

5. Recruiters' valuation of young people's employment insecurities in Bulgaria and Switzerland: making sense of job-hopping and unemployment in the hiring process

Christian Imdorf, Matthias Pohlig and Lysann Zander

1. INTRODUCTION

The growth of temporary employment during the last three decades has been a source of concern for policymakers. Reflecting the increased flexibility in the labour market, Europe has seen a growing share of temporary contracts in several countries, with temporary employment being highly prevalent among young workers (Gallie, 2017). There is an ongoing debate about the prospects and pitfalls of fixed-term contracts and casual jobs for young workers (for example, Baranowska et al., 2011; Booth et al., 2002; Gash, 2008; Gebel, 2010; McVicar et al., 2019). From a life course perspective, short-term contracts can be interspersed with spells of unemployment and the succession of such contracts can lead to precarious careers (Mattijssen and Pavlopoulos, 2019). Previous research has described unemployment and frequent job turnover (in the following: 'job-hopping') as two distinct patterns of employment insecurities among young people in their transition from education to work. Occasional unemployment and job-hopping can be obstacles to develop a foreseeable, stable career; longer phases of unemployment are negatively related to entry into parenthood (Miettinen and Jalovaara, 2020) and mental health over the life course (Strandh et al., 2014). At the country-level, employment insecurities in the transition from education to work indicate impaired transition smoothness, which varies considerably across European countries. Depending on the wider institutional setting, employment insecurities can have more or fewer implications for careers and social inclusion (Gallie, 2017; Gallie and Paugam, 2000). So far, most studies in the field have focused on the

supply side, though recently there has been a growing interest in the role and behaviour of recruiters¹ in labour market processes calling for more qualitative research on employer decisions (Bills et al., 2017; Rivera, 2020).

Therefore, this chapter investigates how employment insecurities affect employers' valuation of skilled labour (for a discussion of the term valuation see Lamont, 2012). Cohn et al. (2020) argue that employment histories are powerful signals of desirable labour market qualities for employers in the recruitment process, where direct information on work attitudes is rarely available and recruiters have to rely on less direct signals detectable in the typical employment application or curriculum vitae. According to them, frequent job turnovers indicate poor work attitudes. Likewise, based on data from the NEGOTIATE project Imdorf et al. (2019) have shown that recruiters in four European countries seem to be concerned about hiring former job-hoppers. In fact, more recruiters reported reservations about job-hoppers than about applicants who have recently been unemployed. In Bulgaria and Greece, two countries with relatively high rates of youth unemployment in the aftermath of the Great Recession of 2008–09, job-hopping was perceived particularly negatively in the recruitment process when compared to countries less affected by the economic crisis, such as Switzerland and Norway.

This raises the question as to how recruiters interpret unemployment and job-hopping in jobseekers' curricula vitae when hiring skilled personnel, and how institutional settings, such as the education and training system embedding school-to-work transitions, may affect this sense-making. Prominent labour market theories such as human capital theory (Becker, 1964 [1993]; Mincer and Ofek, 1982) or signalling theory (Spence, 1974) rarely suggest what kind of attributes employers actually attach to certain signals. This lack of knowledge concerning employers' interpretations of signals has already been pointed out by Rosenbaum and Kariya (1989). They proposed considering work-entry problems, such as youth unemployment and job turnover, as signals of 'poor', that is, less productive workers. In their influential study on institutional linkages of schools and employers in the Japanese school-to-work transition system, they also showed how employers' valuations of young jobseekers are embedded in institutions and networks.

In the present chapter, we seek to illuminate this black box of labour market signalling with regard to two kinds of employment insecurities that young, skilled workers may present in their CVs when applying for skilled jobs: unemployment and job-hopping. Particularly, we are interested in comparing recruiters' interpretation of signals between country-specific school-to-work transition systems. We have selected two countries with relatively liberal market economies – Switzerland and Bulgaria – which vary considerably in terms of their school-to-work transition system: while in Switzerland, the linkage between the education system and job market follows a skill-logic,

it follows an organizational logic in Bulgaria (Heiniger and Imdorf, 2018). Related to this, school-to-employment probabilities are much higher in Switzerland compared to Bulgaria. Conceptually, we argue that the different coordination of education and employment in the two countries affects the way employment insecurities are assessed by recruiters when they hire for skilled jobs. To underpin our proposition, we analyse data from the NEGOTIATE project on consequences of employment insecurity for the labour market integration of young graduates.

We start by reviewing the research literature on employers' valuation of young applicants who have experienced unemployment or job-hopping (section 2). We then conceptualize school-to-work transition systems in Bulgaria and Switzerland and develop our proposition that job applicants who have experienced these two types of employment insecurities may be (e)valuated differently in the two respective transition systems (section 3). In section 4, we present the data and methods, followed by the empirical results in section 5. In section 6, we discuss the usefulness of the theoretical concepts 'organizational space' and 'qualification space' for the understanding of recruiters' valuations of employment insecurities in Bulgaria and Switzerland.

2. RECRUITERS' AND EMPLOYERS' VALUATION OF YOUNG APPLICANTS' EMPLOYMENT INSECURITIES

The research literature on the scarring effects of unemployment points to various inferences that employers may draw from the signal of unemployment. Two mechanisms can be distinguished in the literature: the deterioration of unemployed young graduates' human capital and the stigmatization of the unemployed. On the one hand, human capital theorists (Blanchard and Summers, 1986; Mincer and Ofek, 1982) have argued that previously acquired skills can be lost if they are not practiced and updated through working, and that unemployment may lead to a loss of productive skills. Longer durations of unemployment therefore lead to greater depreciations in expected potential human capital (Shi et al., 2018). Hence, employers may insinuate that job-seekers with prolonged periods of unemployment have deteriorated skills. On the other hand, signalling (Spence, 1974) and stigmatization theories (Gurr and Jungbauer-Gans, 2017; Norlander et al., 2020) suggest that employers may believe that formerly unemployed applicants have low motivation, low productivity or undesirable personality traits, and that work organizations and workplaces will be at risk of being disrupted (Atkinson et al., 1996; Bonoli, 2014; Devins and Hogarth, 2005). Furthermore, longer periods of unemployment may send a stronger negative signal (Shi et al., 2018). Additionally, the likelihood of unemployed persons being hired has been argued to be affected

by organizational processes such as the type of screening process used by firms. For example, formal testing procedures seem to confer more certain information about the knowledge and skills of unemployed persons (Larquier and Marchal, 2016).

Employer-sided research on job-hopping is less developed. Most studies have looked at patterns of frequent job turnover from the perspective of job-hoppers, showing negative consequences such as wage penalties or lower employment chances (for example, Cohn et al., 2020; Doeringer and Piore, 1971; Fan and DeVaro, 2015; Griffeth and Hom, 2001; Munasinghe and Sigman, 2004). However, some studies show that the so-called ‘job-shopping’ may be a successful strategy to try out opportunities and to attain higher wage growth in early careers under certain circumstances in the United States (Alon and Tienda, 2005; Johnson, 1978; Keith and McWilliams, 1995; Topel and Ward, 1992). Research also demonstrates different career strategies of employees: some practice job-hopping because they believe that it could advance their career, others try to avoid it because they anticipate detrimental effects for their career (Dobrev and Merluzzi, 2018; Lake et al., 2018). Young graduates, as well as women, change jobs more frequently (Fuller, 2008; Steenackers and Guerry, 2016). Generally, employers use workers’ past behaviour as a predictor for their future behaviour. On the one hand, jobseekers who change jobs frequently can be seen as ambitious and seeking professional growth opportunities (Rivers, 2018), or they may have more professional contacts, which can benefit the firm (Granovetter, 1974). At the same time, a high personnel turnover caused by job-hopping can negatively affect the stability of an organization’s workforce. Indeed, job-hopping has been found to be a predictor of future turnover (Becton et al., 2011; Munasinghe and Sigman, 2004) and this may explain employers’ reluctance to consider applicants who have been changing jobs frequently in the past, regardless of their reasons for doing so (Cohn et al., 2020; Griffeth and Hom, 2001). From this perspective, frequent job changes can diminish future employment chances because recruiters may interpret job-hopping as a signal of potential organizational trouble in the future (Imdorf et al., 2019). In a recent study using laboratory, field, and survey experiments in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, Cohn et al. (2020) have demonstrated that recruiters ascribe poor work attitude in terms of acting cooperatively and reliably in the workplace to candidates with more frequent job changes. Hence, their study points out the potential costs of frequent job changes due to its negative signalling value in employment biographies.

Altogether, both lines of research point to two different references of employers’ valuation when assessing former employment insecurities experienced by candidates. First, recruiters refer to negative characteristics of the ‘person’ such as individual deficits in skills or capacities of jobseekers. Second, they are concerned about the ‘organization’, whose stability or work-

flow might be at risk by hiring them. These references also justify certain valuations and actions (Imdorf, 2017; cf. also Lamont, 2012). So far, however, there has been little discussion of how institutional settings and transition systems at the country-level affect references in the valuation processes.

3. EMBEDDEDNESS OF VALUATION PROCESSES IN TRANSITION SYSTEMS

In the following section, we will summarize some characteristics of school-to-work transition patterns in Bulgaria and Switzerland (3.1) in order to conceptualize the different societal spaces and transition systems of the two countries (3.2). Afterwards, we present our proposition of why applicants' employment discontinuities may be interpreted differently in the school-to-work transition contexts of Bulgaria and Switzerland (3.3).

3.1 School-to-Work Transitions in Bulgaria and Switzerland

Bulgaria and Switzerland can be contrasted with regard to some important features of transition systems as 'relatively enduring features of a country's institutional and structural arrangements which shape transition processes and outcomes' (Smyth et al., 2001, p. 18) that have been identified in the literature (for an overview see Raffé, 2014): such as the size of the vocational and higher education sector, the standardization of the education system, the occupational specificity of the vocational education and training (VET) system and the linkage between education and employment.

