of used tactics depends on the cultural values of the evaluator. Cultural background significantly impacts the manner of attribution of success and failure, the choice of impression management tactics, as well as the mode of self-construal. For instance, it is characteristic of Eastern cultures and collectivistic cultures in general, that the causes of social events are ascribed to the context, whereas in Western cultures the causes are usually attributed to personal dispositions (Morris & Peng, 1994; Hartung, Fouad, Leong and Hardin, 2002; Oyserman, Coon & Kemmelmeier, 2002).

Furthermore, in individualistic cultures independent self-construal is far more active, resulting in glorifying oneself and presenting oneself as prudent, active and

better than others, while in collectivistic cultures interdependent self-construal is more active, which implies presenting oneself as a sociable, friendly, family focussed and modest person who strives to find optimal position within the current social norms and expected roles (Hofstede, 2001; Schimmack, Oishi & Diener, 2005; Shweder, 2006; Lalwani and Shavitt, 2009; Hogg and Vaughan, 2011).

In terms of Hofstede's (1980; 2001) cultural dimensions framework, the national culture of Serbia could be described as high on uncertainty avoidance dimension (the members of a national culture feel threatened by unfamiliar or ambiguous situations) and low on individualism dimension (people commit themselves to the group and see themselves in terms of group characteristics). Also, Serbian national culture could be in general described as rather masculine (the governing value is caring for others, and not to stand out from the crowd) and high on power distance (acceptance of the fact that power is distributed unequally).

If employer and candidate do not come from the same cultural (or subcultural) background their differences can cause misunderstandings during the selection process. In the societies that were or that are still under the process of social and economical changes, cultural patterns are usually under (re)construction (Pešić, 2006). Therefore, it is important to be aware that the candidate and employer could have been under the influence of different cultural values and thus adopted different views of the adequate way of self-presentation.

Socio-economic context of the research

Although the strike of the second wave of economic crisis in Serbia in 2008 led to unemployment surge all over the country (Report on work of the National employment agency in 2010 year), the tough socio-economic state came as a consequence of wars, sanctions and inner political turmoil in Serbia during the 1990s. Besides the difficult socio-economic conditions, the coexistence of ambivalent value systems, tracing its roots even in the regulations and practices typical for former Yugoslavia, resulted in value confusion of the people.

In the period from 1950 to 1990 the society of former Yugoslavia adopted the policy of non-alignment, which was supposed to reflect neither the full acceptance of Western values (e.g. capitalist non-egalitarianism, individualistic values, consumerism, etc.), nor the acceptance of Eastern values (e.g. egalitarian ideology, collectivistic and authoritarian orientation) (Lazić, 2003, 2011; Pešić, 2006). In reality, the compound of both the East and the West was present – "Western values were implanted into the prevailing socialist matrix" (Lazić, 2003, p. 204). After the breakdown of Yugoslavia, postsocialist transformation was blocked during the Milosević's regime, which brought about strong turn back to traditionalist patterns and nationalism (Lazić, 2003). Accordingly, collectivistic values, high level of authoritarianism (Rot and Havelka, 1973) and patriarchal orientation (Kandido-

Jakšić, 1995; Pešić, 2006) were predominantly present in different spheres of life in many environments, while individualistic values, i.e. valuing personal achievements and taking responsibility to yourself rather than belonging to a group (Hofstede, 1980; 2001) were put down as pro-Western. In the year 2000 Milosević's regime was removed and the first parliamentary democratic government after 1991 was established, but these changes have not significantly improved the quality of life of ordinary people (Milić, 2001).

In different spheres of life (e.g. economy, education, overall life standard, etc.), high expectations of the people were not fulfilled (Lazić, 2005). Similarly, transferring state property from the public ownership to the private did not give expected results leaving the opinion of public significantly divided (Permanent Working Body of the Social and Economic Council, 2011). The psychological contract offered by private company owners implying exchange of productivity for knowledge and skills and so better employability in case of contract breach (Torrington, Hall & Taylor, 2004) was not widely welcomed because, it could not gratify the needs for connection and security (Hofstede, 1980; 2001). We may say that the value paradigm of the Western economic system, which greatly values the mobility of workforce, and consequently independence and candidates' uniqueness, over possession and maintenance of "good" social relations (Hogg and Vaughan, 2011), is still not fully accepted among Serbian workers.

