

# The Role of the Private Employment Agencies in the Making of Employability in Turkey

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## Approvals

“The Role of the Private Employment Agencies in the Making of Employability in Turkey” a dissertation prepared by Ebru Işıklı in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History at Boğaziçi University has been approved on 26 December 2016 by:

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## Abstract

"The Role of the Private Employment Agencies in the Making of Employability in Turkey"

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This dissertation argues that private employment agencies have contributed to the individualization of employment with norms they have created through their practices. Employability is considered to be a panacea for unemployment, and social skills have become central for employment in the context that private employment agencies have appeared.

The cooperation of private employment agencies with institutions, the tools used, and the judgments made regarding employment by the agencies are examined in this scope.

Private employment agencies participate in a redefinition of the unemployed and the unemployable that holds employees responsible for their unemployment. A measurement of the behavioral characteristics of job seekers provided by private employment agencies determines who to exclude from the labor market affecting the job seeking strategies of employees. Private employment agencies determine the position of a candidate in the labor market, contribute to the management of employment as an individual matter of workers, and create norms for employee character formation.

The dissertation aims to contribute to critical management studies in Turkey.

76,000 words

## Özet

“Özel İstihdam Bürolarının İstihdam Edilebilirlik Yaklaşımının Kurulmasındaki Rolü”

Ebru Işıklı, Doktora Adayı, 2016

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Bu tez özel istihdam bürolarının istihdamın bireyselleştirilmesine ürettiği normlarla katkıda bulunduğunu savunur. Özel istihdam bürolarının ortaya çıktığı zaman aynı zamanda "istihdam edilebilirlik" yaklaşımının işsizliğe çare olarak sunulduğu ve iş hayatında sosyal becerilerin önem kazandığı bir dönemdir.

Bu kapsamda özel istihdam bürolarının kurumlarla gerçekleştirdiği işbirlikleri, kullandığı araçlar ve işe alım kararlarını verme biçimleri incelenmiştir.

Özel istihdam büroları işsizleri kendi işsizliğinden sorumlu kılacak şekilde "işsiz" ve "istihdam edilemez" tanımlarının tekrar kurulmasına katkıda bulunur. İş arayanların davranış karakteristiğini ölçme hizmeti veren özel istihdam kurumları kimin işe alınmayacağını belirler ve iş arayanların iş arama stratejilerini etkiler. Özel istihdam büroları adayların emek pazarındaki pozisyonunu belirler, işsizliğin çalışanların sorumluluğu olarak yönetilmesine katkıda bulunur ve çalışan karakterinin oluşumu için normlar üretir.

Bu tez Türkiye'deki eleştirel yönetim çalışmalarına katkıda bulunmayı amaçlar.

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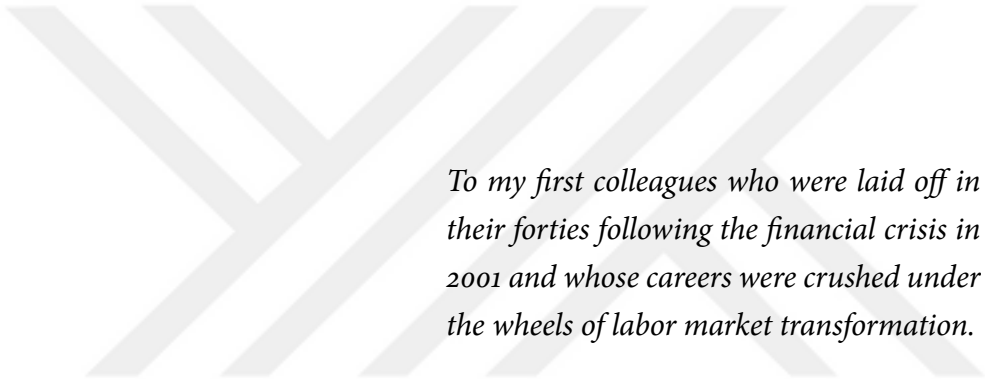
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*To my first colleagues who were laid off in their forties following the financial crisis in 2001 and whose careers were crushed under the wheels of labor market transformation.*



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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

CEİS	Cement Employers Association
CIETT	International Confederation of Private Employment Agencies
DİSK	Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey
EMO	Chamber of Electrical Engineers
EU	European Union
HRM	Human Resources Management
İETT	İstanbul Electricity, Tramway, Tunnel and General Management
ILO	International Labor Organization
İÖİBD	İstanbul Private Employment Agencies Association
İŞKUR	Turkish Labor Agency
KEİG	Women's Labor and Employment Initiative
MMO	Chamber of Mechanical Engineers
MYK	Occupational Competence Institution
OİBD	Association of Private Employment Agencies
PEAs	Private Employment Agencies
PERYÖN	People Management Association of Turkey
SEDEFED	Federation of Industrial Association
TBMM	Grand National Assembly of Turkey
TİSK	Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations
TOBB	Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey
TÜSİAD	Turkish Industry and Business Association
WTO	World Trade Organization

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My experience at the solidarity platform for white-collar workers – namely "Plaza Eylem Platformu" – since 2008 taught me so much. If I had not had discussions with other members or shared the working – life experience of tens of people there, the thesis would have been without spirit. I thank all my friends that I met at the platform. I owe special thanks to Eylem Akçay and Mert Tokur for the discussions I had with them that kept me enthusiastic about the subject.

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NOTE: The in-house editor of the Atatürk Institute has made recommendations with regard to the format, grammar, spelling, usage, and syntax of this dissertation in compliance with professional, ethical standards for the editing of student, academic work.

## Introduction

This research argues that private employment agencies have contributed to the individualization of employment through the norms they have created practically and ideologically, leading to flexibility in the labor market. They have expanded their market as well as responded to market needs with their services in Turkey.

New forms of work life are built as a result of changes in the labor process under the new capitalism.<sup>1</sup> “High-performance work systems, flexible staff arrangements, the decline of career stability and demographic changes in the composition of work force”<sup>2</sup> have created new managerial practices such as outsourcing, short termism, and new assessment tools.

Changes in the labor process have resulted in institutional regulation and have led to the emergence of new actors and a state policy of employability that puts the responsibility on the shoulders of labor at a time when growth without employment has become the norm. Under the new capitalism, the

- 
- 1 I preferred the term "new capitalism" instead of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is mostly associated with the weakening role of state in the market. However, the borders between public and market is blurred, therefore I found the term "new capitalism" is more appropriate to use it for contemporary issues.
  - 2 Vicki Smith, *Crossing the Great Divide: Worker Risk and Opportunity in the New Economy* (Ithaca: LR Press, 2001), 181.

state policy of full employment has been replaced by employability,<sup>3</sup> which means that individuals are responsible for making themselves employable and finding a job. The employability approach individualizes the concept of employment. Active labor market policies that propose an employability approach are deemed a panacea for unemployment and have been implemented as a social policy in this sense.

Following the establishment of high-performance work systems, the workplace has lost its quality as a site of learning. Now, workers are expected to gain certain qualifications before entering the labor market to be considered employable. The variety of metrics to be assessed about employees has increased. Personal qualities are included, as well as technical qualifications.

The recruitment process become longer since job seekers are now subjected to intense assessments, the aim of which is to investigate their potential productivity. The job seeker thus needs to be ready for work both technically and socially. The long recruitment process is expected to guarantee productivity and higher performance at work. The importance afforded the recruitment process has led to the expansion of the recruitment industry in the 1990s in Turkey. Private employment agencies, in which recruitment processes are outsourced, are one of the intermediaries in labor market that appeared as a result of transformations in the workplace.<sup>4</sup> Intermediaries can be divided in to three categories: the private sector, membership-based chambers, and public intermediaries.<sup>5</sup>

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- 3 Dan Finn, "From Full Employment to Employability: A New Deal for Britain's Unemployed?" *International Journal of Manpower* 21, no. 5 (2000): 384–99, doi:10.1108/01437720010377693.
- 4 Intermediaries both public and not have been present since the nineteenth century in the labor market. Sigrid Wadauer, Thomas Buchner, and Alexander Mejstrik, "The Making of Public Labor Intermediation: Job Search, Job Placement, and the State in Europe, 1880–1940," *International Review of Social History* 57, no. S20 (September 2012): 161–89, doi:10.1017/S002085901200048X. What makes current-day private employment agencies different from previous ones is services related to white collar employees.
- 5 Chris Benner, "Building Community-Based Careers: Labor Market Intermediaries and Flexible Employment in Silicon Valley" (paper presented at Global Networks, Innovation and Regional Development: The Informational Region as Development Strategy, University of California, Pittsburgh, November 11–13, 1999), 30.

The making of the market<sup>6</sup> requires contribution of agencies to the definition of employable workers and individualization of employment. The market of private labor intermediaries responded the needs of the labor process, also expanding their market by creating the need. Therefore, these intermediaries are the product and the creators of their sector.<sup>7</sup>

Private employment agencies contribute to the employability approach and therefore to the individualization of employment in several ways. They cooperate with public and private agents by means of conferences, events, and summits they host, the documents they prepare, their marketing activities, and their discourse in several mediums. The tools they employ and the bureaucracy they have created with those tools play a crucial part in their contribution to the individualization of employment. Private employment agencies play the role of constructing flexible employees by influencing the attitudes of job seekers as well as the expectations of employers.

This thesis is an investigation of these arguments. How did the private employment agencies emerge? What did they replace, and in what context? How did they create their market? What did they do to sustain their market? Which kind of labor have they offered? How they have been represented? How have they served employees, employers, and governmental bodies? Which kind of knowledge is made available to those parties? How have the selection and placement processes become sophisticated and by means of what tools? How do they contribute to the formation of the “employable worker,” creating market value for their activity? How has a relatively small sector had such a considerable effect on norm-making in unemployment management?

I focus on these questions in this thesis. Each dimension of the recruitment industry related to employment – namely entrepreneurs, recruitment specialists, recruitment tools of the agencies, sectoral organizations of private employment agencies, job seekers, and legislation – are focused on in the thesis.

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6 Ibid.

7 Kevin Ward, “Temporary Staffing, ‘Geographies of Circulation,’ and the Business of Delivering Neoliberalization,” in *Neo-Liberalization: States, Networks, Peoples*, ed. Kim England and Kevin Ward (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 110–36.



This study is not sector-specific since most private employment agencies do not serve only a specific sector. In addition, employment relations in all sectors share certain common features in the context of the changes that define the new capitalism. Studying the topic based on a specific sector would have advantages and disadvantages. The advantage would be that I could take the determinants of the sector into account – for instance, those in the case of the medical sector. If I had focused on doctors, there would be issues specific to the field that determine how the job is done. The disadvantage would be that I would miss out on the generalizable elements common to all sectors of work, such as performance and monitoring systems or the norms that determine the mental world around work. The aim of this research is to reveal these common features.

Regardless of the sector, the research focuses on the recruitment processes of job candidates who are to work at midlevel positions, such as experts, professionals, and people who do desk jobs but are not at the management level. Furthermore, these people who aim to work in relatively “big/important”<sup>8</sup> companies using labor market intermediaries and job announcements instead of close networks to find a job. In small firms, informal methods are more likely to be utilized in the recruitment process instead of human resources management tools or the services provided by – private employment agencies. That is the reason this study investigates the recruitment procedures of private employment agencies for employment in large companies. Most of the companies using human resources management (HRM) means are large companies and/or informed about international personal management systems through their international partners.<sup>9</sup> Although the number of companies that are “institutionalized” or “important” enough to be informed<sup>10</sup> about HRM

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8 What makes a firm important is more about qualitative rather than quantitative characteristics. A pre-defined work flow; a clear, written work-load of workers; interest in human management methods; and being informed by international sources on running a company are supposed to make a firm "important."

9 Zeynep Aycan, “Human Resource Management in Turkey - Current Issues and Future Challenges,” *International Journal of Manpower* 22, no. 3 (May 1, 2001), 255.

10 Companies may be informed of new-fashioned methods in several ways. Having an international partner, transfer of a manager from a well-known company, attending the meetings of

means and such sophisticated processes of recruitment is small, they often constitute a point of reference in determining what the recruitment process should be. The hiring practices of such companies constitute a model and set the norms. Therefore, they also tell about the [future of the] rest. Moreover, some of the entrepreneurs running private employment agencies are former employees of those large firms.

The study approaches the labor market as a socio-economic sphere. This definition differs from the approach that conceives of the labor market as constituted by relations of supply and demand in which preferences of individuals determine market outcomes. Contrary to this approach “the labor market is a field, consisting of all the social, cultural, economic, political, ideological and social-psychological phenomena and actions involved in coordinating the ideas and actions of those who supply and those who demand, labor services.”<sup>11</sup>

Another point is that the study does not pay special attention to the discrimination experienced in the labor market in terms of demographics (gender, ethnicity, and age), although the existence of such discriminatory practices is widely acknowledged in labor studies. Although the research does not deny that it exists and affects the recruitment processes, it is left as an outside variable.

During the research, several methods have been employed: desk research, participant observation, and in-depth interviews.<sup>12</sup> Forty-one in-depth interviews have been conducted with private employment agency entrepreneurs, sector professionals, state officials, and job seekers. Each interview took one to two hours and followed a semi-structured moderator guide. They were carried out in participants’ offices or at cafes. To do participant observation, I attended human resources summits, training for recruitment specialists, and career support activities organized at universities. I focused on websites, blogs,

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employers’ associations, and employing new graduates are some of the ways of acquiring such information.

11 Steve Fleetwood, “A Trans-Disciplinary (proto) Model of Labor Markets,” (University of the West of England Working Paper 12, 2008), 5.

12 The moderator guide and the profile of people interviewed can be found in the appendices. Each interviewee is coded with a pair of letters and referred to by those codes in the dissertation.

and social media networks as well as discussions of private employment agencies on professional networks as part of the desk research. I also quantified the profile of private employment agencies and their founders.

The interviewees who were founders of private employment agency and sector specialists provided insight into their decisions to enter the recruitment industry, their fields of operation and the dynamics of the ways in which they chase after new tools for employee hiring, the strategies they employ to expand their market, and their roles in the changing expectations of workers. I found professionals for interviews via the list of private employment agencies on the İŞKUR (Turkish Labor Agency) website. I contacted participants through their websites and then met with them. I also interviewed people who run or work for companies that do not claim to be private employment agencies but that nevertheless operate as labor market intermediaries.

The officials from İŞKUR whom I interviewed informed me about the legislative basis of these agencies and the rules of their conduct.

Job seekers I interviewed related their experiences so that I could understand the strategies they developed in their interaction with various agencies in their work life, as well as their perception of ideal work and the ideal workplace. I reached interviewees via Internet websites and mail groups where people seeking a job submit their resumes. I particularly chose job seekers who use anonymous channels instead of close networks for finding a job to grasp their perception of the social dimensions of the labor market. Such workers experience it the most and are therefore more aware of it. Job seekers using anonymous channels are more aware of the stringent character of job seeking as they do not seem to have the privilege or access to the short-cut to of finding a job through their networks.

I attended training programs held by human resources specialists as a participant observer. One was on interviewing techniques for recruitment specialists and the other was on a personality inventory technique that is expected to provide recruitment specialists with a report on the behavioral traits of job candidates, thus enabling them to understand whether or not those candidates are appropriate for a certain position. I also joined several meetings held by professionals in the human resources management industry and talked with many private employment and human resources professionals as well as job seekers and employees.

The second chapter begins with a discussion of the context in which private employment agencies have appeared as service providers in the labor market. I focus on the policy of employability as a central feature of an approach to the labor market that shaped this context. The question of the labor process has changed, how that change created new managerial strategies, how it shaped the expectations of employees, what kind of bureaucratic assessment systems were created, and how labor market actors are positioned are answered. The relation between employability and the recruitment industry is scrutinized. What agencies assess, and what role they have in shaping the employable worker are discussed. Global facts and figures about private employment agencies are provided to determine whether the Turkish case is illustrative. I also discuss the literature related to the subject in the second chapter. The literature on employability, the social skills of employees, hiring practices, and labor market mediators are focused on.

In the third chapter, I focus on the development of private employment agencies in Turkey. The profiles of the agencies and their activities to expand their sector are the main subject of the chapter. It addresses questions of why the number of agencies increased, why companies outsource recruitment services, what services the agencies offer, which legal regulations accompanied the sector's growth, how the industry is created by the entrepreneurs, how the borders of the recruitment industry are drawn, what kinds of platforms were formed, and how the agencies developed relations with state institutions, municipalities, and universities. In order to verify the observations from the interviews, I converted publicly available data on the websites of the agencies into quantitative data to assess their scale. Findings include the sectors they serve, the groups of job seekers on which focus, the number of their branches, and their dates of foundation. I also quantified the profiles of their entrepreneurs to see if there was a pattern among them. I included information on previous professional experiences, educational backgrounds, gender of the entrepreneurs, and their sources of information in the recruitment industry. My investigation includes agencies listed by the state and is based on information provided on official websites. Therefore, unlicensed companies working in the recruitment industry are excluded.

In the fourth chapter, I focus on the features and experience of the employable worker. A discussion of the formation of the ideal worker, their skills

and competencies, and the implications in terms of individual responsibility is conducted with empirical outputs. How the formation of an employable worker is processed, considered, and realized by private employment agencies is discussed. In this respect, another question posed in this chapter is how the employability approach of agencies changed the criteria sought in the recruitment process. I focus on the reasoning behind judgments made by private employment agencies for recruitment. How the individualization of employment is justified and how the past is redefined as a new perspective is developed are also discussed. Job seekers' experience of the new managerial system, what happens to their subjectivity, and their perception of careers were included in the discussion. How employees perceive the promises of the new capitalism and whether they accept and change their strategy of finding a job are the questions posed that relate to employee experience.

In the fifth chapter, I focus on the practices of private employment agencies. The tools of the industry are examined to assess their contribution to the individualization of employment by agencies in practice. The way employability has been made measurable and the assumptions involved in the usage of the tools are central to this chapter. The question of which qualities of employees are made measurable, what are the tools to measure those qualities, how are they measured, what are the expectations from them, and how measurements are differentiated from previous measurement tools are answered in the fifth chapter. The implications of the storage, use and circulation of the results in the labor market for employees are discussed. The norms created for an ideal employee and the expectations evoked within job seekers are touched upon. The primary concern for the chapter is not accuracy of the measurement tools, but rather the effect of the principles and norms accompanying their use on the management of unemployment in the labor market.

The terms “white collar,” “university-educated workers,” and “job candidates” are used synonymously to designate a single category of employees in the study. The hiring practices of private employment agencies investigated in the study are described using several terms. “Employee selection process,” “hiring practices,” “recruitment,” and “employee placement” refer to hiring services provided by private employment agencies. The term “human resources (HR) specialists” is used for people who are responsible for recruitment practices. Terms such as “transferable skills,” “behavioral skills,” “soft

skills,” “personal features,” “traits,” and “competencies” are used interchangeably to indicate the high demand that employers put on behavioral characteristics.

I preferred the term new capitalism instead of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is mostly associated with the weakening role of state in the market. However, the borders between public and market is blurred, therefore I found the term new capitalism more appropriate to use it for contemporary issues.

This study may be considered within critical management studies. The contribution of the thesis is to bring a non-managerial approach to the literature of work under the new capitalism as well as to describe the character formation of employees together with the role of employment agencies in the Turkish case. However, I have focused mainly on the practices of private employment agencies rather than on the individual whose relation to work is shaped by the practices of these agencies.

Although the recruitment industry in Turkey is small, this thesis reflects on the changes in the employment regime through a discussion of private employment agencies. The behavioral aspect of labor has been studied within the scope of emotional labor, the service sector, the social capital required for a good job, and entrepreneurialism. Behavioral expectations of employability approach need to be studied, and it is best evaluated in the practices of the recruitment industry as they assess employees of all levels regardless of sector. Therefore, the thesis is at the intersection of issues of "employability," "hiring practices," and "private employment agencies." Besides, the size of the recruitment industry is larger than the number of licensed agencies indicates. And though the number of registered agencies is not remarkable, the speed with which the norms for unemployment management are spreading is considerable, as they have multiple channels for spreading the approach.

## Employability and the Recruitment Industry

The workplace has changed. “High-performance work systems, flexible staff arrangements, the decline of career stability and demographic changes in the composition of work force”<sup>1</sup> are the transformations in the workplace that characterize the new capitalism of the Post-Fordist era.<sup>2</sup> In this new era, uncertainty is not something to be avoided; instead, it has become the norm in the market as something to be managed.

The new capitalism has created new managerial practices, regulations, and employment patterns such as growth without employment. Furthermore, it has partially preserved old patterns, as well. The change resulted in the “increase in the number of contracts and the number of suppliers, the decrease in the duration of the contracts, the intensification of assessment and the emergence of new professions.”<sup>3</sup>

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- 1 Smith, *Crossing the Great Divide: Worker Risk and Opportunity in the New Economy*, 181.
  - 2 The Fordist era is the period between the World War II and the oil crisis that emerged in 1973, a time when organized labor was a political force and industrialized, pacific countries increased their competitiveness in the world economy. Phillip Brown and Richard Scase, *Higher Education and Corporate Realities: Class, Culture, and the Decline of Graduate Careers* (London; Bristol, Pa.: UCL Press, 1994), 5.
  - 3 Paul Treanor, “Neoliberalism: Origins, Theory, Definition,” 2005, <http://web.inter.nl.net/users/Paul.Treanor/neoliberalism.html>.

The workplace has been reorganized in accordance with high-performance work systems that enable the intensification of work. Methods such as quality assurance, a performance system, a bonus system, change management, customer relations, lean production principles, use of statistical methods in the process of production, and close surveillance of employees are deemed to guarantee the intensification of work, regulating the management of uncertainty (instead of dispelling it).

In the Fordist era, the number of the people employed at a workplace was deemed a sign of the importance of that company in the market. The priority was to have a stable workforce disciplined by means of social security systems.<sup>4</sup> Later, this priority was replaced with the aim of having fewer workers with greater productivity. The word “downsizing” started to become more prevalent than the word “layoff,”<sup>5</sup> indicating a continuous reorganization of companies in the market. The change in the terminology also indicates the disappearance of the subject of workers when change is needed. The change is not related to the workers but only to the business. Paradoxically, the management of workers intensified.

Internal labor markets and career stability have been disappearing, and seniority has been replaced by performance.<sup>6</sup> Seniority is not a qualification appreciated in the labor market unless the worker possesses critical skills for the company. Every worker and every department has become responsible for competitiveness and productivity in the post-Fordist era, regardless of their

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- 4 Guy Standing, “Labor Recommodification in the Global Transformation,” in *Reading Karl Polanyi for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 67–93; Richard Sennett, *The Culture of the New Capitalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 46; Peter Cappelli, *Introduction to Employment Relationships, New Models Of White-Collar Work* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1.
- 5 Peter Cappelli, *Employment Relationships, New Models of White-Collar Work* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ Press, 2008), 7.
- 6 John C. Dencker, “Corporate Restructuring and the Employment Relationship,” in *Employment Relationships: New Models of White Collar Work*, ed. Peter Cappelli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 34.



strategic<sup>7</sup> in the companies. Years spent at a workplace do not guarantee upward mobility unless the behavioral traits of the employee are appropriate and can guarantee profitability. The concepts of skill and seniority have been disconnected. The definition of skill has also changed and includes more social skills.

Books such as *End of Work*,<sup>8</sup> *Knowledge Economy*,<sup>9</sup> and *War for Talent*<sup>10</sup> argued that technological developments would change the labor market, and skill development would be the main issue of the new era. Critical researchers replied to this argument: Brown and Scase defined the approach as a technocratic one claiming that there is little empirical evidence that indicates that the need for skill has increased.<sup>11</sup> They argued, to the contrary, that the new capitalism is characterized by de-skilling rather than up-skilling. Brown, Hesketh, and Williams emphasized that the importance given to skill is a way of distracting attention from the issues of equality and redistribution.<sup>12</sup> The authors frame the issue as a struggle of the middle class for good jobs which are in larger demand as a result of the expansion of university education.

Atkinson expands the debate about skill by arguing that labor has been divided into two categories – core and periphery – in terms of skill acquisition.<sup>13</sup> Workers are to be up- or de-skilled depending on the category in which

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- 7 For example, the marketing department is supposed to expand the activities of a company and has a strategic importance, but departments such as the personnel department – which is responsible for a amount of work – is also held responsible for the profitability of the firm.
- 8 Jeremy Rifkin, *The End of Work* (New York: Tarcher/Penguin, 1996).
- 9 Dale Neef, *The Knowledge Economy* (Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1998).
- 10 Ed Michaels, Helen Handfield-Jones, and Beth Axelrod, *The War for Talent* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, 2001).
- 11 Brown and Scase, *Higher Education and Corporate Realities*, 12.
- 12 Phillip Brown, Anthony Hesketh, and Sara Williams, *The Mismanagement of Talent: Employability and Jobs in the Knowledge Economy* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 6.
- 13 John Atkinson, “Manpower Strategies for Flexible Organisations,” *Personnel Management* 16, no. 8 (1984): 28–31. In the beginning of 1980s, Atkinson claimed that flexibility was valid for both groups, but labor in the core is bounded by functional flexibility, while labor in the periphery by numerical flexibility. Functional flexibility signifies a flexible way of handling work, while numerical flexibility signifies the ease of changing the number of employees according to market demands. In a similar way, Wysong and Perrucci also divide the labor market into

they are placed. Employees in the core have individual negotiating power on their conditions, not need the structural protection provided by legislation, and are less exposed to rapid changes in labor market employment strategies. Jobs in the core require up-skilling. On the other hand, people on the periphery are more easily displaced by employers when they are not needed in the market. The claim that the new capitalism is characterized by deskilling is valid for workers on the periphery. The aforementioned discussions of skill did not include social skill. The subject of social skill has become more important with the employability approach, although the social dimension of job tasks had previously been discussed within the scope of emotional labor especially for employees whose work includes communicational activities with clients such as nurses or teachers.

## § 2.1 Employability

Contrary to the argument that the state is retreating, the state has taken part in regulating the labor market through active labor market policies to make it more flexible.<sup>14</sup> As Finn stated, retreatment has been replaced with partnership.<sup>15</sup> Unemployment has been framed as a problem of matching employees and employers together, as a skill problem, as the result of the incompatibility of education and the market, as a supply side matter, and as the incompetence

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permanent, contingent, and temporary labor. According to the authors, permanent (core) workers are required for “the continuity for the company” and the rest are dependent on the “ups and downs of the market.” Robert Perrucci and Earl Wysong, *The New Class Society: Goodbye American Dream?* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014), 120.

14 Ward, “Temporary Staffing, ‘Geographies of Circulation,’ and the Business of Delivering Neoliberalization,” 12; James Ferguson, “The Uses of Neoliberalism,” *Antipode* 41 (January 2010), 169; Finn, “From Full Employment to Employability: A New Deal for Britain’s Unemployed?,” 388.

15 “The principal instruments for involving both employers and other groups and interests have been national and local partnerships, which are also central to the lifelong learning strategy. “Partnerships” which can take a number of forms are now seen to represent an alternative to simplistic free market solutions and the “old centralized command and control systems, which stifled innovation.” Finn, “From Full Employment to Employability: A New Deal for Britain’s Unemployed?,” 389.

of citizens to adapt to changes in skill requirements. Full employment is no longer a state policy; it is replaced by the issue of employability in the new capitalism.<sup>16</sup> The policy of employability has been considered part of the social policy of the state. Studies that are critical of these developments have been developed. Scholars defined the process as welfare to workfare,<sup>17</sup> whereby unemployment is deemed to have been solved. Streeck developed a critical approach to the concept of employability in relation to the issues of skill and social policy.<sup>18</sup> He regards the development of skill as a policy matter that concerns the state, as well. He proposes that the state should regulate skill development by forcing employers undertake the responsibility rather than leaving employees to acquire those skills by themselves. For him, the workplace conceived as a place of learning could solve the skill problem of the market. Cremin also approached the concept of employability from a critical perspective taking the social skill expectations of employers into account.<sup>19</sup> For Cremin, employability – as a loose concept based on behavior – is used for never-ending exploitation involving the very subjectivity of employees.<sup>20</sup>

Employability is a form of individualized employment approach's vision for the expected behaviors of employees. Sennett underscores that the institutional conjuncture of the 1970s enabled workers to have a self-discipline by means of rewards (retirement, advancement, regular income, a permanent job, and professionalism) gained in one's working life have gradually disappeared in the new capitalism.<sup>21</sup> The new promises to employees in the new

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16 Ibid.

17 Jamie Peck and Nikolas Theodore, "Beyond 'Employability,'" *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 24, no. 6 (November 1, 2000), 731.

18 Wolfgang Streeck, "Skills and the Limits of Neo-Liberalism: The Enterprise of the Future as a Place of Learning," *Work, Employment & Society* 3, no. 1 (1989): 89–104.

19 Colin Cremin, "Never Employable Enough: The (Im)possibility of Satisfying the Boss's Desire," *Organization* 17, no. 2 (March 1, 2010): 131–49.

20 Ibid.

21 Sennett, *The Culture of the New Capitalism*, 24. Standing calls it "social contract relationship of the proletariat, whereby labor securities were provided in exchange for subordination and contingent loyalty. Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*, 1st ed. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011), <http://www.bloomsburycollections.com/book/the-precariat-the-new-dangerous-class/>, 8.

labor market are different. Having the right individual attitude is the condition of being and/or remaining employed. “Workers’ behaviors have been seen increasingly determinants of employment”<sup>22</sup> and “behavior-conditional benefits”<sup>23</sup> have become the hallmark of the new employment relations in which individual responsibility and employability are emphasized.

Unemployment was a question of morality and therefore an individual matter before it became a question of social policy.<sup>24</sup> Although there is a turn toward conceiving unemployment as an individual matter in the new capitalism, the way that it is individualized (by soft bureaucracy) is different than when it was a moral, and thus individual matter. The distinction between unemployed and unemployable (not fit for work) or work-shy<sup>25</sup> has disappeared with the centralization of supply-side measurements today. The term unemployed has been replaced with unemployable. Additionally, the definition of unemployable has changed. It is no longer refers to inadequate physical capacity. It has the connotation that an unemployed person is not skillful enough to find a job. The way social policy posits unemployment today has again made unemployment an individual matter by means of the employability approach.

Unemployment has always been related to behavior at different levels and in different ways. Behavioral expectations of the employees in today’s labor market differ from behavioral expectations of the Fordist era, which means that there were also behavioral expectations in the previous era where unemployment was a matter of social policy. The Fordist era can be defined as a bureaucratic period when “centralized control with hierarchical decision

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22 Peck and Theodore, “Beyond ‘Employability,’” 731.

23 Standing argues that to be socially included, people are expected to display certain behaviors. The new state regulations constituted a new moral system by adopting an active labor citizens approach and engaging in social engineering (modern paternalism). Private employment agencies are the part of the agents aiming to make workers internalize the morality through their practice of creating “socially constructed workplaces” in the labor market. Standing, “Labor Recommodification in the Global Transformation.,” 87.

24 Wadauer, Buchner, and Mejsstrik, “The Making of Public Labor Intermediation: Job Search, Job Placement, and the State in Europe, 1880–1940,” 172.

25 *Ibid.*, 162.

making” was the dominant management approach and “obedience and compliance were strongly emphasized as organizational values.”<sup>26</sup> Employees were expected to be “able to learn the rules, and prepared to be compliant within roles of superordination and subordination.” They could distance themselves from management so long as they were complied with the rules.<sup>27</sup> A degree from a university was not just proof of technical knowledge but was also considered proof of one’s behavioral skills – as an indicator of “certified compliance” to institutions.<sup>28</sup>

The potential of the employees was examined during employment in the Fordist era. Being compliant would be a predictor of performance at work, but the actual performance would be seen while doing the work. Today, with the intensification of work, predictors of performance have come to be applied before employment. The tools used in recruitment are meant to increase productivity by finding employees with the right behavior for their positions. As interdependency increased with centralized management tools, recruitment focused on fitting employees not only in their position but also in the organization.<sup>29</sup>

Personal traits of employees have become more important; however, they are not categorized as “bad” or “good,” as was the case in the past. Instead, the concept of employability indicates that certain positions require certain behaviors regardless of whether those behavioral characteristics are “good” or “bad.” Behavior is considered as a part of an actual task, besides which employment is an individual matter. This point will be elaborated on in later chapters.

“Intensified demands on character”<sup>30</sup> in the new era mean that not only managers but also lower-level workers are expected to be more creative and psychologically involved, regardless of their position in workplace. According

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26 Brown and Scase, *Higher Education and Corporate Realities*, 2.

27 Ibid., 8.

28 Ibid., 137.

29 David E. Bowen, Gerald E. Ledford, and Barry R. Nathan, “Hiring for the Organization, Not the Job,” *The Executive* 5, no. 4 (1991): 35–51.

30 Jason Hughes, “Bringing Emotion to Work: Emotional Intelligence, Employee Resistance and the Reinvention of Character,” *Work, Employment & Society* 19, no. 3 (September 2005): 608.

to Smith, one of the results of the changes in work organization is the expectation of transferable skills that can be applied to any position in any sector, while career stability has declined for workers.<sup>31</sup> Brown and Scase conclude in their field study that there are three general traits related to behavior that would make candidates more employable: suitability (transferable skills such as leadership), capability (traits possessed by nature), and acceptability (compatibility with the organizational culture).<sup>32</sup>

The behavioral aspect of employment in the new capitalism has been studied from different angles. Mainly issues of emotion, character, and self-identity were studied. Scholars within the social sciences have been interested in how employees were involved in their work emotionally due to the expansion of service sector,<sup>33</sup> how emotional labor played a role in jobs involving care such as those in hospitality, teaching, and, nursing,<sup>34</sup> how new capitalism has affected self-identity,<sup>35</sup> what kinds of behavior are valued in the core of the labor market,<sup>36</sup> and how individuality (behavior, character, emotions) as become important in work life.<sup>37</sup>

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- 31 Smith, *Crossing the Great Divide: Worker Risk and Opportunity in the New Economy*, 141.
- 32 Brown and Scase, *Higher Education and Corporate Realities*, 96.
- 33 Rosemary Crompton, Duncan Gallie, and Kate Purcell, *Changing Forms of Employment: Organisations, Skills and Gender*, ed. Rosemary Crompton, Duncan Gallie, and Kate Purcell (London, New York: Routledge, 1996).
- 34 Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Helen Colley, "Learning to Labor with Feeling: Class, Gender and Emotion in Childcare Education and Training," *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 7, no. 1 (March 1, 2006): 15–29, doi:10.2304/ciec.2006.7.1.15.
- 35 Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (New York: Norton, 1998).
- 36 Hughes, "Bringing Emotion to Work: Emotional Intelligence, Employee Resistance and the Reinvention of Character"; Brown and Scase, *Higher Education and Corporate Realities*; Ofer Sharone, "Constructing Unemployed Job Seekers as Professional Workers: The Depoliticizing Work-Game of Job Searching," *Qualitative Sociology* 30, no. 4 (July 18, 2007): 403–16, doi:10.1007/s11133-007-9071-z.
- 37 Smith, *Crossing the Great Divide: Worker Risk and Opportunity in the New Economy*; Hughes, "Bringing Emotion to Work: Emotional Intelligence, Employee Resistance and the Reinven-

In the relevant management literature, organizational fit is claimed to be needed to retain workers. It is obvious that the interest in retaining workers concerns retaining core workers in “war for talent.”<sup>38</sup> The state and companies face the challenge of how to render (non-core) labor more (numerically) flexible, while the human resource management literature is concerned about how to retain the core workers.

Pre-work performance measurement of technical and behavioral competencies requires pre-work preparation. Grugulis defines the previous era as a period where “social and community obligations were emphasized” and criticizes present practices: “now every virtue encouraged is designed to be exercised in the workplace, often at the expense of the individual or the community.”<sup>39</sup> Brown and Scase contribute to the debate by claiming that meritocracy has been replaced with the parentocracy, where parents have their children educated according to risks in the labor market from an early age.<sup>40</sup> In addition, possession of a diploma has become widespread, family involvement has become important in order for the children to be rendered more employable in a more competitive labor market.<sup>41</sup> In that regard, the authors focused on the reproduction of class divisions through recruitment practices. The reason they put forward for this reproduction is that certain traits required by the new capitalism can only be developed with practices extending over a long time depending on the orientation of the parents. Streeck points out that specific skills required for work notwithstanding, technical and soft skills can be obtained at early ages; however, youngsters do not tend to invest in themselves

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tion of Character”; George Callaghan and Paul Thompson, “‘We Recruit Attitude’: The Selection and Shaping of Routine Call Centre Labor,” *JOMS Journal of Management Studies* 39, no. 2 (2002): 233–54.

38 Michaels, Handfield-Jones, and Axelrod, *The War for Talent*.

39 Irena Grugulis, Tony Dundon, and Adrian Wilkinson, “Cultural Control and The Culture Manager,” 1.

40 Brown and Scase, *Higher Education and Corporate Realities*, 140.

41 Ibid.

for the long run<sup>42</sup> unless what Brown and Scase calls “parentocracy” is involved.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, Streeck argues that skill development should be regulated by the state. In their study, Brown and Scase emphasize transferrable traits with the term “cultural capital.”<sup>44</sup> Cultural capital is defined with reference to personality traits such as entrepreneurialism. For instance, good (core) jobs require assertive traits that are not gained through practice at work but exist already before work life begins.<sup>45</sup> People with upper-class upbringings can take the job and have “effortless achievement.”<sup>46</sup> They conclude that the people who acquire the required cultural capital at an early age are more likely to be employed in core jobs.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, good jobs that were taken by the well-educated in the past are now taken by the upper class people who also attend elite universities.<sup>48</sup>

The employability of job candidates depends not only on their technical and behavioral skills, but also on their position in the society. People who are least exposed to the instability of the labor market are prepared for the future in accordance with business values at an early age. Peck and Theodore criticize workfare programs for ignoring the fact that the ones securing jobs are the most employable candidates, in contrast to the expectation that increasing the level of employability creates demand for labor.<sup>49</sup> They claim that the problem is not one of skills, but the fact that the new market that does not generate good jobs. Brown, Hesketh, and Williams therefore offer a framework for employability. They challenge the “positional consensus theory” (skill has become important) with the “positional conflict theory” (struggle over good jobs).<sup>50</sup>

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42 Streeck, “Skills and the Limits of Neo-Liberalism: The Enterprise of the Future as a Place of Learning.”

43 Brown and Scase, *Higher Education and Corporate Realities*, 140.

44 Ibid., 48.

45 Ibid., 46.

46 The concept is borrowed from Bourdieu by Brown and Scase. Ibid, 44.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

49 Peck and Theodore, "Beyond 'Employability.'"

50 Brown, Hesketh, and Williams, *The Mismanagement of Talent*, 37.



Following critical management studies,<sup>51</sup> I base my research on a perspective that suggests that the new capitalism yokes character and work to increase productivity. Some scholars have focused on certain behavioral traits required for the core jobs,<sup>52</sup> but I argue that what has changed in the new era is not merely the emergence of certain behavioral qualifications. The behavioral qualifications required are changeable and become customized according to the job. The behavioral characteristics expected are not standardized and they are not evaluated as bad or good; rather, they are evaluated as useful or not useful. I also argue that behavioral expectations are stronger for non-core employees despite the idea that employees having certain (expected) behaviors secure the best jobs. Employers offering “bad” jobs place more importance on the possession of behavioral qualifications than employers offering “good”<sup>53</sup> jobs. Besides, people in core positions have more negotiating power regardless of their behavioral characteristics.

The argument that the demands of employers on the character of employees has intensified is based on the fact of career instability.<sup>54</sup> It is implicit in the argument: if people are to change jobs in short term, they should have certain behaviors that will be valued in every work environment. In my research, I

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- 51 Critical Management Studies emerged within the business administration departments in Western universities, and its critical approach challenged the conventional managerial paradigm of Human Resources Management. It was informed by foremost critical theory and Braverman’s work “Labor and Monopoly Capital,” and it related management issues to a wider political-economic context. In this way, “a social scientific rather than a ‘regulation-oriented’ managerial approach to personnel management” was offered. Although currently Critical Management Studies include a wide range of approaches, their common denominator is that they all focus on “broader patterns of relations of domination” reflecting on management practices. Paul Adler, Linda C. Forbes, and Hugh Willmott, “Critical Management Studies: Premises, Practices, Problems, and Prospects” in Draft for Annals of the Academy of Management, 2006, 4.
- 52 Hughes, “Bringing Emotion to Work: Emotional Intelligence, Employee Resistance and the Reinvention of Character”; Brown and Scase, *Higher Education and Corporate Realities*.
- 53 A good job promises an employee improvement which then makes the employee more valuable in the labor market.
- 54 Smith, *Crossing the Great Divide: Worker Risk and Opportunity in the New Economy*, 181; Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Knopf, 1977), 327.

related these demands on the personality of the employees to the intensification of work, drawing my analysis from the tools of private employment agencies (PEAs) which are claimed to measure personality traits.

## § 2.2 The New Bureaucracy of Employability

The attempt to render the process of production measurable is not new to capitalism. Although methods of measurement change, the attempt itself is continuous. Measurement requires a bureaucracy, the form of which may be changed according to conditions.

The measurement of individuality led to the formation of a new kind of bureaucracy. Individuality is measured and rationalized within this new bureaucracy which is not very different from bureaucracy in the Weberian sense. It makes an ideal claim of being rational and objective and not dependent on the arbitrary decisions of people.<sup>55</sup>

Bureaucracy has often been criticized for impeding employee flexibility.<sup>56</sup> It is argumentative that loosening bureaucracy would enable managers to free the potential of the employees without being limited by standards.

Within critical studies, the intense demand on the personal character of employees is explained by the absence of bureaucracy. The argument put forward by Brown and Scase is that when there are fewer rules regulating relations in the workplace, motivating people based on their characteristics becomes important.<sup>57</sup> This argument is based on an opposition. Workplaces ruled by strict rules are juxtaposed to workplaces in which more intimate factors are claimed to determine how work is to be conducted. Actually, employers are interested in the personality of employees to motivate them when a "war for talent" is in play, as is the case for the core workers. However, the

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55 Max Weber, Hans Gerth, and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958).

56 Forrest Briscoe, "The Upside of Bureaucracy: Unintended Benefits for Professional Careers," in *Employment Relationships: New Models of White-Collar Work*, ed. Peter Cappelli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 223–56.

57 Brown and Scase, *Higher Education and Corporate Realities*, 6.

intense demands on the personality of employees has more to do with the general intensification of work. The claim that there is no standard respect to the targets to be reached does not mean there is no rule at all. Rather, it means that the target is unlimited.

Several scholars questioned the positioning of organizations that emerged in the post-Fordist era in opposition to the bureaucratic organizations of the Fordist era.<sup>58</sup> These critiques underlined that changes in the conditions and context of work do not necessarily lead to the formation of non-bureaucratic workplaces.<sup>59</sup> They defined the new type of bureaucracy as rebureocratization,<sup>60</sup> soft bureaucracy,<sup>61</sup> or as a hybrid of old and new types of bureaucracy.<sup>62</sup> Courpasson developed the term “soft bureaucracy,” claiming that a new type of bureaucracy had emerged, contradicting the argument that bureaucracy had reached its demise.<sup>63</sup> He emphasizes that “soft bureaucracy” is not anti-bureaucracy. Instead, it refers to the emergence of more “sophisticated managerial strategies” and involves a synthesis of centralization and decentralization within organizations. Kallinikos argues that the standardization and centralization associated with bureaucracy are derivative results of bureaucracy,

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- 58 For a critique of the “demise of bureaucracy” discourse see Geraldine Healy et al., “Competing Rationalities in the Diversity Project of the UK Judiciary: The Politics of Assessment Centres,” *Human Relations* 63, no. 6 (February 18, 2010): 807–34; David, Courpasson, “Managerial Strategies of Domination. Power in Soft Bureaucracies,” *Organization Studies* 21, no. 1 (January 2000): 141–61; Barbara Townley, “The Role of Competing Rationalities in Institutional Change,” *The Academy of Management Journal* 45, no. 1 (2002): 163–79; Jannis Kallinikos, “The Social Foundations of the Bureaucratic Order,” *Organization* 11, no. 1 (January 2004): 13–36; Tom Keenoy, “HRMism and the Languages of Re-Presentation,” *Journal of Management Studies* 34, no. 5 (September 1, 1997): 825–41; Nigel Thrift, *Theory, Culture & Society: Knowing Capitalism* (London: SAGE, 2005).
- 59 David Courpasson and Mike Reed, “Introduction: Bureaucracy in the Age of Enterprise,” *Organization* 11, no. 1 (January 2004): 6.
- 60 Damian E. Hodgson, “Project Work: The Legacy of Bureaucratic Control in the Post-Bureaucratic Organization,” *Organization* 11, no. 1 (January 2004): 97.
- 61 Courpasson, “Managerial Strategies of Domination. Power in Soft Bureaucracies.”
- 62 Dan Kärreman and Mats Alvesson, “Cages in Tandem: Management Control, Social Identity, and Identification in a Knowledge-Intensive Firm,” *Organization* 11, no. 1 (January 2004): 170.
- 63 Courpasson, “Managerial Strategies of Domination. Power in Soft Bureaucracies.,” 142.

not the core elements of it.<sup>64</sup> He also claims that the core of bureaucracy is its non-inclusive character: people take their place in it not with their personas but with their roles. Therefore, the absence of elements such as standardization and centralization does not suggest the disappearance of bureaucracy.<sup>65</sup>

The new management approach can be seen together with “old-fashioned” approaches and “it might well embody and deepen those traditional arrangements by obscuring power behind participatory language.”<sup>66</sup> Courpasson argues that the new bureaucracy entrenches previous relations rather than replacing them.<sup>67</sup> He claims that the bureaucracy of the Fordist era is not replaced with soft management methods in the entrepreneurial, post-Fordist era; on the contrary, the “existing legitimate authority perpetuates itself by incorporating soft practices and articulating these with hierarchical and formal bureaucratic practices.”<sup>68</sup> He adds that “decentralization and the marketization of organizations and autonomy goes hand in hand with the development of a highly centralized and authoritarian form of government.”<sup>69</sup> In other words, normalization and differentiation exist together. The bureaucracy of new management ties employees together to centralization, while the performance of employees is assessed individually and separately from the others to whom they are tied. The paradox is that while new managerial applications increase interdependency at work, the intense performance assessment methods that are founded on an individual basis signify individualism.