Both countries have relatively high *shares of youth with VET* – 54 percent in Bulgaria vs. 66 percent in Switzerland) (Imdorf et al., 2019). Whereas the Swiss educational system has a strong vocational orientation comparable to its German and Austrian neighbours, Bulgaria's relatively wide range of vocational education is a heritage of its socialist past with some new developments, such as a recent initiative to develop apprenticeships in some trades. However, historically, VET is institutionalized differently in the two countries: whereas employer-friendly dual-track VET is most prevalent in Switzerland – it is followed by 90 percent of all vocational students – in Bulgaria school-based VET still prevails (Heiniger and Imdorf, 2018). The relationship with enterprises was eliminated in Bulgaria after the end of state socialism, during which VET was part of the planned economy (Ilieva-Trichkova et al., 2015).

The Swiss VET produces highly *standardized* and very *specific* occupational qualifications that are in tune with the needs of the labour market (Heiniger and Imdorf, 2018) due to the countrywide corporatist coordination of training companies, vocational schools and occupational organizations, and its strong focus on practical education. In contrast, Bulgarian youths have little

practical or work experience in the field of their obtained specialty after completing their education, and therefore find it harder to enter the labour market (Krasteva, this volume). Symeonaki et al. (Table 2A.1, this volume) indeed show that school-to-employment transition probabilities are much higher in Switzerland (0.76 in the year 2016), compared to Bulgaria (0.44).

As the development of educational standards for VET in Bulgaria is only recent (since 2015, see Cedefop, 2018), youths are still educated in vocational high schools which respond slowly to labour market changes and sometimes educate students for professions with little demand. Consequently, there is a shortage of educational programmes imparting the skills and competences required by the contemporary labour market. Moreover, a growing mismatch between labour demands and qualifications offered by the education system has been identified (Apostolov and Milenkova, 2018; Stoilova et al., 2017). Many higher education graduates work in positions that do not require such education levels, or they work in positions that do not match the completed specialty (Krasteva, this volume). Even though the official list of VET professions in Bulgaria lists training programmes in some 230 occupations – a number similar to Switzerland – training content as well as higher education programmes are only loosely linked to modern job requirements and they do not sufficiently satisfy market demands (Apostolov and Milenkova, 2018; Stefanova, 2014).

Heiniger and Imdorf (2018) find a weaker *linkage* between vocational education and occupational fields in Bulgaria, compared to Switzerland. In contrast, there is only a small difference in the linkage strength for people with a university degree in the two countries. In Bulgaria, people with a university degree exhibited an even stronger linkage than those with vocational education, which suggests that tertiary degrees signal a higher value to employers in Bulgaria. Thus, the focus in Bulgaria is more strongly placed on general education. The share of students with a general upper secondary education (Grades 9–12) in Bulgaria is 46 percent, compared to 34 percent in Switzerland. *Tertiary education enrolment* in Bulgaria is 71 percent, compared to 57 percent in Switzerland (Imdorf et al., 2018).

Bulgarian policy-makers have identified the mismatch between labour demands and qualification as a key reason for relatively high *youth unemployment* rates in Bulgaria (Council of Ministers, 2006; Kostova, 2008). In addition to the education system, the weak economic development of the country contributes to the lower economic activity of young Bulgarians, their greater difficulties in finding jobs, and greater insecurity of those who have entered the labour market (Krasteva, this volume). In 2015, at the time of our survey, approximately 22 percent of 15–24-year-olds were unemployed in Bulgaria.² Unemployment was higher among those with secondary education (including VET) than among those with tertiary education (Krasteva, this

volume). Switzerland, by contrast, has exhibited relatively low youth unemployment rates of approximately 9 percent during the same period (Imdorf et al., 2019). For the year 2016, Symeonaki et al. (Table 2A.1, this volume) report a school-to-unemployment transition probability of 0.07 for Switzerland and of 0.31 for Bulgaria.

In contrast to the structural differences in school-to-work transitions, Bulgaria and Switzerland show several similarities with regard to labour market dimensions: both countries have a high share of the service sector (BG: 59 percent; CH: 72 percent for 2014, according to World Bank, 2023) and their economies rely heavily on small companies. They have both comparatively low temporary employment with many working under a full-time work contract (for Bulgaria, see Krasteva, this volume), but weak legal protection against individual dismissals and they score rather high on the labour freedom index (Imdorf et al., 2019). Hence, recruiters in both countries do not need to be as careful when hiring applicants so as to avoid hiring unsuitable job candidates who would then be difficult to fire. Yet, there are stark differences with regard to the ‘grey economy’. Bulgaria has one of the largest undeclared economies in Europe, accounting for about one-fifth of all employment. The grey economy is especially prevalent in construction, retail, tourism, hotels and restaurants, as well as the agricultural sector (Williams et al., 2014).

3.2 Societal Spaces and Transitions

Our theoretical framework for understanding employers’ assessment of employment insecurities in different countries is inspired by the French societal analysis framework (Maurice et al., 1986), which has significantly informed comparative research on school-to-work transitions since the late 1980s (Raffe, 2014). Maurice et al. (1986) compared the national logics underlying the relationships between education, labour markets, and other societal institutions in Germany and France. Comparing French firms to German firms, they found a more extensive hierarchy, with higher wage differentials between employees with and without management roles, and less responsibility of lower level management and skilled workers in France. In Germany, skilled workers enjoyed more discretion, responsibilities, and less managerial oversight. The authors showed how differences in the two countries’ education systems were related to the respective authority structures in the workplace, and how a much stronger technical education of skilled workers and foremen enabled German firms to decentralize responsibility. The different coordination between education and work was complemented and supported by the higher bargaining power of skilled workers in Germany, compared to France (*ibid.*). Maurice et al. (1986) argued that the respective logics of linkage between education, work organization, and industrial relations have formed a ‘qualification space’

in Germany and an ‘organizational space’ in France (Raffe, 2014).³ ‘Space’ is not meant as a characteristic of a welfare state but as an encompassing concept that refers to the interactions and relations between actors, which constitute the space to facilitate skill formation (Maurice and Sorge, 2000).⁴ Marsden (1986) referred to the ‘qualification space’ and the ‘organizational space’ when he proposed the seminal distinction between occupational and internal labour markets (OLMs and ILMs) in theories of labour market segmentation.⁵ Embedded in a broader societal environment and specific to a respective nation state, either space may (more or less) dominate the organization of work. Although work organizations retain their scope of discretion to decide how to organize work and how to recruit and reward their workers, the dominant space influences the logic of recruitment and the matching of graduates with jobs. Thereby, the different social spaces also affect career trajectories and patterns (Marsden, 1982; Maurice et al., 1980; Tolbert, 1996).

In an *organizational space*, firms define jobs according to their own criteria and expect workers to adapt or train them (Maurice et al., 1986, p. 67). Education-wise, the level of (general) education and grades as well as the prestige of educational institutions matter as they signal the potential for individual development (in non-managerial jobs) or status (for upper-level management positions). Job advertisements are rather structured according to the level of general education and less by vocational specificity; any hiring decision is temporary and based on formal or informal probation (Hefler, 2013). Careers are more likely to take the form of gradual progression within a firm (Maurice et al., 1980). At the level of the education system, general education is considered more relevant than vocational education; educational selection is strongly based on competitive tests, and entrance examinations for the more prestigious schools.

In a *qualification space*, firms take account of the existing qualification of the work force and design jobs around the norms of the training system and the capabilities of skilled workers, with a greater emphasis on their relative autonomy (Maurice et al., 1986, pp. 67–68). Careers build upon this initial vocational education and firm-internal labour markets play a smaller role. Vocational education and diplomas matter because they signal trustworthy occupational skills. VET is paramount as it guarantees skills and similarity in the habitus between workers and their superiors.

Despite the dated empirical basis of Maurice et al.’s study, which was limited in scope to firms in the metal and chemical sectors in France and Germany, Hefler (2013) advanced the illuminative conceptual framework, which he also applied in a case study on further training in Austria and Scotland. Given the shortcomings of previous research on transition systems to cope with the heterogeneity of such systems in Central and Eastern Europe (Raffe, 2014; Krasteva, this volume) and in light of the outlined characteristics

of school-to-work transitions in Bulgaria and Switzerland, we consider the distinction of organizational versus qualification space well suited to compare work organizations and firm behaviour in the two countries.

As outlined in section 3.1, the school-to-work transition logic in Switzerland is marked by a strong employment relationship in the qualification space. Above all, it is the labour-market oriented vocational training, completed by almost two-thirds of young people, that structures the transition to employment in a relatively smooth and stable manner (Heiniger and Imdorf, 2018). This is much less the case in Bulgaria, where both vocational and university degrees, as well as grades, have less signal power. Rather, it is the differentiation between selective and nonselective programs within general and vocational education at the upper secondary level (Boyadjieva and Ilieva-Trichkova, 2019) or the name of the university that matters for labour market integration. VET diplomas are devalued, and according to employers, there is a discrepancy between the declared degree of knowledge and the real skills manifested in practice (Apostolov and Milenkova, 2018). One can therefore label the school-employment relationship in Bulgaria as an organizational space (Heiniger and Imdorf, 2018). Hence, the societal analysis framework suggests smaller degrees of responsibility assigned to skilled workers in Bulgarian firms compared to Swiss companies, where workers should have more work-place autonomy. Figures from the European Social Survey 2012 provide some evidence for this: whereas half of Bulgarians (52 percent) had no possibility to take part in decision-making at their workplace, this percentage was less than half for Switzerland (24 percent). Likewise, one fourth of workers (25 percent) could not even make decisions on how to organize their daily tasks in Bulgaria, while only one out of ten workers (10 percent) gave a similar statement in Switzerland (authors' own calculations). The lack of representation and the poor negotiating potential among youths is also determined by the structure of the Bulgarian economy, in which most enterprises are of small size (Krasteva, this volume) and where the bargaining power of young workers is additionally weakened by relatively high unemployment and inactivity in the country. Table 5.1 summarizes the features of the transition systems in the two countries as described in this chapter. Together, these features highlight the differences between the spaces of skill formation in Bulgaria and Switzerland.

