

**INTERVIEWS ON INTERVIEWS: A GENDERED ANALYSIS OF  
JOB INTERVIEWS IN ROMANIA**

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# I. Introduction

This research explores how gender is constructed, performed, and understood before, during and after the job interview experience. How can gender be made visible in a situation perceived as genderless? How does the job interview look from the candidates' point of view and from the recruiters' point of view? All of these questions are placed in the context of the contemporary Romanian labor market and the answers come from interviews with young job candidates (under 30 years of age) and recruiters from multinational corporations with offices in Bucharest. This qualitative study aims at filling a research gap regarding studies on gender and work in post-socialist Romania.

The argument of this research is that gender is unconsciously done by candidates and recruiters during the job interview and that "doing gender" implies certain consequences for both parties (candidates and recruiters) involved. The implications I am considering involve a reinforcement of gender stereotypes, implicit and explicit discrimination against candidates and larger socio-economic implications for recruiters, who, as I discuss later, work in what has become a women's profession. There are certain conceptions of femininity and masculinity which both candidates and recruiters bring to the job interview. Gender is "done" by candidates and recruiters and this becomes evident when job interviews are seen as a learning experience, as something that needs practice and fine tuning. I address how other factors that have a certain influence over the job interviews, like age, social status and citizenship interact with gender. I talk about how there are certain 'ideascapes' (Appadurai 1991) about the West, identified as a symbol of modernity, which trigger the entire context of the job interview.

I start by providing a general framework of gender and work in the post state-socialist context. Due to limited research on Romania and due to a certain similar past of countries

from the former socialist bloc, I bring in evidence from other studies done in similar contexts and I present quantitative data about employment rates in general, and for women in particular. I discuss the issue of multinational companies and how a recent debate in the Romanian mass-media brought to the surface the previously unaired feelings of employees in multinationals. I continue with a presentation of the theoretical framework of this thesis, in which I argue that job interviews have become part of the post-modern “interview society” (Atkinson and Silverman 1997). I discuss how gender is a powerful factor in daily interactions, including the interview setting. I approach the performance of gender at job interviews as an active process of ‘doing gender’ (West and Zimmerman 1991). Drawing from Acker I argue that the gender regimes in the way in which they are expressed within work environments might bring inequality and discrimination against women.

In the next chapter of the thesis I give details about the research design and how this qualitative study was put into practice. I talk about the profile of my interviewees and about the obstacles and the ethical issues raised by this research. I continue with the general analysis of my data collected through in-depth interviews; the body of the thesis is structured in two main chapters: one which deals with the stories candidates related about their experience with job interviews and another which reflects the recruiters’ point of view over the same experience. I argue that candidates have different gendered strategies in regards to job interviews, but in the end all of them see the job interview as a learning experience. As such I conclude that by acknowledging the way in which job interviews have to be practiced, the candidates I interviewed agree that their gender performances have to be learned and that, in the end, they are held accountable for their gendered actions. In order to understand this factor of accountability I look at how recruiters interpret this experience. Discrimination and gender stereotypes come to the surface and sometimes these may favor women in employment, but in the long run they reinforce the patriarchal system. As I show, recruiters

also have to face gendered consequences as this profession has become a women's profession with unfavorable implications.

Although this research is limited in its scope, it can serve as a good starting point for studying the manner in which gender is understood in work environments in a post-socialist context. As I outline in the conclusion, this thesis offers some insights into how women actively prepare for their career adventures and that they might face gender discrimination in regards to pay, opportunities for promotion and overall performance, especially when they start a family. On the other hand, my research suggests that men at a young age invest less into their career capital than women, but in the end they easily secure jobs with higher salaries and opportunities for promotion.

### **1.1. Historical background**

The relation between work and gender in a context of transition from state-socialism to capitalist mode of production has been investigated by several authors. At the beginning of the 1990's the question most frequently asked was whether women in former socialist countries would be forced to draw back from the labor market into the domestic sphere (Aswin and Bowers 1997). Others suggested that women would voluntarily draw back from the public sphere since they had previously been forced to do paid work (Šiklová 1993 p. 75). Aswin and Bowers did a qualitative and quantitative study in order to respond to their frank question: do Russian women want to work? (1997). The answer was that indeed women would do practically anything in order to remain in the labor market, whether for economic reasons or due to their strong engagement with the work place (Aswin and Bowers 1997). Nevertheless the authors suggest that due to "strong ideological and some economic reasons", women may be gradually pushed out of the labor market and the remaining women will be "ghettoized" into low-paid undesirable occupations (1997, p 33).

To see whether this has happened, Pollert investigated the issue of gender and employment in ten east-European countries, including Romania (2005, p. 213). The author acknowledged that women from the communist bloc started the capitalist transformation on good terms: women had high educational levels, there was a high labor force participation rate and there was also state support for childcare and working mothers (*ibid.*, p 214).

A general overview of the labor market in Romania shows these figures: for 2006, the employment rate, as calculated by Eurostat<sup>1</sup>, was 58.8%, while for the entire EU zone it was 64.3%. The employment rate in Romania has dropped consistently from 1997, the first year for which Eurostat offers figures, from 65.4% to 57.6%; the lowest figure registered was in the year 2005<sup>2</sup>. The employment rate for women in 2006 was 53%, dropping, along with the general employment rate, from 1997 when it was 59.1%. For the entire EU zone the employment rate for women in 2006 was 57.1% and for the EU 15 it is 58.4%. In Romania, the gender pay gap, calculated as a percentage of men's average hourly earnings, was 13% for the year 2005. The employment rate of women dropped by 7.8% in just 8 years which is consistent with Aswin and Bowers prediction that women in a post-state socialist context will be forced out of the labor market (1997, p. 33). Romanian women were also confined to lower paid sectors of the economy – from 1990 to 2001 there was an increase in the employment rate of women in the agricultural sector by almost 11% and for the public sector by 2.7%, while in the industry sector there was a drop of 13.5% (Pollert 2005, p. 217). Pollert shows that the gender pay gap in the ten East European countries surveyed is bigger than in the EU-15 and that the pay gap is larger and deteriorating in more feminized sectors and in most private sectors (p. 222). Pollert also suggests that between the adoption of European

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<sup>1</sup> All the numbers were last retrieved on 22.05.2007 from the Eurostat, the EU official statistics office: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?\\_pageid=1996,45323734&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL&screen=welcomeref&open=/&product=STRIND\\_EMPLOI&depth=2](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1996,45323734&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&screen=welcomeref&open=/&product=STRIND_EMPLOI&depth=2)

<sup>2</sup> Indeed men experienced the dramatic effects of economic and political transition and the employment rate for men in Romania in 2006 was 64.6%, a much lower percentage than in 1997 when it was calculated to be 71.9% (data according to Eurostat website).

legislation and official policies on gender equality and their actual implementation and practice there is an enormous gap (p. 228).

A recent study of the tourism industry in Bulgaria and how the transition affected women and men in this sector differently reveals one important aspect: when it comes to the countries in the former communist bloc, as elsewhere, generalizations are unproductive and diminish the nuances and complexities of life experiences. All these countries have experienced a different past and economic transformation and this leads to different gender regimes in the work environment. Ghodsee argues that women working in the tourist sector in Bulgaria could actually keep their jobs and start successful careers because the cultural capital they acquired during the communist times could be put to use. By cultural capital she means that the women were involved in the service sector which expanded after 1989, rather than in the male-dominated heavy industry sector which collapsed. Women knew foreign languages and had exposure to the capitalist world, they had a more general education and work experience, they had connections and were very eager to adapt to the changing situation (Ghodsee 2005). Fodor also argues that women in Hungary started the transition with an advantage because they were overrepresented in the non-productive sector; it was the male-dominated productive sector which, due to its inefficiency and usage of out-dated machinery, was the first to experience privatization and thus the loss of jobs (Fodor 2003, p. 159).

Nevertheless, Ghodsee acknowledges that men could find better paid jobs even within the service sector because “employers preferred workers who could not take maternity leave” (Ghodsee 2005, ch 1). She also argues that when men lost their jobs in the industry they started competing for jobs in feminized professions, for jobs, for which, only several years ago, women were considered to be more biologically suited (ch. 3). Although the author does not stress this aspect, drawing from the examples used in her book, I could argue that



women might have kept their positions at a mid-managerial level, but the owners of hotels and tourism companies are Bulgarian men or foreign investors, rather than Bulgarian women.

What can be concluded is that men and women in Romania have experienced the negative effects of privatization and introduction of capitalist mode of production. This is evident in the decrease of the employment rate and the corresponding increase in the unemployment rate. But women have experienced another loss – mainly in their financial stability as the pay gap increases and women are confined to women's professions, which according to a general trend for as identified by Pollert, are less valued and paid (2005, p. 224).

Romania benefited greatly from the direct and indirect foreign investments made after 1989; the multinational companies that established branches in Romania have offered thousands of work places to Romanian men and women. Romania has become an attractive labor market for foreign investors as the workers are generally highly skilled and have an above the average knowledge of foreign languages (an acknowledgment of this are the numerous procurement centers, call centers, and outsourcing centers of multinationals based in Romania). Multinational companies are seen by most graduates to be 'really good employers' who offer above the average salaries. The companies that attend the job fairs in Romania (in which I also participated, as I detail in the methodology chapter) are mostly big multinational companies and they have the most applicants, in comparison to other smaller, Romanian companies.

The competition to get a job in one of these companies is fierce and it resembles a fight where the fittest worker survives. This expression has passed the figurative meaning into an actual literally understanding: on 21 April 2007, an audit manager at a multinational audit company died of heart failure caused by exhaustion, long hours of work, insufficient sleep hours and low vitamin diet. This case provoked a media frenzy in Romania and as one

blogger posted, “the love affair between Romania and multinational companies has ended” (Stoica 2007). After this case, other cases were revealed in which employees simply died of exhaustion caused by 16 hour work days, 7 days a week and sparked an intense discussion about the myth of “lazy Romanians”. To help explain better the discussions, tension, disappointment and disillusion of employees in multinational companies in Romania, I have translated an entry on a popular Romanian blog (see Appendix 1). In short, I can say that this post on the blog is very similar with other reactions in the Romanian media and it is a crude report made by multinational workers about how multinationals promote a certain work style.

Heintz detailed in her study of work relations in Romania in the year 2000 that employees in multinational corporations have to work at least ten hours per day and that their work is closely monitored (2005, p. 11). A difference has appeared since the year of that research: Heintz commented that none of her interviewees talked about or raised the issue of a balanced life between work and private (p. 11). With some of my interviewees this was quite the opposite because, even though they are at an age where they don’t have family pressures, they still commented that life should not resume only to work, that they have a right to a private life (and fun), outside work. In just 6 years, young Romanian employees have started questioning the ideals over work in multinational companies. The case of Raluca, the audit manager, emphasized that actions towards the construction of a private sphere should start soon, that is if multinational employees don’t want to end up like her.

Eurostat, the EU statistics office, revealed in one of their reports that Romanians are amongst the most hard working people in the European Union with an average of 41,1 hours of work per week, while in the Czech Republic the average is 42,8 hours and in Holland it is only 31,5 hours of actual work (Romanii pe podiumul ... 2007). To add more to this grim picture Eurostat also revealed that the unemployment rate has gone up from 6.9% in March 2006 to 7.8% in March 2007; these figures transform Romania into the EU country with the

fastest growing unemployment rate (Comache 2007). The work environment in Romania is indeed one where the fittest survives and all the rest are simply squashed under the rapidly changing structures.

Finding a job is the first place where people get in contact with this Darwinian environment and have to face countless numbers of interviews with failed results and long months of searching and waiting. The companies for which the recruiters I interviewed work have different recruiting stages: there is usually a language test where the positions implies active knowledge of a foreign language, second there may be a psychological test or a test measuring the candidate's IQ, and thirdly, a test measuring professional qualifications and experience. The interview experience I analyze comes after all this and deals mostly with personal aspects of the candidate's life and aims at discovering whether the personality of the candidate matches the values and vision of the company. It usually lasts from 30 minute to one hour and involves questions trying to decipher whether the person has lied in the CV or not, if she/he has certain qualities useful for the company, psychological questions or situational questions, depending on the recruiters background and personal likes and dislikes. Sometimes this interview is followed by a second interview with the same recruiter with a more specific aim or with the future boss of the candidate. It is therefore no wonder that after all these stages which involve time and energy, candidates would like to actually get the job. One recruiter (Paula) acknowledged that maybe only 1% of those who apply for a job might actually be hired.