The relations of the workplace have become more interdependent as the accountability of employees gained prominence, leading to the use of management tools such as performance systems, outsourcing, and intense measurement. Productivity management tools were used to centralize organizations, regardless of sector. Thus, the increased measurement of individuality runs parallel to an increase in interdependency. Heard optically, the rules of managing flexibility seem not be flexible.

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64 Kallinikos, “The Social Foundations of the Bureaucratic Order,” 16.

65 Ibid., 20.

66 Smith, *Crossing the Great Divide: Worker Risk and Opportunity in the New Economy*, 5.

67 Courpasson, “Managerial Strategies of Domination. Power in Soft Bureaucracies.”

68 Ibid., 142.

69 Ibid., 159.

Even if measurement itself is "objective," what is measured, why it is measured, and what is done with the results are questions of power relations. The claim that the assessment of employability is a tool that brings order to chaotic work relations, eliminates nepotism, and puts human resources specialists in a neutral position neglects the fact that these specialists are themselves employees. In addition, societal inequality is denied by the claim that compliance with official, technical rules has satisfactory results since the measurement is conducted with objective tools "Greater proceduralization is meant to lead automatically to greater fairness and equality."<sup>70</sup>

Employees have autonomy to an extent. The tools that measure individuals in an essentialist way are legitimized, and direct management is replaced with individual responsibility in a soft bureaucracy.<sup>71</sup> Standardization goes hand in hand with differentiation since the individualization of management does not mean the arbitrariness (autonomy) of individuals. What makes contemporary bureaucracy new is that it brings together concepts that were deemed to constitute binary opposites: autonomy vs. interdependency, individualism vs. centralism, irregularity vs. regulation, and standardization vs. differentiation. These different approaches co-exist not in an inconsistent but in a synthesized form.

### § 2.3 Legislative Regulation of Employability

Changes in the production process led to institutional regulation, to the emergence of new actors, and to a state policy of employability that put the responsibility on the shoulders of labor. Active labor market policies are enacted in opposition to policies that take direct, interventionist responsibility for employment (passive labor market policies).<sup>72</sup>

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70 Healy et al., "Competing Rationalities in the Diversity Project of the UK Judiciary: The Politics of Assessment Centres," February 2010, 4.

71 Courpasson, "Managerial Strategies of Domination. Power in Soft Bureaucracies.," 158.

72 Defining policies such as the unemployment fund as passive labor policies is criticized by scholars for its negative connotation. Recep Kapar, "Aktif İşgücü Piyasası Politikaları," İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası 55, no. 1 (2005): 341.

Employability replaced the concept of employment, therefore in the new era the unemployed became the unemployable, and the issue of unemployment became an issue of un-employability. Active labor policies are based on the argument that job seekers neither know how to find jobs nor how to manage their careers; they have not made rational decisions in their lives due to this lack of knowledge.<sup>73</sup> This approach implicitly suggests that the unemployed are not sufficiently equipped; if they were, they would have made rational decisions that would lead them to desired career.

Active labor market policies underscore the responsibility of workers and job seekers to develop themselves for job searching/creating according to the requirements of the market – that is to say, to become employable. Accordingly, unemployment is framed as a matter of matching employees with employers and placing them in the right positions, overlooking the structural aspects of the problem of unemployment. In other words, bringing the employer and employee together in career centers and fairs are suggested as social policies for increasing the level of employment. If you are not the entrepreneur of your own business you need to be the “entrepreneur of self”<sup>74</sup> in order to be employable. Unemployed people are “constructed as active job seekers”<sup>75</sup> need to be trained in job seeking.

Active labor market policies first started to be implemented in European Union countries and the United States in the middle of 1990s first were deemed to be a panacea for unemployment. It was led by economic changes and has been implemented as social policy.<sup>76</sup> The approach claims that training, credit options to run one’s own small business, and employment agencies

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73 To understand how the discourse of employability was disseminated, there is a need for research on the news created about employment during the period in when active labor policies were implemented in order to see.

74 Nikolas. Rose, *Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power, and Personhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 158.

75 Marinette Fogde, “How to Write Your CV: Advice, Expert Knowledge and Job Seeking Skills” (The Fifth Critical Management Studies Conference, Manchester Business School, 2007), 5.

76 OECD, “Labor Market Programmes and Activation Strategies: Evaluating the Impacts,” 2005, 174.

(public, private, and cooperation between the two) would increase the employability of the unemployed and thus decrease the need for state support like unemployment benefits. Implementers of this policy argue that...

...active labor programs (ALPs), commonly found in Organization for Economic Corporation and Development (OECD) countries, are being implemented in transition and middle income economies as one ingredient of labor policy intended to assist in the redeployment of workers negatively impacted by economic restructuring. Active labor policies have both social/political and economic agendas. They are a signal from government to citizens that it cares about individuals who lose their jobs as a result of economic restructuring and wants to help them reenter the labor market. They are also intended to increase productivity, reduce the demand for public income support, and reduce poverty.<sup>77</sup>

The new, active role that workers are expected to take includes new expectations as to behavior in the labor market, as well. The active market policy was an open declaration that...

...new construction of “active” and “responsible” citizens and communities are deployed to produce governmental results that do not depend on direct state intervention. The “responsabilized” citizen comes to operate as miniature firm, responding to incentives, rationally assessing risks, and prudently choosing from among different courses of action.<sup>78</sup>

The context in Turkey was no exception. The Seventh Development Plan of the Turkish Ministry of Development, which covered the years 1996-2000, was the first official document declaring active labor market policy actions in

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77 David H. Fretwell, Jacob Benus and Christopher J. O’Leary, Foreword to Evaluating the Impact of Active Labor Programs: Results of Cross Country Studies in Europe and Central Asia," The World Bank, June 30, 1999, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/1999/06/438323/evaluating-impact-active-labor-programs-results-cross-country-studies-europe-central-asia>, iv.

78 Ferguson, “The Uses of Neoliberalism.,” 172.

the scope of harmonization with the EU acquis and globalization.<sup>79</sup> According to the report “[g]eneral objective of the Human Resources Development Component is to support transition to a knowledge-based economy capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.”<sup>80</sup> The report thus explicitly indicated that the regulation of labor will be more concerned with unemployment problems caused by the neoliberal economy. In 2007, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security implemented the "Human Resources Development Operational Program" within the scope of EU harmonization process.<sup>81</sup>

The idea of employability is expected to prevent labor force from being dependent on unemployment benefits and public resources. However, paradoxically, revenues spent on unemployment by the state have continued. The state started to use the unemployment fund for the institution of the employability approach.<sup>82</sup>

It is assumed that the employability approach would increase demand for labor. Minister of labor Faruk Çelik answered a question asked by a member of parliament about unemployment among university-educated people by stating:

[A]ccording to the 69<sup>th</sup> article of the law numbered 6111, the 30% of the unemployment fund of the previous year was used in order to increase the employability level of the labor force, to decrease the risk of unemployment by qualifying the workers, to orient the workers who are likely to become unemployed due to technological developments to other fields, to take measures to increase and protect employment, to provide advisory services and services of placement, and to do labor market research and planning. In addition, the Cabinet is authorized

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79 Şelale Uşen, “Avrupa Birliği Ülkeleri ve Türkiye’de Aktif Emek Piyasası Politikaları,” *Çalışma ve Toplum*, no. 13.2 (2007): 84.

80 Human Resources Development Operating Structure, accessed May 2, 2012, <http://www.ikg.gov.tr>.

81 Ibid.

82 Further research is needed to see whether the amount of resources allocated to labor market management has decreased, increased, or remained the same.



to increase the rate (30% of the unemployment fund) up to 50% if considered necessary.<sup>83</sup>

He then continued with the monetary incentives to be provided as capital for decreasing the unemployment level. Briefly, he declared that according to the 74<sup>th</sup> article of the law numbered 6111, if a worker has had no record in the social security system in the previous six months, the share of social security of the employer would be paid from the unemployment fund. He stated that this is valid for every insured worker employed in the private sector through December 31, 2015. The minister also stated that 2633 agreements were signed with 1388 municipalities, 1135 social assistance centers, 110 career centers, organized industrial zones, chambers of trade and industry, and technology centers to provide services to job seekers. The Ministry of Labor also organized nineteen employment and career fairs and fifty-five career days (as of November 2012) to bring employers and employees together.<sup>84</sup> The state shifted its responsibility of creating employment to a responsibility to increase employability by using unemployment fund to subsidize training programs around the country.<sup>85</sup>

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83 "6111 Kanununun 69 uncu maddesi ile getirilen düzenlemeye göre; İşsizlik Sigortası Fonunun bir önceki yıl prim gelirlerinin %30'u; işgücünün istihdam edilebilirliğini artırmak, çalışanların vasıflarını yükselterek işsizlik riskini azaltmak ve teknolojik gelişmeler nedeniyle işsiz kalması beklenenlerin başka alanlara yönlendirilmesini sağlamak, istihdamı artırıcı ve koruyucu tedbirler almak ve uygulamak, işe yerleştirme ve danışmanlık hizmetleri temin etmek, işgücü piyasası araştırma ve planlama çalışmaları yapmak amacıyla kullanılmaktadır. Ayrıca Bakanlar Kurulu gerekli görürse bu oranı %50'ye kadar çıkarmaya yetkilidir." Parliamentary question (7/13595), TBMM, accessed March 10, 2013, <http://www2.tbmm.gov.tr/d24/7/7-13595sgc.pdf>.

84 Ibid.

85 A pilot project to implement active labor policies was conducted in Kocaeli with the support of the ILO and completed in 2010. ILO, accessed September 29, 2013, <http://www.ilo.org/public/turkish/region/eurpro/ankara/areas/active.htm>.

Professionals, chambers of professionals,<sup>86</sup> state institutions,<sup>87</sup> and human resources specialists give training and advice to pass on job-seeking skills to employees and prospective employees. Job-seeking skills are expected to enable employees to render themselves more employable. Leading this approach, the state employment agency İŞKUR (Turkish Labor Agency) has become more responsible for the development of the quality of the labor force, including not only blue but also the white collar workers and young people who are prospective employees.<sup>88</sup> In this respect, in 2012, İŞKUR employed 2918 career consultants<sup>89</sup> responsible for guiding job seekers in carrying out effective job searches and for giving career consultations to high school students at their schools.<sup>90</sup> The competency criteria for these job consultants were prepared in cooperation with Association for Personnel Management (*Personel Yönetimi Derneği* or PERYÖN)<sup>91</sup> and the Vocational Qualifications Authority (*Mesleki Yeterlilik Kurumu*), and the agreement among the institutions was signed in

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- 86 The Chamber of Mechanical Engineers periodically provides job seekers with a training programs on resume writing and interview methods. For news of the event, see "26 Mayıs 2012 tarihinde 'CV Hazırlama ve Mülakat Teknikleri' konulu seminer düzenlendi," MMO, accessed June 25, 2012, [http://www.mmo.org.tr/genel/bizden\\_detay.php?kod=28856&tipi=2&sube=1](http://www.mmo.org.tr/genel/bizden_detay.php?kod=28856&tipi=2&sube=1).
- 87 İŞKUR has occupational consultants that give advisory services on job seeking to all job seekers as well as to high school and university students. İŞKUR "What is Occupational Consulting, How It Operates in This Scope (İş ve Meslek Danışmanlığı Faaliyeti Nedir, Bu Faaliyet Kapsamında Hangi Çalışmalar Yapılmaktadır?)" İŞKUR, accessed June 25, 2012, <http://www.iskur.gov.tr/isArayan/Danismanlik.aspx>.
- 88 Since 2002, when unemployment wages started to be paid for the first time, İŞKUR also attracted workers of different socio-economic backgrounds. For the first time, a wide number of white collar workers visited İŞKUR to obtain their unemployment wages.
- 89 "Occupational Consultants Having a Licence Start Working at İŞKUR (Mesleki Yeterlilik Belgesi Sahibi İş ve Meslek Danışmanları İŞKUR'da İşe Başlıyor)," MYK, Accessed May 30, 2012, <http://www.myk.gov.tr/index.php/en/haberler/62-genel/998-myk-mesleki-yeterlilik-belgesi-sahibi-ve-meslek-danmanlar-kurda-e-balyor>.
- 90 "What is occupational consultation?," İŞKUR, accessed May 25, 2012, <http://www.iskur.gov.tr/isArayan/Danismanlik.aspx>.
- 91 PERYÖN is a civil organization for human resources management professionals and employers. It was founded in 1971, operates in seven cities, and has been a member of The European Association for People Management (EAPM) since 1979.

2010.<sup>92</sup> In the committee that prepared the criteria, representatives from PERYÖN were human resources management professionals working in the private sector. The cooperation and partnership of İŞKUR and PERYÖN indicates the reciprocal relationship exists between the private sector and state institutions.

Several regulations have been enacted by the state in cooperation with the private sector since the 1980s in order to expand employability. The regulations and strategically important policies from the period include:<sup>93</sup>

### Strategy documents

- 1 1985-1989, The Fifth Development Plan: The plan proposed entrepreneurship as a panacea for youth unemployment, support for small enterprises, and vocational education compatible with market expectations.
- 2 1990-1994, The Sixth Development Plan: Issues included support for small entrepreneurs, an Employment and Education (*İş Başı Eğitim Programı* or İEP) program supported by the World Bank, the strengthening of İŞKUR, the employment of 73.200 citizens through training programs, and the development of female employment.
- 3 1996-2000, The Seventh Development Plan: Issues included support for small entrepreneurs, training the labor force, consulting for those unemployed who were laid off as a result of privatization, and temporary work and education programs. Within the period of the plan, the unemployment fund was enacted in 1999 and the structure of the Institution for Finding Labor and Laborers (*İş ve İşçi Bulma Kurumu* or İİBK) was changed and it was renamed as Turkish Labor Agency (*Türkiye İş Kurumu* or İŞKUR) with the new regulation passed in 2000. The state's labor agency had monopolized since 1946. Turkish labor law which had been in effect since 1971 was changed in 2003. İŞKUR no longer had the monopoly over providing intermediary services in the labor market;

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92 "Standards for the occupations in the field of human resources management are to be determined," MYK, accessed May 30, 2012, <http://www.myk.gov.tr/index.php/tr/haberler/34-meslek-standartlar-dairesi-bakanl/610-nsan-kaynaklar-yonetimi-alanndaki-mesleklerin-standard-belirlenecek>.

93 Compiled and summarized from Bekir Gür et al., *Türkiye'nin İnsan Kaynağının Belirlenmesi* (Ankara: SETA, 2012), with additions.

private employment agencies appeared in this area as officially recognized actors.

- 4 2001-2005, The Eighth Development Plan: Among the issues were equality for women, the standardization of the requirements of professions, and harmonization with EU policy. The development of a National Employment Strategy was mentioned.
- 5 2007-2013, The Ninth Development Plan: Issues included the problem of the mismatch between the demand and supply sides of the labor market, decreasing the employment responsibility of employers, increasing flexibility, changing education in to be sensitive to demand-side changes, improving of active labor market policies, providing consulting services to make the work-force compatible with market requirements, and encouraging disadvantaged groups for entrepreneurship were its issues.
- 6 2001, Transition to Strong Economy Program: The program suggested the reorganization of the public sector and holding the number of public workers steady (i.e., not employing new people) to make the market more effective.
- 7 Emergency Action Plan: This plan suggests the policy for the 58th, the 59th, and the 60th governments (2002-2011). Issues included accelerating privatizations, flexibilization in the public sector, support for small and medium-size enterprises, improving vocational training to ease the transition from school to work, effective human resources planning, and improving short-term training and consulting services.
- 8 2002, The 61st Governmental Program: The government resolved to employ 4000 job consultants for İŞKUR.
- 9 2009, National Employment Strategy, 2009: The Council of Employment was formed by the Ministry of Labor<sup>94</sup> in 2009 and had declared "National Employment Strategy Draft 2012-2023" in 2012. The labor market was defined as stiff and was claimed to be in need of flexibilization. It suggested that some responsibilities of the employer should be abolished. The plan proposed that the conditions for acquiring compensation and the amount of compensation

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94 Although claimed to have been prepared using social dialogue method, trade unions were critical of the strategy. Indeed the strategy plan was controversial in general. For criticism, see Ahmet Makal, *Ulusal İstihdam Stratejisi: Eleştirel Bir Bakış* (Ankara: Türk-İş/Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Sosyal Politika ve Araştırma Uygulama Merkezi Ortak Yayını, 2012).

should be changed, that the relation between education and business should be strengthened, and that temporary work (instead of work security) should be regulated.

- 10 2010, Action Plan for Strengthening Employment and Education Relations: The plan demanded regular research to regulate the education system in accordance with market needs, proposed vocational courses be observed to see if they are function in an effective manner, and argued for cooperation with consultation industry and for the standardization for qualifications.

#### Employment Policies

- 1 Unemployment fund (firs started to be paid in 2002)
- 2 Short term employment support, 2003 (Support provided for three months when work is suspended or working hours are reduced due to economic crisis.)
- 3 Wage guarantee support, 2003 (Support provided for three months when an employer is unable to pay the wage due to a bankruptcy)
- 4 Employment Packages were launched in 2008 to diminish the effect of the economic crisis and to encourage employment by giving considerable concessions to the employers.
- 5 A remarkable share of the social security (80%-100%) was paid by the state in regions prioritized for development between the years of 2004-2011.
- 6 The social security share of employers who are not indebted to the state was lowered in 2008.
- 7 In 2008, article numbered 5763 resolved that the unemployment fund may be used for anyone recorded by İŞKUR. İŞKUR had authority to use the unemployment fund to increase employability through vocational training programs, public benefit programs, education at work programs, and entrepreneurship programs.
- 8 Six months of the employer share of social security was paid by the state for workers who employed in the years 2009-2010.
- 9 In 2009, support was provided for the employee share of social security for employers who employed the unemployed receiving an unemployment wage.
- 10 The obligation of employers employing more than fifty workers to employ disabled persons, ex-convicts, and terror victims was lifted in 2009.

- 11 The 69th article of the law numbered 6111 (2011) allows the state to use the unemployment fund for employability.<sup>95</sup> In addition, the 74th article allows the fund to be used to pay the social security share of the employers if they employ people who have been unemployed for the last 6 months.<sup>96</sup>
- 12 Vocational Training Centers (*Uzmanlaşmış Meslek Edindirme Merkezleri* or UMEM) were introduced in 2011. İŞKUR is intended to decide on the training programs and their locations in cooperation with the private industrial sector.
- 13 Job consultants were employed by İŞKUR in 2012.
- 14 Notably, all these regulations were realized in partnership with the private sector in a context in which trade unions and labor organization were weakened and the share of skilled workers in non skilled jobs had increased.<sup>97</sup> Turkey is one of the countries with high level of over-qualified labor force.<sup>98</sup>

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95 Article 69 – The seventh paragraph of the 48th article of the Law numbered 4447 was amended as follows: “30% of the unemployment fund from the previous year may be used to increase the employability level of the labor force, to decrease the risk of unemployment by qualifying the workers, to orient workers who are likely to become unemployed due to technological developments in other fields, to take measures to increase and protect employment, to provide advisory and placement services and to undertake labor market research and planning. In addition, the Cabinet is authorized to increase the rate up to 50% if it is considered necessary. However, this limitation does not apply to services for those benefiting from unemployment insurance benefits. The procedures and principles pertaining to this paragraph are defined in the by-law.” 4447 sayılı Kanununun 48 inci maddesinin yedinci fıkrası aşağıdaki şekilde değiştirilmiştir: "Ayrıca Fonun bir önceki yıl prim gelirlerinin % 30'u; işgücünün istihdam edilebilirliğini artırmak, çalışanların vasıflarını yükselterek işsizlik riskini azaltmak ve teknolojik gelişmeler nedeniyle işsiz kalması beklenenlerin başka alanlara yönlendirilmesini sağlamak, istihdamı artırıcı ve koruyucu tedbirler almak ve uygulamak, işe yerleştirme ve danışmanlık hizmetleri temin etmek, işgücü piyasası araştırma ve planlama çalışmaları yapmak amacıyla kullanılabilir. Bu oranı % 50'ye kadar çıkarmaya Bakanlar Kurulu yetkilidir. Ancak, işsizlik ödeneğinden yararlanmakta olanlara yönelik hizmetler için bu sınırlama dikkate alınmaz. Bu fıkraya ilişkin usul ve esaslar yönetmelikle belirlenir." Law 6111, Revenue Administration, accessed November 11, 2014, [http://www.gib.gov.tr/fileadmin/mevzuatek/6111\\_sayili\\_kanun\\_www/6111kanun.html](http://www.gib.gov.tr/fileadmin/mevzuatek/6111_sayili_kanun_www/6111kanun.html).

96 Ibid.

97 Gür et al., *Türkiye'nin İnsan Kaynağının Belirlenmesi*, 83.

98 Conveyed in the OECD Employment Outlook 2011 in Ibid., 54.

## § 2.4 Labor Market Intermediaries in the Context of Employability

Changes in the workplace affect the expectations from workers and their selection and placement processes, as well. Due to high-performance work systems, the workplace is no more a site of learning, and being employable requires having (behavioral) skills and (technical) qualifications that job candidates are expected to have gained before entering the labor market. In this part, I focus on the role PEAs have in the current labor market, the global facts about PEAs, and the relevant literature of PEAs. In this respect, I discuss the literature on employability, hiring practices, and PEAs together and point out the contribution I make.

### 2.4.1 *The Role of Private Employment Agencies in the Labor Market*

When trade unions lost their strength during the 1980s and 1990s, the development of human resources management (HRM) became crucial for new employee management strategies. “Personnel departments” were transformed into “human resources departments” in different companies simultaneously. In this way, the companies aimed to become compatible with their international partners and to appear competitive, adopting the latest developments in work organization.

Reorganization of the workplace resulted in an “increase in the number of contracts and the number of suppliers, the decrease in the duration of the contracts, intensification of assessment and emergence of new professions.”<sup>99</sup> Private employment agencies appeared as a result of changes in workplaces. The task of assessing new types of labor – defined explicitly by active labor market policies – was undertaken by human resources specialists. Achievements in self-discipline were continuously checked by recruitment specialists in job interviews and by means of performance assessment systems at work.

Human resources specialists in the consulting industry also became experts in the use of general productivity tools. In the consulting industry of private employment agencies in particular, the sale of training programs for

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99 Treanor, “Neoliberalism: Origins, Theory, Definition.”

management tools has expanded in this context. The sector provided a variety of services such as data management (of performance, work flow, stock, and finance); implementing performance, bonus, zero error, waste elimination, and customer satisfaction systems; recruitment services; self-development training programs for time and stress management, team work, and career coaching; and implementation of quality management systems. The tools were applied to all departments in every sector with the aim of reaching general goals regardless of sector. The industry gained importance as they became the implementers of systems that were deemed to provide high-performance work environments.

The role of these new actors was defined and specifications were developed related to their jobs that involved normative management tools with, as Legge argues...

... much emphasis on "empowerment", "involvement", "participation", and "teamwork", along with the selection, training and development of 'quality' employees, it provided a rationale for personnel management's specialist contribution through the cultural management, training and development activities associated with the 'soft', normative models of HRM.<sup>100</sup>

Private employment agencies provide other services such as high-performance work systems consultation, job and professional consulting, career coaching, and assessment centers. Besides bringing employers and employees together, private employment agencies give consultations on normative management tools, provide training on the use of tools, provide certification for quality assurance systems, implement new human resources management systems, and transform personnel departments into human resources departments.

Temporary agencies in labor market, which are categorized as subset of private employment agencies, have created controversy. Temporary agencies

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100 Karen Legge, "On Knowledge, Business Consultants and the Selling of Total Quality Management," in *Critical Consulting: New Perspectives on the Management Advice Industry*, ed. Timothy Clark and Robin Fincham (Malden, Mass: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 84.



are promoted by international organizations such as the EU to increase the level of employability. They are claimed to enable employees to experience several workplaces or to re-enter the job market and are defined as a “stepping stone to permanent employment.”<sup>101</sup> The benefits of temporary agencies are defined in sectoral reports, as well.<sup>102</sup> Among those benefits are providing employers with labor flexibility for short-term projects, in busy seasons, and in cases of unexpected demand, as well as enabling the trial of potential, permanent employees or the replacement of absent employees. The flexibility provided by temporary agencies refers to the numerical flexibility of the work force. Current literature associates private employment agencies mostly with temporary agencies providing numerical flexibility through the hiring of short-term staff.

However, whether they provide temporary staff or serve as a selection and placement processes, private employment agencies contribute to flexibility. As the catch-all terms<sup>103</sup> of the new capitalism, flexibility and neoliberalism are manifest in the activities of private employment agencies. Flexibility means outsourcing the recruitment process, the emergence of new mediators in the labor market, the decline of the predetermined careers, the demand that the labor force have certain personality characters before being employed, the increase in the responsibility of the work force to maintain its employability and the encouragement of entrepreneurship. The assessment tools offered by the private employment agencies which are used to realize the selection and placement processes contribute to the flexible management of the workplace. Private employment agencies that offer placements in addition to leasing employees also provide another kind of flexibility that is different from the flexibility provided by private employment agencies operating as temporary agencies, as will be argued in the later chapters.

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101 European Parliament, *The Role and Activities of Private Employment Agencies*, European Parliament, accessed January 27, 2015, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2013/507459/IPOL-EMPL\\_ET\(2013\)507459\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2013/507459/IPOL-EMPL_ET(2013)507459_EN.pdf).

102 CIETT, *CIETT Economic Report 2014*, CIETT, accessed January 27, 2015, [http://www.ciett.org/fileadmin/templates/ciett/docs/Stats/Economic\\_report\\_2014/CIETT\\_ER2013.pdf](http://www.ciett.org/fileadmin/templates/ciett/docs/Stats/Economic_report_2014/CIETT_ER2013.pdf), 42.

103 Ferguson, “The Uses of Neoliberalism.,” 121.

Since the 1980s, institutional changes promoting employability over employment have been realized by the state in cooperation with the private sector, including private employment agencies. As indicated by active labor market policies, labor is to be disciplined by being held responsible for its own employment and for being more employable, even without the promises of retirement, advancement, regular income, or permanent job. This was possible partly as a result of the individualization of employment by means of private employment agencies.

The recruitment process that was assigned to labor market mediators has become longer because of the intense assessment implemented to investigate the potential productivity of job seekers. Longer recruitment processes are expected to guarantee productivity and high-performance. The decrease in the duration of contracts may be observed in the case of "leased" employees employed under the name of a consultancy<sup>104</sup> (since actual leased employment was only recently allowed in Turkey).

The selection and placement practices carried out by the private employment agencies give the clearest definition of what is deemed to be the ideal worker. The decision to employ or not employ a candidate is made based on the data gained in the recruitment process through several tools such as a competency interview, tests, and role playing. Services provided by private employment agencies are supposed to ensure the selection of the "right" worker. The agencies define who is right beforehand in order to make their services marketable and maintain their own existence in the market place. The importance of these agencies as a subject of research stems from the fact that they have expertise on recruitment practices and generate the market in which this expertise about hiring is sold. This sphere of this market needs to be closely scrutinized, as it contains the knowledge about what labor is deemed to be employable. These agencies also play a role in the definition of ideal workers as experts.<sup>105</sup> Agencies are not simply places to which the operational

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104 Companies place workers in other companies, but this practice is legally framed as "consultancy" (*danışmanlık hizmeti*), not as "hiring out workers."

105 Vicki Smith, "Review Article: Enhancing Employability: Human, Cultural, and Social Capital in an Era of Turbulent Unpredictability," *Human Relations* 63, no. 2 (January 2010): 285, doi:10.1177/0018726709353639, 285.

part of hiring is outsourced; they play a strategic role in forming the job seeker, the employee, and the employment relation.

#### 2.4.2 *Private Employment Agencies around the World*

From a historical perspective, several reasons may be given for the state to regulate the mediation of employment relations. Among these reasons are the abuse of mediators such as human traffickers, the need for state authorities to provide harmony between education and the skills required by the market, and the prevention of employer monopolies over the qualifications expected from employers – since the interests of employers and society with respect to skills can be different.<sup>106</sup> The ILO first regulated the mediation of employment in 1919 by establishing the standard for free mediating services (Unemployment Convention, No. 2).<sup>107</sup> The institution released the Fee-Charging Employment Agencies Convention (No. 34) in 1933, aiming to put the states in a monopolistic position vis-à-vis mediation in the labor market and establishing the principle of abolishing profit-oriented private agencies within three years.<sup>108</sup> The Fee-Charging Employment Agencies Convention (No. 96) in 1949 changed the approach, ending the monopoly of states.

The staffing industry dramatically expanded on a global scale from the 1990s onwards.<sup>109</sup> The ILO released the Private Employment Agencies Convention (no. 181) in 1997, focusing on the regulation of temporary agencies

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- 106 Kuvvet Lordođlu and Nurcan Özkaplan, *Çalışma İktisadı*, (İstanbul: Der Yayınları, 2003), quoted in Handan Kumaş, “Türkiye İş Kurumu Faaliyetleri ve İşgücü Piyasası İhtiyaçları Arasındaki Uyum,” *Sosyoekonomi* 11, no. 11 (2010), doi:10.17233/se.72605., 134.
- 107 ILO, *Private Employment Agencies, Temporary Agency Workers and Their Contribution to the Labor Market*. WPEAC, 2009, 2009, 2.
- 108 Phan Tuy, H Ellen, and David Price, “Deđişen İşgücü Piyasasında Kamu İstihdam Hizmeti” (ILO, 2001), 19.
- 109 ILO, *Private Employment Agencies, Temporary Agency Workers and Their Contribution to the Labor Market*, 7.

(employing workers and making them available for a third party)<sup>110</sup> and prohibiting the charging of employees for money.

Globally, there are 137,300 private employment agencies, with 203,500 branches and 624,500 internal employees according to a report issued by the International Confederation of Private Employment Agencies in 2014 based on data for the years of 2012-2014.<sup>111</sup> The report includes only data provided by members of the confederation; the real number can be expected to be higher. Global annual sales revenue of agencies in forty-three countries was €299 billion, and the top ten companies and 28% of that revenue.<sup>112</sup> 61% of the agencies were in the Asian-Pacific region, 24% in Europe, and 11% in the United States.<sup>113</sup> The United States has the largest global market share (28.9%) while Europe has the second highest (36.5%) and the Japan the third (16.6%).<sup>114</sup> The top ten companies were Adecco, Randstad, Manpower, Kelly Services, Allegis Group, Hays PLC, Recruit Staffing, USG People, Robert Half, and Tempstaff.<sup>115</sup>

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- 110 ILO, Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997, No.181, ILO, accessed January 26, 2015, [http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100\\_INSTRUMENT\\_ID:312326:NO](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312326:NO).
- 111 CIETT, CIETT Economic Report 2014, CIETT, accessed January 26, 2015, [http://www.ciett.org/fileadmin/templates/ciett/docs/Stats/Economic\\_report\\_2014/CIETT\\_ER2013.pdf](http://www.ciett.org/fileadmin/templates/ciett/docs/Stats/Economic_report_2014/CIETT_ER2013.pdf), 7.
- 112 Ibid., 6.
- 113 CIETT, CIETT Economic Report 2013, CIETT, accessed January 26, 2015, [http://www.ciett.org/uploads/media/CiETT\\_EC\\_Report\\_2013\\_Final\\_web.pdf](http://www.ciett.org/uploads/media/CiETT_EC_Report_2013_Final_web.pdf), 21.
- 114 CIETT, CIETT Economic Report 2014, 6.
- 115 The first four agencies operate in Turkey, as well.

Table 2.1 The Number of Private Employment Agencies, Branches, and Internal Staff in Europe

Country	Number of PEAs	Number of Branches of PEAs	Number of Internal Staff of PEAs
United Kingdom	18,180	14,009	93,360
Germany	6,694	11,218	55,000
Poland	3,971	-	4,100
France	1,500	6,900	20,000
Czech Republic	1,490	1,700	3,800
Austria	1,297	1,952	400
Slovakia	1,155	194	-
Denmark	966	1,136	-
Hungary	867	-	3,877
Norway	700	900	2,298
Sweden	530	1,300	5,060
Finland	500	-	2,500
Netherlands	481	5,845	34,000
Turkey	404	-	1,500
Serbia	355	465	-
Spain	302	880	-
Portugal	265	-	750
Belgium	250	1,274	6,400
Ireland	210	-	4,000
Romania	129	66	655
Latvia	103	109	315
Italy	97	2,669	11,000
Estonia	60	70	170
Bulgaria	52	61	470
Luxemburg	45	75	309
Lithuania	32	40	159
Republic of Macedonia	27	-	-
Croatia	17	22	85
Greece	10	11	155

SOURCE: CIETT, CIETT Economic Report, 2014, 29. The number of PEAs in Turkey is taken from İŞKUR.

Table 2.2 The Number of Private Employment Agencies, Branches, and Internal Staff in Non-European Countries

Country	Number of PEAs	Number of Branches of PEAs	Number of Internal Staff of PEAs
China	49,000	-	-
Japan	20,000	-	150,000
United States	17,000	50,000	120,000
Australia	3,300	7,000	15,000
South Africa	2,329	4,772	16,139
South Korea	1,813	1,983	9,000
Brazil	1,398	2,356	35,340
Mexico	800	250	3,511
Canada	750	2,000	-
Colombia	595	221	-
Chile	194	112	3,142
Peru	170	214	2,560
Argentina	79	500	3,680
Russia	20	-	1,279
New Zealand	-	-	4,484

SOURCE: CIETT, CIETT Economic Report, 2014, 28.

According to the report, agencies mostly serve low-skilled people with low education, which is different from what is observed in Turkey.<sup>116</sup> The difference is related to the fact that employee leasing was only recently officially allowed in Turkey. Official, licensed mediation services are therefore dominated by agencies serving university-educated employees. The staffing industry is dominated by private employment agencies operating as temporary agencies in most countries<sup>117</sup> unlike in Turkey where private employment agencies are mostly concern with selection and placement of job seekers (rather than hiring out employees). Turkey is not a typical case considering global trends in

116 See Chapter 3.

117 ILO, Private Employment Agencies, Temporary Agency Workers and Their Contribution to the Labor Market, 12.

this sense. Official private employment agencies that provide temporary staffing mediated the employment of 36 million people around the world in 2012. In the report of the CIETT, the penetration rate of these agencies was claimed to be 1.6% in Europe, 2% in the United States and 1.4 in Japan.<sup>118</sup> The industry in Turkey is dominated by small firms with a few multinationals similar to the situation in the United Kingdom. It is different from other European countries where multinational companies have a larger stake in the recruitment industry.<sup>119</sup>

Private employment agencies are regulated by several actors such as ministries of labor, trade unions, and other players in the labor market in European countries, excluding the United Kingdom and Poland.<sup>120</sup> They are also regulated by international institutions such as the ILO, EU, and WTO.<sup>121</sup>

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118 CIETT, CIETT Economic Report 2014, 9.

119 Kate Purcell et al., “Employment Intermediaries in the UK: Who Uses Them?,” Research Paper (Employment Studies Research Unit, Bristol Business School, 2002)., 5.

120 European Parliament, *The Role and Activities of Private Employment Agencies*, 11.

121 ILO, *Private Employment Agencies, Temporary Agency Workers and Their Contribution to the Labor Market*, 37.

## PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

Table 2.3 The Regulation of Temporary Agencies by Country<sup>122</sup>

	License	Sectoral prohibitions	Limitations for the usage	Maximum time for allocating a job	Ban on temporary workers as scabs
Austria	x				x
Belgium	x	x	x	x	x
Denmark					x
Finland			x		x
France	x	x	x	x	x
Germany	x	x			x
Greece	x	x		x	x
Ireland	x				x
Italy	x		x	x	x
Netherlands		x			x
Luxembourg	x	x	x	x	x
Portugal	x	x	x	x	x
Spain	x	x	x	x	x
Swedish	x	x			x
United Kingdom	x(Agriculture)				x
Bulgaria					
Czech republic	x	x	x		x
Southern Cyprus	x	x	No info	No info	No info
Estonia	x	x			No info
Hungary	x				x
Latvia	x	x	x	x	No info
Lithuanian	x	x		x	
Malta	x	No info	No info	No info	No info
Poland	x	x	x	x	x
Rumania	x		x	x	x
Slovakia	x				
Slovenia	x		x	x	x

122 Annemarie Muntz, Temporary employment through private employment agencies in the light of EU, 2013, TISK, accessed October 10, 2014, [www.tisk.org.tr/upload.../02072013110706-eu-rociet130907muntztr.ppt](http://www.tisk.org.tr/upload.../02072013110706-eu-rociet130907muntztr.ppt), 14-17.



Similarly, state regulates private employment agencies in Turkey. Private employment agency licenses may be obtained from the state if required conditions are met. The entrepreneur has to have a bachelor degree, the firm has to have a space (either a website or an office) to conduct job interviews, and start-up capital is required. In legislation passed in 2013, the condition of having a employee qualified on the subject of recruitment (with appropriate certification or a master's degree in a related field) was mandated to be in effect as of 2015; however, the requirement was postponed to until 2016.

### 2.4.3 *Relevant Literature*

Hiring practices that consider employability have been the subject of industrial sociology and psychology, labor economics, industrial relations, business administration, occupational sociology, and industrial engineering. Recruitment processes have been studied within the framework of the issues of employment, unemployment, labor market, employability, recruitment tools, “predicting” performance (through interviews or personality inventories), employee satisfaction, and discrimination. There also have been critical management studies informed by sociology that employ a critical approach to studies on hiring practices shaped by the managerial paradigm. Critical management studies address a variety of issues such as entrepreneurism of the self, the division of risk through employability,<sup>123</sup> the definition of job seeking itself as a job,<sup>124</sup> the “construction of unemployed as active job seeker,”<sup>125</sup> “self-commodification,”<sup>126</sup> individualization of unemployment,<sup>127</sup> social exclusion and

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123 Ibid., 4.

124 Sharone, “Constructing Unemployed Job Seekers as Professional Workers.”

125 Fogde, “How to Write Your CV: Advice, Expert Knowledge and Job Seeking Skills”; Sharone, “Constructing Unemployed Job Seekers as Professional Workers.”

126 Bonnie Urciuoli, “Skills and Selves in the New Workplace” 35, no. 2 (2008): 211–28, doi:10.1111/j.2008.1548-1425.00031.x.

127 Emine Fidan Elçioğlu, “Producing Precarity: The Temporary Staffing Agency in the Labor Market,” *Qualitative Sociology* 33, no. 2 (February 2010): 117–36, doi:10.1007/s11133-010-9149-x.

the reproduction of class differences through new hiring practices,<sup>128</sup> the measurability of labor and rationality attributed to measurement systems,<sup>129</sup> psychologizing the employees,<sup>130</sup> higher requirements for social skills,<sup>131</sup> and reproduction of class divisions through recruitment processes.<sup>132</sup> What is common in studies that adopt a critical approach to recruitment practices is that they approach the labor market as a socio-economic sphere and that they relate the issues to a wider political-economic context. In this respect, they acknowledge that individuals neither independently decide on their conditions nor do they simply try to adapt themselves to social settings. On the other hand, mainstream management studies do not question the existence of the tools used in hiring practices and are mainly concerned with their effectiveness, which is to say their predictive power as to the productivity of candidates.

Although they are not necessarily part of critical management studies, other researchers argue that recruitment tools such as personality inventories that are used to predict performance are ineffective because they utilize statistical methods<sup>133</sup> and adopt a non-contextual approach.<sup>134</sup>

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- 128 Salognon, "Reorienting Companies' Hiring Behavior: An Innovative 'Back-to-Work' Method in France"; Brown and Scase, *Higher Education and Corporate Realities*.
- 129 Townley, "The Role of Competing Rationalities in Institutional Change," 2002.
- 130 John Shields and David Grant, "Psychologising the Subject: HRM, Commodification, and the Objectification of Labor," *The Economic and Labor Relations Review* 20, no. 2 (July 1, 2010): 61–76, doi:10.1177/103530461002000205; Michael J. Zyphur, Gazi Islam, and Ronald S. Landis, "Testing 1, 2, 3, ...4? The Personality of Repeat SAT Test Takers and Their Testing Outcomes," *Journal of Research in Personality* 41, no. 3 (June 2007): 715–22, doi:10.1016/j.jrp.2006.06.005.
- 131 Callaghan and Thompson, "We Recruit Attitude."
- 132 Phillip Brown and Anthony Hesketh, "I Say Tomato, You Say Tomato: Putting Critical Realism to Work in the Labor Market Recruitment Process," in *Critical Realist Applications in Organisation and Management Studies*, ed. S. Fleetwood and S. Ackroyd (London: Routledge, 2004), 337–66, <http://orca.cf.ac.uk/68239/>.
- 133 Charles E. Johnson, Robert Wood, and S. F. Blinkhorn, "Spuriouser and Spuriouser: The Use of Ipsative Personality Tests," *Journal of Occupational Psychology* 61, no. 2 (June 1988): 161.
- 134 Stephen Dakin, V. Nilakant, and Ross Jensen, "The Role of Personality Testing in Managerial Selection," *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 9, no. 5 (1994): 9.

Gender and race discrimination<sup>135</sup> and the role of social networks in finding a job<sup>136</sup> have been discussed by scholars in both mainstream and critical management studies.

Recent studies on hiring practices in Turkey have emphasized certain aspects of the labor market. The main issues discussed in these academic studies concern the end of the monopoly of İŞKUR, Human Resources Management (HRM) practices, and the soft skills of labor. The most controversial issues have been the leasing of employees and the changes in İŞKUR's full as an intermediary<sup>137</sup> in the labor market following the regulation of the private employment agencies in 2003. Another issue handled by academics is the transition from personnel departments to human resources management departments and the effectiveness of human resources management applications.<sup>138</sup> The transformation implied that "'people issues' have transmuted into 'labor-resourcing issues'."<sup>139</sup> Studies focusing on this transformation have mostly been descriptive and quantitative, presenting the number of companies that have implemented human resources management practices (personnel assessment systems, hiring procedures, etc.) during their reorganization in 1980s and 1990s.

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- 135 John Murray, "Hope Versus Experience: Career Ambition and the Labor Market Expectations of University Educated Women," *Australian Bulletin of Labor* 35, no. 4 (2009): 692–707; Mustafa Özbilgin and Ahu Tatlı, *Opening up Opportunities through Private Sector Recruitment and Guidance Agencies*, Working Paper Series (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2007).
- 136 Mark Granovetter, *Getting a Job: A Study of Contacts and Careers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Lindsey B. Trimble and Julie a. Kmec, "The Role of Social Networks in Getting a Job," *Sociology Compass* 5, no. 2 (February 2011): 165–78, doi:10.1111/j.1751-9020.2010.00353.x.
- 137 For an example see Fırat Yöney, "İş ve İşçi Bulma Kurumu'ndan İŞKUR'a – İşe Yerleştirme Hizmetleri," *İş Güç*, no. 5(2) (2003): 160.
- 138 For an overview of theses written in the field of human resources management in the years 1983-2008 in Turkey see Gültekin Yıldız et al., "A Snapshot View of HRM in Turkey: Evidences From Companies Located in Marmara Region" (International Conference on Management and Economics, Epoka University, 2008), 97–106.
- 139 Keenoy, "HRMism and the Languages of Re-Presentation.," 834.

Another approach to the subject appeared in the discipline of psychology where the "soft" side of HRM has gained prominence.<sup>140</sup> The methods applied in the field of HRM are divided into two: "soft" and "hard." The first concerns the self-development of employees while the second concerns the assessment and the control of their productivity. In studies in psychology, employees' adaptation to work is taken up as an issue, while the wider context of work is neglected and working conditions are taken for granted. HRM consultants are criticized for failing to adapt HRM services to local conditions. However, HRM itself is neither questioned nor problematized. The criticism directed to the field of in Turkey mostly concerns wrong applications HRM methods developed in the West that may not be appropriate for local circumstances. HRM practices are found to be culture-blind and to neglect cultural differences.<sup>141</sup> Questioning "wrong applications" is concerned with the question of "how," which per se leads to neglect of the question of "why."<sup>142</sup>

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140 The focus on soft skills dates to 1920s, the years in which the Human Relations Movement took up the issue. Since Taylor's approach was criticized for neglecting the humanity of workers, this movement focused on workers rather than the work. It defined the work environment as a social system that affects the production. "Improved social skills of supervision" was offered for labor satisfaction. The approach taking workers' feelings into account were criticized for taking working conditions as given. Paul Thompson, *The Nature of Work: An Introduction to Debates on the Labor Process* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 1-8.