Table 5.1 School-to-work transition systems in Bulgaria and Switzerland

	Bulgaria	Switzerland
<i>Transition system</i>	Organizational space	Qualification space
<i>Main institutionalization of VET</i>	School-based	Company-school (dual-track)
<i>Standardization of VET</i>	Less	More
<i>Occupational specificity</i>	Less	More
<i>Signal of educational certificates</i>	General skill, potential for individual development	Occupational skill
<i>Linkage between education and work</i>	loose	tight
<i>Logic of professional career</i>	Within firm	Between firms
<i>Employment protection legislation (EPL)</i>	weak	weak
<i>Youth unemployment</i>	higher	lower

Source: Heiniger and Imdorf (2018), Buchmann and Kriesi (2011), Venn (2009), Tonin (2009).

3.3 Transition Systems and Valuation of Job Applicants' Employment Insecurities

Imdorf et al. (2019) have provided evidence that, compared to Bulgarian recruiters, Swiss recruiters (e)valuate previously unemployed jobseekers less positively. The authors suggested that in countries where the signal value of unemployment is generally weaker due to a high share of (youth) unemployment, recruiters pay more attention to other forms of employment insecurity, such as job-hopping, which they may consider a more relevant signal in their national economic context. In turn, in Switzerland, vocational graduates, who are expected to transition smoothly into the labour market, are more stigmatized and scarred by unemployment.⁶ We therefore argue that unemployment and job-hopping have different value in the eyes of recruiters in different societal contexts and spaces of education and work.

Unemployment, especially search unemployment (for example, of higher education graduates), is more prevalent in Bulgaria's organizational space than in Switzerland's qualification space, where (relatively) smooth school-to-work transitions can still generally be expected (cf. section 3.1). Due to lower prevalence, unemployment is more stigmatized in Switzerland. The finding that unemployment scarring is more pronounced in Switzerland than in Bulgaria (Imdorf et al., 2019) and that unemployment spells are particularly detrimental for holders of VET qualifications in Switzerland (Shi et al., 2018) are in line with these arguments. We therefore assume that, in the Swiss context,

Table 5.2 *Employers' assessment of employment insecurities in Bulgaria and Switzerland: Propositions*

Employment insecurity	Bulgaria	Switzerland
	Organizational space	Qualification space
Unemployment	Search unemployment more prevalent → unemployment less stigmatized and attributed to <i>organizational problems</i>	Smoother school-to-work transitions → unemployment more stigmatized and attributed to <i>problems of the person</i>
Job-hopping	Internal labour markets → job-hopping less legitimate and attributed to <i>problems of the person</i>	Occupational labour markets allow for switching firms → job-hopping more legitimate and attributed to <i>organizational problems</i>

unemployment should be typically considered a *problem of the person* (for example, skills, motivation, and personality) and attributed to internal rather than external factors, such as changes in company strategy or economic recession. By contrast, in Bulgaria's organizational space, unemployment should rather be considered a *problem of organization* and attributed to organizational factors (for example, insufficient coordination between education and work organizations).⁷ Given these differential attributional patterns, periods of unemployment should be less informative for employers in Bulgaria.

Correspondingly, job-hopping should be valued differently in organizational spaces compared to qualification spaces. In an organizational space such as Bulgaria, where professional career progression happens within rather than between firms, job turnover and switching companies should raise doubts about the person's qualifications and suitability. By contrast, occupationally segmented labour markets in the qualification space allow skilled workers to switch companies more easily in order to progress their professional career. Hence, we expect that job-hopping should be mainly perceived as an organizational problem in the Swiss context (for example, how to attract, assign, supervise and retain qualified personnel). Hence, Swiss companies should perceive job-hoppers first of all as a potential future risk to organizational harmony due to high turn-over. In contrast, in the Bulgarian context, job-hopping may be more interpreted as a *problem of the person* instead of structural features of the job-market. Thus, employers in Bulgaria are assumed to refer markedly to poor personal characteristics such as work attitude, reliability or patience. Table 5.2 summarizes the assumed assessments of employment insecurities by recruiters in Bulgaria and Switzerland.

4. DATA AND METHODS

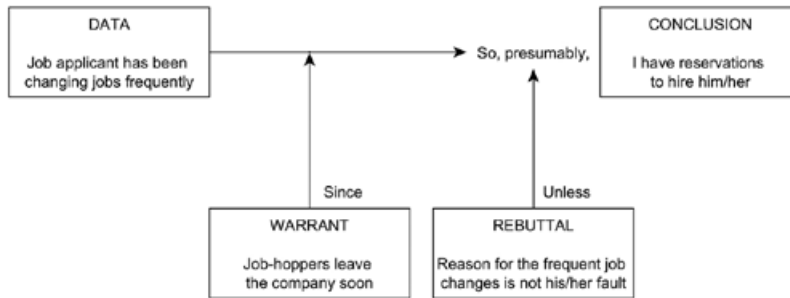
4.1 Data

To analyse how employers make sense of employment insecurities as part of employment histories in Bulgaria and Switzerland, we use qualitative data collected in 2016 within the NEGOTIATE Employer Survey. This multi-national web survey is based on a sample of real vacancies in Bulgaria and German-speaking Switzerland.⁸ The sampled job advertisements were restricted to the five industries of mechanics, finance (banking and insurance), healthcare (nursing), catering (service personnel), and information technology (IT), allowing for a job sample of different skill levels and gender-typing.⁹ The selected industries represent occupations that are more or less linked to technological innovations, offering jobs with higher and lower turnover rates (for further details, see Hyggen and Imdorf, 2020). Recruiters who were responsible for filling the sampled job positions in the four countries were surveyed in late spring / early summer 2016. The response rate of the online survey was 17 percent in Bulgaria and 27 percent in Switzerland. The surveyed recruiters were ca. 70 percent women in Bulgaria and 55 percent in Switzerland. In both countries, the majority of the respondents had some kind of professional training in human resources. In Bulgaria, ca. 21 percent of the respondents worked in firms in mechanics, 13 percent in finance, 30 percent in healthcare, 21 percent in catering and 15 percent in IT; in Switzerland ca. 18 percent worked in mechanics, 17 percent in finance, 28 percent in health care, 16 percent in catering and 22 percent in IT. The survey asked the respondents to rate vignettes of hypothetical, young applicants who had graduated five years before the survey was conducted. In order to study whether employers object to jobseekers who have experienced employment insecurities, two questions were included at the end of the survey: ‘Would you have reservations about hiring a person who has been unemployed during the last two years?’ and ‘Would you have reservations about hiring a person who has been changing jobs frequently?’. Respondents with reservations were then asked to write a few words about what their reservations would be. The answers in the form of open text data were translated to English from the original Bulgarian and Swiss-German data. Answers to these two questions were available for 420 Bulgarian recruiters and 556 Swiss recruiters. While the survey also included an experiment with vignettes representing a set of hypothetical job candidates in each country, the qualitative answers to the above-mentioned questions cannot be linked to individual cases of jobseekers.

4.2 Methods

There is not much research on the use of open-ended survey questions except for questions where short self-descriptions are easier to collect than offering numerous possible answers (for example, occupations). Often, open-ended survey questions are collected for methodical reasons, for example, to crosscheck the questionnaire or to get an impression of reasons for item non-response (Singer and Couper, 2017). Despite their added information and despite being easy to collect, open-ended survey questions seem to have been scarcely used for content analysis. Their major problem is that they are hard to code, compared to closed-ended survey questions (Popping, 2015). Therefore, it is recommended to proceed with the analysis of open-ended survey questions as with qualitative data and to make use of computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (Fielding et al., 2013; Rädiker and Kuckartz, 2020). However, open-ended survey questions have been criticized as they would not allow for the same ‘density’ as other qualitative data, nor for the same rigorous analysis (LaDonna et al., 2018). As the data collected from the open-ended survey questions ranges from single keywords over sentences to short texts, we are nonetheless convinced that data from open-ended survey questions is suitable for qualitative research, especially more structured or formalized qualitative methods such as qualitative content analysis (Kuckartz, 2014; Mayring, 2014). This kind of data is also appropriate for quantizing (Franzosi, 2004; Sandelowski, 2001; Sandelowski et al., 2009; Vogl, 2017) or mixed methods research (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010). In our case, the open-ended survey questions from the NEGOTIATE Employer Survey offer new insights into the reasoning about two specific hiring decisions.

Both open-ended survey questions in the survey asked respondents, who were reluctant to hire applicants with job-hopping or unemployment histories, to explain their reservations. The qualitative information in the dataset is suitable for an argumentation analysis on the question of why employers are concerned about jobseekers who have experienced employment insecurity. We used Toulmin’s argumentation scheme (Toulmin, 1958 [2003]) as an analytical tool for coding responses and classifying codes. The ‘data’ and ‘conclusion’ in Toulmin’s scheme were framed by the survey question itself as only respondents with reservations were asked to answer the questions (see Figure 5.1). In the given answers, we were looking for ‘warrants’ and ‘rebuttals’ which would justify, qualify or refute the survey stimulus (‘data’).¹⁰ Figure 5.1 shows an example for such an argumentation: the ‘data’ given to the survey respondents is that a job applicant has been changing jobs frequently (or respectively has been unemployed). If the respondents ‘concluded’ that they had reservations against hiring such an applicant, they were asked to elaborate in more detail in the open-ended question to justify this. For example, the respondents



Source: Own depiction based on Toulmin (2003).

