

In Search of Good Fortune: Individualization, Youth and the Spanish Labour Market within a Context of Crisis

Authors : Matthew Lee Turnbough

Abstract : In 2007 Spain began to experience the effects of a deep economic crisis, which would generate a situation characterised by instability and uncertainty. This has been an obstacle, especially acute for the youth of this country seeking to enter the workforce. As a result of the impact of COVID-19, the youth in Spain are now suffering the effects of a new crisis that has deepened an already fragile labour environment. In this paper, we analyse the discourses that have emerged from a precarious labour market, specifically from two companies dedicated to operating job portals and job listings in Spain, Job Today, and CornerJob. These two start-up businesses have developed mobile applications geared towards young adults in search of employment in the service sector, two of the companies with the highest user rates in Spain. Utilizing a discourse analysis approach, we explore the impact of individualization and how the process of psychologization may contribute to an increasing reliance on individual solutions to social problems. As such, we seek to highlight the expectations and demands that are placed upon young workers and the type of subjectivity that this dynamic could foster, all this within an unstable framework seemingly marked by chance, a context which is key for the emergence of individualization. Furthermore, we consider the extent to which young adults incorporate these discourses and the strategies they employ basing our analysis on the VULSOCU (New Forms of Socio-Existential Vulnerability, Supports, and Care in Spain) research project, specifically the results of nineteen in-depth interviews and three discussion groups with young adults in this country. Consequently, we seek to elucidate the argumentative threads rooted in the process of individualization and underline the implications of this dynamic for the young worker and his/her labour insertion while also identifying manifestations of the goddess of fortune as a representation of chance in this context. Finally, we approach this panorama of social change in Spain from the perspective of the individuals or young adults who find themselves immersed in this transition from one crisis to another.

Keywords : chance, crisis, discourses, individualization, work, youth

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