Method

Research goals

The main research goal was to explore the ways people portray themselves in resumes, labelled as "unsuitable" after the first review of the recruiters in a manufacturing company in Serbia. We tried to reveal what characteristics, regarding both the form and the content of resumes, determined the negative outcome of a recruitment process. Our aim was to understand the ways some job candidates construe themselves and the job in the context of socio-economic changes in Serbia.

Procedure of obtaining research material

One of the authors of this research, who used to work in the human resources sector of a private manufacturing company in Serbia, noticed that some resumes which were sent to HR sector of the company by mail were distinctly different from those which could be found in career counselling books or which HR managers usually expect. Those resumes were qualified as "unsuitable" (classified as those with the lowest chance to be a part of a selection process) in comparison with others resumes, even though the qualifications of the authors corresponded to jobs that they sought.

They were received through open application process in the company, i.e. interested persons were free to send their resumes by e-mail or mail in any time and company would contact them if the vacancy which corresponds to their qualification profile arose. The company hired the workers of various profiles for different jobs (e.g. gatekeepers, lane workers, sales managers, and designers) regularly, two or three times a year. Upon arrival, resumes were collected on the bases of their qualification and their general appearance (in comparison with other resumes) in three groups: "suitable", "partially suitable" and "unsuitable". The first group had strongest chance to be a part of selection process, and the last one the lowest.

After leaving the company, the author who used to work in it, asked the company managers for permission to analyze resumes labelled as "unsuitable" for research purpose. The company gave to author the permission to use all 50 copies of "unsuitable" resumes collected from the beginning until the end of 2009 with the names and surnames of the candidates being blotted out, so to provide their anonymity. Still, the author who used to work in the company refrained from open coding in the first phase of analysing them in order to avoid any possibility of biased analysis.

Research material

"Unsuitable" resumes were titled "pleas" by their authors in a remnant of the earlier tradition of writing resumes in Serbia, when candidates' qualifications for a particular job were stated in essay forms and titled as "pleas". Although unusual resumes differed from prototypical resumes whose patterns could be found in career counselling books and guides for writing resumes, we treated them as resumes since they still represented short accounts of one's career and qualifications (Merriam-Webster, 2003) and since they were sent during regular open application process with the intention of their authors to find employment. On the other hand, pleas should not be mixed with motivational letters, since the candidates haven't discussed their motivation to work in the particular company. In this paper we will interchangeably use terms "plea" (as their authors titled them) and "unsuitable" resume (as recruiters had previously labelled them because of their "destiny" during the recruitment process).

Collected pleas were hand-written, on old, worn paper, and contained many spelling mistakes. They had a vague structure and were written in essay form at the half of the page or one page. Out of 50 pleas, there were 21 female and 29 male authors, who originated from the vicinity of a town in Serbia with a population of 130,000, where the company, in which one of the authors used to work, had its production facilities. Seventy four percent of the authors of the pleas had secondary school degree and 26% had elementary school degree. One third (34%) of them were under 30 years old, while two thirds were between 31 and 45. Many of them omitted contact information like their address or phone number, so it would not be

possible to call them for an interview. The pleas were sent to the mail address of the company. Their authors usually applied for "any" job, but given their qualifications, it would be possible to hire them as, for example, drivers, lane worker, gatekeepers, cleaning staff or secretaries.

Data analysis: Qualitative content analysis

We opted for qualitative approach since it enabled better understanding of personal and shared meanings, social norms and values and cultural framework within which individuals make sense of their lives. More specifically, the data was approached using qualitative content analysis, which can be defined as "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p.1278), or "an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytic rules and step by step models, without rash quantification" (Mayring, 2000, p.2). We opted for inductive approach, so we applied first open coding and created categories using constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Second and third order coding enabled raising data on the more abstract level, connecting practical and theoretical knowledge and generating interpretations grounded on data.

This inductive approach resulted in definition of two major core categories, themes that repeatedly appeared in the resumes, which seemed to fit the data and "capture" in best way candidates experience and ways of construing. On the one hand, they talked directly about the way they construe themselves, and on the other hand – about the way they construe the job. The first category that embraced all the adjectives and expressions candidates used to describe themselves was named *I as a worker*. The second category embraced the expressions of job motivation and of needs one expects to satisfy through the employment, so we named it *Employment needs*.

