

What is a person but a resume?

Every year in the cool crisp fall air, hundreds of students outfitted in black blazers and shiny shoes line up in front of MIT's Zesiger "Z" Center, the university's main gym. This is the one day a year that MIT's ice rink, basketball courts, and indoor track are all converted to promotional spaces for hundreds of companies to search for top talent at one of the best universities in the world. Amidst the free t-shirts and polite conversations, both students and companies are crowded around each other attempting to navigate the game of recruiting by showing their best self. Reminiscent of the crowds of people in line shown in the picture from class during the Great Depression, the annual Fall Career Fair gathers hundreds of students all with a shared goal, but instead of hats on their heads, these students all have the same thing in their hands: a resume.

In the professional context, this one-page document defines every aspect of who a person is. A resume is said to tell a full story of a person, from their education to experiences a person has had to the different skills one may possess. Professional society has designated a person's value into being represented by one page of paper. An investigation into what 21st century social society places importance on in the professional and academic world reveals that education is highly valued. As discussed in Mauss' paper on personhood, the Pueblos placed a vast amount of importance on the name and the method someone addresses someone else is intertwined with rank, social status, and relationship, but a person emerges beyond the mask of a name. Similarly, the resume detailing a person's education level and even their GPA or test scores is highly

valued as a representation of a person's place in society. However, at the same time, while this inanimate object can hold such importance of defining a person, it's understood that the process will go beyond the resume screen to an interview stage where the recruiters will interact with the actual person behind the resume if it passes the criteria they look for in a screening.

Additionally, the resume contains the entire timeline of someone's academic and professional experience along with a description of all the person's abilities and skills. With the attempted meritocracy we live in today, these resume items are what someone is. It's what a person spends most of their lives doing and defines what they are able to accomplish and where they may go later in life. In the past, people's lives were primarily dictated by family; for example, a farm or business may be passed down from generation to generation. However, as more and more people move away from this model, people's own accomplishments and past experience begins to hold larger value in defining a person and shaping the rest of who they are and what they will do in life. It can also illuminate a person's values since now a person is assumed to have agency of choice over how they wish to contribute their skills; someone working in big oil may be judged as being environmentally insensitive, but someone who works in non-profit can be seen as altruistic.

During the career fair itself, a conversation between a recruiter and a potential employee generally will begin with a short elevator pitch from the recruiter about the company followed by the student responding with a short introduction about themselves. Generally, the student will also tailor this short monologue to relate to the specific company they are speaking to. After this brief conversation, a judgement is made on both sides regarding if they would like to pursue a deeper understanding of each other. However, instead of a normal, prolonged conversation, an

understood exchange occurs as the method of communication through a resume. The initial conversation does a bare minimum establishing any legitimacy for the potential employee and acts as much more of a screening process to purely judge interest. The resume is the vessel that holds the potential employee's professional identity and determines one's value as someone to potentially hire. Analogized to the clip seen of Hitler in class and how Hitler's charisma built over time through his parade throughout town vastly molded by the screaming crowds, a potential employee's legitimacy is similarly built up through the list of experiences that are listed on the resume. Without the screaming crowds or without this list of past employers or experiences, there is no determination of value in that person.

As Fall Career Fair wraps up, students tiredly return back to their dorms chatting with their friends about how their job-searching filled day went. Conversations with friends surround the number of resumes they managed to distribute to employers that day. This number can define how hard they worked or how fruitful those conversations went. As discussed in class and seen in the Geertz reading, kings traveled on expeditions and visits all to reaffirm their personhood which is defined by the power they get from the people. Additionally, how a king is presented to the people is important for their power and image. Similarly, the "reach" and quantity of places a resume goes defines a person's influence and momentum on the job search. As a king or presidential candidate has a goal to reach as many people as possible, a potential employee tries to give their resume to as many employers as possible. The resume acts as an extension of the candidate's best and most hire-able self. Due to time and resource constraints, not everyone is able to be interviewed for an employer to understand who that person is. As a result, the resume is given the agency to represent a person as a sheet of paper.

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