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Experienced newcomers:

Business professionals' identity development

following a career change

by

Pamela Agata Suzanne

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Employment Research

Institute for Employment Research

University of Warwick

October, 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEO: Chief Executive Officer

CFO: Chief Financial Officer

CIO: Chief Information Officer

COO: Chief Operational Officer

CV: Curriculum vitae

IAE: IAE Business School

IER: Institute for Employment Research

ISIC: International Standard Industrial Classification

HRM: Human Resource Management

IT: Information technology

Km: kilometres

MBA: Master in Business Administration

N: number

PhD: Doctor of Philosophy

PICT: Proyectos de investigación científica y tecnológica

UCEMA: Universidad del CEMA (CEMA University)

UdeSA: Universidad de San Andrés (San Andrés University)

UK: United Kingdom

USA: United States of America

UTDT: Universidad Torcuato Di Tella (Torcuato Di Tella University)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DECLARATION

I confirm that this thesis is my own work and it has not been submitted for another degree.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the process of how experienced business professionals adjust to a new role. These experienced newcomers were Argentinean MBA graduates who made a career transition and were going through the first months at the new job. Through a grounded theory and constructivist approach, participants reflected on what was relevant to them during this period, in interviews and personal diaries. Developing the professional identity emerged as a strong theme, including how they developed relationships, how they managed conflict with colleagues and supervisors, how they changed their profiles to adjust, how they managed identity threats, how they experimented with possible selves, and how they constructed their dynamic professional identities.

This doctoral project contributes to the understanding of how experienced newcomers socialise to a new role with a career perspective, considering both past experience and future aspirations. Data collection undertaken during four months for each participant enabled an understanding of process, especially in terms of how individuals develop relationships at work and ideas for possible selves, contributing to theoretical gaps in existing literature. In addition, it contributes to research on business professionals, and MBA graduates in particular, which is quite scarce in Argentina.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context of study

Traditionally, an individual career used to unfold mainly inside one or two organisations, following linear career stages (Sullivan, 1999). However, in the last years, research suggests that careers have become more flexible, allowing and promoting more changes across functional areas, organisations, occupations, and industries (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Cappelli, 1999; Sullivan, 1999). In New Zealand, Arthur, Inkson and Pringle (1999) studied the career stories of individuals across nine occupational groups, finding out that career patterns were characterised by high mobility and improvisation. In Europe, approximately one fifth of employees move jobs between any 12-month period, and in the USA this happens for one third of employees (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2006, Maculay, 2003, in Cooper-Thomas, Anderson and Cash, 2011). Reitman and Schneer (2003) followed the career trajectories of MBA graduates, revealing that one third had stayed with their employers in the long term. These studies suggest that career patterns are fairly mobile.

In Argentina, this mobility trend among professional workers is also evident. Unemployment rates hit professionals hard during the 90's, introducing instability as a new characteristic of the Argentinean labour market. Although the growth of unemployment was harder on the poor classes, in 1996 unemployment for middle class workers was 14% and for middle-high class employees was 9%, contrasting with the traditional situation in which unemployment had been almost unknown for these individuals (Kritz, 2010, p.5). This implied that from the 90's onwards, life-long jobs were no longer guaranteed in Argentina, suggesting an instability element to career development. Layoffs and restructuring increasingly had an impact on individuals'

attitudes towards their jobs. Today, Argentinean young professionals do not look for stability; they rather look for development opportunities, changing jobs as these appear (Cuesta et al., 2009). Indeed, studies suggest that mobility among Argentinean executives is in fact quite high: one in two executives stays no longer than two and a half years in his or her job (Macaya & Suárez Battán Asesores, 2009).

Research therefore portrays the mobility of professionals worldwide, including in the Argentinean context, implying that "transitions represent a significant and increasingly frequent experience in people's working lives" (Hoang and Gimeno, 2010, p.43). These transitions imply challenges both for organisations and for individuals, with adjustment to the new job being decisive to the success of all parties, since it is related to performance, job attitudes and retention (Bauer et al., 2007). As individuals undertake more role changes during their careers, they frequently experience being newcomers who need to adapt to the new role. Several researchers suggest that there is a need to understand the socialisation process of these experienced, or seasoned, employees, since these may be now the largest pool of newcomers and the pool most sought after by employers (Carr et al., 2006; Saks, Uggerslev and Fassina, 2007). At the same time, research suggests that their adjustment differs to that of junior newcomers (Saks et al., 2007; Feldman and Brett, 1983).

The adjustment period has been mostly studied from a socialisation perspective. The process of organisational socialisation refers to "how newcomers adjust to their new surroundings and learn the behaviors, attitudes, and skills necessary to fulfil their new roles and function effectively as a member of an organization" (Saks et al., 2007, p.414). Much research on this topic appearing in management journals, so far, has focused on three aspects: socialisation tactics used by organisations and their effects (e.g. Allen and Meyer, 1990; Ashforth and Saks, 1996); information seeking

behaviours, referring to how individuals acquire the information they need to perform their new jobs and reduce uncertainty (e.g. Brett, Feldman and Weingart, 1990; Miller and Jablin, 1991); and the socialisation of individuals new to the labour market, in contrast to experienced professionals (e.g. Ng and Feldman, 2007). Saks and Ashforth (1997, p.270) state that "socialization research typically appearing in management journals seems at times to be sterile". They claim that richness should be reinstated by

> "focusing on the complexities of the process through which socialization occurs, including the role of equivocality and surprise, conflict, defense mechanisms, key events, mistakes and chances, obstacles, friendships and rivalries, exploration and experimentation, personal development, and markers of progress" (p.270).

1.2 Research aims and questions

This study aims to understand how experienced business professionals undergo the adjustment period to a new role, trying to identify the factors and situations that are relevant to them during the transition. By doing this, the intent is not to provide a template for successful transitions, but to understand what issues are relevant to newcomers and how they deal with them, actually bringing light into equivocality and surprises, defence mechanisms, friendship and rivalries, and personal development. At the same time, the study focuses on how these issues develop through time to improve understanding of the process of how experienced newcomers undergo socialisation. Finally, it examines the transition as part of individuals' careers in order to provide an understanding of the adjustment period from a career perspective, taking into account how career history and future plans affect current behaviour.

It addresses these issues by exploring the career transitions of a group of mid-career management professionals: Argentinean Master of Business Administration (MBA) graduates. MBA graduates are particular apposite for studying work-role changes since they are in a transition phase and in a stage of their careers in which both past experiences and future aspirations can be explored. What is more, previous research on MBA graduates shows that they make job transitions after their degrees, but does not provide much insight into how they experience these. Finally, "the career decisions of these individuals are of interest to more than just those directly affected; MBAs are, after all, people who often go on to lead organizations as well as to create new ones" (Higgins, 2001b, p.256).

Therefore, the general research question is: How do experienced newcomers, Argentinean MBA graduates in particularly, undergo the adjustment period to a new work role? The research sub-questions include:

- What do experience newcomers reflect about during the first months at a new role? What are their main concerns and interests during this time?

- How do experienced newcomers react to these issues? What strategies do they perform?

- How do work experience and career expectations relate to adjustment to the new role?

1.3 Overall research approach

A qualitative approach was adopted to capture narratives about the transition process and accounts of how individuals reflected and made sense of their situations and behaviours. A constructivist perspective was pursued, since understanding the meaning individuals provide to this phenomenon is of central interest as this is what

shapes action or inaction (Lincoln and Guba, 2003). Hence, the focus is "on the meanings that people give to their environment, not the environment itself. Contrary to the contentions of positivists we, as researchers, cannot know this independently of people's interpretations of it" (May, 1997, p.13). This requires questions to be broad and general so that the participants can construct the meaning of a situation (Creswell, 2007). In terms of career research, constructivism conceptualises career development as a complex, dynamic and ever-evolving notion. Responding to the research objectives, this perspective allows an understanding of career transitions in a meaningful context, in terms of both temporal context and social context (Wise and Millward, 2005, p.402).

Considering that the aim of the study was to understand how these Argentinean MBA graduates experienced the transition process to a new role as well as to make theoretical propositions, a grounded theory approach was adopted since it supports process oriented, complex, contextualised, and conceptual research (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Grounded theory is a systematic approach in which theory is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). "One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p.23).

Research participants include individuals who finished their MBAs between 2008 and 2010, changed jobs recently (average 3.5 months before the first interview), 95% undertook a part-time MBA programme while in full time employment, and 83% are male. Data were collected through first interviews (mostly face to face), personal diaries completed during the three months after the initial interview, and follow-up interviews. The interviews combined a narrative approach with open-ended questions

and joint reflection between the interviewee and researcher. The diaries contributed to overcoming the problem with interviews of relying on the participant's account of action, thoughts and feelings that occurred elsewhere in space and time (Becker and Geer, 1957). Additionally, the diaries were indicators of internal processes of reflection, giving insights into the identity process which emerged over time as a result of engaging in new situations and reflecting on those situations (Richardson et al., 2009). The final stage of the data collection involved follow-up interviews to reflect on the socialisation process.

Regarding research ethics, before conducting field work, formal approval was obtained by complying with the Ethical Approval for Research for Doctoral Students requested by University of Warwick. Informed consent of participants was achieved by providing the intended participants with a comprehensive explanation of what the research involved and his or her rights, such as to withdraw from the activity at any time and to have privacy and confidentiality protected. Participants were provided with the researcher's name and contact details, and information on what participation involved, time required, and usage of information during a telephone conversation before the interview, and after providing all the information were asked whether they were interested in participating, giving them time to consider the implications of granting consent. Informed consent was then secured in writing before starting the interviews, and the information was provided in writing to participants.

A constructivist approach based on narrative and joint reflection can lead to a potential blurring between the domains of research and intervention. This posits an ethical dilemma since the researcher may get involved in a situation where her role is confused. This was approached with an ethic of care (Bimrose and Barnes, 2007; Richardson, 2005), in which the research can be of benefit to the participants

(Haverkamp, 2005). If required, participants were provided with sources of relevant information, and encouraged to explore their needs further with suitable professionals.

1.4 <u>My research role: taking a reflexive approach</u>

In a constructivist study,

> "researchers recognize that their own background shapes their interpretations, and they "position themselves" in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural and historical experiences. Thus the researchers make an interpretation of what they find, an interpretation shaped by their own experiences and background" (Creswell, 2007, p.21).

Considering the perspective adopted in this study, as follows I provide information on myself and the research process as this may have affected the way in which I analysed the data. I am an Argentinean woman, 30 years old as I am finishing writing up. I have had an interest in careers since one of my first jobs which took place at a multinational company in Argentina. In this position, one of my responsibilities was to manage the trainee programme. I really enjoyed this job and, particularly, meeting periodically with the trainees to assess their progress, concerns and future aspirations. Once I decided to start a career in the academic world, this interest became my research focus, and I did my master's thesis on this topic. However, when I was starting my PhD, choosing the question and the research design for my thesis took considerable time. My priority was to keep increasing my understanding of individuals' careers. At the same time, with my own career perspective in mind, I was hoping to undertake a PhD that would allow me to get good publications to advance my academic career, would help me build my network with other academics in Argentina and

internationally, and would also allow me to do consulting work. Finally, as I was embarking myself on a long project, I wanted to enjoy the process.

I started thinking I would do a quantitative thesis, or mixed methods, as I had been advised that this would ease publication opportunities. At the same time, I had experience in doing quantitative work and felt insecure about purely qualitative endeavours in which 'you don't know what you will be writing about in the thesis'. However, my research questions indicated that a qualitative approach would provide more appropriate answers. I went back and forward for some time with these ideas which are documented in my research diary, and finally decided to dive in, trusting something exciting would come up from this grounded theory perspective. I also thought my research setting provided a particularly interesting context for a qualitative research design. Argentineans are not generally afraid of talking about emotions and enjoy sharing their experiences. When I presented my study design to the upgrading panel at University of Warwick, I was questioned about the research methods proposed as some people thought I would not get the participants to talk about certain issues or to write in a diary. However, by knowing my culture, I was confident this approach would work and, in fact, I thought the research setting provided a unique place to understand what people go through during a transition.

To broaden my network, although I was affiliated to an Argentinean university and this provided me with easier access to graduates from this institution, I decided to approach MBA directors in other universities as well. This was definitely a good decision as it has expanded my network and my research results are much richer. My affiliation to the Argentinean university also gave me the possibility of 'teaching careers' during my PhD. I taught twice a short seminar to graduate students called 'Career transitions', in which I discussed and refined my ideas with students who were

going through transitions themselves. I also taught twice a subject called 'Professional development' to undergraduate students, where I could also reflect on my ideas and start talking about them.

I have a background in management as my undergraduate degree is in Management, my Master degree is on Organisational Studies, and I have worked for a year and a half at the Human Resource department of a multinational firm. I addition, I have taught classes to Management undergraduate and graduate students for the last six years, as I have been working in the Management department in an Argentinean university. Having a 'management perspective' was a big asset for my PhD as I have a good understanding of the setting in which participants developed their careers but it was also a challenge. At Warwick Institute for Employment Research, I met colleagues who shared my interest in careers but who were working with other theoretical lenses and reading other journals. My supervisors have a sociology/education/career guidance background and an operational research/econometrics/political economy background. Working together was extremely challenging and enriching. Nothing was taken for granted or settled; most concepts and ideas had to be introduced to each other; and I was presented with very interesting readings and approaches I was not familiar with. As the title for the career sub-theme at the EGOS 2012 conference which I recently attended states: "Doing Career Research: Applying Varieties of Disciplines, Theories and Methods", there is a need for different disciplines and theoretical lenses to come together to increase our knowledge of careers. I believe that my previous background and my PhD have allowed me to become a more complete researcher in this area. Summing up, in this thesis I studied the careers of business professionals as these were my teaching and consulting audiences, and I followed mostly the organisational literature as I hope to

continue developing my career in this field. However, as my supervisors study very diverse careers and work with different theoretical lenses, they provided me with broader ideas of understanding careers, which increased my capabilities for data analysis and future endeavours.

Therefore, the PhD required me to do quite a lot of identity work. During the process, I transformed myself into a more qualitative researcher and into a career researcher who, although working at a Management department and teaching business students, has a broader understanding of careers and can work in projects studying the careers of very diverse people.

1.5 Thesis overview

Chapter 2 introduces the literature review on career transitions and socialisation to position the thesis in its broad research context. Chapter 3 situates the findings in its empirical context by characterising the Argentinean MBA programmes and labour market in which participants developed their careers. Chapter 4 explains in detail the research methods. After presenting the data analysis procedures and emergence of the identity theme, chapter 5 introduces a specific literature review into professional identity. In analysing the social context of professional identity development, chapter 6 explores the emerging theme of developing relationships. Chapter 7 focuses on how participants experienced and managed conflicting relationships during socialisation. Chapter 8 portrays how participants adjusted the professional identity to be able to perform in the new role. In chapter 9 the origins of identity threat are described along with the responses and effects. Chapter 10 presents how participants experimented with professional possible selves during this adjustment period. By integrating all previous chapters, chapter 11 introduces a model explaining how individuals construct professional possible selves following a career transition. In chapter 12 the main

findings are summarised, along with the limitations of the study and avenues for future

research.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This section provides an overview of previous studies, theories and concepts to contextualise the research question. Considering this is a grounded theory study, the purpose of this literature review is to situate this thesis in its research context and not to present a specific theoretical framework. First, some current perspectives on professional careers are introduced which call attention to career self-management. Secondly, narrowing down into the research question, relevant dimensions on career transitions are presented, as these concepts will be useful along the thesis. Finally, perspectives on starting a new role are summarised by looking both at organisational socialisation and proactive behaviours during socialisation to a new role.

2.1 Perspectives on professional careers

In the last two decades, two perspectives have gained considerable attention in describing the current context of professional careers (Sullivan and Baruch, 2009). These refer to protean careers (Hall, 2004) and boundaryless careers (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). A protean career refers to "a career based on self-direction in the pursuit of psychological success in one's work" (Hall and Mirvis, 1995, p.271). This perspective suggests that individuals are in charge of their careers, and introduces the importance of values and satisfaction in guiding this career management. Boundaryless careers refers to career patterns that challenge the traditional linear career progression in which individuals used to develop their careers mainly in one or two organisations. The authors suggest that new career patterns have emerged which include more mobility between positions and firms, discontinuous careers, and an increasing amount of knowledge workers who have portfolio careers following opportunities for project work (Barley and Kunda, 2006; Jones, 1996). Although the concept of boundaryless careers seems to suggest physical mobility, later approaches

suggested that it could be understood as psychologically boundaryless, referring to the attitude individuals hold towards initiating and pursuing work-related relationships across organisational boundaries and the inclination toward a career taking place across several employers (Briscoe, Hall and Frautschy DeMuth, 2006). This means that individuals have an open mind regarding their futures and are in constant lookout for what is going on in the labour market, have contacts in other organisations and are concerned for their employability and not their job security in one organisation.

These two concepts put the emphasis on the individual and on career self-management. Although recent literature also recognises the effects of constrains and possibilities awarded by the environment such as prior career history, occupational identity and institutional constraints (King, Burke and Pemberton, 2005), research suggests that individuals are in charge of their careers and of developing the competencies required to navigate the career context. In this vein, Eby, Butts and Lockwood (2003) found a correlation between the three career competencies proposed by the boundaryless literature of 'knowing why', 'knowing how', and 'knowing whom' and career success. Knowing why refers to career motivation, personal meaning, and identification. This competency is associated with an individual's motivational energy to understand oneself, explore different possibilities, and adapt to constantly changing work situations. Knowing how refers to career-relevant skills and job-related knowledge which accumulate over time, with the emphasis on broad and flexible skills which are transportable across organisational boundaries. Knowing whom refers to career-related networks and contacts, which represent a resource for expertise, reputation development, learning, and access to possible job opportunities.

In the current career landscape, researchers have also explored the concept of career adaptability, which refers to "readiness to cope with the predictable tasks of preparing

for and participating in the work role and with the unpredictable adjustments prompted by changes in work and working conditions" (Savickas, 1997, p.254). Career adaptability is a conscious and continuous process, with a focus on self and environment exploration, and with the aim to achieve a good fit between the individual's identity and his or her work. Savickas et al. (2009, p.245) understand adaptability as increasing the five "Cs" of career construction theory: concern, control, curiosity, confidence, and commitment. Concern involves a tendency to consider life within a time perspective anchored in hope and optimism. Control involves individuals not only using self-regulation strategies to adjust to the needs of different settings, but also exerting some sort of influence and control on the context. Curiosity about possible selves and social opportunities increases people's active exploration behaviours. Confidence includes the capacity to stand by one's own aspirations and objectives, even in the face of obstacles and barriers. Commitment to one's life projects rather than one's particular job means that career indecision must not necessarily be removed, as it can actually generate new possibilities and experimentations that allow individuals to be active even within uncertain situations.

Considering these career perspectives, individuals will probably experience transitions frequently in their work-lives and will need to navigate their socialisation to new roles more often in their careers (Bauer et al., 2007), being in charge of their careers and adjustment. The next section introduces key perspectives on career transitions.

2.2 Perspectives on career transitions

The present study understands careers as the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time (Arthur, Hall and Lawrence, 1989). Transitions are defined as changes in employment status and major changes in job content, including all forms of intra-and inter-organisational mobility, change of profession, and changes in

employment status such as unemployment, retirement and reemployment (Louis, 1980a; Nicholson, 1984). Transitions can be characterised by diverse factors which can affect how the individual experiences the process:

- Magnitude: refers to the intensity of the change or the degree to which the role permits the exercise of prior knowledge, practiced skills, and established relationships.

- Duration of the transition period: refers to the time between the exit of a role and the entry to the new one.

- Socially desirable or undesirable: it refers to others' attitude towards the transition, with others referring to the society and members of the role set (relationships attached to a specific role).

- Voluntary or involuntary: it refers to whether the individual decided or was pushed to undertake the transition.

- Predictable or unpredictable: A predictable transition takes place when the individual can anticipate the exit date, the duration of the entry period to the next role and the nature of the events surrounding the exit and the entry.

- Collective or individual: It refers to whether the individual is the only one experiencing the transition or is part of a group going through the same event (Ashforth, 2001).

In terms of the phases of the process, Nicholson and West (1987) propose a model of the transition cycle, identifying four phases: preparation, encounter, adjustment and stabilisation. Their research strategy involved distributing a questionnaire survey among middle and senior managers with the aim to understand better each of these phases. Participants were members or fellows of the British Institute of Management, or were contacted through professional women's organisations and women managers'

professional journals to increase the participation of women. This resulted in a sample of 800 women and 1,500 men. Participants were asked specific questions on characteristics of the phases, such as what had surprised them during entry to the new role (encounter phase) or whether they were innovating in the way the role used to be performed (adjustment phase), and were asked to reply by thinking back to their last job change. Some participants replied to a second survey 15 months later.

Their findings suggest that the first phase, preparation, is related to anticipatory socialisation and involves developing realistic expectations, a positive attitude towards the change, an understanding of one's feelings towards the role; although it seemed not to be a very stressful situation for participants. The second phase, encounter, is related to socialisation and involves exploration and sense building. Here, managers seemed to be negatively surprised by the quality of communications and decision making in the new workplace. The third phase, adjustment, is analogous to metamorphosis and involves role innovation, personal change and relationship building. The final phase is stabilisation and entails personal and organisational effectiveness. They propose that phases are interrelated; for example, if the individual starts with unrealistic expectations, this will make adjustment harder. At the same time, the transition is continuous and not static, allowing for phases to mix up. Finally, once established, the transition cycle may re-start if a new change takes place such as the appointment of a new supervisor.

In terms of this cycle, this thesis focuses on the encounter and adjustment phases, recognising the possible effects of the preparation phase. Nicholson and West's (1987) work made a valuable contribution by setting the transition cycle as a general framework to understand experienced business professionals' job transitions, allowing to identify the individual's temporal location in the change process, and starting to

describe what managers go through in the different phases. The present study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the encounter and adjustment phases by allowing other relevant themes characteristic of this period to emerge.

Summarising, the transition period can be a stressful experience for many newcomers (Nelson, 1987). Managing surprises and entry shocks (Louis, 1980b), along with the uncertainty about being able to cope with role demands, may lead to stress and tension (Fisher, 1985). This is a difficult process and both organisations and individuals try to facilitate it. In the next section, relevant research and concepts on socialisation are explored.

2.3 Perspectives on starting a new role

The period in which newcomers experience the new role has been mostly studied with a socialisation perspective. The process of organisational socialisation refers to "how newcomers adjust to their new surroundings and learn the behaviors, attitudes, and skills necessary to fulfil their new roles and function effectively as a member of an organization" (Saks et al., 2007, p.414). Socialisation occurs whenever an individual crosses an organisational barrier. Even though an employee changing organisation is the clearest example, those crossing internal boundaries such as departments or jobs, are also considered newcomers and hence experience a socialisation period (Van Maanen, 1978).

The process has been described mainly as one of uncertainty reduction, in which newcomers try to increase the predictability of interactions in the new workplace (Bauer et al., 2007). Adjustment consists of three aspects: resolution of role demands which refers to understanding job tasks, task priorities and time allocation (role clarity); task mastery which refers to learning how to perform the tasks of the new job

and gaining confidence in it (self-efficacy); and adjustment to one's group which refers to feeling accepted by peers (social acceptance) (Feldman, 1981).

2.3.1 Organisational socialisation

The first studies on this topic were concerned on how organisations could effectively socialise their newcomers. Van Maanen and Schein (1979) proposed six dimensions of the tactics organisations use to socialise new members. The first one is whether socialisation practices are collective or individual. Under the collective approach, newcomers go through common experiences as part of a group, whereas under the individual approach, newcomers go through the socialisation process as unique newcomers and not as part of a group. Second, socialisation tactics can be formal or informal. Formal tactics involve newcomers who are segregated from other members of the organisation and are trained off the job, whereas informal tactics involve little separation between newcomers and existing employees. Third, socialisation experiences can be sequential or random. Sequential socialisation refers to a fixed progression of steps that culminate in the new role, whereas random involves a more ambiguous progression. Fourth, fixed or variable socialisation tactics involve having a timetable of when the socialisation process is complete as opposed to having no specific timetable. Fifth, serial or disjunctive tactics refer to whether the person is socialised by an experienced member or without the help of a role model. Finally, investiture versus divestiture tactics refers to whether newcomers' identities are affirmed rather than denied or stripped away by the socialisation process. The collective, formal, sequential, fixed, serial and investiture tactics represent an institutional socialisation (Jones, 1986).

In a meta-analysis, Saks et al. (2007) found that institutional tactics are negatively related to role ambiguity, role conflict, and intentions to quit, and positively related to

job satisfaction, organisational commitment, job performance, fit perceptions, and a custodial role orientation, probably because institutionalised tactics do a better job at reducing uncertainty. These results are stronger in the case of recent university graduates than on experienced newcomers, suggesting that while junior newcomers seek organisational guidance, experienced newcomers may rely more on their own adjustment strategies. This suggests the importance of studying proactive behaviours in the case of experienced newcomers.

2.3.2   *Proactive behaviours in socialisation*

Although efforts on the part of managers and the organisation are important, more recent work emphasises the relevance of newcomers' proactivity (e.g., Ashford and Black, 1996; Miller and Jablin, 1991; Morrison, 1993ab). Newcomer proactivity is the means by which newcomers actively engage with their work environment through proactive socialisation strategies (Ashford and Black, 1996). Research suggests that newcomers who engage more in proactive behaviours are more likely to report obtaining what they are looking for; for example individuals who proactively seek feedback are more likely to obtain it (Saks, Gruman and Cooper-Thomas, 2011). Among the proactive behaviours individuals undertake, three main categories can be identified: information and feedback seeking, developing relationships, and role negotiation and framing (Ashford and Black, 1996).

a) Information and feedback seeking: As newcomers enter new roles they face the difficult task of learning the attitudes and behaviours that are necessary to perform new tasks and roles (Louis, 1980b; Miller and Jablin, 1991). In order to learn about their roles, the organisation, their co-workers, and reduce uncertainty, they will seek information and feedback. Of the different possible forms of employee proactivity during socialisation, information seeking has been studied the most

(Saks and Ashforth, 1997). Information seeking is related to task mastery, role clarity, and social integration, as well as socialisation outcomes such as satisfaction, performance, and intentions to leave (Morrison, 1993ab; Wanberg and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). Feedback seeking refers to an employee's solicitation of information about how he or she is performing. It provides information that allows employees to evaluate themselves, increases their sense of control, and gives employees opportunities to correct or modify their behaviours (Ashford and Cummings, 1985).

Newcomers need several types of information. In terms of the role: technical information refers to information about how to perform required job tasks, referent information refers to role demands and expectations, normative information suggests expected behaviours and attitudes, performance feedback indicates how others are perceiving and evaluating the individual's job performance, and social feedback refers to information about the acceptability of the non-task behaviour (Morrison, 1993b). Newcomers most frequently seek task-related information (Major and Kozlowski, 1997). Over time, they seek less for technical information, normative information and social feedback, but more referent information and performance feedback (Morrison, 1993b). Newcomers also need information on organisational issues and attributes such as norms, policies, reporting relationships, terminology, goals, history, and politics (Morrison, 2002).

In a study of experienced newcomers' adjustment strategies, Cooper-Thomas et al. (2011) found several information seeking strategies, such as gathering, attending, asking, reading, and talking. 'Gathering' refers to deliberately discovering and reflecting on information to improve their understanding. This strategy is related to prior identified monitoring strategies, which are those where newcomers watch

others to obtain information, either focusing their attention to find specific facts, or being open to events in order to obtain useful information by chance (Morrison, 1993ab). 'Attending' refers to choosing to be present at training, induction events and departmental meetings. The authors suggest that this strategy overlaps with Bauer and Green's (1994) concept of involvement, which refers to optionally attending organisation sponsored social events, although 'attending' does not include explicitly social events. 'Asking' is equivalent to the strategies of direct inquiry and general feedback seeking (Ashford and Cummings, 1983; Miller and Jablin, 1991). 'Reading' includes sources such as company intranets, external web sites, and business media, and is related to previous strategies referring to organisational manuals or documents (Morrison, 1993ab). Finally, 'talking' is a relatively opportunistic strategy of picking up information in passing.