These two main themes were immersed into the talk about job candidates' life situations. Indeed, the description of the context, of the candidates' personal life stories, "occupied" the resumes for the most part. Candidates used specific language and structured their resumes in a particular way, in order to make certain impression on the reader regarding their personal life stories. Therefore, we decided to present firstly our analytical insights regarding the form, structure, specific linguistic attributes of the pleas, as well as the positioning of the candidates toward the employer through that specific way of writing resumes in the chapter *Self-presentation and positioning toward the reader*. Then we will describe two core categories and interpret the finding in the light of the socio-economic situation in Serbia and psychological and sociological theories.

Results and Discussion

Self-Presentation: Composition, Narrator's Position, Genre

After the analysis of collected data, it was concluded that "unsuitable" resumes differed from common, expected form of resumes not only in content and composition, but also in author's position and the genre of the text.

In these resumes (pleas) data is listed without particular order: the candidate mentions his or her work experience, personal characteristics, and then returns to previous employment, which resembles colloquial speech, with frequent digressions. Texts are partially written in an intimate, confessional tone: the author reveals his or her "sad life story" in first person. Interestingly, all pleas were composed in the same manner, although there was not an established rule for writing them.

The sender of a plea first presents himself or herself (stating name and surname, place and year of birth, in some cases qualifications and previous work experience). Unlike common forms of resumes, here we are presented with incomplete information, i.e. without stating the names of previous employers or a detailed description of previous jobs:

"I worked in the private sector, wherever I could; I did all sorts of things."

Out of 50 pleas, only one stated the position or type of work for which the person applied (*I would like to work in manufacture*), while other authors did not specify desired job positions. In most cases, as if by rule, it was mentioned:

"*I ask you to accept me for any job vacancy; I am ready to do any kind of job."*

To these people it does not matter what they did or what they would be doing in the future, as long as they work, and for this reason they do not highlight their work experience or qualifications, but instead mention what is important for them.

An indispensable and crucial part of these texts is the portrayal of family state and a difficult financial situation:

"I am a Kosovo refugee and I have lived here as part of a nine-member family since 1999. Only my mother was declared redundant and receives minimal wage, which isn't sufficient to support a nine-member family, even for bare necessities. My father passed away three months ago and I remained alone with my mother and sisters who are two years younger than me."

These people emphasize how life has been "cruel" to them. They present themselves as powerless towards life, but they do not lose their hope and instead continue to live and work. For them, job is a "shelter" which would enable them to rebuild their life.

Even the title "plea" implies unequal relation between a sender and a recipient of such text: the sender finds himself or herself in the situation to *plead* for

employment, while the recipient of the message is the institution which has the power to accept the plea or disregard it. The initial position of the sender of such a resume is completely submissive – it is the position of a petitioner. Furthermore, the authors of pleas suggest in their confessions that the survival of their families hinges on their employment. In this way, the recipient of the message no longer chooses whether he will employ a worker, but if he or she will be saving lives.

In terms of genre, or style, it is clear that the resume belongs to administrative/business style with its own rules. However, the "unsuitable" resumes resembled essays, mini-confessions with the elements of colloquial speech (intimate tone, digressions, and random lists of data). Their writers did not follow standard and expected resume form and they mixed the topic of the text (presentation of professional profile) with their private content, while confessional tone and familiar relation towards the addressee clearly indicates their informational isolation. This could be explained by the lack of awareness of the rules of a functional style and switching from one functional style to another – phenomenon known as *code switching* (Radovanović, 2003).

Self-presentation: What a Worker am I?

Table 1 lists the adjectives and other language units in attributive function excerpted from analyzed "unsuitable" resumes.

We see from the table that the authors of these resumes rarely stated specific competences pertaining to the job for which they applied. The most frequent attributes in the resumes were: not fastidious, industrious, serious and responsible. The authors stressed that they were psychophysically healthy, without bad habits such as drinking and smoking, honourable and modest family men. Moreover, they state characteristics such as calm, modest and disciplined, which additionally strengthen their position as a submissive subject who is begging. Apart from indicating poorly developed communication competences and limited speech pattern (Berstein, 1960), the choice of adjectives reflects the values typical of collectivistic societies.

Thus the authors of pleas from a small town are characteristic for their interdependent self-construal, which is associated with concerns about maintaining connection and harmony with others and enhanced tendency to conform to social norms and values (Hartung et al., 2002; Lalwani and Shavitt, 2009). This is particularly reflected in the use of adjectives: friendly, family person, not fastidious and disciplined. They offer the employer loyalty and prosocial behaviour, thus presenting themselves as good workers, which is "corroborated" by their personal characteristics, not by diverse skills and wide knowledge.