In this section I presented, in a brief manner, the labor market in Romania after 1989 with a focus on the gendered effects of the transition period and on how multinational corporations are viewed by men and women in urban Romania. I did this in order to better understand the way in which the interviews I did are embedded into larger socio-economic and cultural discourses. The candidates I interviewed were searching for jobs in Bucharest,

but a multinational company was seen as the best option for starting a career; the vast majority of the recruiters I interviewed work in multinational corporations. This is why I chose to present a detailed picture of multinational corporations in Romania and how employees in such organizations talk about their work life and, non-existent, private life. Even though neo-liberal discourses are very strong in Bucharest, there is a growing criticism towards multinational corporations and the images these companies promote. In the chapter that follows I will analyze the theoretical perspectives on the post-modern society where the everyday interactions shape gender and produce gendered practices and where unequal gender regimes are produced (even more so in the work environment).

## **II. Theoretical perspectives: how to conceptualize gender during interviews and work environments**

In the beginning, I discuss how interviews have become such an important tactic in hiring and how this relates to Atkinson and Silverman's definition of the post modern society as an interview society, a society of the personal confession and how through extensive use of interviews in daily life the private becomes public. Their conception is that the performance during interviews is a gendered one, but in order to understand how exactly it is gendered I address the concept of gender and "doing gender" as presented by West and Zimmermann and West and Fenstermaker; their main argument is that gender is "not merely an individual attribute, but something that is accomplished through interaction with others" (West and Fenstermaker 1993, p. 155). I further tackle the issue of undoing gender and whether the theory of "doing gender" is adequate in order to reveal matters of resistance and subversion to current gender systems. I use Acker's argument on how work environments are a set of inequality regimes, including here gender, in order to show how gender regimes have powerful consequences for the people within organizations and how these consequences disproportionately affect women and men. Throughout this thesis I argue that making gender visible in the perceived genderless situation of job interviews is difficult, but, in the end I conclude that job interviews are an instance of doing gender, which create power relations; I also analyze what might be the consequences for women and men, for recruiters and candidates.

Atkinson and Silverman's research aim is to explore the meanings of the interview society and how the self is constructed during interviews through narratives. Although their main concern is with social sciences and with the fact that interviews have become in recent

years the prime tool of data collection for sociologists, anthropologists and others, they conclude that this is by no means a unique phenomenon restricted to academia. The interview, the confessional, has become an integral part of post modern societies, where the production of self and its prevalence is considered to have special significance (1997, p. 313). They mention how mass media and talk shows (think only of Oprah-like shows) have taken on this trend, how interviews are extensively used by police officers, medical staff and many others.

I would add to this portrait the use of interviews as a hiring technique; Daft argues that job interviews, as a selection technique, are widely used, almost “in every job category in nearly every organization” (2006, p. 444). Even though job interviews are perceived to be not 100% accurate and not a valid prediction of a candidate’s job performance, it is still used world wide with slight variations. Among the various types of interviews used the most common is face to face interviews (single or multiple, with only one employee from the human resources department or with several, including a future boss). Other types include: panel interviews, puzzle or stress related interviews and computer based and internet interviews (Daft 2006, p. 445).

Denzin points towards the fact that interviews are not just methods for data collection, but that they are vehicles for producing performance, that they are in fact a fabrication, a construction, a fiction (2001). Drawing from Denzin, I argue that interviews and especially job interviews are used having in mind that indeed they are thought of as a window to the true self, that this is the only way to actually have a glimpse into one’s private corner of the soul. The logic produced and reproduced is one that argues that individuals have access to their own experiences, that they are willing to express those experiences and that by narrating the self they offer a hint towards personal meaning (Denzin 2001).

Denzin also points towards the fact that interviews are performances and that they are gendered and dialogical performative acts, created through the use of speech acts. But this is a view of how interviews should be, not exactly of how they are used in general. Atkinson and Silverman argue that the interview used by mass media is in fact monologic, “because interviewer and interviewee collaborate in the reconstruction of a common and unitary construction of the self” (1997 p. 314). There is nothing new about these interviews, there is no information that has not been rehearsed or reproduced before the actual happening. There is not an exchange of meanings, of information from both parties; it is simply a repetition of what the interviewee perceives the interviewer wants to find out. There is no room for difference of opinions, there is no room for dialogue, and there is just a perceived exchange of true information about the self. Based on the feminist critique of interviews as a research method I can conclude that job interviews are a source for commodification of individual experience, and of further consumption. Feminist scholars like deVault and Reinharz have argued that interviews are a site of power relations, that there is nothing neutral or un-gendered about how the interview is produced.

Job interviews rest on the assumption that the only party that has to express itself is the interviewee, who indeed becomes an informant. They rest on the assumption that the private self is the real self and that what it is at stake is nothing less than discovering that real self in a matter of 30 minutes. The interviewer is without any obligation of exchanging information; he or she is never under questioning, the company they represent is not to be questioned or exposed. As Atkinson and Silverman put it: “the interviewer, rather than facilitating the appearance of a ‘natural’ or ‘spontaneous’ emergence of the essential self, seeks to strip away appearance ... to lay bare the true identity that lies beneath the surface” (1997, p. 315).

In order to understand the workings of gender I have decided to use West and Zimmerman's theory of "doing gender", an innovative theory which stresses how gender is something that all of us do in social interactions and more importantly that we are held accountable for it. The authors have introduced three distinctions valuable for the understanding of gender: sex (a classification of persons into female and male based on biological criteria), sex category (which might contradict sometimes the biological classification of sex, as in the case of transsexuals or intersex people) and gender as "the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category" (1991 p. 14).

They contend that modern societies are based on this differentiation between women and men and the placement of people within sex categories; because sex categories are omnirelevant and because they are constantly produced, reshaped, reinforced, the doing of gender becomes unavoidable (1991, pp. 23-24). The main feature of gender is that it is done within interrelation activities and judgments are being made about whether the behavior of someone is gender appropriate or gender inappropriate – in this sense we are held accountable for our gender behavior (p. 22). What is relevant is that through 'doing gender' differences between women and men are reproduced and reinforced daily, without them being based on natural, essential or biological differences (p. 24). In this sense doing gender can be observed in the most unusual of places like public toilets, conversational talk, parenting, care and paid work (1993). We as individuals do gender constantly and this is not left without consequences – within paid work, gender differences are produced and in most cases they are non-favorable to women (1991, p. 29).

It has to be stressed again that these differences are not based on a person's essential nature; as an argument for this Williams shows how some professions nowadays in the USA are seen as women's professions, because, it is said, women are more inclined to such types



of labor (jobs as librarians, nurses or teachers). But at the turn of the century and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century these same professions in the same American context were not at all women's professions, but they were male domains (Williams 1995). Other consequences for the gendering of work will be discussed shortly when presenting Acker's position on inequality regimes. The theory of "doing gender" has been applied by several feminist authors within the work environment. Yancey Martin argues that it is not easy to see how gender is talked about, how gender can be made visible within work organizations, or how gender is practiced, but the conclusion would be that "workplaces are infused with gender" (p. 343). What this research will show is that indeed job interviews are an interface of the work organizations and gender is one relevant aspect determining their overall performance (gender in conjunction with age, class position, and citizenship). In accordance with Yancey Martin, gender has to be made visible and doing so is not always a breeze; actions which might be interpreted as gender neutral turn out, upon a closer inspection, to be in fact gendered. This has consequences, both for the candidate and the recruiter.

Deutsch draws her analysis from West and Zimmerman's concept of "doing gender" and argues that even though this notion was groundbreaking in feminist theory as it showed gender as "an ongoing emergent aspect of social interaction" and not simply a result of processes of socialization in early childhood (Deutsch 2007 p. 107), it leaves out the possibility of disruption of gender regimes. They say that more and more "doing gender has become a theory of conformity and gender conventionality, albeit of multiple forms of conventionality" (2007 p. 108). Their point is that if people are generally held accountable for their doing of gender and they can avoid or escape gender, what are then the options for resistance? After making a description of the most important research which has used the theory of "doing gender", the conclusion is that when resistance comes into action the consequences may be severe for those going against the current. For example, one study

researching the ways in which Danish girls defied the normative constraints of being female and white by making friends with Turkish boys, showed that the girls were sanctioned by the community as being promiscuous or asexual (Staunæs 2005, cited in Deutsch 2007, p. 112). Deutsch argues that the way in which feminist scholars have approached gendered experiences is the reason for this lack of resistance and that a shift towards finding a change in gender relations might reveal interesting aspects.

What are the implications of the existence of gender regimes in work organizations? Acker considers that every organization has inequality regimes, which may come at the crossroads between gender, class and race (2006 p. 443). She defines inequality regimes as a combination of “practices, processes, actions and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender and racial inequalities within particular organizations” (p. 443); the consequences of inequality regimes can be seen in the level of pay and other monetary benefits workers receive, in the number of opportunities for promotion, at the level of decision making, in the level of respect, at the level of power and control over resources and outcomes. Acker considers that occupational segregation, both horizontal and vertical, develops as the basis of inequality and is usually intersected with factors such as class and race (for the US context managers are usually middle and upper class white males, while the secretaries and lower level workers are usually women, either white or of color) (2006, p. 444).

Acker also argues, based on several studies that bureaucracies, despite promoting a genderless image, in fact are constructed on gender regimes and stereotypes and survive through an unequal gender regime: “the image of the successful organization and the image of the successful leader share many of the same characteristics, such as strength, aggressiveness and competitiveness” (2006 p. 445), which in the light of an all-boys club at high managerial levels transform into masculine-stereotyped features. What women have to accomplish is to adapt to this image in order to succeed and to conform to work culture. The

traditional bureaucracies rely on unequal gender regimes because they assume the worker is to be a man who has no family responsibilities (which were taken up by the wife) and thus can perform long hours on the job (2006, p. 448). When women enter the public work place they are usually confined to lower level positions, with less prestige and monetary benefits. Throughout my thesis I show how the corporate work environment in Romania also relies on a male image and that it reproduces gender stereotypes that may lead sometimes to discrimination against women and sometimes can favor women; nonetheless these stereotypes reinforce a patriarchal system at a larger level.

Acker discusses how gender, class and race affect the recruitment and hiring processes and concludes that several factors lead still to consistent and continuous patterns of segregation. These factors are: the image of the unencumbered worker with availability for flexible work hours (translated into extra hours); the stereotypical images about what men and women should do and what they are “naturally” inclined to do which leads to horizontal segregation and the access to social networks, as the best source for getting a job and the criteria for hiring based very much on soft skills and competence, which can be arbitrarily interpreted (Acker 2006, p. 450).

One of the difficulties which arose during my research was to make gender visible and to actually talk about gender with my interviewees; this is in line with Acker’s point that gender in organizations are made invisible and as “something that is beside the point of the organization” and the practices of gender are hidden, subtle and unspoken (2006 pp. 451-452). Whenever gender is discussed it appears as a result of general beliefs in biological differences between men and women; but most importantly, masculine features become legitimate and successful more so when they are hidden under the image of gender neutrality (2006 p. 453). Another aspect that is relevant for this research is Acker’s discussion of how the bureaucratic standards from the US environment have been strengthened through

globalization processes (the entrance of multinational companies on different markets) and have been adopted around the world (2006 p. 459). As such I can conclude that her point about how gendered practices within organizational places has unequal consequences for women and men is not something unique for the US, but has become a part of work relations in Romania, as expressed through the job interview.

### III. Discussion on methodology

I have drawn my perspective from the philosophical theory of interpretation which has its traditions in hermeneutics, Charles Taylor and anthropological research (Rosenberg 1995, p. 91). This school of thought comments that culture, social practices and human phenomena are much more complicated, varied and complex than natural phenomena. As such the aim has to be the ‘unpacking’ of meaning of social actions, to make actions intelligible and reveal their significance, rather than creating universal laws and predictions. This is what Rosenberg calls the unpacking of “deep meanings” (1995 p. 105) or what Geertz calls “thick descriptions”(cited in Rosenberg 1995, p. 121); the aim of my research is not just to reiterate what people will say during interviews, but to discover the hidden meanings of their talk and their actions, to discover how gender can be made visible and how gendered actions have consequences.

As a guiding principle of my research I will use an approach in feminist theory, as articulated through Donna Haraway’s view of “partial, locatable, critical knowledges”(2004 p. 89). As such this thesis is a reflection of a specific study, of my personal standpoint and a consequence of my interaction with my interviewees, and not a general guiding truth about job interviews.

The reason I chose this topic goes back to an event I experienced two years ago while waiting to start a job interview; I was sitting in a modern office and on the desk in front of me there was a pile with CV’s of other candidates who have applied for a job at that company. Besides the fact that the pile was enormous and it was, for me at least, frightening to see how many “competitors” I had, I started to wonder what are the motivations for all those candidates, how was the job interview experience for them, what do they do to stand out

differently and get the job. At that time this was impossible to do, but now I turn back to that pile and start asking the same questions with a twist: how does gender affect expectation, performance and evaluation of the job interview experience. This twist is a reflection of this past year, as a student at the Gender Studies Department where I have learned that gender is not something that we can escape and that all actions are gendered.