For most types of information, newcomers engage in monitoring or gathering strategies more frequently than in inquiry or asking, probably because individuals are reluctant to incur the social costs of direct inquiry. When trying to obtain technical information, however, newcomers engage in inquiry more often than in monitoring (Morrison, 1993b).

Some of the antecedents of information and feedback seeking are: desire for control, high extraversion, high openness, and low self-efficacy when newcomers have access to other organisational members and when their tasks are highly interdependent (Ashford and Black, 1996; Major and Kozlowski, 1997; Wanberg and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). Desire for control implies that individuals want to feel in control in the environments in which they find themselves (Ashford and Black, 1996). Extraversion and openness to experience are two of the Big Five personality traits, with extraversion referring to the extent to which an individual is

outgoing, active, and high spirited, and openness to experience referring to individuals who typically display imagination, intelligence, curiosity, originality, and open-mindedness (Wanberg and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). Finally, self-efficacy is defined as the belief in one's capability to perform a certain task (Gist, 1987).

Research suggests that seeking information may be related to relationship building as seeking information may require individuals to make new contacts and communicate with others, which would help to develop relationships with co-workers (Saks et al., 2011).

b) Relationship building: Several scholars have argued that an important way in which socialisation occurs is through social interactions between newcomers and 'insiders', or more experienced members of their new organisation (Feldman, 1981). Empirical research has also highlighted the importance of insiders, especially peers and supervisors, for helping newcomers to acquire information and 'learn the ropes' (Morrison, 1993b). Ashford and Black (1996) found that building relationships with one's boss was related to job performance and general relationship building was related to higher job satisfaction. Finally, relationship building is a positive predictor of four outcomes: social integration, role clarity, job satisfaction, and intention to remain at one's job (Ashford and Black, 1996; Wanberg and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). These studies show the importance of developing relationships for newcomers' socialisation.

Relationship building refers to behaviours on the part of the new employee that are directed toward initiating social interaction in the work environment. In a study of experienced newcomer's adjustment strategies, Cooper-Thomas et al. (2011) found several strategies individuals use to develop relationships: giving, teaming,

befriending, exchanging, and flattering. 'Giving' refers to newcomers providing information or advice to co-workers. 'Teaming' aims at being seen as a member and demonstrating commitment to the team. 'Befriending' has the explicit aim of establishing social relations. 'Exchanging' refers to newcomers trading resources with colleagues such as providing industry contacts and expertise in exchange of desired resources. 'Flattering' aims to make colleagues feel good, so that they are more positively disposed to the newcomer.

Among the antecedents of the behaviour of developing relationships are desire for control and high extraversion (Ashford and Black, 1996; Wanberg and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000).

c) Role negotiation and framing: A third proactive behaviour refers to negotiating the role to achieve fit between the individual and the new job. In order to do this, newcomers may adapt the role to them, adjust to the role or undertake a combination of both. In a study of experienced newcomer's adjustment strategies, Cooper-Thomas et al. (2011) found that individuals try to minimise the differences between new and old roles to take advantage of their learning and hence accelerate performance. The results also suggest that newcomers try to discuss and agree on role expectations with colleagues. Previous studies had also identified the behaviours of changing work procedures, redefining the job, and changing others' perceptions of the importance of the role (Feldman and Brett, 1983; Ashford and Black, 1996). Among the antecedents of this proactive behaviour are desire for control and high openness (Ashford and Black, 1996; Wanberg and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). In terms of the role characteristics that contribute to role negotiation, Nicholson (1984) suggests that when the role provides the individuals with high discretion, the newcomer will tend to adapt the role to him or herself.

Discretion refers to the capacity to choose goals, the means for achieving these, the timing of means-ends relationships, and the pattern of inter-personal communications, influence, and evaluation surrounding them.

2.4 Conclusion

Professional careers are currently characterised by high mobility and an increasing amount of transitions. In trying to understand how to contribute to successful transitions, researchers first focussed on what organisations could do to socialise newcomers, and recently shifted attention to what newcomers could do to successfully adapt to a new role. Meta-analysis shows that both organisational and individual actions are important in newcomer socialisation (Bauer et al., 2007). However, the focus so far has been mostly on organisational learning and effective adjustment, following a definition of socialisation that incorporates the term. Although this is important, there is a need to understand the subjective, complex experience newcomers go through (Saks and Ashforth, 1997), as "the nature of the role transition process strongly affects the nature of the subsequent role enactment and the trajectory of the career" (Ashforth, 2001, p.301). Consistently with recent career and socialisation research focus on proactive behaviours, this study aims at extending research on the proactive behaviours experienced newcomers undertake, but with attention to individuals' subjective experience and adaptability.

CHAPTER 3: CONTEXT

This chapter provides an overview of the educational and labour market context of experienced business professionals in Argentina. As it will be explained in more detail in the next chapter, to increase understanding of how mid-career business newcomers' experience the first months at a new role, Argentinean MBA graduates who had recently changed jobs were selected. These are mid-career management professionals who are particularly suitable to study work-role changes since they are in a phase of transition and at a stage of their careers in which both past experiences and future aspirations can be explored.

To provide the context to these individuals' careers, first the motivations for undertaking an MBA are explored, then post-MBA career transitions, followed by the characteristics of MBA programmes in Argentina together with students' profiles. Finally, some other characteristics of the Argentinean labour market for professionals are presented as these may also affect participants' careers.

Information presented in this chapter is drawn both from secondary and primary data. In terms of secondary data, a range of sources such as academic journals, business magazines, expert and survey reports, and government data were consulted. As this secondary data seemed not to be enough to provide the context in which Argentinean MBA graduates develop their careers, it was decided to undertake short interviews with a few employers and to request data from universities.

Consequently, some of the material related to the motivations to undertake an MBA and to post-MBA career transitions was extracted from interviews with Argentinean/Latin American Human Resource Management (HRM) directors from five companies (that is, Molinos Río de la Plata, Toyota, McDonalds, Unilever, and Banco Galicia), which I undertook exclusively to enhance this chapter. Five telephone

interviews lasting 34 minutes on average took place during February-May 2011. The interview guide consisted mostly on topics they were invited to discuss and these were sent to them previously by email (Appendix 1). Interviews were recorded and transcribed, and quotes from these interviews are presented throughout the chapter. These companies employ vast amounts of managerial employees, are among the biggest multinationals operating in the country both with local and external ownership, have operated in Argentina for many years, and represent different sectors of the economy[1].

In addition, the four universities offering the highest ranked MBAs in Argentina, which were the ones invited to provide contact to potential participants, also made available detailed information about their students and programmes enabling the presentation of a more specific context since participants had studied at those four universities (Appendix 2).

3.1 Motivations for studying an MBA

An MBA is perceived by many as both a passport and a requirement for senior managerial roles (Baruch and Peiperl, 2000), with over 100,000 people studying for an MBA degree each year internationally (Sturges, Simpson and Altman, 2003). Individuals who undertake an MBA are in their early or mid-careers and usually give work a central role in their lives (Dougherty, Dreher and Whitely, 1993). The reasons

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[1] Molinos Río de La Plata - Sector: food. It was funded in Argentina in 1899. Total sales in 2010: US$ 2,653 MM (67% exports/33% local market). Has the number 1 or 2 brand in each category. Origen: Local. Employs more than 5,000 people.
Toyota Argentina - Sector: automobile. It has been present in Argentina since 1994. It is the Argentinean automobile company with highest exports. It produces 56,000 units annually. Origen: Abroad. Employs more than 2,700 people.
Mc Donald's - Sector: restaurants. It has been in the country since 1986. Origen: Abroad. Employs more than 12,000 people.
Unilever Argentina - Sectors: food, home and personal care. It has been in the country since 1926. It is the biggest exporter in its sector. Origin: Abroad. Employs more than 4,000 people.
Banco Galicia - Sector: financial. It was funded in 1905. It has more than 7.1 million clients. Origin: Local. Employs more than 5,000 employees.

for undertaking an MBA are various: improve job opportunities, increase functional and employer mobility, change career direction, pursue entrepreneurial endeavours, obtain general business knowledge, experience intellectual stimulation, improve earnings, and increase self-confidence (Baruch and Leeming, 2001; Hall, Munson and Posner, 1992; Schoenfeld, 2008). In terms of salary increases, research suggests that students remaining with previous employers receive a 36% increase in their pre-degree salary on average, those accepting a new offer receive an increase of 70% on average, while those accepting an offer from an internship receive an increase of 84% on average (GMAC, 2012a).

In Argentina, most MBA programmes comprise part-time students in full-time employment during the course (Apertura, 2009). The programme usually lasts for two years and requires students to attend classes regularly at the university. The Argentinean employers interviewed recognise several benefits of studying for an MBA: learning about other industries, building a professional network, increasing social skills, having a broader vision of the business and not just from the individual's functional expertise, developing problem resolution analytic skills, and experiencing a demanding learning programme. Finally, some believe that the MBA or a business-related master is increasingly becoming a requirement for management positions, as more and more professionals acquire this credential. In the case of the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of the 120 companies that sell the most in Argentina, 33% have studied for an MBA (Monferrán and Valleboni, 2011). Most of the remaining ones have undertaken other advanced, but shorter, management programmes.

One of the benefits of studying for an MBA is that it helps with building a network of alumni contacts (Baruch and Peiperl, 2000) and hence increases social capital. Social capital "comes about through changes in the relations among persons that facilitate

action" (Coleman, 1988, p.100). Social capital is the value that the social structure provides to actors as resources they can use to achieve their interests. Hence, social relations can constitute useful resources for individuals through creating obligations, expectations, trustworthiness, information channels, norms and effective sanctions. For example, pursuing an MBA can provide business professionals with access to information channels that were not available to them before. If the MBA is from an elite university, these would probably be 'elite information channels'. This information can be used for several career enhancing actions such as changing jobs, starting a business, finding about market trends, identifying specialists, and many others (Sturges et al., 2003). MBAs at different universities provide different types of social structures, as a participant from Sturges et al.'s (2003, p.62) study commented: "I think I expected a bit more of cohesion with the alumni network – friends who put themselves through an Ivy League MBA got it. It may be something the school has to work on." This suggests that the social capital acquired at a top-ranked university, as is the case of participants of this study, may be different to that of other MBA graduates.

Through attending a certain MBA program, individuals' social structures will be enhanced, firstly, by forming a high degree of closure with peers in the same class, who see each other regularly, who "have expectations towards each other and develop norms about each other's behavior" (Coleman, 1988, p.106). Even more in the case of elite programmes, these new contacts who have pre-MBA valuable human and social capital, and who now form a close social structure, could provide resources to graduates that facilitate their actions. For instance, the closure of this social structure allows for the existence of trustworthiness which can facilitate partnerships and the creation of business obligations. The collective sanctions imposed by a close social

structure can smooth the progress of business actions that may otherwise be risky or require many transaction costs. Secondly, through the MBA, individuals would be entering an elite group of people who have obligations and expectations from each other and believe they are trustworthy as they belong to the same alumni network. Proof of this are the new start-ups created in the United States and in Europe through which MBA alumni lend money to MBA students to pay for their courses. One of the managing directors of these start-ups said: "I've worked with [MBAs] from all of these schools, and I can't imagine a scenario where one of them would not pay their student loans" (Zlomek, 2012). Consequently, acquiring social capital makes the MBA a qualification of choice, particularly at certain institutions.

Despite all the varied motivations to undertake an MBA, financing the programme is a big barrier in Argentina. A survey undertaken in Argentina found that although 73% of people intended to study for a postgraduate degree, 47% said that they did not actually do it because of lack of resources (Apertura, 2011). In 2009 only 6% of people doing a postgraduate study had economic support from their companies, while this rate was 12% in 2008 (Apertura, 2011). So, postgraduate students in Argentina pay for their studies with: their own resources (59%); university scholarships (18%); company's resources (6%); bank loans (6%); other loans (6%); or other sources of funding (5%) (Apertura, 2011). Related to this, some employers that sponsor MBA programmes indicated that they partially fund these courses. It was also apparent that companies are increasingly focusing on shorter programmes that have a short-term effect. For example, one of the HRM directors interviewed said:

> "Companies are increasingly thinking on programmes focused on developing the specific skills they want to develop in their executives. And these are not MBAs. They don't want to send them to study for an

MBA, they want shorter processes. Because they don't know what happens in two years. They don't even know if they are going to be there in two years, if the company is going to be there. So, all this uncertainty takes you to look at things on a shorter term."

At the same time, when they do sponsor their employees to study an MBA they tend to be very selective and only sponsor a few candidates who they believe have management potential and require broader business knowledge. One of the interviewed employers talked about a new MBA programme they are sponsoring in association with a university, with a class of 45 students all being employees of the company. This type of MBA programme is more tailored to the needs of the firm and the programme is developed as a result of collaboration between the university and the company, including for example the creation of case studies that reflect the company's or industry's issues, requiring the engagement of the firm's training and senior staff (Huddleston and Laczik, 2012). Only big employers, however, have the option of engaging in this type of collaboration.

3.2 Post-MBA career transitions

Research suggests that following an MBA, individuals often make changes in their careers. For instance, within 18 months, half of MBA graduates were promoted and half of those were promoted more than one step up (Schofield 1996, in Baruch and Peiperl 2000). Seventy per cent of entering MBA students at one leading business school defined themselves as "career changers" (Simmering, 1995). Less than 25% of engineers doing an MBA expected to be with their current employer three years after obtaining the MBA degree and more than three quarters would be willing to wait for their companies to provide new job-related opportunities for no longer than 18 months (Hall et al., 1992). Additionally, studies suggest that the MBA provides individuals

with a feeling of choice, encourages career insight and increases awareness of new career opportunities (Baruch and Leeming, 2001; Sturges et al., 2003). A recent survey suggests that many individuals willing to study for an MBA are looking for a change. This is the case for 87% of applicants to full time MBAs and 58% of applicants to part-time MBAs (GMAC, 2012b). Table 3.1 summarises these findings.

Table 3.1 Expected career outcomes by programme type

| Program Type | Self-Employed/ Entrepreneur | Career Switcher | | | Career Enhancer/ Remain With Current Employer |
		Change Industry & Function	Change Industry Only	Change Function Only	
Full-time two-year MBA	30%	26%	13%	18%	13%
Full-time one-year MBA	29%	24%	12%	19%	13%
Part-time MBA	18%	19%	8%	29%	42%
Flexible MBA	26%	23%	10%	26%	30%
Executive MBA	25%	21%	9%	29%	33%
Online/distance MBA	18%	18%	8%	31%	45%

Source: GMAC 2012b, Table 6, page 19.

In Argentina, evidence indicates that successful MBAs allow individuals to have more clarity in their career goals and be more effective in achieving these, attaining promotions, acquiring management positions, even when having a technical background, earning salary increases, launching ventures, changing companies and industries. In all cases, these stories indicate that in order to capitalise the benefits of the MBA, individuals should have several years of work experience, interact with other students and professors, build a network of contacts, acquire management and leadership skills, apply the learning at the company, and achieve a broader professional profile (Gómez Carrillo, 2010).

Argentinean employers are cautious about the effect the MBA has on individuals' careers. One of the reasons for this is that if a company sponsors an MBA, it does not imply that they are planning a career progression for the individual; it could be for several other reasons. One interviewed employer said:

"Sometimes the student asks the company to pay for the programme, others the boss wants to give a prize to someone who had an exceptional year, other times the Human Resources department has these initiatives and people just sign up for them. So, there are many reasons apart besides the ideal career planning that implies doing an MBA, having a follow up, improving performance, and moving to another position. So, the company can do it for several reasons and not even realise when the person finished the MBA. If the person has high expectations for advancement, a problem may appear and they may leave to another company that gives them that."

Another reason for caution, related to the external labour market, is that in Argentina there is a high level of professionals, so if the company cannot afford someone with an MBA, they can get another professional without an MBA who is also very good. Some of the interviewed HRM directors mentioned that the country has more professionals than businesses requiring them. One of them commented:

"There is not that culture of going to recruit MBA graduates to universities. Because you will get them… if you want them, you'll have them; there is not a war for those MBA graduates."

Another one said:

"I will give you an example: an electro engineering company does not have other companies competing for that talent so it will be able to do whatever it wants with the people, because it knows they are hostages who do not have anywhere else to work. So, the great challenge is more related to the country model pursued and the labour market wanted."

Related to this, one interviewed HRM director mentioned that his company was starting a worldwide scheme to recruit more MBA graduates; meaning that each country subsidiary should recruit from the top MBA programmes new middle-managers. However, the Argentinean division is not being part of this programme. They made this decision because they consider that they have many internal people already working in the firm who are prepared for the next step, and bringing in MBA graduates as managers, would be very disruptive to their people development system.

Finally, another reason is that experience is more valued than academic credentials. First because there is a need for short term results so companies prefer individuals who can achieve good performance quickly. One HRM director commented:

> "You say 'I prefer someone who has a similar experience undertaken in another mass consuming company and who rapidly can start operating than someone who comes with a broader mind, and besides this will give him or her broader ideas which may end up being better in the long term but not in the short term'."

At the same time, not all experience is evaluated equally. Similar to what has been observed in the UK retail sector, where "Training quality is therefore dependent on brand reputation with those in the business having an implicit recognition of the value of training carried out in different companies. Employees that have worked and been trained in these companies are sought after in the market place" (Huddleston and Hirst, 2004, p.12), Argentinean employers value highly someone who has worked at specific companies and has consequently acquired some of their training on-the-job. One interviewed employer affirmed:

"I would value more the company in which he worked than the MBA he studied. I prefer him or her to have work at Techint[2] than at another firm plus an MBA, even if the position at Techint is not exactly the job I am looking for. I put a lot of attention to on the job training."

Secondly, employers mentioned that since most of the people occupying high positions in companies have not studied master programmes themselves, they are not aware of the added value it could have, and so focus only on experience.

3.3 Characteristics of MBA programmes in Argentina

At present there is not much academic research available on MBAs in Argentina. Previous work suggests that there are similarities as well as differences among MBA students and graduates' profiles, career paths and choice influences around the world (Özbilgin, Kusku and Erdogmus, 2005; Schoenfeld, 2008). In Argentina, there is great variety of programmes in terms of schedule flexibility, content (focusing more on soft or hard skills), teaching methods, exchange programmes, foreign students and prices. In terms of prices, for example, the MBAs taught in private universities in Buenos Aires in 2010 ranged from $48,480 to $104,000 Argentinean pesos[3] (Management Herald, 2011). All programmes, but one, are part-time.

The top four Argentinean business schools are IAE, Universidad de San Andrés (UdeSA), Universidad Torcuato Di Tella (UTDT), and Universidad del CEMA (UCEMA). This ranking is built by an Argentinean business magazine "Apertura", based on the opinion of 165 business people, General Managers, HRM directors, head-hunters and consultants on the criteria of general perspective, faculty, teaching methods, interaction with companies, price-quality ratio, international linkages, and

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[2] Techint is a multinational company, focused mainly on engineering and steel; www.techint.com
[3] On 1/1/2010, 1 peso was equivalent to 6.13 pounds (FreeCurrencyRates, 2012)

admission rigour. These four universities have been the top four since at least 2008 (Apertura, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011).

The number of MBA students has remained constant for some time with 1,000 incoming students approximately each year (Apertura, 2011). The top four MBA programmes account for nearly half of those students, and they also show a constant tendency in the number of incoming students[4]:

Table 3.2 Incoming MBA students at top four Argentinean business schools

Year	Number of incoming students
2007	469
2008	508
2009	576
2010	446
2011	476
2012	532

3.4 Argentinean MBA students' profiles

In general, professionals in Latin America acquire three to five years of work experience before applying to an MBA (Apertura, 2010). The average age to start an MBA is 29 years old (The MBA Tour in Apertura, 2009). To obtain more reliable information that is relevant to participants of this study, the following information pertains to the top four MBAs, which provided information on incoming students from

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[4] The information for these universities along the chapter is provided only for the part-time MBAs as only one university has a full time programme and it is quite small. Only one of the participants on this study undertook a full time programme.

2008, 2010 and 2012. In particular, in the top four universities, the average age has remained constant during the last couple of years at 32 years old and the average professional experience ranges between 9 and 10 years. Most students are men, ranging from 75% to 78%, and the majority are of Argentinean nationality, ranging from 88% to 91% in the last few years.

The types of graduates most likely to undertake an MBA are engineers, followed by business graduates and accountants. Other degrees with relevant representation in the MBA classes include information systems, economics, marketing and law. Other graduates with little representation on MBA courses include medicine, architecture, and international commerce, among others.

Table 3.3 MBA incoming students' undergraduate degrees at top four Argentinean universities

Undergraduate degree	2008	2010	2012
Engineering	28%	30%	33%
Business	18%	22%	18%
Accounting	19%	15%	14%
Economics	9%	7%	8%
Information systems	7%	2%	5%
Marketing	1%	4%	3%
Law	2%	3%	3%

Because of the years of professional experience preferred, most MBA students have achieved a certain level of seniority by the time they start the programme. Most of them are middle-managers, followed by first level managers or supervisors, and then top-managers. Analysts/assistants and consultants are in the minority. Middle-level managers are those in the levels below top managers, with job titles such as plant manager, regional manager, and divisional manager. They set goals for their departments and other business units. First-level managers have job titles such as: office manager, shift supervisor, department manager, foreperson, crew leader, store manager. First-line managers are responsible for the daily management of line workers, who are the employees on the front line or production or offering services. Top-level managers are also called senior managers or executives. These individuals are at the top one or two levels in an organisation, and hold titles such as: Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Chief Operational Officer (COO), Chief Information Officer (CIO), Chairperson of the Board, President, Vice president, Corporate Head. Top managers are not involved in the day-to-day operation of the firm; rather, they set goals for the organisation and direct the company to achieve them (Simmering, 2012). As it can be observed, most MBA students have management experience before entering the programmes.

Table 3.4 Seniority of incoming students at top four Argentinean MBAs

Seniority	2008	2010	2012
Top-level managers	20%	26%	20%
Middle-Managers	33%	27%	34%
First-level managers / Supervisor	24%	21%	30%
Consultant	5%	5%	4%
Analyst	16%	11%	11%

3.5 Other characteristics of the Argentinean labour market

There are other characteristics of the Argentinean labour market that might have had an impact on participants' careers. The main ones are the size of the informal labour market, the impact of national and international crises, and an increasing trend for mobility.

3.5.1 Informal employment

Informal employment is a big problem in Argentina as it applies to a third of the economic active population (Sel Consultores, 2011b). Formal employment has legal protection through an employment contract, which represents a significant difference from informal employment, because it provides the employee with social security rights such as pension plans, health insurance, unemployment insurance, protection against work risks, among others. Informal employment involves mostly individuals with little education, unlike the participants in this study, with only 40% of informal employees having finished secondary school (Sel Consultores, 2011b). A group that is strongly involved in the informal sector is young people (La Nación, 2011). Hence,

some participants of this study may have started their careers in the informal market. Despite all of them being today part of the formal labour market, the way they started their working lives had consequences on their career decisions, since at some point they may have valued a job just for being in the formal sector.

3.5.2 National and international crises

In 2002 Argentina experienced an important economic and social crisis. Unemployment reached 21.5%, and almost 58% of the population was living in poverty (Rial, 2009). Since 2003 close to three million jobs were created, two thirds of these in the formal private sector (Sel Consultores, 2011a). This enabled unemployment to be reduced to 7% in 2011. However, this period shows two phases: from 2003 to 2007 with an annual increase of the employed population of 4.5%, and a second phase from the end of 2007 onwards with a media growth of 1.7% (Sel Consultores, 2011a). Part of this deceleration can be explained by the international crisis that started in 2008-2009, with the destruction of 200,000 formal jobs in the private sector during the first three trimesters in 2009 (Sel Consultores, 2011a). Both these crises had impacts on participants' careers.

3.5.3 Mobility

Finally, as it was mentioned in the introduction, there is occupational mobility among business professional workers in Argentina. As unemployment hit professionals hard during the 90's and onwards, many employees no longer look for lifelong jobs but for the best deal. Studies suggest that mobility among Argentinean executives is in fact quite high: one in two executives stays no longer than 2.5 years in his or her job (Macaya & Suárez Battán Asesores, 2009). In the case of CEOs, 38% have been in their roles shorter than two years (Monferrán and Valleboni, 2011). In addition,

although in 2009 a decrease in employment growth was observed, 40% of Argentinean employers had difficulties in finding applicants for their vacancies. The jobs most difficult to fill were technicians, followed by managers and executives (Manpower, 2009). This means that individuals with certain professional profiles are often being offered new jobs, which increases disposition for and actual mobility.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided contextual information relating to the environment in which participants of this study progressed their careers, MBA studies and current transitions. Since information on the career of business professionals in Argentina is quite scarce, various sources of information were used to try to obtain a useful picture of the educational and employment situation of these people. MBAs, or related postgraduate management studies, are increasingly becoming a requirement for business professionals. In Argentina, most MBA programmes are part-time. In the top four universities, the average age of the incoming class was 32 years old and the average professional experience was 9 years in 2012. Most students are men, 78% in 2012, and the majority are of Argentinean nationality. The types of graduates most likely to undertake an MBA are engineers, followed by business graduates and accountants. Most students are middle-managers, followed by first level managers or supervisors, and then top-managers.

There are several benefits of pursuing an MBA programme such as acquiring knowledge on other industries, networking, increasing social skills, incorporating a generalist and a broader vision of the company, developing problem resolution analytic skills, and experiencing a demanding learning programme. Employers believe in these benefits but recognise that in the Argentinean labour market there is a strong focus on the short-term and on performance and experience rather than on

academic credentials. This focus may be at odds with MBA graduates' high expectations for their careers after undertaking these programmes, as they expect employers to make interesting offers to them and this may not happen. At the same time, some other characteristics of the Argentinean labour market such as high rates of informal employment, the strong effects of national and international crises, and an increasing mobility trend, affect business professionals' career development.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter provides an overview of the research methods adopted for this study. Specifically, it describes the research approach, the selection of the group of interest for the study, the selection of participants, the negotiation of access, participants' characteristics, the data collection techniques, the ethical considerations, and the approach to data analysis.

4.1 Research approach

A constructivist perspective was pursued, since understanding the meaning individuals provide to a phenomenon is of central interest as this is what shapes action or inaction (Lincoln and Guba, 2003). Hence, the focus is "on the meanings that people give to their environment, not the environment itself. Contrary to the contentions of positivists we, as researchers, cannot know this independently of people's interpretations of it" (May, 1997, p.13). In terms of career research, this perspective conceptualises career development as a complex, dynamic and ever-evolving notion. This allows an understanding of career transitions in a meaningful context, in terms of both temporal and social settings (Wise and Millward, 2005, p.402). "In constructivism, the locus of research inquiry moves from observation of human behaviour from the vantage point of an outside observer to observation of human action informed by the lived experience of research participants" (Richardson, 2005, p.2).

The aim of this research was to understand how experienced business professionals undergo the adjustment period to a new role, trying to identify the factors and situations that were relevant to them during the transition. Considering this goal, a grounded theory approach was chosen in order to be open to how participants experienced the adjustment process, rather than using a specific theoretical

framework, that might bias the understanding. A grounded theory approach supports process oriented, complex, contextualised, and conceptual research (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). This is in line with the constructivist perspective, in which rather than starting with a theory, "inquirers generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meaning" (Creswell, 2007, p.20). Longitudinal qualitative data provided narratives of the transition process and accounts for how participants made sense of their situations and behaviours through time. In understanding the experience of experienced newcomers it was important to capture the "depth and breadth of participants' life experiences, and to capture participant change (if any) through long-term comparative observations of their perceptions and actions" (Pettigrew, 1995, p.16).

4.2 <u>Data collection</u>

4.2.1 Selecting a group of interest

As explained in the previous chapter, literature suggested that MBA graduates were interesting individuals to study career transitions. I then took a step further and talked with staff from the career office of two universities. I discussed the issue with the Career Consultant at Warwick Business School (UK) and at Universidad de San Andrés (Argentina). The career consultant at Warwick Business School explained how she viewed students starting their MBA as having a clear rationale for why they were undertaking the course and within three months, they had lots of new ideas. So, they arrived with ideas for change and then they obtained even more ideas for change. The career consultant from Argentina observed that MBA students are all looking for a change. Although some of them may say that they are interested in the skills, the consultant said that actually they look for the tools to change and grow. She affirmed that they needed the MBA to progress their careers, because: the company values it; they graduated with a degree that is now acting as a ceiling for their career

progression; or the company did not value them and they wanted to look for another job. The process of triangulation involving literature, my knowledge of the process and statements from suitable informants, confirmed how career change is strongly related to MBA graduates, who would then provide a good group to study career transitions.