141 In those studies, the differences between Turkey and other countries are put forward and Turkey is defined as more paternal, fatalist, and collectivist, with a strong state tradition. For the examples, see Behlül Üsdiken and S Arzu Wasti, "Türkiye'de Akademik Bir İnceleme Alanı Olarak Personel veya 'İnsan Kaynakları' Yönetimi, 1972-1999," *Amme İdaresi Dergisi* 35, no. 3 (2002): 1-37; Zeynep Aycan, "Human Resource Management in Turkey-Current Issues and Future Challenges," *International Journal of Manpower* 22, no. 3 (2001): 252-60. This argument assumes that not the tools but their application is problematic; as if their applications in the country in which they were developed are not problematic. As a result, the companies which use the tools after they were developed are positioned as followers. Ward opposes this approach with the claim that developing countries are not passive followers: they are "like other states, populated by classes and social forces with their own interest and strategies engaging with their own neoliberalization." in Ward, "Temporary Staffing, 'Geographies of Circulation,' and the Business of Delivering Neoliberalization." Conveyed from Alejandro Colás, "Neoliberalism, Globalisation and International Relations," in *Neoliberalism, A Critical Reader* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 70-80.

142 De Gaulejac, *İşletme Hastalığına Tutulmuş Toplum*, 62.

Most studies concerning Human Resources Management in Turkey have also adopted a managerial perspective. The studies carried out within the fields of business administration and industrial psychology share a perspective that is concerned with productivity. This is a result of a collaboration established between the private sector and universities to increase productivity through innovations and managerial advances. Thus, they are practice-oriented<sup>143</sup> and instrumentalist.<sup>144</sup> Even when these studies focus on employees, they limit themselves to the issues of job satisfaction or the adaptation of employees. The reason is that work conditions are perceived as “given;” the only problem is deemed to be the adaptation of labor to its conditions. As a result, the wider context is neglected.<sup>145</sup> Studies which only focus on the issues of institutional change, HRM applications, the emotional adaptation of workers are limited from a relational perspective. They do not approach the labor market as...

... a field, consisting of all the social, cultural, economic, political, ideological and social-psychological phenomena and actions involved in coordinating the ideas and actions of those who supply and those who demand labor services.<sup>146</sup>

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- 143 Üsdiken and Wasti, “Türkiye’de Akademik Bir İnceleme Alanı Olarak Personel Veya ‘ İnsan Kaynakları’ Yönetimi, 1972-1999.,” 4.
- 144 Adler, Forbes, and Willmott, “Critical Management Studies: Premises, Practices, Problems, and Prospects.,” 9.
- 145 Özcan analyzed the field of management studies by looking at papers presented at the National Management and Organization Conference held since 1993 and at the management curricula of the top twenty business schools in Turkey. He found that there is a considerable lack of critical studies in the literature. Less than 5% of papers presented at the conferences had a critical voice. Kerim Ozcan, “From the Frankfurt School to Business Schools: Critical Management Studies in Turkey,” *International Journal of Organizational Analysis* 20, no. 1 (2012): 107–23, doi:10.1108/19348831211215696. Alakavuklar and Parker also focus on the lack of a critical perspective at business schools. Ozan Nadir Alakavuklar and Martin Parker, “Responsibility and the Local: The Prospects for Critical Management in Turkey,” *Critical Perspectives on International Business* 7, no. 4 (2011): 326–42, doi:10.1108/17422041111180827.
- 146 Fleetwood, “A Trans-Disciplinary (proto) Model of Labor Markets.,” 41.

There have been critical studies of employability in Turkey. Savaşkan studied employability within the scope of the workfare programs of the state.<sup>147</sup> He discusses employability as part of recent social policy reorientations in many countries.<sup>148</sup> He argues that workfare programs (legislation and training programs offered by public bodies) are implemented to govern poverty and that they operate by making the market central to the livelihood of poor people.<sup>149</sup> His criticism is that market-oriented social policy strengthens neoliberal hegemony.<sup>150</sup> Kapar also criticizes employability policies adopted within the scope of active labor/workfare policies that are deemed to be social policies.<sup>151</sup> Kapar claims that these are not long-term solutions to unemployment and that they assume that the unemployed poor are either unwilling to work or do not know how to find a job.<sup>152</sup> He concludes that the success of active labor policies depends on the generation of new jobs.<sup>153</sup> Seçer studied the effect of perceived employability (he defines it as being responsible to change or adapt one's career path in an unstable work life) on work insecurity. He found that the high level employability determined by personal history (economic, cultural, and social) lowers insecurity in one's work life.<sup>154</sup> In my research, I focus on new actors in the labor market who benefit from and entrench the concept of employability in the context of active labor policies holding the non-poor as well as the poor responsible for their own employability.

Although there is a remarkable amount of critical research on labor market mediators, most of the studies concern private employment agencies that provide temporary workers and focus on contingent employment patterns.

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147 Osman Savaşkan, "Contemporary Social Policy in Turkey: Workfare Programs in the Context of the Neo-Liberal International Governance System" (Unpublished Master Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2007).

148 Ibid.

149 Ibid., 2.

150 Ibid., 197.

151 Kapar, "Aktif İşgücü Piyasası Politikaları," 368.

152 Ibid., 349.

153 Ibid., 368.

154 Barış Seçer, "Kariyer Sermayesi ve İstihdam Edilebilirliğin İş Güvencesizliği Üzerindeki Etkisi" (PhD diss., Dokuz Eylül University, 2007). 335.

Temporary staffing agencies that exemplify a pure form of labor flexibility appeal to critical scholars. Purcell and Çam questioned the sources of the growth of the private employment agency industry in relation to temporary labor in Britain.<sup>155</sup> They concluded that there is not just one reason (neither the demand for flexible labor nor the demand for labor having certain skills) that led to this growth.<sup>156</sup>

Headhunters as a subset of private employment agencies, are studied by Coverdill and Finlay.<sup>157</sup> They debate how headhunters strengthen divisions between social classes as they select and replace the core labor based on social fit rather than capacity.<sup>158</sup>

Özbilgin and Tatlı look at how private employment agencies effectively determine working conditions by negotiating them with the employer (their client) and the job seeker.<sup>159</sup> They also argue that private employment agencies may use their interpretation power to prevent discrimination in the labor market favoring underutilized old people, young people, ethnic minorities, those with disabilities, and LGBT individuals; this despite the fact that they may also cause discrimination.<sup>160</sup>

Ward studies how private employment agencies and cultural network of capital make their market real by producing and distributing information, organizing summits, networking, and cooperating with global institutions such as the World Bank, the OECD, and the EU.<sup>161</sup> He argues that the recruitment industry not only responds to the developments in the labor market, but is rather constitutive of the sector and of labor market flexibility itself. To expand its own market, the recruitment industry ultimately sets the norms of the labor

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155 Purcell et al., "Employment Intermediaries in the UK: Who Uses Them?."

156 Ibid., 26.

157 James E Coverdill and William Finlay, "Fit and Skill in Employee Selection: Insights from a Study of Headhunters" 21, no. 2 (1998): 105–27. Headhunters are private employment agencies confine themselves to finding high-level managers.

158 Ibid.

159 Özbilgin and Tatlı, *Opening up Opportunities through Private Sector Recruitment and Guidance Agencies*.

160 Ibid., 69.

161 Ward, "Temporary Staffing, 'Geographies of Circulation,' and the Business of Delivering Neoliberalization," 116.

market. Ward supports his arguments with events organized and documents published by sectoral organizations of private employment agencies. His aim is to illustrate that neoliberalism is not something external that requires adaptation, but is “peopled” and constructed by actors.<sup>162</sup>

Brown, Hesketh and Williams relate recruitment agencies to employability.<sup>163</sup> They argue that where there is a war for jobs (opposition to the approach of “war for talent”), the relative dimension of a career (behavior) becomes more important than its absolute dimension (education).<sup>164</sup> Eventually, employment becomes employability.<sup>165</sup> The recruitment industry brought itself into existence by claiming to have expertise on the measurement of this relative dimension relating employment with employability and creating a narrative of employability.<sup>166</sup> Brown and Hesketh recognize the central role of the recruitment industry in regulating the war for talent in the labor market. According to these authors, the recruitment industry convinced employers to buy the services it provides by expanding the meaning of skill beyond mere qualifications.<sup>167</sup> It claimed that skill may be measured scientifically, that this measurement is not biased, and that the process of selection requires professionalism. However, Brown and Hesketh argue that the services that the recruitment industry provides do not always successfully detect the most talented workers. The process involves subjectivity, the objectivity claimed by the sector notwithstanding. The candidates who believe the selection process is a matter of qualifications would be unable to meet performative expectations,

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162 Ibid.

163 Brown, Hesketh, and Williams, *The Mismanagement of Talent*.

164 Ibid., 24.

165 Ibid.

166 Ibid., Chapter. 5.

167 Phillip Brown and Anthony Hesketh, “I Say Tomato, You Say Tomato: Putting Critical Realism to Work in the Labor Market Recruitment Process,” in *Critical Realist Applications in Organisation and Management Studies*, ed. S. Fleetwood and S. Ackroyd (London: Routledge, 2004), 337–66, <http://orca.cf.ac.uk/68239/>.



which may lead to a long-term unemployment.<sup>168</sup> The authors call them “purists” as opposed to “players” who “perceive their employability as malleable.”<sup>169</sup>

Elçioğlu’s research shows that temporary staffing agencies contribute to the vulnerability of workers in the long run.<sup>170</sup> Based on field work conducted at a job center for professionals, Smith also argues that the mediators contribute to downward mobility by convincing job seekers to accept low-level jobs.<sup>171</sup> The job seekers believe in individual solutions (manipulating their career history according to the expectations of the employers) that are compatible with the culture in the United States, but they are aware that the problem of unemployment does not stem from their own individual situation, but from structural changes.<sup>172</sup>

In another study, Smith again focused on labor market intermediaries and claimed that they play a central role in constituting the identity of the job seekers by circulating discourses that present job seeking as professional work and by disseminating norms of the ideal worker.<sup>173</sup> She argues that “employability has become a greater part of labor market activities” and may be defined as “employability enhancement business.”<sup>174</sup> Smith shows in her study that norm-making practices based on an image of the ideal worker have different effects on job seekers from different class backgrounds.<sup>175</sup>

Cappelli emphasizes the importance of the recruitment industry by relating its role to changes in the employment policies of companies regarding

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168 Salognon focuses on the disadvantage to employees created by pre-selection through resumes and its contribution to long term unemployment, arguing that “primary rejects are deprived of negotiation power.” Salognon, “Reorienting Companies’ Hiring Behavior: An Innovative ‘Back-to-Work’ Method in France.”

169 Brown, Hesketh, and Williams, *The Mismanagement of Talent*, 115-145.

170 Elçioğlu, “Producing Precarity: The Temporary Staffing Agency in the Labor Market,” 131.

171 Smith, *Crossing the Great Divide: Worker Risk and Opportunity in the New Economy*, chapter 5.

172 Ibid.

173 Smith, “Review Article: Enhancing Employability: Human, Cultural, and Social Capital in an Era of Turbulent Unpredictability,” 285.

174 Ibid., 286, 295.

175 Ibid., 286.

white collar workers.<sup>176</sup> According to Cappelli, when companies changed their employment strategies after 1980s to lower the costs incurred due to the economic crisis of the 1970s, abandoning the aim of a stable workforce they did not want to invest in workers with significant skill accumulation for prospective senior positions.<sup>177</sup> The recruitment industry rendered it possible to find workers whenever needed, and the use of surveillance technologies made managerial positions less necessary.<sup>178</sup> The rate of job loss has become the same in both periods of crisis and growth as the eye notion of a life-time career has disappeared.<sup>179</sup> The number of workers who quit their jobs has also increased as the long-term vision for employment and benefits (training, position, different experiences, developments gained through work experience) that come with seniority in the internal career weakened.<sup>180</sup> Companies that changed their strategy more often look for workers outside the company who are more compatible with the new strategy.<sup>181</sup> Consequently, companies have come to allocate larger budget for recruitment in place of on-the-job training.<sup>182</sup> Another point underscored by the author is that the “rise of non-degree credentials that certify skills and proficiency in various technical areas” made private employment agencies more central for companies and especially for IT (Information technology) workers, as criteria other than having a diploma are more important.<sup>183</sup>

A few studies regarding private labor mediators take a historical perspective. Wadauer, Buchner, and Mejstrik and Lucassen trace mediators back to the end of the nineteenth century to reveal the actors that operated in the labor

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176 Cappelli, *Introduction to Employment Relationships, New Models Of White-Collar Work*.

177 Ibid.

178 Ibid.

179 Ibid.

180 Ibid.

181 Ibid.

182 Ibid.

183 Ibid., 15.

market as intermediaries.<sup>184</sup> Wadauer, Buchner, and Mejstrik explain how public intermediaries were founded to counter the abusive activities of commercial intermediaries and to regulate job seeking. They also include the roles of trade unions, charity organizations, and employers in order to show the “collective process of the making of labor market intermediaries.”<sup>185</sup> Lucassen examines the use of labor mediators, illustrating that at the end of nineteenth century they were used when geographical distance existed between the worker and the place of work.<sup>186</sup> He also includes the role of guilds, trade unions, and employers (who found workers in cooperation with the trade unions) in Europe and shows which fields were subject to mediation (namely domestic servants, sailors, mercenaries, and agricultural workers).<sup>187</sup> Makal mentions memories of state officials about abusive labour market mediators between 1920-1946 in Turkey.<sup>188</sup>

There are a few studies on the role of private employment agencies in Turkey. Books published on the issue are mainly produced either by employers’ organizations to promote the recruitment industry<sup>189</sup> or by İŞKUR.<sup>190</sup> Study of private employment agencies from within critical management studies are clearly absent. This study aims to contribute to the field by scrutinizing the issue with critical perspective.

This study is not concerned with how effective private employment agencies have been in matching employees with employers. It does not aim to reveal that the practices of the private employment agencies are different from

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184 Wadauer, Buchner, and Mejstrik, “The Making of Public Labor Intermediation: Job Search, Job Placement, and the State in Europe, 1880–1940”; Jan Lucassen, “In Search Of Work,” International Institute of Social History Research Papers 39, 2000, <https://socialhistory.org/en/publications/search-work>.

185 Ibid., 189.

186 Lucassen, “In Search Of Work.”

187 Ibid.

188 Ahmet Makal, *Türkiye’de Tek Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri, 1920-1946* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 1999), 469-474.

189 See an example: TİSK, *Özel İstihdam Büroları Aracılığıyla Geçici İş İlişkileri Semineri: Tebliğler ve Görüşler*, 25 Ocak 2013, Hilton Oteli – Ankara., 2013

190 See an example; Ali Kemal Sayın, “Emek Piyasasında Aracılık ve özel İstihdam Büroları” (PhD diss., Ankara University, 2002).

what they claim, rather it pays attention to their claims together with their practices. The promises and premises of the services of labor market actors are the central issue of the study. It examines how their services are situated in the labor market vis-à-vis the new forms of work life.

Following Brown and Hesketh, I draw on the practices of private employment agencies to relate them to the changes in the labor market that have common to favor employability over employment.<sup>191</sup> Brown and Hesketh argue that companies that invest in managers spend more money and time for the selection and placement process,<sup>192</sup> and Watson argues that a higher level of commitment and emotional involvement is expected from employees in the core "who create high uncertainty with more autonomy."<sup>193</sup> I argue that more and more time is spent on the selection not only of workers in core positions, but also on those working in non-managerial, non-core, and lower positions. The aim is to ensure that the character of the worker is compatible with the character that the position requires. The recruitment industry measuring the relative dimensions of a career not only allocates good jobs to core workers, it applies the same tools to increase the productivity of non-core workers. Similar to Ward<sup>194</sup> and Smith,<sup>195</sup> I also question whether private employment agencies contribute to flexibility in the labor market in order to "make" and protect their place in the market.

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191 Brown and Hesketh, "I Say Tomato, You Say Tomato."

192 Ibid.

193 Tony J. Watson, "HRM and Critical Social Science Analysis," *Journal of Management Studies* 41, no. 3 (May 2004): 457.

194 Ward, "Temporary Staffing, 'Geographies of Circulation,' and the Business of Delivering Neoliberalization."

195 Smith, *Crossing the Great Divide: Worker Risk and Opportunity in the New Economy*.

## Private Employment Agencies (PEAs) in Turkey

In this chapter I scrutinize the development of private employment agencies and its actors in Turkey. The chapter is based on desk research and in-depth interviews conducted with professionals and entrepreneurs in the recruitment industry. The aim of the chapter is to reveal the various dimensions of the growth of the market of private employment agencies in Turkey.

### § 3.1 The Development of Private Employment Agencies

For the last two decades, “come and start on Monday” is apparently no longer a phrase that the white-collar job candidates hear from manager or employers. As of the 1990s, many white-collar job candidates stopped being hired directly by prospective employers. New actors, i.e. those of the recruitment industry, emerged to mediate the relation between employers and employees in new capitalism in Turkey.

There are several reasons that led to growth in the recruitment industry in the particular case of Turkey. Executive searches (headhunting) emerged as one of the first tasks of private employment agencies. Global companies started to defer to such agencies to find top managers for their local branches. During their integration into the world economy after during 1990s, a number of international companies operated either with new partners or on their own. Private employment agencies provided services under the name of consulting

for international companies that were entering an environment with which they were not familiar. With the expansion of the service sector, executive search practices extended to include white-collar workers. Private enterprises were encouraged to take part in employment provision in an era in which new types of jobs were emerging and firms were reorganized. Companies operating in the financial, grocery and hotel sectors completely outsourced their hiring processes. These were sectors that employed large numbers of workers. Processes such as classifying resumes, making short lists for final decisions and interviewing potential employees were found to be time-consuming, and thus outsourced.

Employers have become more concerned with the intensity of work rather than the number of workers they employ, and this concern for productivity rendered soft skills – which were reflected in the behavior of job candidates – more important. The widespread use of productivity tools in the workplace regardless of sector has led to the formation of a consulting market that includes PEAs. Besides selection and placement services, PEAs provide generalized tools, as well. Hiring out temporary skilled or unskilled workers, carrying out employee selection processes on behalf of companies, and consultations on employee management and training programs are among the services of private employment agencies. Furthermore, the tools used for the selection and placement processes are also used for internal reorganizations, assessments and promotional decisions. The services of PEAs are purchased by a company's human resources department. This is correlated to the fact that many entrepreneurs of PEAs were formerly salaried human resources specialists. I focus on that point as I expand on the profiles of PEA entrepreneurs. This process was well-defined in one entrepreneur interview:

The recruitment industry for high-level management was new. They had become more valuable. Between the years 1990-1995, there was incredible economic growth and employers thought: "I can employ whomever I find." They were growing so fast that saying "I employ 3 to 5 thousand people" was enough to consider themselves as large. Quantity was more important than quality. It was important to fill a position

as soon as possible. But the economic crisis in 1994<sup>1</sup> taught them a lot. Not the number of people employed but the main cadre became more important, which meant doing more with fewer people and employing the right, skilled people. Employers understood that human resources were the biggest assets of a company. Head-hunters started hunting and it became more essential to retain workers. They established human resources departments or turned their personnel departments into human resources departments. The matters of motivation, bonus systems, training came onto the scene. Those departments were no longer departments that do paperwork anymore. Employee satisfaction had become crucial. High-level employees had a strong negotiation power due to the lack of qualified middle and upper-level managers. But they also lost their power after the economic crisis of 2001. Moreover, there are many middle and upper-level managers now. (Entrepreneur, Female, AJ)

Additionally, recruitment has become more important due to changes in the labor law that regulate the termination of work contracts by employers. The labor law changed in 2003 requiring employers present a valid reason for ending their contractual relation to employees<sup>2</sup> and obliging them to keep official records of the performance of the employees. This change in the law led employers to be more selective in the hiring process and to consider job fit,<sup>3</sup> encouraging them to use private employment agencies specialized in selection and placement processes.

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1 Also known as the "5th April Decisions"

2 The law was in accordance with ILO Convention 158. Article 4 of the convention declared "The employment of a worker shall not be terminated unless there is a valid reason for such termination connected with the capacity or conduct of the worker or based on the operational requirements of the undertaking, establishment or service." ILO, "Termination of Employment Convention, No 158, ILO, accessed December 21, 2011, <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C158>, "C158, Termination of Employment Convention by ILO" was accepted in 1982 but promulgated in 2003.

3 Zeynep Aycan, "Human Resource Management in Turkey," *Managing Human Resources in the Middle East* 22, no. 3 (2006): 164.

The ease of starting up a PEA contributed to the grow of these agencies, as well, since there was no need for fixed capital from the beginning.<sup>4</sup>

Career web portals which are among private employment agencies also played a critical role in the recruitment industry. PEAs were compelled to provide more sophisticated services to differentiate themselves since the online recruitment industry (portals) cheapened the selection process. The most well-known job website, *kariyet.net*,<sup>5</sup> was launched in 1999 and gradually came to be used on a wide scale. Due to just this one resume portal, the profit rates of private employment agencies decreased. The portal provided companies with tools with which they could easily classify resumes, canceling the need to outsource the process. Although entrepreneurs of private employment agencies were concerned about career portals – thinking that because of such portals they would lose customers – in the end they used the portals to make their services faster. Filtering made the preliminary elimination of resumes easier for both private employment agencies and the companies. It saved time and lessened the need for stationery materials. As a result, some companies ended their contracts with private employment agencies and internalized their employee placement processes. After losing their competitive advantage for collecting and selecting resumes on behalf of employers, private employment agencies had began to emphasize that their function was not simply operational but of strategic importance. They framed their function as specialization based on scientific results. In addition, small and medium-sized enterprises started to attract the interest of private employment agencies, as well. Agencies came to include such enterprises in their client lists, since they were less likely to have separate HR departments and could possibly be interested in outsourcing. Therefore, PEAs extended their field of operation from large companies to the smaller companies.

Although Turkey ratified the Fee-Charging Employment Agencies Convention of ILO (1949, No. 96) which abolished the state monopoly in labor

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4 One entrepreneur I interviewed pointed out that periods of economic crisis are also times when human resources managers become unemployed and decide to run their own business.

5 Kariyernet web portal was established in 1999 as the first online resume data bank. It also works as a private employment agency with a license issued by İŞKUR.



market mediation in 1951,<sup>6</sup> the first legislation regarding private employment agencies was released on November 20, 1987 in Turkey.<sup>7</sup> In this legislation the tasks of these agencies were defined as providing consulting on employment, organizing trainings and vocational courses, and ensuring job orientation by focusing on personal features of the job seekers. These definitions concerned job seekers more than employers. Their customers would be job seekers. Since the state's employment policy was based on the principle that unemployment was the result of a lack of qualifications, investment incentives were given to the entrepreneurs of these agencies who would increase the quality of the labor force. Therefore, the first agencies were formed as companies that served training programs to workers.

Private employment agencies operating as mediators in the labor market on behalf of companies were legalized in 2003 with the reformation of the Turkish Labor Law which had been in force since 1971. However, there were many agencies already active in the market before this reform.<sup>8</sup> This legislation prohibited the charging of job seekers in return for mediation service, employers were to be charged. The new labor law required private employment agencies be licensed by İŞKUR. The state no longer held a monopoly<sup>9</sup> over labor market mediation. Private employment agencies carried out hiring practices

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- 6 The Ministry of Labor and Social Security, ILO agreements approved by Turkey, The Ministry of Labor and Social Security, accessed July 23, 2015, <https://www.csgb.gov.tr/media/2078/%C4%B1lozozlesmeleri.pdf>.
- 7 The number of the official journal is 19640, Official Journal, accessed July 23, 2015, <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/main.aspx?home=http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/arsiv/19640.pdf&main=http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/arsiv/19640.pdf>, pg 22.
- 8 Turkey did not ratify the Private Employment Agencies Convention (no. 181) of the ILO released in 1997 since regulates temporary agencies that hire out employees. But a regulation within the convention prohibiting the charging of job seekers was included in the law enacted in 2003.
- 9 İŞKUR had been a monopoly in the field since 1946. Although placement services for employees were defined as a public service in 1936 in Articles 63-71 of Labor law 3008, its organization was established in 1946. TBMM, Labor Law 3008, TBMM, accessed May 21, 2015, [https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR\\_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmco16/kanuntbmmco16/kanuntbmmco1603008.pdf](https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmco16/kanuntbmmco16/kanuntbmmco1603008.pdf).

under the name of consulting before this regulation and still operate as such<sup>10</sup> without being licensed by İŞKUR. The regulation was passed a few years after the Seventh Development Plan declared by the Ministry of Development for the years 1996-2000.<sup>11</sup>

Apart from PEAs, membership-based chambers also provided its members with job opportunities. However, İŞKUR notified membership-based chambers not to carry out intermediary tasks for labor, claiming that only licensed institutions may serve in that capacity.<sup>12</sup>

Private employment agencies are favored and promoted by state institutions for providing job opportunities and making labor more employable by means of training programs that are deemed to have been neglected by official

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- 10 In a conference held by the Turkish Industrial Relations Associations (TIRA) in 2002, the lawyer of Adecco (one of the largest international private employment agencies) asked the head of İŞKUR about private employment agencies operating without a legitimate position: "We all know that the private employment agencies have been in operation for a long time without legal status... (Yurtiçinde iş bulmaya aracılık eden özel istihdam büroları, bu faaliyetlerine yasal statüleri olmamalarına rağmen hepimizin malum olduğu üzere uzun zamandan beri devam ediyorlar)." Dr. Necdet Kenar (The Head of İŞKUR) replied: "Private employment agencies work under the name of consultancy and our colleagues have to intervene considering the law. Therefore, the legislation should be passed immediately. We are working for it... (Bu aşamada özel istihdam büroları danışmanlık şirketleri olarak faaliyetlerini görüyorlar. Bu noktada arkadaşlarımız da görevlerini yapmak durumundalar. ... Dolayısıyla yasayı yani genel kuruldaki tasarıyı bir an önce yasalaştırmamız lazımdır. Biz bunun mücadelesini veriyoruz.)" TUSİAD, "İşgücü Piyasalarının Etkinliğinin Artırılmasında Özel İstihdam Bürolarının ve Esnek Çalışma Biçimlerinin Rolü," 2002.51-52. It is claimed that some PEAs currently operate without the license required by İŞKUR. If licensed agencies notice them, they inform İŞKUR to intervene and protect their competitive power. If unofficial agencies leave no trace and use only "word of mouth," it is impossible to know about them.
- 11 The plan suggested support for small entrepreneurs, training of the labor force, consultancy for the unemployed who were made redundant after privatizations, temporary work, and educational programs.
- 12 For an example see EMO, "İşsiz Mühendise Darbe," EMO, accessed January 17, 2012, [http://www.emo.org.tr/genel/bizden\\_detay.php?kod=89056&tipi=5&sube=0](http://www.emo.org.tr/genel/bizden_detay.php?kod=89056&tipi=5&sube=0). The private employment agencies operating in the market may have informed İŞKUR about the operations of membership-based chambers to keep their competitive power. Membership-based chambers are notified by the state employment agency not to carry out the role of intermediary task. Only institutions with a license taken from the state can serve in the field.

institutions.<sup>13</sup> İŞKUR produced a considerable number of documents emphasizing the importance of private employment agencies.<sup>14</sup>

The first private employment agencies in Turkey were founded at the end of the 1980s. As they only came to be regulated in 2003, it is not possible to find out which ones were first since they cannot be traced back through official license records. However, it is widely claimed that they started to operate actively as of the 1990s. The participants in this research claimed that KRM<sup>15</sup> (founded in 1994) and EPS<sup>16</sup> (founded in 1995) are among the oldest. Private employment agencies are often called as consulting companies or human resources agencies in the everyday language of labor mediation market.

Legal regulation that would have permitted private employment agencies to hire out employees was rejected by the president in 2009.<sup>17</sup> Such regulation also appeared in a legislative proposal in 2010, but the article pertaining to the regulation of employee leasing was removed before the enactment of the law.<sup>18</sup> Currently, companies may only buy services (outsource part of a job) or use one of the kinds of flexible work regulated by the law 4857, which was passed in 2003.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, when firms want short-term employees,<sup>20</sup> subcontractors

13 For example, see Yöney, “İş ve İşçi Bulma Kurumu’ndan İŞKUR’a – İşe Yerleştirme Hizmetleri.”

14 For example, see Sayın, “Emek Piyasasında Aracılık ve özel İstihdam Büroları.”

15 The website of the company is <http://www.krm.com.tr>.

16 The website of the company is <http://www.eps.com.tr>.

17 TBMM, "26.6.2009 Tarihli ve 5920 Sayılı; İş Kanunu, İşsizlik Sigortası Kanunu ve Sosyal Sigortalar ve Genel Sağlık Sigortası Kanununda Değişiklik Yapılmasına Dair Kanun ve Anayasanın 89 uncu ve 104 üncü Maddeleri Gereğince Cumhurbaşkanıca Bir Daha Görüşülmek Üzere Geri Gönderme Tezkeresi ile Plan ve Bütçe Komisyonu Raporu," TBMM, accessed May 2, 2012, <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/sirasayi/donem23/yilo1/ss419.pdf>.

18 For previous version of the law, see TBMM, Draft Law, TBMM, accessed May 2, 2012, <http://www2.tbmm.gov.tr/d23/1/1-0797.pdf>.

19 While writing this thesis, the proposed law for the authorization of temporary staffing was in parliament. TBMM, accessed 8.02.2016, <http://www2.tbmm.gov.tr/d26/1/1-0597.pdf>. The regulation was accepted. The Ministry of Labor and Social Security, accessed on May 14, 2016, <http://www.csgeb.gov.tr/home/news/guvenceli-esneklik-yasalasti/>.

20 The concept of “short-term” needs to be problematized. This concept leads us to think of a binary opposition between skilled workers vs. unskilled workers. In general, “short-term” jobs are expected to be suited for unskilled workers, while the work done by skilled workers is

hire out workers under the guise of consulting services either for core or non-core jobs. Alternatively, employers can use other flexible employment models such as "on call employment". The entrepreneurs of private employment agencies expect restrictions on hiring out workers to be lifted and to extend their market in which they can operate. The sector would expand to unskilled workers since unskilled workers are more likely to be employed in short term positions. The labor mediation market for unskilled workers would enlarge the business since the human resources market is currently dominated by the field of management of white-collar employees. Agencies also expect that hiring out skilled workers out with temporary contracts will be legal.<sup>21</sup>

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expected to be long-term and secure. However, currently, some companies working under the name of a consultancy and either hire out workers for a certain period of time or make them work at other companies. The time that workers spend at a work-place depends on the termination of the service contract of the consultant firm or on the satisfaction level of the primary employer. The job advertisements of those companies are mostly project-based. They look for candidates for one-year projects, for example. Workers hired out do not work under the same conditions as permanent employees, a situation that requires additional research. This method of recruiting is mostly used in the information technology and finance sectors. In addition, short-term jobs can continue in practice if the contract is renewed over and over.

- 21 Hiring out employees is most common in care industries (babysitting, cleaning, elderly care, etc.). There are also private employment agencies operating in the field of care work. Private employment agencies specialized in white-collar recruitment may extend their business to low-skilled jobs and become interested in the field of care work after the law regulating temporary agencies. They may also try to turn permanent jobs into short-term jobs to be able to hire out white-collar workers, as well. One entrepreneur I interviewed stated that if the law is passed, they even had the intention of hiring out general managers for certain periods of time as well. Another interviewee who owns a PEA mediating the employment of university students for short-term jobs pointed out that they actively try to convince employers that permanent positions in their companies can be turned into short-term jobs accommodate university students looking for short term work.

## § 3.2 The Making of the Private Employment Agencies Market

### 3.2.1 *Why is Hiring Processes Outsourced?*

The services regarding hiring processes have been diversified and are used for several reasons. The reasons for outsourcing hiring practices may be summarized as below:

- 1 To hire in bulk
- 2 To hire an executive externally
- 3 To hire workers in sectors in which turnover rates are high (e.g., call centers, and finance)
- 4 To conduct the process in a confidential manner
- 5 When the company wants to keep its prestige in the eye of the prospective workers to preserve its negotiating power
- 6 When the company has exhausted the means of finding a specific worker
- 7 To handle seasonal busy times, i.e. flexibility
- 8 Not to be dependent on the expectations of the managers

Companies operating in sectors employing large numbers of workers with high turnover rates see outsourcing recruitment as a practical solution that takes operational tasks out of the workplace allowing focus on profitability. The reason is that selection and placement processes that involve classifying resumes and doing job interviews are time-consuming. Placement of large numbers of employees by a PEA is thus preferred. One interviewee told how she convinced customers to buy her service:

I told the customers that “if you need 50-100 people hired, I do that, and can have them start their jobs in five days. I was the first person who could use kariyer.net, the online resume bank, and I was able to filter out any kind of employee I was searching for. The big companies that came to Turkey were not able to organize a sales team consisting of 100-200 people. (Entrepreneur, Female, AJ)

A well-known recruitment specialists states in his resume that he placed a large numbers of employees in a short time:

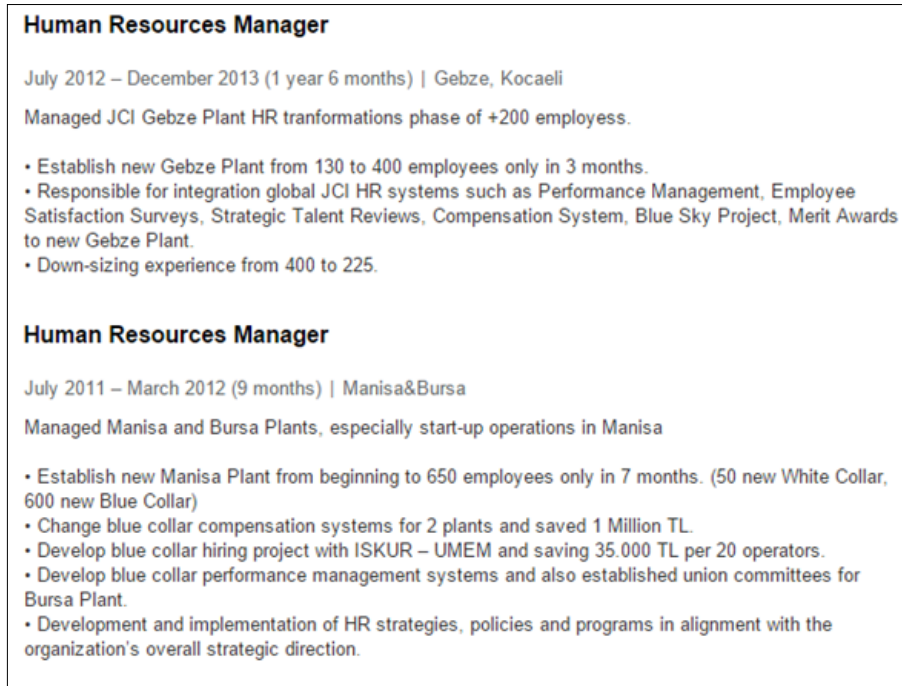


Figure 3.1. Example of a Recruitment Specialist's Resume<sup>22</sup>

One of the reasons for outsourcing selection and placement processes is to preserve the confidentiality of the companies. Companies want to keep their names confidential when they plan to replace, dismiss, reorganize their current workers or wish to hide new developments from rivals in their sector. They also want to hide new developments from rivals in the sector.

Companies may defer to private employment agencies to recruit flexible labor during busy periods or to assume less responsibility when long-term employment is in question:

For example, head-quarter requires you to hire 400 people but you need eight more to complete the required tasks the. Your company doesn't want to hire them with a long-term contract. In the end, you work with an agency to have eight people on a short-term contract.  
(Recruitment specialist, Female, AH)

22 The resume is taken with the permission of the owner from "LinkedIn" which is a social network for professionals and presented. The names of the companies served are hidden in the image.

Companies using their internal human resources departments for more profitable work prefer to outsource the selection and replacement process. Recruitment specialists of private employment agencies define the process of pre-placement as “clearing the dust at the first level”;

We are mainly the first step, clearing the dust. This is the case for many positions if not for all. Accountants and, financial managers can be selected from among hundreds, thousands of people, and you need to present five people to your client who are compatible with their company profile. They should be compatible with the position, the job description, and the profile of the firm. (Recruitment specialist, Female, AD)

Companies may use the services of agencies when they exhaust their own search methods and have not found the desired employee. In that case, they rely on the focused searches of PEAs that use large resume databases and flexible methods such as snowballing.<sup>23</sup>

Although the time spent for operational work is expected to decrease as recruitment processes are outsourced to private employment agencies, agencies do more than just operational work. The recruitment process is considered operational when conducted in-house, but turns into a strategic work when it is outsourced. Intermediaries in the labor market increase employers' demands relating to employees. Employers expect more from a process conducted by a PEA than a process conducted in-house, as one interviewee points out:

If customers find employees by themselves, they accept them even if they are not fully compatible with the requirements they asked for, thinking that they can improve over time. But if they receive the services of an agency, they expect candidates sent by the agency to have all the requirements. (Recruitment specialist, Female, AN)

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23 This method involves inviting job candidates and asking about their acquaintances for open positions in question.

Employees of clients who are responsible for recruitment also increase the level of the requirements of a position that they expect an agency to fill by making use of competition among the agencies.

Some companies prefer the services of agencies even if they have the capacity to conduct hiring processes in-house. The reason is that PEAs bring prestige to companies, increasing their negotiating power as employers. Companies may use an agency if they do not want to seem to be trying to attract the employees. One participant working as a recruitment specialist in a well-known textile retail company claimed that she would not try to convince anyone to work for the company:

As a representative of a prestigious company, I never call a job candidate who has not applied him or herself. It disturbs my image (of the company). Agencies come into the process at this point and direct job candidates to us who have not applied to our company themselves. (Recruitment specialist at a textile retailer, formerly a PEA employee, AC)

Companies that put distance between themselves and the employee are deemed professional enough to outsource and spend money on the selection process. As one interviewees underscored, the sophisticated, long processes carried out by private employment agencies are associated with professionalism.

If the candidates are first interviewed by the agency, they might think that the employer is professional. However, some people also think that getting a job via an agency is more difficult since there are many phases to pass through. (Recruitment specialist, Female, AD)

Companies do not outsource their selection and placement processes simply because they are not able to conduct them. As one entrepreneurs pointed out, agencies enable companies to employ flexible labor, as well:

Think about it. Here we do recruitment for the ten biggest companies in Turkey. Don't you think there's something wrong with this? They have three times more human resources specialists than we do. We do the business with a third of their department. That is not the point. We



have a more strategic task. They can conduct the process with higher quality. However, it has to do with the difference we make. We can make some employees work for them that the firm cannot. People who have an associate's degree can be made work – maybe not in an expert position – but in an internship position. We can be more flexible on the training of new comers. We can make people who need to gain a specific job skill work hours that companies cannot make them work. We can make them work more hours with more added value. We are more dynamic. We can go to local authorities (the muhtar) and ask something, but the human resources manager of a big bank would have difficulty doing that. Actually, we do things that those companies cannot. (Entrepreneur, Male, BA)

Private employment agencies sometimes work in favor of job candidates. Labor market mediators see gender and school-specific inquiries made by employers as problematic and make efforts to convince employers to change their approaches. The reason is that agencies want to find the “right” person as soon as possible since they get paid not for the time they spend, but for the work they accomplish. This is also determines the performance of recruitment specialists. Therefore, they try to reconcile the demands of employers with their capacities. One interviewee underscored this effort:

We sometimes give tips to the candidates before they go to an interview with an employer to increase their chances. Because we are also responsible to our own bosses. You can work for a long time and not be able to find the right person (Recruitment specialist, Female, AD)

Employers sometimes demand a person, “male, under 35, having foreign language, from Boğaziçi University.” We try to convince them that there are people from other universities who would be able to do the same work. (Entrepreneur, Female, AJ)

A recruitment specialist working for a big large company underscores that she makes use of experiences gained at her previous workplace, which was a private employment agency:

Everyone you employ is not perfect. Even if the candidate is not fully compatible with your expectations, to do your job you have to complete the recruitment process. Therefore, I underline the good sides of candidates when I present them the department, and I give the job seeker clues for the second interview in this respect. I do the recruitment in that way. This approach comes from the experience I had at a private employment agency. (Recruitment specialist at a textile retailer, formerly a PEA employee, AC)

Özbilgin and Tatlı found that agencies could use their negotiating power in their reports to prevent discrimination with.<sup>24</sup> However, the changes that agencies can impose on employers' demands are limited since a second placement is guaranteed in case of the failure of an agency's first placement.

Increasing interdependence among companies is another reason companies use private employment agencies for recruitment. Job candidates are supposed to fit not just the job but into an organization<sup>25</sup> in which departments and employees are more dependent on one another by general productivity management systems. Candidates are chosen by taken other employees into account. They are considered with their relations to others at the organization. Therefore, interpersonal relations are to be conducted by the employer. Managers or recruitment specialists also take their dependency within the organization into account and defer to a labor market mediator, thus having the decisions evaluated from outside the company. This enables the processes to be conducted independent of power relations in the workplace. In this way, employees responsible for recruitment lower their individual risk of failure. One interviewee who is a recruitment specialist exemplified this argument:

Once the human resources manager of a customer suggested a candidate, but he told us to meet him first as a mediator and asked us to direct the candidate to the company. He did not want to take any risks; he wants to say "the agency offered the candidate." Having a network

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24 Özbilgin and Tatlı, *Opening up Opportunities through Private Sector Recruitment and Guidance Agencies*, 69.

25 Bowen, Ledford, and Nathan, "Hiring for the Organization, Not the Job.," 39.

does not work in that case. For example, I had a friend who was looking for a job. He was compatible with the job and I put his name on the short list, but there is nothing more that I can do about it. (Recruitment specialist, Female, AD)

The interviewee adds that companies may refer to a private employment agency even if they themselves have posted a job ad for the position with the same concern of managers.

Employers do not want to be dependent on managers and they want to limit the autonomy of managers that comes with the position. The avoidance that managers' have with the intention to make their decisions by using external sources for recruitment intersects with the intention of employers. One entrepreneur I interviewed uses the argument to explain the function of private employment agencies:

If recruitment is done in-house, it leads to skill erosion. Let's say I am a manager and I hired you. I wouldn't hire anyone who is smarter than me, and you wouldn't hire anyone who is smarter than you. There is skill erosion in the end. That is the main reason for outsourcing recruitment. The decision maker at the top works with an outsourcing company. The outsourcing company doesn't have those concerns and brings in smarter people. (Entrepreneur, Female, AG)

Employers' concerns about the autonomy of managers is also a reason for external recruitment. The recruitment specialists I interviewed often claimed that the dependency of employers on managers and the autonomy of managers based on seniority is weakened when recruitment was outsourced. Therefore private employment agencies are both the cause and the result of the disappearance of the internal labor market. Companies look to the outside to find managers compatible with their new strategies instead of promoting someone senior within the organization.<sup>26</sup> The outsourcing of recruitment was justified by skill erosion which was claimed to be caused by seniors trying to protect their position within the organization. Managers and high-level directors could be found more easily through PEAs.

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26 Cappelli, *Introduction to Employment Relationships, New Models of White-Collar Work*, 10.

The reasons for employers outsource the recruitment process to the recruitment industry are discussed above. How private employment agencies receive the task of recruitment process is discussed in the following parts.

### 3.2.2 *How Does It Work?*

Private employment agencies work at the request of an employer for a worker. The representative of the private employment agency, the employer or manager, and the recruitment specialist together define the requirements for the position. The specialist of the agency may also visit the workplace to have a grasp of its written and unwritten rules. Some PEAs may even hire out recruitment specialists to companies in the process of bulk hiring, which is a time-consuming process.

While searching for prospective workers, agencies look to their databases, post advertisements on the Internet or in newspapers and also contact employees who have a job and do not look for a job. The number of applicants is reduced to a plausible number (a short-list)<sup>27</sup> through desk research and pre-interviews. Depending on the budget and the expectations of the employer, the process may be made more sophisticated with the introduction of other tools such as single or group role playing<sup>28</sup> and personality inventories. Thus, a second reduction in the number of the applicants is realized and the final candidates on the short list are reported to the client company. The employer (or representative of the employer) makes the final decision about the placement.

Certain principles apply to both the PEA and the client company for the protection of their competitive power. Generally for one year, the agency is not allowed to try to re-recruit a candidate that it has placed in a company. If the employer is dissatisfied with the employee and terminates their employment within a certain period (up to 6 months), the agency is to replacement free of charge. PEAs do not keep records of the ensuing careers of job candidates after their placement. Although not legally allowed, some agencies have certain restrictions into their contracts with customers (employers) to prevent

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27 A short list includes the resumes of three to five people for a position.

28 In bulk hiring, candidates are asked to discuss an issue in a group or perform in a pre-scripted case. The way in which they handle a case with others is observed.

them from working with other agencies. These agencies may be fined for this action but still take the risk. The reason is that if more than one agency is trying to find an employee for the same position, the chance of anyone agency finding an appropriate candidate decreases. In some cases, more than one labor market mediator may be acting between the job candidate and the employer. For instance, a consulting company that is to place an employee in a company for a temporary project may find him/her through a private employment agency.

Private employment agencies are paid 10-12% of the annual salary of the job candidate that they place.<sup>29</sup> In some PEAs, salaried employees are paid a bonus for each placement that they accomplish. The amount of the commission may be lowered during economic crises. Notably, the amount of the payment is dependent on the salary of the position therefore, to avoid being paid a lower fee, mediators do not always negotiate job seekers' salaries in the favor of the employers. In some cases, private employment agencies work for the benefit of the job seeker, which is to say, for their own benefit. However, other recruitment specialists emphasize that such manipulations are not worth considering since PEAs must find another employee if the company is not satisfied with the one they find.