My interviews were semi-structured with open ended questions; I conducted face to face interviews in Bucharest, Brasov and Budapest during the months of March and April 2007 and received email responses to my open-ended questionnaire. The target for selecting my interviewees was for candidates to be under 30, who were searching for a job or had recent experience with job interviews within the Romanian job market; for the recruiters it was people with extensive experience in recruiting within the Romanian job market, mostly in multinational companies.

The aim was to have a balanced number of female interviewees and male interviewees; as I further explain in chapter two, I had difficulties finding male recruiters and I will suggest what are the reasons and implications of this. I conducted 19 interviews face to face and four online interviews; out of these eleven were with candidates (three of them were male) and twelve interviews with recruiters (out of which two were male). Some of the candidates I knew before this research and some were friends of friends, but I met all the recruiters for the first time through this research. In order to gather people for interviewing I sent emails to friends who then forwarded the email and I posted a request on yahoo groups. Those whom I interviewed are in the majority of cases people who have responded to these emails. The candidates are almost all under 30 years of age, most commonly around 25, graduates or final year students and living in Bucharest (some were born in other towns in Romania, but moved to Bucharest when they started university studies). They graduated from different fields of study (like sociology, political science, computer science) and are

searching for jobs in the labor market in Bucharest. The recruiters are a little bit older in between 25 and 33, with an average around 28; they are also graduates from different field of studies – sociology, economics and language studies. All of them have at least one year of experience with recruiting and for some the experience amounts to 5-6 years in the field (for detail information regarding each informant please see Appendix 2).

Part of the research was also my participation in a conference called HR Forum, dedicated to Human Resources (HR) specialists in Romania where I did intensive networking; I also attended three job fairs in Bucharest where I presented my research to recruiters and candidates asking them to have a talk with me on their experience with job interviews. Some of the interviews were recorded, while at some this was impossible (due to location or the interviewee's refusal to have it recorded); during all interviews I took extensive notes which I transferred into an electronic format soon after. I also schematically investigated the how-to books and handbook manuals connected to the topic of job interviews and recruiting. I analyzed several books related to human resources: a report made by the Economist Intelligence Unit about Human Resources in countries from the former communist bloc which is designed for HR specialists within the business sector in this geographical region. I analyzed a manual for HR people published in Romania by Romanian authors and two popular self-help books published in USA, but their style and language I have discovered in articles and books available in Romania. I also browsed through countless Romanian websites aimed for a Romanian audience which offer tips on how to dress, behave and answer questions during the job interview situation. The results of my findings are to be found in chapter 5.

I started the interviews with a very open-ended statement: tell me about your experience with job interviews. I let the interviewees to do the talking and when I saw they were ending their narration I asked some questions based on certain themes. These themes

are: appearance and dress, preparation for job interview (which includes questions about former experience with job interviews, conversation with friends, direct access to articles and books on ‘how to’ behave during job interviews), the image of the ideal candidate, the relation between the candidates and the interviewer and what factors might affect that (e.g. age, gender, class positions), their reaction towards the job interview in general and with a focus on their perception of how the evaluation goes. The interviews with recruiters went along the same lines: I asked them to tell me about their experience with job interviews and then to specify exactly how the process is conducted in their companies, what is the ideal employee in their minds, how do they evaluate the candidates, according to appearance, general attitude, skills, expressed motivation, what would be the mistakes a candidate might make, what happens if a candidate performs really well during the interview and then does not perform well at the job, how have they changed their recruiting strategy over time, how do they characterize the relation between themselves and the candidates. I was very flexible during the interviews and tried to adapt my questions to what the interviewee answered and ask as many auxiliary questions as possible. For example, when they told me that they wear a business outfit I asked them to specify what they meant by that and how they chose that outfit.

This approach draws from Sherna Gluck’s account of feminist oral history and how she herself conducts interviews: “the principle which I generally use is to ask the most general question first, waiting to see where that questions leads. It might lead to a detailed description, to what appears to be a digression, or to a blank. My own reaction, then, is tailored to the women’s response” (p. 225).

The method of analysis is a feminist methodology and has been defined as “conversational analysis”, one in which the researcher listens “with great attention to the details both of what is said (and not said) and how it is said” (Kitzinger, p. 127). My study



has a postmodern approach because I am not looking for objective, real life experiences, but at how people translate their experiences into language, how they perceive and express themselves and their experiences and most importantly how their talk is embedded into a larger social context and reality (Kitzinger, p. 128). Anderson and Jack advise feminist scholars to be good listeners to women's tales and representations: "We need to listen critically to our interviews, to our responses as well as to our questions. We need to hear what women implied, suggested and started to say but they didn't" (1981 p. 17). What I would add is that feminist authors should not only have a special ear for women's stories, but also for the way men construct their narrations.

In regard to ethical issues raised by my research, these are some of the concerns: in terms of interviews the possible problem is that people might not feel comfortable with telling me their experiences that may have been unsuccessful. I detailed in the theoretical chapter that Atkinson and Silverman describe our post-modern society as an interview society, a trend which I continue, because I am interviewing people about their interviews and so reinforcing the broader social norm (Rapley, p. 17). Where I am actually trying to unmask power relations I am myself creating another set of power relations just through my presence and my power of asking intimate, detailed questions. Feminist authors (e.g. DeVault 1999, p. 71) have pointed to this and have called for an acknowledgement of power relations and to consider the interviewees as active participants in the research, not simply informants or resources. Nonetheless the responsibility for accurate and trustworthy research rests on the shoulders of the author (Sangster, p. 93).

Some authors have reflected upon the issue on how gender influences the interview process (Presser 2005, Pini 2005 cited in Deutsch 2007); they found that when a woman is interviewing a man there is a disruption of gender conventional norms and men try to resist this disruption "by asserting their masculinity during the interview" (Presser cited in Deutsch

2007, p. 112). As an example, men acted in such a manner as “to create and communicate heterosexual masculinity” (ibid) – actions like controlling the interview setting, acting chivalrous, they sometimes called the female researcher by her first name or ‘honey’ or ‘sweetheart’, the male interviewees sometimes engaged in sexual innuendos. In regards to my own research, even though I have interviewed few men, I found the same type of behavior coming from some of my male interviewees. Besides the fact that men were less willing to be interviewed, when we actually had the interview they expressed their masculinity by, for example, inviting me to barbecues, paying for what we drank or ate, asking for my phone number (actions in which none of my female interviewee engaged).

Another problem raised after doing the analysis of the data is that my interpretation and conclusion might be in disagreement with what my interviewees feel to be the appropriate analysis; indeed I do not offer a very bright image about the job interview process and I conclude that the consequences of this might equally affect candidates and recruiters in a negative way.

Having discussed the methodology of this research it is time to proceed with the analysis of the rich data I collected. The next two chapters deal with manner in which candidates and recruiters experience the job interview situation, how they prepare for it, how the actions are gendered for both parties involved, what are the gendered implications for this setting and beyond.

## IV. The preparation – the view from candidates

In this chapter I address the issue of how candidates prepare for the job interview and how they adapt to the ideal image they envisage; I outline the three main strategies my interviewees described and how candidates prepare for the interview, from reading how-to books and articles, to deciding what to wear. I discuss a contradiction I encountered during the interviews I made and how job interviews can actually be seen as part of career capital. I end by presenting the feelings that most candidates expressed which are feelings of frustration, anxiety and self-doubt. Although most of the interviewees directly asked me what is the best strategy for securing a job interview I had to let them down and say that my research didn't have this aim and say that when the quest for finding a job starts for me I will be as defenseless as they are/were (some of my interviewees have found jobs since the time of the research).

### ***4.1 The three main approaches to job interviews***

After listening to my interviews time and time again I concluded that my interviewees had three distinct approaches or strategies (although unconsciously formulated): one I associated with the preparation for a date, the other I call the androgynous attitude, and the third, is the strategy of I-don't-really-care.

The first two interviews I did revealed what can be depicted as diametrically opposed approaches for the job interview situation: the first, exemplified by Diana, can be summarized as the first date preparation and second as the androgynous strategy. Diana is a beautiful woman, 25, an MA graduate from a foreign university who is on the lookout for jobs within the Public Relations sector. Diana told me she particularly liked interviews with men and the way she presented the preparation for the job interviews seemed as though she

was preparing for a date with an unknown man. She would shave her legs, wear a skirt, put on make-up and high heels; even though we spoke in Romanian she used this economic term of ‘assets’ in English when she referred to her physical characteristics. Diana actually used the term ‘final product’ when she talked about herself and her entire appearance.

Yes, probably I think more about what to wear than on a regular day, I start thinking the night before the interview and pick those clothes in which I feel good; now I am dressed more casually, but for job interviews I usually put on a skirt and shoes with some heels. This is not saying that I go dressed like a slut or something like that or that I show too much skin, but I try to be pleasing to the eye.

Most probably Diana doesn’t think that her preparation for a job interview is similar to that of a date, but from my interview with her and the manner in which she talked about these aspects, as if they were some sort of ‘secrets’ she is willing to share with me, I concluded that the similarities between job interview and a date are undeniable. I would also argue that Diana did not question the rules of dress and appearance, as she took them for granted and what she did is to use them in her advantage. She felt it was appropriate to use her feminine ‘assets’, her beauty and her sexuality because in this way she could be one step ahead of the competition (I will detail in ch. 5.2 the manner in which Diana thought of female recruiters). By using terms like ‘assets’ and ‘final product’ it was obvious that for Diana a personal style does not come easily, that it takes practice, hard work and development of skills. Wolf argues that it is not uncommon for women to see their beauty as part the “bourgeois marriage market” and to conceptualize beauty in relation with wealth, money and consumer culture (1990 p. 20). Other interviewees’ strategy resembled Diana’s, but none were as explicit as she was. They also dressed very feminine for the job interview or very masculine (in the case of men) and loved the job interview experience itself. They prepared for it physically and emotionally and tried to win over the interviewer. They were the ones who talked at length about their job interviews and in most cases with understated pride.

This description of the job interview as a date is depicted by some books advising candidates on how to behave during the given situation:

Remember, since the hiring process is more like choosing a mate, than deciding whether or not to buy a new house, the employer is simply trying to determine if they like you. If you bomb in one of these areas just listed, the person-who-has-the-power-to-hire-you may decide they really don't like you, in which case you're not going to get hired there, no matter how qualified you otherwise are. (Nelson Bolles 1998, p. 201).

The second attitude towards job interviews was revealed to me by Catinca who had a very strict behavior for handling the job interview experience. I asked her how she acts during an interview and she promptly enumerated a long list with dos and don'ts:

Don't be too feminine or too masculine, be more of an androgynous person, look like a reliable person, never look in the eye, be calm, don't stare at the walls, talk loudly so that they can hear you, have your body inclined at 45 degrees, put your hands on the table, show respect, praise as in talk about the organization accomplishments, but don't go to far, don't suck up to them, never answer with a no, show some sense of humor and speak only when asked to.

Catinca expressed that she behaves very rigidly during a job interview and that she had perfected this list after having attended more than 15 interviews in the past months and after a first job interview experience where she thought she broke all the rules (like going dressed too lightly and too feminine or simply not asking any questions during the interview).

Some researchers have identified the same pattern of behavior in other situations where women felt they had to adapt and conform to a male standard. Pini (cited in Deutsch 2007) reveals that women who were in positions as agricultural leaders made use of the notion of third sex: they tried to conceal their femininity by wearing dark suits and doing perceived masculine activities while at the same time they used a conventional image of femininity by being nurturing, communicative and emphatic. Pini's conclusion is that women in leadership positions thought that in order to be taken seriously they had "to create

themselves as a third sex, which bodes ill for gender equity” (Pini 2005, p. 82, cited in Deutsch 2007, p. 111).

Catinca and Diana have a lot in common if you spot them on the street – they are both beautiful women, with feminine traits, very sociable and very smart, both oriented towards jobs in the Public Relations sector, but when it came to job interviews they couldn’t have been more different. Although they are both Romanian in the same age group with access to the same popular advice they have interpreted them differently and this I would suggest is caused by an unsuccessful first job interview experience – Diana used this strategy from the very beginning, refining it in some parts and got the jobs, whereas Catinca had a much more difficult and strenuous job interview experience.

Another strategy was that of indifference to the job interview – simply dismissing its importance and not making a big fuss over it; the interviewees said that they go to interviews dressed as they would normally do during a regular day, that they would not prepare very much for the interview and would just want to have it over as soon as possible so that they can return to their normal routine.

Once I was so late for the interview that I thought I shouldn’t go there because I don’t stand a chance; it wasn’t my fault – I just had other things to do that day and couldn’t finish earlier (Camelia).

This interviewee throughout our interview always related the job interviews which she attended within the larger context of her daily routine; the job interview was never a standout experience and, most importantly, it was sometimes related with mistakes on her part, as expressed in this quote where she talks about being late. I suggest that by connecting the job interview with a minor mistake Camelia tried to dismiss the importance of the job interviews in her life – they were not worthy of her attention and her concentration, and so she was late.