4.2.2   Sampling methodology

The sampling methodology was convenient sampling, meaning that all potential participants that could be identified as complying with the criteria were invited to participate (Bryman and Bell, 2007). This prevents the study from making generalisations, but as this was not the goal, this sample provides a springboard for further research and allows links between factors to be forged and seeks to advance our knowledge on business professionals' experiences during the first months following a career transition. The main criteria for selecting participants were that they had graduated from an MBA programme at one of the top four MBAs in Argentina in the prior two years and that they had changed jobs recently. As the MBA is such a significant experience in their lives, which provokes strong identity reflections, it was decided that all participants should be close to the termination of the programme. The top MBAs were also chosen to ensure participants were similar in respect of deciding to do an MBA and of the experience of going through the programme. Four universities were identified through the ranking developed by the Argentinean business journal "Apertura". As the focus of the research was on the experience of entering a new role and on the process of such an experience, it was necessary that participants were at this point of their transitions to obtain real-time accounts, rather than retrospective ones. Given that that previous studies of newcomers' socialisation focus on the first 4 to 12 months (Allen and Meyer, 1990; Ashforth and Saks, 1995;

Ashforth, Sluss and Saks, 2007; Major et al., 1995; Morrison, 1993ab; Saks and Ashforth, 1996; Saks and Ashforth, 1997) and that 'learning the ropes' of the new setting typically occupies the newcomer for the first 6 to 10 months on the job (Louis 1980b), it was decided that participants should not be in the new role for longer than 12 months, and, if possible, six months.

For the research design, it was suggested that if the number of potential participants was large, the selection criteria would be tightened to include a gender balance, since women's career development is significantly different from men's (Bimrose, 2001), particularly in mid-career. Previous research suggests that women encounter more challenges in career transitions since they may lack information on the new roles, networking, and role models (Ibarra and Smith-Lovin, 1997). However, as explained next, it was extremely hard to identify individuals who complied with the first two criteria, so participants were mainly male which reflects the composition of MBA programmes.

4.2.3   Negotiating access

Access to participants at the university to which I am affiliated was facilitated by the contact I had with the MBA director and staff at the career office. However, most MBAs in Argentina are part-time, meaning that participants change jobs at different points in time, and universities do not keep records of this, either when they are students and even less when they graduate. As participants for this study needed to be in the first months of a new role, it was difficult to identify these individuals who were 'just starting' a new job. The process for identifying participants started with staff working with the MBA programme or at the university's career office who might have 'heard' that someone was changing jobs and hence introduced me to this person. University staff felt more comfortable in pointing out potential participants than

sending a general email to their graduates. Hence, the first contacts were aided by university staff and the remaining through snowballing among participants.

At another university, I contacted a professor whom I had met at an academic conference and she introduced me to the person in charge of career development for the full time MBA at this university. This person introduced me and sent the invitation for participation in the research to the 2009 graduates who were employed and two replied expressing their interest in participating. I started collecting data from participants from these two universities and after five months I had seven participants, but the staff at these universities was unable to find any more graduates who complied with the selection criteria. I contacted the Professor at the second university again as the person in charge of career development explained that I was likely to find more potential participants from the part-time MBA programme. So, the Professor introduced me to the MBA director of the part-time MBA programme and he was able to provide me the contact of potential participants.

I then decided to expand the number of universities included in the study, to ensure numbers of participants and to increase the richness of the research. I selected the universities by looking for the other two universities whose MBA programmes are among the top ranked in Argentina. The four total MBA programmes are all internationally accredited and belong to the following institutions: IAE, UdeSA, UTDT and UCEMA. In order to contact the remaining two universities, I attended the 'MBA forum', which is an event where universities present their programmes to prospective students, as I expected MBA directors to be there. At this event, I introduced myself to one director, and got the director of the programme at my university to introduce me to another one. Once the contact was made, I explained the study orally and in writing and they agreed to introduce me to potential participants. I

believe that having a university affiliation had mixed effects in terms of accessing other universities. On the one hand, it facilitated introductions. On the other, MBA directors were concerned about me extracting data that would be used to improve the MBA programme at my university. I addressed this by assuring confidentiality of data (Appendix 3). At the same time, they were concerned about the experience their graduates would go through and this was addressed by the principle of informed consent and the ethical guidelines followed which will be explained in section 4.2.6.

Once these contacts were made, the challenge to identify graduates in transition was similar to that at the first university. Most directors provided me with the email addresses of graduates they thought had changed recently and I contacted them on their behalf. (Please see Appendix 4 with the contact email sent to potential participants). I sent out 107 emails, to which I received 28 responses from graduates who complied with the criteria and were interested in finding out more about the research project. I had conversations over the phone with 27 of the potential participants who had provided their phone numbers and a suggested time to call, of whom 25 agreed to participate and two declined because they were too busy and were concerned they would not be able to comply with the research process. One other potential participant also complied with the criteria but after explaining the research process to him by email, he was also concerned about not having enough time, so was not included. There was another graduate who started participating and the first interview was undertaken. However, after leaving the premises where the interview took place I was mugged, which resulted in the theft of the recording of the interview. I contacted the participant explaining the situation to him and providing my apologies for this random, unfortunate event. I afterwards wrote a summary of the interview and asked him if he would like to check it. He agreed but never actually checked the

summary nor got involved in the remaining of the research project, even after I contacted him a couple of times by email and one through telephone to encourage his participation. Hence, he was removed from the sample. So, 24 participants comprise the total sample and Table 4.1 shows the distribution by university.

Table 4.1: Participants' distribution by university

Universities	IAE	UdeSA	UTDT	UCEMA
Number of participants	6	9	2	7

In terms of the interaction with participants the affiliation may have had an impact on the research process, though this was not detected. For example, participants graduating from my university might have felt that they were contributing through this research to their institution and this increased their willingness to participate. However, there was great enthusiasm from participants belonging to all universities as this was a topic in which they were interested and so wanted to contribute knowledge. Additionally, the MBA directors of their universities had asked them to contribute to the study and since they were grateful for their educational experience, they felt positive about participating.

4.2.4   Participants

Participants included a total of 24 individuals who had finished their MBAs during 2008-2010, had changed jobs recently (average 3.5 months before the first interview). Ninety five per cent had undertaken a part-time MBA programme while in full time employment, 83% were male, and the average age when starting the new job was 33. They had recently undertaken different types of transitions such as promotions, lateral moves, demotions, changes in company, changes in industry, and becoming

entrepreneurs. The new role belonged mostly to middle-management, followed by first level management and consultancy/analysts, and finally top-level management (see Appendix 5 for participants' characteristics. The actual number of participants exceeds slightly the proposed in the PhD upgrade document). The research design prioritises thick description by multiple qualitative data collection techniques that will be described as follows, rather than breadth through large samples of cases (Goodwin and Horowitz, 2002).

4.2.5   Data collection techniques

Data collection included three techniques used over a period of four months: first interviews, diary keeping, and follow-up interviews. The aim of combining these three data collection methods was to observe processes through time from the point of view of participants. At the same time, as I did not expect problems in people disclosing their thoughts, feelings and experiences, interviews and diaries seemed a good option. This expectation was due to Argentineans being characterised by talking about their experiences and emotions. A study undertaken in 2008 affirmed that Argentina had 145 psychologists per 100,000 residents (Moffett, 2009). That is far more than second-place Denmark, with 85, or eight-place Brazil with 31.8 (Moffett, 2009 – data from 2005 study by the World Health Organization). This is particularly the case in Buenos Aires, where the universities participating in this study are located, with 789 psychologists per 100,000 residents. At the same time, a 2009 national survey conducted by TNS Argentina found that 32% of respondents had at some time had a psychological consultation. Finally, 85% of Argentine psychologists are women (Universia, 2006), representing another factor that would probably contribute to participants' willingness to share their experiences with a female researcher.

a) First interview: In the constructivist perspective,

"In terms of practice, the questions become broad and general so that the participants can construct the meaning of a situation, a meaning typically forged in discussions or interaction with other persons. The more open-ended the questioning, the better, as the researcher listens carefully to what people say or do in their life setting" (Creswell, 2007, p.20).

An interview protocol was developed with a broad key question which encouraged the participants to narrate their career transitions. However, in the first pilot interview, undertaken in the UK, it became evident that with such a broad topic and broad question, participants would go in very different directions, complicating the analysis. At the same time, although the study did not have hypotheses to test, I was aware of core ideas regarding role transition theory and interesting avenues to advance knowledge. Hence, it was decided that the interview protocol should encourage participants to reflect on those topics, whilst keeping an open-ended style. Consequently, to achieve these goals, other interview protocols were created and tested in three other pilot interviews held in the UK (see Appendix 6).

Firstly, questions were introduced to increase similarity among interviews. Questions were open ended, to promote the telling of stories (Egan, 1994), allowing themes and dimensions relevant to the participants to emerge. The idea was not necessarily to ask all questions during the interview in a specified order but to encourage conversation through them, using the protocol as a 'safety net' for the interviewer. Initially the protocol comprised questions only. Then other elements were also introduced which encouraged conversation and reflection (see final First interview Protocol in Appendix 7). These elements and topics included:

Past career history: Previous research shows that work experience affects how individuals adjust to role transitions (Beyer and Hannah, 2002). At the same time, in pilot interviews that omitted exploration of prior career stories, it became necessary during the interview to ask questions to make sense of what was happening to participants. Because of this and because questions about past career are easy for participants to reply, it was decided to start the interview with this theme. In addition, it provided information in a chronological order, which helped in making participants comfortable and provided the interviewer with information to make sense of following themes. An autobiography exercise was then chosen, with an emphasis on transitions, which is the focus of this study. The strategy consisted of asking participants: "If you wanted to write an autobiography of your educational and work domains starting when you were 18 years old, what would the chapters be? Try to avoid chapter titles that can be used by many people such as 'university' or 'employment', and choose titles that reflect or summarise a particular period in your life. Please feel free to be creative and we can try to think of titles together." This first question was also positive since it has been suggested that "allowing respondents to provide narrative accounts of their lives and experiences can help to redress some of the power differentials inherent in the research enterprise" (Elliott, 2005, p.17).

Adjustment and socialisation: Several questions were introduced to encourage participants to discuss how they were adjusting to the role. Some of these questions were adapted from Barner's (2006) "Transitional coaching assessment interview questions" and from Ashforth and Saks' (1996) study on socialisation tactics.

Emotions: Participants were asked to report on their emotions. The interest was not on the specific emotions they mentioned but on how identifying emotions would encourage participants to reflect on the circumstances that were relevant enough to them to reveal emotions. Participants were then presented with a list of affect states and asked "If you had to choose a couple of words to reflect how you feel today about your work, which ones would you choose?" After they chose the words from the list or added new ones, they were asked to comment on the reasons why they felt this way. The emotional states list was adapted from the Job-related Affective Well-being Scale (JAWS) developed by Van Katwyck et al. (2000) and the wellbeing scale developed by Warr (1990). These were the most appropriate as they: relate to work-wellbeing and stressors; they ask for emotions to specific situations and not a general affective tendency; and they look for both emotions high and low on pleasure and arousal. The emotions were translated into Spanish with the aid of the Geneva Emotion Research Group's (1988) 'Labels describing affective states in five major languages'. Some of the emotions in JAWS and Warr could not be appropriately translated and were hence left aside. The rapport built during the first part of the interview and Argentinean cultural characteristics probably increased the disposition to disclose feelings.

Developing relationships: Previous research shows that relationships are very important during adjustment to a new role (Ibarra, 1999; Morrison, 2002). However, there is not much research on how these relationships develop as newcomers enter a new role. Since data collection was undertaken over a four month period for each participant, this was a unique opportunity to track how relationships developed and address this research gap. At first, a question was introduced asking participants to identify individuals who had been important in

their adjustment. During pilot interviews, participants struggled with this question, so in following pilot interviews, they were asked to make a list first with the names and then talk about them. This improved the conversation about this theme, but pilot participants' feedback indicated that they felt 'awkward' at doing this. Hence, building from the method used by Spencer and Pahl (2006), a diagram was designed for individuals to present their relationships. This diagram proved to have many benefits for the study: participants felt comfortable about completing it; it allowed the study to inquire for relationships providing different types of help/information; and it allowed for tracking changes in the diagrams through time as participants were asked to complete it two more times during the study. The selection of types of social relationships and questions to elicit them were influenced by Podolny and Baron (1997) and Ostroff and Kozlowski (1993). (See Appendix 8)

Future chapters: As this research aimed at understanding the current transition as part of individuals' careers, there was also an interest in capturing their wishes and plans for the future.

Summarising, the interview combined a narrative approach with more directed questions, dynamics, and joint reflection. Participants were told the focus of the study was the individual experience and that they should avoid disclosing what they thought the interviewer wanted to hear (Gillham, 2005). Joint reflection acknowledges the value of the participant as a reflexive subject, encouraging reflexive moments 'in time' during the interview and not only 'after the time' when the interview becomes an artefact (Riach, 2009). This was pursued throughout the interview, by conceptualising it not as a situation in which a subject transmits 'real information', but as an opportunity for sense-making (Holstein and

Gubrium, 1997). During interviews, there was a constant effort for clarifying the meanings of statements to make sure the participants' voices were heard and to make analysis easier and more robust. There was also a request for concrete examples of experiences to stimulate the respondent's memory and clarify abstractions or terms (Witzel, 2000). Given how fostering a relationship between the researcher and the participant is crucial to gain access to the subjective experience in constructionist methodologies (Richardson, 2005), an effort was made to establish rapport during interviews. Building trust and familiarity, showing genuine interest, assuring confidentiality, and not being judgmental were important elements (Miller and Glassner, 2004).

Prior to the interview, updated CVs were requested from participants. The interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes, were recorded and transcribed. First interviews were undertaken between April 2010 and February 2011. It was suggested that interviews were either held at a meeting office in their workplaces or at an Argentinean university that has two locations (downtown and suburbs). These suggested meeting places were aimed at reducing noise during interviews, which would complicate the transcriptions, and to accommodate participants' preferences. However, seven interviews took places at public settings such as coffee places because participants preferred this, and two over the telephone as participants worked more than 1,000 km away. Participants could choose the time of day that best suited their needs. This procedure was applied in the same way for follow-up interviews.

b) Diary: Participants were asked to keep 'transition diaries' for a period of three months. This provided a time frame long enough for some adjustment initiatives and experiences to take place without becoming a huge burden for participants.

The aim of this data collection technique was to overcome a problem with interviews relying on the participant's account of action, thoughts and feelings that occurred elsewhere in space and time (Becker and Geer, 1957). Additionally, the diaries were indicators of internal processes of reflection, giving insights into the identity process which emerged over time as a result of engaging in new situations and reflecting on those situations (Richardson et al., 2009). At the same time, during pilot interviews, it was discovered that it was hard for participants to talk about adjustment. They could talk about their career stories, but when asked about how they were experiencing the new role, they would say that although they had challenges, these were fun and they just coped with them. Consequently, it was decided that the diaries were necessary to be able to collect data on ongoing adjustment. Asking participants to keep diaries was a risky strategy, since participants were full time workers. This may have decreased their time and disposition to write on a diary for someone else. However, it was thought to be the best way to capture what the research was investigating: process, and how these individuals experienced the transition over some months. So, diaries were included in the research and hard work was undertaken to achieve a good compliance rate. In the following chapters, the quotes identify from which data source they belong, showing the depth of the writing that took place in the diaries. At the same time, the diaries enabled very rich follow-up interviews.

Participants were asked to write once a week in an unstructured diary (Elliott, 1997). Research shows that if there is some time between entries, information is richer than if participants write on a daily basis (Bagnoli, 2004). Diaries were kept both in electronic and hard-copy forms to relate to participants' most usual modes

of writing or preferences (Mann and Stewart, 2001), and participants could use both forms simultaneously.

Hard copy diaries contained an introduction with suggested topics to write about, together with the researcher's contact details. They included the Relationships Diagram with instructions and participants were asked to complete this diagram once a month after the first interview. Next, they had an example of some pages of a diary, to give participants an idea of what was expected from them (as many felt lost at first). Finally, it had several pages for participants to write freely. In every page, there was a sign that reminded participants to write the date, so that entries could be then put in chronological order with the electronic diary entries. Hard-copy booklets were small (A5-sized) and bound, making them easy to be carried and kept (Harris and Daniels, 2005). (See Appendix 9).

The electronic diary had a home page in which participants would find questions to stimulate responses to or sentences to complete. The aim of these was to give them ideas of what to write about. The first question was broad, simulating the hard-copy diary format, and said "These last days at work have been…" The other questions related to topics discussed during the interview. For example, there was a trigger on emotions which said "These last days at work I've been feeling…" It was decided to ask about general feelings and not regarding the particular moment of writing, as research suggests that "daily estimates made at the end of the working day have good correspondence to summated momentary ratings made across the day (Parkinson, Briner, Reynolds, & Totterdell, 1995) and singular momentary assessments might obscure the affective tone of the day (Tennen & Affleck, 2002)" (Harris and Daniels, 2005, p.425).

Participants were provided with the hard copy diary and shown on a computer the electronic diary at the end of the first interview. Confidentiality and safety was an important concern in terms of the electronic diaries. The platform needed to ensure that only the participant and I could locate the diary on Internet, read and write on it. After exploring facilities at Warwick and other blogs such as Blogspot.es, Blogger and Wordpress.com, a Warwick website with an embedded forum was chosen. These two tools could be hidden from Internet browsers such as Google and also from the 'Warwick tree', they allowed the researcher to indicate which users could read and write on each diary, and the website would send an email to the researcher notifying when participants wrote on their diaries. Although it was not the most 'user friendly' option, it was good enough and it complied with security issues. IT services provided me with the authorization to create external Warwick users, in order for participants to be able to access their electronic diaries. The diary address looked like: www.warwick.ac.uk/go/diario12 ('diario' is the translation of 'diary' in Spanish). Usernames and passwords were assigned to be the same, based on participants email addresses, and participants were asked to change the password as soon as possible (See Appendices 10 and 11). The electronic diary also allowed participants to write on it by replying an email. The questions and sentences were sent to participants on the day of the first interview and they could reply to those emails and get their responses posted into their electronic diaries. This was implemented to allow them to write from portable devices such as mobile phones.

Three participants wrote only on the hard copy diaries, ten only on the electronic ones, and five on both. Participants who wrote only on the hard-copy diary wrote the most with 2,794 words on average, followed by participants who wrote on both

diaries with 2,280 words on average, and last those writing only on the electronic diary with an average of 1,752 words each. One participant who wrote on both diary formats commented:

> "I thought the process, the method, was very positive. Very good, especially the double methodology for the hard-copy little book and the website. Generally, I would leave the book on the table, so that every time I would pass by, I saw it… the book would talk to me and I would think 'I need to write something'. And if I didn't write in the little book, maybe at some point I would become free at the office and would leave a comment on the website. I thought it was very good because I would leave the book at home. Besides, after being all day working with the computer, you get home exhausted, and you don't want to turn it on. So, I dedicated some time to the book…" (Participant 2, Follow-up interview)

There was another participant who wrote only in the electronic diary who commented about the process:

> "The fact that it was as electronic as possible was the best for me. Because I am with the computer all day and that in a break, maybe after lunch, I can sit and do something like this, it is much easier, to log into a blog and write rather than having a little notepad. This way I don't have to remember if I brought it or not. Then I get home and I'm tired and so I don't do it. For me, the fact that it was portable, it was very valuable." (Participant 5, Follow-up interview)

This suggests that having both formats was very useful, because although these are all similarly educated participants who all spend most of their times in offices and working with computers, they had different preferences for the way they wanted to write in the diary. Hard-copy diaries were transcribed and ordered chronologically with the electronic ones for each participant.

Various strategies were designed to support compliance. First, the importance of obtaining their thoughts on a continuous basis was explained to participants (Harris and Daniels, 2005). Secondly, I would periodically upload in the electronic diary articles and news that were particularly interesting for each participant considering the industries in which they worked, their professional concerns, among other issues. These provided a contribution in return for their time, and at the same time, gave me an excuse to email participants announcing the new upload, and hence remind them of the research project. Participants were encouraged to ask the researcher for topics they were interested in, so that files could be more useful to them. Approximately half of them made some requests. Most of these could be complied with, but two of them were particularly hard and quite some time was devoted to trying to accommodate the participants' interests. 105 files were uploaded into the electronic diaries. An analysis into how this affected their writing shows that when participants received the email informing of the new upload, the probability of them writing in that the day or the next two days was approximately 10% higher than of writing on any three days (see Appendix 12).

The level of writing remained constant throughout the three months. There is no evidence suggesting that participants wrote more times neither more words at the beginning of the study and then lost the energy, or the other way around (see

Appendix 13). Some participants said that they would remember to write by thinking of it as a work task. So, on Thursdays, for example, they 'had to write something before leaving work'. In fact, one of them said that at the beginning she would forget about writing, so she included it as a task in her email calendar, and this worked for her. Others had it in mind during the whole week but usually did not find time to do it, and so they would write at home during the weekends. These participants said that having a time period, a week, was useful, because they knew they had to write something before the next week started. The weekends were the writing space especially for some of the ones writing in the hard-copy diary. The location of the diary in the house was important. One said:

"Every weekend I had the diary there. The kitchen and the living room are connected by a bar and the diary was there. I would ask my wife not to move it from there. So it was there or on my night table, so I had it present." (Participant 22, Follow-up interview)

Some participants mentioned that time passed very quickly and so they thought they had written the week before and when they logged on to the electronic diary they would see it had been a while longer and would think "she is going to kill me!" They also commented that on some weeks 'not much happened' and so it was hard to write.

In terms of the topics they wrote about, most of them commented that they just started writing and they would write whatever came to mind. As they wrote, they would remember what had happened during the week or the feelings they had experienced. One participant mentioned that he would sit to write and try not to think much about it, not to look at the agenda to see what he had been doing that week: "if for some reason something had not seem important to me and I did not

remember about it, then it was probably not worth writing about it" (Participant 5, Follow-up interview). Others said it was good to have a space to express themselves, with what at first would be 'waterfalls of ideas' that then turned into arguments. Others said that when a strong feeling or change of mood took place they would think "I need to include this" and would write about it. There was one participant who had the diary very present in her mind, so as she was working and something happened she would think: "I could write about this, I will do it at night" (Participant 7, Follow-up interview). The events that would elicit these thoughts were those in which there was some doubt or conflict. She said:

> "For me, taking it out of my head, putting the doubt on paper, it is like it loses magnitude. I think so. So, it is good to take it out and decrease its magnitude... In general they were situations in which there was some type of conflict, bigger or smaller, to solve." (Participant 7, Follow-up interview)

The topics and the way they wrote could have depended on whether it was the hard-copy diary or the electronic one. For example, the ones who wrote electronically tried to accommodate what had happened to the questions or triggers presented on the website. Participant 2, who wrote in both formats, said that he was more reflective on the hard-copy diary while more expeditious in the electronic one.

> "With the little book, I would sit to write and reflect on the work day, and maybe on what had happened in the last three or four days. In the Internet one, what was in my mind on the moment because I said 'Ok, I have 5 minutes'." (Participant 2, Follow-up interview)

In the first interview, asking about emotions proved to be a very good way to elicit participants' experiences of the adjustment process. So, during the diary writing period, I sent some emails to participants, just asking for them to identify their emotions for the previous week. This information, which resembled the diary writing, and in fact was one of the suggested questions in the electronic diary, also helped to increase participants' writing during this time. Actually, one of them said that when I started sending these emails asking about their feelings, he found it easier to reply to those emails than writing in the diary.

In order to remind them of completing the Relationships Diagram, I created for myself reminders on my email calendar to write to each participant when one month and two months had passed. Thirteen participants completed the diagram three times as requested, six completed two times, four completed it once, and one participant did not complete it (as we ran out of time during the interview).

c) Follow-up interviews: The final stage of the data collection involved follow-up interviews to reflect on the socialisation process. The main goal of this interview was to reflect and explore participants' comments on the diaries further. Therefore, I read the diaries and crafted the interview protocols based on these, following Burgess (1992, p.160):

> "Document-based interviews can be extremely useful in several different ways. Firstly, we may wish to ask questions about a document which we cannot understand because it refers to a situation or event about which we know too little to make sense out of what is written, or because the document is in a form which we cannot decipher owing to the use of abbreviations and expressions which are not familiar to us. Secondly, we may wish to question writers of documents as starting

point for interviews intended to go far beyond the actual contents. In such cases, the interview serves as a means of entry or stepping stone to information related to but not covered by the document itself. Thirdly, we may wish to interview the writers of documents in order to make them reflect and elaborate upon what they have written, and thus to draw more meaning out of the document than is conveyed in the written word."

A few participants were surprised by the detailed way in which I had read their material. Although they were conscious on writing for someone else (as they would finish sometimes their entries with 'Greetings' or they even mentioned they were cautious of not disclosing much strategic information from the company), it is probable that at some points they got relaxed and hence they were surprised that someone was exploring for more detail or reasons of what they had written. Even though this process may have felt awkward for a few of them, they replied to the questions and they said they enjoyed participating in the project.

Additionally, during this interview, Relationships Diagrams were presented next to each other and participants were asked to comment on the changes observed and how each relationship had developed (see Appendix 14 for a Follow-up interview protocol). In the cases where participants had not been keeping diaries, they were asked to talk about the months passed. The interview protocol also included some questions aimed at following up themes discussed during the first interview and assessing adjustment and satisfaction levels.

These interviews were undertaken approximately four months after the first interview, noting that participants wrote in their diaries for three months, after which I collected the hard-copy diaries to analyse them, and then the follow up

interview was organised. Follow up interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes, were recorded and transcribed. They took place between September 2010 and June 2011.

Appendix 15 summarises participants' completion of the data collection techniques. Most participants (n=17) complied with both interviews and wrote on the diary, providing very rich data for the analysis. No pattern of difference is observed between those who completed and those who did not. It must be recognised that not the same amount of data is available for all participants and this may have an effect on the results of the study, since for those participants who provided more information, more analysis could be undertaken. However, when trying to validate ideas, the propositions were applied to all participants who had information on that issue.

All data collection was undertaken in Spanish because it was participants' first language. It was also transcribed and analysed in Spanish to prioritise the meaning of words and then several quotes were translated into English to share with supervisors and to include them in reports and the thesis.

Finally, five interviews were undertaken with Argentinean/Latin American HRM directors to contextualise participant's comments on the labour market, as this was a strong theme during first interviews. An HRM director who was known to me through my teaching experience was invited to an interview on this topic. He accepted and offered to forward the invitation to other HRM directors. They all showed great interest in the study and five telephone interviews lasting 34 minutes on average were undertaken in February-May 2011. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. The interview guide consisted mostly on topics they were invited to discuss and these were sent to them previously by email (Appendix 1). The interviewed HRM directors belonged to the companies Molinos Río de la Plata, Toyota, McDonalds, Unilever,

and Banco Galicia. These companies employ vast amounts of managerial employees, are among the biggest multinationals operating in the country both with local and external ownership, have operated in Argentina for many years, and represent different sectors of the economy. Brief characteristics of the companies were presented in Chapter 3.

4.2.6 Ethical considerations

The Warwick Institute for Employment Research Ethical Approval for Research procedure was followed (see Appendix 16). Informed consent of participants was secured by providing the intended participants with a comprehensive explanation of what was involved in the research and his or her rights, such as to withdraw from the activity at any time and to have privacy and confidentiality protected. In addition, participants were provided with an information sheet with the researcher's name and contact details, and information on what participation involved, time required, and usage of information. Informed consent was secured in writing before interviews, after participants had been given information about the research and had time to consider the implications of granting consent (see Appendix 17).

Data were handled with due attention paid to security and anonymity. As soon as possible after the interviews were over, the recording was passed onto an encryption software (Truecrypt vault) and deleted from the recording machine. All other information from participants, such as resumes, was also held in a Truecrypt vault. Emails were kept under secure passwords. Online diaries were protected with a password only known by participants. The only people having access to the diaries were each participant, the researcher, and web administrators assigned by Warwick/IER. Hard copy diaries were held by participants during data collection. They were responsible for the confidentiality of their own data. After it has been

handed to the researcher, it was made sure it was located in a safe place. At the same time, diaries do not have names, rather codes (the codes are kept in a Truecrypt vault).