Analysis of the adjectives, as well as, other information about personal and professional experience brought us to conclusion that the authors of "unsuitable" resumes use defensive IM strategies – they write about a multi-member family that

they need to support, that they live in a rented apartment and do not have enough money to pay for it, that they are refugees who left behind everything they had in their homeland. By emphasizing "their sad life stories", they ascribe low standard and position in society to social context. They tend to induce empathy among the readers and to put aside their poor education, modest work experience and lack of specific skills.

Table 1. Characteristics that were stated in "unsuitable" resumes

Adjectives and expressions	f
Not fastidious	10
Industrious	8
Serious	7
Responsible	5
Capable	4
Resourceful	4
Psycho-physically healthy	2
Friendly	2
Persistent	2
Conscientious	2
Precise	2
Quick learner	2
Disciplined	2
Motivated	2
Initiative	2
Active	1
Practical	1
Modest	1
Family person	1
Non-smoker, non-alcoholic person	1
Highly ethical person	1
Calm	1
Well-organized	1

Note. f – Refers to the frequency of stating a characteristic in a sample of "unsuitable" resumes. Since the candidates usually mentioned several attributes, the total number of adjectives is higher than the number of resumes.

Employment Needs – What Do I Want and Expect from Work?

Judging from the statements expressed in pleas, it could be concluded that their authors particularly highlighted the financial aspect of work (in 30 pleas – 62.5%), whereas hardly anyone mentioned the achievement and self-actualization motives (in 4 pleas – 8.33%). This is in accordance with finding from cross-national

studies that in less individualistic and poorer countries intrinsic job characteristics are less related to job satisfaction than extrinsic job characteristics. In collectivistic countries economic and social security is considered more important characteristic of the job than freedom in the work place. According to socio-economic perspective, in less economically developed countries individuals' lower needs are still more salient than the higher needs (Huang & Van de Vliert, 2003). An example of the statements that illustrates the necessity of employment for solving financial problems is:

"*I need a job because my family and I live in one room <u>without any income</u>.*"

Through work they hope to amend certain inconsistencies, which create trouble in work identity (Taylor and Littleton, 2006): they intend to maintain a positive image and preserve the role that is expected of them by the society: father as breadwinner, dedicated single mother or responsible and caring children. In 4 pleas, authors stated that they wanted to help their families and society, which is in accordance with collectivistic values and inter-dependent self-construal.

"*I need a job because children have to go to school and I need to provide for my family.*"

According to Milošević (2001), poor development of needs among the authors of pleas regarding work, or resignation with the fulfilment of "basic" needs comes as the consequence of unfavourable political, social and economic events, which were abundant in Serbia during 1990s, especially in rural areas. In the context of financial uncertainty value system changes – "the value of survival" (Kačavenda, 2002; Koković, 2002) prevail over "the values of self-expression", dominantly present in more developed countries (Pantić, 2005).

It was shown that young people's career aspirations and choices tend to be influenced by the local and neighbourhood labour market opportunity structure (Canny, 2004) and thus young people living in areas with high unemployment rate, such as the one in which writers of pleas resided, find it particularly hard to consider any other needs, apart from existential, which could be fulfilled through work.

Conclusion

Using qualitative content analysis of pleas, it was possible to reveal what characteristics determined the unsuitability of these resumes. In table 2 these values, experiences, perceptions and tactics of self-presentation presented in "unsuitable" resumes are juxtaposed to expected form of resumes.

Candidates position themselves as pleading subjects, who are submissive and disciplined and who would do any job for the invisible magnate whose will determine the survival of their families. They use defensive IM tactics, highlighting sad life stories as an explanation for the lack of professional competences and attributing business failure to unfavorable circumstances (and not personal factors).

All that they could offer to an employer is high (extrinsic) motivation to do any kind of job and loyalty that are not sufficient any more for an employer searching for resilient employees that are able to comply with rapid changes (Torrington, Hall & Taylor, 2004).