Rares, (male, 24), a final year student in Computer Science was at the time of the interview in between jobs in the area of software and graphic design (he was unsatisfied with his current place of employment and wanted to change it) and as such attended different job interviews. He lived with his girlfriend, the same age as he, and apparently she was the little secretary in the family:

Well... usually my girlfriend does much of the work – she actually wrote my CV, the applications for different jobs and picks my clothes, if I would be alone I would pick those things that are washed and cleaned. She reminds me about the interview and tells me what I should say and do. She has more experience with these things and I rely on her opinion.

From the interviews I had these were the three most important strategies my interviewees adopted – not everyone fits completely into one strategy, but their actions resemble more a type of strategy than another. The first plan for action of winning the interviewer over and using physical assets was shared both by men and women, as was the third, that of indifference towards the job interview; the second strategy of being androgynous and minimizing one's gender was shared only by women and I believe this is indicative of how feminine features are perceived in the labor market. Men never thought of playing a different persona during the job interview. For them job interviews were not so much an act or a presentation of a different self, of putting on a mask. Indeed one of the male interviewees admitted that for him dressing up for an interview and going in a suit presents lots of problems, but not to the extent of becoming a different person during the job interview. Some women believed not showing their femininity is a good strategy for a job interview, while none of the men thought of downplaying their masculinity.

## **4.2. The actual preparation**

In accordance with these strategies the interviewees had a different plan when discussing how they prepare for the job interview. The informants said that the preparation involves reading books, articles on how to act and what to respond, it involves also talks with friends or family about the job interview. Others simply said that no, the answers come naturally for them and they don't have to invest any time and energy for preparing for a job interview. But in contradiction with this last situation comes their attitudes towards job interviews as being a learning experience which taught the interviewees what to say and how to say it. I will further argue that job interviews become career capital.

When I did my interviews I asked the people in front of me to tell me how they prepare for the job interview; the people who adopted the first approach for the job interview had at first glance a contradictory response: they argued that job interviews come easily for them, it is part of their personality and that they rely most on spontaneity. But then when I asked more detailed questions all the factors had some importance during the preparation: reading advice columns, talking with friends, doing something relaxing in order to get into a good mood: "For me the most important thing is to start by having a nice day and positive feelings during that day, to have positive energy" (Angelica), "I load myself with self confidence and I tell to myself that I am the best" (Ramona). "What I generally try for a job interview is to get into my best shape, to present the best of me, so I choose the outfit which will boost my confidence, but I don't over do it. I dress like I am usually dressed" (on the day of the interview Angelica was wearing a very feminine outfit with black skirt, ruffled top and sleek orange wool sweater, with light makeup).

In regards to what to wear people had different attitudes: those who love interviews thought that getting the proper outfit for the interview is one of the most important things, as Diana's response presented earlier and others. When I say they love the interview I refer to



one of my other interviewee classification; as recruiter, Anna thought that people who go to job interviews can be subsumed under two categories: those who love the experience and can't get enough of it and those who hate it and just want to get it over as soon as possible. The women and men in the first category are people who generally invest in their wardrobe, who take pride in what they wear and have a large array of office clothes appropriate for a job interview situation. For those who have elegant, classic attire even on regular days, choosing the clothes for the job interview is just a matter of picking their Sunday best:

I start thinking about what to wear from the night before [before the day of the job interview]; in the morning I wake up 10 minutes earlier and I start choosing what to wear, the most important is to choose the right color – if I know I will have a stressful day I will choose something yellow and I will avoid wearing something very powerful like hot pink. I always wear a skirt, I believe it's more feminine so I will never wear pants for the interview, I would let my hair down. (Beatrice, 24, graduate from Law School, now Customer Satisfaction Manager)

For others things are not as easy as they seem:

When I first started to go to job interviews I think I had just one office jacket and probably 2 skirts, so the array was limited. I went dressed in them – a black jacket and most probably some nice pants, definitely not jeans. If I could have the money I would wear a suit in light, pastel colors. (Amalia, 24 years, IT software consultant)

This is a contrast to Diana who confessed that if she is invited for a job interview and does not like what she has in her closet, she will go shopping. This suggests that the economic situation of the candidates has impact on how the preparation for job interviews goes. One of the recruiters (Livia) remarked that there are some candidates who simply don't have the money to buy better clothes, but, in her opinion, as long as the clothes are clean and the candidates use deodorant this is a non-issue during the evaluation process. Even though this might be true, the outside pressure of being up to date with the rigors of fashion is felt by the candidates.

In regards to wearing make-up the women interviewed fit in two categories: those who wear make up every single day and so wear it during the job interview and those who do not wear make up and do not make an exception for the job interview experience. A study regarding make-up at work in the USA (Dellinger and Williams 1997) found that women associate make-up with looking well rested and healthy, with heterosexuality and with credibility; for them, also, make up was a source of pleasure and simply finding time for oneself. The researchers found little resistance to institutionalized rules which through time were internalized; but when it came to actually finding a job, subversion was put to the side, as one interviewee responded: “but when I am trying to get a job, you know, I want to get the job. The thing I want to do is control the conversation around the work and so I don’t want them to be going, ‘she’s not wearing any makeup’” (this is what Rebecca said, even though she took pride in challenging people’s ideas about the way women should look like; cited in Dellinger and Williams 1997, p. 173).

The advice on how to prepare for the interview is extensive in the how-to books; from clothing, perfume and the right answers to the recruiters’ questions, these books and articles seem to know it all. Some of them have distinctive advice for men and women; suggestions go from using deodorant and a light scent of perfume to wearing a bra (Nelson Bolles 1998, pg 201). Most commonly the women I interviewed knew that an office look is acceptable for a job interview and tried to conform to it having in mind their financial capabilities and fashion tastes. But what do they mean by office attire?

What is generally perceived to be an appropriate outfit for job interviews is in most cases a suit. The suit has been interpreted as being a gendered object which brings about different significance when worn by men or by women; in the case of men it creates a unified image which men can relate to. It can lead to a common bond, whereas for women it is a sign of women’s homage to man-ness (Wright 1996, p. 155). When asked about their clothes for a

job interview, the women who fall within the category of approaching the interview as a date did not mention a suit as a favorite option and this is in line with their strategy – they wanted to convey an image of femininity, rather than masculinity and power dressing, as the suit is normally perceived to represent. The women who adopted an androgynous approach to job interviews agreed that a suit is the first option of choice and again this goes in line with their over-all strategy – they used the suit in order to create a commonality between themselves and the interviewee/work organization and marginalizing the notion of femaleness. The women expressed their relative disinterest over clothing as a subtle message of not adopting the general discourse about femininity within the larger social context.

But how do men address the attire situation? Ilie was very much aware of the impositions a job interview brings and thought that wearing a suit every single day must be pure nonsense. But at the end of the day he was prepared to go through the entire routine and accept the norms. For Ilie wearing a tie and suit sent the message of respecting the unwritten rules of male office etiquette, as the suit is a symbol of communication between men. The tie, although it has no practical function, portrays an image of masculinity and conformation with established rules (Ash 170).

This is probably what I don't like the most the fact that I have to go dressed in a suit, I have to pick the shirt and a matching tie, I have to polish my shoes and then to take a cab, as not to spoil the entire look in the buses or metro. But I realize that recruiters discriminate based on how someone looks so I don't want to lose points on this aspect. (Ilie, 24 years, Political Science graduate, just started his job as Office Manager)

Ilie was convinced of this aspect of discrimination when, as a new member of the organization which deals with recruiting, he observed how the hiring process goes: “they had two ladies for a post as receptionist, one of them a little bit over weight and the other one slimmer; the first one had more work experience, but over all they were similar in abilities

and knowledge. Who do you think they chose? Of course, the slimmer lady”. He became acutely aware of the issue of discrimination and how if someone does not fit the criteria for hiring they should start changing their plans. In fact, Ilie was the only interviewee who brought up the issue of discrimination based on a person’s appearance and gender discrimination; all the rest said that appearance is important, but that recruiters base their decision on more objective facts. I will discuss the issue of discrimination later on in the following chapter. The other two men I interviewed professed ignorance towards the entire process of choosing clothes: for Rares, his girlfriend was the one making all the decisions, while for Bogdan clothes were picked as for a normal day at work “nothing fancy”, as he put it. Rares relied on his girlfriend for most aspects of the job interview process, which is an indication for how men delegate some of their responsibilities to their female companions. Bogdan was not alone in this strategy: some women expressed similar attitudes: “the clothes are those which I wear on a normal work day, a blouse and some pants” (Camelia).

The influences in how to act, how to behave and what to wear came from very different sources; most of the interviewees (75%) said that they read what they could find on the internet and especially on the websites that publish job announcements like [www.bestjobs.ro](http://www.bestjobs.ro) or [www.ejobs.ro](http://www.ejobs.ro), but they denied that the online articles have a strong influence. Friends were not so much a source of inspiration for the interviewees and some said that they might call or talk with their friends only after a second interview, when they feel it’s more certain that they will get the job (all three men acknowledged this); some of the women said that they will ask friends about what to answer to some questions or ask if they have friends or acquaintances in that organization who can give them some tips. Fashion magazines were never brought up and when I specifically asked their importance was dismissed. Diana offered a very unusual answer: she said that before the interview she will

look at news programs to see how the women are dressed to have a sense of what is in for the office nowadays.

In order to interpret my interviewees' responses on preparation for job interviews I have chosen to present the Foucauldian framework on productive power and feminists' criticism of this. Foucault (cited in Bordo 1993) posits that power in modern societies has transformed itself from a repressive model to a productive, non-authoritarian, non unidirectional model. If power previously emanated solely from the sovereign, nowadays power is nowhere specifically to be found, but everywhere. Productive power has to be conceived as scattered multiple processes, not necessarily as a possession of certain individuals. It embodies certain concepts such as normalization, self-internalization and voluntarism – there is no certain someone who creates certain rules that need to be followed, but there are discourses, processes and practices pressuring individuals in a non-coercive manner. According to Foucault, this type of power simultaneously creates two reactions: it produces the docility and obedience of the individual towards these norms and it provides an experience of empowerment for the individuals through the exercise of control and practice of skills over one's body.

A critique of Foucault emerged from feminist scholarship which draws attention to the fact that the body as envisioned by Foucault has no sex, no gender. The Foucauldian concept of productive power ignores the bodily experiences felt differently by women and men. The disciplinary practices in force in modern societies create “an ideal body of femininity” (Bartky, pg 71), one which inscribes further the inferior status of women in society. The critique continues by saying that women are under intense and ever increasing pressure to perform a certain type of femininity, one which presupposes that the female body needs constant readjustment, attention, care, energy and time. Men are confronted with different discourses that do not accentuate the defectiveness of the male body – “soap and

water, a shave, and routine attention to hygiene may be enough for *him*; for *her* they are not” (Bartky, pg. 71).

What is the situation for the people I have interviewed – are the discourses differently interpreted? Are they charged with different significance than what other authors have found for western cultures? First of all, the past brings a specific legacy into contemporary times – state socialist polices supposedly accentuated the equality of its citizens, the creation of a genderless homo sovieticus, rather than on gender differences (Gessen, pg 198). Because of this general view of a genderless society, multinational companies which invaded the economic arena after 1990 tried to actually create, when it came to consumers, gendered bodies, and distinctive male and female bodies. As True puts it the companies’ aim was to market gender, but to market it in a very specific way, through gendered products and gendered services. The discourse is one of individualism, of expressed sexual identity and of identification through the new products available on the market (True, p. 115-116). If this is so then the disciplinary practices in force are equally oppressing men and women; what Bartky found could potentially not be applicable to a Central and East European context.

Indeed women are subject to outside pressures when it comes to their appearance and they internalize these discourses to become part of their own nature – they feel that this is what they were born into. Ilie was acutely aware of the discourses and expectations society has over how he should look and how he should perform his gender – he resented wearing a suit, but nevertheless he agreed to the norm and carried it out as perfectly as he could. The other two men thought that showing importance to such trivial things as appearance is not in line with their perception of masculinity: “I don’t understand some women, my girlfriend included, they always say match your colors or wear a shirt, but I wear something comfortable, not something that will strangle me” (Rares). Whereas Amalia wished she could have more money in order to buy more clothes and be more presentable for the job

interviews, the men tried to keep things as simple as possible. The interesting thing is that some professions which are male-professions, including the ones for whom Rares and Bogdan work (like video game production, IT companies, advertising) acknowledged men's desire of having casual attire at work and they promoted this image, as such the two men felt comfortable at work.

### **4.3. Learning job interviews**

An aspect that appeared with strong consistency during the interviews was the idea that job interviews have to be practiced, that they do not come easily for the job candidate and so they should go to as many job interviews as possible, even if not looking for a job. Most of my interviewees agreed that they go to job interviews if they have an opportunity in order "to see how it is". This is what Camelia said to me when pondering about her job interview experience after telling me how she went to more than 10 job interviews in the past 2 years.: "Ohh sorry, now I remember I went also to that interview for a training at a multinational telecommunications company and to that other one where my friend gave me a recommendation".