Agencies profit when a candidate is placed, regardless of the time and effort spent to find an appropriate job candidate. Therefore, it is important that they have large resume databases to find candidates as quickly as possible.<sup>30</sup> Several informal methods are also used to increase the number of resumes on file. Among them are posting fake advertisements to collect resumes, learning the names of a candidates' manager in interviews to consider the manager for core positions, and asking interviewees if they have friends interested in a position. The aim is to acquire new contacts and to expand the agency's network. In their databases, agencies maintain information on workers who are not actively looking for a job, as well. They collect this information through job interviews, by asking job candidates about the people they work with, through

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29 It is not legal to charge job seekers except in certain fields (artists, football players, etc.).

30 The interviewee from İŞKUR stated that PEAs expect İŞKUR to use a resume format that is appropriate for market needs so that PEAs can use them in their resume pools and expand their data banks.

professional networks such as LinkedIn, by calling companies and pretending that they are from a different institution, or by attending professional networking meetings. They also collect resumes at career festivals and fairs organized by universities, municipalities, or both.

### 3.2.3 *Professional Organizations of the Private Employment of Agencies*

In this section, I focus on the networks and relations of private employment agencies to organizations in the field in order to reveal the actors in the market in Turkey. There is no a single organization that brings PEA professionals, entrepreneurs, and employees together. Nor is there any organization of PEAs employees in the sector. Human resources specialists at PEAs or other companies work as representatives of their employers,<sup>31</sup> making it difficult for them to organize on the basis of being employees.

The market of private employment agencies brings together professionals from the fields of marketing, human resources management, software development, psychology, and accounting. Therefore, it is possible to encounter entrepreneurs and professionals from PEAs in other organizations related to their fields of expertise as well as in organizations related to human resources management. Recruitment professionals and private employment agencies also participate in other professional organizations such as the Corporate Governance Association of Turkey<sup>32</sup> and the Management Consultants Association (*Yönetim Danışmanları Derneği*),<sup>33</sup> either personally or as representatives of their companies. The Corporate Governance Association of Turkey,

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31 In most cases, human resources employees are official representatives of their employer organizations. For example, the Turkish Cement Manufacturers' Association formed a Labor Relations Committee to follow up on developments in labor legislation, and share the Juridical decisions and perspectives concerning labor relations with trade unions. It was decided that human resources managers would represent employers in the committee. CEİS, Labor Relations committee, CEİS, accessed January 19, 2011, <http://www.ceis.org.tr/1/kategori/17/calisma-iliskileri-kurulu.html>.

32 Türkiye Kurumsal Yönetim Derneği, <http://www.tkyd.org/en/default.asp>.

33 <http://www.ydd.org.tr>. The Management Consultants Association is also affiliated with the Turkish Industry and Business Association (*Türkiye Sanayicileri ve İşadamları Derneği* or

the Management Consultants Association, and PERYÖN also operate as consulting firms, the members of which provide a wide range of services. However, recruitment professionals are mainly visible in three organizations founded as sectorial bodies. These bodies maintain and expand the business field by organizing summits, publishing magazines and bulletins, and lobbying. PERYÖN, PEA Association (*Özel İstihdam Büroları Derneği* or ÖİBD)<sup>34</sup> and İstanbul PEA Association (*İstanbul Özel İstihdam Büroları Derneği* or İÖİBD)<sup>35</sup> are the organizations in which entrepreneurs and professionals provide updated information on issues related to human resources management and in which private employment agencies create their networks in the field.

The PEA Association accepts only corporate-level members and consists of the suppliers of recruitment services. It includes the largest sixteen private employment agencies in Turkey, most of which are global. The association has been lobbying for legislation on issues that concern the private employment agencies such as temporary hiring. However, the PEA Association is not favored by all entrepreneurs in the sector. Some of the entrepreneurs I interviewed for this research either avoided comment on the PEA Association or criticized it for being interested only in the interests of international corporations in Turkey.<sup>36</sup> Smaller companies see the power of this organization of global companies as a threat.

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TÜSİAD) through Federation of Industrial Association (*Sektörel Dernekler Federasyonu* or SEDEFED).

- 34 Özel İstihdam Büroları Derneği, [www.oibd.org.tr](http://www.oibd.org.tr). This PEA Association was founded in 2004 and is member of the umbrella organization; the European Confederation of Private Employment Agencies (EUROCEITT).
- 35 İstanbul Özel İstihdam Büroları Derneği, [www.ioibd.com](http://www.ioibd.com). This association for agencies that mainly provide care workers was founded in 2008. Interestingly, that they have separate organization from the PEA Association because the field in which they operate (care work) is considered different.
- 36 The sector is dominated by small and local companies. Professionals of those companies sees a conflict of interest between large and small companies. Their criticism makes sense considering the members of the PEA Association. Adecco, Randstad, Manpower, and Kelly Services are among the members and they are also in the top ten list of the largest private employment agencies worldwide. CIETT, CIETT Economic Report 2013.

PERYÖN is the organization for human resources management professionals and employers in the field. Its members consists of salaried professionals working in the field of human resources management and entrepreneurs of human resources management companies or companies that have human resources management departments. It is also possible to be a member at a corporate, organizational level. The demand side of the sector forms the considerable part of its members. PERYÖN organizes internal and external training programs for state institutions such as İŞKUR as well as for the private sector and for individuals. In addition, PERYÖN organizes a Human Management Congress every year, bringing together companies and professionals. The organization considered a place where companies can expand their client lists by establishing networks. Neither its summits nor membership in PERYÖN is free of charge, which limits participation by employees.<sup>37</sup> The entrepreneurs I interviewed widely acknowledged that PERYÖN plays a critical role in the presentation and recognition of human resources management as a profession.

Members of these institutions could find new customers through them, as well. As one member I interviewed stated, some entrepreneurs first present their services at PERYÖN in order to become known within the sector:

I am a member of PERYÖN, but I am not there to take advantage of the institution. I am there because the people I work with are there and it is like a community. I am there to expand my knowledge. But I also started there. I did my first presentation there and then we decided for the other training programs. (Entrepreneur, Psychologist, Female, AP)

PERYÖN functions as grounds for spending the market. Another entrepreneur who is a recruitment specialist and trainer in soft skills also finds her clients through PERYÖN and benefits from membership, which includes reference checking for the recruitment process:

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37 There are other obstacles preventing salaried professionals in the field who are not high-level managers from joining the events. One of the interviewees who works as a recruitment specialist was critical of such events, claiming that it is difficult for non-managerial specialists in the field of human resources management to establish networks since people in the field tend not to share information about their companies. She also added that those meetings are generally attended by sales managers hoping to expand their marketing activities.



PERYÖN has a training department for member companies. They hire me for the training and pay me, but they don't charge their members for the training. Human resources professionals get to know each other there, and we need each other when we do reference checks on job candidates we place in positions for our clients. The answer is more satisfying if you ask someone at PERYÖN than the answer you get when you call a candidate's previous workplace. I benefit from it a lot. (Entrepreneur, Female, AB)

Human resources companies/entrepreneurs introduce human resources managers to tools used in the industry such as personal inventories and they make use of training sessions within the organization for the promotion of their activities.

The efforts of the entrepreneurs in private employment agencies to protect and expand their market by institutionalizing and networking. They strengthen the fences of the sector by means of professional organizations.

#### 3.2.4 *Actors in Cooperation with Private Employment Agencies*

New capitalism is embodied by agents. As Ward and England underscore, it would be incorrect to conceptualize neoliberalism "as something that is external and imposed, as if it is a process that is authorless and without origins, springing fully formed and unimpeded from one location to another, with no relational sense of space" or consider it as something "conceptual" or as a natural course.<sup>38</sup> Private employment agencies are not simply founded by employers in response to external changes; state bodies, professionals, and international organizations act in cooperation in their constitutions, as well. The market is constructed by the "cultural circuit".<sup>39</sup>

Entrepreneurs of PEAs contribute to the making of the market in this context by lobbying, cooperating with the state in the formulation of social poli-

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38 Kevin Ward and Kim England, "Introduction: Reading Neoliberalization," in *Neo-Liberalization: States, Networks, Peoples* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), edited by Kim England and Kevin Ward, 1–22.

39 Thrift, *Theory, Culture & Society: Knowing Capitalism*.

cies on unemployment, and distributing the knowledge produced by the industry. Employer organizations such as the TÜSİAD, Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations (*Türkiye İşveren Sendikaları Konfederasyonu* or TİSK), The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (*Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliği* or TOBB) organize congress and seminars in cooperation with PEAs, their associations, and İŞKUR.

The making of this market involves many actors and relations. For instance, the associations of PEAs conduct lobbying activities<sup>40</sup> by visiting politicians. The Ministry of Labor and Social Security organize conferences in cooperation with employers' organizations and with the contribution of PEAs such as Adecco.<sup>41</sup> Academics participate in events which defined as scientific,<sup>42</sup> and high-level managers give speeches to employers' organizations.<sup>43</sup> In addition, academics and employees of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security write books and articles for the magazines of employers' organizations,<sup>44</sup> promoting the expansion of the recruitment industry. PEAs and İŞKUR cooperate in increasing the employability level of the labor force<sup>45</sup>. Professionals of

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- 40 The president of the PEA Association visited the Minister of Labor in 2008 and the association declared that in the meeting, the minister underscored the importance of expanding of the field of PEAs to include temporary staffing. The declaration also stated that the minister called his counsel or to contact the association and officially ask their opinion on the issue before presenting related legislation in parliament. "Yönetim Kurulumuz Çalışma ve Sosyal Güvenlik Bakanı Sayın Faruk Çelik ile tanışmak için Ankara'ya gitti," OİBD, accessed June 31, 2013, [http://www.oibd.org.tr/html/haberler/calisma\\_sosyal\\_guvenlik\\_bakani\\_ile\\_gorusme.html](http://www.oibd.org.tr/html/haberler/calisma_sosyal_guvenlik_bakani_ile_gorusme.html).
- 41 TİSK, "Özel İstihdam Büroları Aracılığıyla Geçici İş İlişkisi Semineri, Tebliğler ve Görüşler," 2013; TÜSİAD, "İşgücü Piyasalarının Etkinliğinin Artırılmasında Özel İstihdam Bürolarının ve Esnek Çalışma Biçimlerinin Rolü."
- 42 TİSK, "Özel İstihdam Büroları Aracılığıyla Geçici İş İlişkisi Semineri, Tebliğler ve Görüşler," 28.
- 43 Erdem Cam, "Uluslararası Çalışma Örgütü Sözleşmeleri Çerçevesinde Özel İstihdam Büroları ve Çeşitleri," *Çimento İşveren Dergisi*, C 22 (2008): 1.
- 44 Nusret Ekin, "Türkiye'de İş Piyasasının Yeniden Yapılanması: Özel İstihdam Büroları," *İstanbul Ticaret Odası*, Yayın, no. 2001-30 (2001).
- 45 Peryön, *Türkiye İnsan Yönetimi Derneği*, 2012-2013, 23. Olağan Genel Kurul Toplantısı, Faaliyet Raporu, Peryön, accessed March 26, 2014, [https://www.peryon.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Peryon\\_Faaliyet\\_Raporu\\_2012-2013.pdf](https://www.peryon.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Peryon_Faaliyet_Raporu_2012-2013.pdf).

the recruitment industry cooperate with universities<sup>46</sup> and municipalities.<sup>47</sup> Job advisors of İŞKUR are trained by PERYÖN<sup>48</sup> and are charged to refer the job seekers applying to İŞKUR to PEAs. PERYÖN determines the requirements for recruitment specialists and draws the sector's boundaries on the authority of the Occupational Competence Institution of the state.<sup>49</sup> High-level bureaucrats of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security promote the expansion of PEAs in parliamentary commissions<sup>50</sup> and international conferences.<sup>51</sup> Members of PERYÖN give speeches at career events organized by İŞKUR<sup>52</sup> at universities and participate in the City Councils for Employment and Vocational Trainings (*İl İstihdam ve Mesleki Eğitim Kurulları*).<sup>53</sup> PERYÖN and

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- 46 Seminar on Getting Ready to Work Life (İş Hayatına Hazırlık Seminerleri), Bilgi University, February 2013, <http://bilgikariyer.com/articles.php?id=MjUz>, Bilgi University, accessed February 26, 2013. Three professionals from three private employment agencies gave speeches in the seminar.
- 47 The career center operating at the Üsküdar municipality works as a private employment agency with the license and organizes courses on entrepreneurship in cooperation with the PEAs. The Municipality of Üsküdar, accessed August 1, 2015, <http://www.uskudaristihdam.com/w/uskudar/baskanin.mesaji.aspx>.
- 48 "Some İŞKUR branches in Istanbul took the initiative and bought training programs from PERYÖN for the internal training of the job advisors. But it is not a general policy of İŞKUR" Participant, İŞKUR.
- 49 The commission from PERYÖN officially determined the competencies of the public job consultants with the authorization given by the Occupational Competence Institution (Mesleki Yeterlilik Kurumu) which is a state department. "Definitions of the Occupations in Human Resources – Draft (İnsan Kaynakları Meslek Standardı Taslakları)," PERYÖN, accessed March 10, 2011, <https://www.peryon.org.tr/index.php/bilgi-yonetimi/ulusal-meslek-standartlari/insan-kaynaklari-meslek-standardi-taslaklari/>.
- 50 TBMM, Commission Report, TBMM, accessed February 19, 2015, [https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/komisyon\\_tutanaklari.goruntule?pTutanakId=1205](https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/komisyon_tutanaklari.goruntule?pTutanakId=1205).
- 51 The Minister of Labor and Social Security stated that the informal economy in the sector of care work could be prevented by PEAs. KEİG, accessed August 18, 2015, <http://www.keig.org/gundemimiz.aspx?id=6>.
- 52 İŞKUR, "Genç İstihdamında İŞKUR'un Üniversite Öğrencilerine Yönelik Girişimcilik ve Karriyer Günleri," İŞKUR, accessed August 19, 2015, <http://www.iskur.gov.tr/Portals/o/DuyuruEkleri/gaziantep%20ofuar%202013.pdf>.
- 53 PERYON, "City Employment Commission Meeting in Çerkezköy," Peryön, accessed August 19, 2015, [http://www.peryonkongre.com/peryon/haber\\_130309.asp](http://www.peryonkongre.com/peryon/haber_130309.asp).

İŞKUR work together to organize panels on unemployment<sup>54</sup> and the entrepreneurs of PEAs participate in events that promote early career management in different fields,<sup>55</sup> thus contributing to the narrative of employability. Journalists frame unemployment as a matter of competency by deferring to research conducted by PEAs.<sup>56</sup> High-level officials of the state declared that measures will be taken in cooperation with the PEAs to place vocational school graduates in corresponding positions.<sup>57</sup>

Companies, the state, and employers' organizations act cooperatively, putting a remarkable amount of effort into expanding the sector. They produce copious documents and circulate discourse the common argument of which is that the market of PEAs needs to be expanded to include temporary labor so that the informal sector may be formalized. The claim is that PEAs will regulate the labor market as it becomes more complicated as technological changes require new skills. Since the problem of unemployment is defined as a matter of qualifications in this discourse; it is argued that the interventions of the PEAs would increase the level of employment. In line with this approach, İŞKUR and PEAs are defined as complementary rather than as competitors. The discourse in circulation is not simply descriptive; it sets the norms in the labor market.<sup>58</sup> Expanding the market of PEAs is the aim of this

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- 54 PERYÖN, "The Importance of Vocational Education in the Fight with Unemployment Panel by PERYÖN," PERYÖN, accessed August 19, 2015, <http://www.peryonkongre.com/peryon/is-kurpanel.asp>.
- 55 Two entrepreneurs of the PEAs made presentations at the conference; "Good Examples in Education" organized by the Sabancı University in 2012. Sabancı University, "Good Examples in Education," Sabancı University, accessed August 19, 2015, <http://egitimdeiyor-nekler.org/assets/gecmis-iokler/Program-izelgesi2012.pdf>.
- 56 See Jale Özgentürk, "Unskillful Turkey," *Radikal*, accessed August 19, 2015, [http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/jale\\_ozgenturk/yeteneksizsiniz\\_turkiye-1111975](http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/jale_ozgenturk/yeteneksizsiniz_turkiye-1111975). The word "competency" is used interchangeably with the concept of "qualification" in the article. Texts which start by criticizing the quality of education in Turkey end up by stressing the importance of certain behavioral features that the job candidates should have if the problem of unemployment is to be overcome.
- 57 Official Journal number 26312, *Official Journal*, accessed August 19, 2015, <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2006/10/20061007-9.htm>.
- 58 Ward borrowed from Majone the term of "rule intermediaries" to refer to those actors involved in norm setting. Ward, "Temporary Staffing, 'Geographies of Circulation,' and the

approach that argues for a "war for talent," for a market-centered social policy for unemployment, and for the formalization of the informal sector. It defends a moral reconfiguration, early-age career management, and the individualization of employment.

Companies do not simply respond to external changes; they are also active agents in making their own market. The market is formed and "the production and reproduction of neoliberalism does not just happen; but rather, takes an incredible amount of work, and even more to naturalize it, to make it seem that there is no alternative."<sup>59</sup> It is "contextual and contingent rather than a universally inevitable monolithic force."<sup>60</sup> Private employment agencies cooperate with several actors to establish their sectoral organizations that make, expand, and protect their market.

### § 3.3 The Profile of Private Employment Agencies in Figures

In this part, I numerically scrutinize private employment agencies in terms of their organizational structures and scales, the sectors which they serve, and the types of job seekers in which they specialized. I provide information on the cities in which they are based, the number of their branches, their scales, their services, and their dates of foundation.

My investigation of private employment agencies covers only those agencies listed by İŞKUR<sup>61</sup> on February 19, 2015 and is based on the websites of

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Business of Delivering Neoliberalization," 111; Giandomenico Majone, *Evidence, Argument, and Persuasion in the Policy Process* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

59 Branko Milanovic, "The Two Faces of Globalization: Against Globalization as We Know It," *World Development* 31, no. 4 (2003): 667–83; Susan Roberts, "Gendered Globalization," *Mapping Women, Making Politics: Feminism Perspectives on Political Geography*. New York: Routledge, 2004, 127–40 in Ward, "Temporary Staffing, 'Geographies of Circulation,' and the Business of Delivering Neoliberalization.," 250.

60 Kevin Ward and Kim England, "Conclusion: Reflections on Neoliberalization," in *Neo-Liberalization: States, Networks, Peoples* (Malden, MA, Blackwell, 2007), 248–62., 250.

61 İŞKUR, List of Private Employment Agencies, İŞKUR, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.İŞKUR.gov.tr/tr-tr/ozelistihdamburolari/acikkapaliburolitesi.aspx>.

those agencies and official accounts on social networks. The aim of this analysis is to verify certain assumptions commonly shared by interviewees in the sector or observed in the field.

Private employment agencies in Turkey are members of associations organized at city, national, and international<sup>62</sup> levels and are obliged to submit statistical activity reports to İŞKUR every three months. According to statistics compiled by İŞKUR from those reports, 291,713 people were mediated by private employment agencies between June 2004 and 2013. 59% of those employees were university graduates.<sup>63</sup> As of 2015, 404 private employment agencies operate with official license in Turkey and 293 of them (74%) are based in Istanbul.<sup>64</sup>

I converted the detailed information gathered on private employment agencies into quantitative data and provide a descriptive analysis of them. I followed the criteria below to prepare the data for the evaluation:

- ◆ When the agency was a global one, I preferred to use the foundation date of the local branch in Turkey instead of that of the global firm. The reason is that the original dates provide no insight on the condition of the sector at the national scale of Turkey.
- ◆ When the number of the branches registered by İŞKUR conflicted with the number stated by the agencies on their official websites, I preferred the later.
- ◆ I analyzed branches on a city basis.
- ◆ When a company had more than one office in the same city, I counted them as one.

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62 The International European Confederation of Private Employment Agencies (Eurociett) was founded in 1967.

63 The percentages are based on figures provided by İŞKUR. İŞKUR, Statistical Information, İŞKUR, accessed January 2, 2015, <http://www.iskur.gov.tr/tr-tr/ozelistihdamburolari/istatistikibilgiler.aspx#dltop>.

64 Importantly companies conducting job seeker placement in the recruitment industry must be registered by İŞKUR while ones just doing selection do not have to be registered. This information implies that the industry is larger than the number shows. Drawing on informal sources, Aycan claimed that there were one thousand consultancy firms. Aycan, "Human Resource Management in Turkey-Current Issues and Future Challenges.," 258.

Table 3.1 Years of Foundation of Private Employment Agencies

Year of foundation	No.
1981	1
1982	2
1985	1
1986	1
1988	2
1989	2
1991	1
1992	4
1993	3
1994	4
1995	6
1996	2
1997	1
1998	6
1999	5
2000	8
2001	8
2002	9
2003	6
2004	4
2005	18
2006	10
2007	9
2008	17
2009	13
2010	16
2011	20
2012	19
2013	35
2014	31
2015	6
Unknown	134
<b>Total</b>	<b>404</b>

## PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

Table 3.2 Years of Foundation of Private Employment Agencies – Short List

Years of foundation	No.	Percent
Before 2003	66	16.3
2003 and later	204	50.5
Unknown	134	33.2
Total	404	100

As can be seen in the analysis, private employment agencies were operating before they were regulated and legalized, but the number of agencies increased dramatically after their legal regulation.





Table 3.3 Number of Private Employment Agencies by City – 2015

City of head-quarters	No.	Percent
İstanbul	299	74.0
İzmir	26	6.4
Ankara	23	5.7
Antalya	14	3.5
Bursa	10	2.5
Adana	4	1.0
Kayseri	4	1.0
Tekirdağ	4	1.0
Gaziantep	3	.7
Muğla	3	.7
Eskişehir	2	.5
Sakarya	2	.5
Aksaray	1	.2
Balıkesir	1	.2
Denizli	1	.2
Diyarbakır	1	.2
Düzce	1	.2
Kocaeli	1	.2
Manisa	1	.2
Nevşehir	1	.2
Samsun	1	.2
Tokat	1	.2
Total	404	100

## PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

Table 3.4 Number of Private Employment Agencies and Branches by City – 2015

City	No. of Main Offices	No. of Branches
İstanbul	299	6
İzmir	26	5
Ankara	23	4
Antalya	14	3
Bursa	10	4
Adana	4	2
Kayseri	4	1
Tekirdağ	4	
Gaziantep	3	1
Muğla	3	
Eskişehir	2	1
Sakarya	2	
Aksaray	1	1
Balıkesir	1	
Denizli	1	
Diyarbakır	1	
Düzce	1	
Kocaeli	1	5
Manisa	1	
Nevşehir	1	
Samsun	1	1
Tokat	1	
Konya		1
Total	404	35

As the figures given above illustrate, private employment agencies mainly operate from four large cities.

Table 3.5 Number of Private Employment Agencies by Year<sup>65</sup>

Year	Open Number	No. Newly Opened	No. Newly Closed	No. Closed by İŞKUR
2004	18	18	1	
2005	84	67	2	
2006	167	85	18	3
2007	209	60	23	
2008	268	82	28	
2009	300	60	47	1
2010	314	61	41	2
2011	344	71	44	3
2012	363	63	43	3
2013	364	44	42	
2014	406	84	48	2
Total			337	14

The official figures cover licensed private employment agencies, which have steadily increased in number.

337 such companies were closed between the years 2004-2014. Fourteen were closed by İŞKUR while the rest were closed upon request.<sup>66</sup> However, twenty- could still be found in the list issued in 2015, which means that they had been closed but are in operation again.<sup>67</sup>

There are eight different kinds of private employment agencies:<sup>68</sup>

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- 65 The starting year is 2004 since PEAs were legalized in 2003. The figures are based on information provided by İŞKUR upon a request number 62677 dated 10 May, 2015.
- 66 İŞKUR does not provide information about the reasons for closures. The common belief within the recruitment industry is that competitors informed on some companies for not complying with İŞKUR's regulations. Another common reason put forward is that the entrepreneurs decided to close the company down due to the failure.
- 67 Some among the 309 companies that closed may be operating under another name in the labor market.
- 68 This categorization covers the main services. There may be agencies that serve in more than one category. For this categorization, I owe special thanks to Nuri Yazgan who at the time of our interview oversaw private employment agencies under the authority of the Şişli Branch of İŞKUR.

- 1 Those that work with employees from every segment of the labor force and that differ in terms of education and qualifications
- 2 Those that work with high-level managers (headhunters)
- 3 Those that work in a specific field (such as medicine, finance, or insurance)
- 4 Those that mainly work with blue collar workers
- 5 Those that work with low-wage and temporary workers (such as personal service workers, cleaning staff and care workers)
- 6 Those that organize training programs which involve finding employment for trainees in relevant positions<sup>69</sup>
- 7 Those that work for a special purpose (finding jobs for the handicapped or for graduates of a certain university)
- 8 Resume database portals

Some private employment agencies provide services in more than one field. Further research would be required to find out how many companies and which types of companies outsource their recruitment processes to private employment agencies.

Research conducted by SETA shows that 5.1% of companies use PEAs for recruitment.<sup>70</sup> This rate reaches 11% among large companies.<sup>71</sup>

Further research would be required to learn which types of companies outsource their recruitment processes to these private employment agencies. However, for a clue about sectors that outsource the selection and placement process, I looked at references of two companies<sup>72</sup> that provide behavioral measurement services by means of inventories as recruitment tools. I categorized the clients they claimed to served on their website, and eliminated the

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69 Some private employment agencies cooperate with İŞKUR and act like public intermediaries. Those agencies provide training to job seekers and guarantee them jobs in the end. They either employ trainees themselves or the place them in other workplaces according to the conditions of the cooperation.

70 Gür et al., *Türkiye'nin İnsan Kaynağının Belirlenmesi*, 190.

71 Ibid.

72 See the references of those two companies: accessed August 5, 2015, <http://www.thomas-turkiye.com/referanslar> and [http://www.discakademi.com/files/DISC\\_Referans\\_Listesi.pdf](http://www.discakademi.com/files/DISC_Referans_Listesi.pdf).

ones appeared more than once. There was a total of 305 companies that received the recruitment assessment services from the two companies. Their sectoral distribution was as follows:

Table 3.6 Sectors of Clients Receiving Recruitment Services from Two Given Companies

Sector	No.
Construction, energy, chemical	50
Retail merchandising	34
Business consultancy	28
Finance, insurance, banking	24
Food	22
Information technologies, telecommunication	21
Conglomerate	20
Logistic, transport	15
Automotive	14
Education	13
Hospital, medical	12
Tourism, hospitality	10
Textile	9
E-commerce	6
Durables	5
Furniture, wood	5
Media	4
NGO, associations	4
Call center	3
Export-import	3
State institutions	3
Law	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>305</b>

Sophisticated recruitment tools are also used in non-service sectors in which social interaction is indirectly related to the work. As expected, the tools were used in sectors such as finance, banking, and retail in which social interaction with customers is a clear aspect of the work. This picture shows that tools used

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to measure behavior are also used for the social design of workplaces, that are not necessarily part of the service sector.

Table 3.7 The Types of Private Employment Agencies

Organization type	No.	Percent
Companies	364	90.1
Web Portals	23	5.7
Small and Medium Sized Enterprise, Platforms, NGOs	13	3.2
Universities	3	0.7
Municipalities	1	0.2
Total	404	100

Table 3.8 Scale of Private Employment Agencies

Scale	No.	Percent
Local	370	91.6
Global	32	7.9
Global and Local	1	.2
Unknown	1	.2
Total	404	100

Local companies dominate the industry with a market share of 91.6%. As a result, the international organization for private employment agencies does not attract large segment of the industry, which is largely comprised of local entrepreneurs. The reason is that it lobbies for global companies.

Table 3.9 Private Employment Agencies with Branches in Other Cities

Branches	No.	Percent
Company has no branches	374	92.6
Company has branches	29	7.2
Unknown	1	.2
Total	404	100

Table 3.10 Private Employment Agencies with Branches – No. of Branches

Number of offices (including the headquarters)	No.
2 branches	16
3 branches	3
4 branches	2
5 branches	4
6 branches	2
13 branches	1
15 branches	1
Total	29

Table 3.11 Fields of Activity of Private Employment Agencies

Field of Activity	No.	Percent
White-collar workers in no specific field	233	57.7
Temporary, low-profile, blue collar workers	88	21.8
Information and technology, e-commerce	15	3.7
White and blue-collar workers in no specific field	13	3.2
Small and medium sized enterprises	6	1.5
Finance, accounting, insurance, auditing	5	1.2
Health industry	4	1.0
Call centers	3	.7
Logistics	3	.7
Retail	3	.7
Tourism	3	.7
Energy	1	.2
Construction	1	.2
Drivers	1	.2
University students	1	.2
Chemical industry	1	.2
Maritime Industry	1	.2
Creative industries; art director, etc.	1	.2
Sport	1	.2
Unknown	20	5.0
Total	404	100

I classified the fields in which agencies in the list operate. I observed that agencies differ in terms of the types of labor they find for employers. Although all receive the same license from İŞKUR to carry out selection and placement services, some operate only for the employment of executives (headhunting firms), while others mediate the employment of specialists or easily-replaceable employees such as call center workers. A considerable proportion of the agencies serve to employ of white-collar workers without a focus on any specific field (58%). This means they apply the same recruitment tools to all the white-collar workers regardless of sector. On the other hand, the number of PEAs for serving blue collar and temporary workers is lower. One reason is that intermediary activities for people like house keepers, cleaners, and baby sitters with low education are likely to be informal.<sup>73</sup>

Table 3.12 Level of Education of Job Seekers Private Employment Agencies Place

Job seekers education level	No.	Percent
University	267	66.1
Lower than university	87	21.5
General	29	7.2
Unknown	21	5.2
Total	404	100

The table shows the level of education of the job seekers that agencies select and place. 66.1% of the agencies mediate the employment of white-collar university graduates.

73 The head of the Istanbul Private Employment Agencies Association stated that more than 200 private employment agencies work without a license. The working conditions in the fields in which those agencies operate (mostly the field of care work) are claimed to be inhumane since they are free from state control through licensing. İÖBD, "Çgange in The Regulation of Private Employment Agencies (Özel İstihdam Bürosu Yönetmelik Değişikliği)," İÖBD, accessed May 12, 2013, <http://www.ioibd.com/basin-bultenleri/Ozel-Istihdam-Burosuyonetmelik-degisikligi-28.html>.



Table 3.13 Services of Private Employment Agencies

Services provided alongside recruitment	No.	Percent
Only recruitment	201	49.8
Management consulting: talent management, performance systems, reorganization	107	26.5
Training: human resources management, personal development, time management	68	16.8
Payroll services	54	13.4
Coaching	14	3.5
NGO, Municipality, Organized Industrial zone, Chamber of Commerce etc.	9	2.2
Vocational training	9	2.2
Labor law consulting	7	1.7
Talent management	6	1.5
IT (Information Technology) consultancy	6	1.5
Assessment center	5	1.2
Financial consulting	4	1.0
Psychology consulting	1	.2
Not applicable (i.e., portals)	29	7.2
Other	27	6.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>404</b>	

Alongside recruitment, companies provide a variety of services such as management consulting, human resources applications, law consultancy and professional education. Half the companies provide only recruitment services, while the rest offer other services, as well. The most commonly provided services in the field are management consulting, training on human resources management, and pay roll services. The kinds of services provided alongside recruitment also provides a clue as to other sectors related to the recruitment industry. Consulting on productivity and management tools, accounting, reorganization of employee structures are among them.

### § 3.4 The Area of Influence of Private Employment Agencies

İŞKUR provides a list of PEAs on its website. However, many other companies that do not have a PEA license operate in the industry. Some are not required

to have a license because they do selection or assessment but do not realize the placement. Others hire out employees under the name of consulting. All these companies actually operating in the same industry may be seen together at sectoral summits, career events organized at universities, and career fairs held by public institutions. Therefore, the scale of the recruitment market is wider than what the list of the licensed companies suggests.

The tools and methods sold by PEAs do not simply consist of recruitment services. The recruitment industry operates in the field of human resources management, and companies that provide selection, placement, and assessment services also sell services and tools for all other processes of human resources management such as promotion, reorganization, and performance systems. Apart from conducting selection and placement private employment agencies organize training and workshops, implement performance assessment systems, work as business consultant and teach career management.

The labor market norms created by PEAs are spread through various agents. They are carried to human resources specialists of companies through training programs. However, human resources specialists, whether in PEAs or in companies – are not the only ones concerned with assessing the distance between one's behavior and career. As one of the entrepreneurs emphasized, managers are also expected to adopt the same approach and are included in training programs offered by the recruitment industry:

We have training programs on several issues such as time management and team work. Those are the first programs that companies stop buying in times of crisis. But training on competency-based interviews sells well. People used to suggest this program only to human resources specialists, but managers take the course, too, as they are part of the selection process. (Entrepreneur, Female, AB)

The first phase of the selection process, which involves the formation of a short list for managers to evaluate, is carried out by internal recruitment specialists or an outsourced private employment agency. However, recruitment specialists expect managers to possess a human resources management perspective. This perspective involves paying attention to performance predictors and knowing about labor law rather than just about the technical capacity and experience of job candidates. An entrepreneur underscored the point:

Managers should have the qualifications of human resources management. We call it integrated human resources management. They should know the legal obligations in cases of dismissal. We have training programs on labor law for managers. (Entrepreneur, Male, AA)

The practices and norms offered by PEAs are also spread through cooperation with universities, state institutions, and municipalities as detailed above. This cooperation entails career events, training programs, and committee organizations which are assigned the role of solving the problem of unemployment. Considering the extent of the fields in which they operate, the sphere of influence of PEAs is larger than is suggested by the list of licensed private employment agencies.

### § 3.5 The Entrepreneurs of Private Employment Agencies

Throughout the interviews, I observed that entrepreneurs had certain features in common. Many had studied in the United States and their studies involved the intersection of fields such as psychology, data base management, of information technology, and marketing. Following their studies, they transferred new entrepreneurial ideas to Turkey. In addition, entrepreneurial interviewees argued that the sector was dominated by women. For a discussion of these observations and arguments in quantitative terms, I provide figures regarding of features of the registered agencies in this section.

Since the recruitment industry is dominated by small companies the distinction between entrepreneurs and recruitment specialists is not clear cut. Entrepreneurs and their employees work together closely. Entrepreneurs are not just entrepreneurs; they are mainly professionals of the sector.

Recruitment specialists are expected to have knowledge of labor law as well as of software development. The latter is required to organize and develop productive resume databases. They are also expected to have expertise in psychology which they use to create character inventories. Marketing skills are important for the sale of services. Having experience in certain fields is vital to carry out activities in the recruitment sector. Most entrepreneurs of private employment agencies with or without licenses have experience in the fields of

management and business administration, information technology and marketing.

Some agencies provide specialized recruitment for certain sectors such as medicine or logistics. Such startups are established by specialists with experience in the sectors in question either as human resources specialists or in other positions. On the other hand, entrepreneurs of agencies that serve companies regardless of sectors have experience in variety of sectors, but mainly in the field of marketing. The ideal entrepreneur of a PEA has experience in the fields of both marketing and human resources.

The entrepreneurs of the consultancies I interviewed either had long-term experience in their sector (mainly in global companies) or were experienced in marketing and inspired by practices in the United States. All were informed about the most up-to-date management resources produced in the United States as they had either visited the country or acquired those resources.

PEA entrepreneurs experience a change of workplace, as well, since most were former salaried professionals. In times of economic crisis, unemployed HR professionals tend to start their own businesses. The entrepreneur of one PEA claims that the ease with which recruitment industry startups could be established led the competition:

Everyone who became unemployed from 1995-2001 became a human resources consultant because starting-up was easy. (Entrepreneur, Female, AJ)

It is easy to start a business in the field of human resources as fixed capital is not needed at the beginning. This obliges agencies to use sophisticated methods to assert their professionalism vis-à-vis competition in the recruitment business.

To discuss the assumptions that recruitment specialists mentioned in their interviews, I investigated the profiles of the entrepreneurs of the 404 private employment agencies listed by İŞKUR<sup>74</sup> using their websites and official accounts in social networks such as LinkedIn.

In preparing data on the entrepreneurs of private employment agencies for analysis, the following criteria were followed:

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74 İŞKUR, List of Private Employment Agencies.

- ◆ Information about some entrepreneurs was neither found on their official websites nor in other available media. They were coded as “unknown.”
- ◆ When there was more than one entrepreneur, the one with more experience in the sector and with more shared, professional information was included in the analysis.
- ◆ The bachelor degrees of entrepreneurs were considered in the analysis. Although some pursued studies beyond undergraduate level, these were not included in the analysis so that all the entrepreneurs could be analyzed on the same basis.
- ◆ For global agencies, high-level managers of local branches were included in the analysis of lieu of the founders of the agency. The founder of a global firm would not be relevant at the national scale of Turkey.
- ◆ Although other agencies required some companies, the original entrepreneur was taken into consideration in the analysis. Therefore, the current owners of a certain companies are different than its entrepreneur.

Table 3.14 Entrepreneurs of Private Employment Agencies – Gender

Gender of the entrepreneur	No.	Percent
Female	129	31.9
Male	134	33.2
Not applicable	16	4.0
Unknown	125	30.9
Total	404	100

Although participants claim that the sector is dominated by females, the percentage of female entrepreneurs is close to that of males.<sup>75</sup> But still, the gender of the salaried employees working at the agencies needs to be studied. The reason interviewees claim, is that women came to dominate the recruitment

75 It is claimed that before being turned into human resources departments, personnel departments were managed by males who were former male soldiers. This is in line with the argument that back then, workers were expected to comply with the rules of the Fordist era. Ex-soldiers were expected to be capable of disciplining employees under the Fordist regime. The relation between the gender of human resources managers and changes in management concerns that now involve emotions and the character of the employees requires further research.

sector only in the last twenty years. One interviewee explains the change with the profile of personnel managers:

When personnel departments were turned into human resources departments, more women workers were employed for the departments. Personnel managers had been soldiers or had experience at state institutions previously. (Entrepreneur, Male, AA)

Table 3.15 Entrepreneurs of Private Employment Agencies – University

University at which the entrepreneur studied	No.	Percent
İstanbul University	33	8.5
Boğaziçi University	31	8.0
Middle Eastern Technical University	20	5.2
Marmara University	13	3.4
ITU, YTU, Hacettepe, Bilkent, Bilgi, Koç, Ege, Işık, Ankara, Dokuz Eylül, Anadolu, Gazi, Yeditepe, Uludağ, Beykent Universities	63	16.3
Univ. abroad	16	4.1
Other	17	4.4
High school	1	0.01
Unknown	194	50.1
Subtotal	388	100
Not valid (non-profit organizations)	16	
Total	404	

50% of entrepreneurs whose university is known are graduates of the country's most prestigious universities (97 out of 194 from İstanbul University, Boğaziçi University, Middle Eastern Technical University, and Marmara University).

Table 3.16 Entrepreneurs of Private Employment Agencies – University Departments Graduated

Department in which the Entrepreneur studied	No.	Percent
Business administration, management, economics, labor economics, industrial engineering, marketing	84	21.7
Engineering	25	6.5
Social sciences	21	5.4
Psychology, psychological counseling or guidance	13	3.4
Information Technologies	10	2.6
Other	11	2.8
Unknown	223	57.6
Subtotal	387	100
Not applicable	17	
Total	404	

Most entrepreneurs are graduates of management-related fields such as business administration. Certain other professions are common among entrepreneurs of the recruitment industry – management, marketing, engineering, social sciences, psychology and information technology being the most common.

Table 3.17 Entrepreneurs of Private Employment Agencies – Professional Experience

	No.	Percent
Experience at a large company	118	76
Information Technology experience	19	12
HRM or Management Consulting experience	97	62
Marketing experience	25	16
Total number of employees	156*	

\* The reason the total number of column is more than 156 is that some entrepreneurs fall into more than one category.

The figures concerning entrepreneurs whose past careers are accessible indicate that experience in the human resources management department of a large company is really advantageous for running one's own business in the

sector. The reason is that entrepreneurs use methods they learned at the company's in which they worked. 78% (122) of the sample had past experiences in more than one of the sectors mentioned in the Table 3.17. Considering the full list, 36.9% of companies were established by entrepreneurs with experience in certain fields; human resources management, information technology, marketing, and experience at a large company.





## Formation of New Employees by Private Employment Agencies

*Every word in Heaven is a reflection of the heart's intent.*

İbni Zerhani<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter I discuss how an employable job seeker is defined by the recruitment industry in the new capitalism and why it has been defined in that certain way. I include the experience of job seekers at the end of the chapter.

Candidates are expected to present themselves using individual discourse with organizational terms<sup>2</sup> and to redefine their pasts in compliance with corporate values. Employable people are those who act in a responsible manner throughout their lives not just through their careers, and they possess expected behavioral and technical features, that are compatible with each other. Beyond that, a complete overlap between life and business is sought since the notion of the workplace as a site for learning has been weakened.

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- 1 Fictitious character in Orhan Pamuk, *Kafamda Bir Tuhaflık*, (İstanbul, İletişim, 2014), 307.
  - 2 Sarah Campbell and Celia Roberts, "Migration, Ethnicity and Competing Discourses in the Job Interview: Synthesizing the Institutional and Personal," *Discourse & Society* 18, no. 3 (May 2007): 244, doi:10.1177/0957926507075474.

The fact that employees are expected to be emotionally involved in and personally compatible with their job evokes a point made in critical studies that employ the literature of subjectivity. The point in question is that employers intend to manage the emotions of the workers and expect full psychological involvement from them.<sup>3</sup> Kunda and Barley argue that in the new workplace the “qualities developed at work are expected to be devoted exclusively to the organization” by means of normative management strategies such as social activities organized by the employer.<sup>4</sup> Those activities are realized through work rather than being organized at work; in other words, they are organized to make the work more effective instead to provide relief from work.<sup>5</sup> Grugulis, Dundon and Wilkinson claim that work “encompasses the totality of employee lives.”<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Hughes points out that job competencies are perceived to be “expressive of an employee’s total identity.”<sup>7</sup> This argument is partly right: emotion is managed. However, normative management methods are not applied to make workers devote themselves more fully to work; employers are not interested in the worker as a whole. What makes the contemporary situation different is that an employee is considered as individual who construct their lives in compliance with market needs. Employers are not interested in the worker as a whole; they care only for their utilitarian proper-

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- 3 The idea that the increased importance of personality implied a consideration of the employee as a whole person is also argued within the managerial paradigm. Bowen, Ledford, and Nathan argue that candidates are not placed in a position, but in an organization since employers are more concerned with retaining employees and with their level of satisfaction. Bowen, Ledford, and Nathan, “Hiring for the Organization, Not the Job,” 39.
- 4 Stephen R. Barley and Gideon Kunda, “Design and Devotion: Surges of Rational and Normative Ideologies of Control in Managerial Discourse,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (1992): 363–99, doi:10.2307/2393449.
- 5 Special thanks to Eylem Akçay for discussion of the issue.
- 6 Grugulis, Dundon, and Wilkinson, “Cultural Control and The Culture Manager’: Employment Practices in a Consultancy.” in Hughes, “Bringing Emotion to Work: Emotional Intelligence, Employee Resistance and the Reinvention of Character.,” 613.
- 7 Hughes, “Bringing Emotion to Work: Emotional Intelligence, Employee Resistance and the Reinvention of Character.,” 613.

ties. Only the properties of candidates that suit to the job are recognized, leading to the degradation of their other properties. Individuals are evaluated in relation to their socializing capacity, isolated from their actual social relations.

Candidates are deemed to have appropriate career lives if there is an overlap between their personalities, career histories and their wills to build careers. Skeggs criticizes this approach, claiming that recruiters' understanding of the self is based on "notions of an interested, optimizing, risk-taking self and such theories, focusing as they do on middle-class values, rely upon ideals of the self-related to the bourgeois individual subject."<sup>8</sup> The pursuit of employers or this overlap has been defined as an unreach goal by authors in critical management studies. Cremin states "employability is the dream of ontological closure of oneness with the boss,"<sup>9</sup> and Shields and Grant underscore that "labor objectification is an employer aspiration, not an accomplished reality."<sup>10</sup>

Employees who are expected to develop their careers in accordance with their behavioral characteristics by focusing on themselves are promised self-actualization. Sennett argues that individuals are dragged into an impasse when they are forced to focus on their own selves.<sup>11</sup> He claims that individuals compelled to mold themselves are deprived of the art of play. He gives the example of plays among children who learn how they present their emotions while playing with the rules that are not yet fixed, subject to change and negotiation. Individuals who are compelled to form themselves would not find an answer (as there is no answer or principle that can be produced alone) and would show "narcissistic" behaviors. Companies manage workers by instigating narcissistic behaviors with the aim of counting the challenges that workers pose to the existing conditions at work, which they consider as an indispensable part of their formation of self.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, companies create a range of

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8 Beverley Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004). Conveyed in Paula Black, "Class Matters in UK Higher Education," *Women's Studies International Forum* 28, no. 2-3 (May 2005): 127-38, doi:10.1016/j.wsif.2005.04.003., 134.

9 Cremin, "Never Employable Enough.," 134.

10 Shields and Grant, "Psychologising the Subject.," 3.

11 Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, 313-333.

12 Ibid.

positions and form a bureaucracy of promotion and reduction not out of necessity, but to provide employees with a narcissistic promise.<sup>13</sup> Sennett adds that employees do not experience alienation but rather forced attachment to the work. Sennett not only focuses on emotional subsumption at work, but pays attention to the formation of character in tune with the labor market.

The promise of self-actualization conforms to the expectations of job seekers to some extent. Employees and job seekers who embrace the discourse of happiness – a promise of satisfaction when one’s character and one’s job correspond – define themselves in the terms of the business.