Figure 5.1 Example of Toulmin's argumentation scheme

could justify their evaluation with the expectation that job-hoppers would also untimely quit their company, or they could exonerate the job-hopper by alluding to business failures during a recession or other reasons beyond the applicant's control ('rebuttal').¹¹

To begin with, we explored the data cross-case wise and manually coded the first 50 cases from Switzerland using in-vivo-codes of the expressed arguments. Subsequently, we established a preliminary coding scheme and proceeded with coding half the Swiss data. Seemingly new arguments were coded as in-vivo-codes. Afterwards, the coding scheme was revised and all cases were recoded. Then, we continued with the Bulgarian answers, making only small modifications of the coding scheme. We slightly deviated from this inductive approach in order to code and categorize arguments related to the jobseeker's personality, as we deductively (re-)aligned arguments related to personality attributes relying on a six-factor personality concept from work psychology (Oswald et al., 2013).¹² Hence, we have mainly inductively developed a coding scheme with 78 thematic codes of arguments grouped into four top codes differentiating between arguments about the recruiting process in general, rebuttals and two clusters of warrants. The coding scheme is documented in the Appendix.

Below, we present a descriptive quantitative analysis illustrated by excerpts from the qualitative data to compare the characteristic reservations against job-hoppers and the unemployed in the two countries. In order to prepare descriptive statistics in MAXQDA from our codes, we have prevented codes from the same case being counted more than once. The quotes from the qualitative data should help to 're-qualitize' the presented frequencies by presenting the meaning and reasoning behind the codes.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Pattern of Arguments Against Unemployment and Job-Hopping

To get an initial impression of how recruiters assess jobseekers differently for those they consider to have changed jobs frequently and those who have been unemployed, Figure 5.2 depicts the share of the identified argument patterns relative to the number of cases in Bulgaria and Switzerland. The figure shows the highest level of aggregation of our coding scheme in the four top-code clusters. The first top-code ‘recruiting process’ refers to statements that deal with the information insecurity of the recruiting process. The respondents often referred to additional sources, such as references or inquiries during a job interview, which they would consult for their decision. These statements circumvent giving arguments for reservations against job-seekers with previous unemployment or job-hoppers and often refer to the meta-level of the survey situation. Although these statements offer interesting insights into the practice of hiring procedures, they contain little information relevant to our research question. The next top-code ‘rebuttal/qualifier’ refers to the two argument patterns in Toulmin’s scheme and consists of all arguments that describe exceptions from the reservations or specify the strength of the reservations. Typical rebuttals refer to external circumstances, which may credibly lead to unemployment or job-hopping, such as business closure or family reasons. Furthermore, the applicant’s age and the duration of unemployment periods or the frequency of job-hopping often determine the valuation of unemployment and job-hopping. In the next section, we omit statements about the recruiting process and rebuttal/qualifier. The last two top-codes ‘company and organizational fit’ and ‘person’ both correspond to warrants in Toulmin’s scheme. The top-code ‘company and organizational fit’ encompasses arguments which refer to the resources, functioning, organization and stability of the company, such as lost investments in employee training or problems in teams. The top-code ‘person’ comprises all arguments that mention failures or deficiencies on the part of the person or personality of the applicant.

At first sight, the height of the bars in Figure 5.2 shows pronounced differences between applicants with unemployment and job-hopping histories. In the case of unemployment, around 37 percent (in Bulgaria, BG) and 40 percent (in Switzerland, CH) of the recruiters’ arguments deal with the recruiting process and rebuttals/qualifiers, while this share is only 25 percent for job-hopping. The country differences for both top-codes are negligible or relatively low. With regard to warrants, we find that approximately 12 percent (BG) or 16 percent (CH) of the reservations against applicants with unemployment histories are directed at the company or the organizational

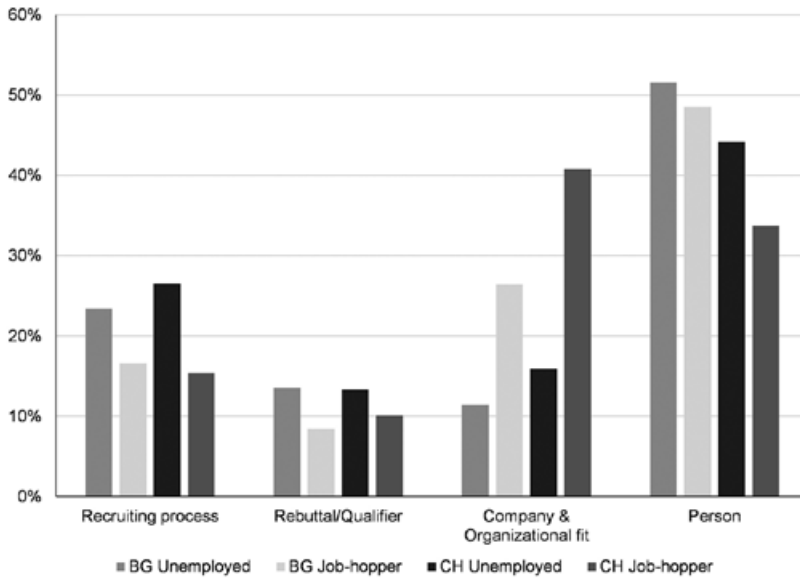


Figure 5.2 Share of argument patterns (top-codes)

fit and that the overwhelming majority of arguments with approximately 52 percent (BG) or 44 percent (CH) address the person. Hence, reservations against unemployment mostly concern the person of the applicant in both countries. Having said this, Swiss recruiters named more arguments directed at the company and fewer arguments addressed at the person. Reservations against job-hopping are referred much more to the company, compared to unemployment, with 26 percent in Bulgaria and 41 percent in Switzerland. The relative share of person-directed arguments is therefore lower, with 49 percent in Bulgaria and only 34 percent in Switzerland. Again, Swiss recruiters named more arguments pointed at the company, now surpassing the share of reservations concerning the person. In Bulgaria, respondents addressed the person more often. Furthermore, the difference in the number of arguments directed at the person between unemployment and job-hopping was small. The fact that recruiters referred more frequently to the person than the organization in both countries when interpreting applicants' unemployment and job-hopping seems to contest the idea that unemployment would primarily be seen as an organizational problem in Bulgaria. However, the shares of arguments appear to support our presumption that job-hopping is seen more as an organizational problem in Switzerland and more as a problem of the person in Bulgaria.

5.2 Warrants Against Unemployment and Job-Hopping

To provide a more detailed view of the warrants, Figure 5.3 depicts the most frequent arguments directed at the company and the person and their relative shares within each top-code cluster. The base for Figure 5.3 consists of 276 open answers coded as addressing the company in Bulgaria and 591 in Switzerland, and 683 answers coded as directed at the person in Bulgaria and 773 in Switzerland. Figure 5.3 allows for the identification of typical arguments raised against the unemployed and job-hoppers. In the following, we will summarize some key findings.

Regarding *the unemployed*, it is interesting that the most important reservations related to the *company* are concerned with the prevalence of unemployment or the labour demand in the specific labour market segment, which is expressed in the following citation:

There is a shortage of nurses, and the fact she was not hired for two whole years indicated this candidate is not desirable for work. (Code: Sector/ field conditions for UE and JH, ID 1345999099, Bulgaria, Health, Unemployment)

The high labour demand for nurses is brought up as a supporting argument for the warrant that the labour supply of applicants with unemployment histories is unsuitable. Another important company-related argument against the unemployed is the ascribed ‘[I]oss of work habits and the ability for teamwork’ (Code: Team skills/work, ID 1353699099, Bulgaria, Health, Unemployment) which casts doubt on the potential integration into the team and the organization. Related to this argument about work habits is the fear that unemployed applicants take ‘longer to train, [and] forgot some practices (routine)’ (Code: Investment in new employees, ID 2428028051, Switzerland, Unemployment), which would extend the time horizon and raise the costs, expenditure, and the uncertainty for the investment in the new employees. The classic negative signal of unemployment for productivity is formulated by the following recruiter:

In our business, we have given an unemployed person a chance multiple times. Sadly, we then had to discharge 90 percent of them again in the probationary period because they did not take advantage of the chance and produce the necessary results. (Code: Work performance and behaviour, ID 2435928051, Switzerland, Catering, Unemployment)

This citation uses the recruiter’s previous experience to back up the warrant that the work results or performance of unemployed persons is not sufficient. The occurrence of these main reservations against job-seekers with previous periods of unemployment related to the company is relatively similar in

Bulgaria and Switzerland. Only less frequent arguments, such as arguments concerning contextual factors in the company, differ more strongly between Bulgaria and Switzerland.