Beatrice is one interviewee who could be interviewed about her experience with finding a job at any moment throughout the year. She goes regularly to job interviews even when she has been in a job for only 2 weeks. I would call her a job interview addict:

My boyfriend tells me that I should write down my memories on job interviews because I have gone to so many that I have lost track of them.

*Q: Why to you go to so many?*

Beatrice: Well first of all because I get bored easily with my present job and I want to find something that is more suited for my abilities and, second, because I want to know what is out there, what are the expectations nowadays and how should I prepare.

In order to understand why people go to so many job interviews I asked them if they feel they have learned something by going to job interviews and the answer was in almost all cases a definite yes. The interviewees feel that job interviews are a thing to be learned and they recommend to their younger friends to go to as many as possible. Amalia explained it like this: “When I was in the midst of finding a job I realized that with each interview I was better at it, that I accumulated knowledge, that I knew how to present myself better. I now know how to chat around and don’t feel so scared”. Angelica expressed her experience with job interviews as such: “I like interviews, they tell me where I am right now and what I want to become, I love meeting new people and it is one of those chances where you know yourself, so, yeah, I do go to job interviews”. Having in mind that Angelica, a fourth year student at the Academy of Economic Studies, described me her long experience with job interviews, I can firmly say that she likes job interviews a lot.

I interpret this as being an acknowledgement of the fact that job interviews are a performance which needs training, practice and actual performance. Furthermore, because they are gendered performances they reveal how gender is something that we do, rather than just have (as I have pointed in my theoretical framework chapter using West and Fenstermaker’s concept of “doing gender”). I would add that there is a lack of social knowledge regarding job interviews, as they are still a novelty for most Romanians, having been used as a general hiring technique only since the late 1990’s. My interviewees attended job interviews because informal information regarding the experience is hard to find – their parents have, most certainly, no stories to tell, and their friends might not share their experiences.

Because of this continual practicing done by final year students and fresh graduates I would suggest that job interviews are part of a career capital. This term is part of the general concept of capital as proposed by Bourdieu and refers to what is obtained after the investment



in different types of capital within the professional activity (Iellatchich 2001 cited in Simionca 2006). Simionca argues that the economic system and the legal system are in close connections with the career field, while educational background and cultural capital contribute to one's career capital (2006, p. 17). She researched the manner in which final year students and fresh graduates transition from the university environment to the work field and how to they prepare and reflect over this transition. She concluded that students in Romania access a variety of options in order to compliment their academic activities and raise their chances on the labor market; among these were summer jobs, most often within programs such as "work and travel" and volunteer work for NGO's. I would argue that amongst all these activities (which indeed were performed by most of my interviewees) attending job interviews becomes part of the investment in career capital. In a context where school is perceived as not giving secure chances to students, they try to use the options available for themselves, which become integral in their discourses. This is what Angelica said when I asked her about her motives for getting a job even though she is still a student; by going to job interviews she hoped not merely to discover a good place to work, but to discover her true self:

I was very disappointed with school; the professors sometimes don't even show up for classes and most of my colleagues just treat it very superficially; I learned more at my first job place than during two years of school.

But finding a job is not the easiest thing one can do; some of my interviewees expressed feelings of deep frustration with the entire process and with the anxiety of not knowing what the next day will bring (as a current and former job candidate myself I can strongly understand these feelings because when I was searching for a job and days passed without a single call from the companies where I placed my CV I felt as if I hit rock bottom). Amalia expressed her feelings in this way:

At one point I was literally with my morale as low as it can be; but one has to believe that they will find their way and that if didn't get the job maybe is better, maybe you just didn't belong there; and you have to be honest with oneself and don't make a lot of concessions.

The most surprising aspect when I heard these stories of frustration was that the issue of nepotism and corruption was never brought to the surface; while most young Romanians say that corruption is one of Romania's biggest problem and that in order to succeed in life they have to offer bribes<sup>3</sup>, this is not something that the candidates felt they had to deal with. Other studies have indicated that corruption might be the problem for not getting a job and was acknowledged by Heintz's interviewees (2005 p. 105). Heintz mentions that early on in life, Romanians thought that society in which they live, study and work is based on relations and corruption (Heintz 2005, p. 105). I would say that the absence of a discussion of corruption is caused by a proliferation within the media of success stories of people who have entered the corporate world without any outside help. To me this was really surprising because the evaluation process of candidates is not transparent at all; one has no idea after a recruiting campaign was finished how many applications that company received, how many passed the first stages, how many actually got a job. These aspects and the fact that after an interview the candidates most often don't receive an email informing them of their application status<sup>4</sup> might create an image of nepotism and lack of transparency.

This chapter was not intended to give advice on how to behave at a job interview, but as an account of how gender becomes visible in a situation normally perceived as gender neutral. I have identified three strategies used by candidates: one, where they prepare and react during a job interview as with for a date with a person of the opposite sex; this implied a lot of preparation, including reading help books, choosing a particular type of appearance and

<sup>3</sup> A recent study made by Leo Burnett presenting the portrait of the young Romanian showed that 41% of the respondents (ages 16-24 years old) thought that in order to be successful in life one has to give bribes (Anghelescu 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Only one recruiter, Paula from a multinational said that every candidate receives a diplomatic email about their performance at the job interview or at any other stage. The frustration felt by candidates was detailed in ch 1.

talking with friends. A second strategy was that of creating a third sex, an androgynous one, which was put in practice only by women candidates, which actually implied acting as asexual working under strict guiding rules. The third strategy, that of imagining the job interview as having no special significance in one's life, demanded simply showing up at the interview and not much more; the job interview was perceived in this situation as being something unimportant that simply has to be done. I have argued that for job interviews, candidates internalize the rules about appearance and appropriate dress code and some understand the rules as further pressure in an already stressful situation. I examined the situation from a Foucauldian perspective and showed that, at least for those men in category one, the rules about appearance are equally binding for men and women. Still, some men prefer to delegate this responsibility to their girlfriends and then to dismiss the importance of appearance at a job interview.

I further suggest that the uniformity of answers when responding to my question of whether job interviews teaches candidates something is a strong argument for the general body of literature which suggests that gender is always in the doing. I also consider job interviews as an experience demanded on the labor market in order to get a job and that they are to be considered part of the career capital.

Having in mind these brief conclusions I turn now to the recruiters' point of view and the way in which they expressed and, reflected upon their experiences with job interviews (including also the perspective of candidate). This will provide much richer information about how the candidates are evaluated based on their (gendered) performances and about how recruiting is actually done in Bucharest, Romania within multinational companies.

## V. The paradoxes of discrimination

In the chapter that follows I will present how gender aspects contribute to the job interview experience and how gender is revealed in the most unexpected places. The title of this chapter relates to what I have interpreted as the paradoxes of discrimination: candidates are discriminated against, both implicitly and explicitly, but then the recruiters themselves have to face larger socio-economic disadvantages, so in a sense they themselves will experience discrimination. The discrimination my interviewees have expressed is not strictly related to gender and includes other factors like age and social status, but gender is an important factor contributing to the recruitment process. I start by addressing the issue of gendered organizations and bureaucracy and I further argue that, as the ideal worker is perceived in masculine terms, implicit and explicit discrimination arises. In order to back up this argument I make an analysis of human resources handbooks and articles and present evidence from my interviews. I discuss the extent to which the human resources profession has become a woman's profession in Romania and what the consequences are at an economic level and how it affects the general perception of candidates towards women working in this field.

### ***5.1. Corporate culture and the image of the ideal candidate***

Connell argues that there are two management cultures inside big corporations. The first is a management culture that is paternalistic and which promotes close identification with the firm and its values, while the other shows a management style based on accountancy and profit and “not very much interested in the workers” (2005, p. 101). Based on a British study (Roper cited in Connell, 2005), Connell concludes that both cultures are masculine

oriented and the change has not “produced more equal or tolerant gender regimes in business” (2005, p. 102).

Hochschild’s study of an American corporation can be thought of as being an example of the first type of management culture where most employers feel they have to choose between two evils, home and work. They perceive home to be the bigger evil and work as the lesser evil; the choice in this context is a matter of pure logic. As Hochschild puts it: “this sense of being cared for encouraged workers to adopt a more personal orientation toward work time” (2001, p. 208) while on the other hand, home and family life became more Taylorized, efficiency driven, and time segmented. In this battle with time, women were the hopeless losers because they were to demonstrate their abilities at work by putting in more hours and energy and by being the primary care giver of children and elderly relatives at home.

Ehrenreich, in her study called *Bait and Switch*, reaches a different conclusion, one more fit with Connell’s second type of management style: “for all that they missed their salary and benefits, no job seeker I met ever expressed nostalgia for the camaraderie of the workplace, perhaps because they had experienced so little of it” (2006, p. 222). The author questions the way in which middle class Americans in their late 30’s and 40’s deal with the pressure of getting a job after having lost their positions. The financial rewards are missed by all of those questioned, but none thought of going back to work because they missed the corporate culture. But what triggers an employee to search for jobs in such a manipulative, Darwinian culture, besides the financial incentives? Ehrenreich’s argument is that corporate culture does not give any time or space to breathe and to reflect on one’s actions and it is designed so that it constantly blames the employee for mistakes and for a wrong attitude, rather the corporation in itself.

*Bait and Switch* is a useful investigation for this research because it follows the author, disguised as a fictional character, through the “futile pursuit of the corporate dream”, meaning the entire job search process within the American job market in the year 2004 (Ehrenreich, 2006). The author makes a harsh critique of the current self-help books and coaching courses available online, over the telephone or as actual classes (most of them costing exorbitant sums of money). The author claims that instead of helping a person look for a job, all these practices just help to destroy one’s self esteem and to create a good employee under the corporate standards: a team player, extroverted, passionate for endless hours of work and conforming to a certain type of dress code. What these books and the corporate world itself value is one’s personality rather than one’s skills, aptitudes and willingness to do a certain type of job. The implied promise is that even if you are not one of those successful ‘guys’, by reading and exercising you too can be transformed. Further on, Ehrenreich argues that the transformation implies in most cases a transformation into a perceived genderless person, but it actually involves a male figure.

In regards to the corporate culture in Romania and how the two management styles are configured in this space, I would argue, drawing from what I have presented in the Introduction chapter and Appendix 1, that employees resent the long hours of work and the Human Resources Department’s attempt of creating a strong family within the corporation through team building (which is usually held on the only days off for the employee and are mandatory) and brand identification. In a sense, the corporate culture of various multinationals in Romania resembles the paternalistic type of management, but in a context where people want to have separate work and private lives, this turns out to be a failure.

### 5.1.1 The image of the ideal candidate from the perspective of how-to books and manuals

The human resources manuals that I have studied and which are available for the specialists and the general public<sup>5</sup> have two major tendencies: first to emphasize the lack of an efficient management style in Eastern Europe during the state socialist era and second to present the ideal worker in terms of a young and ambitious man. In the Economist Intelligence Unit report the most common words used in discussing Eastern Europe are “inefficiency”, “absence” and “difficulty”. When referring strictly to human resources in the region, the following phrases are used to describe the situation: overstaffing, lack of clear management objectives, lack of specific management skills, lack of ambition among management, high absenteeism and absence of systems for performance evaluation (Moynihan 1993, pp. 2-3). In contrast, a “Western”<sup>6</sup> type of management style is represented as being all about empowering, improving, and managing efficiently (Moynihan 1993, pp. 2-3). By providing such a grim picture of the Eastern bloc in comparison with the ‘flawless’ West, the result is a situation where the former state-socialist countries have no other option but to accept the Western style of management without any negotiation. This unconditional and unquestionable import of Western style of management was acknowledged during the interviews I conducted. Heintz, also considers that the new management theories introduced in Eastern Europe by foreign consultants were treated as religions, immutable to criticisms (2005, p. 48). Besides the extensive use of western style methods and jargon, at least at a discursive level (I have not researched the actual manner in which the companies transform

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<sup>5</sup> A description of the books I have analyzed is to be found in the Methodological chapter of this thesis.

<sup>6</sup> When I refer to West or Western I want to stress that I use this term not necessarily in reference to a particular region, but as a discursive marker of modernization, in line with how Gail Kligman talked about the division of West / East at the Gender Symposium: Gender, Empire, and the Politics of Central and Eastern Europe, CEU, May 2007.

their discourses into actual practices) most of them were actually expressed in English, as I will discuss later on.