Even if the employees do not embrace the discourse of happiness, they may comply with its expectations. Those job candidates who are able to show that they are good at doing whatever is expected will succeed in getting the job. Brown, Hesketh, and Williams call people who understand "employability as a positional game" as "players."<sup>14</sup> All players are not destined to be employed; some of them may not be good "players."<sup>15</sup> The other group, namely "purists," who "understand employability as a meritocratic race," may refuse to play and are eliminated at the beginning of the recruitment process.<sup>16</sup> One of my interviewees who was looking for a job as a salesman defined a good worker as someone who doesn't bring emotions to work and endures the stresses of selling. Players are aware that bring their emotions to work is not sustainable to. Therefore, their act of happiness in a job interview makes them "players" and is considered to be a play rather than a real emotional expression.

Confidence in one’s work comes with seniority. However, when behaviors come to be assessed in their own right, the recruitment industry ignores their relation to seniority. Whoever is better at performing expected behaviors gets the job regardless of the amount of their work experience. Therefore [behavioral] skill and seniority are detached from one another.

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13 Ibid.

14 Brown, Hesketh, and Williams, *The Mismanagement of Talent*, 126.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid., 137.

The required flexibility of labor leads to the “regulation of the employees’ self rather than the work they are engaged,” as Kunda claims.<sup>17</sup> Hughes also argues that “we’re being judged by a new yardstick: not just how smart we are, or by our training or expertise, but also by how well we handle ourselves and each other.”<sup>18</sup> He calls the change as “reinvention of character” by “corporate colonization.”<sup>19</sup> What distinguishes his claim from Sennett’s is that he argues that “changes leading to the present-day organization of work have not instrumented a corrosion of character, rather, they have intensified demands for character.”<sup>20</sup> However, Banks is not so critical about the inclusion of worker’s character in work.<sup>21</sup> He thinks the blurring between the work and non-work elements of life may carry an opportunity for the future. He suggests that refusing to work only for money could lead to a “re-moralization of economic relations.” And, one should avoid claim that “re-moralization” sincerely leads to either freedom or slavery.<sup>22</sup> However, Heelas points out that the opportunity for freedom is valid only for the upper classes (or core workers).<sup>23</sup> Grugulis, Dundon and Wilkinson have reservations about the liberating promise of the normative management tools.<sup>24</sup> Instead, they point to the control established over employees through the promise, arguing that

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- 17 Gideon Kunda, *Engineering Culture: Control and Commitment in a High-Tech Corporation* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 2009) in Irena Grugulis, Tony Dundon, and Adrian Wilkinson, “Cultural Control and The Culture Manager”, 2.
- 18 Hughes, “Bringing Emotion to Work: Emotional Intelligence, Employee Resistance and the Reinvention of Character.,” 603.
- 19 Hughes, “Bringing Emotion to Work” borrows the term “corporate colonization” from Casey, C, *Work, Self and Society: After Industrialism*, London: SAGE, 1995.
- 20 He refers to book Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character*.
- 21 Mark Banks, “Moral Economy and Cultural Work,” *Sociology* 40, no. 3 (June 2006): 467, doi:10.1177/0038038506063669.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Paul Heelas, “Work Ethics, Soft Capitalism and the ‘Turn to Life,’” in *Cultural Economy: Cultural Analysis and Commercial Life* (London: SAGE, 2002), 92.
- 24 Grugulis, Dundon, and Wilkinson, “Cultural Control and the ‘Culture Manager’: Employment Practices in a Consultancy.,” 27.

[n]ormative control is not a system that will entirely liberate employees from alienating regulations, nor will it inevitably deprive them of agency. It has the potential to offer certain freedoms and contains distinct totalitarian tendencies but these are set against one another and mediated through the employment relationship.<sup>25</sup>

The increased importance afforded to behavioral traits in job requirements requires potential employees to pay more attention to their own personal traits. They are expected to know themselves well and to become aware of their "natural" tendencies. Heelas claims that this approach – which works on the individual rather than on the work – presents a new ethic and defines the current era as an "exploratory mode of capitalism," which advises employees to "know themselves."<sup>26</sup> He argues that the "problem of work" was turned into a problem of "self-work ethic." Rules of the Fordist era, such as compliance, do not apply. There is no method, rule, criteria, or reference upon which "knowing oneself" can be based.

Hughes argues that the new morality resides in "individual discretion."<sup>27</sup> In that regard, Thrift draws on Heelas<sup>28</sup> to point out that concern for developing a career "becomes a spiritual discipline."<sup>29</sup> The exploratory new capitalism aims to explore the performance which has not yet been performed and thus, leads employees to explore themselves. Therefore, the new capitalism neither offers any specific moral principles to the individual nor any ethical principles for the social system. The absence of moral expectation leads employees to believe that individuals may create their own morality. Employees who work on themselves and assume total personal responsibility would can only themselves for their failures.

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25 Ibid.

26 Heelas, "Work Ethics, Soft Capitalism and the 'Turn to Life,'" 83.

27 Hughes, "Bringing Emotion to Work: Emotional Intelligence, Employee Resistance and the Reinvention of Character," 605.

28 Paul Heelas, "The Sacralisation of the Self and New Age Capitalism," in *Social Change in Contemporary Britain* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), 139–66.

29 Thrift, *Theory, Culture & Society: Knowing Capitalism*, 41.

The bureaucracy of the Fordist era is criticized in the post-Fordist managerial literature for being based on the idea that “individuals cannot be trusted to manage their own behavior.”<sup>30</sup> Consequently, new management methods are defined as tools that provide more freedom as they enable people to manage themselves. However, the new management sets the rules of self-management.

#### § 4.1 The Narrative of the Employable Employee by the Recruitment Industry

The intensification of work in high-performance work systems led employers to define socialization at work as waste. The time defined as "waste" includes time that new employees spend at work learning the job assigned to them and becoming a socially and technically fit employee. The workplace as a site of learning for new employees is expected to allow the gradual development of a social dimension of the task since each worker has a different background of technical and organizational capability and experiences. For instance, regardless of their formal qualifications good recruitment specialists develop practical interviewing skills after having gained a certain amount of experience in work. The tasks of a job are partly carried out by means of tacit knowledge obtained through experience. Time spent in the mean-time is not indirect to the work, but inherent to it. However, this time expected to be spent outside of work and the workplace as a site of learning has been weakened.

This sociality is part of job. For example, an affectionate nurse and a talkative salesperson are thought to carry out their jobs better because of their social skills. The social dimension of job is thought to optimize the job. What is new is that not only social time at work but also the social dimensions of jobs are being managed. The social dimension of the job – or in other words, the inherent sociality of a job – requires a different kind of management. Social time at work was already being managed. Apart from the sociality inher-

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30 Bowen, Ledford, and Nathan, “Hiring for the Organization, Not the Job.,” 36.

ent to the work, the social time indirectly related to work is managed by surveillance systems or basic, stated rules.<sup>31</sup> The rules regulating the length of time for lunch, the conditions for having break, the requirement that an excuse be entered into a software system when one leaves one's desk, or the use of software to track employees working out of the office are examples of the ways indirect time is controlled.

Management of the sociality inherent to a job differs from direct control in that it requires that the design of social relations in the workplace. The organization is considered to be interdependent, constituting a whole body. Therefore the managed sociality is defined with special terms related to the organization such as "company culture," "organizational citizenship,"<sup>32</sup> and the "right chemistry"<sup>33</sup> between employees and the organization. The compatibility of employee with the company and the position is sought by recruiters through a candidate's interpersonal and transferable skills. Employees are expected to have both the technical and the behavioral traits "required" by the position and the company.

Working well is not enough to be considered a good worker, since traits beyond technical capacity are expected as one entrepreneur who participated in the research emphasized:

People have a certain behavioral structure, energy and knowledge. When those three come together, people can do something. They have personality, skill, and the motivation. It is important how you use your technical skills, and it is determined by the other two. (Entrepreneur, Psychologist, Female, AP)

The features thought to make an employee work with the highest efficiency are possible through characterizing the positions. The character attributed to

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31 It is problematic to define time spent on activities is indirectly related to work as non-work time. To distinguish social time at work and the social dimension of work, I used it in this way.

32 Bowen, Ledford, and Nathan, "Hiring for the Organization, Not the Job.," 46. The term citizenship is interestingly used for employees of a firm at a time when the real citizens are described as customers.

33 Coverdill and Finlay, "Fit and Skill in Employee Selection: Insights from a Study of Headhunters.," 106.



a position is called "competency" in the recruitment industry. New employees are expected to possess the social skills that the job requires outside of the workplace, too. Moreover, how employees handle themselves socially in a job task is part of a social design managed by human resources specialists for the sake of workplace for productivity. What private employment agencies seek and manage are the competencies that will optimize a certain job. The most suitable candidate neither necessarily has the best qualifications nor generally socially approved behavioral traits. Instead, job candidate would only need to meet certain requirements. This is stated clearly by one interviewee:

You define the competencies for the positions instead of trying to know who the candidate is. You just look for the competency you want, which makes your job – selection of a candidate- easier. (Entrepreneur, Female, AB)

The requirement to fit into an the organization where the social dimension of work is managed for the sake of productivity does not render technical qualifications less important. Technical requirements are the skills needed to carry out a certain job, while behavioral requirements (i.e. transferable, soft skills) enable technical skills to be used with maximum performance.<sup>34</sup>

Although technical attributes are important, they are not evaluated per se, and competency is sought, as well. For recruitment specialists, if technical capabilities are critical, soft skills constitute the means of elimination. While technical capabilities are considered the first step of the selection and in the preparation of a shortlist, behavioral requirements are laid down for the final elimination in the recruitment process. The elimination of candidates is justified through the requirement of certain social skills.

The majority of recruiter interviewees gave examples of candidates who had graduated from an eligible university but were did not seem sufficiently

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34 Hesketh, Brown and Williams argue that "the value of education as a screening device" was higher when the access to higher education was limited. Personal traits became attached to the requirements when mass education become the norm. Brown, Hesketh, and Williams, *The Mismanagement of Talent*, 32. I focus on the reasons for the intensification of work, but do not oppose their argument.

assertive in the interview, implying that the proofs of technical does not guarantee performance at work. Indeed, the most common phrase encountered during interviews was “some candidates are from the best universities, but they can’t express themselves”<sup>35</sup> indicating that technical capability is not enough to be selected anymore. It is not that technical skills are no longer important; instead, something more is expected from workers. When it is said that “technical capability is not enough,” it implies that the contemporary expectation of certain behaviors has changed. Participants expressed this in several ways, as can be seen below:

I am not interested in someone who graduated from Boğaziçi University. A person can’t be eligible just because they studied at Boğaziçi University. We ask people to tell us something they did, something they are proud of – and if they say “I studied at Boğaziçi University,” we eliminate them. Their family may have led them there. We understand many things from a single question. (Entrepreneur, Female, AG)

You look for a person who is able to execute a job. There are so many Boğaziçi University graduates who can’t express themselves. So you wonder how they are going to take any responsibility. They must give the feeling that they can shoulder responsibility. (Recruitment specialist at a large textile retailer, formerly a PEA employee, AC)

The common understanding was “I graduated from Boğaziçi University or Istanbul Technical University, and I can now start to work as a manager for a good salary.” Some companies don’t want people from those universities and ask for people from other universities because they won't be spoiled and will be more hard-working. (Entrepreneur, Female, AJ)

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35 The argument that the quotation contains is not questioned here. Rather it is used to show an attitude that reflects the lesser importance attributed to the education and technical capacity.

The university you graduated from used to be really important. People working in the financial centers of the city were from Boğaziçi University. Managers would consider the university from which a job candidate graduated. It is still valid to some extent; some people regard their universities like their hometowns and prefer someone from their own hometown. But professional companies have a different approach now. (Entrepreneur, Psychologist, Male, AO)

In some of the companies you can't find an employee from the universities that are not in the top. This is also discrimination, especially towards the people who graduated from the universities in Anatolia. Okay, your success is admirable but the boss of Vestel is not a university graduate and neither are Bill Gates or Steve Jobs. What is the remarkable thing you have done? (Entrepreneur, Female, BF)

My customer gives me an order to place a seller saying that "the candidate can be a new graduate; I will provide the training but they should have a competency for selling." You invite people who have graduated from very good universities for job interviews and you see that they are not good at expressing themselves. (Recruitment specialist, Female, AN)

There is a consistency between the discourse of the top-level managers of companies and that within the recruitment industry: both have high expectations about the behavioral traits of employees. The CEO of Turkcell, when interviewed by a newspaper journalist, stated that he is not interested in the schools of job candidates:

I graduated from Harvard, but believe me, I don't place any importance on the school from which candidates graduated; I care about their enthusiasm – whether they are hard-working and innovative.<sup>36</sup>

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36 Ceo gave a panel talk on the fifth anniversary of research about the 500 largest companies in Turkey, which was organized by Fortune Magazine and sponsored by a major telecommunications company. "New Markets are Good but Be Careful with the Competition for Cheapness

Although there are differing opinions among recruitment industry entrepreneurs about recruitment strategies of largest companies,<sup>37</sup> they all agreed that a candidate's university is not the only criteria on which to select and eliminate candidates, regardless of the fact that some hiring managers prioritize the schools from which candidates graduated while others do not. The general opinion that people who have graduated from a reputable university are not necessarily good employees does not mean that these schools are found inadequate. Instead, employers expect universities to teach employees how to in line with the needs of the market needs.<sup>38</sup>

Although the recruitment industry distinguishes between technical capability and behavioral traits, that employers demand certain ways of behavior from employees is nothing new. Technical capability was not deemed to be merely technical even in the Fordist era. It was considered a sign of compliant behavior (i.e. compliance with institutions and social settings).<sup>39</sup> Having graduated from a prestigious school once used to be a sign of having a “right” position in society. In the Fordist era, this indicated the belief of an employee in institutional structures. Complying with the rules, recognizing the hierarchy based on seniority, and being patient were some of the behavioral traits previously expected from employees. Therefore, there is continuity vis-à-vis the demand for behavioral traits, but it manifested in a different way. Behavioral expectations have changed and intensified in the new capitalism compared to those of the Fordist era. What counts as success has changed. In one's career history, being argumentative rather than being compliant has come to be more appreciated. Workers were expected to comply with the rules in the Fordist era, while now in the Post-Fordist era, non-compliance with the rules is expected from them. However, non-complying with the rules does not mean behaving in a way that would be unacceptable to the employer; instead, it means taking more initiative. One entrepreneur interviewee points out that the information sought about job candidate has changed;

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(Yeni Pazarlar iyi ama Ucuzluk Yarışına Dikkat)," Milliyet Newspaper, accessed December 7, 2012, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/yeni-pazarlar-iyi-ama-ucuzluk-yarisina-dikkat/ekonomi/ekonomidetay/14.09.2012/1596014/default.htm>

37 The recruitment strategies of the largest companies requires additional study.

38 Brown and Scase, *Higher Education and Corporate Realities*, 13.

39 Ibid., 112.

The way the candidate sat and talked used to be important. There used to be recruitment criteria related to the experience of a manager recruiting and the tradition. Appearance was very important. A job candidate without a tie would not be employed and could be put on a blacklist. And it would not be acceptable if he or she started to argue about an issue, which is to say, he or she was not supposed to argue. Now, after ten to fifteen years, we see the change. Conversely, candidates who have the courage to stand up for their claims started to be employed. (Entrepreneur, Psychologist, Male, AO)

It is claimed that the new organizational culture is to be created by workers whose skills are not constrained by the strictly structured order of the company.<sup>40</sup> Thus, employees can enhance the work assigned to them to a much further extent than is expected of them. The flexible target is thought to unfetter the workers, enabling them to realize themselves to the fullest extent.

In both the Fordist and post-Fordist eras, the aim has been to find out whether the required traits that predict performance in a certain position exist outside of the workplace. The contemporary recruitment industry also measures one's position in society. However, the aim is not to understand whether a candidate is respected in society – by their hard work or compliance – as was the case in the Fordist era. In Fordist era, candidates were expected to adopt behaviors that were approved by society even in the workplace, while in the new capitalism, the converse is the case. Candidates are now expected to adopt behaviors that lead them to have high-performance at work and in their daily lives, as well, regardless of society's stance with regard to those behaviors. If candidates display those traits outside the workplace, as well, how they present themselves in the workplace is deemed consistent. Therefore, there high-performance is sustainable.

The new management approach that pays attention to behavioral traits is presented and justified with reference to differences among generations vis-à-vis behavioral traits. This discourse draws a line between old and new management approaches. There is a tendency to explain the difference between the

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40 Bowen, Ledford, and Nathan, "Hiring for the Organization, Not the Job."

approaches in terms of the different character of the new generation of workers rather than in terms of a change in social settings that led to the demand for a different kind of character. The duality is created by the definition of newcomers, namely "generation Y."<sup>41</sup> Employees in the new era are defined as rule-breaking and not loyal to the old values. They are and forcing out old-fashioned managers who are used to working within a hierarchy. The profile of an ideal employee is constructed through the definition of the new generation. Old managers are defined as paternalist, and as interested in the voices of their subordinates, as if these behaviors took place in a context-free environment.<sup>42</sup>

Individualism – together with the intensification of interdependency and the demise of hierarchical structure is defended in opposition to the “old-fashioned” bureaucratic structure of traditional companies:

It is a time of performance for companies. Feedback is very important. Managers did not use to talk to employees, but now during certain performance periods, managers inform employees about what is good and what is bad about them and what needs to be developed. (Entrepreneur, Female, BF)

Employees of the old management approach are blamed for creating an obstacles for the new approach. Human resources specialists advise experienced managers and senior employees to develop their communication skills by referring to the recruitment industry, which also provides coaching services.<sup>43</sup>

There might be a manager who is very skilled but not good at communications. There might be complaints and you may lose employees. It increases the costs. Coaching is used for those cases, for employees who are skilled but not good at communication. People who don't

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41 In human resources terminology, generations are segmented in terms of their attitudes towards work. Those who were born between the years 1980-1990 are called “generation Y” and are defined as assertive, disliking hierarchy, and not having difficulty with changing jobs. See; "Generation Y Determines the Rules of the New Work Life," *Arel University*, accessed September 8, 2012, [http://aresem.arel.edu.tr/images/j\\_yenerasyon/basin\\_bulteni.pdf](http://aresem.arel.edu.tr/images/j_yenerasyon/basin_bulteni.pdf).

42 Wendy Hollway, “Fitting Work: Psychological Assessment in Organizations,” in *Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity* (New York: Methuen, 1984), 323–39.

43 Coaching services are a form of personal career consultancy.

have interpersonal skills will not be managers in the future. (Entrepreneur, Psychologist, Male, AO)

Transferable skills have become more important and seniority has lost its meaning<sup>44</sup> accordingly. One is valued as an employee not for experience, but if for whether one socially fits into the position. Most interviewees claim that working for more than four years a single workplace is considered negative for the person's career history. A long tenure in one company is associated with not being adaptive, open-minded, or willing to change one's conditions. It means not feeling responsibility for the company's interests and just being interested in the wage being paid. The focus on social skills has increased as the labor force was losing social security rights that would protect senior workers.<sup>45</sup>

Behavioral traits related to the technical capacity to optimize the required task for a position vary according to the needs of the position and the "company culture." Some traits encouraged in some cases may be discouraged in other cases. High expectations are held with regard to the behaviors of employees; however, behaviors are not defined as "good" or "bad," as was the case in the past. The concept of employability indicates that certain positions require certain behaviors:

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- 44 The research conducted by İŞKUR and MEGEP shows that the lack of behavioral skills are regarded as problematic by the employers to a considerable extent. The research was conducted in 30 cities with 4437 companies employing more than 10 people and represents 76.000 companies. 27% of the participants stated that there is a communication skill problem within the labor force. Leadership (13%), planning (11%), orienting others (10%) and management skills (10%) are the other competencies thought to be lacked. İŞKUR, "*MEGEP İş Piyasası ve Beceri İhtiyaçları İncelemesi*" (İŞKUR, 2005). Additionally, with new control mechanisms, it has become more and more unnecessary to have seniors promoted as middle level managers, which is another reason why seniority has lost its importance. The performance system and the surveillance techniques ensure the control of the employees by measuring them individually.
- 45 For example, the program of the 61st government program presented by the president in parliament in 2011 included a change in to the severance pay policy that was claimed to put pressure on employers. *TBMM*, Accessed March 12, 2016, <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/hukümetler/HP61.htm>.

It is necessary to select and place people according to their personality. Are they able to put their knowledge into practice? Do they have the ability to adapt? For example, an accountant is not supposed to be strong in communication skills; furthermore it is better if the accountant does not communicate because he or she will be recording receipts all day long. You look for skills of persuasion for a sales position. Even it can be detailed. If you are selling credit cards, you are expected to be more aggressive. But if you are selling something to companies, you need to be more receptive and let the customer analyze the need. (Entrepreneur, Female, AB)

There are also features that everyone is expected to possess. Brown and Scase call it “suitability” in general.<sup>46</sup> Suitability involves the traits that may be transferred to other jobs regardless of their content. Being adaptive, competitive, a rule breaker (doing more than expected), a fast learner, having original ideas, and giving the impression that one works happily are among traits most mentioned in my interviews with entrepreneurs. Business-minded employees concerned with profitability are expected to possess these traits. One of the interviewees emphasizes that even employees doing operational jobs should have a business-minded approach:

A business-minded approach is important. Even telephone operators who have this kind of approach can contribute to a company. For example, if a customer calls the operator, it is very important to the customer how she or he sounds as it reflects on her or his mood. It is important to sound happy, giving the impression that the employees working there are happy and satisfied. If the light is on in an empty room and you switch it off – this it is also very important. These kinds of attitudes reflect the employees’ approach to the company. (Entrepreneur, Female, BC)

As mentioned above, no one kind of character is required in the new era since every job position has different requirements. Focus on the behaviors of job

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46 Brown and Scase, *Higher Education and Corporate Realities*, 96.



candidates is justified by the claim that individual differences are being recognized and that job seekers are not expected to belong to a certain typology within society:

You can't evaluate a person by just looking at a paper – a resume. This [approach] is becoming more and more out of date. The social relations of a person are becoming more important. Their talents may be different; he or she may have studied teaching but may have marketing skills. There may be a talent that you are missing. (Entrepreneur, Male, AK)

However, candidates' differences are recognized as long as these differences are compatible with the job. For example, bohemian candidates unconventional in their clothes may be hired for positions that do not require them to act in a formal manner in business environments. Recognition of differences may appear to allow flexibility to an extent, and the approach seems to accept the uniqueness of individuals, instead of imposing a stereotype. However, in fact, this approach is much more strict. It seeks an absolute overlap between work life and non-working life. What is missed is the possibility that a bohemian person may be bohemian outside the workplace but may have a corporate outlook at work. The differences of people are acceptable only if the job requires the difference. Bohemian candidates may work in positions where they do not represent the company to customers but more “decent” – candidates in the business sense – are sought for sales positions:

There is no such thing that social values are of no value. We don't recruit someone with a criminal record, for example. But, for example, if have a bohemian candidate, it depends on the kind of work he or she will do. A businessman told me a very important thing. He said “I don't mind an employee coming with a beard as long as he does his job well, but if I employ him as a salesman, he will wear a tie and a suit, because he represents me. (Entrepreneur, Female, AG)

Being different in different parts of one's daily life (being talkative in a non-work atmosphere and being calm at work) is denied as are differences within one's career story. Companies are seeking coherence with business values in candidates' daily lives and in their past. Regardless of the conditions of work

life, one's personal history is expected to be coherent and planned from the beginning, as one interviewee remarked:

Two bad decisions taken in the past which are observable in the resume can be tolerated. Some decisions are considered bad, such as working in the same position for more than six years or working at a local company after having worked at an international company. If there is a grammatical mistake, this is not tolerated. (Entrepreneur, Female, AJ)

To ensure coherence in a one's career history, one should choose jobs according to one's personality. I asked interviewees in the recruitment industry how important the matter of behavior was with regard to the profession, in an effort to better understand the matter of coherence that came up in interviews. I questioned whether it is possible to develop such behavioral competencies at work rather than in one's pre-career life. The reason I asked was to understand whether interviewees thought that a "changing in social relations was possible."<sup>47</sup> If they said that they believed in change in social relations, my second question was whether they believed it could be developed at work, which is a social space. They stated that they believed in development at work provided that candidates meet the minimum requirements. In this way, employees could add to what they already have. But the requirement they called "the minimum" is a dynamic concept. What is now called "minimum" is different from what was deemed to be the "minimum" in the past, and the definition of the "minimum" will be different in the future, as well. While change at work is denied, additional change is accepted, – meaning that the process of change has been expelled from work. The time spent practicing job at work has been displaced and transferred into recruitment processes, that have become more sophisticated and therefore longer. Part of the time saved by intensifying work and dispelling the time for learning at work place is used for longer recruitment process.

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47 The debate on whether the environment changes individuals, individuals change the environment, or whether they mutually change each other is framed as the "person situation controversy" in the management literature. See Bowen, Ledford, and Nathan, "Hiring for the Organization, Not the Job," 49.

Behavioral competencies are not given at birth; they may be developed. I have many friends who didn't even think of becoming salesman and they became sales managers. Being promoted has to do with the performance you show." (Entrepreneur, Male, BA)

I asked this entrepreneur whether a candidate who is introverted can develop communication skills at work, and he answered:

He/she wouldn't be employed at first anyway. That is why those tests – for job candidates- exist; not to have those people. Companies are not parents. They are founded to make profit. Tests, competency analysis are used (in the recruitment process) to direct people to right jobs. Those tools block their path from the beginning... Of course, you don't give someone something without demanding. Actually, these kinds of competencies should be thought at childhood, the kids should be guided. If you do that at those years, that would be better. People don't know the professions and because of that they don't improve themselves. (Entrepreneur, Male, BA)

This approach parallels the discourse produced by management studies. Ayca argues that the lack of career planning at early ages and protective family culture forced employers to expand their budgets to train their employees.<sup>48</sup> She finds that the workplace as a site of learning was a burden employers were compelled to take because people did not take responsibility for the careers of their children. Remarks made by the interviewees follow the recruitment industry in the same line:

The conditions of competition are very tough; everyone wants to employ the best. You can gain experience while you study at the university or even before you start studying at the university. No employer is saying "after you finish with the university, come and we will teach you." (Corporate communications specialist at an online employment recruitment company, Female, BB)

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48 Ayca, "Human Resource Management in Turkey.," 166.

Another interviewee explained how pre-career life can be used as a predictor of performance:

We ask in interviews what kinds of projects the candidates undertook at the university, who they worked with, whether the projects involved teamwork, what the task was and whether they were leaders or just audience. These are all simulations of work life. In my time, it was ridiculous to work while you were studying at the university, but now people even who work for four months as interns are not appreciated. This is important because this work period enables them to figure out their competencies. People who worked while studying at the university have different results in psychoanalytic tests than those who did not. (Entrepreneur, Female, BF)

Candidates are expected to develop traits appropriate for business life even before entering the labor market. The coherence sought between one's personal history and business values through one's behavioral traits is closely connected to one's socio economic class. It requires early career development despite the ups and the downs of the market.

Consequently, career planning becomes a process that has been expelled from the workplace and the labor market. It is supposed to start at an early age, even before college, since seniority and finding more experienced employees in the workplace has been disassociated from capability and replaced with behavioral traits. Career planning turns into a process that is supposed to be organized at an early age, which hinges on parents and social class. It entrenches inequality in society. Children are to be brought up with business values to be able to enter the labor market in the future.<sup>49</sup>

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49 A report prepared following a workshop titled "A Career Center Model in Cooperation with the Industry" organized at University of Dicle offers that "Career coaching and professional coaching implementation at primary and secondary schools would be appropriate...the youth centers of the Ministry of Youth and Sport could be career consultancy centers in the summer time. Career planning should be conducted by professionals. In the first phase, there should be classes on career consultancy and career planning at universities. And in the second phase there should be a department of "Career and Professional Consultancy." Experts in psycho-

The success of a coherent career is considered a success of parenting. If the personal character consciously formed by individuals at an early age turns out not to be useful in the labor market, there is no one to blame but the parents. One interviewee, who is both the head of a career center of one at the largest universities and the partner of a licensed private employment agency wanted some information from me at the beginning of our interview. I told him about my past career. He asked me about my parent's occupations and I told him that my mother is a house wife and my father is a marble salesman. He ascribed my "renunciation of a successful career" and "non-coherent experiences in career" to the inadequacy of my family background rather than to my self-actualization.

In job interviews, overall coherence is sought in the personal career history of the candidates, including their pre-work life. To what extent this history overlaps with business values is investigated:

If someone does the same job for years, it raises a question mark. It is possible that the job was a kind of refuge and that the employee didn't have the courage to change positions. You can understand this from the interview. There are many questions you can ask to understand it. (Entrepreneur, Female, BC)

When I asked her whether people remember the details of their work history, she pointed out what is expected from the candidate:

We try to make them recall the details. I start the conversation from the time they graduated from the university. The candidates may not remember, but I at least try to learn about their history by asking about the phases they passed through, the number of people they supervised, to whom they reported, and why they left a job. (Entrepreneur, Female, BC)

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logical counseling and guidance can be trained in career consultancy, or career and job consultants can be employed by the Ministry of Education as independent professionals." "Career Workshop Results are Declared (Kariyer Çalıştayının Sonuç Bildirgesi Açıklandı)," *Milliyet Newspaper*, accessed October 28, 2014, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/kariyer-calistayi-nin-sonuc-bildirgesi-diyarbakir-yerelhaber-472858/>.

Past experiences are supposed to be memorized and recorded as a means to prove the coherency of the career. People who keep business values in mind, conforming their daily lives to them are believed to be able to memorize their experiences related those values and talk about them in interviews:

Suppose that my company seeks several competencies such as leadership, a results-oriented approach, a customer-oriented approach, teamwork, organizational skills, and a perspective seeking regular personal development. I seek those competencies through the candidates' experiences. While they tell us their memories we read between the lines and ask how they conduct their work, [handle] crisis, and whether they are in the process or not. (Entrepreneur, Female, BF)

I again asked her whether people can precisely the number and keep their experiences in mind and she answered:

The smart ones keep them. That is why we tell candidates to prepare for the interview. For this reason, I made a presentation with the tagline: "Think – Write – Put It in Your Mental Drawer." (Entrepreneur, Female, BF)

One interviewee working for a career portal visited universities giving a speech about career life to university students. She told how important it is to begin structuring one's life for the labor market at the university:

University students from the first grade to third through the third year don't understand it no matter how much you tell them [about preparing for a career]. But when they are in their fourth year, they panic [about finding a job.] When only one year is left, they feel the pressure. But the situation is clearer for students who are more conscious. They say they have worked every summer, joined events, have taken responsibility in those events, and took initiative to carry out tasks in the events. Basically, they invested in themselves and expanded their network.... (Corporate communications specialist at an online employment recruitment company, Female, BB)

I ask the same question I asked of previous interviewees about whether social skills can be learned in the workplace. She answered:

They should know before they start the university, actually. You don't expect an introverted person to become successful at a position after studying public relations or marketing. One should be oriented according to one's traits. It is about knowing oneself. We conducted a research as to which kind of personalities should choose which kind of professions [to guide job seekers.] (Corporate communications specialist at an online employment recruitment company, Female, BB)

The candidate is considered fixed and to be discovered during the recruitment process. This conception of a *fixed personality* does not mean distrust in change; rather, it means impatience with the wait for someone to change in the workplace. Candidates should have already invested in their careers before they start to work and they should be able to be present proof of their investments, as mentioned by one interviewee from the recruitment industry:

It is easy to access knowledge today; the important thing is what you have done to put it into practice. The candidate in the interview can say that he or she can do [a job], but what they have done is more important. It used to be all right if the candidate just had the knowledge. (Entrepreneur, Female, AB)

Personality is associated with the nature of the people. However, the "nature" of an employee is to be appropriated according to the expectations of the market, if not constructed from an early age onward. Smith, shows in her research how candidates look for "*self-reconstruction methods such as erasing evidence of preference for bureaucratic careers on their resumes.*"<sup>50</sup> Brown and Scase claim that suitability (general expectations such as initiative-taking), capability (naturally possess traits) and acceptability (compatibility with company culture) are the behavioral traits that relate to employability of the candidate.<sup>51</sup> However, I disagree with the category of "capability." In accordance with my findings, I prefer "competency" (behavioral traits maximizing the results of a

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50 Smith, "Review Article: Enhancing Employability: Human, Cultural, and Social Capital in an Era of Turbulent Unpredictability.," 285.

51 Brown and Scase, *Higher Education and Corporate Realities*, 96.

task.) Based on my observations, I concluded that the traits required for a certain position are framed as natural, but that the actual expectation is that they have been developed in the past.

Behavioral traits matter for both core and non-core workers. Brown and Scase focus on changes in various behavioral expectations from workers in new capitalism, ranging from “individual attributes<sup>52</sup> to the “personal qualities” in new capitalism.<sup>53</sup> However, their research focuses on behavioral expectations from core workers. They intend to show that the education system led new conditions for the selection of employees. They focused on the cultural capital needed to make claims to core jobs. However, the behavioral expectations from non-core labor are different than cultural capital. The demand for behavioral traits that maximize the results of a task is stricter. The selection process has become more important for prospective core workers as firms, which intend to invest in those workers, consider both their technical and personality skills. However, most recruiters interviewed agreed that if they want to employ someone with specific skills, behavioral expectations can be loosened. They claimed that technical skills are likely have more weight than personality. Once core workers are employed, control mechanisms are more loose, and the employees have more autonomy compared to non-core workers. As non-core workers are more easily replaceable, their jobs are not regarded as strategic like those of core workers. Therefore, transferrable features have become more important for non-core laborers. Even if the same measurement tools are applied to the core and the periphery, the motivation behind measurements made during the recruitment process are different. One aim is to measure the loyalty of both core and non-core workers. However, an aim of the measurement of core workers may be to make ensure that they do not leave the company after monetary and training investments are made in them. On the other hand, the aim of the same measurement for the non-core workers may be to make sure that they comply with the rules of the organization.

The behavior and career of core workers are related with the “war for talent” discourse within the recruitment industry. This approach assumes that to retain talent, employers are more concerned with the employee satisfaction of

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52 Qualifications such as a diploma, ethnicity, or gender.

53 Brown and Scase, *Higher Education and Corporate Realities*, 137.



"talented" core workers. Therefore, the personality of employees matters for the satisfaction of talented employees that employers wish to be retain. The concern about the personalities of core workers is also valid for non-core workers; however, maintenance of those non-core workers is contingent on the ups and downs of the market. Employers are concerned about the personalities of employees working at lower levels, so the personal qualities of non-core workers are measured, as well.

That changes in the workplace led to changes in expectations from new employees has been argued above. Additionally, the workplace as a site of learning has disappeared as work was then intensified by means of high-performance work systems. Social skills have become important for optimizing tasks, while their acquisition at work is precluded. Values gained at educational institutions are no longer not considered to be predictors of performance in the new capitalism as was the case in the Fordist era. They have been replaced by behavioral traits that will optimize the tasks assigned to the employee. Private employment agencies created their market by claiming that measure the "relative dimension of career"<sup>54</sup> (behavior) thereby contributing to the individualism of employment. I showed how the narrative of employability has been created by professionals and entrepreneurs in the recruitment industry in this respect. In the following section, I show how employees experience the expectations of the new labor market.

## § 4.2 The Experience of Employees

*People resemble their times more than they do their parents.*

Ancient Arab proverb<sup>55</sup>

This section of the research is based on interviews conducted with job seekers and employees to understand how they perceive the management approach

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54 Brown and Hesketh, "I Say Tomato, You Say Tomato.," 312.

55 Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (New York: Knopf, 1953), 19.

used in recruitment processes and what strategies they employ for their careers. I interviewed participants who had had at least ten job interviews and had sent their resumes to around one hundred companies over the course of their career. They had developed job searching skills, which is a distinct form of knowledge to obtain. Looking for a job had become a job in itself as there are a limited number of jobs in the market.<sup>56</sup>

In this research, I argue that although employees do not know what is expected from the tools of recruitment industry, they find these new tools meaningful because they speak to their needs. Employees find the new bureaucracy legitimate. Individualized business values and the promise of happiness by self-actualization (when one's character fits the job) are understood as an increase in the importance placed on individuals. In this way, individuals come to determine work life rather than work life being ruled by autonomous, control-seeking managers. The employees I interviewed emphasized that they would prefer to be measured rather than simply evaluated by a manager or a recruitment specialist; they think that nepotism often rules the latter situation.

The conventional bureaucracy – in which recruitment decisions are left to the "arbitrary" decisions of the "autonomous" managers – is claimed to be old-fashioned, legitimizing the current practices of specialists in the recruitment industry. In this equation, career variables such as seniority, the employer, and the context (an economic crisis, for example) are excluded, while human resources departments are expected to implement impartiality. Candidates welcome this approach in their descriptions of what makes a good job:

A reliable and institutionalized company is one in which managers are not ego-centric. It is good to have a human resources department in the company that assesses you separately from the manager. When a manager tries to exclude you in order to protect his or her own position, there needs to be a department that can say "This guy has good performance. What do you think you are doing?" You shouldn't be the victim of a manager's ego. Sometimes such things happen at institutionalized companies, too...They look into behavior because there is competition; people don't have the patience, they don't want to lose

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56 Sharone, "Constructing Unemployed Job Seekers as Professional Workers."

time. If you don't have a suitable character for the work, it doesn't matter that you graduated from Harvard. They don't tolerate people who are driven by their egos. It is important to be positive and to add value in this way. Managing relations are important; you even manage your friendships. Choosing a suitable person for the a team is crucial. If you consider too many details, you can't find anyone. Therefore, the company should determine the criteria and say; "This is a workplace; everyone should put their ego aside." (Job seeker, Male, Salesman, 37, BN)

Impartiality is expected from people who manage the workplace. Employees define the management of behavior as the elimination of "troublesome" people. They prefer the rationality brought about by rules to avoid being the victims of the managers. However, the power that is built around the measurement of behaviors works to advantage of employers, not to that of employees. Although recruitment specialists claim that they provide rationality, this rationality works for the businesses. They do not select "good people" (those who put their ego aside, for example), but people who are behaviorally suited to increasing productivity. The required characteristics are not necessarily those desired in everyday social relations. Indeed, the behaviors in question may not be tolerated outside workplaces. For example, job seekers compete with others in group discussion during the selection process. Any action in the selection process that is deemed approvable could be counted as a negative. What is being measured is unknown to the job seekers, and behavioral requirements in question cannot be generalized for every recruitment process. Expectations from labor changes according to the position, sector, and context. Inequality of power is implicit in the asymmetry of information. With the guidance of the recruitment industry, employers choose employees that either entrench company culture or nonconformists that spoil the company culture when change is desired. As one participant stated, when needed, a behavior that is not acceptable in the society could be encouraged:<sup>57</sup>

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57 In line with that sentiment, Verhaeghe says "Neoliberalism has brought out the worst in us," Paul Verhaeghe, *The Guardian*, accessed September 14, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/sep/29/neoliberalism-economic-system-ethics-personality-psychopathicstic>.

Some companies don't consider aggressiveness to be a negative trait. It is a positive trait most of the time. For example, in my company they realized that people in the advertising department were passive about making other departments do their tasks. They thought the team in that department should be more aggressive. Hiring people with a more demanding, aggressive character was deemed a solution in a workshop, an idea that was probably developed with the human resources consultants. Eventually, the people who were hired were aggressive and over demanding. They were tough men. There is an approach that considers this way of behaving as a plus. (Employee, Male, Focus Group, CE)

The business approach promises that natural tendencies that overlap with the requirements a position bring the happiness of self-actualization. Recruitment specialists assume that candidates have already worked on those traits that are expected to naturally overlap with the requirements of the position. However, people may have the intention of changing their behavioral traits or may want a job that does not encourage their traits. One of the employees in a focus group on job interviewing that I attended stated that she quit her last job because managers expected her to behave in a patronizing manner towards other employees. Although she thinks that she naturally tends to be dominant, she did not want to act in a dominant, patronizing way. Being able to criticize the traits one has was also her attitude. However, employees are not supposed to show all of their traits. In other words, job seekers are expected to put useful traits to work, and pretend that those required traits constitute "the whole" of their personality. In this way, they allow traits that make them productive at work to dominate other traits or inclinations. In the literature focusing on the subjectivities of employees under the new capitalism, workers are generally depicted as agents whose totality (emotional, mental and manual labor) is captured by companies. However employers are not interested in the worker as a whole, only in those properties considered to be utilizable, as mentioned before.

The discourse of happiness, which is deemed to depend on the overlap between one's character and the job, appeals to the subjectivity of employees because of its promise of self-actualization. The responsibility that comes with

this self-actualization had a positive reception among the employees. The way in which the issue is discussed is justified by workers who suggest that everyone would like to have a job that is both materially rewarding, and emotionally satisfactory. Candidates respond positively to this call and are prepared to expose their privacy to companies. Job seekers who conform to the behavioral requirements of a position are likely to think that they naturally fit the position. The results are deemed to be natural since they are based on technical methods. Technical, standardized methods that describe and categorize personalities with certain terms are used to suggest that candidates have been selected in a natural way – that the methods in question are incontestable. Candidates who are hired and excluded cannot object to the results.

Most of the job seeker interviewees underscored the importance of the overlap between an employee's character and their position; however, they also stressed that experiences in their work lives had changed their behaviors. The workplace is a social environment in which people change through their experiences with others. What are expected to be overlap are paradoxically considered to be dynamic as well. Participants gave the following accounts of their experiences of change:

Work life enabled me to know myself; it showed me my skills and the things for which I do not have the skills. I understood to what extent I fit job. I learned about the life, how workers and employers are. It increased my communicative skills; I am a good communicator now. (Job seeker, Female, Engineer, 44, BT)

You see many different people, different sectors at work... Handling the relations, your ego... Maybe you are an introvert, but you realize at the age of forty that you needn't be shy. This may be developed at work. I changed sectors. Although I am not experienced in this sector, I am experienced in work life and in relationships. (Job seeker, Male, Engineer, 37, BM)

However, the same participant also stated that he could not assume certain positions at work since his nature was not compatible with the requirements:

There are certain things one should have. They either exist or do not. When you have a position, you may not have those things. I can't work in the production process, for example. I never wanted to. Neither did I want a position in sale. I can't be a salesman. I am a genuine person; I can chat with people I just met and get along with them. However, doing it as a job is a burden; it feels like a role. A salesman visited us today and tried to sell some goods. He was friendly, but I didn't find it genuine. I like what I am doing now. I love the job I am doing. (Job seeker, Male, Engineer, 37, BM)

The discourse that individualizes employment leads employees to construct their relations to work in an individualized way, free from other determinants. Employees also pay attention to the happiness of the other employees, expecting them to be happy with what they do.<sup>58</sup> They also expect their colleagues to have the same personal interests as them. One interviewee who had participated in decision-making processes related to recruitment at his workplace emphasized that he wanted to work with people similar to himself although he previously claimed that he wanted to see the diversity in social life at work, as well:

I would like to see the different profiles that I live with and that I see in the country at work. I think I would be more productive sharing things with them. For example, a woman with headscarf or someone with an accent. I would like someone at work who comes from Sarigazi<sup>59</sup> to work in the morning. However, no one comes from that place. This is a standardization. I mean... I have set in on the job interviews together with the human resources specialists. I looked into candidate's technical qualifications. The human resources specialist looks into requirements other than technical qualifications. Technical qualifications are visible in the resumes selected by the private employment

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58 This expectation is likely to turn into pressure on other employees working in other companies. For instance, patients may expect doctors to be affectionate and bank customers may mistreat call center operators. More emotional involvement could be demanded by customers. This argument requires further research.

59 Sarigazi is known as a poor neighborhood in Istanbul.

agency. The thing I pay attention to is whether I will get along with the candidate. This is the only thing I look into. I will be with him or her all day long, drink tea and have a chat [with them]. Do we speak the same language? Do we laugh at the same things? And do we have similar tastes? It is the nature of human beings that they want to be with people who are like them so that they feel safe. I think everyone would give the same answer. (Employee, Male, Focus Group, CF)

When I asked him whether he would allow someone from Sarıgazi to be employed, he answered:

No one comes from Sarıgazi anyway. The private employment agency eliminates them beforehand. (Employee, Male, Focus Group, CF)

The business discourse of happiness leads employees to question whether they are happy at their work. They pay attention to whether their character is suitable for their job. They are ready to leave jobs that they think are not for them or in which they do not fit in behavioral terms. Happiness has been added to the agenda of employees in the new workplace, which distinguishes them from the previous generation. They realize that many jobs do not bring them happiness.

Job seekers claim that their parents and the previous generation of workers did not care about the pleasure that could come from work. This assumption misses the point that enjoyment is not simply about the content of an assigned job. The expectation of compatibility between behavioral traits and a job position which is constructed by the recruitment industry determines what kinds of happiness can come from work. The promise of happiness leads to the redefinition of the past, as well as it is redefined with today's terms. As one interviewee points out, the expectation of happiness and fulfillment from work distinguishes contemporary employees from those of previous generations:

The difference is very clear. My parents got a job and worked for a lifetime at the same place. There is a huge difference to an extent that you can't communicate. A job was not something that you questioned; it was simply something you did to earn money according to them.

However, for me it is an indispensable part of life: the pleasure of producing, the feeling of being productive. If you want to be satisfied with your job, a clash emerges with your parents. You are not able to explain your concerns to them. It is difficult especially to tell them if you have doubts about your formation or about whether you will continue with the job that your education has taken you to. (Job seeker, Male, Graphic designer, 37, BZ)

Management based on the regulation of a variety of characters at work corresponds to the needs of employees with different motivations. Employers want pre-work and non-working life to be more like business life, while employees want work life to be more like non-business life. Both sides want the two to overlap, although with different purposes.