The constructivist approach based on narrative and joint reflection can lead to a potential blurring between the domains of research and intervention. This posits an ethical dilemma since the researcher may get involved in a situation where her role is confused. This was approached with an ethic of care (Bimrose and Barnes, 2007; Richardson, 2005), in which the research can be of benefit to the participants (Haverkamp, 2005). When required, participants were provided with sources of relevant information, and encouraged to explore their needs further with suitable professionals. On a few occasions, participants asked my opinion about their careers. I explained to them that this was not my role, but that we could have an informal conversation about this once data collection was over. In these conversations, I mainly discussed with them my knowledge of the labour market and challenges other people in their positions were also experiencing. Most participants asked me to send the thesis or other publication materials as they were very interested in reading about the findings.

In accordance with an ethics of care, many participants commented that the research process had been useful to them. For example, from the beginning, many participants were excited about the diary writing request. They thought it would be a way to force them to organise the process and deepen their reflections. In fact, Giddens (1991) suggests that in modernity, reflexivity of the self is continuous, and that individuals are asked to self-interrogate themselves in terms of what is happening regularly. One participant had actually tried to keep a diary of his transition before but could not maintain the commitment, so he thought this research project would be a way to

enforce him to do something he had already wanted to do. Another participant commented about her reflexivity:

"I am a very reflexive person, I have been doing therapy for many years and I think all the time. But it is more like I think constantly and I lose myself with lots of ideas, but it is not like getting to reflect and think strategically. And this study forces you to think strategically. I mean, drawing your networks makes you think strategically, who you are contacting and why, in whom you are leveraging and why. So, it is good, you learn, you learn about yourself." (Participant 18, Follow-up interview)

Related to learning, another participant said:

"I thought it was a very good experience, a really good experience. It should be a type of exercise one ought to do, right? I mean, every now and then say 'let's see, I stop for a second and I write how I feel, how I see myself, what I learnt…' I mean, then you read it and it is like you start seeing lots of things that you don't in other ways." (Participant 26, Follow-up interview)

Participants who did not write in the diaries were apologetic and said that the weekly assignment was very hard for them but they enjoyed the interviews and were eager to have more. One of them actually insisted in having an interview during the diary keeping period (and so he had three interviews in total), also to feel that in this way he was complying with the request.

As it is suggested in the previous quotes, the data collection techniques affected the level of reflexivity and awareness of the transition process. One participant

commented after the first interview that he was now more attentive to his transition process.

> "Today, after the interview, I felt very eager to find out what my place in this organisation is and what my expectations are in this moment of my life. The day was like all others, but my perspective was more acute towards what I do and how I relate, in the context of 'what I want'." (Participant 20, Diary)

This same participant wrote on the diary that reading what he had written over the months helped him realise his situation and triggered further actions:

> "If I revise what I do, what I wrote, what I have to do tomorrow and in the next few weeks, I clearly rediscover that my responsibilities in this organisation are of a lower hierarchy than what I have as a goal for this time in my professional life. Now, with this clear vision, I need to consider: I either accept what I have or I look for what I want. We'll see." (Participant 20, Diary)

Another participant commented:

> "I've been doing an analysis of what I sent you, right? And there is a common word in most of them: anxiety. And I thought 'this is something to reflect about'. Amazing. I swear I had not realised about the issue until I wrote it on paper and read it and I said: 'this is something to work on'." (Participant 23, Follow-up interview)

This level of reflexivity and moments of awareness may have affected the results as the research process may have encouraged participants to be more reflective than the average experienced newcomer. When learning about the results, the reader should be

aware that they reflect the transition process of a group of Argentinean MBA graduates who had become particularly reflexive as a consequence of participating in this study. This limits generalisation but nevertheless introduces important factors and their links.

4.3 Approach to data analysis

Data were analysed following a grounded theory approach, involving an iterative process with data collection and literature review, promoting the collection of future data based on insights generated during the analysis. Substantive and theoretical memos assisted in the induction process, moving from the empirical to proposition development (Punch, 1998).

First, following this grounded theory approach, open coding was undertaken to identify: 'What is going on in the data? What are the participants trying to do and how they do it? What are the main processes and concerns during the first months in the new role?' (Charmaz, 2006). This first coding was close to the data and it was done by reading transcripts and writing on the margins 'what was going on'. After coding in this way three interviews, a coding scheme was created, with a definition for each code and sub-code and an explanatory quote. Right from the start, the coding scheme was detailed, in terms of identifying not only categories (codes) but also dimensions and properties (sub-codes) (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Although this was time consuming, it encouraged idea development and memo writing. The distinction between previous transitions and the current transition was the first to emerge in the coding scheme. This separation enabled a focus on the current transition, and still enabled coding of previous transitions, important for later analysis. Figure 4.1 shows the coding scheme for previous transitions and current transition, and Figure 4.2

shows more level of detail of this coding scheme. The software package NVivo 8 and

subsequent versions were used for coding.

Figure 4.1 Fist coding scheme
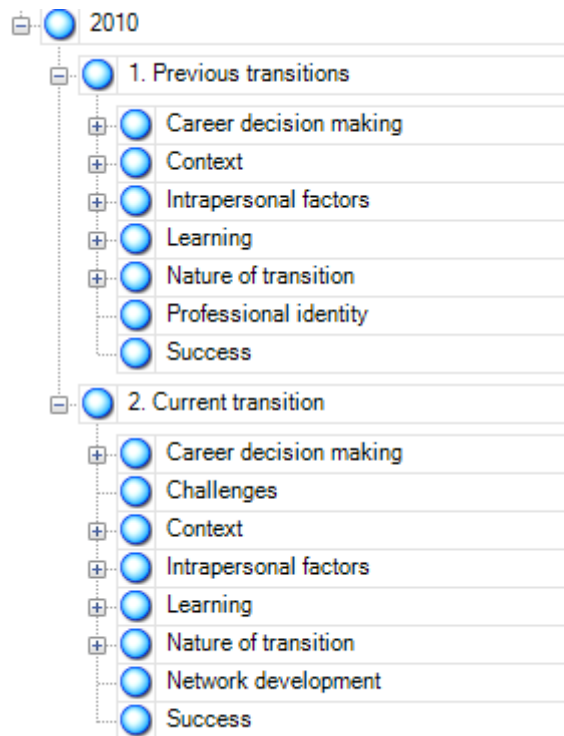
Figure 4.2 First Coding scheme – Current transition expanded
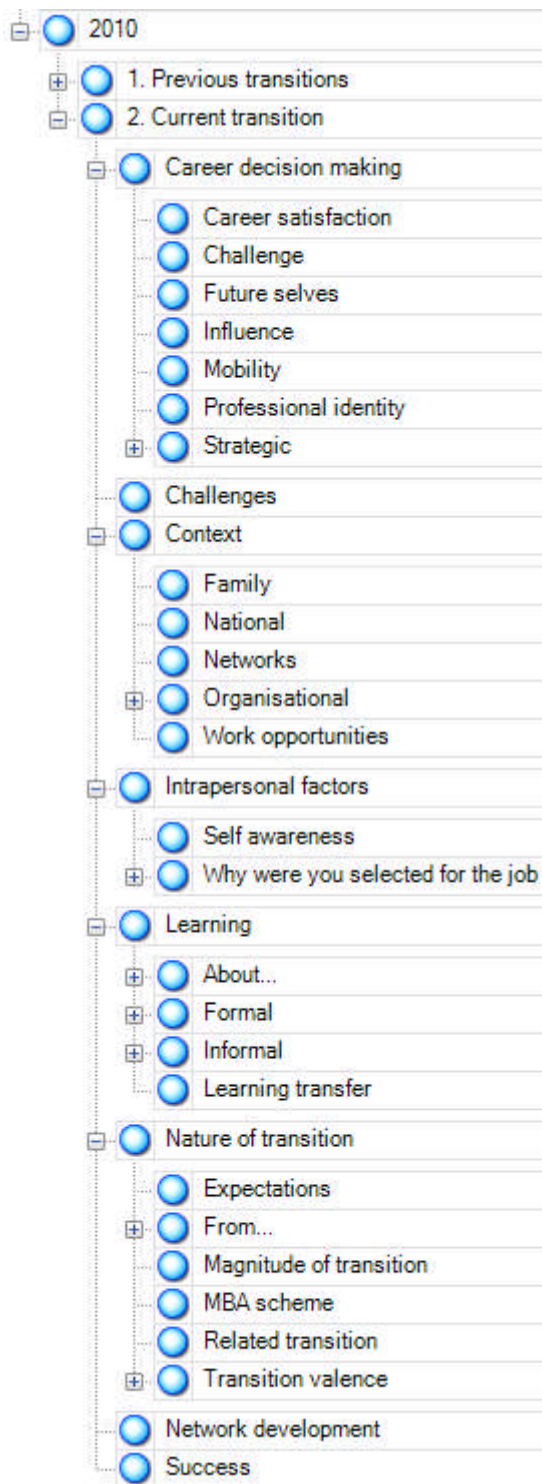
During the following months, this coding scheme was applied to more interviews. When doing this, new sub-codes were created and refined, and another code was created: 'Feelings at first', and some months later as the follow-up interviews were

coded: 'Feelings at end'. The emerging codes guided further data collection in terms of follow-up interviews, and stimulated the reading of appropriate literature to make sense of what was being found.

Some months later, it was realised that these codes were quite static and that in order to describe process, other types of codes were needed. Following Charmaz (2006), a new coding scheme was created which emphasised the ideas of action and process. This new scheme was first divided into: First interview, Diary, and Follow-up interview to be able to identify from which phase of data collection they belonged. Within each code, there were sub-divisions into: Current transition, Previous transitions and Comments on methods. The following Figures present this coding scheme with different levels of expansion of codes and sub-codes.

Figure 4.3 Second Coding scheme
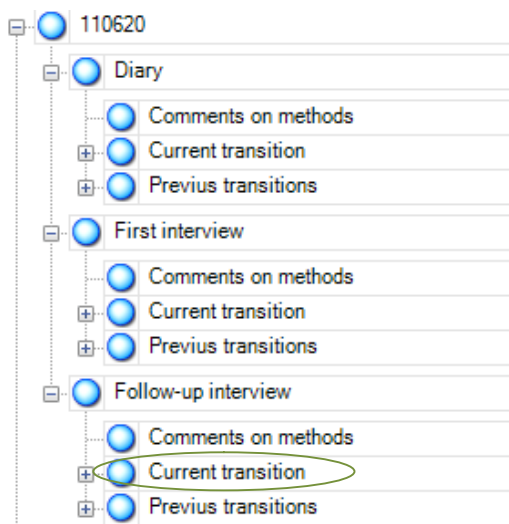
Figure 4.4 Second Coding scheme – 'Follow-up interview/Current transition'
expanded
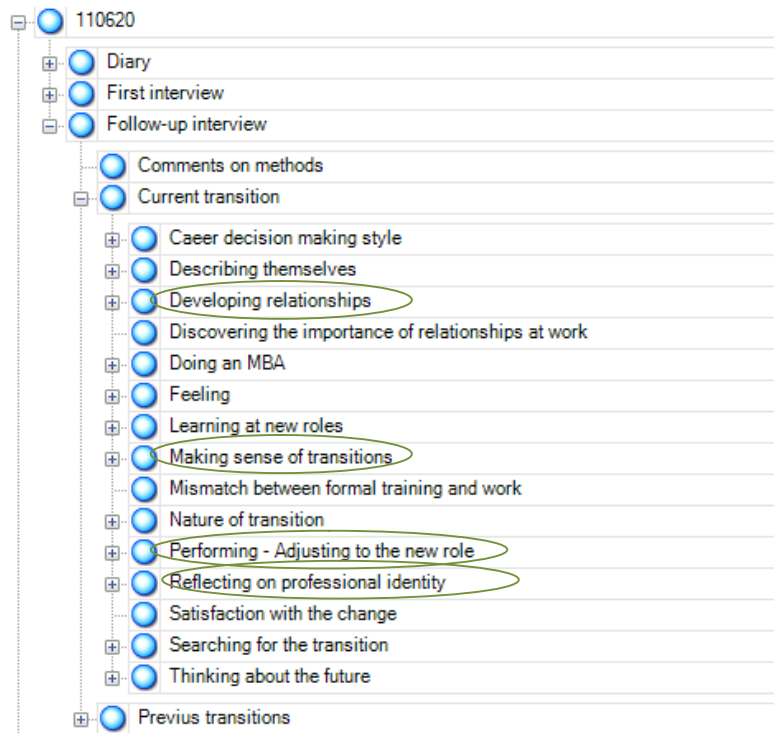
Figure 4.5 Second Coding scheme – 'Follow-up interview/Current transition' expanded further

110620
    Diary
    First interview
    Follow-up interview
        Comments on methods
        Current transition
            Caeer decision making style
            Describing themselves
            Developing relationships
                Changing through time
                Dealing with bad contacts
                Developing friendships
                Effects of relationships
                Having multiple functions
                How are they formed
                Mentoring
                Other categories
                Strategic
                With boss
                With senior people
            Discovering the importance of relationships at work
            Doing an MBA
            Feeling
            Learning at new roles
            Making sense of transitions
                Achieving a better fit
                Being part of the plan
                Being sure about it
                Capitalising career investments
                Changing professional identity
                Increasing chances for the plan
                Learning
                Leaving a bad situation
                Looking for challenges
                Opening doors
                Progressing
            Mismatch between formal training and work
            Nature of transition
            Performing - Adjusting to the new role
                Adjusting strategies
                Being adjusted-performing
                Being overwhelmed
                Contextual conditions
                Having multiple roles
                Internal positioning
                Time
            Reflecting on professional identity
                Being certain about it
                Identity threat
                Transitions as experiments
                Willing to change
            Satisfaction with the change
            Searching for the transition
            Thinking about the future
    Previus transitions

As with the first coding scheme, these codes were developed in terms of sub-codes (dimensions and properties), and as these were being applied to all interviews and diaries, new dimensions and properties were created and refined. As previously indicated, the complexity of codes emerging spurred further idea development and memo writing.

The formation of the professional identity emerged as a central category. The code 'Reflecting on professional identity' was extensively discussed by participants and it was of particular conceptual interest as is was central to the process being studied (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This led to a literature review on identity. The definition by Gecas (1982) was chosen which understands identity as referring to the meanings that individuals attach to themselves.

Identities are dynamic and they include and imply:

- a strong social dimension: as individuals learn, work and interact with others;

- upskilling/ re-skilling: individuals become skilled over time and individuals are agents in the construction of their particular set of skills and understandings;

- threat management: identities can be contested at times since they require recognition by others such as clients or peers and by management and the labour market through job grading and type of work allocated;

- agency: some individuals actively construct dynamic identities throughout their careers (Brown, 1997).

Following these propositions, as identity formation is a social process, the code 'Developing relationships' was also further analysed. During the adjustment period, participants were 'discovering' that building relationships was important both to adjusting to their roles and for their future careers. At the same time, the data provided

unique information on how those relationships formed and developed through time. This theme is developed in Chapter 6. A particularly interesting finding emerged related to 'conflicting relationships'. This was first brought to my attention during data collection. While completing the Relationships Diagrams, two participants asked 'Where do I put the enemies here?' They explained that in their new roles, there were people with whom they had to interact to get their tasks done, but who complicated their performance. After this initial insight, I realised that other participants also had conflicting relationships but did not call them enemies. I selected the concept 'Conflicting relationships' as a central phenomenon of interest and through axial coding looked for categories that related or explained this central phenomenon. These could be casual conditions that influenced the central phenomenon, the strategies for addressing the phenomenon, the context and intervening conditions that shape the strategy, and the consequences of undertaking the strategies (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). In Chapter 7, this main code is discussed, including the situations in which participants had conflicting relationships, how they responded to these relationships, the effects these had on them and the dynamics over time.

In terms of becoming skilled, the codes 'Being adapted' and 'Adjustment strategies' were analysed. These codes were selected because they related to learning as part of the identity development process. The code 'Learning' includes data on how participants learn at new roles, but not so much on the subjective experience of the identity development. These findings are presented in Chapter 8.

In terms of contested identities and constructing the professional identity, 'Reflecting on professional identity' emerged as a main category, and so "within-case and across-case comparisons were made to assist in uncovering relationships among categories" (Beyer and Hannah, 2002, p.639). Throughout the data collection, participants were

talking about their current professional identities and how they felt about them, what they were doing if they were not satisfied with the situation, and about what they wanted for the future. These processes involved a lot of energy, reflection and emotion, and proved to be a major concern of these individuals during the adjustment period. Other codes were incorporated into the analysis as they seemed to be antecedents or consequences of this identity main category. These were 'Making sense of transitions' and 'Thinking about the future'.

As a result of an iterative process between data analysis and literature review, two main categories emerged: identity threats (Chapter 9), and experimenting with possible selves (Chapter 10). Through constant comparison among cases and time periods, a theoretical model was achieved which explained antecedents, responses and effects (Glasser and Strauss, 1967). Selective coding was then performed to make connections between categories of codes (Strauss and Corbin 1990), and extreme cases served to generate propositions, which were then tested in other cases, achieving theoretical saturation of main conceptual categories and relationships. As Beyer and Hannah (2002, p.640), I worked to reach theoretical saturation, by including in the analysis *all* concepts that helped me to understand and explain variations in any of the newcomers' ongoing adjustment. Systematic, detailed comparisons across all cases were made and questions were continuously asked to address any differences or unexplained variations identified (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p.62). To answer these questions and to facilitate comparisons across cases, many tables were crafted (Miles and Huberman 1994).

During the analysis, the literature was searched for concepts and findings that would help in understanding the newcomers' experiences and how various elements were related to each other. I constructed a variety of provisional relational models and

refined them until through this process and by presenting at workshops/conferences, a model emerged, presented in Chapter 11. Having participants who shared an age group, an MBA degree, and a concern for their careers, but who had very different career stories and were experiencing diverse types of transitions, allowed the study to differentiate process depending on the type of transition, constructing a broad model.

4.4 Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research

The quality of qualitative research can be evaluated through its credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Credibility refers to the 'truth' of the findings. In this study, credibility is achieved by prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, and negative case analysis. Prolonged engagement refers to spending sufficient time in the field to understand the phenomenon of interest, and this was sought by interacting with participants in many occasions. Development of rapport and trust also facilitates understanding and co-construction of meaning between researcher and the participants. This was achieved by engaging in extensive interviews, keeping in contact through four months, listening to participants' concerns and not trying to impose ideas on them. Participants affirmed that they had felt very comfortable during the research process and many of them kept in contact with me after data collection was over to update me of work news, inform me of changes in contact details, or send holidays greetings, suggesting good rapport was built during the research process. Persistent observation was achieved by gathering data for each participant during four months; this allowed me to identify those elements in the process that were most relevant to participants. Triangulation involves using multiple data sources. Through the process of first interviews, diary and follow-up interviews, it was possible to check for the consistency of findings across different data collection methods and across

different points in time. For example, if participants were trying to make a good impression in the first interview, this could not be maintained for four months both in diary writing and in follow-up interviews. This assured that relevant themes emerged and not just 'nice stories'. Peer debriefing can help uncover taken for granted biases, perspectives and assumptions, and provides an opportunity to defend emergent ideas. This was achieved by having my doctoral supervisors discussing periodically with me the research question, pilot interviews, ethics, data collection techniques, literature background, assumptions, trustworthiness, and preliminary findings. In addition, I informally shared preliminary findings with colleagues and management professionals, and presented the study at academic conferences and workshops where my ideas were challenged. Finally, negative case analysis involves discussing elements of the data that do not support or seem to contradict emerging explanations. Usually, ideas emerged from a few cases, then these were 'tested' in all other cases and, on occasions, discrepancies appeared. I worked on the emerging ideas until they were not contradicted by any case.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that transferability can be achieved by providing thick descriptions of the phenomenon so that the reader can evaluate the extent to which the conclusions are transferable to other times, settings and people. The appendices and remaining chapters provide rich descriptions of the participants and their thoughts to allow the assessment of transferability to other professionals. Dependability involves showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated. This chapter has provided a detailed description of the research process, to facilitate the possibility of other researchers repeating the study. Confirmability requires that the findings are supported by the data collected, and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest. To pursue this, I kept a research diary during the whole process in which I

would regularly write my thoughts and perceptions, as long as the reasons for all decisions. Most of these decisions and rationales are expressed in this chapter and the evolution of data collection protocols is also included. At the same time, I discussed these issues with my doctoral supervisors who encouraged my reflexivity and increased the awareness towards the effects I might be having on the research process.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter provided a detailed explanation of the research process and underlying decisions, including the selection of the group of interest for the study, the negotiation of access, participants' characteristics, data collection techniques, ethical considerations, and approach to data analysis. Returning to the aim of this study of understanding how experienced business professionals undergo the adjustment period to a new role, by trying to identify the factors and situations that are relevant to them during the transition, the analysis suggests that developing the professional identity through social interactions, managing identity threats, experimenting with possible selves, and hence creating dynamic identities was a central phenomenon during this time in their careers. The next chapter introduces key concepts on professional identity, providing a more specific literature review to understand the study's results.

CHAPTER 5: PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Professional identity emerged as a main category in data analysis, indicating that a literature review in this direction was necessary to develop, contextualise and position the results. This chapter presents a brief outline of key concepts and research gaps related to identity within a management context to provide a more specific framework to the following chapters in which the results are discussed.

5.1 Professional identity and transitions

Several definitions of identity are evident in the literature. In this study, identity is understood as referring to the meanings that individuals attach to themselves (Gecas, 1982). "Professions, such as medicine, law, and accounting, arise when an organized group possesses esoteric knowledge that has economic value when applied to problems (e.g., sickness) faced by people in a society" (Pratt, Rockmann and Kaufmann, 2006, p.235). Previous studies on professionals in medicine and management suggest that identity is a key element in their working lives (Ibarra, 1999; Pratt et al., 2006). Professional identity is an 'achieved' identity, meaning an identity acquired or assumed through life development, as opposed to an 'ascribed' identity, which is an identity socially constructed on the basis of birth (Jenkins, 1996). It follows that individuals need to work on the construction of their identities, and employment experiences have an effect on this. "Professional identity forms over time with varied experiences and meaningful feedback that allow people to gain insight about their central and enduring preferences, talents, and values" (Ibarra, 1999, p.765).

According to social identity theory, these self-conceptions reflect a social identity comprised of salient group classifications and a personal identity comprised of idiosyncratic characteristics such as bodily attributes, abilities, psychological traits,

and interests (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Hence, professional identities include a social identity, as individuals define themselves as part of a certain professional group and a personal identity as they differentiate their individual characteristics. Identification with professional groups can derive from regular contact such as periodic meetings, newsletters, mutual support and goal sharing, or from 'psychological groups', which are "a collection of people who share the same social identification or define themselves in terms of the same social category membership" (Turner, 1984, p.530). Therefore, individuals who define themselves as 'marketing managers' do not need to interact with other marketing managers or be accepted by them, although this will usually make the professional identity stronger.

Individuals present multiple identities belonging to different domains and to different time frames. It is increasingly being recognised that identities are dynamic and in constant evolution (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). Identities can be more or less central to the individual, be permanent or provisional, and reflect actual or potential achievement (Markus and Wurf, 1987; Stryker and Serpe, 1982).

During transitions, identities might change as new roles require new skills, behaviours, attitudes, and patterns of interpersonal interactions (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010). Identity work has been defined as people's engagement in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening, or revising their identities (Snow and Anderson, 1987; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). Identity work includes the utilisation of artefacts such as clothes, office decor, and personal objects. It can also imply cognitive strategies such as selective social comparison, searching for balance among multiple identities, and experimenting with possible selves. Finally, it may include rhetorical devices such as stories and justifications which aid the individuals in expressing the identity problem they are facing (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010).

Identities are dynamic and they include and imply:

- a strong social dimension: as individuals learn, work and interact with others;

- upskilling/ re-skilling: individuals become skilled over time and individuals are agents in the construction of their particular set of skills and understandings;

- threat management: identities can be contested at times since they require recognition by others such as clients or peers and by management and the labour market through job grading and type of work allocated;

- agency: some individuals actively construct dynamic identities throughout their careers (Brown, 1997).

The following model introduced by Brown (1997) summarises these ideas.

Figure 5.1: A dynamic model of occupational identity formation

changing

activities at work

engagement   engagement

interaction

individual   others

working, learning, other

relationships

development   recognition

identity at work

becoming

communities of practice

3 dimensions: workgroup

institution

occupation
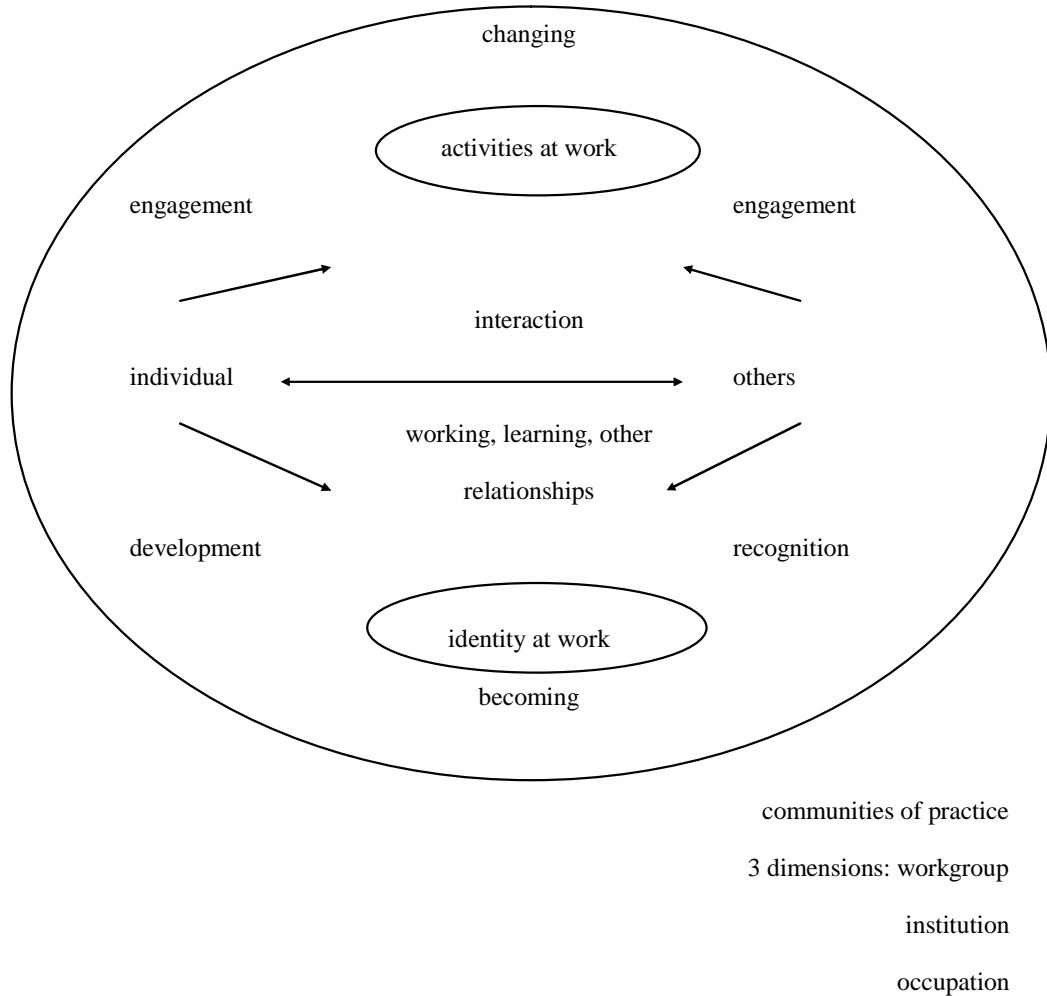
Source: Brown (1997), Figure 1, page 61

The model depicted in the figure serves to frame the thesis' findings. First, it understands learning as an identity process. The model refers to Lave's (1991) proposition regarding that learning is not a cognitive underpinning but a process of becoming a member of a sustained community of practice. Similarly to this thesis' findings, this suggests that identity work is a central concern for newcomers. This implies that as individuals make career changes, they learn and change through entering new communities of practice. These communities belong to different levels: occupational or professional, institutional such as the organisation, and more local

communities of practice such as the workgroup. Depending on the magnitude of the career transition, experienced newcomers will be entering and maintaining some of these communities and, as will be explained in later chapters, their interaction and participation will impact their learning and identity legitimation (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

The figure also suggests that learning is a relational social process, and that recognition of the status of experienced practitioner is dependent on the recognition of others and a sense of self-worth (Brown, 1997). This confirms the importance of understanding the social context in which experienced newcomers develop their professional identities following a career change. Finally, the figure portrays identities at work as dynamic. The model incorporates the individual as an agent who, by engaging in the activities at work, is affected and can affect the practices of the community, also modifying or maintaining some aspects of his or her identity.