The second trend, that of imagining the ideal candidate as being a young, married and ambitious male figure, is consistent throughout the entire report of EIU; when managers talk about their employers they usually refer to the worker as being a male worker; this is how an American manager sums up the condition of a citizen during the state-socialist times: “one, *he* could join the party. Two, *he* could become an academic. Three, *he* could enter the black market” (Moynihan 1993, p. 20) (*italics mine*). It has to be stated that a masculine form of nouns and pronouns is considered to be the default grammatical form. Still, there is further evidence to support that the use of “he” is not by accident. Almost all the real life examples of managers, whether foreign or native, are of male managers. There is also talk about how a good and stable marriage is an indication of the seriousness of that employee:

A stable family life is a desirable quality for an expatriate heading for Eastern Europe. Life and conditions are hard enough in most parts of the region without the added pressures of a difficult marriage or other family problems. To a large extent, a successful record at home suggests that an employee is free from any obvious problems (Moynihan 1993, p. 27).

Human resources managers in Eastern Europe report that they use family background as one of the best indicators of a worker’s future performance. Western companies look for a stable environment at home and few domestic problems (Moynihan 1993, p. 81).

It can be inferred that the talk about a stable family life might refer to family situations where the wife will provide that stable environment and take the burden off of the expatriate’s worries in a new country or, in the case of locals, to allow him to stay long hours at work. Besides this precondition of a happy marriage, the handbook stresses that employers



should look only for young people when hiring: ‘avoid hiring managers’ and ‘don’t be afraid of hiring young people’ read two of the book’s tips on successful recruiting. In her study, Heintz identified this recruitment policy of private enterprises in Romania, which prefer to hire people under the ages of 35-40 years; she even mentions that some years ago (the study was done in 2000, so probably she refers to the years 1996-1998) this requirement of age limitation was written in job announcements (Heintz 2005, p. 33). As such, one concludes that the ideal worker as presented by this book is a young male with a stable family with flexible attitude willing to adapt “to Western ways and ready to change again if warranted by external conditions” (Moynihan 1993, p. 50).

This book is not unique: western style books translated into Romanian or articles available online for job candidates portray the ideal candidate’s image in terms of masculine attributes. One book even considers women a special group among the working population along with ex-offenders and ex-military and gives specific advice for them (Nelson Bolles 1998); one reason for this might be the fact that the author assumes women might experience more difficulties in the labor market and thus would want advice tailored for their own situation. Another book gives a list of seven winning factors for securing a job interview; among which we find aggressiveness, enthusiasm and rational thought process, attributes which are generally perceived to be masculine features (Yeager and Hough 1990).

I would conclude that the image of the ideal job candidate and worker as presented by various human resources manuals and online articles have greatly promoted this type of management style where employees have to adapt to an organizational culture while the corporation doesn’t have to change at all. The job interview demonstrates this perfectly: from my research I can say that the job candidate is put under intense pressure to reveal his/her “true nature” during an hour long interview, where what is valued is not originality and diversity, but compliance with “organizational culture and values”. As long as one

demonstrates that s/he embraces the corporation's values and is willing to play along with these values then that person gets the job. This type of organizational culture promotes standards of efficiency and work performance difficult to achieve by anyone, either male or female.

### **5.1.2. The construction of the image of the ideal candidate by Romanian recruiters**

I asked the recruiters I interviewed what the image of the ideal candidate is, what qualities a person has to have in order to be hired and what defects are most despised. For some of them the answer started with stating that the person has to embrace the company's values which in most cases run along the lines of efficient, pro-active, out-going, sociable, and time conscious.

American authors have concluded that the trend within human resources during the 1990's was to move away from a very technical recruitment strategy focused on a specific job towards a "person-situated" hiring process where the goal is to hire "people" for the organization (Bowen, 1994). They have pointed out that "a new model of selection is emerging ... that is geared toward hiring a whole person who will fit well into the specific organization's culture" (Bowen 1994, p. 402). What this management style requires is that successful employees should have knowledge, abilities and other personal characteristics that match the content and the context of the organization (Bowen 1994, p. 406). In the multinational corporation where Livia worked the recruitment strategy could be summed up the following:

We look for students and fresh graduates, so of course there can be no talk about work experience; in our firm there are certain values and a certain atmosphere and when I do the hiring I look for people who could integrate quickly into the firm, for actual skills we train them from day one, so those are not a necessity" (Livia, recruiter, 25 years)

Other authors have argued that the rise of “soft skills” as the most important criteria when hiring has led to an increase in “subjectivity and racial discrimination” (Shih 2002, p. 101). Shih has investigated the patterns of hiring of African Americans and Latino immigrants in the Los Angeles area and the conclusion was that the most important aspect in the recruitment process is the “attitude” workers have (2002 p. 102); “employers ... are more likely to desire workers who are manageable, obedient and pliable; i.e. those who are least likely to contest their direct authority” (2002 p. 102). As such, Latino immigrants had better chances at getting hired than second generation Latino migrants or African Americans, because these last two categories were seen as problematic and difficult to work with.

The most interesting thing is that these qualities are talked about in English, which suggests that the influence of western-style management is ever more pervasive. With some of my interviews it is not a necessity to translate the quotes into English, as the recruiters used various English words and phrases but applied a Romanian grammatical category; most of the time when they used English nouns or phrases was when talking about the company’s management style or the qualities the candidate should have. The reason for this is that the training people receive is in English and so the easiest way of communicating these ideas is by reproducing them in English and not finding the appropriate translation in Romanian. Heintz considers that the usage of terms in English or French where the translation of these terms in Romanian is possible is an indication of the will to become a ‘westerner’ (2005, p. 21). Paula is one perfect example of this:

There are general competencies I search for in the candidates like: *customer focus* – very important even for the jobs which do not imply sales, because even their colleagues are considered to be internal clients – *result oriented, team spirit, planning and organizational abilities* (Paula, recruiter, 27 years) (words in italics are not translations, the interviewee used the English version).

I also examined one very popular Romanian website which posts recruitment announcements<sup>7</sup>; I searched within the field of Secretarial/ Administrative jobs and have analyzed the first twenty entries which appeared for the day 19.05.2007. As such I can say that ten out of twenty position titles were in English, one was in German and only nine were in Romanian. When it came to job descriptions, eight out of twenty were in English, two out of twenty were in German and ten out of twenty were in Romanian. It can be concluded that not knowing English, and to a lesser extent German, will even prevent the candidate from reading the job announcements.

When discussing with my interviewees the image of an ideal candidate for the job, all the recruiters used the masculine pronoun and declined the verbs with a male conjugation”

My aim during the interview is to discover if *he* has what we need, if *he* is certain of himself, to see how *he* reacts to certain stress situation and to discover what *he* can do for us; if I get those then I am happy” (Adina, recruiter, 29) (italics mine).

Adina’s implicit discrimination towards women didn’t stop at using the default male pronoun during the entire interview. She thought of a job candidate in terms of a male person – when she talked about attire she used the term “suit”, when she talked in general about job candidates she usually used the male term “guy” (Rom: tip) or to the neutral term “people” (Rom: oameni). The first time when she mentioned a woman was in a context where that person had done something wrong and needed guidance and training – this was a girl who was very good for the job, but who wore too much make-up and Adina advised her to use a more nuanced type of makeup for the interview with the representative of the company. Adina was unconsciously discriminatory – she actively embraced the male model of a candidate and pressured herself under this model.

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<sup>7</sup> The website is <http://bestjobs.neogen.ro/>; the research was limited as I have analyzed the first 20 entries which appear for the search; the search was done for all cities in Romania.

A second layer of discrimination arises which is more explicit. Some people with some characteristics get hired and others may receive a polite email stating that they were not selected (this being a good situation because most of the candidates I interviewed said that they don't receive any email or telephone calls after the job interview). The most straightforward response to my question on how the candidate should be was from Carmen. Carmen works as an office manager for a financial investment company and among her many daily tasks she has to deal with the recruitment process for entry level jobs and internships. Her answer started with a long list of what that candidate should do or be like:

The candidates should be smart and beautiful; they should not have speech defects, not too long hair or too short, they shouldn't be overweight and should be impeccably dressed, they should have good posture and present themselves with a strong and confident attitude. They should not have kids or plan to have kids in the near future, they should be active and actually do some kind of sport (Carmen, Office Manager, 26).

When she gave me this long list at first I thought they were hiring people for positions as top-models, but then she confirmed that the hiring was for positions as junior financial analyst or junior broker. So besides looking like a million bucks they should have a strong knowledge of financial investments and about the stock exchange. I asked if these criteria are applicable only for women or for men also; the response was that men had to be equally presentable and the standard was not lower for men. Actually she said that it is much easier for women to fit the standards because they are used to getting dressed up from university years and men have a harder time at adjusting to very formal attire. Carmen commented:

Once we were in a big hurry and had to hire someone quickly; from all the candidates we chose a guy who was really smart and knew a lot of things. I actually thought we struck gold when we hired him. But after two weeks we had to let him go, he just couldn't adapt to the requirements. *Q: What exactly were the reasons for his dismissal?* I have to be frank with you – he was overweight and it was during the

summer and he just was not pulled together, he perspired too much and he resembled a lake sometimes. I have to agree that he did his best, he was always in the bathroom washing, changing his clothes, but for us the girls it was simply disgusting.

What this interview suggests is that the beauty standard is not necessarily a battle only for women, but men also have to face this increasingly demanding standard more and more. I detailed the manner in which candidates respond to the beauty pressure in chapter 4.3. In this context, the standard established by the firm and by Carmen were practically impossible standards to meet by ordinary people and their requirement of smart and beautiful reached men and women equally.

During the interviews, discriminatory attitudes against candidates were revealed. The recruiters I interviewed admitted that sometimes they look just for women or for men when they are doing the hiring process, but they do not make this public because they could receive fines from local authorities. The situation where recruiters look just for women or for men happens most often when a team is unbalanced, i.e. with too many women or too many men. However, without exception the interviewees spoke about teams where there were too many women and one or two men were needed to balance out the problematic situation; no interviewee said that an all male team was problematic.

Indeed it happens sometimes that the boss comes in and says, for this job hire a boy because they had only women and of course it becomes more difficult; first of all because for the jobs where we have women in the team, mostly women apply and no men were to choose from, and second it takes unnecessary time and energy to interview women even though we will not hire them, only if we really can't find a man. (Adina)

The team manager comes to my office and says: can you get us a man this time, I have only girls; and you know is more problematic having an all girls team, but even though I try, most of the time, it is impossible to find equally qualified men and women. (Livia, recruiter, 25 years old)

There isn't only talk about problematic women-teams, but about how some jobs are naturally suited to women and some are naturally suited for men. Usually, for jobs in sales, women are preferred to a certain extent. When it comes to positions which imply more decision-making power, men are preferred. Heintz observed that in one of the companies in which she did her ethnographic research, a private enterprise, women were hired for positions as sales agents, "due to their better physical appearance," and men were hired for positions as negotiators, which involved more force and aggressiveness (2005, p 39). Later on, the author emphasizes that the women knew they were recruited only for their physical appearance, that they were simply objects destined to manipulate the clients and make profit for the manager (Heintz 2005, p. 54). Of course, there are some exceptions to the rule, as Carmen identified: "it's interesting; in auto room shows all the sales agents are men. Have you ever seen a woman selling a car? No, because men buy the cars and want men to sell them". It is evident that certain gender stereotypes are created about what women and men should do and can do, which are then grounded in biological reasons.

Livia was one of the few recruiters I interviewed who actually preferred having women at interviews and who valued the work of women more. Her explanation was that for most of the jobs they need people who know 2 or 3 foreign languages and since girls are the ones studying foreign languages at the undergraduate and graduate level the majority of candidates are women. Not only that, but the age factor comes into the picture – Livia hired people between the ages of 22 to 25. She argued that:

At this age girls are more reliable and if a girl tells me something about her experience I tend to trust her more than I would trust a boy; girls do more during university years, have more experience and are committed, while boys tend to do nothing and just spend their parents' money, so of course I like to hire women. Boys are unreliable – you call them and establish an interview and they don't even show up and when you call them back they say that they are not interested any more. I bet they simply forgot about the meeting or they overslept.

While this explanation was truly amazing to hear I quickly understood that it wasn't just an acknowledgement of women's abilities and competences, but simply her way of revenge against a brother she didn't get along with, so all the male candidates who resembled her brother were dismissed from the start. When she mentioned a male candidate who performed really bad during the interview, who was dressed inappropriately or who lacked ambition an immediate comparison with her brother emerged. As she confessed: "when they come in I smell them immediately and if they are those annoying little brats I try my best to give them the hardest time during the interview".

Similarly Shih has revealed that employers in the Los Angeles area will favor, during the hiring process, African American women over African American men, and within the category of women those who had children were considered to be the most stable, reliable, responsible workers because "they are motivated by the needs of their children" (2002 p. 111).