Considering arguments directed at the *person*, the main argument against job-seekers with previous periods of unemployment is the loss of human capital, such as skills, qualifications, knowledge or experience, due to lacking practice or due to losing touch with the development of the field, as formulated by this Swiss recruiter:

- Would like to know reasons for unemployment
- Is the person still up to date with the latest professional/technical etc. developments?
- Would like to know what the person has done in this time. (Code: Human capital, ID 2140201005, Switzerland, Mechanics, Unemployment)

What stands out is the much higher share of human capital arguments in Bulgaria compared to Switzerland, which points to the importance of human capital acquired during on-the-job training in Bulgaria. Another very frequent argument against job-seekers with previous periods of unemployment is their ascribed lack of motivation or commitment, which occurs in about equal frequency in both countries. Sometimes, recruiters link this argument to alternative ways for job-seekers with previous periods of unemployment to prove their motivation, for example by further training, as in the following excerpt:

Lack of motivation to work, lack of appropriate knowledge and skills, but the candidate may possibly have used his time for improving, or acquiring a new qualification. (Code: Motivation, ID 1514101053, Bulgaria, IT, Unemployment)

A third, recurring warrant against unemployed people, which is related to the ascribed lack of human capital and motivation, is the loss of a working life structure or daily working routine during unemployment. The following statement reflects the consequences of this lack of a working structure for the company:

The person is no longer used to working every day and the rhythm of work. Means double initiation/double risk: into the position and into working every day. Two years [is] a long time to find a job or to reorient yourself, or if need be to accept a temporary position. Up to a six-month interruption would be OK (excluding, for example, longer maternity leave. (Code: Working life structure, ID 2100801005, Switzerland, Mechanics, Unemployment)

Other less frequent arguments involve health and stress coping or social skills. Altogether, the strongest country difference between arguments against

job-seekers with previous periods of unemployment related to the person remains the doubts regarding the job-seekers' human capital in Bulgaria.

Reservations against *job-hoppers* addressing the *company* seem to be country-specific: The most frequent argument against job-hoppers in Switzerland is that their ascribed high likelihood of leaving again makes planning uncertain and potentially destabilizes teams and the company, which is articulated in the following words from a Swiss recruiter:

I could not plan long-term with him, he has hardly settled in and then he already leaves (Code: Stability of recruiting firm, ID 2108607013, Switzerland, Mechanics, Job-hopping)

In Bulgaria, however, team skills and the integration of job-hoppers were questioned more often than in Switzerland. As teamwork is an aspect of the firm-internal organization of work, this raises issues of interpersonal problems and working efficiency as stated by a Bulgarian recruiter:

When an employee often changes jobs, this most often tells me he has a problem with working in a team, and for us, teamwork is very important (Code: Team skills/work, ID 1265001024, Bulgaria, Finance, Job-hopping)

This corresponds with the higher shares of arguments related to conflicts (with the employer, superiors and colleagues) and trust in Bulgaria, on the one hand, and the higher importance of investments in new employees and loyalty in Switzerland on the other. The argument concerning investments in new employees is put differently for job-hoppers. Rather than higher costs, recruiters address the higher uncertainty of outcomes as can be seen in the following excerpt:

Since the settling-in period with this job lasts about one year, it would be a real waste for us if someone would already leave the position after one year, since the costs and time would have been poorly invested. (Code: Investment in new employees, ID 2109907013, Switzerland, Mechanics, Job-hopping)

Overall, reservations against job-hoppers addressing the company seem to be more strongly linked to the expectation of interpersonal problems within the company in Bulgaria and more to organizational problems of planning and investment in Switzerland.

With regard to the *person*, the lack of conscientiousness is the most frequently stated reservation against job-hoppers in both countries. This notion has a slightly different meaning in the two countries, which might have to do with the lower work-place autonomy in Bulgaria. Recruiters in Bulgaria invoked discipline and responsibility, whereas recruiters in Switzerland

referred to perseverance and reliability, as can be seen in the following responses:

The person who changes jobs is either undisciplined and irresponsible or cannot decide what he wants to work in (Code: Conscientiousness, ID 1418201043, Bulgaria, Catering, Job-hopping)

- lacking tenacity and perseverance.
- doesn't know what s/he wants.
- will not stay very long (Code: Conscientiousness, ID 2318203008, Switzerland, Health, Job-hopping)

Another reservation against job-hoppers in both countries is the lack of motivation, as is evident in this excerpt:

The frequent change of jobs indicates inconstancy, unserious attitude to work, low qualification, or unwillingness to work. (Code: Motivation, ID 1365593099, Bulgaria, Health, Job-hopping)

Next to these two frequent reservations against job-hoppers, there are some more country-specific reservations. In Bulgaria, job-hopping is interpreted more frequently as a signal for problems in general: 'He must have some problems if he changes jobs this way' (Code: Problems, ID: 1356099099, Bulgaria, Health, Job-hopping). In Switzerland, recruiters would like to receive a convincing biographical justification for job-hopping by the applicant:

[...] Short positions have to be explained very well. I assume that a "pattern" is continuing if the reasons are not explained clearly. (Code: Explanation of biography/behaviour, ID 2318103008, Switzerland, Health, Job-hopping)

Furthermore, Swiss recruiters often point out that they miss goal orientation and satisfaction in job-hoppers as '[j]ob hopping indicates restlessness, dissatisfaction, and a certain disorientation' (Codes: Dissatisfaction and boredom, (Dis-) Orientation and goals, ID 2549419049, Switzerland, IT, Job-hopping). In Bulgaria, recruiters also noted that job-hoppers' expectations of a job would be too high.

In summary, our analyses show noticeable differences between the valuation of unemployment and job-hopping in Bulgaria and Switzerland. In both countries, recruiters' concerns about job-seekers with unemployment histories more frequently targeted the person than the company. Contrary to expectations, we found no strong evidence for the proposition that previous unemployment triggers company-related concerns in Bulgaria. The more frequent doubts regarding the human capital of previously unemployed applicants highlight the mismatch between educational credentials and the demands of the firms in Bulgaria, compared to Switzerland. Concerning job-hopping,

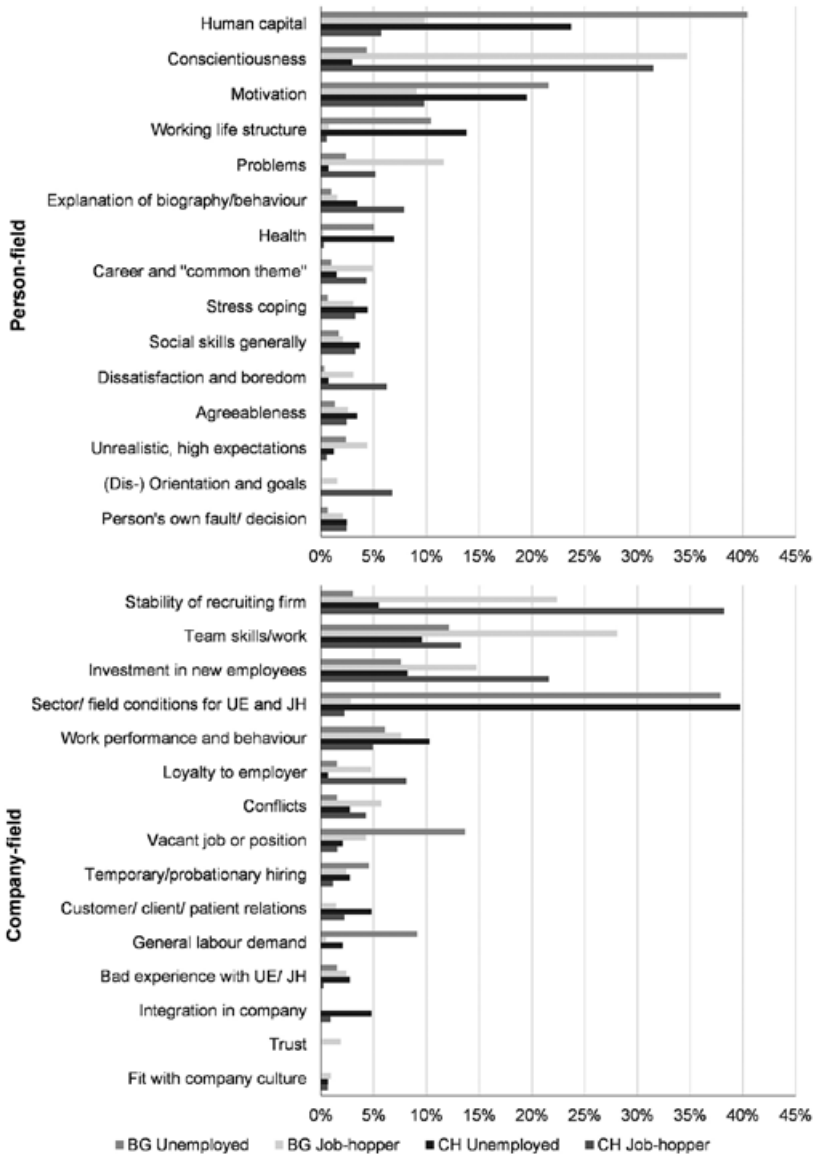


Figure 5.3 Frequent arguments directed at the company and person (relative share in %)

however, we find that concerns are more frequently directed at the organization in Switzerland, whereas responses in Bulgaria problematize the person more often. This is also supported by the stronger emphasis on potential interpersonal problems of job-hoppers within companies in Bulgaria. Together, these results provide important insights into the arguments and reasons of recruiters for dismissing or sending applications from youth with employment insecurities to the back of the queue.

5.3 Alternative Explanation: Industry-Differences of Warrants Against Unemployment and Job-Hopping

One reason for the country differences described in the previous section could be the imbalanced distribution of the five industries (mechanics, finance, healthcare, catering, and IT) in the recruiters' responses to the open-ended survey questions in Bulgaria and Switzerland. In an additional analysis, we therefore estimated the expected shares of argument patterns when the differences were only based on industry-specific argument patterns and different distribution of industries in Bulgaria and Switzerland. Although smaller deviations emerged, the described differences between both countries were still visible. In the following, we highlight some differences in the arguments between the five industries to show that the latter matter for the organizational context of the valuation. Figure 5.4 shows the shares of the most frequent arguments directed at the company and the person separated by industry. To reduce complexity, the results have been pooled for Bulgaria and Switzerland.