All the job seekers and employees I interviewed wanted to do a job they would like and feel happy doing. They were pursuing this expectation to make it real. They had disappointments but neither gave up nor accepted what they had; instead, they suspended their expectations. Therefore, they have weak emotional bonds with their work. They have few friends from work, for example.

Whether realistic or not, the expectation of happiness of employees is continuous evoked by the new employment relations. Therefore, the tools to measure behaviors are not found problematic, as one interviewee states:

You need to love what you do; you should want it. If you do it to earn money, you can't be successful. You work anyway, but it would be at low level then. You should be interested in the job. (Job seeker, Male, Marketing, 45, BY)

I asked another employee what his expectations from an employer would be if he was an employer. Being happy with what you do was the center of his expectations:

I would ask their first and tenth year; how much development has been made during this period. I would ask key questions: how good they are at stress and time management. Being practical is important – being able to find practical ways of doing things. This is a contribution. They



wouldn't be worn out by doing that because this motivates one. Therefore, they should be energetic. This is related to loving one's job. If you do a job you don't love, there wouldn't be any motivation. You wouldn't be practical and search for additional information to do the job. You would just do what is ordered. (Job seeker, Male, Engineer, 37, BM)

Not only do employers use a discourse of happiness, they expect non-core employees to be happy as one of the tasks and measure their happiness with employment satisfaction surveys.<sup>60</sup> The way that employers expect satisfaction from employees is different for core and non-core workers. Core employees can decide whether they are satisfied, while non-core workers are compelled to be happy.

Actually, candidates are ready to do what a job requires rather than waiting for a job that would give them pleasure. However, they find the promise of pleasure realistic; it defines their feelings towards work and then suggests that they are deprived of it (that is to say, of love for the job). It is claimed that people can be happy if they do a job that fits their character. This forces candidates to prove that they will be happy to do a job for which they have applied. Therefore, for candidates, job interviews are a struggle to hide what they actually think. An employee who had sat in a job interview to hire someone new told me about her experience:

The candidates in the interview told me how they were good at team work; I felt embarrassed. What I was looking for first was experience and second, compliance. You see that they are acting. I don't want to ask classical questions such as "what are your negative traits?" I don't care about those things unless I am going to go out with them. The reason I ask their expectations is that if a candidate wants to be a manager in the future, I tell them that the job won't meet their expectations and advise them not to waste their time – because there is no managerial position here as there are just three people in the department. Therefore, I ask what they really want. However, I can't get an answer.

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60 Called the Economics of Happiness in the business administration literature.

Whatever I ask is perceived to be a trick. It is really difficult to communicate. (Employee, Female, Focus Group, CG)

In the new bureaucracy, business values are codified as moral values that eventually become a part of common sense. Knowing oneself per se is framed as a moral duty in the recruitment industry, and this is accepted by employees to some extent. Although the individualization of employment includes a discourse of moral considerations, what principle one would refer when evaluate themselves is not clear. The employability approach advises people to develop characters in line with the business values to be able to find jobs. The phrases "know yourself," "be yourself," or "work on yourself" do not refer to any principle. Whatever the expectation of the day is, one is required to comply with it. But paradoxically career is expected to have been constructed in the past. Expectations from the labor market change, but they are expected to have been built in the past. Although the discourse of change and the adaptability of workers is often emphasized by employers, workers are expected to make their choices in the past by guessing what future labour market would expect. Employees are expected to be future-oriented or re-write their past career to make it look "rationally developed" which makes them feel incompetent when the past has already gone. The demand for an overlap between personality and position leads job candidates to appropriate their past – as they cannot take it back – according to the expectations for each new position. The expectation created by the industry is that "the self has to be packaged as a life story full of productive promise."<sup>61</sup> The possibility of the expectation shows that the underlying expectation is to be good at re-packaging oneself.

Employees who object to working conditions can be more easily marginalized as morally deviant. This is not new, as Skeggs argues; "inequalities faced by working class people are constantly represented as their own moral deviancy."<sup>62</sup>

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61 Brown, Hesketh, and Williams, *The Mismanagement of Talent*, 36.

62 Beverley Skeggs, "The Moral Economy of Person Production: The Class Relations of Self-Performance on 'reality' Television," *The Sociological Review* 57, no. 4 (October 2009): 626–44 in Helen Colley, "Learning to Labor with Feeling: Class, Gender and Emotion in Childcare Education and Training," 17.

An employee I interviewed stated that talking about working conditions with colleagues is considered unethical:

The first thing I was told by my superior on my first day was that "this is our company culture. We don't like gossip here as it would have a bad effect on communication among employees and disturb the working conditions." I found it appropriate at first but then she continued: "We don't like gossip here; therefore, we don't want people to talk amongst themselves about the salaries they get. What she meant by gossip was talking about salaries. (Employee, Female, 30, Focus Group, CA)

The paradox of the new bureaucracy is that while there is an increase in interdependency at the workplace, the focus of recruiters is on individuality and character formation. Employers are aware that this structure leads to paradoxical behavioral expectations. There are no borders but there are rules at work. One interviewee explains the elements that recruitment specialists expect apart from technical requirements:

They want believability. They are very suspicious; they do cross investigations. They expect us to be relaxed, self-confident and proactive. They want us to be extroverts to get the job done. They don't want people who question too much. They don't want creative people, either. They want people that comply with the hierarchy, do overtime work, devote themselves to work, and they don't want to give a good salary. (Job seeker, Female, Engineer, 44, BT)

The new bureaucracy nourishes the self while leaving it to employees to survive interdependency. Individual expectations are bound up with increased interdependency that is enabled by the performance system. The relation between employers and employees has become more contractual since the promises given in return for high-performance, requires more emotional involvement on the part of employees. However, emotional involvement does not lead to emotional commitment, as people easily quit jobs whenever they

feel better careers options are available to them.<sup>63</sup> One of the interviewees describes a successful career as follows:

People who have successful careers start working either just after graduation or in their last year at the university. After becoming a valuable employee, they get a new job at a competing company, which surprises the employer. (Job seeker, Female, International Trade, 29, CA)

When asked what the reason would be to a quit the job in which they were appreciated, she continued saying...

...because it is normal for a successful person to want to improve themselves. One cannot progress by staying at the same company. It creates rustiness." (Job seeker, Female, International Trade, 29, CA)

People who work at a company for a considerable period question themselves, thinking that a change is needed without knowing specifically what needs to be changed. Change per se is a goal to be realized, regardless of what it leads to. The reason is that people who do not leave a jobs may be considered "timid" or "insecure" in the labor market.

The research on conventional bureaucracy focuses on a "loss of agency," which is based on the idea that if the rules are set and employees are expected to comply with the setting, there is no agency.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, people feel less responsibility for the outcomes of an organization in which they play a part. The new bureaucracy of the recruitment industry based on personal traits places importance on individuality assuring that arbitrary decisions are prevented by the use of standardized tools. However, a loss of agency is not possible at a company with customized assessment tools. The new bureaucracy, which is constructed with an interest in individuality is perceived as an ideal synthesis. Bureaucracy indicates rationality while interest placed on the self gives promises employees emotional fulfillment and happiness.

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63 Brown and Scase, *Higher Education and Corporate Realities*, 71.

64 Langdon Winner, "Do Artifacts Have Politics?," in ed. David Kaplan, *Readings in the Philosophy of Technology*, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009), 251.

Employers, human resources specialists and job seekers assume that the present generation of workers has determined contemporary working conditions. Human resources specialists and job candidates use the discourse of a "generation" to explain the differences in the present:

I have gone through personality inventories although I don't have much of an idea about them. The reason they didn't exist in the past and exist now is that the generation has changed, maybe. Or they do it to understand whether a candidate is suitable for the work environment? The generation that came after 1990s is not comfortable with the classical way of working. None of them wants to work from nine to five at an office desk with no interaction. Actually, they like to work alone; they are not successful at team-work, but they also have tendency to socialize. (Job seeker, Female, International Trade, 29, CA)

Even if companies are not interested in privacy or private life in the classical sense, they are interested in how employees construct themselves and how they connect to others. While questions posed in job interviews relating to the personal lives of candidates, such as marriage plans as to whether they wish to have kids, are found discriminatory and considered an invasion of privacy, questions and measurement relating to behavioral traits are not. Indeed although they know little about the process and the details, employees methods that measure behavioral traits:

I don't know what they deduce from the questions they ask, actually. They may want to understand in what kind of a workplace you want to work. They ask what path I would have followed for the university if I was able to go back to age twelve or fifteen with my present state of mind. I don't know what they wanted to understand from this question, but I answered them... This is a general question to find out if you are sure of your status or your job. Whether you believe in what you do or not... that is what they want to learn probably. They ask about your social relations, whether you can manage them or whether you are too informal. That is how it works if they hire for the production department. If you apply for a sales position, they ask how many friends you have on online social networks. For example, they ask

“how many people you know at other companies?” to understand whether you are able to make connections, gain new customers – whether you have a social status, hobbies through which you can make connections – whether your environment is appropriate to meet new people and whether you expand your environment. These are exactly what the sales departments focus on. (Job seeker, Male, Engineer, 32, BR)

The privacy of employees is assessed by the recruitment industry. It is not the privacy in a common sense, referring to intimate relations. It is rather privacy of the construction of the self. The intimacy that the narrative of employability creates compels employees to pursue happiness at work, which has been redefined by the recruitment industry.

Behavioral categories are formed and developed by the recruitment industry. The expectations of employers are translated into those categories. Employees present themselves according to those categories. For instance, human resources specialists from a career portal were invited to a career day event I attended at Kadir Has University.<sup>65</sup> They presented a brand of personality inventory to university students. The speaker explained what the name of the test stands for – that the letters consisted of the first letters of characteristics, namely: dominant, influencing, inspiring, steady/stable, and correct/compliant. As he mentioned each category, he asked people to raise their hands if they fit into the category. The participants at the event all opted for D or I. No one wanted to be S and C. It is obvious that the participants chose traits deemed valuable in business life. In that regard, Hughes emphasizes that “the rules are that there are no rules; ‘just relax,’ ‘be yourself.’<sup>66</sup> The absence of explicit rules opens the possibilities for different kinds of control. In line with that situation, people prefer to present themselves as whatever is deemed appropriate in a certain environment. Tools that are claimed to reveal the truth about employees actually create categories in which employees themselves situate themselves in. While talking about her experience with a personality in-

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65 The event took place on November 19, 2013.

66 Hughes, “Bringing Emotion to Work: Emotional Intelligence, Employee Resistance and the Reinvention of Character,” 612.

ventory applied to her during a recruitment process, one employee interviewee stated that she was found to be cruel because she gave an unexpected answer to the question “Do you feel sorry when you see an elderly person?” She said she would not feel sorry but the presumption of the test was that elderly people are supposed to make people feel sorry. Depending upon the position in question, employees are expected to adopt a certain, approach which is also not value-free.

The tension between the strategies developed to get employed and the aspiration to do emotionally satisfactory work creates "confusion between the struggle to preserve personal integrity and the struggle for survival."<sup>67</sup> Regardless of whether a recruitment industry genuinely believes in the effectiveness of an overlap between personal character and the a position, keeping the bar high makes employees work hard on their employability. This process involves the aspirations of employees, which in turn strengthens the narrative produced by the recruitment industry.

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67 Christopher Lasch, *The Minimal Self: Psychic Survival in Troubled Times* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1985), 125.

## The Role of Private Employment Agencies in the Individualization of Employment

This chapter is based on field work conducted to understand the role of private employment agencies in the construction of the individualization of employment via the practices they employ. In previous sections, I focused on the individualization of employment via the adoption of the concept of employability in the recruitment industry. In this section, I expound on how this approach is applied to recruitment processes used in the industry. In addition, I will further examine what distinguishes recruitment through private employment agencies from in-house recruitment. I show how the narrative of employability is reified through the methods of the recruitment industry. The tools private employment agencies use to assess employability and measure behavioral characteristics constitute the main subjects of this chapter. I conclude with the role of private employment agencies in the individualization of employment.

### § 5.1 Tools of the Private Employment Agencies for Assessing Employability

Job positions require different types of behavioral characteristics and job seekers are not simply hoped to have those characteristics. The expectation of certain behavioral traits has led to sophisticated recruitment processes and has



brought in new measurement techniques used in hiring practices. Expected behavioral characteristics that contribute to the productivity of the job candidate are rendered more measurable<sup>1</sup> to make sure that candidates meet those expectations.

The results of the measurement are used as predictors of performance. Measuring productivity used to be confined to the workplace, but now also applies to recruitment processes in which the individual histories (including work and non-work, personal histories) of the candidates are taken into consideration. Recruitment processes are based on workplace rules (strict performance evaluations and a search for compatibility with the organization) designed to decrease “the indeterminacy of labor – the gap between purchased potential and profitable outcomes.”<sup>2</sup> Social performance at work is predicted by means of hiring tools, that are also used in the workplace after recruitment as one interviewee underscored:

We also assess employees for promotions. We give more information to managers who decide on promotions than they can get from within the company. We provide them with support mechanisms on which they can base their decisions. We use different methods to describe features of the employees. Those features cannot be recognized in daily life. (Entrepreneur, Psychologist, Female, AP)

Recruitment specialists make sure that all the required traits are investigated well. For the investigation of the candidates, behavioral traits are rendered measurable by means of personality inventories, competency-based interviews, role playing, and group discussions. Though rarely used, home visits may also be paid to job candidates. The suitability (general expectations such as initiative taking), acceptability (compatibility with company culture),<sup>3</sup> and

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1 Brown and Scase, *Higher Education and Corporate Realities*, 114.

2 Thompson, *The Nature of Work: An Introduction to Debates on the Labor Process*. In Callaghan and Thompson, "We Recruit Attitude," 234.

3 As mentioned before, I used the categories of Brown and Scase. Brown and Scase, *Higher Education and Corporate Realities*. However, I changed their category "capability (traits possessed by nature)" to "competency (behavioral traits maximizing the results of a task)." Behavioral characteristics are framed as natural but are actually expected to be developed by the recruitment industry.

the competency (behavioral traits for maximizing the results of tasks) of the candidate are measured with tools that are widely used in the recruitment industry.

Most recruitment specialists claimed that the goal of these assessments is to “know who the candidate really is,” as this cannot be inferred from decent behaviors learned easily via Internet. Interviewees phrased this approach as follows:

There is a load of hearsay information for employees. People can find it easily on the Internet. There is advice on how to be well-dressed and shake hands. That is why we apply tests, to find out what is behind those. (Entrepreneur, Female, AG)

Recruitment specialists do not mean looking at criminal records when they refer to investigating the “real selves” of job candidates. Instead, they are referring to the compatibility of the candidates with the behavioral requirements of the position and their enthusiasm for work. The term – “real-self” – is limited to the requirements of the position. It is not the person being investigated but rather the demands of the employer that are at stake:

We don’t question the competencies of the job candidate, rather we question the competencies required by the position. (Entrepreneur, Female, AY)

The measurement tools used have a guiding principle which was often mentioned in interviews: “Not a job for an employee, but an employee for a job.”<sup>4</sup> By claiming that they are capable of “discovering who the candidate really is,” recruitment specialists send two messages to the candidates. The first is “Do not dream about jobs; you will be placed in the position that we think matches your features.” Their second message is “We are able to know who you really are behind your representation of yourself.”

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4 Hollway historicizes this approach. According to her, “fitting the man to the job and fitting the job to the man” was the concern of the occupational psychology up until the 1960s. This approach aimed to maximize productivity. The voice of employees and what workers want became more important with the goal of full employment since the 1960s. Hollway, “Fitting Work: Psychological Assessment in Organizations.”

Recruitment tools aim to find ideal employees who are either supposed to have little discrepancy between what they think and how they behave or to be able to manage the difference well. If the discrepancy is high, it is assumed that as employees they would feel pressure to act like someone whom they really are not. In other words, the intention behind the acts of employees is also subject to measurement.

Assessments aimed at measuring the level of correspondence between the character of the job candidate and the requirements of the position go beyond existing methods that regard personal traits as predictors of performance. There is a tendency to insist on consistency between the privacy of workers and corporate requirements. As one interviewee claims, developments in the field of assessment could lead to the emergence of a new form of measurement allow human resources specialists understand the divergence between the intentions and the practice of employees:

A day-to-day value or virtue-based life will become more important. The next step after competency-based job interviews could be value-based interviews. They would be related to intentions and actions, rather than behaviors. Companies continued to care for sustainability, environmental issues, and the happiness and health of the employees – and this is where the circle of awareness has expanded. Having a good score for sales is a behavioral thing, but the intention behind the behavior and what you want to do is related to values. The knowledge related to technical matters will [continue to] exist, but for example, doctors will be distinguished as bad and good based on their communicational skills in addition to their technical skills. Communication is a soft skill. The more you value people, the more you value communication. Surgery is a core, technical thing for doctors. And the reason they explain things to their patients could either be that they want to earn money as soon as possible or that they want their patients to understand their conditions. The more aware they become, the more attention people will pay to intentions. For example, my father had a serious operation.... The doctor invited us in when he had another operation and a patient waiting. His minutes are valuable. He explained the details for half an hour. He asked whether we understood,

and when we said that we didn't, he spent another twenty minutes to simplify the issue. He did it by heart. The value he created was more important than the operation he did, because he took care of us and valued us. When it was realized that intelligence alone is not enough, emotional intelligence emerged and competency-based interviews became important. The intention of the candidate who behaves in compliance with the position will be important in the future; I don't know how this can be measured and validated. (Entrepreneur, Male, BD)

The consistency required by recruiters is likely to be extended such that the life of candidate will not only be expected to be embedded in business values. A complete overlap between life and business will be sought. At this point, there will be no conception of embodied and embodying as distinction between the two – i.e. between business life values and values of oneself – will be denied. This also indicates that recruiters will no longer be concerned with the adaptation of employees to their work since the very fact that the distinction will not exist .

Although measurement methods are used to provide a socially-designed workplace for productivity, a homogeneous, non-conflictual work environment is not the goal. Conflicting social relations can be approved by management so long as they lead to productivity. For example, when the personalities of all workers in a workplace are suited for their work as salespeople, the work may become routinized. According to the trainer in a seminar that I attended on personal inventories, workers with different personalities should be positioned to prevent routinization and social comfort. Therefore, it is a good idea to insert a kind of employee that would "heat up" the workplace.

Assessment tools also operate to secure the position of managers in new organizations in which interdependence is on the rise. The increase in accountability and interdependency in a workplace leads workers at every level to seek safety, which is deemed to be provided by measurement tools. This legitimizes the use of these tools by management. Managers and workers at higher levels try to avoid making decisions independently in order not to be accused of unsatisfactory results in the future:

The use of assessment tools gives managers confidence and makes them feel more secure. People in human resources departments feel

confident towards other employees. They feel comfortable with the tool. At least there is a scientific dimension. There is a scientific base which can be referred to. (Entrepreneur, Female, AY)

We use tests for promotions. For example, assume that there are ten to twenty managers at a company and three to five of them are to be promoted. We decide who will be appointed. Upper-level managers also have their own observations. They want candidates to be evaluated by an independent agency and they want them to pass through a standardized process. (Entrepreneur, Psychologist, Male, AO)

Technical and scientific methods are believed to reduce personal involvement, and thus, the results are considered more accurate. These tools have a further advantage for those employers who do not want to be dependent on managers since they may be used to weaken the autonomy managers and senior employees.

Human resources specialists can use competency-based job interviews, personality tests, and other methods together, or they may choose just one method depending upon the position, time constraints, and the budget allocated for the process. The recruitment industry also uses informal tools. Different tools serve different concerns. The most commonly used methods are competency-based interviews and personality inventories.

#### 5.1.1 *Job Interviews*

A job interview is a part of the recruitment process along with resumes, personality inventories and tests, role playing, reference checks, and general background searches via the Internet or through acquaintances (colleagues and friends). During the interview, recruitment specialists, managers, and employers make general observations about the candidates and develop insights during the conversation. Although the interview process sounds simple, several methods are developed to obtain the information about the candidate.

The general and the competency-based interview methods are the most common methods of job interviewing. Many interviewees claimed that the

general interview method has been replaced by the competency-based interview method in the last ten years; however, the general interview method is still in use.

The general interview method lets candidates tell about themselves and to see if they meet the requirements. It is based on the experience of recruiters. The more people recruitment specialists see, the more capable they become at generalizing. As the name suggests, in general interviews the interviewer lets candidates talk about themselves without providing any guidance. Aside from informal methods recruitment decisions are based on the information provided by the candidates. A general interview can be seen as a method for understanding “who candidate is in the society” in general. However, this is an old (i.e., Fordist) way of investigating candidates and is now found to be risky. The reason is that even if the candidates do not lie, they may try to represent themselves differently or may give irrelevant information. The risk emanates from the fact that the information given by the candidate is accepted without intervention:

There used to be traditional interview methods. More and more recruitment specialists have started to use competency-based interviewing because it makes it easy to understand the candidate. In the traditional model, you ask them to tell about themselves and they do, but you don't know what you are going to match it with. Competency-based interviewing makes our job easier; it is a shortcut to get information. (Recruitment specialist at a textile retailer, formerly a PEA employee, AC)

Information about a candidate is produced by the recruitment specialists in the competency-based interviews. Information given by a candidate is partially taken into account. Competency based interviews, personality tests, and role playing are alternatives to the general interview method and are used to decipher the *real* character of the candidate. In such alternative interview methods, recruiters are not interested in the candidate as a whole. Their concern is whether the candidate meets the requirements.

Unlike a general interview, competency-based interviews are aimed at understanding whether the candidate has behavioral traits required for the position. These behavioral requirements are established via an interviewer guide

prepared before the interview. This semi-structured guide defines the job requirements and does not let interviewees talk about what they wish. The interest in the personality of the candidate is limited to those personality traits required by the job position. It is not aimed at understanding who the candidate is as a whole. Therefore, some traits of the candidate are left unevaluated. The guide is framed by a list of the competencies being sought.

If the candidates have the expected behavioral traits, they should be able to prove it by providing concrete examples from past experiences, regardless of their educational background or technical knowledge. How well candidates would fit into an organization is determined based on their proven successes. For example, if the position requires the candidate to have "the capacity to take initiatives," the question posed would be; "Can you give an example of a case in which you had to take initiative in your previous job?." A general question such as; "Do you think you are someone who is able to take initiatives?" would be avoided. Recruitment specialist claimed that only concrete examples of successes from the past are accepted as a proof of one's competency:

If we are to recruit a salesperson, we list the competencies such as being marketing – and results-oriented, communicative, and having organizational and time management abilities. If we investigate being result-oriented, we ask such questions as, for example: "At your work, what was your target? What did you do to reach the target? To what extent did you achieve it? And which traits that you possess did you use to accomplish it?" (Recruitment specialist, Female, AH)

If you use the general interview method, answers are likely to remain at a very abstract level. If you ask someone how courageous they are at work, they would say, "I am very courageous, everyone tells me that I am courageous." Anyone who speaks well can manage to give an answer. But when you ask: "Can you think of a case in which you turned a difficult situation into a success story by being courageous?" – then the candidates are at a loss for words. My motto is: "You are rewarded not for what you know, but for what you are capable of doing." That is what competency interviews assess. Pure knowledge has no value unless it leads to results. Companies look for people who can turn

knowledge into profit. People who think more conceptually have more difficulty at work in our world today. (Entrepreneur, Male, BD)

In job interviews, competencies are required to match the traits of the candidates. Concrete examples showing of practical ability are seen as the “natural” result of candidates' character rather than their experience, seniority, or training.

As a part of this research, I attended a two-day training on competency-based job interviewing techniques given by a private employment agency for recruitment specialists. The participants were recruitment specialist employees sent by their companies for the training. On the first day, the trainer took an active role, planning the logic behind the method. On the second day, the method was practiced by means of role playing. In the interview rehearsal, hired actors acted like troublemaking job seekers to test the interviewing skills of the participants. Every rehearsal was recorded and watched by the other participants and the trainer, and then feed-backs was given.

Below is the summary my notes from the training program:

How Does the Competency Based Interviewing Work?

- ◆ In the first step, behavioral requirements called competencies are listed for the position and sector in question. This list is used to create short lists from the first round of interviews. The list is crucial for recruitment specialists who conduct the first interviews with candidates. Following the interviews, they eliminate some applicants and prepare short lists to be submitted to the employers and managers.
- ◆ When a position is available, the requirements for candidates are determined. The list of competencies is prepared based on an analysis of the current conditions of the workplace. The current situation of the company is investigated through surveys conducted in the firm with the participation of the workers. Current employees list the behavioral features they think one should have to carry out the job. This process is called “competency analysis.”
- ◆ Managers review and revise the compilation of the traits investigated. They decide whether prospective employees should have only the traits in the list or additional traits to push other employees to be more competitive and to contribute to the competitiveness of the company.

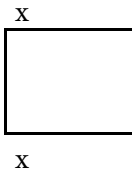


- ◆ In some examples, the list of traits is prepared based on comparison of the best with the worst performers to see what traits yield high-performance. The traits listed reflect the performance of the best performing employees.
- ◆ Competencies are categorized under the headings interpersonal, “technical,” and managerial. Whether everyone in the company is supposed to have interpersonal skills depends upon the needs as described by the company. For example, everyone working in a hotel should look presentable and cheerful. On the other hand, “technical” traits are those needed to carry out a certain job with maximum performance. Although they are called technical, these traits are in fact behavioral characteristics that are required for the stimulation of certain technical skills. These skills are not expected from everyone, but only from the one who is to carry out the job. For example, human resources specialists are supposed to be discreet as they have personal information about employees in the company. For managerial positions, the candidates are supposed to have managerial traits. They are expected to be able to take initiatives and manage each person considering the relationships at work.
- ◆ A minimum six, and a maximum of ten combinations of competencies are determined before the interview. During the interview, job seekers are to give concrete examples from their previous job experiences proving that they possess each competency. If answers given by the candidates as to their specialties are abstract and general, in-depth interview techniques are used for further investigation. The interviewers ask candidates to give an example for each abstract term that they use to make sure that they possess the competencies they are claiming. The candidates may claim that they have the required competencies but this does not mean that they have applied them in practice. Therefore, recruitment specialists are charged with finding out whether candidates have put the claimed competencies into practice and see if the information provided by the candidates reflects the “truth.”
- ◆ Candidates who give three examples of experience for each competency get the highest points. However, candidates who get the highest points are not ideal as they are highly experienced and overqualified. The assumption is that candidates who are already good at a job will not have the motivation to do it.
- ◆ An example of the scoring table of a candidate that is filled after the interview is given below:

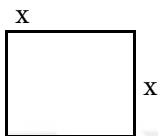
Table 5.1 Calculation Sample in a Competency-Based Interview

	Doesn't have expe- rience (1 point)	Doesn't relate ex- perience but gives feeling of it (2 points)	One ex- ample of experience (3 points)	Two ex- amples of experience (4 points)	Three ex- amples of experience (5 points)
Taking initiative			√		
Being discreet		√			
Strong communication				√	
Control-seeking		√			
Focus on details					
Risk-taking	√				
Total	3+2+4+2+1=12				

- ◆ The right employee is the one who scores average points, or perhaps more than average and but less than the highest points. It is thought that the person with the highest score will not to be satisfied with the job. The calculation is made as follows:
- ◆ Average point for each competency: 3
- ◆ The number of competencies: 6
- ◆ Average grade:  $6 \times 3 = 18$
- ◆ Highest points: 30 (5 points for each of 6 competencies)
- ◆ High score:  $30 - 6 = 24$  (highest points minus number of competencies)
- ◆ The ideal candidate will score between 18-24 points
- ◆ It is suggested that the physical conditions of job interview environments should be appropriate to make candidates feel comfortable so that they can give "real responses." For instance, one consideration is to arrange the seating in a way to place the interviewer and interviewee in certain positions around the table. For example, the positions below are assumed to give the impression that the recruitment specialist and the job seeker are on opposing sides, and it is not suggested.



- ◆ Therefore, the arrangement below is supposed to make the candidate feel more comfortable:



- ◆ It is also suggested that the candidates should be able to behave freely so that their spontaneous responses could be observed. The trainer gave an example of this point by suggesting the case in which a job seeker forgets to turn off his or her cell phone. When the phone rings during the interview, she claimed that interviewers should not respond so that they can see if the candidate gives a convincing excuse, how he or she reacts in this kind of situation, whether she or he accepts the phone call during the interview, and if he or she speaks on the phone, how she/he talks to people. These provide clues about the job seeker. Body language, communication skills, and in-depth interview methods are used to grasp the "truth" about the candidate.
- ◆ Recruiters ask about behavioral traits through indirect questions or draw on their impressions during the recruitment process. Candidates who demand a place to hang their coats instead of holding onto them during the interview, those who talk about a hobby not specified in the resume, those who mention an experience that proves that they do not take initiative, and those who prefer to just carry out the tasks instead of do more during the role play are all evaluated negatively with regard to their performance potential. These indicators are well-defined by the interviewers:
- ◆ We are not interested in what they say, but what they don't say. Their dress, their mobile phone, whether they change the settings or download a different

music for the ring tone;, these all say a lot to us about a person. (Entrepreneur, Male, BE)

- ◆ The assumption of this method is that “if someone has the competency, they must have experienced it. If they didn’t experience it either in their careers or outside of their work lives, it means they don’t have it.”<sup>5</sup> According to the trainer, the competencies of individuals take their final form at age of seven. People may have certain competencies that they cannot prove as they could be buried at the subconscious level. The recruitment specialists cannot get at these competencies, either. So, it is assumed that if people have the traits, they will be able to show them in the job interview. If they do not show them by giving concrete examples, it means that they either do not have them or are not able to use them.

Candidates are advised to record all their experiences that have to do with the competencies required for work (leadership, results orientation, team-work, organizational skills, and continuous development) so that they have proof of their competencies for future interviews. One of my interviewees, who is an entrepreneur, underscores a motto she developed to stress the importance of keeping a record of past experiences: “Think – Write – Put it in Your Mental Drawer.” Candidates are expected to synthesize their individual discourse in organizational terms<sup>6</sup> and redefine their pasts in compliance with corporate values. Recruiters want candidates to have a coherent personal history as was the case in the Fordist era. The difference is that this coherence is measured by corporate values and the past is expected to have been wrought by these values.

### 5.1.2 *Personality Inventories and Tests*

According to interviewees, tests are not the only determinant of placement decisions. Instead, they are used to support job interviews and other applied methods. There are several types and brands of personality test that enable the

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- 5 School life is perceived as a simulation of business life. Therefore, to investigate the behavioral traits of the new graduates, recruitment specialists ask them about their experiences during their studies.
  - 6 Campbell and Roberts, “Migration, Ethnicity and Competing Discourses in the Job Interview: Synthesizing the Institutional and Personal,” 244.

description, expression, and codification of the dominant behavioral features of candidates. Customers of private employment agencies can also decide which type of inventory is to be used:

Each customer can choose a different personality inventory. They say "X inventory is more appropriate to my needs." A company may want to use X brand inventory for a certain position and Y brand for another position. They are used at every level. (Entrepreneur, Male, BA)

There are several types of personalities generally defined by the test. Each person is assumed to have a certain combination of personality types. These tests are different from psychopathological tests that are used to assess the mental stability of people who intend to buy a gun or procure a security job. The distributor of one brand of test emphasized the difference between psychological tests and personality inventories. Psychological tests are used to find problems while personality tests are aimed at understanding the character of candidates and how they can be positioned in an organization to make the work-flow faster and more productive. The inventories do not reveal abnormalities but rather the main characteristics of the candidate. However, they are used for both recruitment processes and organizational purposes.<sup>7</sup>

The test results are used not only for the selection and placement of candidates, but also to make teams, formulate ideal definitions of the requirements of a position, and develop management models, as well as for reorganization and career development. They are used for current workers in companies at managerial, operational, and expert levels, as well. They may also be used in the training of the salespeople together with other methods such as

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7 For example Turkish Airlines put out a press release on their website explaining the reason they use the MMPI personality test. Turkish Airlines, "Press Release On MMPI Application," *Turkish Airlines*, accessed March 20, 2015, <http://www.turkishairlines.com/tr-tr/kurumsal/basin-odasi/basin-bultenleri/basin-bulteni-detayi/mmpi-cok-yonlu-kisilik-envanteri-uygulaması>. This psychological test should only be applied by experts in the field of psychology. The fields in which the test is used vary (from education to gun licensing to health to recruitment) but there is no sanction by authorities for its misapplication. Some companies provide training on how to evaluate the results. See: "Training on the application of the test," accessed September 8, 2015, <http://mindengineers.co/mmpi-uygulayici-egitimi>.

role-playing and interviews. People are assessed before they are promoted to an high-level positions as well as in the recruitment process:

You promote people to important positions – they will manage so many staff, you need to trust them. The tools we use are supportive; we don't expect the tools to give us exact answers. But you get something that can direct you before or after the interview. (Entrepreneur, Female, BC)

There are no statistics available as to how many companies use tools that measure behaviors. However, the entrepreneur of a personality inventory stated that the test has been filled out more than 3,5 million times.<sup>8</sup> The same person may have filled out the test more than once (with a fake identification), but still, the number of people who have filled out the test is tremendous. Candidates are allowed to fill the test out once a year. This principle is based on the idea that a person may change within a year's time; thus, participants are allowed to complete the test again. Since they may fill it out only once a year, some candidates take the test under fake names to see their performance before they take it under their own names and make the results available to employers. Companies that place job advertisements on a career portal may also ask applicants to fill out the test via the portal. Individuals may also fill out individually complete the test and buy the results.

The test is applied to find out the behavioral traits of candidates who already meet the basic requirements in terms of technical knowledge and education. The typical order of the recruitment process is that the resumes are first classified, then personality assessment inventories are completed, after which recruitment specialists have interviews with candidates in which they ask predetermined questions. The final interview is conducted by managers and/or employers. Candidates are asked to fill out the tests before the job interview so that the right questions can be asked in the interview. If the test shows that the candidate is weak in communication skills, this issue can be elaborated on the interview. Tests may be used to eliminate candidates who are found be in appropriate for the position.

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8 *Disc Akademi*, accessed February 7, 2016, <http://www.discakademi.com/tr/index.hrm>.

All the results are gathered in the database of the personal inventory company. The results of candidates who filled out the test for a certain position may also be accessed and evaluated by another company to which they are applying in the same year. The fact that results are stored and shared implies that candidates who completed the test for a certain position are then categorized in a certain way for the whole labor market.

As part of this research, I attended a one-day training event for human resources specialists organized by a personal inventory company and a well-known career portal. Later, I also conducted an in-depth interview with the entrepreneur of the personal inventory company. It was suggested to the human resources specialists who participated in the training that with this test, they could manage social relations at the workplace in a way to create a no-conflict work environment. The trainer also underscored that the test ensures the happiness of workers as it makes it possible to place them in positions that are compatible with their behavior. Managing sociality is possible by knowing both oneself and the workers. According to the trainer, this knowledge provides managers with the best composition of workers who have the characteristics needed in the organization. The trainer argued:

We all put masks on our face at work, but the important point is how well we carry them. If you don't know your workers well, they may be working in lower or higher positions than the position they are supposed to be.

The entrepreneur of the personal inventory company argues that the personal assessment inventory provides information about the personalities of people with whom we do not have experience. Knowing the risks of a prospect communication failure strengthens our communication power:

For example, assume that you don't like arrogant people. If you are like that, you have difficulty communicating with them. In this case, the inventory tells you that before you meet. But working together and not liking one another are different things. If we identify these in advance, we can say that "there is a risk that you may not like the candidate." If you accept that these are characteristic traits, you come to a better level

of understanding to get along well with the candidate. (Entrepreneur of a personal inventory brand, Male, AZ)

The results of the test in this case measure “natural personality,” “adapted personality/social character,” and the gap between them. Results are visualized with graphs in a report. If the distance between the two is low, the level of potential stress is considered low, too. Low stress levels indicate that the person will not have difficulty adapting his or her natural personality to the work environment. If candidates have a natural personality that is appropriate for the work environment, their stress level would be low. If their stress level is high, it means that people are forcing themselves to be adaptive and the more they keep working in their positions, the more stressed they will become.

The test results are not the only thing on which a recruiter's decisions are based. During the training, it was claimed that several other dimensions of the candidates should be evaluated together with the test results. Accordingly, the socioeconomic backgrounds of candidates are taken into account alongside their individual traits. It is suggested that the upbringing of candidates should be taken into consideration even if more than one candidate is found to have the same personal traits according to the test results. For example, if a candidate is easygoing according to the test, it should be checked against whether he or she grew up in an environment in which “inappropriate” practices were approved. For example, one candidate may comply with traffic rules while some others may not. The reason may be that the latter were brought up in environments in which non-compliance with traffic rules was approved. If recruiters are looking for someone compliant, they would not choose someone compliant with anything. In other words, two candidates who have the same results may behave in different ways. Therefore, the results are evaluated together with other information about the candidates.

Although standard personality inventories categorize candidates according to certain personality types the tests either lead to standardization nor suggest an ideal type for job candidates. On the contrary, they reveal differences. By using measurement tools, recruitment specialists do not generally aim to define any specific, target result. This flexibility in practice means that the right employee is not the one that meets a certain target set by the company, instead, the right employee is the one who approximates the performance of employees



who are already displaying excellent performance within the company. Employers do not limit their expectations by setting average standards for job candidates. The reason is that people can exceed expectations. Recognition of difference is deemed important in this respect. Showing the minimum expected performance may lead to the dismissal of an employee, as one recruitment specialist underscore:

We received complaints about one of the candidates we had placed. They said that he was just doing his job, not taking any initiative to do more. (Recruitment specialist, Female, AR)

Before measurement tools are applied, the best performers of the company are investigated to understand which behavioral traits are critical for high-performance. Candidates are evaluated on their similarity to the best performers:

For example, [consider that] a sales person is to be employed for an insurance company. Assume that they have 1200 employees. Probably thirty people from the group have excellent performance. Those people make the company profitable. We have in-depth interviews with those people that last one to three hours. We apply the inventory and develop an ideal profile in the end. We ask them how they sell... Candidates are employed according to this ideal profile. If one thousand people apply, fifty people compatible with the ideal profile can be found. (Entrepreneur, Psychologist, Male, AO)

We look at the successful employees of a company. We find out the common traits they have. For example, we find out that they are all patient, and we decide that patience is an important trait for us, and we expect the next employees to be patient. If they are all introverted and efficiency-oriented, we develop a profile according to this result. We start with the best employees and check the results with the worst employees. (Entrepreneur of a personal inventory brand, Male, AZ)

There is not a certain, adequate or sufficient result of these tests. The definition of what is adequate, changes according to position to be filled. The differences between candidates are not evaluated as good or bad. However, defining individuals based on the combination of certain character categories leads to a

context-free evaluation.<sup>9</sup> Whatever happens at work can be explained as a result of the mismanagement of behavior regardless of other conditions.

The competency-based interview method and the personality inventory differ in their approaches to personality and character. Personality tests acknowledge that people may change and behave differently in the future. Personality tests also recognize the differences in one's behavior at work and in non-work environments; however, the tests and the competency-based interview method expect them to overlap.

On the other hand, the assumption behind the competency-based interviews is that people must provide proof of their representation of themselves with reference to their personal histories. These personal experiences are expected to meet the needs of the company. Regardless of how experienced candidates are, if they do not present proofs of the requirements based on work or personal experiences, they are not considered compatible with those requirements. It is also not enough that candidates give a single example, since this would not prove that their experience was not just an exception.

A workplace in which people behave in an expected way (which is also assumed to be presented as real selves) is only possible if it is a socially-designed environment.<sup>10</sup> One interviewee claimed that it takes time to design the workplace socially:

The test we use confirms that 60% of the people in the society are normal, 17.5% are potential "troublemakers," some of them are "performers," and 2.5% of them constitute the most "dangerous" group. The performers are suitable for high-level managerial positions. Think of the company as a balloon; we do not recommend companies to fill it with people who could pull the balloon down or cause it to burst with a needle. It took me one year to clear my company of troublemakers. You need to do it slowly. Because if you fire them in a short time, it can be

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9 Zyphur, Islam, and Landis, "Testing 1, 2, 3, ...4? The Personality of Repeat SAT Test Takers and Their Testing Outcomes."

10 Standing calls them "socially constructed workplaces" and Kärreman and Alvesson call the phenomenon the "orchestration of work." Standing, "Labor Recommodification in the Global Transformation," 19; Kärreman and Alvesson, "Cages in Tandem: Management Control, Social Identity, and Identification in a Knowledge-Intensive Firm.," 10.

dangerous. I wish I had seen this test at the beginning of my career; my life would have been completely different. I could have made the right decisions instead of wasting that much time. (Entrepreneur, Female, AG)

What is common to personality inventories and competency-based interviews is that both try to understand the sociability of candidates and define it before they hire them. In this way, the workplace can be socially-designed in advance to increase productivity, which is the concern that characterizes the contemporary labor market.

There is an observable difference between the definition of the employable worker used in the Fordist era and the definition that is applicable in contemporary labor market. In the Fordist era, people were considered to represent their social groups – such as being university graduates –, and assumptions about the candidate were based on these representations. In addition, no direct relation was established between the upbringing of the person and the work to be done. The past of the candidate was assessed in an indirect, commonsense manner in terms of being either good or bad. However, in new capitalism, the focus is on the individual. Individuals are expected to build their own histories (with the help of their families) via corporate values in a consistent manner and to be compatible with the position to which they are applying. The fact that the personal history of the candidate is taken into account suggests that current assessment criteria are similar to those that were applicable in the Fordist era. However, the difference is that personal history is taken into account as long as it – or a part of it – is found to be directly related to work. In addition, now there are behavioral assessments based on individuality. The results of these assessments are not considered as either good or bad.<sup>11</sup>

### 5.1.3 *Informal Tools*

The specific methods mentioned above are used to make job placement processes more effective for employers. When effective, these processes end with

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11 One may be expected to be manipulative for a sales position, although this trait is considered negatively in society.

the recruitment of the most suitable person who possesses behavioral traits that comply with the position. As mentioned before, the expectations as to behavioral traits have three aspects:

- 1 to maximize the performance of a specific job position,
- 2 to decrease social conflict among colleagues, and
- 3 to have workers compatible with corporate culture.

Sophisticated selection processes aimed to eliminate the risk of encountering differences between the expected and “the real.” However, it may not be claimed that one’s acquaintances or the social position one possesses no longer matter in the recruitment processes. Acquaintances and the person’s position in society still matter in recruitment processes. These relations operate within sectoral networks and blacklists, as well as through other informal methods.

Managers and human resources specialists informally share information with private employment agencies regarding their companies that are looking for employees. If informal knowledge is not explicitly shared with the agencies, they are expected to understand and interpret the unwritten rules.<sup>12</sup>

Unwritten rules require informal methods be inserted into the recruitment process, and sometimes only private employment agencies may employ such methods. The manager of a private employment agency explains this logic and differentiates their services from in-house recruitment as follows:

We are more dynamic. We can go to local authorities (muhtar) to ask something about the candidate but the human resources manager of a big bank would have difficulty doing that. Actually, we do things those companies cannot. (Entrepreneur, Male, BA)

Informal methods are used to complement the bureaucratic procedures and methods that involve the use of standardized techniques. Private employment agencies can conduct secret investigations about candidates and can compile and share blacklists among themselves.

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12 Coverdill and Finlay, “Fit and Skill in Employee Selection: Insights from a Study of Headhunters.” Understanding informal rules does not necessarily lead to compliance of private employment agencies with employers’ demands.

Companies accumulate personal information not only of current workers and workers chosen for a position, but also of job candidates who fall out of favor and are blacklisted. Most interviewees confirmed that black lists exist. People who act “strangely” (who have hand tremors or talk in an aggressive manner, for example) are put on the blacklist. Companies differ in terms of the reasons they blacklist candidates; however, assaultive behavior and a personal history of corruption are reasons for all of them. Candidates may also be blacklisted for simple attitudes that are considered deviant behavior.<sup>13</sup> As one interviewee stated, some agencies do not tolerate candidates who miss appointments and put them on their blacklist:

There are professional liars; even if you are very experienced, you don't realize it. Those people steal our time. Assume that they lie and make us believe them. It comes to light when they are employed, anyway. They do harm to themselves. They may harm their reputation. We have a network; we share data (among professionals). There is such a thing as blacklist. There is a blacklist in every company as well as for every web portal. They can even be shared among companies. For example, if I make an interview with you for the company X and write a report saying that you were half an hour late, your diction was bad, and you didn't have information about the position beforehand, you will be evaluated in the same way my other companies... The way blacklists are formed may change from company to company. You may not include someone whom I would include in the black list. (Entrepreneur, Male, AK)

Although crime-related and exceptional examples are generally given to justify blacklists, interviewees gave more ordinary cases from their experiences as examples as well. Crimes and missing a job interview are likely to be treated

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13 One item of advice of a private employment agency on how to behave in order not to be blacklisted: "What to do in an interview (Mülakatta Ne Yapmalı?," *Ergmer Consultancy*, accessed June 15, 2014, <http://www.ergmer.com/index.php?sayfa=haber&HaberId=80&LId=370&htypeidx=1>.

in the same way. Extreme cases are mentioned to justify blacklists. The quotations below exemplify this approach of juxtaposing extreme cases and simple misbehaviors:

Some candidates lie about their resumes; some have psychological problems or have a moral deficiency. Therefore, agencies have blacklists. (Entrepreneur, Female, AJ)

Candidates must have an absurd behavior to be included in the blacklist. One of the candidates talked to me nonchalantly on the phone. Salespeople are like that, anyway (I didn't mind); but he wanted to make an appointment for the interview at 11 pm. He was directly added to the blacklist... If one doesn't come to the appointment, we put them on the list too. They should let us know that they are not coming. Some people had mental problems as well. (Recruitment specialist, Female, AH)

Being on a blacklist may lead to a wider embargo for job seekers. Lists compiled in several places can be circulated through many channels. If a holding company has a blacklist, it is shared with its subsidiaries. Small companies contribute to the main blacklist, as well. If a person is on the blacklist of an agency, he or she is blacklisted for all the companies with which that agency works. The network developed by human resources specialists, who are either entrepreneurs or salaried workers, is used to share information about employees. In this way, companies are supposed to find the "right" employee and know about "bad employees" who are not to be employed. Salaried recruitment specialists also put blacklists into circulation in the labor market when they change companies:

Human resources specialists know each other well through PERYÖN.<sup>14</sup> We do reference checks (for the candidates). It helps us a lot. If you decide to employ someone, there is a difference between

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14 As mentioned before, PERYÖN is a civic platform for human resources professionals and managers claiming to be at the leading edge of the sector. It has 3,000 members.

what people from the person's previous job say and what a human resources specialist tell you. People from the candidate's previous job may just tells you what they read in their files. We can't say that PERYÖN is a chamber of professionals, but unofficially, it is so. It helped me a lot, in my experience (Entrepreneur, Female, AB)

As private employment agencies only get paid when they achieve their task, the less time they spend researching about an employee, the more profit they make. Blacklists are useful to save time for private employment agencies.