As follows, the dimensions of the model (identities as social, becoming skilled, contested identities, and constructing dynamic identities) are further explored as this contributes to introducing the following chapters.

5.2 The social dimension

Identity recognition is partly done by others; "how they are perceived by other workgroup members, managers, other workers, trainees, clients and so on can all be influential in the formation of an occupational identity and an identity at work for an individual" (Brown, 1997, p.64). Previous studies on business professionals' identity development during transition periods show that individuals look for feedback from their work relationships to evaluate if their behaviours are appropriate (Ibarra, 1999). Decisions to change professional identity orientation are also influenced by formal and

informal relationships. Scientists who could choose between a traditional pathway related to basic research and a more applied pathway with interaction with industry were affected by the diversity of their advice networks and by a social comparison effect with members from the advice network and formal work groups (Suzanne and Dabos, 2010).

At the same time, individuals acquire skills, knowledge and understandings over time in particular social settings. Different types of relationships and interactions accompany individuals during the learning of the profession; this could be mentors, senior colleagues, peers, and non-work relationships. This means that individuals experience diverse learning experiences as they change social settings and as they develop relationships. Hence, "the formation, development, maintenance and change of an occupational identity, and/or identities at work, are influenced by the nature of the relationships around which they are constructed" (Brown, 1997, p.64). To become skilled in a certain profession and in a specific work setting, individuals may require the explicit support, encouragement and advice from their peers (Brown, 1997).

Considering the role of the social context in identity development, it is important to understand how these relationships develop as individuals change professional roles. The social network and socialisation literatures have emphasised how different types of relationships affect individuals' careers and newcomers' adaptation particularly (Burt, 1992; Granovetter, 1973; Morrison, 2002; Seibert, Kraimer and Liden, 2001). For example, newcomers with larger informational networks that cut across organisational units report greater organisational knowledge, whereas those with denser and stronger informational networks indicate greater mastery of their jobs and greater clarity with respect to their roles. Having supervisors (as opposed to just peers) within one's informational network is also related to job and role learning. In addition,

newcomers are more committed to the organisation when their friendship networks contain individuals from different subunits and levels (Morrison, 2002). However, there is little information on how social networks at work are developed (Ibarra and Desphande, 2007), and particularly how newcomers develop and manage relationships as they enter a new role.

5.3 <u>Becoming skilled</u>

During career transitions, individuals need to acquire new skills and develop either a new professional identity or extend an existing one to a new level. Findings from a study of junior business professionals, who progressed to the next stage in the hierarchy at a management consulting firm and at an investment bank, show that individuals experimented with provisional selves that served as trials for possible, but not yet fully elaborated, professional identities. The study proposes that adaptation involves three basic tasks: observing role models to identify potential identities, experimenting with provisional selves or professional behaviours, and evaluating experiments against internal standards such as personality and against external feedback (Ibarra, 1999). Through this process, new professionals acquired the required skills and evaluated whether they were suitable for them and for the environment.

Past experience affects experienced newcomers' adjustment to a new temporal role in three primary ways: through the personal identities they had developed and carried with them, through the know-how they had acquired in past jobs and how well it fitted with their new jobs, and through the personal tactics they had learnt for managing their work and managing change (Beyer and Hannah, 2002). Senior professionals also need to adapt to new roles. For example, senior managers' experiences have profound influences on how they perform the role and how they tackle the problems by focussing efforts on different areas (Gabarro, 1987).

In this thesis, participants performed identity work when reflecting on their individual characteristics that allowed them (or not) to perform the new role, therefore changing aspects of their identities to adjust to the new role.

5.4 Contested identities

The professional identity provides an important feeling of one's own value. It also mediates how the individual presents himself or herself to society (FAME-Consortium, 2007). Considering that work is an important sphere for most people; "more than engaging in work being solely about exchanging time and labour for remuneration, there are potentially important outcomes for individuals that arise from engaging in work activities and interactions" (Billett, 2007, p.187). So, when the professional identity is contested, it may produce strong negative effects on individuals.

Undertaking tasks which are not related to the professional identity has the potential of contesting an identity. In fact, specific kinds of tasks could be the most important dimension of identification with one's work for many workers (Valenduc et al., 2006). During the entry to a new role, individuals may see their identities contested or experience a threat when the tasks and activities they perform are not aligned with their identities. Pratt et al. (2006), in their study of medical residents who were forming their identities, reported how these young professionals encountered identity threat when they needed to perform activities that did not match what they thought they should be doing.

The position or role is another aspect that might contest the identity. "The construction of an identity is a transaction between on the one hand, individuals with identification desires and on the other hand, institutions that give status, categories, and diverse

forms of recognition" (Valenduc et al., 2006, p.132). When companies do not provide this desired status, the individual may feel his or her professional identity threatened. Identity threat refers to "experiences appraised as indicating potential harm to the value, meanings, or enactment of an identity" (Petriglieri, 2011, p.644). Newcomers are "often concerned with building a self-definition, of which the social identity is likely to comprise a big part" (Ashforth and Mael, 1989, p.27).

When individuals perceive their identities threatened, they will probably react to the threat. Petriglieri (2011) reviewed identity threat coping responses and identified two major types: identity-protection responses and identity-restructuring responses. Identity-protection responses are "directed toward the source of the threat and involve no change to the individual's threatened identity" (p.647). This category encompasses three types of response: derogation, concealment, and positive-distinctiveness. Derogation implies discrediting the source's validity. Concealment refers to disguising a particular identity in settings where the individual thinks this identity might be threatened. Positive distinctiveness involves the individual presenting identity-enhancing information to try to change the attitude of others towards the identity.

Identity-restructuring responses are directed towards changing an aspect of the threatened identity. This category encompasses three types of responses: changing the importance of the threatened identity to the individual, changing the meaning associated with the threatened identity such as making it compatible with the tasks required in the role, and abandoning the identity and physically disengaging from any role or group associated with the identity. An example of changing the meaning was observed by Pratt et al. (2006) in a study of medical interns who changed the meaning of their identities to make them relate to the activities they had to perform. Empirical

research is needed to unravel the strategies experienced newcomers use and whether they apply one or multiple responses (Petriglieri, 2011).

5.5 Constructing dynamic identities

In the current labour context, which is characterised in many countries as flexible, deregulated and fluid, individuals need to constantly construct their identities, as potential trajectories are very diverse; "a steady, durable and continuous, logically coherent and tightly-structured working career is however no longer a widely available option. Only in relatively rare cases can a permanent identity be defined, let alone secured, through the job performed" (Bauman, 1998, p.27). The emphasis is not on pre-structured occupations but rather on individual skills development, acquisition of knowledge and competencies, work experience and a proactive work attitude. Work identities are hence highly individualised and dependent on the specific work context, job profile, individual skills composition and career orientation (Kirpal, 2004). Workers today are actively constructing dynamic identities (FAME-Consortium, 2007).

Professional identity work is then focussed on current identities and on possible selves. Possible selves are "the ideal selves that we would very much like to become. They are also the selves we could become, and the selves we are afraid of becoming" (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p.954). Possible selves are built considering the past identity as perceived by the individual and observing role models. They have two functions: giving meaning to current experiences and motivating behaviour to achieve the desired possible selves. Individuals may create various possible selves, aimed at different points in the future. Transitions are moments in which individuals negotiate the meanings of their identities with that of the role and the organisation (Nicholson, 1984). It is important to understand individuals' reflections and work on their

identities, as "self-concept research has revealed the great diversity and complexity of self-knowledge and its importance in regulating behaviour" (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p.954).

"Despite consensus in the socialization literature that identity changes accompany work-role changes, the process by which identity evolves remains underexplained" (Ibarra, 1999, p.765). Some studies bring light into the personal identity in terms of adaptation and skills developed (Beyer and Hannah, 2006; Ibarra, 1999), however few studies examine how the possible selves change over time. An exception is Pratt et al. (2006) which provides some insights in the case of junior professionals who are taking their first jobs. Another exception is Ibarra (2003) who suggests that individuals wishing to undertake a radical career change should experiment with future selves when deciding the next steps in their careers. These experiments refer to small trials to get a better grasp of the possible selves. By means of experimenting with future selves through temporary assignments, side projects, or studying, individuals can gain a good picture of what the new identity would be like and make an informed decision, since "we learn about ourselves by doing, by testing concrete possibilities" (Ibarra, 2003, p.91). She also suggests individuals to shift connections and to make sense of catalysts and triggers to rework their career stories.

Once individuals have made a transition, they may still be in a 'highest investment experiment', as they are continuously evaluating whether they feel at ease with the new identity. In line with this idea, it has been recently proposed that contrary to the belief that choice and work adjustment take turns in career development, the current boundaryless nature of work suggests that they are increasingly intertwined (Hoekstra, 2011, p.161). The analysis of professionals' reflections on their identities during the first months at a new role might contribute to Ibarra and Petriglieri's (2010, p.20)

suggestion that "further studies are needed to discover the range of the means by which possible selves are created, embellished, redefined, and adjusted".

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided some key concepts which have contributed to the results explained next in this thesis, through an iterative process between literature and data analysis. Summarising, professional identity comprises a social identity by which individuals define themselves as part of a certain professional group and a personal identity which includes their idiosyncratic characteristics such as abilities, psychological traits, and interests. Identities are dynamic and are affected by the social dimension, involve upskilling or re-skilling, require management of identity threats, and call for agency as individuals actively construct dynamic identities throughout their careers.

In the following chapters the social context of identity development is observed by looking into how participants developed relationships and managed conflicting ones in the new role. Then, the focus is on how they became skilled to perform the new job. Results on origins of, responses to and effects of identity threat are next presented. Subsequently, it is shown how the current career change provokes a continuation or modification of possible selves. Finally, a model is introduced which suggests how identities are changed during the first months of a new role. This contributes to arguments for the need for greater attention to identity's dynamism over the course of an increasingly discontinuous professional life (Ashforth, Harrison and Corley, 2008; Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010).

CHAPTER 6: DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS

The social context is part of individuals' identity development (Brown, 1997). The data reveal that participants devoted much reflection as to how their relationships helped or limited their performance, their positioning in the organisation/industry, the information they acquired, and their career prospects. At the same time, they thought about how to develop their networks to improve these objectives. The code "Developing relationships" was present in 22 out of 24 first interviews covering on average 9% of the text of first interviews, in 18 out of 20 diaries covering on average 22% of the text in all diaries, and in all 20 follow-up interviews covering on average 29% of the text in these interviews (see Appendix 18 for the coverage of this code in each source). During interviews, there were questions regarding the development of relationships. In the diaries, in which participants were encouraged to write about what was relevant to them, the comments on relationships were more spontaneous. Besides, data on this was also available through the Relationships Diagrams. As it was explained in Chapter 4, participants were requested to complete a diagram during the first interview, a month later, and two months later (see Appendix 8). This diagram asked question on different types of relationships, including: relationships that provide information on how to do the task, relationships that provide strategic information, relationships that provide friendship, and mentors. These four types of relationships involve both person-to-person and position-to-position ties, and the conveyance of both resource and identity content (Podolny and Baron, 1997). Follow-up interviews provided an opportunity to discuss the dynamics of these diagrams with participants, presenting very rich data on this process. Twenty-three participants provided information that could be used for this chapter either through interviews or diaries. In

addition, four participants completed once the Relationships Diagram, six completed it twice, and 13 thrice.

This provided a unique data set to follow up how relationships develop through time when individuals start a new role. Firstly, this contributed to understanding the social context of professional identity development, as individuals negotiate their identities with others (Ibarra, 1999; Wenger, 1999), learn new skills from and with others (Lave and Wenger, 1991), and reflect on their careers and possible selves with others (Ibarra, 2003). Secondly, it also starts to fill a research gap in social network theory. In the last few years, social network theory has developed rapidly, mostly in terms of analysing the effects of different types of networks on socialisation (Morrison, 2002), career development (Seibert et al., 2001), and career change (Higgins, 2001a; Suzanne and Dabos, 2010). However, there is little understanding on how people develop relationships at work (Ibarra and Desphande, 2007).

This chapter introduces participants' reflections on 1) developing relationships that provide strategic information, 2) forming friendships and relationships that helped them in getting socially integrated, and 3) developing and maintaining mentoring relationships. There are other relationships that were also relevant in participants' reflections such as getting information on how to perform the task, developing relationships with clients and providers, developing their working teams, learning how to work with supervisors, and developing relationships with senior colleagues.

6.1 Developing relationships that provide strategic information

Relationships that provide strategic information refer to those which give the newcomer insights into the goals and strategies of important individuals, divisions, the entire firm or the industry, including organisational and industry gossip (Podolny and

Baron, 1997). This is similar to what some authors call 'organisational information' which refers to power, politics and value premises (Morrison, 2002; Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1993). Participants were conscious of the need to develop these relationships in order to achieve adjustment and success. For example, Participant 18 was aware of the need to continue developing relationships to obtain strategic information:

> "You need to build relationships, have internal supports, with other business units, with the directors of other businesses. These are key relationships in the company. I cannot stay only with the people within my unit. There may be people who have more experience and you may be able to leverage on them. I mean, having built relationships allows you to go and make questions, to ask for advice, but for that you first need to build the relationship." (Participant 18, Follow-up interview)

Besides showing the importance that individuals assigned to developing these relationships, data provide insights into 1) who are the individuals newcomers choose to obtain strategic information from, 2) how newcomers start off these relationships, and 3) how these relationships develop through time.

6.1.1 Who provides strategic information?

Individuals are able to choose, amongst constrains such as access facilitated by the position (Podolny and Baron, 1997), who to approach for strategic information. Participants chose to approach individuals a) who seemed to have 'good' information, b) to whom they had easy access, and c) with whom they had matching personalities or working styles. In social network literature, when describing ego networks, referring to networks that are focused on one individual, the other persons with whom

this focal person has a relationship are called alters (Morrison, 2002). Hereafter, this denomination will be used.

a) Having good strategic information: Most relationships providing strategic information were based on the participant believing that the colleague had good strategic information (75% of 71 relationships[5]). This belief may have been supported on colleague's i) position or job (72% of 52 relationships), ii) tenure in the organisation or market (25%), or iii) good results and performance in the organisation (2%). Brief descriptions of each follow below:

Perceived good information as a result of alter's position: Participants thought that individuals who had high positions in the hierarchy or were in key positions had good information. Perceiving information as 'good' is relative to each participant, considering participants' own access to information as a result of their jobs and their needs for strategic information. For example, individuals occupying positions low in the hierarchy may approach a manager as a good source of information, but individuals being managers themselves might consider a director has useful information. Similarly, a colleague occupying a specific role which has a lot of interaction with clients might have information which is of not much value to one newcomer, but very valuable to another one who needs that kind of information to position himself or herself in the company. Finally, a newcomer may approach a colleague who does not occupy a hierarchical position but has access to information because of the specific role and the conversations in which he or she is present. Summing up, the potential value of the information can be related to

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[5] The total number of relationships identified in the diagrams as providing strategic information is 102. However, there is detailed information on who the alter is for 71 relationships. For all the coding presented in this chapter, a main reason/code was identified for each relationship so as not to double-code.

hierarchy; to domains the newcomer needs information about; or to a role which has access to strategic conversations.

In relation to hierarchical positions, for example, Participant 14 mentions someone senior at the organisation that provided him with strategic information which was useful to support his decisions.

> "Because of the seniority he has, right? So he has helped me in feeling supported in some decision processes I was involved in." (Participant 14, Follow-up interview)

In relation to domain specific, for example Participant 18, who is the product manager of a medical product, obtained strategic information from the medical advisor for that product:

> "She is the medical advisor for my product, so she is the one that strategically provides me with lots of elements… because, besides, she knows the business." (Participant 18, First interview)

Subordinates can also occupy positions that give newcomers access to information regarded as strategic, especially if the newcomer has achieved a senior position and hence depends on the information the work-team provides him or her on each specific domain. For example, Participant 26 received important strategic information from his subordinates:

> "Definitely, they are the ones who bring me more strategic information from each of the businesses today; regarding the strategic plans and we discuss how we fit in those plans." (Participant 26, Follow-up interview)

In relation to positions which have access to strategic conversations, secretaries seem to be the typical example:

> "Being the General Manager's secretary, she has access to a lot of things I did not find about before." (Participant 23, Follow-up interview)

Perceived good information as a result of colleague's tenure in the organisation: As some participants entered a new organisation, those individuals who had long tenure seemed good sources for information on strategies, values, power, and stories. Tenure allowed the colleague to have accumulated information during a long time and also to have built an extensive network that provided him or her current strategic information. In relation to accumulating information, Participant 21 who moved to France to a new organisation, mentioned a colleague who had been there for many years as an important source of strategic information:

> "He is an Argentinean, he is 60 years old and he has been in this company almost all his life. And he has been an expatriate for 25 years at least. So everything that is related to information about the group, about being an expatriate and all those things, he is number one." (Participant 21, Follow-up interview)

In relation to tenure increasing networks, for example, Participant 15 looks for information in someone who has been in the organisation for a long time and so has a big network.

> "Because he has been at this company for many years, he has contacts and he knows other people with whom he has built trust and so they tell him things." (Participant 15, Follow-up interview)

Perceived good information as a result of colleague's performance: Some participants identified individuals who had superior performance and positioning in the company, and thought these people should have access to strategic information in order to have been able to achieve these goals. For example, Participant 11 used to approach a colleague for strategic information because he had long tenure in the organisation. However, some months later she realised this individual did not have good results in terms of salary and promotions, so she decided to search strategic information from someone who had a higher career performance. Regarding the new contact that provided strategic information she said:

> "He is a guy who knows a lot about how to move, with whom to move and he has achieved the position he has and the things that he has … because he earns more than all the other managers (all things I started learning about later) because he is a very smart guy." (Participant 11, Follow-up interview)

Regarding the colleague who is no longer approached for strategic information:

> "I guess that then I took him out of my network because… I realised that his information was not that useful to me. I mean, because his perception of things was not necessarily correct." (Participant 11, Follow-up interview)

b) Easy access: Especially at the beginning of the transition, individuals may receive strategic information from whoever is close and is willing to share this with them, with no other criteria for it. This represented 17% of the relationships providing strategic information. Easy access could be mainly related to being physically

close (50% of 12 relationships) or interacting because of the position (50% of 12 relationships).

Being physically close could refer to the workspace or to spending time together. For example, Participant 21 at first got strategic information from people who were in the same office:

> "Because of proximity too, they are in the same office." (Participant 21, First interview)

Participant 11 also got information from the colleague who used to travel to and from work with her:

> "At some point I used to talk more with her and she would tell me… it is like when you enter the company, people start telling you how things really work because you have no idea. And since she lives three blocks from my house I would give her a ride every day, and then she started telling me, I don't know, a million things about the company…" (Participant 11, Follow-up interview)

Position-based ease of access refers to those colleagues with whom participants interacted as a consequence of their jobs. As they spent time working together, they had the chance of also obtaining strategic information. For example, Participant 18 explained about her team colleague who provided her with more operational information but also strategic:

> "Everything gets mixed, because actually, Alan also helps me strategically… He tells me things on how I can… For example, we were talking about our unit, and he said 'They will probably start putting pressure on us because Brazil is doing very well.' So, he

suggests to me 'why don't you organise a meeting with the Brazilian people or we invite them here?' And this is not the task itself, he is actually giving me ideas so that I can develop the business… so, he also helps me strategically with some issues. Or for example, when I have to make a presentation, he would say 'No, don't include that. Say it this other way'. There are some more operational issues like 'Where do I check the sales results?' and others which are more strategic like 'You don't have to provide information to the sales force in that way…' (Participant 18, First interview)

Ease of access could also be affected by homophily as people find it easier to form relationships with similar others (McPherson and Smith-Lovin, 1987). So, although this may not be the best people to provide strategic information, it is easier to approach them. Mollica, Gray and Treviño (2003) found that homophily was a stronger predictor of newcomers' relationships even compared to physical proximity. In this study, homophily measured by gender shows that early in the socialisation process, participants chose 73% of relationships providing strategic information of the same gender.

c) Having matching personalities or working styles: Besides approaching individuals who seemed to have good information or good access to, participants obtained strategic information from colleagues who had matching personalities or working styles. This represented 8% of the relationships providing strategic information. Witkin et al. (1977, p.15) define style in terms of "individual differences in how we perceive, think, solve problems, learn, and relate to others", and suggest that cognitive similarity will lead to smoother interaction and positive mutual feelings between individuals. In line with these arguments, some participants searched for

strategic information from individuals who had similar styles. For example, Participant 15 received strategic information from someone she shares the way they work:

> "He is a guy whom I like how he processes and analyses information. I feel very comfortable working with him." (Participant 15, Follow-up interview)

Matching working styles can also be related to unit grouping, since as those who are grouped together tend to share common goals and values, they tend to perceive each other in a positive light (Kramer, Brewer, and Hanna, 1996). At the same time, this may trigger a rapid, cognitive cue or first impression that allows the newcomer to trust this colleague (Lewis and Weigert, 1985). Trust refers to someone believing in, and being willing to depend on, another party (Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, 1995). This trust concept can be broken into two constructs: trusting intention, meaning that one is willing to depend on the other person in a given situation; and trusting beliefs, meaning that one believes the other person is benevolent, competent, honest, or predictable in a situation (McKnight, Cummings and Chervany, 1998). For example Participant 11 searched for strategic information from someone who had a matching working style and this was strengthened by belonging to the same unit:

> "We have a similar tune and that is why my position belongs to operations and not to sales, it is like we have a similar brain […] And he is very very honest. That is my perception now, maybe next month I tell you something else, but I don't think so, I don't know, it gives me the impression of a person who is open when he tells you things." (Participant 11, First interview)

Finally, most participants looked for colleagues who had more than one of these characteristics to consider them sources of strategic information.

6.1.2   What factors favour the creation of strategic relationships?

In the previous section it was identified who participants chose to obtain strategic information from. This section analyses the factors that favour the creation of these relationships. These include factors based on a) prior relationships (29% of 80 relationships[6]), b) having a clear role and task interacting (29%), c) physical proximity (15%), d) newcomers' proactivity (5%), and e) newcomers' behaviours and attitudes in the new role (3%).

a) Based on previous relationships: Many relationships that provided strategic information were formed through prior relationships, such as knowing the colleague from previous roles, being friends with the colleague from before, and having friends in common who introduced them. Some examples of these are provided below.

Some of the relationships that provided strategic information were formed with people the participant had known from before, although before this role this colleague did not necessarily provide strategic information. For instance, Participant 18 made a lateral change in the same organisation and so she already knew some of the people who had 'good' information for her new position.

> "I had run into them before, so in that sense it was easier because I knew them and I had already interacted in other settings." (Participant 18, First interview)

A particular type of previous relationship is being friends. Being friends from

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[6] The data present information on how relationships providing strategic information were formed for 80 relationships.

before with people who had 'good' information was very valuable.

> "This is my best friend, he is the sales director of an important company, and he helps me a lot with market information. He has access to information that I don't have or I should pay for." (Participant 24, First interview)

Some participants were not friends themselves with the colleague but had friends or close relationships in common so it was easier to form the relationship.

> "He is a person who knows a lot about certain industries, he knows the pharmaceutical area very well, for example. He has helped me a lot with this entire field… He is a friend of my father in law and he also plays tennis with my dad, so there is a very good vibe with him." (Participant 24, Follow-up interview)

b) Based on having a clear role and task interacting: By performing activities of their roles, participants met colleagues who could potentially be sources of strategic information. Depending on the characteristics of the role such as the amount of interaction it involved and the clarity on the responsibilities and tasks assigned to the role, this was facilitated or not. Role clarity refers to understanding job tasks, priorities and time allocation. It is related to newcomers' performance, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and intentions to remain in the organisation (Bauer et al., 2007). In this study, data suggest that role clarity is not only important for newcomers but it is also important in the eyes of colleagues. If others in the organisation have clarity regarding the newcomers' role, they will be able to interact with them more and, probably, also approach them with relevant information. If neither the newcomer nor the colleagues have a clear idea of the

role, they will not know how to interact with each other. For example, Participant 15 has a clear role and colleagues approached her because they know the kind of information she needed:

> "He is very much involved with everything related to the approval of prizes for the projects I develop, and everything related to the productions. So, when there is something related to a negotiation and I need him to incorporate something into it, I talk it over with him. […] Or he tells me: 'Beware that we are working in an agreement with this company for their music rights, so tell me which contents you want'. And then he would say: 'And we also talked about this other thing at the meeting'." (Participant 15, Follow-up interview)

On the other hand, Participant 5 entered the company as part of an MBA scheme with no defined work role. He thinks this affected his possibility of developing relationships:

> "The group keeps being receptive towards me, although I am uncomfortable with not having a clear role to make my contribution. I think that for now it is my concern, but it is something I have talked about with my boss and my mentor. I keep meeting people from the support areas, but without a clear goal (or need), it is hard to move further than a social introduction." (Participant 5, Diary)

> "The fact that my role is quite blurred by the scheme, because the rest of my peers see that I don't have certain responsibilities… well, all these issues influence the relationships' dynamic. If I had entered the company straight as an executive, I think that my relationships would

have developed differently. I would have had a different relationship with my peers, another support; there would have been other interactions with another frequency, which today are not present…"

(Participant 5, Follow-up interview)

c) Based on physical proximity: As suggested by previous studies, newcomers' networks are much influenced by physical proximity. Previous research shows that co-workers that were separated by more than 25 metres walking distance had a significantly lower probability of communicating with each other than those closer to each other (Allen and Fustfeld, 1975) and that highly frequent interaction (on a daily basis) did not reach further than 18 metres on average, as measured from someone's desk to another desk across a range of different office-based organisations (Sailer and Penn, 2009). Similarly, co-authorship network structures within an academic department are also affected by distances separating researchers (Wineman, Kabo and Davis, 2009). Previous research also suggests that 'opportunity to interact' is a significant factor in newcomers' information seeking (Wanberg and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). In the case of Participant 21, he started forming relationships with people who provided him with strategic information because of being in the same office.

On the other hand, Participant 4 was located on his own in the top floor as there was no physical space available close to his peers. In his diary, he made reference on six different days to being alone and not being able to develop relationships. This was in fact the topic which was more present in his diary writing, exemplifying the importance it had to his adjustment:

"These days I've been feeling that I am paying the price for being new in an organisation which is a bit informal. This feeling is related to

being alone in an office in the top floor (because there was no space where the Marketing area is). I am alone upstairs and this does not help me to relate to people and be there on the day to day with the marketing team. It is hard to incorporate the culture and know more about the company if I am isolated in a floor where there is no one." (Participant 4, Diary)

d) Based on newcomers' proactivity: Some participants made a conscious effort to approach a person whom they thought had 'good' strategic information. However, all participants who were being proactive in this sense were not sure of how effective their efforts were. This was usually the case with colleagues high in the hierarchy with whom they had no interaction before this role. For example, Participant 9 was trying to get closer to get information from the Plant Manager and Participant 23 to the Country's Director:

"I've come closer to the Plant Manager, but I don't know how effective that will be." (Participant 9, Diary)

"I am trying to build a relationship with him. The thing is that he is a person hard to come close to. He doesn't trust anyone." (Participant 23, Follow-up interview)

e) Based on newcomers' behaviours and attitudes in the new role: Some behaviours or attitudes which were natural to the participants could favour the creation of a relationship that may provide strategic information. These behaviours and attitudes include performing well and contributing to each other's work. Besides regular task interaction, when participants performed well, they could encourage others in the organisation to develop a relationship as they positioned themselves as 'interesting' colleagues. For example, Participant 23 felt that a superior with

whom he interacted regularly, started sharing strategic information with him once he proved he had a high-quality performance.