In contrast to the other industries, *unemployment* histories seemed to be perceived much less as a human capital problem than as a motivational problem in the catering sector, which has relatively high unemployment rates in both countries. As the unemployment rate in the health care sector is low in both countries, many respondents were suspicious of applicants with longer or frequent unemployment in healthcare. Low work performance was more often highlighted in the mechanics industry and finance where unemployed people were asked to explain their biography. Teamwork and social skills figure more prominently in the predominantly female fields of healthcare and catering than in the other industries. In all five surveyed industries, *job-hopping* was interpreted as a signal of low conscientiousness, most strongly in catering. The stability of the organization was noticeably more seen as compromised by job-hopping in mechanics, IT and finance, whereas teamwork was emphasized

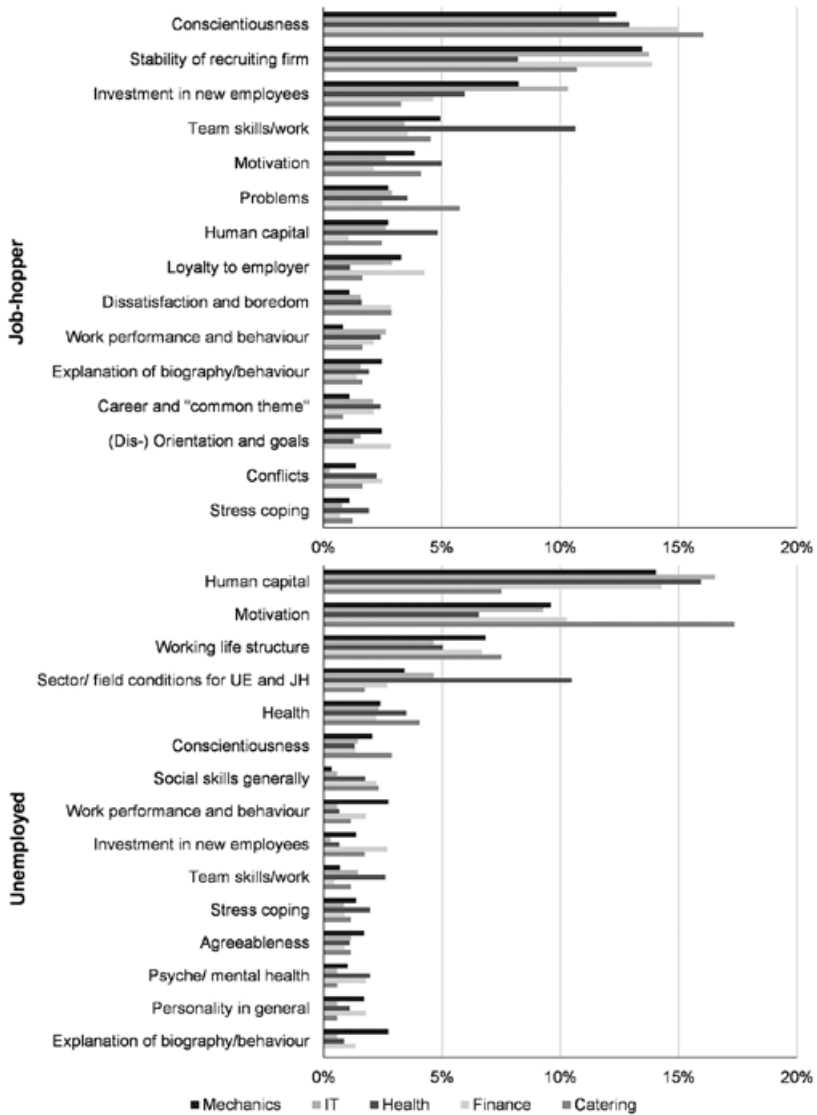


Figure 5.4 Most frequent arguments referring to the company and the person by industry (Bulgaria and Switzerland pooled, relative share in %)

more strongly in healthcare. Costs for investment in new employees played a much smaller role in catering in comparison with the other industries, especially mechanics and IT. Altogether, these industry differences show that the reservations and arguments reported in the open-ended survey questions are linked to the organization and organizational fields. Next to country-specific institutions, such as VET systems, industrial fields seem to be an important contextual factor for the valuation of an applicant's employment insecurities.

6. DISCUSSION

In this chapter, we first raised the question of how employers interpret employment insecurities in young job-seekers' applications in two countries with different school-to-work transition systems – Bulgaria and Switzerland. While many studies have found that recruiters interpret periods of unemployment as a negative signal, few studies have examined this in contrast to recruiters' interpretation of job-hopping. Moreover, the literature on unemployment and job-hopping as labour market signals has mostly overlooked the social embeddedness of such valuation processes as proposed by, for example, network (Granovetter, 1985), neo-institutional (Fligstein, 2001) or conventionalist theories (Larquier and Rieucan, 2019; Thévenot, 2001). For this reason, we derived from the societal analysis framework by Maurice et al. (1986) how transition systems in the Bulgarian 'organizational space' and the Swiss 'qualification space' might affect the valuation of employment insecurities. Building on this distinction, we proposed that unemployment would be less stigmatized in Bulgaria. Due to its systemic character and the possible external attribution, unemployment would be rather considered an organizational problem by recruiters. On the other hand, we argued that job-hopping would seem less legitimate in the Bulgarian context where internal labour markets organize training and careers within firms. This would make job-hopping a less legitimate behaviour and prompt personal attributions and concerns. In Switzerland, we expected that the smoother school-to-work transitions would make periods of unemployment a less likely trajectory. Recruiters should thus be more inclined to attribute unemployment to problems of the person. Given the occupational structure of the Swiss labour market, job-hopping, on the other hand, should be perceived as a more legitimate career strategy for job-seekers. Therefore, turnover should rather be judged an organizational problem. Thus, we had expected that valuation in recruitment processes depends on the embeddedness of the hiring companies in labour market and educational institutions, and on conventions of work, or the quality conventions of a productive worker in both countries (cf. Larquier and Rieucan, 2019).

Analysing data from two open-ended questions from the NEGOTIATE Employer Survey, the current study showed that, contrary to our expecta-

tions, recruiters' interpretations of unemployment contained more aspects referring to the person in both countries. However, the results of this study provided some evidence that recruiters anticipated negative consequences and problems with job-hoppers more frequently with the company in Switzerland and more with the person in Bulgaria. Hence, we found mixed evidence for our propositions at the aggregated level of the four top-codes of our coding scheme. Another important finding was that reservations against job-hoppers directed at the company were associated with interpersonal problems within the company in Bulgaria and with organizational problems in Switzerland. Furthermore, in Bulgaria periods of unemployment were mainly interpreted by recruiters as the candidates' potential lack of or decreased human capital. These two findings could be interpreted as support for our theoretical propositions at a more refined level of analysis. A comparison of the five different industries showed other interesting findings. For example, periods of unemployment were interpreted more frequently as problems of the person in the health industry because of the high demand for skilled labour in this industry. This finding complements the results of Stoilova et al. (2017), who found that in Bulgaria, most employers in the health sector (77 percent) agreed that the advertised position required a specific vocational training or field of study (whereas such education was not indispensable for jobs in mechanics, IT and catering). The industry differences seem to reflect the organization and organizational fields that affect recruiters' interpretations of employment insecurities. Thus, we find evidence for industry-specific expectations and norms about the quality of a productive worker.

There are some similarities between the valuation of unemployment and job-hopping. First, some warrants appear in both cases, such as lack of motivation or team skills. Second, external factors were often stated as rebuttals of possible reservations against unemployment and job-hopping. Due to the survey stimulus, the respondents did not consider that unemployment and job-hopping could be substitutes in a highly flexible labour market for youth who have to decide between taking on a temporary, precarious job, being unemployed, and looking full-time for a job. However, from our perspective, deciding between job-hopping due to temporary, precarious job offers, and search unemployment can be a zero-sum game. In many cases, youth would possibly avoid unemployment and judge job-hopping as less problematic or even as an experience gain which would result in more frequent job changes among young graduates. Employers, on the other hand, may be more critical of job-hopping than of search unemployment in certain circumstances. The stronger attribution of problems to the person in the Bulgarian 'organizational space' makes it harder for young people to signal their potential if they had to cope with labour market insecurities. The problems of organization, highlighted in the Swiss 'qualification space' mean that job-seekers also need to

show their potential organizational fit. This has important implications for developing active labour market policies (ALMP) for youth by suggesting that the unemployed should not be ‘pushed’ on the labour market at all costs, if this impairs job matches or job quality (Imdorf et al., 2019). Instead, further training, internships or education, which were regarded as legitimate rebuttals by the recruiters, could be considered more favourable and less stigmatizing alternatives to job-hopping and unemployment. Preferably, policies should also enable youth to develop and show their organizational fit in ‘real’ work situations. Thus, ALMP development should especially aim at improving the match and quality of such upskilling labour market programmes.

NOTES

1. The terms ‘recruiters’ and ‘employers’ are used synonymously in this chapter.
2. Youth unemployment has recently decreased considerably, with the youth unemployment rate for 15–29-year-olds down to 8.9 percent in 2019. The share of youths who do not study or work (NEETs), however, remains high, at 16.7 percent (22.2 percent in 2015) (Krasteva, Table 9.2, this volume).
3. The authors have furthermore shown how different institutional packages of education, employment and industrial relations shape the process of social stratification differently.
4. This open concept of ‘spaces’ resembles the concept of organizational fields (Fligstein, 2001). Though an ‘innovation space’ was later added, Maurice et al. have never compiled an exhaustive list of ‘spaces’ due to its character as an empirical concept (Maurice and Sorge, 2000).
5. Marsden was thereby missing out the point that the notion of spaces was initially proposed as a sociological alternative to the one of markets: space refers to two institutionalized, non-market processes of how markets are being regulated based on either organizational needs or occupational logics (Hefler, 2013).
6. Despite the tight education-employment linkage in the occupationally segmented Swiss labour market, VET certificates do not necessarily guarantee a smooth transition from school to work anymore (Shi et al., 2018) given increasingly complex work realities and requirements (Salvisberg and Sacchi, 2014). This growing structural unemployment among VET graduates is detrimental especially for this group. Shi et al. (2018) point to the fact that the employer-sided scarring effect of unemployment mainly unfolds among VET certificate holders if the applicant has received the required occupation-specific training and has worked in the appropriate occupational field.
7. Problems of organization can also be attributed to internal (for example, team constellations or organization of work) and external (for example, contact with clients/customers or competition with other companies) factors.
8. The survey also covered vacancies in Greece and Norway. This chapter is limited to Bulgarian and Swiss data.
9. The survey design does not take into account undeclared jobs (grey economy), which constitute an important part of the Bulgarian labour market (see section 3.1).