The technical and scientific services of agencies are emphasized the within the sector for the sake of claiming to professionalism. However, experienced-based knowledge actually enables agencies to meet the special needs of their customers. The experience-based knowledge that PEAs have enables them to search for and find the job candidates in several<sup>15</sup> ways and strengthens the negotiating power of employers. A recruitment specialists I interviewed underscored how creative they become when they want to reach candidates:

Companies come to us saying that they can't find an employee and ask us to find one. The resources of companies are limited. Ours are wide; we go everywhere. We reach candidates via their office numbers saying that they are invited for a training program to make the secretary put you through. It requires creative performance. You always find different methods. They get surprised by how we find them. If the process must be conducted secretly, in case of a high-level management position, we interview candidates somewhere outside our office. Some PEAs do not have a signboard outside their offices in order to make candidates feel more comfortable. (Recruitment specialist, Female, AN)

Informal ways of finding candidates as well as experienced-based knowledge are used together with the new, so-called technical methods. The services of PEAs which that promise productivity and control of employees for the productivity of every company regardless of sector are based on experience-

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15 One well-known PEA calls it "creative." Alanyalı Consultancy, accessed June 18, 2015, [http://www.alanyali.net/exec\\_search.htm](http://www.alanyali.net/exec_search.htm).

based knowledge and assessment tools. PEAs distinguish themselves by their experience and the tools they use in the market as suppliers of recruitment services.

## § 5.2 The Objectivity of Recruitment Tools

Management procedures and assessment tools used in recruitment processes are presented and applied with claims to objectivity. Standardized tools based on science and technology and “objective implementers” (consultants) who are free from the interdependent relations of the workplace are claimed to provide objectivity. This claim is also a way to legitimize judgments made during the recruitment process:

Human resources specialists were always being criticized by candidates who claimed that “if the recruitment specialist likes you, you get the job.” Therefore, they needed to apply a method that would prevent those kinds of arguments. (Recruitment specialist at a textile retailer, formerly a PEA employee, AC)

The use of techniques (inventories, for example) that require professional knowledge would make recruitment approved. The claim of agencies to have certain techniques renders their recruitment services more marketable as they would be deemed to be implementable in different conditions and sectors. It also enables private employment agencies to maintain their place in the market vis-à-vis prospective or current competitors that can easily enter the human resources market. The recruitment industry’s recourse to science in promoting their assessment tools renders their services marketable. By emphasizing the techniques provided by their services, they aim to have recruitment recognized as a distinct profession. Recruitment professionals emphasized the importance of using sophisticated tools to distinguish themselves from the non-professionals:

You can do hiring, I can do hiring. There is not much difference. What makes the difference is the tests and their technology. That is why it is more plausible to move towards testing. (Entrepreneur, Female, AG)



The standardized tools of competency-based interviews and personality inventories are claimed to have a scientific basis. Competency-based interviews are constructed on a psychological framework, similar to personality inventories. Inventories are adapted to local conditions based on the results of quantitative research conducted in the society in which the tool is to be used.<sup>16</sup> When the terminology of hiring methods is backed up with that of scientific of psychology, it is harder to question their objectivity.<sup>17</sup> The capacity of these tools to measure what they are supposed to measure (their validity) is promoted to legitimize their existence. However, the question of why these tools are needed remains unanswered. The norm setting role of the categorization made by the inventories is also not questioned. The categories offered suggest a certain way of thinking.

Bureaucracy in the Fordist era had a "non-inclusive" character that allowed candidates to be part of an organization through their position, independent of their personality.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, in the new type of bureaucracy, differences of personality are recognized; and standardized methods are used to fill job positions with employees whose behaviors are compatible with those positions. Although the personalities of employees are taken into consideration, as mentioned previously, employers are not actually interested in employees as whole persons; which leads people to develop personality traits that are more compatible with business values. The employees are simply expected to be able to display the kind of personality traits that would be useful for work.

The use of standardized methods that recognize differences in personality suggests that candidates are selected naturally, something candidates who are hired in the end appreciate. They are made to think that their employment was inevitable since they were appropriate for the position by nature. The rationality attributed to the new bureaucracy – which claims to reach “natural results” by using objective tools – conceals the non-natural power relations at stake within the “naturalism of personal features.” It leads to the establishment

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16 From an interview with a entrepreneur of a brand of personal inventory.

17 Grugulis, Dundon, and Wilkinson, “Cultural Control and the ‘Culture Manager’: Employment Practices in a Consultancy.”

18 Kallinikos, “The Social Foundations of the Bureaucratic Order,” 16.

of social relations based on corporate values. Business values are rephrased as individualized concepts. The moral discourse that accompanies the individualized discourse contributes to the perception that working conditions are pre-given as it suggests that the position in which one works is pre-determined by natural rules.

In the old type of bureaucracy, “social relations become codified into technocratic fields that dissipate the moral and ethical concerns in social action in favor of a purely procedural focus,”<sup>19</sup> while with the new bureaucracy, “rational” procedures are codified into moral concerns and used together with the old previous one through individualized discourse.

### § 5.3 Subjectivity in the Recruitment Process

Part of the services of PEAs can be conducted by companies in-house. However, outsourcing the recruitment process provides companies with certain kinds of flexibility that they otherwise would not have. Some of the reasons why PEAs are preferred pertain to the fact that they enable recruiting large numbers of workers in a short time, hiring white-collar employees for short or medium-term work, using informal methods to find the fit employees, conducting internal reorganization without letting current employees who will be dismissed know, and attracting passive candidates.<sup>20</sup> In addition, some companies use agencies to put distance between themselves and the candidates so that they keep negotiating power. Some companies prefer PEAs because they can conduct recruitment processes free from managers' autonomy. PEAs have accumulated knowledge about the labor market and can persuade candidates to work more for less.

Although the agencies claimed to be professional because selection and placement uses personality tests and assessment techniques, it is difficult to

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19 Gazi Islam and Michael Zyphur, “Critical Industrial Psychology: What Is It and Where Is It?” SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, November 1, 2015), 18, <http://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2684636>.

20 People who are employed and not looking for jobs. For several reasons, passive candidates are more likely to accept job interview invitations from PEAs than from the companies themselves. They do not want to be perceived as job seekers or be seen at a competitor company.

deny the experience-based character of the field. This is the inconsistency of the sector. Claims to understand human behavior by means of objective tools based on science exist together with subjective methods. The recruitment specialists with more than three years of experience in the field said that they had interviewed more than a thousand people. Accordingly, they base their professional knowledge on their own experiences rather than formal knowledge they gained through their education or through certificate programs.<sup>21</sup> The understanding they gain through experience is crucial in the sector. The conclusions drawn by recruitment specialists are as important as the tools they use. The length of their experience in interviewing leads perception changes in how they evaluate candidates;

There is a trend for recruitment specialists during their experience. The first time you start conducting job interviews, you ask yourself: "How am I going to decide on the careers of people? Will they change with my one word?" There is no formula for that. At the beginning of your practice of the profession, you first approve job candidates [who are] like yourself and disapprove of others. You pass this phase after you gain more experience. In the second phase, when you have made about 50-200 interviews, you think that you are able to judge people at first sight and know whether they are compatible a the position or not. But when you reach 300 interviews, you go back to the beginning and you relax. You understand that there is no such a thing as knowing people at first sight. Making decisions based on your previous experience may be wrong. Everyone has different a story and should be assessed individually. This is the point at which you relax. (Entrepreneur, Female, AB)

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21 Undergraduate programs on human resources in Turkey are new. The first was started at Sakarya University in 2008. Sakarya University, Homepage, *Sakarya University*, accessed June 18, 2015, <http://www.iky.sakarya.edu.tr/tr>. Master programs, private courses, and classes within other undergraduate degrees are more prevalent. Therefore, most of the professionals in the field does not have formal education directly related to human resources management.

The process involves subjectivity<sup>22</sup> due to the experienced-based character of the field. However, professionals in the industry find no contradiction between the role of the specialists' subjectivity in the process and the quest for scientific means of assessment. One of the entrepreneurs explains the kinds of clues they use to infer how candidates behave:

I have had thousands of interviews; some of them were for bulk hiring. We hired 1000 thousand people for a bank once. There was little time to see people. But I singled out candidates who were annoying. For example, people in the selection process asking: "Where will I hang my coat?", "Where will I park my car?", or complaining about their chair were the examples. This is not the only thing you evaluate, but this is a sign. You put down a negative remark for adaptation skill. (Entrepreneur, Female, AB)

Experience-based knowledge was codified and the knowledge became transferrable during the professionalization of the field of human resources.<sup>23</sup> "Professionals" could be defined as "exclusive occupational groups that apply somewhat abstract knowledge to particular cases."<sup>24</sup> It is difficult to claim professional knowledge based only on experience; anecdotal arguments cannot be claimed as the basis of professional knowledge. The knowledge that professionals in the industry defer to is not always that of the tests; it also involves judgments with no reference – if not spiritual-mystical judgments.

What makes private employment agencies important is not simply the professional knowledge they claim or the interviewing skills they gain with experience. PEAs work with different companies in different sectors. While they carry out selection and placement processes, they learn more through interviews with candidates and interactions with customers. They collect information that is not directly related to candidates, as well. For instance, through accounts by candidates and customers, they gather information on

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22 How the subjectivity of recruitment specialists' affects decisions they make is not a focus of the research and requires further study.

23 Remarkably, many human sources specialists convey their professional knowledge through websites full of individualized cases and anecdotes.

24 Andrew Delano Abbott, *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 8.

the internal mechanisms of the companies, the differences among companies, and labor market conditions in terms of salaries and organizational structures. This information is crucial for them to make their services more marketable. They expand their pool of candidates by acquiring the names of the new candidates. They diversify options for their customers and help them to strengthen their negotiating power over employees. As entrepreneur interviewees pointed out, apart from experienced-based personal knowledge, the information that the candidates carry to agencies make up a crucial part of the knowledge that PEAs possess:

We sometimes see three different people from the same department of a company. If they tell different stories, it means that someone is not telling the truth. You think that a job candidate is hardworking; you can change your opinion through this experience. (Recruitment specialist, Female, AN)

Informal information that is not openly shared can be obtained through candidates at job interviews or from managers we have placed in a position. (Entrepreneur, Female, BC)

When PEAs release a job advertisement without providing the name of the company, current employees of the company may also apply for the job without knowing that it is at the company for which they work. One of the recruitment specialists I interviewed said that in those cases, their resumes are considered for other companies in the same sector.

Job interviews are important sources of information about companies. I argue that PEAs are also information gathering points about the labour market, a fact which gives them strategic importance. Through candidates, PEAs acquire information about market dynamics that they could not otherwise obtain. This information constitutes part of their marketable knowledge.

In the recruitment process, both new tools claimed to be based on scientific techniques and old ones (practices and blacklist) are used together.

## § 5.4 Norms Generated by the Recruitment Industry

The tools of private employment agencies discussed above are accompanied by certain principles created by the recruitment industry. Private employment agencies claim that the tools are needed for:

- 1 Finding employable workers who is comply with the discourse “do what you love” and “love your job”
- 2 Regulating anonymous, societal relations, thereby decreasing interpersonal conflict
- 3 Preventing nepotism and individualistic behavior and providing professionalism
- 4 Eliminating “bad” people
- 5 Providing change to be up to date

These principles of the recruitment industry, which I clarify in more detail below, regulate the labor market and become part of common sense.

### 5.4.1 *Do What You Love*

The psychological contract<sup>25</sup> broken by the disappearance of the social security provided by employment – that is to say, of seniority, retirement, compensation, promotion and regular income) – is reconstructed with the promise of self-actualization.<sup>26</sup> Autonomy is associated with happiness. Promises of free agency, self-actualization, and happiness are expected to replace the concrete benefits of employment. In addition, those abstract promises are defined outside of work. Happiness at work does not come from work; instead, it is based on the personal history of employees who are to bring their happiness to work.

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25 Brown and Scase argue that the psychological contract was broken the disappearance of the social promises of the Fordist era. Brown and Scase, *Higher Education and Corporate Realities*, 179.

26 There is a difference between core and non-core workers in terms of the “self actualization” that comes with autonomy. See Robertson and Swan for an example of how knowledge workers practice a certain degree of autonomy. Maxine Robertson and Jacky Swan, “Going Public: The Emergence and Effects of Soft Bureaucracy Within a Knowledge-Intensive Firm,” *Organization* 11, no. 1 (January 2004): 123–48, doi:10.1177/1350508404039661.

This is only possible if they know themselves and their competencies and construct a career in accordance with the required competencies. The skill of a candidate's management of their own career is measured during the recruitment process.

At a conference<sup>27</sup> organized for human resources assessors, a well-known entrepreneur of a PEA made a distinction between the satisfaction and the fulfillment of employees. He argued that satisfaction brings loyalty, while fulfillment brings performance. Therefore, employers should be concerned with the fulfillment of their employees. He mentioned one of his customers who complained about loyal employees who deliver poor performance. High-performance is associated with self-actualization and happiness and is thus preferable to having a loyal labor force.

Self-actualization is assumed to have been reached when one comes to know one self, something which should have reached its closure by the time of beginning of the career. In this approach, self-actualization is defined as acting in accordance with one's personal traits which are to be explored. People who know themselves will find the job they will love and that will make them happy. As it is related to one's personality, self-actualization is supposed to be developed before and outside of work. In this way, unhappiness at work is claimed to be the responsibility of the employee. The employer cannot be brought to account in any case of conflict. Happiness at work is associated with one's personal, emotional, inner quest, and one interviewee pointed out that this quest starts at an early age:

I don't believe that people who haven't completed their inner journey can find a job and be fulfilled by a job. (Entrepreneur, Male, BA)

Employees are advised to do jobs they love, taking their personalities into account as defined in human resources magazines. The website of a university career center welcomes its visitors with the aphorism: "Choose the job you love and you will never have to work a day in your life."<sup>28</sup> According to these

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27 New Approaches in Human Resources Management in Assessment Centers, Bilgi University, Istanbul, on May 13, 2015.

28 Kadir Has University, Career Center, *Kadir Has University*, accessed November 18, 2013, <http://www.khas.edu.tr/kariyer-merkezi>.

kinds of advice, employees should first discover themselves, understand what they like, and then be prepared to pursue the “right career” in accordance with the results. One interviewee who works as a human resources manager and career coach shared his ideas on happiness in relation to working at a newspaper:

Many people resign from their jobs after reading my book. They change companies, saying “I am not happy” and start doing the job they love. They switch to different sectors. Sometimes the managers of the companies I work with get angry with me because I encourage so many people to quit their jobs. But people who don’t love the job they do... they won’t be useful for the company.<sup>29</sup>

The imperative to “love your job” supports the new bureaucracy produced by PEAs. The institutions of new capitalism do not impose the need for compliant behavior or want compliant workers; instead, they look for people who behave voluntarily in an entrepreneurial way. As Yashin argues, when power individualizes its language and individuals perceive it as their own, discourse becomes a common sense approved by the people, in contrast with ideas that are imposed.<sup>30</sup>

Focusing on the individual renders the social, relational part of work invisible. The emotional promises of employment and the individualization of employment divert attention from institutions and structures to individuals. This leads to the dissociation of the job from the workplace. For instance, a famous human resources management specialist shares an aphorism on the professional social network LinkedIn that stresses the importance of loving

29 "Kitaplarımı okuyup ya da bir eğitime katılıp işinden istifa eden birçok kişi var. Ben çok mutsuzum diyerek çalıştıkları şirketleri değiştiriyor, sevdikleri işi yapmaya başlıyor, değişik sektörlere geçiyorlar. Bazen çalıştığım şirketlerin yöneticileri bana kızıyor çalışanlarının işten ayrılmasına sebep oldum diye ama zaten işini sevmeden yapan insandan da onlara hayır gelmez." "Managers Get Angry with Me (Şirket Yöneticileri Bana Kızıyor)," Hurriyet Newspaper, accessed November 10, 2011, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/-sirket-yoneticileri-bana-kiziyor-/cumartesi/haberdetay/11.06.2011/1401036/default.htm>.

30 Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).



one's job regardless of the employer: "Love your job, but do not ever fall in love with your company, because you cannot know when it may leave you."

As one interviewee remarks, recruitment specialists use different methods and strategies during the hiring process to find out whether the job candidate loves the job in question:

If a candidate talks very positively about marketing and says how he sold things, I tell myself that he loves his job – that he likes to be in the field. And I ask him if he would consider another position in the company, but this is actually a bluff. I want to find out whether he really wants to work in the field. If he tells me that he may think of the position about which I bluffed, I put him a little lower down on the list. But if he says, "No, I don't want a managerial position, I want to be in the field because it is more fun and you can arrange your own time" etc., then you can infer from this that he really likes to be in the field. (Recruitment specialist, Female, AH)

This individualized employment approach is wrought by an individualized discourse that refers to love and pleasure, evoking intimate relations with work. In line with that, recruitment specialists frequently use marriage as a metaphor for work:

I think finding a spouse and finding a job are similar processes. Assume that you have a partner who has money but treats you badly. How long can you stay together with such a person? And how long would you stay together with a person who has limited means but treats you nicely? I think you can stay with the latter for a life time. (Entrepreneur, Male, BA)

Another interviewee related an anecdote about a CEO she had met which exemplifies how employment is individualized. In this example, the interviewee goes beyond using metaphoric language and defines loving one's job and marriage as criteria of employment. She concludes that matchmaking is similar to hiring:

The CEO of big company answered a question about how he selects employees. He said "First, the candidate should be positive, doing everything instead of saying the impossible. Secondly, I meet his wife, because I want to see with whom he spends his time after me." That is what I tell people when I give a talk: "Be careful when you choose your husband or wife and your job. I also 'recruited' my husband." (Entrepreneur, Female, BF)

The YouTube video an advertisement company (TBWA\ISTANBUL) released to illustrate its intern recruitment process provides an extreme example as to how employees are expected to love their work.<sup>31</sup> In total, 503 candidates applied to the position and only five were finally recruited. During the recruitment process, several advertisements were shown to the candidates and their emotional responses were measured by means of neuro-technology. The person in charge of the process stated in the video that "We try to scientifically turn the level of love and excitement into quantitative data... We aim to select those who are the most excited and passionate, [and] thus deserve the position by discovering even the subtlest differences among the feelings of the candidates."<sup>32</sup> The candidates gave positive comments about the method and justified the process, as well. One of them said "after such an selection process, I think the selection is more just,"<sup>33</sup> while another said "[normally] people can speak differently than how they think,"<sup>34</sup> suggesting that this method would reveal the gap. Sophisticated recruitment processes backed up by quantitative

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31 TBWA/ISTANBUL, Adlove Project, accessed September 30, 2013, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vzSlfhdKI&desktop\\_uri=%2Fwatch%3Fv%3D4vzSlfhdKI&app=desktop](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vzSlfhdKI&desktop_uri=%2Fwatch%3Fv%3D4vzSlfhdKI&app=desktop).

32 "Bu yaratıcı alana duydukları tutkuyu, aşkı ve içlerindeki heyecanı biraz da olsa bilimsel sayısal verilere dökmeye çalışmak... Stajerlerin arasında çok ufak da olsa heyecan ve tutku farklarını bularak bunlar arasında bir puanlamaya giderek en sonunda da en çok hak edenleri, içlerinde en çok heyecan duyanları, bu işe en çok tutkuyla bağlananları seçmeye çalıştık aslında."

33 "Şu yaptığımız elemenden sonra ayrışmanın daha adil olacağına inanıyorum."

34 "İnsanlar konuştuklarını ve duygularını farklı anlatabilirler."

assessment methods are unlikely to be questioned<sup>35</sup> by candidates. The comments shown in the video were positive, though of course, the producers would not have included the negative comments of participants in the video. Nevertheless, these candidates have a point. Employees are ostensibly hired for “natural” features discovered by scientific methods. In response, selected employees feel happy for the proof that they are naturally suitable for their positions.

In a conference I attended as a part of my field research, a well-known human resources specialist who is one of the oldest entrepreneurs of the recruitment industry and has a background in psychology criticized the method conducted by the aforementioned advertising agency.<sup>36</sup> Human resources specialists constituted the audience, and some of the speakers were the entrepreneurs of private employment agencies. He showed the video on and asked the audience whether they approved it. Murmurs of approval arose from the audience. He continued to say that this method had no validity. It was a wrong understanding of assessments. He has several books and articles about how to convert business values into a language with moral reasoning.<sup>37</sup> As an entrepreneur, he based his professionalism on his skill of relating the issues of productivity, value, emotion, and career using his background in psychology. His criticism was not about the relation established between emotions and work, but rather about the specific method used. This criticism of bad practice, which is prevalent in the field, assumes that there is an ideal practice. However, the discourse of the ideal goes hand in hand with the discourse of bad practice; hence, it opens up a space for tools that measure the level of overlap between values in daily life and business values. Therefore, it entrenches the approach.

Another way to use the “happiness” argument is to emphasize the characteristics of the new generation, which is claimed to be looking for self-actualization instead of job security. This young generation is commonly called the

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35 For example, emotional condition can affect results during the hiring process. The claim of being natural and context-free ignores this dimension.

36 *New Approaches in Human Resources Management in Assessment Centers*, Bilgi University, Istanbul, on May 13, 2015.

37 "How Values Are Put into Practice?," "The Value of Values," "Values in Daily Life," "The Feeling of Values Give Energy" are the titles of some of his articles. Acar Baltas, accessed June 23, 2015, [http://www.acarbaltas.com/tum\\_makaleler.php#.VcrSZvl\\_Oko](http://www.acarbaltas.com/tum_makaleler.php#.VcrSZvl_Oko).

Generation Y, and is claimed to be assertive, disobedient, and seeking self-actualization. The entrepreneur of a private employment agency included himself in Generation Y and explained their differences as follows:

Generation Y is different; they will change companies. Including me... I don't adhere to patterns. I look at the entrepreneurialism and skills of people. You are expected to have explanations for everything in this generation. People used to tell their staff what to do and give them order, but this generation asks the reasons and the benefit of it. (Entrepreneur, Male, AK)

According to the observations of an interviewee, young employees are deemed to be oriented toward self-actualization instead of simply looking for money:

Generation Y has high expectations that they lower after they have more experience. They research the company really well before the job interview. They are very sensitive about the kinds of places in which they would like to work. They are concerned not only about money, but also about some other things. They want to do jobs that they will like. Titles are very important for them; they want to have positions in which they can do jobs of strategic importance, but they don't understand how early it is for them. (High-level manager at a PEA, Female, AE)

The differences mentioned in the industry between older and newer generations conceal a paradoxical conflict of interest at a time when performance measurement, control, and surveillance tools are used more intensely and widely for employees who are thought to be rule-breaking.<sup>38</sup>

The call for happiness, pleasure, autonomy, and pursuit of self-actualization made by employers and by the recruitment industry have had unintended consequences. The norms created by the industry are likely to create employee expectations, as mentioned in the section on the experiences of employees. Employees tend to bring non-work life to their work life, while employers aim

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38 A comparison of the approaches of different generations towards work would require further research.

to bring work life to non-work life by asking about business values in the personal history of the employee, regardless of their direct relation to the work in question. McRobbie draws on Donzelot to assert that the self-management imposed "achieve unprecedented and sophisticated levels of regulation of labor."<sup>39</sup>

The recruitment specialists I interviewed commonly remarked and complained that young people looking for jobs are self-centered and have a high opinion of themselves, even as they praise the new generation and marginalize "old-fashioned" employees. The opinions of young job seekers are approved when they are in line with the requirements of flexibility (meaning doing more than what is asked), but they are disapproved when they involve demands to be promoted or receive raises. The individualization of employment is approved as long as it relates to the content, rather than the conditions of work:

If a new graduate asks for a salary of 3000 Turkish lira, I ask about his father's job. He says "he is a teacher," and I ask about his salary. And he says "1400 Turkish lira and he has been working for 20 years." Well, who are you then? There is a reality of minimum wage; this is the reality of this country. The most important thing we talk with new graduates is their impatience. (Entrepreneur, Male, BA)

Interviewees also added that young people lower their "high" demands after a period of unemployment, having faced the realities of the market:

New graduates especially want to be given responsibility straight away, and to be promoted. They immediately ask: "Will I start as an assistant?," [and] "Will I always be working as an assistant?" They say those kind of things recklessly. They are motivated at school, but they later become disappointed. There is a considerable difference between new graduates in their first job interview and ones who are having their

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39 Jacques Donzelot, "Pleasure in Work," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 251–80; Angela McRobbie, "From Holloway to Hollywood: Happiness at Work in the New Cultural Economy?," in *Cultural Economy: Cultural Analysis and Commercial Life* (London: SAGE, 2002), 109.

tenth interview. (Recruitment specialist at a textile retailer, formerly a PEA employee, AC)

Employers expect employees to have already meet business requirements in their pre-work lives. In line with that, employees justify the high demands on their character with the promise that they will be able to do a job they love in return. This expectation on the part of employees is then re-used by the industry. The expectation is first constructed and then re-managed:

Today, we use certain techniques to make people feel important. Ten years later we use other techniques to make them feel important. Now we talk about social media; there was no social media before. And now we also use social media so that job seekers feel better. Nothing changes; we change our shape to convince people. (Entrepreneur, Male, BA)

Happiness at work can be defined in different ways. For instance, Sennett and Cobb draw on their research to argue that all workers, regardless of their character, consider jobs that provide them with a power of interpretation – and thus more control over their work – as good jobs.<sup>40</sup> In addition, sociality at work may also make people feel that they are a part of a meaningful group. The idea of a "satisfying job" was replaced by preaching that individuals are to pursue their own fulfillment. Happiness at work is redefined by PEAs: the thing to look for is not the job but self-actualization. The redefinition of happiness by the recruitment industry in relation to work as a whole requires an overlap between the one's character and the requirements of the position. This makes it possible to assess the social dimension of work. The industry imperative to "do what you love" redefines what pleasure at work means.

The promise of happiness, which comes along with self-actualization at work, is produced to legitimize the use of recruitment tools. Those tools that reveal the "nature" of the candidates supposedly enable recruiters to make a decision as to which candidate "naturally" deserves the position. In this regard,

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40 Jonathan Cobb and Richard Sennett, *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (New York: Knopf, 1972), 226.

happiness comes to refer to the value given to the employees if they do the job they love.

#### 5.4.2 *Regulating Anonymous Societal Relations and Decreasing Interpersonal Conflict*

The new bureaucracy claims to bring order to chaotic anonymous relations. The reason is that conflict, though recognized as inherent to social relations, is perceived as a waste of time if it does not lead to increased productivity. Tools to eliminate non-compatible job seekers are presented as means of problem solving. However, as emphasized at a training organized on the usage of personal inventories, clearing the workplace of conflicts is not the goal, either. Although workflow should continue without interpersonal problems, the goal is not routine. Therefore, an employee with a different kind of personality is advised by the recruitment professionals to be placed among employees who have with similar personalities. It is assumed that this will prevent the formation of harmonious social relations, and thus vitalize the social environment. In this way, conflicts may be created when needed for productivity. The entrepreneur of an assessment center also points out that there is an inverse relation between peace at work and profit:

If what people understand from a good workplace is to have employees who do whatever the manager says, those kinds of employees are hired at the company. However, no creative work can be expected from such a work environment. Eventually, they conduct their business without having any conflict at work; but in the long run, the company is likely to go bankrupt because it cannot compete like that. (Entrepreneur, Psychologist, Male, AO)

Conflicts and negotiations are managed at workplaces in which different people from different backgrounds encounter each other. In managerial terminology, the way in which a company is managed is called "company culture." The company culture includes partly written and partly unwritten rules. Managing the social space at work requires taking each employee into account, along with their relations, which have become more interdependent. Being compatible with the organization is held to be similar to being compatible with one's

spouse. As one interviewee stated, organizational citizenship<sup>41</sup> and the right chemistry<sup>42</sup> are the terms used to define this relation:

There is no right or wrong employee; there are people who are compatible with positions. The compatibility between the candidate and the company is very important. For example, if the company as a strict hierarchy, it may not be suitable for a candidate who has an independent attitude. Even if the job is the same, some managers give initiative while others do not, and the latter may not want to have an employee who tends to take initiative. (High level manager at a PEA, Female, AE)

The term “company culture” was mentioned frequently by the interviewees regarding the issue of the compatibility of employees. Every time it was used, I asked about its meaning. I observed that the term indicates the culturalization of contractual relations. Companies are deemed to be like communities with different cultures that require respect regardless of their content. Therefore, they are thought to be genuine, peculiar, unchangeable, and generally context-free. The rules of management were often represented with a naturalized discourse of culture concealing their agents. This was particularly obvious in the statement of one interviewee:

Every company has its own culture which is determined by the sector and the company itself. We pay attention to that as we place candidates. For example, one of the employers was from the Black Sea region and was conservative. The first candidate we offered was very professional and modern. They had a conflict. Neither liked it. It is sometimes funny the extent to which employers can ask you to employ someone from the same region that they are from. Later on, I was careful about that. It does not matter how professional you are – if you don't comply with the company culture, you are a misfit. Therefore, I don't make

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41 Bowen, Ledford, and Nathan, “Hiring for the Organization, Not the Job,” 46.

42 Coverdill and Finlay, “Fit and Skill in Employee Selection: Insights from a Study of Headhunters,” 106.



agreements without first seeing the workplace; I need to see it. (Entrepreneur, Male, AK)

While new methods of recruitment are claimed to represent a break from old ones, the old, paternalistic, hierarchical style of management is actually being disguised by the concept of company culture. Employees are expected to be compatible with the position and the company culture so that social conflicts decrease. This also means that they are to comply with informal and unwritten rules at work. Understanding those rules is a task recruitment specialists bear in mind:

We place appropriate candidates in positions in order to have the highest productivity, since happy people work productively. Being appropriate means meeting the standards of the company. Those standards are professional and behavioral ones. Secondly, compatibility with company identity is very important – meaning compatibility with company culture. Company culture is not something measurable. For example, I can't place someone who dresses in a very eye-catching way in a conservative company... Company culture is not written. Rules or principles are visible but there are also informal rules. These are the rules which we, as human resources specialists, figure out. Everyone knows the visible ones. (Entrepreneur, Female, BF)

The term “company culture” is mostly used as a euphemistic phrase to refer to the informal rules of a workplace. The personalized definition of the company culture implies that the conditions at work are given and not open to change.

#### 5.4.3 *Preventing Nepotism and Individualistic Behavior and Providing Professionalism*

Personality tests and interviews are framed and presented as methods of selection and placement that indicate professionalism. All the new methods used in the selection process are based on an idea of objectivity. An interviewee made the following point in that regard:

There is no old way anymore. People used to find employment through their close relations, their relatives, and friends. The classical model was that "whoever we employ, the important thing is the honesty of the person; hire trustworthy acquaintances." However, honesty wasn't enough; candidates needed to have the features required by the job as well as compatible personal traits. Furthermore, they were expected to have expertise and a customer portfolio. Nepotism is applicable today only in cases there are two candidates to choose between. (Entrepreneur, Female, AJ)

When nepotism is imposed by the employer, the so-called "old" way of recruitment is appropriated by recruiters who try to make the system look working. The following statement of an interviewee is illustrative:

Sometimes top-level management sends us a resume that is to be given priority. You can't reject it by saying "he or she doesn't have compatible traits with the company." Instead you just say "let's do it without letting anyone know about it." If other employees realize it and criticize you, you don't say "this is the way it is." Instead you say, "I can't inform you on the issue. I am not allowed to share the criteria on which the decision of selection was based." They could find it out if everything was transparent, but it's not; therefore, they can't say anything. If they say "they are not compatible," you just say "there are other criteria." (Recruitment specialist at a textile retailer, formerly a PEA employee, AC)

The new bureaucracy is a package that comes with a discourse of justice. Methods and evaluations are assumed to provide objectivity and impartiality, preventing nepotism:

No one in the world only looks at the resumes anymore; measurement and evaluations are more important. A resume is a criterion to eliminate candidates in terms of basic features as well as a criterion for discriminatory practices. Discrimination can be about school, gender, or something else. (Entrepreneur, Male, AL)

The claim to professionalism is made with the argument that hiring decisions are not to be left to the arbitrary decisions of the managers. This claim aims

not only to justify the sophisticated recruitment processes, but also to suggest that the new tools promise the elimination of dependency to the managers. The professionals of the recruitment industry I interviewed often underlined that with their work, they rank above everyone in the hierarchy, except for the employers themselves:

You may say the candidates should have interviews with the people with whom they will work. Actually they – the managers – take it more personally. Human resources specialists look into recruitment more generally. Maybe the manager is aggressive and wants someone passive. I just say "I found the candidate who has the competencies you asked for," but I know that he wants the employee to be passive and not to communicate openly. Human resources equalize the relations. (Recruitment specialist at a textile retailer, formerly a PEA employee, AC)

The approach of human resources specialists is actually a reflection of the general manager's approach. Because the manager consigns authority to me to source the candidate. When I have an interview with the candidate, I am concerned about the general manager's expectation, not even the managers. The first thing I am concerned about is whether the candidate is suitable to work with the general manager, and then I think about others, such as the department manager. (Entrepreneur, Female, BF)

Instead of the arbitrary decisions of managers, rational and objective tools are found to be reasonable by job seekers, as well as, mentioned in the section on objectivity. This approval by the candidates themselves contributes to the general reputation of the recruitment industry.

PEAs are deemed to be objective as they operate outside the workplace. In addition, the tools used by PEAs are claimed to be based on science. PEAs are thus eventually positioned as neutral, objective institutions.

#### 5.4.4 *Eliminating "Bad" People*

Apart from economic crises, sector professionals gave exceptional reasons for layoffs and cases in which candidates are not hired. Exceptionalism is used to

legitimize recruitment methods that promise to protect the workplace from criminals and the mentally ill. When I asked recruitment specialists whether candidates they placed ever turned out to be different, they gave extreme, exceptional examples. Workers who seemed to have been hard working turned out to be lazy or to have criminal records. I actually waited for such answers as: “They seemed to be an extrovert, but were shy in public,” which would have been more related to the goals for which the methods are put to work (i.e., seeking behavioral competencies). Marginal examples are brought up to justify the use of methods that promise to eliminate people with troublesome manners. However, the methods are used mainly for non-exceptional reasons. The following example from an interviewee was given when I asked whether she has ever made a recruitment decision that she felt was a mistake:

There was a candidate who told me that he was really good at sales and had a considerable experience, and I told myself that it was great. I arranged another interview with the manager. Eventually, he turned out to be an obsessive. His hands were shaking, which I thought was because he got excited in the interview. I would get excited too if I had a job interview. I did not question it and he turned out to have obsession. And we changed our mind. His manager questioned him because he was exempted from his military service obligation, which I thought had to do with his studies. However, when the manager asked him the reason, he said that he hadn't delayed it, that he was exempted from the military service duty because of problems he had. We changed our mind to employ him... There is another example, they employed someone for the disabled quota and he turned out to have schizophrenia.<sup>43</sup>(Recruitment specialist, Female, AH)

The control mechanisms are put forward as a claim to eliminate “risks,” thus bringing order a chaotic world. Interviewees painted a chaotic picture to justify the use of control mechanisms. The majority of interviewees from the recruitment sector gave the examples that involved strange behaviors (obsessive personality, insane behaviors, mental problems, or a criminal record in the

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43 Discriminatory practices towards people with having criminal pasts or mental problems are not our current subject.

past) to explain why psychological inventories and blacklists are necessary. However, the entrepreneur of a company that provides personality inventories distinguished psychological tests from personality inventories. What recruitment are actually used for tools is to measure the compatibility of behaviors of the candidates with their careers.

The use of tools is justified by the claim that they eliminate possible abnormalities. This justification also has another result. The candidates who are left out of the labor market in this way are branded as “bad.” This is in line with the approach that suggests that candidates are hired because they are naturally compatible with the position in question. If a candidate is not hired, the reason is claimed to be natural, as well. It contributes to an understanding that people deserve whatever they experience. They are fired or not hired for being criminals or problematic, or they are hired because they possess the natural traits required by the position, which makes their recruitment inevitable:

If someone is fired, the reason could be an abusive manner against work ethic – leaking company data for example. Otherwise, no one would prefer to fire an employee if nothing happens. There must be something related to the abuse. (Entrepreneur, Male, BA)

Behaviorally incompatible employees are likely to be defined as “bad” based on assumed intentions:

We personally saw that personal inventories work after using them in our workplace. We changed many staff members in the company. You see in the results of the tests that there are some characters with hidden hostilities while some others masquerade as being good. And there are also people who are good, but are not able to be visible enough. After we realized that, we changed half of the staff working here. (Entrepreneur, Female, AG)

The entrepreneurs of the PEAs speak with the discourse of the Fordist era in which qualified candidates were selected according to their compliance to the general moral rules. The answers given by entrepreneurs of PEAs, including the exceptional ones, indicate that whoever violates the rules of general morality is eliminated. The practices which aim to define the candidates in terms of their behaviors are justified by exceptionalism in that way.

#### 5.4.5 *Need for Change*

A discourse of change was commonly employed by the recruitment professionals I interviewed. There is an interesting contradiction in this discourse of change. Although much importance is given to change in general, job seekers are expected to naturally possess certain interpersonal qualifications that match the requirement of the job position and to have developed them before starting to work and be good at demonstrating them. What was meant by change was always left vague and not framed in the interviews. That the employees may change and develop behavioral traits through practice at work was denied. Despite the common acknowledgement of change in general, the idea that candidates can change in and through practice at work has weakened. Candidates who have a manipulative personality must be salespeople while those with a dominant personality will be managers, and those with an affectionate personalities will be nurses. The idea that personal character is shaped by social relations in and through practice was discarded. The time spent and the sociality required to learn certain techniques in and through practice are no longer tolerated.

Especially senior employees are criticized for not being able to adapt to the market and for not pursuing self-development. Basically, social rights that non-core workers gain by seniority came to be seen as costly. Changes in the labor market that involved privatization, diversification of the service sector, and increases in non-core job positions led to a real transformation of organizational forms. However, that is only part of the explanation relating to the discourse of change. Çam argues that the discourse of change (in consumption patterns) that leads to the requirement of different skills is used to justify temporary employment, especially after privatization, which took place between the years 1985-1996 in Turkey.<sup>44</sup>

The decline in career stability renders the discourse of change possible. Seniority is not a condition to be promoted since the grading system determines the salaries of the employees according to performance, instead of experience. In a training on job interviewing techniques, the instructor claimed:

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44 Surhan Çam, "Neo-Liberalism and Labor within the Context of an 'Emerging Market' Economy – Turkey," *Capital & Class*, no. 77 (2002): 94.

If a person has worked in a place for more than four years, it is questionable whether they are able to take initiative and risks. Therefore, they are considered to be less skillful at contributing to the competitiveness of the company.

Employees who have not made many changes in the course of their careers are criticized:

There is someone who has worked at a bank X for nine years. She is a manager, but has had no change in her wage. Others with less experience got promoted. Her position didn't change; her wage was a bit higher. She thought of working somewhere else, but she didn't do it because she lost confidence and was intimidated. She is afraid of leaving for another place, she says, "I even got used to my chair here, how can I put myself in another place again." (Recruitment specialist at a big textile retailer, previously a PEA employee, Female, AC)

The experience accumulated by the candidate may be seen as an obstacle by recruiters. A candidate who worked for the same company for a long time may be considered loyal in one job interview, but may be deemed incapable of adapting in another one. In this respect, skill in any sense has been fetishized<sup>45</sup> to justify the expectation of change from seniors who may be accused of being incapable of change. Further research is needed to reveal the discourse of skill produced by state social policy and the demand for skill by employers. It would ask "Why can those skills not be learned at the workplace?"

In other words, the discourse of change is applied mostly to seniors in the labor market and not to younger people who are more willing ready to work for less:

Companies may not want their employees to work in the same position or in the same company for ten to fifteen years. Companies don't look for employees who will retire from the company anymore, but they don't want managers to leave after three to five months or within a year either. (Recruitment specialist, Female, AF)

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45 Urciuoli, "Skills and Selves in the New Workplace.," 212.

Age becomes an issue not in relation to the physical capacity of employees, but rather in relation to expectations that come with seniority and are found to be costly. The discourse of competency is utilized to claim that competency – not the age – is the real issue. It is argued that age does not matter; however, that does not result in the employment of senior candidates. Their exclusion from employment is justified by a discourse of competency:

We don't prefer older people for field-work sales. They don't want it anyway because their expectations are high, as well. For example, in the interview, I ask them: "Assume that we hired you... how long do you think it would take for you to be promoted?" People of a certain age say that they should be promoted within six months or so due to their age... Actually they are right; they have worked for years and put in the effort. If I were at that age, I would expect a managerial position, too. (Recruitment specialist, Female, AH)

The exclusion of people who are advanced in years by the invoking of competency requirements leads to the marginalization of seniors. Regardless of what they are doing, senior employees who work for the same company for ten years are claimed to be incapable of keeping up with the "changes," as if their workplace is a frozen environment:

When I invite people who worked in the same company for seven to ten years, I ask them why they want to leave. They can't say anything because they themselves feel so much part of that company. They say: "Everyone makes changes. I think I am not learning anything anymore." But still, they don't know what they want. I feel that they can't accommodate themselves to my company. If they work for the same company for such a long time, you don't want them. The candidates should have the capacity to take risks, to be alert, to keep up with technological changes. (Recruitment specialist at a big textile retailer, previously a PEA employee, Female, AC)

Paradoxically, the changes of career are not permissible. Recruiters carry out close investigations on the career histories of candidates. Having experience in a certain field is not enough to prove professionalism, either. Candidates are expected to prove that they are behaviorally compatible with the position in



question. Eventually, one's career is supposed to be developed together with one's character:

You question the competencies of a candidate in the job interview, but how you [the recruiter] feel is also important. The candidate may answer all the questions very satisfactorily. However, you sometimes say "something is missing." For example, there was a girl in the last interview. She was great... claimed that she could manage things. However, she had a manner that expressed her dislike. You can have her work in the field, but it was likely that she would complain about her sales visits. That was how we felt and therefore we didn't employ her. We don't give a chance to people to develop their competencies. Unfortunately, it does not matter if I don't hire a candidate; there are so many unemployed people. You always say to yourself as a recruiter "I can find a better one." (Recruitment specialist, Female, AH)

On the other hand, tools used for the assessment of labor make the constructed discourse of change a reality. Behavioral features are measured for both recruitment and promotions – even for positions framed as operational responsibilities.

Consequently professionals in the recruitment industry make decisions about employment with the responsibility of managing unemployment in the labor market, taking structural changes into account and framing it as an individual matter.

## § 5.5 Moral Reconfiguration of the Recruitment Industry

*Hire easy manage hard, hire hard manage easy.*<sup>46</sup>

Employment is still a matter of social policy, as it was in the Fordist era. What has changed is that with its individualization – through focus on character for the sake of the intensification of work – employment has become a moral mat-

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46 An anonymous phrase in the industry.

ter. Therefore, employment has become a matter of both moral and social policy in new capitalism. The contribution of PEAs to the moral aspect has become considerable.

Employers increased their demands on the personal character of employees to facilitate the intensification of work. PEAs advise job seekers to focus on their feelings about work and to investigate their characters to find an appropriate job regardless of whether their sector involves emotional labor or. To that end, PEAs undertook the assessment of the relation between job positions and candidates. Loving one's job or doing the job one loves is associated with an overlap between one's personality and work. Any gap between those is framed as a moral matter by the recruitment industry. In this respect, Sennett cites Kernberg's point that the expression of "what I do" was replaced by "what I feel" by the employees.<sup>47</sup>

Candidates eliminated during the recruitment process are deemed to have mis-planned their careers. The scientific claims of PEAs force these candidates to accept the and they are deemed to deserve worse jobs, to have downward mobility, or to be unemployed. In that sense, PEAs redefine unemployment through a narrative of employability that contributes to the individualization of employment. Jobs which are disliked are debased, diminished in importance and defined as jobs that do not require skill. This leads to ignorance about the intensification and worsening of working conditions in non-core jobs. After all, the measurement show that employees working in those jobs deserve the job they have. In addition, the intensification of work becomes inevitable. The reason is that behaviors that are claimed to be appropriate for a job position are actually behaviors that make employees work harder. These behaviors are considered in relation to the behaviors of other employees to build socially-designed workplaces that impel employees to work harder. Workplaces are not deemed to be constructed based on the choices of managers or employers, but are claimed to be based on the results of measurements that discover the nature of the candidates. This claim distracts attention from

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47 Richard Sennett, *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures, and Politics of Cooperation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012). Kernberg, Otto, "Structural Derivatives of Object Relationships," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 47 (1966), 184.

the fact that these workplaces are socially designed"<sup>48</sup> and omits the role of employers in their construction. As a result, the conditions of work becomes no one's choice but inevitability.