> "He is my boss' supervisor. I started having much more contact through these management meetings in which I presented. Well, when I presented my project and they saw how good it was, he started also paying more attention to me." (Participant 23, Follow-up interview)

Some participants received strategic information from people whom they were helping as part of their work, and hence contributing to each others' work. Probably, having a good work relationship, promoted the colleague to share information. For example, Participant 26 thinks that his approach towards his subordinates helped in developing the relationship.

> "I felt really comfortable. The first week I organised a one-to-one meeting with each one, and the agenda for the meeting was 'them', getting to know them, their trajectory in the company, their previous jobs, their concerns in the company, the needs they had… I mean, my first issue was 'I want to know how people are in here' because one thing is what I saw from outside, from the business point of view, and another one is how the people are. I had never had access to how the people were, so my first task was that: understand how they are, and even more if I have to work of restructuring the area. And I think people took that approach very well. To my surprise, it had been a long time since someone asked them how they were. And there were many issues that they had been bringing up for some time, to which maybe the solutions are not that complex. I mean, we know that some issues

are going to take some time, but at least having a plan and giving them

feedback about it." (Participant 26, First interview)

6.1.3 Dynamics of relationships providing strategic information

This section identifies how and why relationships that provide strategic information develop through time. Following a qualitative methodology, in which each case has its relevance as it introduces a new finding that cannot be ignored, the changes identified below are supported by one to four relationships. The purpose of presenting them is not claiming saturation or representativeness, but, as literature in this area of knowledge is quite scant, the insights presented below provide material for future research avenues.

Relationships that provide strategic information experienced big changes through time, with 38% of identified alters not being present one or two months later.[7] There are several reasons why these relationships may change:

a) Identifying better informants: As it was mentioned above, participants received strategic information from different colleagues because of diverse reasons. As time in the new role passed by, newcomers may have changed the type of colleagues who provided them with strategic information. For instance, at the beginning participants may have received strategic information from colleagues to whom they had easy access such as physical proximity which facilitated the interaction (Sailer and McCulloh, 2012), but then discovered these were not sources of good strategic information. Another type of ease of access is that provided by homophily. Participants approached 72% of contacts of the same gender at the beginning, and two months later this proportion was

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[7] The totals represent the amount of alters participants identified at some point as strategic. 'Not maintained' is an alter that at some point was identified as strategic and was not in following months.

67%, showing a slight decrease. Similar to Mollica et al.'s (2003) findings for racial homophily, although strategic relationships changed quite a lot, the homophily score remained quite similar as time passed by. Another type of ease of access could be related to the position or job. For example, Participant 20 had someone assigned to provide him with strategic information. However, after being in the role for some months, he realised he was not a good source of strategic information:

> "He has stopped having the weight he had when I started working at the company, because my boss had put him as a person I had to work together to learn. And the truth is that he has 50,000 shortcomings, so I started, on the one hand, not taking him as an absolute reference. […] So, from having him as someone strategic, he is now someone else in the organisation. I don't have a bad relationship, all the contrary, but if he tells me something, I will check it somewhere else." (Participant 20, Follow-up interview)

b) Requiring different types of strategic information: The type of strategic information participants needed at the beginning was different to what they needed some months later. At the beginning they needed an introduction to who is who, how things are done, behaviours to be avoided, and the important players for their role and their objectives. As they learnt this basic strategic or 'culture related' information, the strategic information required was related to having updated and accurate information to make decisions, who are the important players at an organisational level, how to get a salary raise, or how to get a promotion. This change in information needs may trigger a change in the relationships that provide strategic information. This is in line with

previous studies that suggest that actors' behaviours can alter their network and the organisational network evolution, as they interact with different colleagues as needed by their projects and goals (Simon and Tellier, 2011). Simon and Tellier (2011) studied the generation and development of R&D projects and discovered that "the evolution of actors' motives throughout the idea development process is consistent with the evolution of network structure and the changes in the proportion of different types of ties" (p.427). Following this, it is reasonable to propose that as newcomers have different information needs and goals, they will change the relationships which provide them with strategic information. For example, Participant 11 commented about a colleague who was considered strategic in the first interview but not in the second:

> "At some point I used to talk more with her and she would tell me… it is like when you enter the company, people start telling you how things really work because you have no idea." (Participant 11, Follow-up interview)

In the second interview, she identified as strategic, for example, an individual whom she considered a good source of information for 'moving' in the organisation and achieving goals:

> "It is a guy who knows a lot how to move, with whom to move and he has achieved the position he has and the things that he has … because he earns more than all the other managers (all things I started learning about later) because he is a very smart guy." (Participant 11, Follow-up interview)

c) Activity changing: Relationships and required information are associated to activities performed. As some participants changed their activities during the first months at the new role, their relationships providing strategic information also changed (disappearing, appearing or becoming more or less frequent). For example, Participant 26 had identified someone as providing him with strategic information very frequently but some months later the interaction was more sporadic. He said the reason for this change was that in the first months the area to which this person belonged was very strategic to him but not anymore:

> "He is the leader of one of those businesses that was very hot when I started in this position. And it cooled off, with this thing of the 'service level agreement', with the metrics, with the monthly meeting... So, he is out of my orbit now." (Participant 26, Follow-up interview)

Participant 2 commented about someone who was identified as strategic but not anymore, since he has changed his activities in the company:

> "Evidently, this lawyer from the USA is not that relevant in this moment, as I am transitioning to a more financial, numeric part." (Participant 2, Follow-up interview)

d) Replacing relationships: Another reason why these relationships may change is that a colleague can replace another one as they provide similar strategic information but with easier access. For example, Participant 16 talked about someone new in his network (Arnold) who has taken the place of someone with whom it was harder to meet now.

> "Besides, from having done businesses, from being older than I am, I mean, he has a different experience. Anyway, that has been covered by

Arnold. With time Arnold started occupying that place […] well, when I stopped working at Olivos[8], I stopped having lunch with him, right? It was also related to spacing out, right?" (Participant 16, Follow-up interview)

e) Changing identity: As participants changed their professional identities, they also changed their networks. Some participants changed their professional identities during the study, and as this happened, they changed who they approached for strategic information. For example Participant 22 passed from a corporate to an entrepreneur identity and these changed his relationships:

"Now, that I am changing area of work, I am getting closer to the contacts which are related to entrepreneurship, projects, leaving behind the contacts that belonged to the corporate world." (Participant 22, Follow-up interview)

f) Chance reasons: Relationships that provide strategic information may end because of fortuity reasons like the other person going into maternity leave, or quitting the organisation. For example Participant 11 commented on someone who used to provide her strategic information but not now, as she is currently on maternity leave:

"Later it was not that she moved away from my network but with the pregnancy..." (Participant 11, Follow-up interview)

g) Increasing trust: Strategic relations may get stronger as individuals show each other they are trustworthy. As it was mentioned before, trust can be an important factor in developing relationships and when newcomers and their

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[8] Olivos is a city in the Province of Buenos Aires.

colleagues prove each other with actions that those first cues for trust were correct, the relationships may get stronger. For example, Participant 14 commented on how his relationship with some senior colleagues providing him with strategic information grew stronger as he showed them they were right to entrust him with this role:

> "I showed myself as a possibility to solve the problem, and they saw that possibility, and today the results are on the table. So the connection gets stronger, right? The level of trust grows every time more." (Participant 14, First interview)

6.2   Developing friendships

Individuals also have friendships or 'expressive' networks at work that provide support, and a sense of belonging and identity (Morrison, 2002; Podolny and Baron, 1997). Just as newcomers need to learn and acquire information, they also need to feel socially assimilated within their new jobs. Among other things, achieving social assimilation influences commitment to the organisation (Morrison, 2002). Most participants were eager to make friends and feel socially integrated in the new workplace. Participant 4 was struggling with this, and he commented both in his diary and second interview:

> "I am a little removed from the work team but it is an issue of time, in two months we will be moving to new offices and I assume I will feel more comfortable and integrated to the Marketing area." (Participant 4, Diary)

"I used to go downstairs for lunch, and they all had gone. But no one invites you here! They could tell me 'Hey, we are going to eat, do you want to come?'." (Participant 4, Follow-up interview)

Besides showing the importance for participants of feeling socially integrated to their new work settings, data provide insights into: 1) who newcomers choose as friends, 2) how they start off these relationships, and 3) how these develop through time.

6.2.1 Who are friends?

Newcomers will naturally look for co-workers with whom they can develop relationships that will support them at work in terms of friendship, and with whom they can discuss situations of anxiety and uncertainty. Participants chose colleagues a) who contributed to their work, b) with whom they had developed a trusting relationship, c) who had matching working styles, d) who had been in similar situations, e) who had matching interests, and f) who were friends from before. There were also some few participants who were not interested in building friendship relationships at work.

a) Contributing to participant's work: Participants developed friendship relationships with colleagues who tried to help them with their work and their careers. This represented 31% of relationships from a total of 36[9]. For example, Participant 18 recognised her boss had this positive attitude towards her and so she felt she could trust her and find support in her:

"My boss, I choose her because she worries, she showed interest in trying to help me with my career, let's say: 'I am going to facilitate

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[9] The total of friendship relationships is 76. However, there is detailed information that explains why they are chosen as friends for 36 relationships.

your way for that'. And she tries to do it actually." (Participant 18, Follow-up interview)

b) Having developed a trusting relationship: Being able to share important and sensitive issues requires trust. Participants mentioned that although they had a friendly relationship with many people, there were not that many with whom they shared their concerns, choosing only those with whom they had developed a trusting relationship over time. This represented 22% of friendship relationships. Some participants, who were making a change in the same organisation, had been able to develop a friendship relationship over time which was very useful in these times of uncertainty. For example, Participant 18 had a long lasting relationship from whom she got social support:

> "Internally, the one I trust more to tell her things is Marcela. Because the rest, let's say my former peers, I tell them some things but not everything I am telling you, more kind of 'Yes, everything is going right, I am learning a lot' but not other things…" (Participant 18, First interview)

c) Having matching working styles: As happened with relationships providing strategic information, many participants also chose as friends those with whom they shared working styles. This represented 19% of friendship relationships. This has some agreement with previous research results which show that students attaining similar levels of academic performance are more likely to develop friendship ties, since academic performance could be related to a way of managing study and work (Lomi et al., 2011). For example, Participant 11 commented about one of her new friends:

128

"Basically because we are more alike, we share a similar vision of the company and how we do things... It is basically that, similar ways of being." (Participant 11, Follow-up interview)

Participant 15 made a similar comment about a work-friend:

"We met at a Project meeting, and you know, when you have a similar way of thinking, it inevitably happens, you feel more at ease." (Participant 15, Follow-up interview)

Participant 13 commented about someone who had been identified as a friend in the first months but not later. What changed the relationship was that he realised he did not share his working style.

"He is like those guys who manage things but are like steam, you know? You realise that each topic you talk about he says 'I've been through that'. At the beginning I would think 'wow, that's great'. […] I got into his area a little bit because it is part of my role, not because of wanting to bother, all the contrary, I always try to look at the issues together. But he is a guy… who just goes with it, because he has been doing it for years. But professionally, no… […] Well, at some point I identified him as a friend. It is not that he is no longer in my network but I don't put him in terms of friendship." (Participant 13, Diary)

d) Being in a similar situation: Passing through similar experiences seems to be a bonding situation. At the same time, this allowed participants to find support in these colleagues as they felt understood and at the same time could get more personal advice as they had gone through the same and learnt on the way. This represented 14% of friendship relationships. For example, Participant 21, who in

this transition moved to France, became friends with another Argentinean colleague who had moved there five years before.

> "He is Argentinean. When I got here, on the first day he came and he told me 'come here, this is where you buy this, this is where you can get these things, this is how things are here'. As he had lived here for five years, in fact his second daughter was born with the same doctor my daughter did." (Participant 21, Follow-up interview)

e) Matching interests: Participants developed friendship relationships with co-workers with whom they shared general interests and hobbies. This represented 6% of friendship relationships. For example, Participant 2 became friends with those who liked playing football:

> "We are all the same age; we have the same interests. […] And that allows you to broaden your network of contacts and friends… and what better way to get along than a sport. It is very integrating…" (Participant 2, Follow-up interview)

f) Being friends from before: There were some participants who, although were making inter-organisational transitions, reunited with prior friends in the new job. This represented 3% of friendship relationships. Participant 10 is an example:

> "When I started at X company we became very good friends. Then I left that company to go to Y, and we continued being friends, and he was the one who contacted me saying 'look, they are looking for a person here, if you want to…' And now, obviously, being working together and being friends, there are lots of things that I confide in him, I talk them over with him." (Participant 10, Follow-up interview)

Finally, there were some participants who were not interested in building friendship relationships at work. They felt they already had their personal friends and were not prepared to invest time in forming friendship relationships at work. This was the case for Participant 17:

> "I leave work and 'goodbye, good luck'. I don't relate. I mean, I do relate but I don't want to go out for dinner with my colleagues after work, you know? I have my own life besides." (Participant 17, Follow-up interview)

Others were cautious of with whom to develop friendships. For example, Participant 11 reflected on her job demanding her not to be 'friends with everyone' since the interests of people occupying certain positions could be opposite to those of her role and becoming friends would put her in a difficult situation:

> "...because of my job I cannot be friends with everyone. I think I did really well by not attending when they invited me to birthday parties, because my position is very complicated in terms of personal relationships. I report to the General Manager because the Operations Manager wants me to do something, the Sales Manager something else, and the Marketing one something else. Each one with a concrete, real interest, and even legitimate to some point. So, I report directly to the General Manager so that I have a neutral place. Finance wants you to report everything and maybe the General Manager does not want you to report everything. So, there is an equilibrium, that's why I depend from him. It is complicated." (11, Follow-up interview)

6.2.2   What factors favour the creation of friendship relationships?

In the previous section it was identified who participants chose as friends. This section analyses the factors that favour the creation of these relationships. Homophily strongly affected the formation of this type of relationships, even more than in the case of relationships that provide strategic information. In this study gender had a great effect on friendship relationship development as participants chose as friends 84% of the same gender (in the first diagram). The other factors that favoured the creation of friendship relationships are the same as with relationships providing strategic information and in the same order, although with different percentages. These factors are based on: a) previous relationships (70% of 43 relationships with available information), b) task interacting (12%), c) physical proximity (9%), d) newcomers' proactivity (7%), and newcomers' attitudes and behaviours in the new role (2%).

a) Based on previous relationships: Many friendship relationships were formed through prior relationships, such as knowing the colleague from previous roles, being friends with the colleague from before, and having friends in common who introduced them. Some examples of these are provided below.

   For example, Participant 9 identified as friends people with whom he used to interact in previous roles:

   > "This is a colleague; an ex-team member in the supply chain position. Today I have little formal interaction." (Participant 9, First interview)

   Participant 26 mentioned as a friend someone with whom they had been friends for many years:

   > "He has been in the company since I started, and we became friends with time. First, because of a work interaction, because we worked

together in the process automation of my areas throughout my entire career, and he was always my support to do that. So, it started from the professional side, and then as we also have personal affinities, we started playing tennis together, and we ended up being friends. He is an internal person with whom to share and calm down anxieties." (Participant 26, First interview)

Another opportunity for meeting potential new friends based on prior relationships is having friends in common who casually introduce each other. For example, Participant 11 made two friends early in her new role, and some months later she had a new friend whom she had met through them:

"She is a friend of María and Alejandra." (Participant 11, Follow-up interview)

b) Based on task interacting: Having to interact because of the tasks assigned to the role also puts people in contact who, if they have some of the factors mentioned in point 6.2.1, can become new friends. For example, Participant 15 talked about a friend she met because of her tasks and with whom she has matching working styles:

"We work a lot together and the truth is that she is very similar to me. I mean, in general, it was hard to find people in this company who had a similar profile to mine, like being more responsible." (Participant 15, Follow-up interview)

c) Based on physical proximity: Research shows that physical proximity is a good predictor of friendship (Festinger, Schachter and Back, 1950). Indeed, in a police academy setting, research shows that seating arrangements in classrooms affected

the formation of friendship ties (Conti and Doreian, 2010). These newcomers experienced a similar situation. Participants mentioned that the relationship with their work-friends was many times related to being physically close. For example, Participant 11 mentioned some friends with whom she does not work nor has any excuse for interacting, but whose desks are next to hers:

> "Not related at all, they work in the Quality area, but they are physically next to me." (Participant 11, First interview)

d) Based on newcomers' proactivity: Another factor that contributed to participants meeting and developing new friends was being proactive in trying to create opportunities for friendly interaction. Some participants were consciously trying to form these relationships and hence would organise activities that would encourage this. For example, Participant 2 turned himself into the one who organised football games and barbeques, by renting the field, sending reminders and offering his house:

> "I am kind of the events' organiser. Yes, I like the role; I don't refrain from doing it." (Participant 2, Follow-up interview)

e) Based on newcomers' attitudes and behaviours: As participants contributed to other people's work, this improved the chances of becoming friends. For example, Participant 13, who was part of a regional finance office, contributed to the work done in Colombia. This resulted in a friendship relationship with the Country Head of the Colombian subsidiary, and he commented:

> "We have a very good relationship; he calls me all the time. It is personal. […] Some time ago, the Regional General Manager told me: 'you received many compliments from Colombia'. So, then I thanked this person and he

told me 'You have nothing to thank me for, it is what it is'." (Participant 13, Follow-up interview)

6.2.3   Dynamics of friendship relationships

Friendship relationships did change in a period of four months, since 40% of relationships were introduced during the study and 11% were not maintained[10]. At the same time, although friendship proved to be much based on homophily for newcomers, the proportion of same sex relationships decreased from 84% to 73% within four months, suggesting that as time passed, networking criteria broadened. Some of the reasons for changes in friendship relationships are identified as follows. The reasons are supported by few cases, but bring light into the research gap of social networks' dynamics at work, suggesting avenues for future research.

As participants passed months in the new role, some relationships that were of other types (e.g. strategic, task related, mentoring), changed into friendships. For example, when the information provided by a colleague was no longer strategic as participants had found other colleagues with 'better' strategic information, these relationships could then turn into friendships. Similarly, when participants changed jobs, many of the people with whom they used to interact in their previous roles turned into friends, at least at the beginning. As time passed by, these relationships from previous roles lost frequency and many disappeared. For example, Participant 18 identified some co-workers from the previous role as friends early in the new position, but not four months later:

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[10] The totals represent the amount of alters participants identified at some point as friends. 'Not maintained' is an alter that at some point was identified as a friend and was not in following months. 'Maintained' is an alter who was introduced in diagrams 1 or 2 and was maintained in diagram three. An alter who was introduced in diagram 2 and not maintained in diagram 3, would be counted both towards 'new' and towards 'not maintained'.

"Some of the girls from downstairs, from my previous teams, I trust some things to them." (Participant 18, First interview)

Some formal mentoring relationships turned into friendship as participants and their mentors got to know each other and bonded. For example, Participant 2 was assigned a mentor in his new role, who three months later was also considered a friend:

"We really have mutual esteem for each other." (Participant 2, Follow-up interview)

Friendship relationships could end because of over-confidence problems. Some participants felt that colleagues might forget about their work relationship and behave more like friends and not very professionally. In these cases, they decided to end the friendship relationship. For example, Participant 11 had problems with someone who thought that because he was her friend, he could avoid complying with the responsibilities of his role towards the participant's role:

"If you mix up personal and work things… I mean, I really like my boss, but I don't tell him 'go and do it yourself' because he is my boss. I am not this guy's boss, but anyway, he owes me respect as to any work colleague…" (Participant 11, Follow-up interview)

Not contributing to each other's work anymore is another reason for these relationships to end. Friendship relationships are many times based on contributing to each other's work. As the activities change, the relationship may become more or less sporadic.

"At some point he was the Human Resource Manager for Latin America which related to my previous position. With all these changes, they've been taking responsibility from him. And as I also positioned

myself differently, I mean, he has been drifting apart, and continues
to." (Participant 26, Follow-up interview)

Finally, as happened with relationships providing strategic information, friendship relationships could also end because of fortuity reasons like the colleague entering maternity leave or quitting the organisation.

6.3   Developing and maintaining mentoring relationships

Research has suggested that mentoring is an important way for individuals to learn the ropes and get immersed into a profession or establish a role in an organisation (Scandura and Pellegrini, 2008). Mentors provide young adults with career-enhancing functions, such as sponsorship and coaching, facilitate exposure and visibility, and offer challenging work and protection (Kram and Isabella, 1985). In the psychosocial sphere, the mentor offers role modelling, counselling, confirmation, and friendship, which help the mentoree develop a sense of professional identity and competence (Kram and Isabella, 1985). Research suggests that those individuals who have mentors experience more learning, job satisfaction and higher salaries, and less role ambiguity, intentions to leave, turnover and stress (Baugh, Lankau and Scandura, 1996; Chao, Walz and Gardner, 1992; Kram and Hall, 1991; Lankau and Scandura, 2002). Particularly in the case of newcomers, psychosocial mentoring provided by mentors has been found to be related positively to politics and performance aspects of socialisation, while career-related mentoring is related positively to establishing successful and satisfying relationships with organisational members (Allen, McManus and Russell, 1999). At the same time, newcomers who have mentors are able to learn more about organisational issues and politics (Ostroff and Kozlowsi, 1993). Indeed, mentoring increases organisational commitment of newcomers, this in turn reduces the intentions to leave the organisation (Phornprapha and Chansrichawla, 2007).

Developing mentoring relationships was very important to participants in this study. They reflected on: 1) how their previous mentoring relationships were nurtured or not; 2) the new mentoring relationships they were forming; and 3) the mentors they would like to have but could not.

6.3.1 Nurturing previous mentoring relationships

Mentors can belong to the organisation or to the professional domain and be maintained even if mentor and mentoree are not working in the same organisation. Both participants changing organisations and those making intra-organisational transitions reflected on whether they could maintain their prior mentoring relationships, as these had been useful to them previously in their careers. Indeed, some of them struggled with accepting that people who had been their mentors were not playing that role much anymore. For example, Participant 22 commented on two mentors who he had identified as such in his first Relationships Diagram but in the second interview he mentioned he could have included them but in a more distant role:

> "When I started the exercise, I brought mentors from my previous work, but then reviewing and being a little bit more realistic, I realised that they may still have a mentoring role, but maybe I don't have them that close." (Participant 22, Follow-up interview)

Keeping previous mentoring relationships was sometimes hard for participants and they had to let go. Some factors were identified which eased or complicated the continuation of the relationship.

a) Fulfilling the role: Whether the mentor was active in guiding and helping the participant achieve the current transition affected the maintenance of the relationship. Moments of transition are situations in which mentors could have a

protagonist role as individuals need a great deal of career and psychosocial support. As participants transitioned and received or not the support they expected from their mentors, this left a mark in the relationship. Participants reflected on the effectiveness of previous mentors, and some of them agonised about this because they still wanted to consider these individuals as their mentors but at the same time recognised that these individuals had not performed their roles appropriately. For instance, Participant 14 had his former boss as his mentor. When he started looking for the change, his mentor did not provide career opportunities:

> "Maybe from where I had more expectations, from where I expected to receive more help, from the person who had been my boss for eight years, I received nothing." (Participant 14, Follow-up interview).

On the other hand, this same participant had a mentor with whom he was not interacting much in the new role because they were geographically far from each other, but who was considered his mentor anyway as he was very present during the transition hard times:

> "He was, not this year with much intensity because I am in Venezuela, but he is the one with whom I worked in leadership at the university, and he helped me a lot with this transformation process." (Participant 14, First interview)

b) Continued professional identity: Depending on the current professional identity and on possible selves, a mentor could continue to be 'useful' or not. For example, Participant 22 changed his identity and so his previous mentors were no longer a source of consultation:

> "In what was related to corporate jobs like looking for a job as Finance

Manager or Planning Manager, I had a lot to ask to Carlos and Pedro, but in my role of wanting to develop projects, it is not them but another profile that I need." (Participant 22, Follow-up interview)

On the contrary, when participants maintained their professional identities, their prior mentors could be useful. For example, Participant 25 had a mentor from an old job, who supported him in the previous and current role. At the same time, when it was his time to help, he was there and gave good references for him to achieve the current transition.

"Because he is a guy who through all this process advised me quite a lot and he had the commitment with me that as soon as a position turned up he would consider me. And he was one of the guys whom when I was feeling badly in the previous job tried to support me. But the truth is that he is great, and he is one of the references they called for this position and I know he spoke very well of me." (Participant 25, First interview)

Eight participants reflected strongly and positively on being able to maintain their mentoring relationships and in all cases these two factors, fulfilling the role by aiding the participant with the most recent transition and a professional identity match were present. For example, Participant 18, made a lateral transition in the same organisation, has an emotionally strong and frequent relationship with her mentor. Her mentor had been formally assigned to her years ago as part of being recognised a 'key talent' in the organisation. She had requested this person be assigned as her mentor, and she affirmed that most of these formal mentoring relationships had ended by now but she had kept hers because she was interested in it.

"At some point, several key talents were identified and they all had a mentor. I think today none of those mentor-mentee relationships are kept. They were left in nothing. I kept maintaining it because I was interested, and she as well because of my motivation. So, we maintain it, I don't think there is any other in the company being maintained." (Participant 18, Follow-up interview)

Now with the transition, the relationship complies with the identified factors to be maintained:

- Her mentor played an important role in the recent transition by giving her visibility and coaching:

"She oriented me to some things: the MBA, she was also the link to start doing some marketing activities, to start introducing me to it… when this position was opened, she also oriented me." (Participant 18, First interview)

- Participant 18's professional identity remains in the same line, and her mentor is a useful source of advice and role modelling:

"First, she had passed from marketing to medical and I wanted to pass from medical to marketing; and because of her character and her way of handling things, I wanted… She is not a role model for this position but yes inside the organisation." (Participant 18, Follow-up interview)

6.3.2   *Developing new mentoring relationships*

The new role opened possibilities for developing new mentoring relationships, which newcomers were eager to form as they thought these could help them in their

adjustment and careers. These relationships were formed a) with the supervisor, b) with other senior colleagues or c) with personal acquaintances.

a) Supervisor: Ten participants were developing new mentoring relationships with their bosses and many of them were very enthusiastic about them. Participants perceived their supervisors to take the role of mentors when they provided career enhancing and psychosocial support, and had similar ways of thinking. For example, Participant 2 was developing a mentoring relationship with his boss, who the organisation had assigned as his 'coach', meaning a more 'operational mentor'. In spite of the formal label, he was performing all the mentoring functions:

 "Again, I am pleased to have a coach in the company. He helps me by introducing me to people, he is a source of consultation and in turn, I am a contributor to his work." (Participant 2, Diary)

"We really have mutual esteem for each other. At work, sometimes you get along and sometimes not that much. Luckily, in my case I get along with him; he gives me advice both professionally and personally... Although not getting into too personal, but into personal related to professional. For example, talking about the issue of moving to Brazil, he tells me: 'Look, Brazil is part of the region, it is not that far away... if you have to take a plane, it is three hours...' He also tells me: 'If you are interested in Brazil, maybe you can look at it like living a new experience, learning another language, getting to know the Brazilian idiosyncrasy...' It is not the type of advice of 'Yes, go because you will make this much more money'. I mean the advice is quite complete... not only from the professional point of view... It is good advice. Really,

both as a coach and as a mentor. Like a Godfather." (Participant 2, Follow-up interview)

"We made a good combination, I mean, it is like we both understand each other. Maybe if I were different… I don't know, we wouldn't have got along this way, both in an intellectual level (he knows a lot) and in an interpersonal level… the relationship is very good." (Participant 2, Follow-up interview)

b) Other senior colleagues: The new role provided participants with opportunities for developing mentoring relationships with other senior colleagues. These relationships could be based on participants' proactivity to develop the relationship, on the natural formation of a new relationship with old contacts, or formally assignment. How they were created affected the way in which they developed and the challenges and benefits of the relationship.

Seven participants were proactive in developing mentoring relationships with senior colleagues. These endeavours could be aimed at being assigned a formal mentor or at developing informal mentoring relationships. Participant 5 is an example of the first one. He asked to have a mentor because he thought the learning would be beneficial. He was strategic in whom he chose his mentor to be: someone who had an excellent relationship with his boss and who was in a strategic position in the company. However, by the time of the second interview, the relationship was not much developed.