10. Elliptical constructions and answers consisting of word lists or single words were included in the analysis although the reasoning and the direction of the argument was often not fully clear. We tried to conclude the argumentation as best as possible and to match the answer with topics in the existing coding scheme.
11. As qualifiers (the 'So, presumably' in Figure 5.1) and rebuttals are interlinked, we coded both together. For example, the argument that the evaluation of job-hopping depends on the age of the job applicant was often formulated as a possibly exonerating argument for young applicants and as a clearly charging argument against older applicants.
12. We applied a dictionary search using terms from Ashton, Lee, Goldberg (2004), filled in with some translations from Ashton, Lee, Perugini et al. (2004) to identify and organize the personality arguments.

REFERENCES

- Alon, S. & Tienda, M. (2005). Job mobility and early career wage growth of White, African-American, and Hispanic women, *Social Science Quarterly*, 86(s1), 1196–217.
- Apostolov, G. & Milenkova, V. (2018). The skills system of young adults in Bulgarian context, *Balkanistic Forum*(1), 256–66.
- Ashton, M.C., Lee, K., & Goldberg, L.R. (2004). A hierarchical analysis of 1,710 English personality-descriptive adjectives, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87(5), 707–21.
- Ashton, M.C., Lee, K., Perugini, M., Szarota, P., de Vries, R.E., Di Blas, L., Boies, K., & de Raad, B. (2004). A six-factor structure of personality-descriptive adjectives: solutions from psycholexical studies in seven languages, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 86(2), 356–66.
- Atkinson, J., Giles, L., & Meager, N. (1996). Employers, Recruitment and the Unemployed. Institute for Employment Studies (IES); University of Sussex, Brighton, at www.employment-studies.co.uk/system/files/resources/files/325.pdf.
- Baranowska, A., Gebel, M., & Kotowska, I.E. (2011). The role of fixed-term contracts at labour market entry in Poland: Stepping stones, screening devices, traps or search subsidies?, *Work, Employment & Society*, 25(4), 777–93.
- Becker, G.S. (1993). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education*. University of Chicago Press.
- Becton, J.B., Carr, J.C., & Judge, T.A. (2011). Is the past prologue for some more than others? The hobo syndrome and job complexity, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 79(2), 448–60.
- Bills, D.B., Di Stasio, V., & Gërkhani, K. (2017). The demand side of hiring: Employers in the labor market, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 43(1), 291–310.
- Blanchard, O.J. & Summers, L.H. (1986). Hysteresis and the European unemployment problem, in S. Fischer (ed.), *NBER macroeconomics annual 1986*. MIT Press, pp. 15–90.
- Bonoli, G. (2014). Employers' attitudes towards long-term unemployed people and the role of activation in Switzerland, *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 23(4), 421–30.
- Booth, A.L., Francesconi, M., & Frank, J. (2002). Temporary jobs: Stepping stones or dead ends?, *The Economic Journal*, 112(480), F189–F213.

- Boydjjeva, P. & Ilieva-Trichkova, P. (2019). (Un)realized agency in a situation of early job insecurity: patterns of young people's agency regarding employment, in B. Hvinden, C. Hyggen, M.A. Schøyen, & T. Sirovátka (eds), *Youth unemployment and job insecurity in Europe: Problems, risk factors and policies*. Edward Elgar, pp. 117–36.
- Buchmann, M.C. & Kriesi, I. (2011). Transition to adulthood in Europe, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 37(1), 481–503.
- Cedefop (2018). Vocational education and training in Bulgaria: Short description, *European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training* (Cedefop), Luxembourg, at doi.org/10.2801/600634.
- Cohn, A., Maréchal, M.A., Schneider, F., & Weber, R.A. (2020). Frequent job changes can signal poor work attitude and reduce employability, *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 19(1), 475–508.
- Council of Ministers (2006). National strategic reference framework Republic of Bulgaria: Programming period 2007–2013, accessed 19 January 2021, at archive.eufunds.bg/document/435.
- Devins, D. & Hogarth, T. (2005). Employing the unemployed: Some case study evidence on the role and practice of employers, *Urban Studies*, 42(2), 245–56.
- Dobrev, S.D. & Merluzzi, J. (2018). Stayers versus movers: Social capital and early career imprinting among young professionals, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 39(1), 67–81.
- Doeringer, P.B. & Piore, M.J. (1971). *Internal labor markets and manpower analysis*, Lexington: Heath Lexington Books.
- Fan, X. & DeVaro, J. (2015). Does Job Hopping Help or Hinder Careers? The Signaling Role of Work History, *Centre of Excellence in Population Ageing Research* (CEPAR), Sydney, accessed 19 January 2021, at www.cepar.edu.au/sites/default/files/Does_job_hopping_help_or_hinder_careers_the_signaling_role_of_work_history.pdf.
- Fielding, J., Fielding, N., & Hughes, G. (2013). Opening up open-ended survey data using qualitative software, *Quality & Quantity*, 47(6), 3261–76.
- Fligstein, N. (2001). *The architecture of markets: An economic sociology of twenty-first century capitalist societies*. Princeton University Press.
- Franzosi, R. (2004). *From words to numbers: Narrative, data, and social science*. Cambridge University Press.
- Fuller, S. (2008). Job mobility and wage trajectories for men and women in the United States, *American Sociological Review*, 73(1), 158–83.
- Gallie, D. (2017). The quality of work in a changing labour market, *Social Policy & Administration*, 51(2), 226–43.
- Gallie, D. & Paugam, S. (eds) (2000). *Welfare regimes and the experience of unemployment in Europe*. Oxford University Press.
- Gash, V. (2008). Bridge or trap? Temporary workers' transitions to unemployment and to the standard employment contract, *European Sociological Review*, 24(5), 651–68.
- Gebel, M. (2010). Early career consequences of temporary employment in Germany and the UK, *Work, Employment & Society*, 24(4), 641–60.
- Granovetter, M. (1974). *Getting a job: A study of contacts and careers*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Granovetter, M. (1985). Economic action and social structure: The problem of embeddedness, *American Journal of Sociology*, 91(3), 481–510.
- Griffith, R.W. & Hom, P.W. (2001). *Retaining valued employees*. Sage.

- Gurr, T. & Jungbauer-Gans, M. (2017). Eine Untersuchung zu Erfahrungen Betroffener mit dem Stigma Arbeitslosigkeit, *Soziale Probleme*, 28(1), 25–50.
- Hefler, G. (2013). *Taking steps: Formal adult education in private and organisational life*. Lit-Verlag.
- Heiniger, M. & Imdorf, C. (2018). The role of vocational education in the transmission of gender segregation from education to employment: Switzerland and Bulgaria compared, *Journal for Labour Market Research*, 52(1), 15.
- Hyggen, C. & Imdorf, C. (2020). 'NEGOTIATE Employer Survey. Scientific Use File, 2020', Negotiating early job-insecurity and labour market exclusion in Europe (NEGOTIATE), at doi.org/10.18712/NSD-NSD2644-V3.
- Ilieva-Trichkova, P., Stoilova, R., & Boyadjieva, P. (2015). Regional gender differences in vocational education in Bulgaria, in C. Imdorf, K. Hegna, & L. Reisel (eds), *Gender segregation in vocational education*. Emerald, pp. 151–80.
- Imdorf, C. (2017). Understanding discrimination in hiring apprentices: how training companies use ethnicity to avoid organisational trouble, *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 69(3), 405–23.
- Imdorf, C., Bieri, F., & Heiniger, M. (2018). Gender segregation in education and employment: The role of educational systems in Bulgaria and Switzerland, in P. Bojaieva, M. Kanušev, & M.I. Ivanov (eds), *Neravenstva i solcialna (dez)integracija: V tãrsene na zaednost: jubileen sbornik v ÷est na prof. Rumjana Stoilova = Inequalities and social (dis)integration: in search of togetherness*. Iztok Zapad, pp. 331–45.
- Imdorf, C., Shi, L.P., Sacchi, S., Samuel, R., Hyggen, C., Stoilova, R., Yordanova G., Boyadjieva, P., Ilieva-Trichkova, P., Parsanoglou, D., & Yfanti, A. (2019). Scars of early job insecurity across Europe: insights from a multi-country employer survey, in B. Hvinden, C. Hyggen, M.A. Schøyen, & T. Sirovãtka (eds), *Youth unemployment and job insecurity in Europe: Problems, risk factors and policies*. Edward Elgar, pp. 93–116.
- Johnson, W.R. (1978). A theory of job shopping, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 92(2), 261–78.
- Keith, K. & McWilliams, A. (1995). The wage effects of cumulative job mobility, *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 49(1), 121.
- Kostova, D. (2008). Bulgaria, in I. Kogan, M. Gebel, & C. Noelke (eds), *Europe enlarged: A handbook of education, labour and welfare regimes in Central and Eastern Europe*. Policy Press, pp. 97–122.
- Kuckartz, U. (2014). *Qualitative text analysis: A guide to methods, practice & using software*. Sage.
- LaDonna, K.A., Taylor, T., & Lingard, L. (2018). Why open-ended survey questions are unlikely to support rigorous qualitative insights, *Academic Medicine*, 93(3), 347–49.
- Lake, C.J., Highhouse, S., & Shrift, A.G. (2018). Validation of the job-hopping motives scale, *Journal of Career Assessment*, 26(3), 531–48.
- Lamont, M. (2012). Toward a comparative sociology of valuation and evaluation, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 38(1), 201–21.
- Larquier, G. de & Marchal, E. (2016). Does the formalization of practices enhance equal hiring opportunities? An analysis of a French nation-wide employer survey, *Socio-Economic Review*, 14(3), 567–89.
- Larquier, G. de & Rieucan, G. (2019). Valuation and matching: A conventionalist explanation of labor markets by firms' recruitment channels, *Historical Social Research*, 44(1), 52–72.