Table 2. Structure and the content of "unsuitable" resumes, as opposed to what is expected from the literature on resumes

	"Unsuitable" resumes	Expected resumes
Title	Plea	Resume
Topic	Revelation of private history with an incomplete professional profile	Focused representation of professional experiences, competencies, education.
Author's position	Addresses the recipient in 2nd person and describes himself in 1st person	Using short impersonal sentences
Style	Informal, similar to colloquial language	Formal, administrative/business style
Discursive tactics	Confession, pleading	/
Effect on the reader	Generates empathy	Generates interest
Relation towards the reader	Petitioner	Presenter, candidate
Adjectives used to present themselves	Unselective, industrious, loyal, serious and responsible person	Suitable candidate for a specific job
Employment needs	Financial, mere survival	Self-actualization

Note. Expected resumes – Source: Instructions for using the Europass curriculum vitae, 2013

As Soroko (2012) pointed out – candidates, when thinking about which qualities to present, rely on their imagined correspondence to the work, but also to the organization. Relying on the result from this research, we could wonder whether the authors of the "unsuitable" resumes are informed about characteristics that are nowadays valued by employers. On condition that they are not fully informed about the value shift in the job market, the only resource of their knowledge about possible expectations of employers is apparently their immediate social surrounding (local community and family). Since this immediate surrounding have not fully accepted the new value paradigm, their support and advices could not have been quite appropriate. Company culture tends to be influenced by highly promoted social values and those value elements are built into the company practice (Mojić, 2003; 2010). The company to which our candidates were sending their resumes has been privately founded at the beginning of 2000 and thus we could say that it was more inspired by promoted individualistic and masculine values, in contrast to state-

owned companies and companies that have been privatized. This fact obviously made the value gap between the candidates and the company even greater.

Even though the authors of the pleas are relatively young workers (one third of them were under thirty, and the oldest candidate was forty five years old), they do not seek the job in order to maintain self-actualization, acquisition of new skills and knowledge, improvement and expression of their personal resources – for them job means solely livelihood. Candidates' unenviable socioeconomic status obviously prevents them from reflecting their competencies and needs. On the other hand, they do reflect the urgencies of others – their close and even extended families, usually putting aside personal needs and ambition (Hofstede, 1980; 2001). Although this approach helps them to maintain the favourable image of a responsible family member, it does not help them to find the job in a highly competitive and individualistic job market. Therefore the whole situation becomes a vicious cycle.

Having in mind apparent contrast in form and structure of "unsuitable" resumes from what is expected (Table 2), we could conclude that in some extension our candidate still embrace the values such as: collectivism, high uncertainty avoidance and power distance, and femininity (Hofstede, 1980; 2001) that were more typical for the former socialist regime in which the older members of their community worked. The employer is obviously seen as an in-group (a member of an extended family) who should have empathy for the disadvantage members of his community in exchange for their unconditional loyalty. The authors' prefer cooperation and modesty and highlights the need for care for the deprived. We could certainly not say that these values are wrong, but we could notice that they are not fully adjusted with those of employers who search for skills and knowledge (resources) and not for workers. Needless to say, it can be argued to what extent these shortcomings in mutual communication are the responsibility of employers and employees and to what extent of the society which did not offer them proper social platform to exchange their expectation in the face of the large transformation of the economy (Permanent Working Body of the Social and Economic Council, 2011).

What could be also concluded from our research is that resumes are powerful tool of self-presentation. Therefore, career centres and government agencies should think of the guidelines for practical interventions that could provide economically disadvantaged and less educated people opportunity to get informed about the changes in the job market and the values that are appreciated by employers. We believe that some specially designed courses could facilitate candidates' understanding of these changes and encourage reflection on their competencies which could be beneficial, giving them opportunity to compete for a job and not to be rejected at start.

It is also important that employers managing modern and multicultural companies that majorly appreciate individualistic values develop sensitivity toward

the potential job applicants who do not share the same values like them, but could be valuable workers. That could be especially relevant for the countries that, like Serbia, recently experienced major social and economical transformations that could have been influenced value change (Tomić-Koludrović & Petrić, 2007; Potočan, Mulej & Čančer, 2008).

However, the present study has a certain limitation that needs to be taken into account when considering the results and conclusions. Although we believe that obtained findings could be relevant for other post-communist and post-socialist countries the possibility of application to other settings is to consider with precautions. Study could have been more reliable if it used data collected through several different procedures (e.g. additional interviews with job candidates) and not only through qualitative content analysis of resumes. We also believe that the more holistic view of values regarding the employment and interplay of collectivistic and individualistic values in contemporary Serbian society could be obtained through analysis of discordance of needs of employer and employees.

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