"I have been able to get assigned as a mentor the Director for Regional Sales Operations. This person (and role) is key to how the company is organised, and so I think it is a big step. Besides, she has an excellent

chemistry with my boss, so I hope she can be a good avenue for my

development." (Participant 5, Diary)

Participant 13 is an example of trying to develop an informal mentoring relationship. As he did not find in his boss a good mentoring candidate because he was not confident he could trust him nor that they had similar ways of thinking, he considered the CEO as a potential mentor. However, he had to be cautious since his boss could feel negatively about it, and so he was going slowly with the development of the relationship:

"He is a natural leader, he is a leader, a manager, a CEO, who knows

how to look into all issues, with no depth in any, but he knows about all

issues […] I let the relationship flow, it is not that I am trying to…

because I don't know, my boss could get upset if he sees me trying

more." (Participant 13, Follow-up interview)

During the transition, some old contacts might have been taking a supportive role towards the participants. This was the case for two participants. For example, Participant 14 who had worked at the current firm when he started his career ten years ago, had met a senior colleague there while working on a project. When he was looking for this transition, he approached this person and he helped him to get his current role. Now that they work in the same company again, this senior colleague has turned into a mentor and the relationship gets stronger as the participant shows his new mentor that he was right to help him, as he is achieving excellent results in his role.

"With him, we developed the opportunity for me to be where I am now

[…] I showed myself as a possibility to solve the problem, and they

saw that possibility, and today the results are on the table. So the connection gets stronger, right? The level of trust grows every time more." (Participant 14, First interview)

Finally, one participant was assigned a senior colleague as formal mentor when he entered the new role. Having the mentor a very high profile implied that he may have been too busy, with little time for the mentee, but the participant thought it was interesting anyway.

"He is saturated with work, so it is complicated for him maybe." (Participant 2, Follow-up interview)

"I have his advice very present... I mean, obviously if he is showing a door in which there is work, it is a good possibility. This does not mean that then I will choose that one… But, well, at least just having the chance of seating with him, to talk and have this space for interaction, even if it is a meal…" (Participant 2, Follow-up interview)

c) Personal acquaintances: As individuals start going through a transition, they may start discussing their new role with individuals belonging to their personal spheres. Although these individuals may have always been close, the mentoring role is new. This was the case for two participants who became entrepreneurs and found in family members the psychosocial and coaching support they needed. For example Participant 16 affirms his wife is his mentor and his most important work-relationship.

"I respect a lot her opinion. I think it is… I already know how her replies are, so I already know how to take them, and the truth is that she is always right. She has an amazing smell sense. She doesn't have the

entrepreneur bug as I do, if not she would already be an accomplished business woman. She has very good insights, she perceives situations right away. She 'gets' people in a moment, she doesn't even need to meet them, it is amazing. Really, I don't understand it, with only reading an email, she gives me a radiography of the person! And the truth is that I trust blindly in what she says." (Participant 16, First interview)

"The truth is that the only important role is my wife. It is the only one that I say 'this is the one that matters'. I respect and I know her opinions very well, so I understand it very well when she wants to tell me something, right?" (Participant 16, Follow-up interview)

Participant 22 provides another example since, with the transition, his mother in law has transformed into a mentor through career enhancing functions.

"She is my mother in law, and she is the one through whom I tried many contacts related to opportunities in public, private and corporate sectors in the north of the country. And well, from there, various possibilities emerged. […] At the beginning I had not recognised her as a mentor and she is now the one having a stronger role as such. She is the one who gets closer to my idea of professional development, which changed maybe from the one I had at the beginning." (Participant 22, Follow-up interview)

6.3.3   Struggling with developing mentoring relationships

Some participants lost prior mentoring relationships and were having a hard time in finding a new mentor. Three participants did not have mentors but were not concerned

about it. Another participant was really concerned about establishing such a relationship and kept reflecting about what he could do to secure for himself someone who would help him with his career. This was the case of Participant 9 whose mentor left the company and the participant felt he needed to find someone else inside the organisation to take this role. He is considering several options, in terms of feasibility and in terms of where he wants his career headed to. However, he is having a hard time in making any of these real:

> "My former director left the company two weeks ago, and he was my mentor, so I am dead. So, my biggest conclusion is that I have to find a Godfather. One of the things I wrote in the diary is that I think that Godfathers, if well used, are good for both sides, both for the Godfather and the Godchild." (Participant 9, Follow-up interview)

> "This is the Plant Manager; I passed him from here to here because I am seeing that I was not using him as a mentor, it was more for technical learning. But now I recognise that this guy is the only possibility I have for a mentor. […] What I see is that he is a very capable guy, very good with technical things, very decisive, right? And very skilful. I mean, analysing a little bit the profile, I realised that he is very skilful in how he presents things and I think that is a quality I would like to imitate from him. […] And I've told him I would like to have a couple of talks with him… but I haven't achieved them yet. The truth is that I should ask him for a meeting on Outlook, but it is obvious that there is something about me that stops me, you know." (Participant 9, Follow-up interview)

"I should say to the Human Resource person: 'I would like to get into this'. I mean, I thought about telling him: 'Look, in the long run I would like to work in the commercial area, I would like the current Commercial Director to be my mentor', and then that he would help me convince him. But this is the guy who did not choose me for the position, so in fact it is my last shot because if the guy says no to this now …" (Participant 9, Follow-up interview)

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the social context in which participants were developing their professional identities and adjusting to the new role. In understanding who individuals choose to form relationships with, it is notable that this depends on the type of relationship. In the case of relationships providing strategic information, the perception that the colleague has good information was the main rationale for approaching the person, showing a clear utility principle. In terms of friendship relationships, the rationales for choosing a person as a friend were more diverse. The most important one was feeling that the colleague contributes to one's work, followed by having developed a trusting relationship over time. Despite the dissimilarity between the main reasons for choosing strategic informants and friends, homophily plays a role in both types of relationships. In terms of gender, 73% of relationships providing strategic information at the beginning and 67% four months later were of the same gender, while 84% of friendship relationships at the beginning and 73% four months later were also of the same gender. Homophily is also significant in terms of matching working styles. Besides gender, individuals look for strategic information, for friendship, and also for mentoring, from others who are similar to them in the way they work.

Regarding the factors that favour the creation of these relationships, there is also correspondence between what contributes to strategic and friendship relationships. The first factor is previous relationships, followed by task interacting. As newcomers enter a new role, having the excuse to interact with others is an important way to meet people and develop a relationship. The third factor is physical proximity, followed by newcomers' proactivity. Finally, some positive behaviours and attitudes newcomers naturally express at work may favour the creation of relationships, suggesting the indirect benefits for the social environment of contributing to others and of good performance.

Results suggest that networks are quite unstable when individuals start a new role, particularly in terms of strategic relationships but also in terms of friendships. One third of individuals recognised as providing strategic information at some point were not fulfilling this role one or two months later, while 11% of friendship relationships were also dropped.

In terms of mentoring relationships, participants were eager to experience a continuation of their mentoring relationships through their career transitions. This could be done when mentors were active in helping the newcomer achieve the new job and when participants transitioned to a role which was a continuation of their professional identities. At the same time, participants were enthusiastic about developing new mentoring relationships facilitated by the new role. Most of these relationships were formed with the supervisor, and by the time data collection was over, these relationships were also the more developed ones. On the other hand, participants who had new mentoring relationships with other senior colleagues were struggling to get those relationships to work.

CHAPTER 7: MANAGING CONFLICTING RELATIONSHIPS

As it was introduced in chapters 5 and 6, the social context plays a crucial role in individuals' professional identity development, particularly during career transitions. One type of social relationship emerged unexpectedly during the research process which affected participants' professional identity development and adjustment to the new role. This is 'conflicting relationships'. As was explained in chapter 4, while completing the Relationships Diagram two participants asked 'Where do I identify the enemies?' They were referring to colleagues who were making their adjustment more difficult, complicating their daily lives at the new role and challenging their identities by not allowing them to perform these properly. Considering that conflict is defined as a "process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party" (Wall and Callister, 1995, p.517), it was then realised that other participants were experiencing similar situations. This was very interesting as much previous research on adjustment introduces the role of social relationships in newcomers' adaptation to the role, but identifies only the helping role.

Conflicting relationships included relationships with colleagues and with the supervisor. When participants encountered these kinds of people, they reflected a great deal on them during interviews and in diaries, suggesting the importance of these relationships. Although the number of conflicting relationships was not huge, only 12 relationships experienced by six participants, the novelty of this category and the impact it had on participants, demands further exploration. At the same time, as this phenomenon was so striking for participants and they reflected continuously on it, it was possible to follow up how these relationships developed over time. Therefore, this chapter brings light into how a conflicting social context can affect how individuals develop their identities and adjust following a career transition.

First, potential conflicting colleagues are identified. Then, participants' conflict management strategies towards these colleagues are explored. Third, a model with the phases through which these relationships went through time is presented. Next, the focus turns into conflicting relationships with supervisors. First, sources for developing conflicting relationships with supervisors are identified. Second, participants' conflict management strategies towards these supervisors are characterised. Third, as the supervisor-supervisee relationship is so important for newcomers, the negative effects of such a conflicting relationship are explored. Finally, regarding the dynamics over time of these relationships, through data analysis two different models with different phases were recognised, depending on whether the source for conflict was visible or could not be anticipated. These two models are then presented.

7.1 Managing conflicting relationships with colleagues

As participants entered the new role, they found people with whom they had to interact to get their work done, but who impeded, rather than helped them. Five participants experienced conflicting relationships with colleagues. These relationships took up a lot of time and energy from participants who were conscious that it was crucial to their performance that they learnt to manage these peers.

7.1.1 Identifying conflicting colleagues

Conflicting colleagues included: a) previous incumbents of the role, b) individuals who had wanted to transition to that role and were denied it, and c) individuals whose roles had contradictory interests with the participant's role. These are explained and exemplified next.

a) Previous incumbents: As individuals undertook the new role, sometimes the person who used to occupy that position remained in the organisation, and on occasions, could be conflictive. For instance, Participant 13 had to deal with the previous incumbent of his role, who had been transferred to another position, being demoted. When he started this role, this person 'attacked' him and as they were having meetings together he would 'put sticks in the wheel'. Participant 11 had a similar problem with the person who, although had not specifically occupied her role, had previously performed her tasks as part of his position.

> "There is this person with whom I struggle; we are doing a little better now. He is the Sales Manager, and he showed it from the start. Everyone did an induction for me but him. Thanks that he said 'hi'… All managers, people I have nothing to do about, gave me the induction, and he did not, considering that he was the one who used to do my task. It is obvious. It is obvious that he did not want it, that it bothered him… But, I still have to manage things with him. He yells a lot at me at meetings and slowly I have started to answer back." (Participant 11, Follow-up interview)

b) Aspiring incumbent: In occasions, participants entered a new role that someone else in the organisation had wanted. So, as the participant had to work together with this person, a conflicting relationship could develop. For example, Participant 11 also had problems with a colleague she needed information from. At the beginning she could perceive his unwillingness to help her but she could not understand the reasons. Finally, someone she became friends with, and who was also a friend of this person, told her that this conflictual colleague had wanted her position.

> "He said 'you are two very good people and I think you will get along
> at some point', and I said 'it is him, not me'. And he said 'yes, well...'
> and then he told me: 'he wanted your job but he will get over it'."
> (Participant 11, Follow-up interview)

c) Contradictory interests: In organisations, sometimes positions have contradictory interests. Although they all need the company to do well, they may represent different parties in the organisation who have different personal interests, or their economic compensation may be attached to different goals and hence they have conflicting priorities. For example, as Participant 9 transitioned from Operations to Manufacturing, he soon realised that the labour union representative would not help him with his adjustment, but the contrary.

> "It is like sleeping with the enemy. So it is clearly someone you need to
> work with but he is kind of your enemy." (Participant 9, First
> Interview)

7.1.2 Conflict management strategies towards colleagues

Participants used several strategies to manage these conflicting relationships. Research on interpersonal conflict management suggests that there are five conflict management strategies: integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding and compromising (Rahim, 1983). Integrating refers to pursuing the collaboration between parties through openness, exchange of information, and examination of differences to reach a solution acceptable to both parties. Obliging implies playing down the differences and emphasises commonalities to satisfy the concerns of the other party. Dominating is related to forcing behaviour to win one's position. Avoiding refers to withdrawal, keeping away from the other party. Compromising is related to give-and-take or

sharing whereby both parties give up something to make a mutually acceptable decision (Rahim and Magner, 1995). In trying to manage their conflicting colleagues, participants used several of these strategies as it is explained next.

a) Integrating: Participants tried to find ways to relate better with the colleagues by inviting them to work together, having social conversations, and involving them on issues. For example, Participant 13 tried to do this with his conflictual colleague.

> "We went to a couple of 'calls' related to foreign work issues. We did it together, we participated each other mutually. I mean, I invited him to participate, I suggested the idea and he accepted; he then suggested something and I accepted it. I mean, in a way I would say things are better. […] I invited him for lunch and we did it. That action came from me." (Participant 13, Follow-up interview)

b) Dominating: Although participants could not use their positions to dominate the colleague as they were in the same or in a lower hierarchy, some participants discussed the problem with the supervisor, looking for him or her to intercede. For example, Participant 4 approached his boss to intercede with a colleague who was not being collaborative and was 'attacking' him by email.

> "When I talked with my boss when she came back I told her 'look, this is happening, there are some tense situations over email…' And well, she talked it over with her and now everything is ok." (Participant 4, Follow-up interview)

c) Avoiding: Sometimes participants changed the work processes so that they did not need to interact with the conflicting person to get their jobs done. At the beginning they did it informally, and as this could not be done for too long, they sometimes

managed to change the process formally. Changing the process informally required participants to get help from other colleagues, while changing the process formally required the agreement of their supervisors. For example, Participant 11 had a conflicting colleague with whom she had to meet to agree on the sales forecast and who would consistently underestimate it, complicating her work. She first convinced the appropriate person to buy more product than what this person said, and finally she asked her boss to change the process so that this conflicting colleague was not involved in estimating the forecast.

Informally:

> "We are having shortcuts of products and Patricio refuses to increase the forecast. Until now, I am handling it with Germán (supply planner) the most critical things but implementing a double set of numbers. Even though he listens to me for now and buys more than what the forecast says, he only does it because he trusts me and the good relationship we have. In the moment that he loses his patience or talks about this with the Regional Operations Manager, there are going to be problems. To comply with my goal for one set of numbers I need Patricio to commit, and if things continue this way, the only way to achieve it is to talk it over with the Country Head." (Participant 11, Diary)

Formally:

> "Now, I've changed the process so that I don't have to put up with him at these meetings." (Participant 11, Follow-up interview)

d) Compromising: Participants understood the conflicting interests at place, and used a 'give and take' strategy, letting the other person win sometimes to be able to win later. Regarding the labour union representative, Participant 9 commented:

> "So, what I am trying to do now is to disarm his game. To tell him, ok, this is how we are going to communicate this issue. You go and tell them this before. Some things I let him tell them before, so that he takes the novelty…" (Participant 9, Follow-up interview)

e) Emerging strategies: Two new strategies emerged in this study. The first one is 'protecting themselves' which means that as participants realised that this conflicting colleague could diminish their success probabilities, they discussed it with their supervisors. Participant 13 is an example.

> "I was authentic then and commented it to my boss, because I had a couple of trips with this person, at the beginning he would go with me and would put sticks on the wheel. I told it to my boss; I thought it was fair play to tell him." (Participant 13, First interview)

The other new strategy is 'realising it is not personal'. As participants grew in confidence with other people at work, they started discussing this problem with colleagues and this made them feel better as they realised it was 'not their fault'. Participant 13 also used this strategy.

> "With his peers, we say that the guy is doing better. He is a guy who is much beaten. At 58 he used to be number 1. He had my boss' position and then they started demoting him. And well, that must affect him. And to some point, it is natural. This is why he's had issues with several people." (Participant 13, Follow-up interview)

7.1.3   Conflicting relationship with colleagues: development over time

Three main phases can be identified related to how participants managed these relationships over approximately four months.

Phase 1: Discovering the problem

In phase 1, participants discovered the problem and tried to understand why this colleague was complicating their work. First, as participants started performing their roles, they started receiving signs of these colleagues not contributing to their work. For instance, Participant 11 soon realised that the person who used to do her task did not explain to her how to do it, was not willing to help her, and was actually complicating her work:

> "This week I've realised that one of the main challenges of my job is going to be to beat the resistance the Sales Manager is having towards the process. Even though it is logical that he felt he lost power when they removed from him the authority to determine the forecast, and so I am being patient, I consider that he is making it very difficult for my meetings with the sales supervisors to have the desired results. He interrupts me constantly, he leads the meeting although he shouldn't, and he complains permanently about the process." (Participant 11, Diary)

Secondly, as participants realised about the problem, they tried to understand what was going on, why the colleague reacted that way, and learn about his or her reactions. For instance, Participant 9's comments about his relationship with the labour union representative in the first interview and in the diary show that they are in a phase of getting to know each other and testing the other person's reactions.

"It is a fight in which we are both in the first round, in the middle of the ring, we throw a punch, but more or less, we are in a study period." (Participant 9, First interview)

"Undoubtedly, it is about learning how to talk with people who have different codes and discover their game." (Participant 9, Diary)

Phase 2: Feeling negatively

Phase 2 was characterised by negative feelings as participants were not able to manage these relationships properly. They felt both angry and eventually tired. For example, Participant 9 was negatively surprised by an action taken by the labour union representative and got angry at this.

"Last week we had a crash, we discussed in front of all the people, because of a stupid thing like almost always: he had sent them to stop the production line for an hour. Then, we all went to a goal communication meeting, evaluations and so on, and he left and I stayed tense, very angry all afternoon." (Participant 9, Diary)

Although participants tried and kept trying to work on the relationship, in some moments they felt tired of the situation and thought they had done their best and that was enough.

"One day I asked him something, to be up to date with something he is doing, that is related to my job… And I had an answer by email which was not bad but a little harsh. My boss was copied in. So my boss tells me later 'Beware of managing…' And I told him, 'I am doing it!' Maybe it went out a little angry, I told him 'I am honest with you, it doesn't disturb my sleep either; I know I am doing everything for it to

work. If I do everything at my reach, but you do not react… or you do your own thing, it comes a moment when you say 'I've exhausted all instances, I am not in charge anymore'." (Participant 13, Diary)

Phase 3: Managing the relationship

As time passed, negative emotions were predominantly left behind since participants finally understood what was going on. This allowed them to identify the best way to handle the conflicting colleague, and most of them felt they were being quite successful at it. This phase was characterised by learning to manage the situation and the emotions.

As time passed and participants experienced encounters with the conflictual colleague, they learnt from his or her reactions to different situations. Reflecting on these experiences, they identified ways to manage the relationship. For example, Participant 9 reflected on his diary about a time when the labour union representative complicated his work, making him angry, and on the following day he got good results from this representative. He understood that the relationship required him to compromise to obtain results.

> "The other day we had a meeting that lasted almost two hours in which we achieved more than what we were looking for, in terms of production commitment and reprocessing of products. It is very important not to get into their game, allow for everyone to have their performance and close deals before or after." (Participant 9, Diary)
> "So, what I am trying to do now is to disarm his game. To tell him, ok, this is how we are going to communicate this issue. You go and tell them this before. Some things I let him tell them before, so that he

takes the novelty…" (Participant 9, Follow-up interview)

Participant 11 also identified a new strategy to manage the relationship and passed from an integrating to an avoiding strategy. As she had tried for some time to be open with the colleague, explaining the advantages of working together and this had not worked, she adopted an avoiding strategy. She needed a sales supervisor to provide an accurate forecast of what she would sell, and the person kept saying she would sell less than what she knew she could sell. The participant decided to either ignore the problem although it affects her performance, or try to avoid this person and do the task herself.

"I let them pass because in the aggregate they don't make a big difference. […] I think that there are things that cannot be changed, I don't know, it is my perception. They are cultural and cannot be changed. I modify it myself at the end as I am tired of trying to convince them to give me the right number." (Participant 11, Follow-up interview)

In phase 2 participants felt negatively as they could not manage these conflicting relationships properly. As time passed, they managed these feelings, trying to be strategic to achieve results. For example, Participant 13 who was tired of trying to improve the relationship left his tiredness aside and took an integration strategy.

"I did what I could do, what was at my reach, we worked on issues together, I invited him for lunch and we had a good talk." (Participant 13, Follow-up interview)

Participant 9, who used to get angry, still gets angry at certain situations but now tries to manage it and not to show it.

"I tried not to show it so much, because there are times when I get really angry. But if you show him that, he wins." (Participant 9, Follow-up interview)

7.2 Managing a conflicting relationship with a supervisor

Four participants also experienced the need to manage a conflicting relationship with the supervisor. These relationships took up a lot of time and energy from participants, and they devoted quite a considerable amount of space during interviews and in their diaries to expressing their thoughts on this problem. Previous studies suggest that supervisors' negative behaviours are associated with subordinates' stress, poor performance, workplace deviance and citizenship behaviour (Aryee, Sun, Chen, and Debrah, 2008; Mitchell and Ambrose, 2007; Zellars, Tepper, and Duffy, 2002). In fact, recent research has started looking at the negative effects supervisors can have on newcomers, suggesting the importance of exploring this issue. For example, supervisor verbal aggression is associated with newcomer negative affect which, in turn, negatively affects performance and helping behaviours (Nifadkar, Tsui and Ashforth, 2012).

7.2.1 Identifying a conflicting supervisor

Participants had to manage conflicting relationships with the boss when a) they had different working styles, b) they had a boss who did not understand the participants' role, c) they had more than one boss with different interests, or d) they felt superior to the boss.

a) Different working styles: Research suggests that differences between supervisor and subordinate have consequences on issues such as perceptions of psychological contract breach (Suazo, Turnley and Mai-Dalton, 2008), supervisors' provision of

negotiation latitude (McClane, 1991), subordinates' absence to work (Hope Pelled and Xin, 1997), amount of communication, and subordinates' performance ratings (Turban and Jones, 1988). These differences can be visible differences such as gender and race or perceived differences such as cognitive styles. In this study, visual differences in terms of age had an impact on the quality of the supervisor-subordinate. Differences in cognitive styles also affected the emergence of conflicting relationships. Cognitive styles refer to "individual differences in how we perceive, think, solve problems, learn, and relate to others" (Witkin et al., 1977, p.15) or to "consistent individual differences in preferred ways of organizing and processing information and experience" (Messick, 1976, p.5, cited in Allison, Armstrong and Hayes, 2001). A mismatch between the participant's and the boss' working styles usually provoked problems in the relationship and encouraged participants' to reflect a lot on this. For instance, Participant 13 who had a conflictual boss, complained that he was very demanding and obsessive, was controlling him all the time and did not interact socially with him, as he would expect. He commented:

> "It is like his psychology works very differently from mine." (Participant 13, Diary)

Participant 6 had a boss with whom she had a strong conflicting relationship, and she also mentioned the difference in their working styles:

> "I feel that my way of working is not his way of working. I mean, clearly. So that makes it difficult for us to get along, or to generate something together." (Participant 6, Follow-up interview)

Apart from cognitive styles, a related difference which had great impact on the quality of the relationship was the mismatch between what supervisor and subordinate believed the supervisor's role to be. For instance, this was the case of Participant 6.

> "He has some theories about work, kind of: 'you have to take care of it. And my work is only to pressure you'. And I think a boss has to... That's why; we have different views of the boss-employee relationship. So, it is hard for me, I don't agree. […] His way of achieving things is by being rude, and he thinks it is fine. Maybe for him treating me that way means nothing. And it bothers me, I don't like, it is hard…" (Participant 6, Follow-up interview)

b) The boss not understanding the individual's role or situation: Participants also had to manage a conflicting relationship with a supervisor when he or she did not understand the participant's work and hence demanded results that were not feasible. For instance, Participant 11 had this problem with her regional boss.

> "They ask me for things... They ask me to support my ideas on market information and we don't buy market information because we have no budget for that. And I've told him that three times and he keeps telling me the same, so I can't talk to that person, it is ridiculous." (Participant 11, Follow-up interview)

c) Having more than one boss with different interests: In today's companies, it is usual for individuals to have more than one boss as firms' structures require it. When this happened, participants might have had problems in managing

contradicting interests. For instance, Participant 11 had a local and a regional boss with different interests.

> "At a first sight everything is fine, but then there are conflicting interests between what people here want and what regional people want. When you take a job, everyone seems very harmonious, that they all want the same, but then they don't want the same. And it is hard because I have to take a position, and I always try to make everyone happy but in general this is not possible in this life…" (Participant 11, First interview)

> "In the current context I feel pulled apart and with difficulties to achieve the contradictory goals that both bosses ask me to achieve." (Participant 11, Diary)

d) Feeling superior to the boss: People like to admire and look up to their bosses, so, when this does not happen it can be quite frustrating. Participant 4 felt this way as he thought he was superior to his boss and devoted much reflection to this issue and to trying to manage the relationship.

> "The person, to whom I would supposedly report to, has five or six years less than me of AGE. She has five or six years less of experience; she started working in 2003 I think. She is much younger. But that much younger, she is 28/29 years old; she has her degree, and… six years of experience. And at the end in the structure she is my boss. And I say: stop, I have more academic credentials, more professional credentials and more years of experience, and at the end I have to ask for permission, and tell her 'Do you think we should do it this

way…?'." (Participant 4, First interview)

Newcomers also complained about their supervisors when they did not provide guidelines for work because they were either overwhelmed or not much knowledgeable of the role - although not to the point of having conflicting relationships. For example, Participant 17 had a boss who was overwhelmed. Being new to the role and to the organisation, and not being part of a work team with colleagues doing similar tasks, he would have needed more support from his supervisor but he did not get it.

> "She is overwhelmed with work; it is not that she... She is overwhelmed with work and well, she expects from me that I do things right, and not to seat with me to look at issues. From others yes, but from me she does not expect: 'please, how do I do this thing? How do I do this other thing?' She told me 'I prefer you to make mistakes'. […] It would be good to have a little bit more guidance, but no, today I don't have it." (Participant 17, First interview)

7.2.2 Conflict management strategies towards a supervisor

Participants used several strategies to manage this conflicting relationship. These are exemplified next.

a) Integrating: Some participants discussed openly the problem with the supervisor. They did this either because they felt the boss was capable of listening or because they just could not take it anymore. This had a positive short term effect, with the boss trying to improve the relationship, but this was not necessarily maintained in time. For instance, Participant 13 had a conversation with his boss trying to make him understand how hard it was working with him, while Participant 6 had a burst

in which she showed his boss she could not handle his style. In both cases, the participants observed an effort from their supervisors to change but this did not last long.

> "So, I told it to him some days ago… 'Well, accept a comment from me. Forgive me, I am no one to say this, but from my experience with you… I think it is worth telling you, so that we can talk about it face to face. I think that during the first six months you are very very very much over people. And sometimes, the questionable part from my point of view is the way in which you communicate. I see those are your ways, it is not only with me, I don't judge them… but sometimes someone can get upset by them'. So, I don't know whether I was right or wrong to tell him that… not with those words… I summarised it now. He didn't take it badly. During two days… let's say this happened on Tuesday… Wednesday, Thursday and Friday he tried to create some softness, you see? But then he came back…" (Participant 13, Diary)

> "I exploded! I went to ask something to my boss and he started mistreating me and I don't know how we got to a level of discussion and I told him that I could not do it anymore, that if he didn't like it, he knew what to do. It was a whole scandal. […] Anyway I explained the director that I only wanted to ask my boss for more communication and team work and things had gone out of control." (Participant 6, Diary)

> "At the beginning he was more careful I think […] In fact, it was good that we could talk. The idea is that we will try to communicate a little bit more…" (Participant 6, Follow-up interview)

b) Obliging: Some participants tried to adapt themselves to the boss, so as to diminish the conflict. When individuals started the new job, they first behaved in ways that had been useful to them in previous experiences. However, as they received explicit or implicit feedback and learnt about the boss' characteristics, participants started accommodating their behaviours. For example, Participant 13 is a very proactive person who soon started creating relationships with everyone at the firm and was going 'fast' with his work. As he realised about his boss' obsessive and controlling characteristics, he tried to adapt.