What the interview with Livia showed is the extent to which personal likes and dislikes might influence the outcome of the job interview. She was not the only one to express that she feels more comfortable with one type of person rather than another, as others expressed similar feelings. Radu, a male recruiter for a company where 80% of the employees are male, admitted that:

What can I say, when I have a beautiful woman in front of me I am more indulgent and more willing to hear what she has to say. I don't think that I have hired more women than men over the years, but it certainly gives me more pleasure to interview beautiful women. (Radu, psychologist, 32 years)

In regards to age, Monica, a recruiter for several big NGOs, says that it is easier for her to interview people her age, meaning under 30, rather than older people. But she immediately added that this personal preference has no influence over the evaluation process



because she is not hiring people as her friends, but people who should do their job efficiently. None of the recruiters I interviewed raised the issue of hiring someone from another country. Nevertheless, Camelia, born in Republic of Moldova and an active candidate on the labor market in Bucharest, expressed her feelings regarding discrimination: “I erased from my CV all the elements that could indicate that I come from Moldova, but still I feel its my obligation that during a job interview to tell them that I don’t have Romanian citizenship and that there are lots of papers to fill in. Some said that is not a problem, but never called back, some from the very beginning started making faces.” This aspect of discrimination based on citizenship, ethnicity (for example the Roma population) or sexual orientation I have not investigated in my research due to lack of time, but further studies might reveal interesting issues.

Sometimes the recruiters have established a set of standards which they think they have achieved and so the candidates themselves should reach it; they say things like “when I went to interviews I was much more serious then the guys who come into my office now”. The generational gap between the recruiter and candidate is not so big; in most cases the recruiter has created an illusory image of himself or herself which is configured as the ultimate to be achieved by candidates. As such, the recruiter’s self-esteem goes up and the power to dominate the interview situation comes about. I asked Livia how the job interview experience was for her when she was in the position of a candidate and the answer was this:

When I remember how I was during the job interviews I realize that the candidates now are simply not like that; I was so nervous and serious, I read about the company, I put on my best clothes and I had a lot of respect for the person who was sitting in front me. Now they are not so self-conscious and aware, they are interested only in money.

The attitude of reflexivity towards the changing factor of a job interview was not obvious with all or even with the majority of my interviewees – most of them said very dryly that they do not have preferences, that they do not discriminate and that they put the same set

of questions to every candidate no matter of age, sex or social status; at one point I actually started to believe that the recruiters are some kind of robots who learn the same answers, as some candidates do, because I heard the same exact words from several of them even after I specifically asked them about age, gender and social status and their influence on how the interview goes:

All these factors have no influence over the interview and over the process of evaluation; I try to be as fair as possible with all the candidates and as such I put the same questions and perform the same type of evaluation. (Margareta, recruiter, 27 years).

In comparison with the answers detailed above and the dry responses I got from other recruiters, I think it is safe to say that these last answers are a consequence of a ‘failed’ interview where I didn’t have the abilities to make the interviewees feel comfortable and to create a situation where they could trust me with their answers. For this there are several reasons: the interviews which were held in the recruiters’ office under a strict schedule due to a busy calendar proved to be less fruitful than the other interviews where we met over a cup of coffee in a nice café with no other meetings pressuring our dialogue. More time and more energy on my part might have helped the situation. I would argue also that these answers where gender was completely avoided and actually disregarded is a testimony to the lack of interest towards gender sensitive issues. None of the recruiters I have interviewed had a plan in their organization towards eliminating gender pay gaps, sexual harassment or occupational segregation (for some of them these issues came as a complete novelty). Whereas authors investigating the European Union’s labor market have noticed that some organizations use the issue of gender equality as part of building their image as an equal opportunity employer (Puchert 2005, p. 81), in my case none of them even considered these issues (with the exception of ending their job offer announcements with a statement that X organization does not discriminate based on gender, age or other factors).

## **5.2. Recruiting – a women’s profession in Romania**

The discussions I had with recruiters in Romania revealed several other aspects in relation with job interviews, besides the story of discrimination based on gender and other characteristics; first of all the issue of how the human resources profession is a women’s profession in Romania. I interviewed only two men who are doing recruiting in Bucharest even though I have struggled immensely to find some men, as I have already discussed in my methodology chapter. I have also attended 3 job fairs in April in Bucharest and one conference dedicated to human resources specialists which support my first impression of the human resources area. The conference revealed two aspects: the degree to which the human resources profession has become a woman’s profession in Romania, as almost 70% of the participants were women, but most importantly that at a higher professional level women are confronted with a glass ceiling as the panel at the conference was formed by 7 distinguished men. The two men that I interviewed were managers in the Human Resources department having in their team only women. Unfortunately there are no statistics about the number of people hired in the human resources area and how many of these are women.

Occupational segregation is one of the consequences of inequality regimes within work organizations, as identified by Acker (2006; see theoretical perspectives chapter); it is an aspect sociologists have researched for a long time; the main conclusion is that there are two types of segregation: horizontal, which happens when men and women are recruited to different jobs and vertical, when due to selective recruitment and promotion women are confined to lower level jobs and men into higher level within the same internal labor market (Crompton and Sanderson 1990, p. 32). What happens next is the creation of so called women’s profession, like teachers or nurses and men’s professions like taxi-drivers, miners; in regards to human resources area I would argue that due to several factors this profession has become a feminine occupation, where the glass ceiling is in the process of development.

Because of this particular situation I decided to ask my interviewees what they think about this aspect; a common feature was to lightly dismiss my finding by stating that they actually know men who work into this profession and who are very good at it:

I don't know if it is true; in our organization the manager for human resources for the entire East Europe is a man and he is quite good at what he does (Marta, 26 years, recruitment leader).

This is quite interesting but I have to tell you that some months ago one of my colleagues was a man and he was extremely good at what he was doing, he is super ok in the field, very friendly, he sells the job really well and creates a different kind of atmosphere at the job interview than I do, it is a very relaxed one, whereas I tend to be more serious, as I look like a teacher (Paula).

I would interpret this first response as defensive one where these women tried to explain to me that human resources is not a women's profession, because according to what I have discovered all women team are highly problematic; as such these women tried to distance themselves from this aspect and stressed that men too appreciate this profession; they looked for validation for their job importance by showing that men are part of it, as if men's participation into this job translated into respectability and seriousness.

After this first response I again put an emphasis on my findings and showed that I myself can only find women to interview and that the interviewees themselves know barely one man who works in this profession; as such the answers I got present a very stereotypical attitude towards women:

Maybe because women are better at communication, it is not very easy to do recruiting and you have the power to actually change someone's life. (Paula)

My answer would be that women are more sensible, they are oriented towards emotions, while men are more oriented towards rules and decisions making process (Marta)

Why do you think this is? I tell you why – because ladies have more success at selling anything, including a job; when people are coming into a firm they like seeing a women it gives them more confidence and trust in that firm (Carmen).

What Monica has correctly identified are the numerous factors which lead to the persistence of male and female jobs like: the tradition still alive from the communist times, an overstuffing of women within certain types of university studies and general cultural beliefs regarding women's abilities and capacities. As such it is evident that a conglomerate of economic and socio-cultural factors mixed and conjoined lead to the development and persistence of the feminization of the human resources profession (Crompton and Sanderson 1990, p. 36).

I think this is related to the socialist era when the human resources department was simply a place for getting your paycheck and some papers and the tradition still lives on; maybe women are more oriented towards details and more women go to social science universities and because of that (Monica).

What this segregation determines is firstly a continuation and reinforcement of the same ideas which in the first place lead to segregation; it will reinforce conventional attitudes towards women and men's work and shape the gender identities and regimes. Some authors have pointed towards the fact that 'male' occupations are usually higher ranked in society and thus better paid than 'women' profession are (Crompton and Sanderson 1990, pg 32); a study of the European Union's labor market has revealed that "horizontal segregation yields gains for men, which is expressed by the income and position discrimination against women" (Pucher 2005, p. 55). The only terms of comparison that I can make for the Romanian market is the income women have in the educational field which is a truly women's profession; according to the National Statistics Institute in 2003 in the educational field 68,3% of the workers were women, but their income was just 83% of the men's income in the same field (Annual Report 2004, NIS). Another study has shown that men and women in male dominated professions have higher satisfaction levels than men and women in female dominated professions (Cassidy and Warren 1991, p. 193); the study made sure to keep all

other variables like income, work hours and work experience constant. Their explanations was that men's professions have in general more authority and receive more respect, while women's professions are sometimes viewed as semi-professions, not equally important or challenging (1991 p. 201).

When I asked a male recruiter what he thought of this feature, his answer attributed such stereotypical traits to women, like doing all the paper work and doing routine jobs, while for the activities which involved decision making and creativity he stressed that this is a psychologist's job. I have to add that he is a psychologist and while his remark does not necessarily translate into discrimination against women, having in mind that he is the only man in the HR department at that firm, his answer shows a clear demarcation line between what women and men are supposed to do:

Indeed the human resources area is a woman's area and this is because it involves a lot of paper work, of patience, it is a desk job and all these are women's attributes; but nevertheless any organization needs a psychologist in order to the recruiting, the evaluation because without proper training you are simply circulating opinions with nothing to back them up. (Radu)

I found the same attitude during the second interview with a man recruiter as I have detailed earlier; for Silviu his female colleague was the one doing all the hard work, the tests and the first interviews, while he was the one taking the decision and simply overriding all the rules his colleague put into work. His decision was a first impulse and as he said: "Sabina prevents me from taking the wrong turn", but at the same time Sabina had no decision making power during the final recruitment stage.

Although HR has become a woman's profession as I have shown above that all the candidates I interviewed expressed a preference for having men interviewing them. For some, the gender aspect arose during the interview without me asking a specific question (about 50% of the female interviewees and none for the man interviewees); for all the rest the gender

aspect emerged only after I specifically asked whether they feel more comfortable with a woman interviewing them for a job or with a man. With practically no exception everyone said they want to be interviewed by men and gave different reasons for this:

I have never thought of that; if I start thinking about it I was mostly interviewed by men who were to become my future bosses; I certainly don't like having a panel of 4 or 5 men standing in front of me and questioning me, but neither an all female panel. If there are 2 or 3 I think is better to have it balanced. (Camelia, Assistant Manager for a security company, 24 years).

I definitely like to be interviewed by men, I have better relations with them, they give me more energy and the good type of energy. I feel more relaxed with them and probably more confident. I have had more interviews with women though. (Catinca, in search for a job in the PR, HR sector, 25 years).

There was a group of people who expressed very low opinions about women who are in positions of recruiters; they strongly said that having women interviewing them is to their disadvantage and when they talked about successful job interview experiences they always stressed that the interviews were held with men. This is what Rares, a 24 years old man said:

I have to tell you – whenever there were women interviewing me I left the office completely outraged and without any desire to work for that company; they are late for meetings or they simply cancel the interview with 30 minutes notice and if you actually get to an interview, after several attempts is pure waste of time. They are disorganized – I don't know what happens to them, probably they just hire the stupidest people for this job (Rares, in between jobs within the software sector, 24 years)

My first interview was with Diana (MA student in search of a job, 24 years) and the interview was truly an experience because it confirmed me that this research might actually be successful. Diana presented me her entire routine or getting ready for a job interview which resembled very much the way women get ready for date with an unknown man; because of her attitude towards the job interview and her heterosexual orientation her desire

for a man recruiter is not surprising. She acknowledged that she feels more comfortable with a man interviewer, she perceives them to be more sincere and not extremely judgmental and she believes she has a higher chance at getting the job if the interviewer is a man. When I asked what about a woman interviewer she said they are in most cases jealous because she looks better than they look so they are more hostile and aggressive, less likely to favor her.

The situation I have identified is actually a paradox: even though HR is a woman's profession and recruiting is mostly done by women, the candidates I interviewed expressed their desire and preference for being interviewed by men, with reasons going from unsuccessful past job interviews experiences to a general perception of women as competitors and not reliable as business partners. This can be seen as an argument for those authors who have commented that women's professions tend to be less valued within societies, as those women who perform them are seen as "incapable" while the token men in this profession tend to have higher appraisal and possibly a higher income.

Another aspect brings further evidence to the manner in which human resources profession is perceived in Romania; some of my interviewees admitted that the position of the HR department in an organization is sometimes very fragile and lacks true decision making power. The same idea was acknowledged during the conference I attended – several of the participants pointed towards the secondary importance of the HR department were they are working. Interviewees expressed their ambiguous feelings:

The HR department sometimes is considered to be secondary, a subsidiary department; we don't produce any money or actual profit for the company, so because of that we are sometimes left behind. But our aim is to convince the big managers that without us there can be no organization or any profit for that matter. (Marta)

In some firms this department is just a paper work department, they go there to get their paycheck and some other documents and that is that. I have tried here to change that mentality and transform the department into a pro-active one, where things actually work. (Silviu).



The gendered aspect of the job interview is further enhanced by the way in which my interviewees shared their experiences through out the interview; what I have found is that for women recruiters there is always a tension arising between the need for objectivity and implicit subjectivity; all the women I interviewed tried very hard to convince me that the job interview process is done very rigorously having a clear evaluation scheme while possible likes and dislikes were expressed as accidents, as something they do not want to admit. Subjectivity and intuition were not seen as valuable assets when doing the evaluation of the job candidate; these features were condemned as being unreliable and despicable. The two men that I have interviewed expressed different feelings – for them intuition and experience in recruiting were seen as very important and they used them when deciding whom to pick from the pool of candidates.