The aforementioned accounts of recruiters and entrepreneurs point to certain qualities that all candidates are expected to have. They are to be willing to work in an extraordinarily happily fashion (knowing what is "ordinary" in order to understand what is extraordinary) in terms of their working hours and assignments, and they prepare to work as of an early age by accommodating their lives to business life.

Working and behaving in certain ways are defined as separate things,<sup>49</sup> and behaving in a certain way is framed as an element of productivity. Suitability (general expectations such as initiative taking), competency (behavioral traits that maximize the results of tasks), and acceptability (compatibility with the company culture) are the behaviors to be measured in relation to work. Behaviors are first objectified by means of new tools and are then commodified to make employment decisions.<sup>50</sup> Colley concludes her study on nurses by noting that "emotional labor carries costs for the nursery nurse, not because children consume her emotional resources, but because her emotional labor power is controlled and exploited for profit by employers."<sup>51</sup> Colley's conclusion parallels what recruitment specialists look for:

The features looked for in the recruitment process depend on three things: the company, the managers of the company, and the position. For example, when I look at the medical sector – in which I am more experienced –, affection is very important besides technical skills. If a nurse is not affectionate and doesn't feel it, I think she is not a successful nurse. (Recruitment specialist, Female, AF)

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48 The effect of socially constructed workplaces on employees requires further research.

49 Putnam and Mumby define it as distinction between the body and the mind. Linda L Putnam and Dennis K Mumby, "Organizations, Emotion and the Myth of Rationality," in *Emotion in Organizations* (London: SAGE, 1993), 36–57.

50 Hollway, "Fitting Work: Psychological Assessment in Organizations."

51 Helen Colley, "Learning to Labor with Feeling: Class, Gender and Emotion in Childcare Education and Training," 15.

The general management of behavior has become the same as the management of emotional labor since PEAs have made this approach applicable to all positions, not just positions that require emotional labor like teaching and nursing. Not just employees working in the service sector who are in direct contact with client, but employees from all sectors are expected to have certain behaviors depending on the position. Emotions, behaviors or attitudes of other employees – who are not service sector – as well as those of the nurses were related to productivity. This was implied by one recruitment specialist I interviewed:

People in information technologies are very relaxed and weak in human relations. All they have is just a computer screen. They are anti-social and we don't expect them to be social. I can't place very active and energetic people in those positions. They would be unhappy. They are more introverted and their working hours are flexible; they work at night. They come to work in the afternoon, but as long as they do the job assigned, it is not a problem. However, accountants are supposed to be niggling and attentive. This is because they deal with numbers. They need to be smart and shouldn't miss anything. Reserved people can't be salespeople. We prefer extroverted people who have an inquisitive tone. (Recruitment specialist, Female, AN)

PEAs provide services to determine the kind of personality that candidates should have, to estimate how they will get along with people in higher and lower positions, to specify the kind of effect the candidates should have on others, and to procure indicators of their prospective performance. The experience of a recruitment specialist also renders it possible them to take unwritten rules of work into consideration during the recruitment process. The requirements of a job position to which job seekers apply are individualized by PEAs.

The behavioral categories are developed by the recruitment industry. Recruitment specialists determine which behaviors are to be placed in which categories. This process involves the subjective decision-making of these specialists since the industry also draws on experience-based knowledge in addition to purportedly scientific techniques. Some of the information they gather in the process adds to the knowledge they create. The knowledge thus created

about candidates is comprised of test results, blacklists, interview reports, and data gained informally. This knowledge is shared with many others through several channels. Once recorded by the recruitment industry job candidates can hardly change the information produced about themselves; the results of recruitment process become entrenched and are used more than once. Job candidates are placed in certain behavioral categories based on knowledge created by PEAs and are thus assigned a definite place in the labor market.

Employees appropriate those categories for themselves since it is hard to oppose the use of tools claimed to be based on science. However, assumptions of employees as to the expectations of employers may differ from the actual expectations of employers. There is no rule-book defining what kinds of behavior are expected.

When behavioral traits became requirements for recruitment, they also became reasons for dismissals, as was stated in one interview. PEAs use these arguments when extending their market to small and medium-sized enterprises, which are considered to be less professional, to get them to use recruitment tools:

At first, when the awareness of employers was low, in order to persuade them that professional recruitment procedures are necessary, we told them “you hire people according to technical skills but fire them because of their personality.” (Entrepreneur, Female, AJ)

With the techniques, we can tell you about yourself without knowing you. You are able to know people. They – employers – eventually understand. (Entrepreneur of a personal inventory brand, Male, AZ)

The demands of employers were challenged or taken further by an industry continually trying to maintain and extend its market. The limits of the flexibility of labor are extended, and the need for flexible labor is partly constructed by the industry as well. Entrepreneurs I interviewed intend to transform permanent jobs into short-term jobs and expand of the sector to fields that include short-term jobs.<sup>52</sup>

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52 The position of a general manager or secretarial jobs, for example.

Critical management studies commonly playing that high demands for certain behavior is an indicator of a "war for jobs"<sup>53</sup> as opposed to a "war for talent." According to this approach, good jobs are taken by job candidates who have qualifications together with certain behavioral characteristics which are associated with the values of the upper class.<sup>54</sup> Good jobs with high salaries or managerial positions are also thought to require the possession of social capital and an upper-class language besides technical credentials. This approach explains how good jobs are distributed among candidates. However, the focus on character as an indicator of performance is different than focus on behavior as a means for class discrimination. The demand for a certain character among employees as an indicator of performance is directed at the intensification of work in general. People at any level can be assessed by their behavior. For example, the drivers of public buses are also assessed in terms of their behaviors.<sup>55</sup> The recruitment industry has a skill-based discourse that it uses for core workers. It corresponds to the discourse of a "war for talent." But the discourse of functional flexibility that pertains to core workers is actually used for the hiring of non-core workers, as well. Recruitment specialists advise employees to be flexible to add new qualities for self-development in general. However, the way of obtaining new flexibility skills to be flexible depends on one's position in the labor market. For core employees, the cost of obtaining new skills is often met by companies. New skills can lead to new career opportunities. The ensuing changes in their career are framed as self-development. However, career changes among non-core employees are regarded as a deviation or failure unless they are the result of an economic crisis. For non-core employees, no conflict is assumed to exist between the demand for their flexibility, on one hand, and the demand for coherence between their behaviors and the business values they have gained throughout their careers. The reason is that for non-

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53 Brown, Hesketh, and Williams, *The Mismanagement of Talent*, 8.

54 Smith, "Review Article: Enhancing Employability: Human, Cultural, and Social Capital in an Era of Turbulent Unpredictability"; Brown and Scase, *Higher Education and Corporate Realities*.

55 Candidates were asked to fill out the personality inventory on the official website before being invited for a job interview. İETT, "Announcement for the candidates," *İETT*, accessed August 21, 2015, <http://www.iETT.gov.tr/tr/main/news/aday-memur-atama-islemleri-ile-ilgili-duyuru/1157>.

core workers, flexibility does not mean skill expansion, but rather working more than what is expected of them. Career histories are not sufficiently coherent and are framed as mis-constructed or mis-conducted careers. Therefore, the discourse that is generated for core employees and filled with promise is reused to justify the working conditions of non-core employees. Employees who have "mis-conducted" their careers are forced to accept work whatever the working conditions. Employees are held responsible for their own conditions. Sennett argues that when work is framed as an indispensable part of oneself, employees develop a forced attachment to work, that makes it difficult for them to oppose to the working conditions.<sup>56</sup>

A new task, being past oriented, is added to the task of being future-oriented for employees. Employees are expected to continuously construct their personal histories according to the needs of contemporary labor market. Misfits are defined based on career histories, so a career becomes something that must be constructed from an early age. Career histories are evaluated retrospectively in terms of both the behaviors and qualifications of employees. Those who are employable are those who can reconfigure their pasts according to the needs of the present-day market. Sennett argues that the problem we face in contemporary capitalism is about how to rearrange our stories.<sup>57</sup> Employees (or their parents) who did not manage to construct their careers at an early age or cannot reconfigure their pasts are confined to their fate to fail to be upwardly mobile by being forced to accept whatever work is available. This fate is strengthened by the "nature" of employees that recruitment tools claim to reveal. Candidates take core jobs if they manage to make themselves employable before the start of their careers, which strongly depends on their social background.<sup>58</sup> As one participant from the industry observed, parents make a difference in their children's lives, especially if they themselves were in the labor market:

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56 Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, 332.

57 Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character*; in Eva Illouz, *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2007), 107.

58 Brown and Scase, *Higher Education and Corporate Realities*.

The children of parents who had lives in business inevitably guide them there because they already saw everything in their own lives, experienced crises, and shape their children accordingly as far as I observed. (Corporate communications specialist at an online employment recruitment company, Female, BB)

While recruitment industry commodifies behavior, it also decommodifies work. This call to "do what you love" involves a redefinition of the satisfaction one could get from work. However, employees who need to make their work meaningful support this narrative. This belief is accompanied by a desire for autonomy from managers and seniors who are seen as obstacles. On the other hand, who benefits from the decommodification of work depends on the position of the employee in the labor market. The approach that one's behavior should be compatible with one's career actually applies to core employees. The reason is that employees from upper classes construct their children's careers as of childhood.<sup>59</sup> Then they are able to do the job they love. Core workers are pictured as employees who have taken right steps in their careers by taking their behavioral characteristics into account. Assessment results justify inequality as a natural outcome for non-cores workers in this way.

The recruitment industry utilizes a discourse of skill to justify the use of new tools of elimination. Skill is associated with unemployment and has become the issue of social policy. Research on the need for certain skills were conducted by public authorities to reorganize the education system.<sup>60</sup> It was found that the needed skills were not those gained through university education, but were mostly skills pertaining to lower-level jobs. The vocational

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59 Many contemporary studies pose the question "Who is left outside the labor market?" Starting to build a career at an early age is partly taken to be a problem of inequality. However, this approach neither questions the fact that people have to start constructing careers at early ages nor that they need to be brought up with business values. Instead, it questions why people from lower classes do not actively do anything about their future careers. It suggests an equality of opportunity for the lower classes, assumes that there is a job for everyone, and assumes that everyone could be employed if they constructed a better career. See, for example; Elif Keskiner, "Generation in Transition: Youth Transitions among Native-Born Descendants of Immigrants from Turkey" (PhD diss., University of Amsterdam, 2013).

60 İŞKUR, "MEGEP İş Piyasası ve Beceri İhtiyaçları İncelemesi."



schools initiatives taken up by public authorities and companies to address the issue of skills as well as agreements made between İŞKUR and training companies are examples to this approach.<sup>61</sup> These initiatives formed to promote skill development among potential employees are neither concerned with new skills nor with the skills needed for core jobs.<sup>62</sup>

There are a number of university-educated people who are unemployed and look for a white-collar job.<sup>63</sup> The recruitment industry, which mostly selects and places university-educated people, uses behavioral criteria to eliminate candidates. Those candidates who are selected do not necessarily have upper-class values and required qualifications; they are those who possess certain behavioral qualities that suggests that they will be the most productive in the position in question. Although skills change continuously, a high demand is placed on the character of employees for non-core jobs.

The discourse of skill used by PEAs does not apply to most employees. Employees left outside the labor market are expected to accept that the jobs for which they applied were not compatible with their character or personality.<sup>64</sup> Whatever job remains is claimed to be compatible with their character. When they are not recruited, the result is justified as unavoidable, as it is based on traits of the candidate that have been discovered by scientific tools. This can lead to downward mobility for seniors, as well. Those left outside the labor market consent to low level jobs, thinking that it is natural that they have not been selected for a better job or position. The belief that one may love one's job remains a hope.

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- 61 See *Vehbi Koç Vakfı*, accessed August 25, 2015, <http://www.mesleklisesimemleketmeselesi.com> for School-Workplace Partnership Guide for Vocational Education and İŞKUR, "Active Labor Policy Legislation 2014," *İŞKUR*, accessed August 20, 2015 [www.iskur.gov.tr/.../Aktif%20İşgücü%20HİZmetleri%20Yönetmeliği.docx](http://www.iskur.gov.tr/.../Aktif%20İşgücü%20HİZmetleri%20Yönetmeliği.docx).
- 62 Savaşkan, "Contemporary Social Policy in Turkey: Workfare Programs in the Context of the Neo-Liberal International Governance System."
- 63 57% of the unemployed are university graduates. DİSK, "The Number of Unemployed has Increased by 40%," *DİSK*, accessed August 20, 2015, <http://www.disk.org.tr/2015/08/disk-ar-is-siz-sayisi-3-yilda-yuzde-40-artti/>.
- 64 Character and personality are often used interchangeably by interviewees of the recruitment industry.

In that sense, PEAs have the role of regulating "the war for jobs" by means of the narrative of employability that they created.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, the discourse of skill is manipulated and used interchangeably with competency by the industry. "The need for behavior" is rephrased as "the need for skill." This rephrasing is easier for jobs in service sectors such as hospitality or nursing – those in which customer satisfaction is more closely related to employees' behavior.

The recruitment industry claims that the reasons for one's unemployment have to do with lack of skill, the failure to match employee with the right position, and to know oneself and do the job one loves. Although structural unemployment is touched upon, the reasons for unemployment are explained with the same arguments. Labor market regulation by the state – that is to say, its active labour policy – increases the responsibilities of job seekers. Those policies are formed together with the private sector, and maneuvers aimed at expanding the recruitment industry are presented as social policies that address unemployment.<sup>66</sup> In that context, a narrative of employability is created at both the institutional level and in the daily practices of PEAs.

The social dimension of work is managed by PEAs. The formation of behavioral features and social relations is managed through socially-designed workplaces. The spontaneous character of relations is diminished and commodified behavior becomes a public performance.<sup>67</sup> This affects non-work spaces, as well. Conditions in the workplace are translated into an individual language by employees. Working conditions become a matter of one's individual negotiating strength. Any social right one gains depends on individual characteristics; the focus is redirected to the self instead of to the working conditions and their agents. Career is framed not only as the construction of a career, but also as the construction of the self. The dimensions of social rela-

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65 Brown and Hesketh, "I Say Tomato, You Say Tomato.," 323.

66 See; TİSK, "Özel İstihdam Büroları Aracılığıyla Geçici İş İlişkisi Semineri, Tebliğler ve Görüşler."

67 Putnam and Mumby, "Organizations, Emotion and the Myth of Rationality."

tions are founded on the advice of human resources specialists who have become "experts of subjectivity."<sup>68</sup> Laval and Dardot argue that neoliberalism differs from liberalism with its belief not that the individual is self-interested, but that the individual constructs herself or himself.<sup>69</sup> On the part of employers, the focuses on the construction of the self as well as on how to organize work are intensified with the help of PEAs. Job seekers are expected to pay attention to themselves in order to understand which job is appropriate for their tendencies. As one interviewee underscores, this distracts attention from contextual issues such as economic crises, sectoral dynamics, and the fact that the sector may be saturated with professionals. The issues of employment are framed as issues involving behavioral characteristics that are then to be matched with a positions in the market, as one entrepreneur notes:

New-comers (young employees) make a mistake; their starting point is the profession while it should be themselves. They need to answer such questions as: "Who am I? What do I want?" These are the most difficult questions to answer. One should start with oneself by asking "Who am I? What do I want? What are my skills? What is my knowledge? What are my goals and values?" They should analyze this and then they can match it to a sector. But the first thing they actually think about is which sector is growing, where there are there available positions, and in the end they become unhappy because they are not compatible with it. (Entrepreneur, Female, AJ)

I questioned whether it is realistic to think that new-comers will secure the professions they want by applying this advice – even if they know themselves well – given that the market can change with a crisis or with structural problems. I asked the interviewee how well she thinks one's tendencies can overlap with the realities of the market. She answered:

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68 Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self* (London ; New York : Free Association Books, 1999). Quoted in Fogde, "How to Write Your CV: Advice, Expert Knowledge and Job Seeking Skills," 3.

69 Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval, *Dünyanın Yeni Aklı*, trans. Işık Ergüden (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2012), 367-409.

Since private universities were founded competition grew. Competition always leads to progress for people and institutions. They are aware of that; they have career departments. Even Anatolian University has one. Student clubs are aware of that, too. Those clubs find me and invite me to speak. They say that youngsters are not interested, are irresponsible, and not knowledgeable. But on the contrary, they are very conscious, wanting to get involved in life and take responsibility. They just need to be oriented in terms of their careers; they need a consultant to orient their energy and motivation the right way. They are down to earth; if they really explore themselves and know who they are – what their personal traits and skills are – they make the right choices... because they apply to so many companies, they have so many interviews, and they form a knowledge of the market. In addition, the career fairs at the universities contributed a lot to this knowledge. (Entrepreneur, Female, AJ)

If people who think they are employable by taking into account the questions "Who am I?" and "How I feel?" end up unemployed, it is again deemed to be their own fault. They are blamed for failing to observe the changes. Hesketh and Brown argue that recruiters are largely responsible for creating the narrative of employability and establishing the strong connection between employability and employment.<sup>70</sup> Accordingly, it is argued that anyone who is employable can find a job. Although it would be hard to argue that this narrative of employability is created mainly by PEAs in Turkey, this research suggests that PEAs certainly contributed to the individualization of employment. As PEAs work to make and expand their market, they also make a moral appropriation to justify the tools of elimination that they use.<sup>71</sup> The employability approach helps to frame employment as an individual matter. Individualization of employment is realized through tools customized at the individual level under the new bureaucracy. The tools sold and used by PEAs simultaneously increase individuality and interdependency in the workplace.

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70 Brown and Hesketh, "I Say Tomato, You Say Tomato.," 312.

71 Inspired by the "mass moral engineering" concept of Thrift. Thrift, *Theory, Culture & Society: Knowing Capitalism*.

Employers do not tolerate the rhythms of social relations. The workplace is not considered a social space in which sociality may be learned. Neither is the workplace a place for learning qualifications or behavior. The self-actualization of employees and their employability is realized solely in the conservative discourse of the new capitalism. Furthermore, the moral discourse of self-actualization can only be accompanied by social selection rules. Scientific claims presented as ideology-free are used to put social selectionist rules in the service of PEAs. This service allows PEAs to construct the new employee in the new capitalism. The norms created for recruitment are retrospective. The claim is that any problem today is the result of errors made in the past. This confines one to contemporary conditions in desperation. The recruitment industry does not consider character to be unchangeable. However, that the workplace is a social space in characters is shaped through practice is denied.

Consequently, career planning becomes a process which is expelled from the workplace and the labor market. It is supposed to start at an early age, even before the university. As only upper classes can organize the careers of their children at such an early age, this situation strengthens the inequalities in society.<sup>72</sup> Children are expected to be brought up with business values to be able to enter the labor market in the future. Career planning extended to childhood has different meanings for different classes. Career planning at an early age means preparation for the future for upper classes, while it means early employment at low-level jobs for lower classes.

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72 Brown and Scase, *Higher Education and Corporate Realities*, 27.

## Conclusion

This thesis scrutinizes changing employment relations through the practice of private employment agencies in Turkey. The – change namely individualization of employment – is seen in a purer form in the practices of recruitment agencies. In this respect, the focus is on three main subjects: employability, hiring practices and private employment agencies. The reason I focused on the hiring practices of private employment agencies is that these agencies emerged with legal regulations as a new actor in the labor market at the time of the change. They are the agents making the judgment about who is let into the labor market and who is left out. They also have a unique position in the labor market of determining labor relations beyond just responding to changes in the labor process. The way that judgments regarding recruitment are made is determined both by an employability approach and concern for expanding the recruitment market itself. To see the change in employment relations, one must of course look at the recruitment strategies of companies but then it would not have been possible to see the unique role of labor mediators. Therefore, I focused on both the individualization of employment brought about by agencies and the role of the agencies in the labor market.

In the thesis, I argued that private employment agencies have become actors that regulate and manage unemployment. Such agencies determine the position of a candidate in the labor market, legitimate the management of unemployment through individualized tools, and create norms for employee character formation to expand their market. The making of the recruitment

market required a redefinition of employable workers by means of the individualization of employment. The recruitment industry assessing individuality producing definitions of the behavioral traits to be associated with given job positions. Therefore, while the industry appeared at the time when employment was becoming individualized, it also contributes to the approach. I examined the private employment agencies operating with a license, although the recruitment industry is larger than the private employment agencies.

The focus on the individualization of employment in private employment agencies compelled me to consider the two literatures together. The individualization of employment involves the subjectivity of employees and managerial strategies, leading me to employ the literature on managerial systems and the literature on how new forms of work life affect employees. Therefore, I also included the perception of employees in the thesis, as well as how the individualization of employment operates in practice (by agencies).

I first explained the change in employment relations in Chapter 2. Second I analyzed the development of private employment agencies in Turkey in Chapter 3 and continued with the practices of private employment agencies in Chapter 4 and 5 of the thesis.

In the second chapter I examined the context in which private employment agencies appeared. The private employment agencies assessments of job seekers appeared in a certain context. The change at workplace resulted in the appearance of an employability approach in the labor market through active labor policies. Active labor policies were considered a panacea for economic restructuring and unemployment by states on a global scale. Concern for employment was replaced with employability (the individualization of employment). Therefore, the unemployed were redefined as unemployable and unemployment was redefined as unemployability. The principles of the policy encouraged entrepreneurship and a responsible citizen approach to employment. Employment is framed as an individual responsibility. The demand for behavioral characteristics of employees to increase productivity intensified. How an employee handles her career throughout her life has become a consideration in managing unemployment. Career development throughout one's life includes both social and technical skills. Public sources were spent to increase the employability through individual responsibility. In this respect,

I listed the labor market regulations of the state that encourage individual responsibility of employees in the second chapter. I observed that the sources of unemployment are redefined (as a matching problem, skill problem, a problem of gaps between education and the market, and as the ignorance of employees about career development). Strategy plans, programs, and regulations starting in 1980s strengthened the bond between education and the labor market, assigned the job of training the labour force to the private sector, promoted the consulting industry, made labor more flexible, approved the employment of career consultants at public institutions, approved the organization of career fairs to increase employability subsidized by the unemployment fund. I concluded that regulations, training programs, and career events are launched to promote the individualization of employment in cooperation with private sector.

I distanced myself from the literature that relates the behavioral demand of employers to the knowledge economy. I related the concern about employee personality to the intensification of work rather than to employee satisfaction, differing from the managerial paradigm. Additionally, I related behavioral demand to the intensification of work rather than to its social capital dimension. Behaviours considered to be upper-class can be used for eliminating job seekers for good jobs. Therefore it differs from the studies concerning the class dimension of acquiring good jobs. I also left the factor of the mass acquisition of diplomas as an outside variable leaving the behavioral dimension to become more important and keeping the focus on new recruitment strategies related to high-performance work systems. In terms of employee subjectivity, the demand for certain behavioral characteristics is mostly associated with the service sector. However, I argue that emotional involvement is a general phenomenon regardless of sector or position, although it is more visible in the service sector. In order to show that behavioral demand is a general phenomenon I scrutinized the recruitment strategy of new capitalism, which has changed in several ways. I discussed the change in the recruitment strategy of employers between the Fordist and post-Fordist periods, which resulted in the redefinition of a *good* employee. I concluded that, today, a diploma is not the indicator of a good employee; since interdependency with performance systems increased, an employee is hired not for the position but for the organization,



performance replaced seniority, which led to the disappearance of career stability; new managerial tools (personality inventories, individualized bureaucracy and normative management methods) created their own bureaucracy; social security is not the promise; work is not considered to be a site of learning; and behavioral traits and personal history determined by work values are sought by employers to exclude the job seekers. I also discussed that new managerial strategies created a new bureaucracy with intense assessment tools to counter to the idea that the new workplace is not bureaucratic. Increased measurement of individuality runs parallel to the increase in the interdependency of the new bureaucracy required by the management of flexibility. Management strategies synthesize opposing approaches with the new bureaucracy they create. The new principles of the new bureaucracy bring paradoxical concepts together. Autonomy/interdependency, individualism/centralism, irregularity/regulation, standardization/differentiation and formality/informality are the principles of new management.

I related the change in employment relations to the recruitment industry in the same chapter. It led to the outsourcing of recruitment and a long recruitment process due to the demand for intense assessment of potential employees. Such assessment in the recruitment process is expected to guarantee productivity in the workplace by defining and analyzing performance indicators. Assessment of employees includes both the measurement of behavioral characteristics and qualifications. I discussed the role of private employment agencies at the intersection of the literatures on employability, social skills of employees, hiring practices, labor market mediators, and employee subjectivity.

Although private employment agencies are mostly studied in terms of temporary labor and the disappearance of state monopoly of labor mediation in the Turkish case, I discussed private employment agencies in terms of their role in constituting the norms of the management of unemployment. I focused on these agencies as new actors in the labor market that benefit from and entrench the concept of employability in the context of active labor policies that hold the non-poor as well as the poor responsible for their own employability.

The third chapter and later chapters constitute the empirical part of the thesis. I mapped the operations of private employment agencies in Turkey at an institutional level. I profiled the agencies in terms of scale, the sectors they

served, the group of job seekers in which they specialized in, their date of foundation, and the background of the entrepreneurs. Based on interviews with entrepreneurs and recruitment specialists as well as data I quantified from the credentials of the agencies, I revealed that the agencies first started operating in the labor market at the beginning of the 1990s. They continued to operate without legal regulations until 2003 when the labor law changed and the state ceased to have a monopoly over labor mediation. This was also the time that the recruitment industry grew dramatically in the global arena. The recruitment industry is dominated by private employment agencies operating as temporary agencies in most countries, unlike the case in Turkey where employee leasing was not legal.<sup>1</sup> Looking at the agencies on the global and local levels, I assert that private employment agencies in Turkey are not illustrative as they mediate on behalf of white-collar employees more. The profiles I analyzed show that 66% of private employment agencies do intermediary services for white-collar workers. 58% of the companies mediate for white-collar workers without focusing on any specific sector in the labor market, which means that the same recruitment tools are applied to all the white collar workers regardless of sector. The profile analysis also showed that sophisticated recruitment tools are also used in non-service sectors in which social interaction is related to the work only indirectly, proving the argument that the measurement of individuality is not confined to the service sector. The Turkish recruitment industry is also differentiated from global trends in that it is dominated by small, local companies (92%). Although the number of licensed private employment agencies was 404 in January 2015, the recruitment industry and its field of operation is far larger than this number indicates. Companies doing assessment or selection per se are not required to have a license from İŞKUR so long as they do not place employees. Therefore, there are more companies in the recruitment industry, but they are not required to have the license. I revealed that many companies in the recruitment industry,

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1 However, this has been done in the name of service-providing and has recently been legalized. While writing this conclusion a proposed law for the authorization of temporary staffing was in parliament. The regulation was accepted in May 2016. The Ministry of Labor and Social Security, accessed on May 14, 2016, <http://www.csgeb.gov.tr/home/news/guvenceli-esneklik-yasalasti/>

regardless of their client's sector, provide services such as the application of productivity tools (performance systems, for example), management consulting, human resources applications, law consultancy, and professional education. Half of the agencies provide only recruitment services.

I observed that intermediaries create their market in addition to responding to changes in the workplace. They cooperate with public bodies (İŞKUR, municipalities, and local committees for employment) and universities to increase employability. Agencies contribute to the employability approach in the formulation of social policies on unemployment at an institutional level within those cooperative ventures. I also observed that the emergence of online recruitment portals and the ease of establishing an agency increases competition in the recruitment market, which, in addition to the demand of employers for intense assessment of employees, encourages agencies to employ more sophisticated, "scientific" recruitment tools to differentiate themselves.

In the fourth chapter, I demonstrated the employability approach of professionals in the recruitment industry to reveal how recruitment judgments are made. The approach of recruitment professionals reveals that personal history is expected to have been developed by business values leading the expectation of a career history translated into personalized discourse. I demonstrated that the workplace as a site of learning has been disappeared both for technical and social skills. Those skills are to be developed before career starts. If technical and social skills are not developed, personal history is expected to be continuously re-written according to changes in the labor market, such that one's individual history is a career history developed as if the needs of today had been envisioned beforehand. The problem of unemployment is redefined as a problem of the self-management of employees. Recruitment professionals most highly regard job seekers who are good at performing expected behaviors regardless of their work experience. Seniority has been replaced by performance; therefore, skill and seniority are detached. Skill is not something that comes with time spent at work. The previous definition of a good employee is disvalued for being resistant to change, indifferent to personal desires, for not knowing how to handle the "self", and therefore being irresponsible. The exclusion of senior workers from the labor market becomes possible with norms created that are related to behavior.

The new demands for behavioral characteristics that would optimize a job task and could be used for elimination from the recruitment process are defined by the recruitment industry. They are newly defined such that the social dimension of a job (not just the social time at work) becomes measurable and commodified. Measurement of labor has become more intense through the measurement of behavioral characteristics that are considered part of actual job tasks. Measurement is not conducted only during time at work but also before an employee is employed. Indirect tools aimed at increasing productivity – such as social activities organized by employers – and direct tools – such as surveillance systems – are kept in place, while the social design of the workplace which takes into consideration the behavior of employees, has been added to the managerial system. Behavioral characteristics are not just important for employees who use emotional labour to individually face customers but also for others in the service of intensifying the labor process.

An employable job seeker is a good player and can present that the features for optimizing the job that were developed earlier than his or her professional career started. The job seeker should be able to express their behavioral characteristics compatible with current business needs. Employees considered to be employable can best perform the characteristics requirements. The new norms created by the recruitment industry do not suggest business values be carried to non-work spheres. Instead, they suggest employees to construct their characters in accordance with the business values. The norms provide "not only the means of survival, but also a vision."<sup>2</sup> Business values are not occupying life; life becomes business. The PEAs have a considerable role in the constitution of these norms.

I also examined the perception of employees to reveal the distance between their expectations and the expectations of the labor market in the fourth chapter. I found that employees deprived of the promises of the previous era (secure work and its benefits) differentiate themselves from older generations

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2 Linda Twiname, Helen Samujh, and Steven Rae, "Valuing Workers: Are They Costs to Be Cut, or Human Investments to Be Valued?" (25th Cardiff Employment Research Unit (ERU) Annual Conference, Ideas at Work: The study of culture in HRM, Cardiff, UK: Cardiff Business School, 2010), 1.

in terms of their quests for self-actualization and happiness at work. The expectation of happiness is related to actual job tasks, not to working conditions per se. Employees internalize the intense demand for certain behaviors as they hope for careers that are consistent with what they desire. I showed that their expectation of making work more meaningful shortens the distance between their ideals and the obligations of work. The promise of objective recruitment process that excludes the arbitrary decisions of managers contributes to its positive reception.

Agencies appropriated the definition of the good worker, therefore contributing to the individualization of employment through their judgments. The time spent practicing the job at work is displaced and transferred into longer, more sophisticated recruitment processes. The judgments of the recruitment industry did not change the employability approach, but took it further via the norms it created. The industry defines the employable worker that will work at a new workplace, measures employability as a predictor of performance, designs the workplace socially, and consequently manages unemployment in the labor market. The professionals of the recruitment industry use the discourse of war for talent (which is valid for core workers) for war for work (which is valid for non-core workers).

After showing the employability narrative of the recruitment industry in detail in the fourth chapter, I focused on the tools of private employment agencies. In the fifth chapter, I showed how the employability approach in the recruitment industry is practiced to select or exclude employees. I detailed the techniques used in the process and unveiled how the employability approach works in their application. The tools measuring behavioral characteristics are a central service of the recruitment industry. Competency job interviews and personality inventories are the main tools of the recruitment process for assessing behavior. I investigated the recruitment tools in practice, not in terms of their accuracy, but in terms of the reasons they are needed.

In the practice of these agencies, "right" behaviors are attached to job positions that maximize performance. Compatibility with company culture (involving unwritten rules), competency (the behaviors that the task requires), and readiness to do more than expected are measured by the tools. The behaviors required for a job position are defined, categorized and measured by the recruitment industry. The recruitment process, which is customized for each

position in terms of social skills, seeks out the necessary behavioral characteristics. The measurement of each employee is considered together with other employees in the form of social design at work. The employee as a whole is not measured, nor is a general ideal worker defined. There is no good worker, but only an appropriate worker, since each position requires different traits. Traits respected in society may not match with the requirements of a given job.

The tools are justified by its scientific evidence and presented as natural results. Therefore, the requirement of work performance is expected to be presented as the real self of potential employees. The intense measurement is justified by the promise that the recruitment process selects ones who naturally fit a position in terms of their behavioral characteristics. I found out that the traits required for a certain position are framed as natural, but in fact are expected to have been developed before employment.

Being employed naturally means being fired naturally. Unemployment is an unavoidable result and, in the end, a personal failure. The norms created by the recruitment industry translate business values into the moral reasoning of employees. The job and the workplace are detached in this way. Employment becomes the relation to a job that the employee develops rather than the workplace conditions defined by contractual relations. The gap between behavioral characteristics and work is framed as a moral defect. Eventually, the recruitment industry played a considerable role in making the issue of employment a moral matter.

The recruitment tools that assess behavioral characteristic and determine who to exclude are justified with certain arguments. The approach of "do, what you love," and "need for change," as well as the claims that the agencies "objective tools backed by science are necessary to weed out people with bad intentions" that "the tools make the selection process more just" are accepted to some extent by job seekers. In this new era, the aim of increasing productivity indirectly through the management of motivational activities for employees is replaced by the aim of increasing productivity directly via the requirement of compatibility between a job and once behavior. Relief from work is replaced by "relief at work" with the approach of "performance with fulfillment/self-realization" which was created by the recruitment industry. Employees who are expected to develop their careers in accordance with their behavioral char-

acteristics by focusing on themselves are promised self-actualization/fulfillment. While it creates its own narrative as to this commodification, it de-commodifies work with the imperative of "do what you love." Agencies not only define employment as an individual responsibility, but change the relation that employees individually developed with work. They form the idea of ideal job seeker who is ready to accept the results of being excluded from the labor market, and from core jobs. It is their own responsibility and the result of their own failure.

Regulatory functions claimed by private employment agencies via "objective tools" have distorted the attention of employer. It is claimed that the workplace is socially designed not based upon the decision of managers or employers, but upon scientific tools. In this way, human resources professionals claims the position of referee. For that reason they are also justified by employees. However, informal requirements still apply and are sometimes disguised under the discourse of "company culture." I showed that despite the scientific claims of its tools, the recruitment process involves the subjectivity of the recruiters. Black lists and informal means of acquiring information about candidates are used as complement.

The practices of the agencies show that information about employees is collected, created, accumulated, and circulated in the labor market by the recruitment industry. The information directly presented by employees constitutes a small part of that information. Agencies are the places where the information of the labor market is accumulated. They collect information on different sectors, on different positions, and on the conditions of similar employees. By means of the information created and collected, recruiters position employees in certain places in the labor market in ways that become impossible to oppose.

The agencies constitute and contribute to the employability approach with their tools that meet the intense demands of employers for certain behaviors. To maintain and expand the recruitment market, agencies contribute to the context that sets certain norms for the labor market. They have expanded the employability approach by creating norms about how employees should behave and what characteristics employees should have.

I concluded that the change in employment relations can be clearly seen in the practices of private employment agencies. Additionally, these agencies

have a unique position vis-à-vis their contribution to the employability approach in that they take it further by the commodification of behavior. The agencies have a considerable role in the management of unemployment as an individual matter in the labor market. I showed that agencies form and entrench their positions by both their institutional relations and the norms they create.

The recruitment industry manages unemployment and thus regulates the labor market by means of the norms it creates which individualize employment. Assuming a role that was previously associated with public intermediaries, private employment agencies participate in defining the unemployed and the unemployable. The PEAs are not only bodies to which the operational aspects of hiring are outsourced, but are agents of strategic importance. Through the employability narrative they create, they influence the mental world built around work and the self. Regardless of the scale of the recruitment industry, the narrative it creates shapes the expectations and practices of job seekers, as well.

Labor market intermediaries function in a way that they make employers invisible to employees. Recruitment professionals do this by framing employment as a matter of behavioral characteristics. The managerial practice is justified by a discourse of the naturalism of behavioral characteristics, therefore, employees who wish to make their work more meaningful find the practice plausible to an extent.

The redefinition of employment as the capacity to handle one's career contributes to the entrenchment and expansion of the individualization of employment. When employees are on the periphery, the redefinition also contributes to the management of unemployment. Employees who are more likely to have insecure jobs would find themselves responsible for the exclusion from the labour market.

Private employment agencies determine the position of a candidate in the labor market, legitimate the management of unemployment through its tools, and create norms for employee character formation – all of which expand their own market.

More multidisciplinary study needs to be conducted on the issue taking structural changes and the experiences of the employees into account. These should be informed by the social sciences, avoid the managerial paradigm,



and expand the debate on employment and the role of the private employment agencies in the labor market. The profile of the clients of private employment agencies, the recruitment strategies of the largest companies, the relation between the gender of human resources managers and the changes in management concerns, the effect of the subjectivity of recruitment specialists on recruitment decisions, the effect of socially-constructed workplaces on employees, the dissemination of the employability approach in the media, the results of active labor policy applications (the subsequent careers of employees who participated in programs organized under the scope of the policy, for example), the discourse of skill in social policies, the job seeking strategies of employees, the reasons for job leaves, and generational differences are questions that require further research. The change in the labor market that will come as private employment agencies begin operating as temporary agencies – which have recently been legalized – also needs study.

## Appendix A: Field Work

People interviewed	
28 in-depth interviews	Owner of a private employment agency, recruitment specialist in a private employment agency, manager in a private employment agency, recruitment specialist in a well-known company
2 in-depth interviews	İŞKUR – The person in charge of a private employment agencies' in Şişli Branch, a job consultant in the Şişli Branch
11 in-depth interviews	Job seekers
Participatory observation	
18-19.03.2011	Two days training on Competency-Based Job Interviewing Techniques by NMT.
11.04.2012	One day training on the usage of personality inventory (DISC) at the Kariyernet office.
4.10.2012	PERYÖN Human Resources Management Summit 2012.
17.11.2012	Focus group on job seeking organized by a civic platform aimed to strengthen solidarity among white-collar workers (Plaza Eylem Platformu), 25 participants.
19.02.2013	Istanbul Technical University – Career Days – Maçka.
19.11.2013	Kadir Has University – Career Days – Training on how to write curriculum Beta and interviewing methods – <a href="http://www.khas.edu.tr/kariyer-merkezi/182">http://www.khas.edu.tr/kariyer-merkezi/182</a>
13.05.2015	New Approaches in Human Resources Management – Assessment Centers (An event for HR professionals doing assessment as part of their jobs, at Bilgi University). <a href="http://www.bilgi.edu.tr/tr/haberler-ve-etkinlikler/haber/4971/yetkinlik-degerlendirme-ve-gelistirme-merkezleri-standartlar-ve-gelecek-trendler/">http://www.bilgi.edu.tr/tr/haberler-ve-etkinlikler/haber/4971/yetkinlik-degerlendirme-ve-gelistirme-merkezleri-standartlar-ve-gelecek-trendler/</a>

## Appendix B: Profile of the Participants

No.	Position	Education	Code
1	Entrepreneur, active in PERYÖN, well-known career portal consultant, İŞKUR consultant for recruitment services, HR manager experience in both public and private sector	Law, Economics	AA
2	Entrepreneur, active in PERYÖN, HR manager experience in private sector	Educational sciences	AB
3	Recruitment specialist experience at PEAs, HR Manager	Philosophy	AC
4	Recruitment specialist experience at PEAs	High school	AD
5	High-level manager at a PEA	Psychology	AE
6	Recruitment specialist experience at PEAs	Business Administration	AF
7	Entrepreneur, active in PEAs Association, HR manager experience in private sector	-	AG
8	Recruitment specialist experience in private sector	Economics	AH
9	Entrepreneur	Economics	AJ
10	Entrepreneur	Computer education and instructional technology	AK
11	Entrepreneur, experience in private sector	Economics	AL
12	Recruitment specialist experience at PEAs	Labor Economics and Industrial Relations	AN
13	Entrepreneur, psychologist	Psychology	AO
14	Entrepreneur	Psychology	AP
15	Recruitment specialist experience at PEAs	-	AR
16	General Manager of an online employment recruitment company	Electrical Engineering	AS
17	High-level manager at an online employment recruitment company	Communication	AT
18	Entrepreneur	Business Administration	AY
19	Distributor of DISC (personal inventory)	Computer Engineer	AZ
20	Entrepreneur	Business Administration	BA

No.	Position	Education	Code
21	Corporate communications specialist at an online employment recruitment company	Corporate Communications	BB
22	Entrepreneur	Economics	BC
23	Entrepreneur, HR manager experience in private sector	Industrial Engineering	BD
24	Entrepreneur	Business Administration	BE
25	Entrepreneur, HR manager experience in private sector	Labor Economics and Industrial Relations	BF
26	Entrepreneur, Manager of a career department at a university	Psychological Counseling and Guidance	BG
27	Recruitment specialist experience at PEAs	Psychology	BH
28	Project assistant of assessment projects	Business Administration	BI
29	Recruitment consultant		BK
30	Responsible for PEAs at İŞKUR		BL
31	Job seeker – Quality Assurance	Metallurgical and Materials Engineering	BM
32	Job seeker – Sale	-	BN
33	Job seeker – Procurement	English Teaching	BO
34	Job seeker – Tourism	Business Administration	BP
35	Job seeker – Production Engineer	Material Science and Engineering	BR
36	Job seeker – Sales Engineer	Metallurgical Engineering	BS
37	Job seeker – Production Engineer	Industrial Engineering	BT
38	Job seeker – Marketing	Archeology	BY
39	Job seeker – Graphic designer	Industrial Design	BZ
40	Job seeker – International trade	International Relations	CA
41	Job seeker – Sale	Economics	CB

## Appendix C: Moderator Guides for Interviews

### Moderator Guide Used for Interviews with Entrepreneurs at Private Employment Agencies and Recruitment Specialists

- ◆ When do you think mediating the employee placement processes became a sector in the market?
- ◆ How did you decide to enter the employee placement business? What inspired you? What was the model in your mind before you started? What kind of feasibility analysis did you make before you entered the market? What was the need to be filled by the service you would provide?
- ◆ Who are the first entrance into the sector that you can think of?
- ◆ To what extent does the field have connections at the global level?
- ◆ How diversified is the sector? What are the services provided?
- ◆ Do you participate in congresses and summits? What do you expect from such events?
- ◆ Do you have formal and informal networks that consist of professionals in the sector? How do they work?
- ◆ What do you think the mediating business will be like in ten years?
- ◆ What do you think it would be like if employment agencies did not exist?

#### The services provided

- ◆ What are the operational and strategic sides of your job?
- ◆ What are the training programs you offer? Who is most interested in the programs? Do you follow how effective your training is in the long run?
- ◆ How does mediating work? Who is involved in the process of deciding who is to be employed?
- ◆ What are the conditions of the contract signed between the employer, the private employment agency, and the job seeker?
- ◆ What kinds of tools are used to choose an employee? Which method is generally used?
- ◆ What makes a good recruitment specialist?
- ◆ Changes in job seeking

- ◆ What were the methods to find a job before private employment agencies emerged? Which method, do you think, is most effective? What did you replace?
- ◆ What are the important criteria considered when one looks for a job?
- ◆ Thoughts on job seekers
- ◆ How did the expectations of employees and the job seekers change?
- ◆ How did this business influence the expectations of employees?
- ◆ How significant is your role in the process? Who do you think finds you more important?
- ◆ What difference do you make when your service is bought?

Other

- ◆ Assume that one is going to an interview; what should they be concerned with?
- ◆ What makes you think that you had a good interview?
- ◆ To what extent is your job experienced-based?
- ◆ Have you ever thought that you made a mistake with a recruitment decision? If so, why was it a mistake?
- ◆ Why do you think recruitment specialists are always female?

Moderator Guide Used for the Interview with for Job Seekers

- ◆ When did your work life start? How many jobs have you had?
- ◆ How many job interviews have you had? Which kinds of tools were used?
- ◆ How much time did you spend searching for a job?
- ◆ How did you choose the sectors and positions in which you worked?
- ◆ Do you look for jobs when you are employed?
- ◆ What are your sources of information for finding jobs?
- ◆ What would you recommend to a friend who is going to have an interview?
- ◆ What information do you think you are expected to give during an interview?
- ◆ What makes one successful at work? What do you think about the career of a person in his 50s who is said to have had a good career?
- ◆ What is a good job? Who do you think will get it?
- ◆ Which jobs do you think suit you and which do not?
- ◆ Which kinds of changes in your work life you observed?

- ◆ Could you compare your social relations at work with relations at other work-places?
- ◆ How do you define your past and future?
- ◆ What is your prediction for the coming years in your work life?
- ◆ How did your work life change you?
- ◆ If you could go back to the past, what would you change about your work life?
- ◆ What are the informal ways of getting a job or not getting a job that you have observed for yourself or for the people around you? (Networks, black lists, etc.)
- ◆ Do you think that the position you are looking for and your capabilities overlap?



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