- Marsden, D. (1982). Career structures and training in internal labour markets in Britain – and comparisons with West Germany, *Manpower Studies*, 1(4), 10–17.
- Marsden, D. (1986). *The end of economic man: Custom and competition in labour markets*. Wheatsheaf.
- Mattijssen, L. & Pavlopoulos, D. (2019). A multichannel typology of temporary employment careers in the Netherlands: Identifying traps and stepping stones in terms of employment and income security, *Social Science Research*, 77, 101–114.
- Maurice, M., Sellier, F., & Silvestre, J.-J. (1986). *The social foundations of industrial power: A comparison of France and Germany*. MIT Press.
- Maurice, M., Sorge, A., & Warner, M. (1980). Societal differences in organizing manufacturing units: A comparison of France, West Germany, and Great Britain, *Organization Studies*, 1(1), 59–86.
- Maurice, M. & A. Sorge (eds) (2000). *Embedding organizations: Societal analysis of actors, organizations, and socio-economic context*. John Benjamins.
- Mayring, P. (2014). Qualitative Content Analysis: Theoretical Foundation, Basic Procedures and Software Solution, Klagenfurt, accessed 3 February 2021, at nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssaar-395173.
- McVicar, D., Wooden, M., Laß, I., & Fok, Y.-K. (2019). Contingent employment and labour market pathways: Bridge or trap?, *European Sociological Review*, 35(1), 98–115.
- Miettinen, A. & Jalovaara, M. (2020). Unemployment delays first birth but not for all: Life stage and educational differences in the effects of employment uncertainty on first births, *Advances in Life Course Research*, 43, 100320.
- Mincer, J. & Ofek, H. (1982). Interrupted work careers: Depreciation and restoration of human capital, *Journal of Human Resources*, 17(1), 3–24.
- Munasinghe, L. & Sigman, K. (2004). A hobo syndrome? Mobility, wages, and job turnover, *Labour Economics*, 11(2), 191–218.
- Norlander, P., Ho, G.C., Shih, M., Walters, D.J., & Pittinsky, T.L. (2020). The role of psychological stigmatization in unemployment discrimination, *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 42(1), 29–49.
- Oswald, F.L., Hough, L., & Ock, J. (2013). Theoretical and empirical structures of personality: Implications for measurement, modeling, and prediction, in N.D. Christiansen & R.P. Tett (eds), *Handbook of personality at work*. Routledge, pp. 11–29.
- Popping, R. (2015). Analyzing open-ended questions by means of text analysis procedures, *Bulletin of Sociological Methodology/Bulletin de Méthodologie Sociologique*, 128(1), 23–39.
- Rädiker, S. & Kuckartz, U. (2020). Analyzing open-ended survey questions with MAXQDA: Step-by-step, *MAXQDA Press*, Berlin, at doi.org/10.36192/978-3-948768027.
- Raffe, D. (2014). Explaining national differences in education-work transitions, *European Societies*, 16(2), 175–93.
- Rivera, L.A. (2020). Employer decision making, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 46(1), 215–32.
- Rivers, D.L. (2018). *A grounded theory of millennials job-hopping*, Dissertation, Walden University, accessed 6 February 2020, at scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations/5936/.
- Rosenbaum, J.E. & Kariya, T. (1989). From high school to work: Market and institutional mechanisms in Japan, *American Journal of Sociology*, 94(6), 1334–65.
- Salvisberg, A. & Sacchi, S. (2014). Labour market prospects of Swiss career entrants after completion of vocational education and training, *European Societies*, 16(2), 255–74.

- Sandelowski, M. (2001). Real qualitative researchers do not count: The use of numbers in qualitative research, *Research in Nursing & Health*, 24(3), 230–40.
- Sandelowski, M., Voils, C.I., & Knaf, G. (2009). On quantizing, *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 3(3), 208–22.
- Shi, L.P., Imdorf, C., Samuel, R., & Sacchi, S. (2018). How unemployment scarring affects skilled young workers: evidence from a factorial survey of Swiss recruiters, *Journal for Labour Market Research*, 52(1), 7.
- Singer, E. and Couper, M.P. (2017). Some methodological uses of responses to open questions and other verbatim comments in quantitative surveys, *Methods, Data, Analyses*, 11(2), 115–34.
- Smyth, E., Gangl, M., Raffae, D., Hannan, D.F., & McCoy, S. (2001). A comparative analysis of transitions from education to work in Europe (CATEWE): Final Report, *Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI)*, Dublin.
- Spence, M. (1974). *Market signaling: Informational transfer in hiring and related screening processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Steenackers, K. & Guerry, M.-A. (2016). Determinants of job-hopping: an empirical study in Belgium, *International Journal of Manpower*, 37(3), 494–510.
- Stefanova, T.A. (2014). Regional distribution of vocational secondary and higher education schools in Bulgaria, *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 120, 53–65.
- Stoilova, R., Krasteva, V., & Yordanova, G. (2017). The role of employers on the labour market in Bulgaria, *Sociological Problems*, 49(Special issue), 36–59.
- Strandh, M., Winefield, A., Nilsson, K., & Hammarström, A. (2014). Unemployment and mental health scarring during the life course, *European Journal of Public Health*, 24(3), 440–45.
- Tashakkori, A. & Teddlie, C. (eds) (2010). *SAGE handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research*. Sage.
- Thévenot, L. (2001). Organized complexity: Conventions of coordination and the composition of economic arrangements, *European Journal of Social Theory*, 4(4), 405–25.
- Tolbert, P.S. (1996). Occupations, organizations, and boundaryless careers, in M.B. Arthur & D.M. Rousseau (eds), *The boundaryless career: A new employment principle for a new organizational era*. Oxford University Press, pp. 331–349.
- Tonin, M. (2009). Employment protection legislation in central and east European countries, *South-East Europe Review for Labour and Social Affairs*, 12(4), 477–91.
- Topel, R.H. & Ward, M.P. (1992). Job mobility and the careers of young men, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 107(2), 439–79.
- Toulmin, S.E. (2003). *The uses of argument*. Cambridge University Press.
- Venn, D. (2009). Legislation, collective bargaining and enforcement: Updating the OECD employment protection indicators, *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)*, Paris, accessed 15 July 2019, at www.oecd.org/els/emp/43116624.pdf.
- Vogl, S. (2017). Quantifizierung: Datentransformation von qualitativen Daten in quantitative Daten in Mixed-Methods-Studien, in N. Baur, U. Kelle, & U. Kuckartz (eds), *Mixed Methods*. Springer VS, pp. 287–312.
- Williams, C.C., Franic, J., & Dzhekova, R. (2014). Explaining the undeclared economy in Bulgaria: an institutional asymmetry perspective, *South East European Journal of Economics and Business*, 9(2), 33–45.
- World Bank (2023). Services, value added (% of GDP). World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files, *World Bank*, Washington D.C., accessed 8 March 2023, at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NV.SRV.TOTL.ZS>.

APPENDIX

Table 5A.1 List of codes

<i>Recruiting process</i>	Temporary/probationary hiring
Job-hopping as signal	Vacant job or position within the company
Quitting as signal	Norm of permanent employment
Dismissal as signal	Team skills/work
Definite rules	Work performance and behaviour
Information gathering	Fit with company culture
Depends on reasons/case	Trust
	Conflicts
<i>Rebuttal/Qualifier</i>	
Change of occupation or sector	<i>Person</i>
Depending on queue of applicants	Opportunism, only self-oriented
Directed from public employment service	Availability
Economic crisis	Person her-/himself in general
Gender	Problems
Origin	Person's own fault/decision
Business closure/restructuring	Job search behaviour
External fault/responsibility	Self-perception and ability to take criticism
Former employer's fault	Dependency and need for job
Former job: type and/or temporary	Unrealistic, high expectations/demands and poor judgement
	Willingness to learn
Frequency of job changes or unemployment periods	Seriousness
Unemployment and search duration	Personality in general
Foreign labour market culture	Extraversion
Job/employment length	Emotionality/Neuroticism
Season	Agreeableness
Age depending	Honesty/humility
Criminal behaviour and rule violations	Openness
Holiday/travelling	Conscientiousness
Family and personal reasons	(Dis-) Orientation and goals
Further education/training	Dissatisfaction and boredom
Useful time-use of gaps	Motivation
	Human capital
<i>Company and organizational fit</i>	Social skills generally
Integration in company	

Sector/field conditions for unemployment (UE) and job-hopping (JH)	Appearance/Impression
General labour demand	Career and 'common theme'
Unionization	Explanation of biography/behaviour
Fit with company's position/job	Working life structure
Loyalty to employer	Stress coping
Customer/client/patient relations	Overtaxed/excessive demands
Good experience with UE/JH	Problem-solving ability
Bad experience with UE/JH	Health
Investment in new employees	Psyche/mental health
Stability of recruiting firm	