A sense of tension sprang up during the interviews – unconsciously formulated, but still there: a tension between objectivity- as the ultimate aim to be achieved and subjectivity as something that is inevitable, but has to be minimized in all situations. All the tension between objectivity and subjectivity could be understood as a tension between masculinity and femininity – the women struggled to be as objective as possible and to make objective decisions while on the other hand their inevitable subjectivity and intuition were somehow left behind.

What I want during an interview is to have control over the entire situation, I don't want to let the candidate mess me around, 'cause you know, sometimes they try to that. (Monica)

There are some jobs as sales person and when you have a sales person at an interview you always sense it, because they try to sell themselves better than all the rest and try to convince you of that. They amuse me, but the bottom line is that the grades they receive on the evaluation list counts, not anything else. (Paula)

Marta said that “the recruitment process goes the same lines no matter the candidate’s sex or age; our aim is not to send the message that we discriminate all the other candidates, so we try to be as fair as possible with everyone”. This is the same recruiter who argued that the human resources profession is a feminine profession because women have intuition and are more oriented towards emotions, but it seems that these traits are never put to use during the job interview experience or at least the person denies their use.

For the men, the interview seemed to be without so many worries and constraints, as such a strict pattern for the job interview maybe changed and altered considering the mood of the recruiter and the candidate’s personality:

I mean some do exaggerate, if you have an entry level position or an administrative one they should not spend so much time with the recruitment process, why do you need a personality test and two interviews in order to hire someone at the reception or as cleaning lady?! (Radu).

The other male recruiter said the following:

After the first minute I decide whether I want that person in my organization or not; I really count on Sabina who comes up with the short list and who brings me people who are all capable for that job and so it is up to me to decide who gets the job and who doesn’t. The rest of the interview is simply a formality and most of the times we start talking about politics or some hot topic of the day, rather than me asking questions. This is just a matter of not being accused of discrimination and so we have interviews with everyone (Silviu, 33 years, human resources manager).

I interpret this tension between objectivity and subjectivity as a battle between different styles of management based on perceived notions of masculinity and femininity.

Throughout this chapter I have investigated the ways in which gender reveals itself as an important factor for understanding the job interview experience and the work recruiters do; I have shown how the image of the ideal candidate is configured as a male person and how this leads to implicit and explicit discrimination. I also have shown that discrimination is

not solely restricted to the gender aspect and it involves aspects as age and nationality. The EIU report mentioned that HR managers should orientate their hiring process towards young, ambitious people – an advice that was understood ad literam by the recruiters I interviewed (having a young team, with an average age around 30, was a feature most recruiters took pride in). As Camelia indicated for someone coming from Republic of Moldova it is rather difficult to have access and secure good job offers.

I have addressed the issue of the feminization of human resources profession and how this in turn leads to possible discrimination against recruiters themselves. Although the majority of recruiters are women, the candidates I have interviewed expressed a strong desire for having men as interviewers; I indicated that women in human resources might experience a pay gap compared with the men in the same area based on comparison with other feminine fields of work. The conclusion of this chapter is that the job interview is a site where several layers of discrimination arise: first for the candidates themselves who have expressed their frustration as I have shown in chapter 4 and for the recruiters, due to larger socio-economic factors.

## VI. Conclusion

Throughout the pages of this thesis I tried to show how job interviews are a window for understanding the complex ways in which gender, age and social status interact within the work environment and how certain stereotypes produce unequal gender regimes in work organizations. Although a job interview may last for just an hour it is an event with many implications for those who are looking for a job and for those who are offering jobs. A job interview is a new recruiting technique in Romania, as it was introduced on a large scale only after 1989. Multinational corporations, which invaded the economic market in Romania, promoted this hiring method, and soon after almost all companies, either private or public, adopted and used it. Due to a lack of experience in using job interviews, the recruiters in multinational corporations adopt the procedures as they were produced by the mother-company. All other companies try to steal the techniques from the most well-known corporations or use the sample questions available on-line. A testimony for this is the general complaint I received from my interviewees that the questions recruiters ask are the same, that even the structure of the interview is the same no matter the job and the company.

The question which I asked then is: even though the questions asked are similar, if not identical, how can gender be conceptualized in this situation? The answer which I conclude from my research is that gender is a powerful factor in the interaction called the job interview. The candidates have gendered strategies when preparing for the job interviews – one is to emphasize femininity/ masculinity, another one is to downplay femininity and a third one is to locate the job interview within the logics of an ordinary day and thus adopt a gender neutral approach. From the stories I heard during the research I can conclude that women invest greatly into their career capital – they work for NGO's during their university years, are involved in lots of extracurricular activities, they learn all the nuts and bolts of the

job interview. On the other hand young men seem less willing to get involved, they have less experience with job interviews, but in the end they generally get the jobs, which sometimes are paid much more than the average.

On the part of the recruiters, gender assumptions are even more significant because recruiting has become a women's profession in Romania which brings certain gender implications. Almost all of the candidates interviewed said they prefer being interviewed by men, as men are more reliable, less subjective, while the women recruiters are seen by women candidates as a possible threat or as competition. The HR department where recruiters do their work is less valued in the corporations; even though there is general talk about how people are the most important resource for the company, several recruiters said they feel the department where they work is not considered to be a vital department in the company's structure. Even though I have no strong data to back this up, from the research I have conducted in Romania I would argue that there is a glass ceiling emerging in the HR department – men are occupying the top-management positions, those which are better paid and have more decision power, while the women are stuck in middle-management positions, doing a lot of routine work.

Heintz argued in her study that in Romania there is no such thing as a work ethic that capitalist values have yet to be learned, and unemployed people don't yet know the golden rules of demand and supply in the labor market (Heintz 2005, p. 112). From my research I could argue the opposite - the candidates I interviewed knew very well the logics of the capitalist society and did their best to reach capitalist ideals. The pervasiveness of the neo-liberal discourses is demonstrated by the lack of talk around corruption and nepotism, which Heintz identified as a key element in work relations in Romania. There is this general feeling that if you want to get somewhere, then all that you have to do is to work hard, join the best companies (usually these are the multinational companies) and all the bitterness provoked by

failed job interviews will disappear. The recent debate over the death of the audit manager in a multinational corporation sparked the beginning of the discussion over the balanced life. Still, this discussion is not about a complete transformation of work demands, but for a transition towards less harsh and demanding criteria. Even more so, in the near future I envisage a discussion over how women should start avoiding this type of work because they cannot cope with it (see Raluca's case) or because they should think of their (future) family. The discussion of how the companies should change towards more flexible working hours, towards encouraging male-employees to take parental leave, towards fighting against the gender pay gap and towards occupational segregation seems to be dead.

## VII. Appendix 1

This is a translation of a message on a very popular blog in Bucharest. The author, Mihai Moraru, compiled this text with entries from the messages received from the readers (over 200). It was written shortly after the media boom regarding Raluca Stroescu, the audit manager who died in her sleep after too many work hours. The original text in Romanian can be found at: <http://morar.hotnews.ro/were-all-in-it-together-portretul-corporatistului-la-tinerete-wikiexperiment.html> (last retrieved 22.05.2007).

Ten years is our measurement. Give or take 10%. If I look back I see all the key moments in my life. 1. The first 100 bucks/ per month; the first marriage; 2. The first 500 bucks; the first child; 3. The first thousand, the first divorce; 4. The first 3000, the second wife, the first mistress; 5. The first 5000, the first side step. Where will the next decade bring me?

I am group brand manager and at my multinational every talk starts with “looking from a marketing point of view” even though that meeting has nothing to do with marketing. I blame my sales colleagues for the loser advertising campaign, for “not understanding the advertising message” or because “they were not in the target”. I hate the people in HR. For ten years they try to brainwash me with their terms: “We are a big family!”.

In the mean I also want to thank Andrea Kirchknopf who carefully read pieces I sent to her, was patient to enough to correct all my mistakes and found it fun to read my thesis.

Time, my wife divorced me, and, from what I know, my son from the first marriage lives with his grandparents and sends me an SMS on my birthday. Last time I saw him it was on New Year’s Eve and he was laughing. I got to play 5 minutes with him. And he clung to this playtime like a hungry man after a bowl of soup. 5 minutes... I had to run to work. I had a memo to submit...31<sup>st</sup> December. It was the first day in that year when I managed to leave work at 6.30 pm. I remember even now that my status on Yahoo Messenger! read: “my personal record! 6.30 pm!”. 31<sup>st</sup> of December.

This morning I woke up in a hotel bed and I didn’t even know in what city I was. Last month I moved into a duplex in one Residential Park, I pay a monthly fee to the bank, but I haven’t slept there once. It is not home because it is a foreign place. But I am really proud of having a sensible home, nicely decorated, a la Elle Decoration. Over night a new influx of email invaded my Indox. Half are from my boss trying to prove me that he stayed the longest after office hours. Nothing unusual. Three are from friends. I forgot to

tell you that the meetings with my friends I note them down in my notebook with the company's logo on it... I just note them down. I never make it to any of the meetings. I have no idea whether I booked my airplane ticket for tonight. But there is something more important than that: when I get in the airplane I have to find a quickest way to my seat, near the window, obviously and not to get in, like yesterday, at the back of the plane when my seat is up front.

... If I could I wouldn't answer the phone. It rings in my head, like my boss' warning, like my clients' faces, like the roar of laptop, like Excel's sound, similar to a cathedral bell sound. My laptop is the most intelligent part in my body. I am tied through the umbilical cord to my telephone. I answer. I hear my colleague's tears. She forgot to write with Arial 18 and wrote with Arial 12. They put her on the list for the next training about corporate ID, among the newcomers.

Damn it! Where was my Angel to pinch me and say: "before you enter a multinational be careful what you wish for because you already have it and don't realize". Back then I looked from my dorm window, with endless lust towards a world without garbage. Now, years after, I rarely get to look through my office window with the same eye, trying to remember why I had such a lust for life. One afternoon I looked at two workers cutting the lawn in front of the building. God, how I wish I could do that! To cut the grass! What a fine job this must be! No strict deadlines. And if it rains you can stop... You breath real air. I, on the other hand, breathe air recycled through the building's ventilation system.

When someone opens my soul they will discover inside all the boots of those who lived next to me. Mud, tears, loneliness and an unquantifiable quantity of disappointment which I haven't accumulated as to become contraband merchandise. For now, I live the caricature corporate existence. Like in that morning when I when to check my company's stand at that exposition. When I left I noticed that the trees were blooming. I was in my winter Pollini boots and a winter coat. And the people, on the street didn't seem to be in a hurry, much to my surprise. Some. Me, even when I am at shopping I run.

... I fell asleep holding in my hand the only soul in my house: my MacBook 2.0 Ghz. I bought a MacBook as not to say to myself that I haven't read a book in months. In the end, work never killed anybody.

-For Raluca-



## VIII. Appendix 2

Candidates :

Pseudonym	Gender	Details	Age	Type of Interview
Angelica	F	final year student at Academy of Economic Studies, looking for jobs in the Financial/Banking sector	23	face to face
Beatrice	F	law graduate, newly employed as Customer satisfaction manager for an Automotive corporation	24	face to face
Amalia	F	Academy of Economic Studies graduate, in between jobs	24	face to face
Camelia	F	Communication graduate, searching for a job in the PR/ Advertising field	24	face to face
Catinca	F	MA graduate searching for a job in the PR sector	25	face to face
Bogdan	M	final year student in Computer Science, in between jobs	25	face to face
Ilie	M	Political Science student, searching for a job	24	face to face
Rares	M	Computer science student, perpetual job candidate	24	face to face
Diana	F	MA graduate, searching for a job in the PR sector	24	face to face
Ramona	F	working for a multinational company, looking to change her work place	31	email
Georgiana	F	Law graduate, searching for a job related to the legal area	23	email
Monica	F	Psychology graduate, searching for a job; any job	25	email
<b>Recruiters:</b>				
Adina	F	economist, extensive recruiting experience mainly within HR agencies	29	face to face
Livia	F	sociologist, recruiter for a multinational providing diverse business solutions	25	face to face

Carmen	F	philologist, recruiter for a Financial Investment company	26	face to face
Radu	M	psychologist, HR manager for a Multinational company in the IT/software area	32	face to face
Rodica	F	economist, HR manager	36	face to face
Marta	F	psychologist, Leading Recruiter for big FMCG Multinational corporation	26	face to face
Monica	F	economist, recruiter	26	face to face
Paula	F	filologist, recruiter for a Multinational in the IT/Software area	27	face to face
Anna	F	sociologist, foreign recruiter	28	face to face
Silviu	M	economist, HR manager for a big FMCG Romanian company	33	face to face
Sabina	F	psychologist, recruiter for a big FMCG Romanian company	28	face to face
Margareta	F	recruiter in the Pharmaceutical sector	27	email

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