> "Maybe the person is very obsessive and wants to have control on everything, right? So I've started to administer it, I took the foot out of the accelerator a bit, I slowed down. In the sense of talking about it, to make sure he is aware of everything… good communication. Because he wants to be involved in everything all the time." (Participant 13, First interview)

c) Dominating: Probably, because of the type of relationship, subordinate-supervisor, it was hard for participants to use dominating strategies. However, there were cases in which someone interceded for them, but they had to be very careful so as not to negatively affect their relationships with their bosses. For example, Participant 11 managed to make her boss understand important characteristics of her work that made his requests not feasible, by having someone else explaining it to him.

> "Here we have 486 clients, and he wanted me to make the forecast by client. I told him... I don't know for how long I had to discuss with him, until finally the Operations Manager told the Regional Operations

Manager and he finally paid attention to me, but it was obvious, you see? It is ridiculous." (Participant 11, Follow-up interview)

d) Avoiding: This was also a difficult strategy to use as participants had no choice but to interact with the supervisor. However, they avoided the conflict by saying 'yes' to the requests, but not performing them. For example, Participant 11 had conflicts because her regional boss was asking her to report to him when her local boss took an action which did not follow the regional established procedures. Her strategy was not to confront him but neither do the task.

"It is crazy, really crazy, only he can think about that. I tell him 'yes, yes, of course, you will be the first one to find out…'." (Participant 11, Follow-up interview)

e) Compromising: Although most participants tried to adapt to the boss, many were not ready to oblige completely, or on all facets, and looked for a compromise situation, in which they would adapt a little but would also demand that they were accepted on their own terms, even if this was not aligned to the boss' style. This was the case of Participant 13.

"He wants me to change the way I handle the shareholders, he wants to make me more alike him, with a harsh personality. That's an issue, right? But he is like that, I am not going to change, I can't do it, it's not me." (Participant 13, Follow-up interview)

f) Emerging strategies: The strategy 'realising it is not personal' also emerged in relation to managing conflicting relationships with the boss. As happened with conflictual colleagues, once participants had built confidence with co-workers, they started discussing this problem with them, feeling better as they realised it was the boss' fault and not theirs.

> "Besides, my peers see it the same way. Actually, other departments see it the same way. So… I have that tranquillity, which is not a tranquillity… it is a tranquillity that the problem is not me. If not, I would worry more." (Participant 13, Diary)

7.2.3 Effects

Considering the importance of the relationship with the supervisor, the presence of conflict had strong effects on participants' emotions, learning and turnover intentions.

a) Feeling negatively: Participants who had conflicting relationships with their bosses were going through emotional stress. This could happen at different levels, depending on the kind of conflicting relationship. For instance, Participant 11 was feeling tense at having to deal with bosses with conflicting interests while Participant 6 felt totally upset at dealing with a boss with whom she had different working styles.

> "Today I feel quite burdened because I am still in the process to adaptation to a double local/regional report." (Participant 11, Diary)

> "Now, he suddenly is in a hurry for things to get done and even though I feel I have things quite advanced, any missing detail, he demands it to me as if I hadn't done it because I was not in the mood. I feel very pressed and with fear. I don't want to come to work. I lock myself in the restroom to cry. I am having a very bad time." (Participant 6, Diary)

b) Reducing learning opportunities: Participants who had conflictual supervisors saw their learning opportunities to adjust to the role diminished by this relationship. This could be related to doubting the supervisor's feedback, not having working guidelines, and limiting relationships with senior people. One of supervisors'

important functions is to provide feedback to newcomers for them to adjust to the role (Morrison, 1993b). As participants had conflicting relationships with their bosses they were either not certain of whether they could trust their feedback, or they did not receive feedback at all, and hence they missed this learning opportunity. For example, Participant 13 received feedback from his boss but he was not sure of whether his boss was actually trying to help him and whether he was a useful source for feedback.

> "And my boss gave me some feedback, a comment… Again, I am getting to know him… I balance his good spirit with an interrogation mark. I am sceptic in that sense." (Participant 13, Diary)

Participant 6 is an example of not receiving feedback or guidelines at all that would help her reduce uncertainty and improve role clarity.

> "I need someone to provide me with a guideline of where we have to go to. Because I have just started, I have no idea of what is expected. And my boss has a hard time in understanding that I need this… But, well, I don't know… 'Can I go this way? Can I go that way?' There a lot of things that can be done, but it all depends on what the strategy is. And I don't know it." (Participant 6, Follow-up interview)

Other senior people could be a source for learning. However, many supervisors, especially conflictual ones, would get upset if the participant interacted much with other senior colleagues. For example, Participant 6 found her boss' supervisor guidelines useful but was not able to ask for them.

> "My Director is quite tough, but it is ok for me because she is very clear about what she wants, she knows a lot. So three words from her

solve a lot of things for me. But until I get to the point of talking to her, I have to take all the punches first, you see? […] I can't go directly to her because my boss gets angry." (Participant 6, Follow-up interview)

c) Increasing turnover intentions: As it has been suggested in the literature, the quality of the relationship with the supervisor affects employees' intentions to quit (Graen, Liden and Hoel, 1988). This happened to newcomers as well, although depending on the level of conflict, some participants assigned a deadline to their work for this boss while others wanted to leave right away. For example, Participant 13 thought he could handle another two years managing his conflicting supervisor, while Participant 6 was looking for jobs since this conflicting relationship was affecting her well-being.

"If I asked myself 'would you take him for a long time?' And… two more years." (Participant 13, Diary)

"So, the truth is that I am enduring. Yes, the idea is to get something else, and as something else comes up… Because of a health issue, I mean, I cannot take it any longer." (Participant 6, Follow-up interview)

7.2.4 Supervisor conflicting relationship: development over time

Participants reflected extensively about these important conflicting relationships during interviews and in diaries, providing information about how these developed through time. One participant had a conflicting relationship with his boss provoked by a visible factor, which he realised as soon as he got the position. Three other participants had conflicting relationships provoked by cognitive factors which were not visible from the start. This led to two supervisor conflicting relationship's dynamic models: visible conflict model and delayed recognition model.

a) Visible conflict model: Visible factors are easily observed by individuals and hence can provoke prejudices in the starting off of the relationship, beginning a conflicting relationship. Data suggest that this can be detrimental for both parties but as the participant learnt about some of the supervisor's invisible characteristics, prejudices can disappear or decrease and the relationship improved.

Phase 1: Identifying the problem

Participant 4 realised even before starting the new role that his boss was much younger and with fewer years of professional experience. At the same time, he knew his boss wanted someone more junior for the position but finally he was assigned to the role. This was the start of a conflicting relationship.

> "I told the Human Resources guy 'I don't know how the day to day is going to be, I don't know how to say it without sounding arrogant, but I have seven or eight years more of experience than her, I am four or five years older, I even have more academic credentials... I don't know how this situation will go…'." (Participant 4, Follow-up interview)

Phase 2: Reacting to the problem

As Participant 4 soon realised his boss' characteristics, he felt an immediate conflict in the relationship and he took an integrating strategy by talking about it with her right away, although with a confrontational tone.

> "The first meeting I had with her before the meeting with the people from Chile was testing expectations. I told her 'look, I don't know what you are looking for or what you have in mind. But if you really want an assistant type guy for you…' because that was the profile the job search

had at the beginning, and in Chile they did not want that, they wanted a person with more seniority and a more commercial profile rather than marketing. So we talked and I told her 'look, if this is what you are looking for, I may not be the most appropriate person…" (Participant 4, Follow-up interview)

Phase 3: Getting to know each other

After an initial rough time, they got to know each other. This smoothed the relationship, as the participant identified characteristics of his boss that were invisible at the beginning, which were positive. The following quotes show how his boss' initiatives had a positive effect on the participant as he recognised her effort to be a good supervisor and that they had similar working styles.

Recognising her good will:

"On June 15th I had a meeting with my boss that gave me more tranquillity. The goal of the meeting was to set expectations for the current position in the organisation and talk about future expectations. It was her initiative and I thought it was very interesting. She proposed to me and the team that we could have this talk with her so that she could be aware of our vision and be the facilitator of our goal. On the other hand, it gave me the opportunity to tell her more about my expertise and share some visions on the problems of the category. It was interesting, I think we were able to get to know each other better and understand where each one wanted to go to." (Participant 4, Diary)

Recognising matching working styles:

"On June 26th we had a team meeting in which we did an exercise that helped us get to know each other. It was one of those exercises in which each one has to give a value to one of four options. Then all the points are summed up and that gives a result and each column has a colour associated. I thought it was interesting for two reasons: on the one hand, getting to know my peers in the category and on the other hand my boss had guessed the results for each one of us but did not get mine right. She thought my result would be in a totally opposite way to what I actually got. The truth is that my profile is very similar to hers, I mean; we are quite alike in many aspects. It was useful because it contributed to continue getting to know each other. My relationship with my boss keeps smoothing and we understand each other better." (Participant 4, Diary)

Phase 4: Managing a minor conflictual relationship

Although the participant expected that his boss would recognise that he was more senior than she was, which she had not done so far, he is managing the relationship carefully, trying to make it work.

Expecting recognition:

"If I had to work with someone whom I have to lead, but I know internally that this person is older than me, has more years of experience and more credentials, I would have a talk with this person and tell him 'look, these are the rules of the game today, great, you are with the team, I will try to learn things from you and contribute…'. Well, that did not happen." (Participant 4, Follow-up interview)

Compromising:

> "And well, this is where we have some differences with my boss. She thinks we are going in one way and I think more in another way… But well, we try to get a consensus and not fight; we have to work together every day. Anyway, maybe I think it is everything ok, but it took some time to get to understand each other, but she is really nice…" (Participant 4, Follow-up interview)

b) Delayed-recognition model: This model of the dynamic of the relationship took place when the factors provoking the conflict were not visible. This resulted in participants taking more time to identify the problem than in the previous model. So, the relationship started smoother than in the visible model and got worse with time. By the end, the result could be the same as in the visible model or more negative as the conflicting factors were very important and irremediable.

Phase 1: Receiving signs

Participants who had this type of relationship conflict with the supervisor received signs of potential conflict but did not recognise it right away. For example, Participant 11 knew that the newly assigned regional supervisor could provoke conflict because she foresaw he would have contradictory interests with her local boss. However, at the start it was just a fear.

> "I have the feeling that this is going to bring me conflict with my actual boss. He is a person who values loyalty from his employees a lot, and who doesn't like the region to meddle in his affairs and who does not totally appreciate the standardisation of processes and the bureaucracy

imposed by the region. Maybe these are only my hunches but I'll see how things develop." (Participant 11, Diary)

Another example, Participant 6, was receiving little feedback and help from her boss but she was attributing this behaviour to him also being new to the organisation and hence being overwhelmed.

"If I bump into my poor boss twice a week, that's a lot. He is all the time running from one place to another, if there is something urgent I ask him, if not, I move forward. I don't have anyone to teach me how to do things." (Participant 6, First interview)

Phase 2: Recognising the problem

After some time, participants understood the situation better and realised that they were having a conflicting relationship with the supervisor which they needed to manage. For example, Participant 11 started having actual conflicts between the interests of her two supervisors.

"Just as I had imagined I am starting to have conflicts between what my regional boss asks for and what my local boss wants from me." (Participant 11, Diary)

Similarly, after some months, Participant 6 realised that the reason her boss did not provide feedback was not that he was overwhelmed but that he did not consider it part of his role. She started feeling frustrated. The following are extracts from her diary on three different days.

"I am frustrated because I cannot get my boss to give me feedback on my work." (Participant 6, Diary)

"On the 14th of July there was a big event that turned out very well, luckily. Actually it was not luck, it was because of my work and my boss got there for the picture. I am angry because I like what I do but I don't feel valued or respected." (Participant 6, Diary)

"Since my boss' supervisor came back, he hasn't stopped pushing me and telling me things in a bad way." (Participant 6, Diary)

Phase 3: Reacting to the problem

After realising the problem, some more rapidly than others and some with more patience, participants started consciously designing strategies and implementing them to manage the relationship. For example, Participant 11 discussed with her colleagues how to handle the situation. Her regional boss was asking her to tell him when her local boss took actions which were not aligned with the regional guidelines. She discussed this request with other people in the organisation who had similar jobs to hers.

"And I talked to others in my position in other countries and I asked them and they said he was crazy; it is suicide to do something like that." (Participant 11, Follow-up interview)

Phase 4: Managing the relationship with little conflict or wanting to leave

Some participants, after feeling more in control of the situation as they had already understood and reacted to the problem, were still managing a conflicting relationship with their supervisors, but were less stressed about it. For example, regarding his boss' requests to change his behaviour in certain circumstances, Participant 13 commented:

"When the time comes, if something comes up, I will, but it is not something that worries me." (Participant 13, Follow-up interview)

In a different situation, Participant 6 had reacted to the conflict and although she perceived some good results of her reaction, the conflict was too negative for her and she was trying to hold on but also thinking of leaving.

"I am extremely responsible and I get really upset… No, no, no, it doesn't make sense to me. I cannot hold it. Well, I am trying to hold… […] So, the truth is that I am enduring. Yes, the idea is to get something else, and as something else comes up… Because of a health issue, I mean, I cannot take it any longer." (Participant 6, Follow-up interview)

7.3 Conclusion

This chapter introduced how conflicting relationships at the new role affected participants' adjustment and identity development. Both colleagues and supervisors could be a source of conflict to which participants had to react. They managed these relationships by applying simultaneously several of the conflict management strategies identified in previous research and also two other strategies which emerged in this study: 'protecting themselves' and 'realising it is not personal'. These conflicting relationships, especially the ones with supervisors, had negative effects on participants in terms of emotions, learning and career plans. The unique data provided by a combination of the first interview, diary, relationships diagrams and follow-up interviews, allowed the study to observe the dynamic of how these relationships developed over time. In the case of colleagues the relationship followed three phases: discovering the problem, feeling negatively, and managing the relationship. In the case of conflicting relationships with supervisors two different models were observed,

depending on whether the source of conflict was visible or not. The visible conflict model has four phases: identifying the problem, reacting to the problem, getting to know each other, and managing a minor conflictual relationship. The delayed recognition model has the following four phases: receiving signs, recognising the problem, reacting to the problem, and managing the relationship with little conflict or wanting to leave. After observing the impact and development of the social dimension on experienced business newcomers following a career transition, the next chapter explores how they adapt their personal identities to the new role.

CHAPTER 8: ADJUSTING THE PERSONAL PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

As these experienced participants entered the new role, they first tried to perform and behave as they used to. Some of them were able to continue like this while others realised that they needed to adjust their personal identity, referring to abilities and attitudes (see Chapter 5), to be able to perform. Considering that adapting the personal identity is one of the topics of identity dynamism which has attracted most research already (Ibarra, 1999; Beyer and Hannah, 2006), this chapter aims at describing briefly how this process occurred for these experienced business professionals and compares it with previous studies.

8.1 The importance of adjustment

Data show how one of participants' most important concerns during these months was adjusting to the job. This is suggested along the diaries, in which many of the entries which refer to positive emotions are related to receiving signs of being adjusted. Participants felt positively when they received good feedback, they achieved results, or got signs of being able to adjust. Some examples are presented below.

- Getting good feedback

    "On Tuesday I got an email from the Sales Manager (someone I do not particularly get along with, quite the opposite actually) congratulating me on something I had done, and sending a copy of that email to the Finance Manager, the Operations Manager and my boss. Despite the fact that I know that this is anecdotal, it makes me feel good that some of the effort I am putting on getting this new position forward is showing. I think it was an excellent decision to enter this company. My achievements had never had so much visibility. Previously, if I did

something right, my boss took 100% of the credit and I did not even find out about other people's comments. The feedback given to me due to high exposure is very motivating." (Participant 11, Diary)

- Achieving results

"The progress of the project makes me feel not only happy, but also satisfied, since I am now part of this assembling game." (Participant 10, Diary)

- Feeling they are adjusting

"My talk to the Chilean boss was very enriching, I think things are on their way and little by little I am starting to feel more comfortable in the organisation. [...] Little by little I am getting in touch with the market and the distribution channels and I am feeling more comfortable." (Participant 4, Diary)

However, this adjustment did not always come easily. As participants reflected on their adjustment, some of them realised that they could benefit from the competencies, working styles and knowledge acquired in previous roles while others realised that they needed to make changes to their work identity to adjust.

8.2 Benefiting from previous work roles

Participants were going through different types of career changes in terms of the continuity of the professional identity. For all of them, this was a relevant change in their careers, but for some it was incremental while for others it was more radical. This affected the level in which they needed to develop new skills.

When individuals are trying to adapt to a new role, they may benefit from previous work roles as the experience, working styles and knowledge required are similar to

those of the new role. Research suggests that newcomers may strategically try to shape their role to reduce the amount of new learning required, as this is likely to enhance performance and career prospects (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2011). In this study, participants mostly benefited from previous roles when the transition was of small magnitude (see Chapter 2). Transitions were small when the new role was in the same organisation or one with a close culture and doing tasks similar to those of a role held in the past. Thirteen participants were going through small transitions.

The following quotes describe how the small magnitude of the transition allowed them to use prior knowledge, skills and relationships.

"I don't think I will have to change my profile too much because it seems that this company is very similar to the previous one. And I did well in the previous one…" (Participant 25, First interview)

"In this role, it is really important to know how to relate to different cultures… During the last two years, in the previous job, having managed a regional department showed me how different Latin American countries are." (Participant 13, First interview)

"I have several years of experience as account executive before this company... so, in a few months I understood where the needs were…" (Participant 5, Follow-up interview)

"It wasn't new to me to lead people belonging to different departments because before working in this sector, I was working in forecasting. The forecasting process is cross functional and involves many areas, and by leading that process I had to interact with many departments, generate the involvement of the other participants and assure that

everyone met their responsibilities, so this was not new to me."

(Participant 12, Follow-up interview)

8.3 <u>Changing profile for adjustment</u>

When the transitions were big, participants undertook a large amount of personal identity work, as they needed to make changes to their profiles to adjust. When they started performing the new role, participants naturally continued working as previously. However, when this seemed not to have the desired effects and they got angry or anguished, they then realised they needed to adapt their profile to the new setting. Thirteen participants were going through big transitions (two participants appear in both small and big transitions because they were starting two new roles at the same time). To achieve adjustment, all participants (even those who were not happy with their new roles), were willing to make changes in their professional profiles if necessary. Different types of changes can be observed in terms of internalisation and temporality.

8.3.1 Non-internalised changes

These are changes which are expected to last as long as the role lasts, or even for a more limited temporal frame, being only undertaken in special occasions as participants did not totally agree with behaving this way. Participants undertook and reflected on changes they needed to make to be successful in the role, although they did not expect these changes to be necessarily internalised to their identities. Three types can be identified:

a) Role temporal changes: This type of change is usually related to entering a work environment where 'things are not done as they should' and so individuals understand they need to learn how to work and be productive even when people

work like they do. For example, Participants 10 and 15 changed organisations and had to adapt to how people worked there.

> "At first I was quite ok, enthusiastic to move things forward, but then I bumped with totally different working styles and... well, I had to adapt, I don't know if the way I work, but yes my behaviour a little to how work is done here. Here everything is slower, at least, to what we are used to. And well, people's personalities are also different, so as months went by I kind of got used to it, and took the foot out of the accelerator..." (Participant 10, Follow-up interview)

> "I am learning to move around. I've been at this company for a short time. And to me, it is a totally different culture, much more informal, last minute, everything is done running; and at the beginning I crashed all the time, because after such a long time in the previous organisation where everything was about processes, structure, for me it was a huge shock. So, at the beginning I used to get anguished because things were not as I was used to or as I would like them to be. And now they are still not done as I would like to, but I am moulding a little more. I live it in another way." (Participant 15, Follow-up interview)

b) Occasion specific changes: This type of change relates to undertaking behaviours the participants did not feel completely comfortable with. Many participants experienced the need to undertake behaviours they did not entirely agree with. This provoked identity work as they had to make sense of why they did not undertake these behaviours even if they were suggested they should or why they did take these behaviours even though these did not represent who they were.

When adopting these behaviours or considering doing it, participants saved it for specific circumstances of extreme need. Some examples are presented below.

> "This thing of sending emails asking for things which correspond to their job, copying in directors, and so on... I have no choice but to put them in evidence by replying to those emails with 'copy to everyone' simply saying 'this is part of your job'. This is not normally my style." (Participant 10, Diary).

> "My peers in other countries have more of an accusing attitude; they ask for things and the third time they need to ask for it, they copy in the General Manager, who would be their boss like my boss is the General Manager. And I don't do that… I do it in very specific cases… I actually haven't done it yet… Well, two days ago I replied something in which the General Manager was copied in and I answered that… but everyone was copied in and I included only my boss and the Operations Manager who was involved; I didn't dare to copy in everyone. I mean, I don't like that way of working but if I have no choice, I will have to do it." (Participant 11, Follow-up interview)

c) Acting: Some participants discovered that their new jobs required them to act. Until then, they had showed their true personalities and this had worked for them. However, they realised that their new peers were acting and that showing their true personalities as they may have done in previous roles was not good for performance and for building their professional image. So, they incorporated the acting skill which they had not performed before, but the behaviours they undertook are precisely an act and not their true profiles. This happened to Participant 18:

"At this workshop with everyone from the department, I realised that they are all more careful. And there are a lot of lies. I mean, a lot of lies in the sense of appearances, right? Like trying to look like something else, like acting, knowing what to say to make a good impression. And I am a little more of a rebel, which does not suit this position. So, I have to moderate my character and be more strategic when I talk."

(Participant 18, Follow-up interview)

8.3.2 Internalised changes

As the transition was bigger, participants needed to make more profound changes to be able to perform. These changes usually related to skills learning, which were then incorporated to the professional identity. Participants were happy to learn these competencies as they thought they made them more employable. These were skills that would have been useful in previous roles but as they were not required, they had not realise they would have benefited from their development. When changing roles, they found that they had no choice, since they were essential for job performance. Once they realised they did not have these skills but needed them, they were happy to invest time and effort in their development. It was not easy to make these core changes, it took time, and while the change was under development, participants might have suffered as their performance might not have been good enough since they were exposed to situations they still could not manage properly. However, they seemed to tackle this as a positive challenge. Particularly in expansive work contexts, participants were able to learn new skills and apply them to their new roles (Fuller et al., 2007). For example, Participant 11 had started to learn how to present in public during the MBA. However, as she did not need to use this skill in her previous job which was characterised by being restrictive in terms of having a narrow task and no

discretion, it was still underdeveloped. The new role is giving her opportunities for discretion and exposure to a range of work processes, which are helping her develop this skill and many others.

> "[Previous employer] is very bureaucratic, all processes are written down. I had bosses from abroad who would indicate me how to do the most obvious thing you could imagine. This process is much more creative." (Participant 11, First interview)

> "I am overcoming my fear of talking in public. The truth is that this job obliged me to do it. If I had known when I got the job offer that it implied so many presentations, I don't know whether I would have taken it. Anyway, I think this helps me a lot to develop that part which I started to practice at the MBA. During my first degree and in my previous jobs, I didn't have to make presentations, so it is a real challenge." (Participant 11, Diary)

Participant 18 is also experiencing an expansive new role that is increasing her learning (Fuller et al., 2007). In this new role she has a high level of discretion, exposure to many processes, and a management style which encourages the creation and distribution of knowledge. Regarding her learning she commented:

> "When you study 'strategies, goals, action plans…' that's great, and I am sure that I have applied it sometime and that I have talked about it many times. But I think my job was so structured before and so relational that this was not required… I mean, it was based mostly on instinct. And here I need it. So this is the greatest change I have to make: change my everyday mindset." (Participant 18, First interview)

Most participants reflected in their diaries and interviews about these changes they were either making or trying to make, to adjust and be successful in their roles. Most of them undertook a combination of these types of changes, sometimes internalising them and sometimes not, depending on the specific behaviour required.

8.4 Conclusion

In agreement with previous studies, this chapter suggests that newcomers perform identity work to adjust to the new role (Ibarra, 1999). The way they do this depends on the fit between previous experiences and the current role, suggesting the importance of transition magnitude on this process. Beyer and Hannah (2006) observed the influence of past experience in the case of seasoned newcomers. However, they observed a much stronger effort to attach to the held personal identity and try not to change it than what was observed in this study. Probably, because in their study participants were taking a temporary two-year assignment and knew they were going back to their previous positions and some of them were much senior, this may have affected the willingness to change.

In the present research, participants were eager to adjust and perform because they knew their future careers depended on this, and although they had considerable working experience, they were aware of the need to acquire more skills to continue developing their careers. In analysing how participants adjusted, this chapter introduced the element of temporality, since participants made both changes that were specific for the role or certain occasions, and others that were long term. Figure 8.1 summarises the results in terms of adjusting behaviours, which are included in the integrated model presented in Chapter 11.

Figure 8.1: Adjusting behaviours
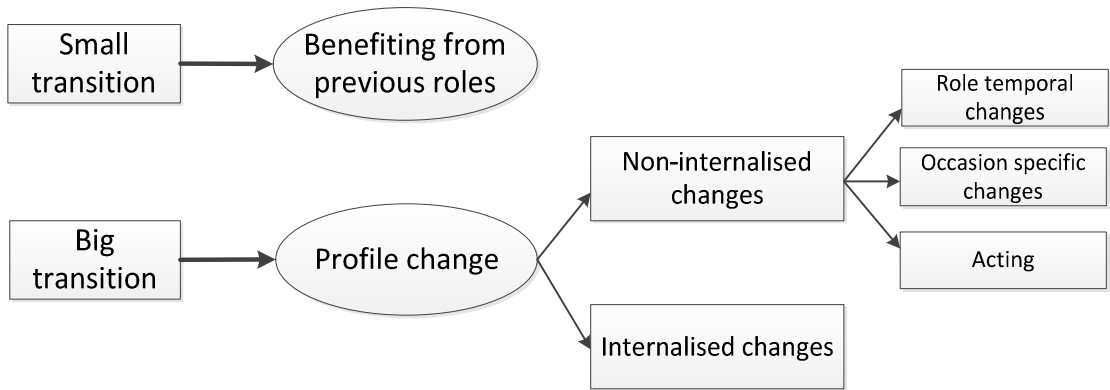
CHAPTER 9: MANAGING IDENTITY THREAT

One of the most relevant processes emerging from the data relates to dealing with identity threat. Identity threat refers to "experiences appraised as indicating potential harm to the value, meanings, or enactment of an identity" (Petriglieri, 2011, p.644). This chapter identifies when experienced newcomers suffer a professional identity threat, how they manage it and the effects it has on their adjustment and on their careers.

9.1 Identity threat origin

Similarly to previous studies (Pratt et al., 2006), participants of this study faced identity threat when the activities of the new role and the position did not match their professional identities. For example, Participant 20, who was suffering strongly from identity threat, started a new role in which he was performing activities that were not aligned with his skills and with his professional identity, and felt negatively about it.

> "And suddenly I am at a new sales administrative position, much more structural, much more formal, and much less seductive in relation to using the competencies I have built during my experience and the tools I have acquired at the MBA. So, in general, it is a much poorer position than what I would wish for and where I come from. That is the reality."
>
> (Participant 20, First interview)

In the case of junior newcomers, the threat arises because they have expectations which differ from the real work of the profession or differ from what they are able to do at early stages of their careers (Pratt et al., 2006). Experienced newcomers usually have clearer pictures of their identities and the roles available, suggesting that the reasons for experiencing identity threat may be different. Previous research suggests

that identity threats can be triggered by involuntary career changes. For instance, research shows that unemployed individuals experience identity threat as they stay at home and do not perform the activities attached to their work identities (Berger, 2006). The same happens with old and disabled people who can only gain access to positions that differ strongly from what they consider to be their work identities (Riach and Loretto, 2009). Although individuals in the second example are taking voluntary career decisions (rather than being made redundant or dismissed), the constraints they face may force them to accept positions which do not reflect their identities, and hence they experience identity threat.

In this study, when analysing the differences between those participants who experienced identity threat and those who did not, two clear groups emerged: those who took the job with an intrinsic rationale and those who accepted the role because of extrinsic factors. Intrinsic motivation is based on the rewarding experiences individuals get directly from performing certain tasks, it is "the motivation to engage in work primarily for its own sake, because the work itself is interesting, engaging, or in some way satisfying" (Amabile et al., 1994, p.950), while extrinsic motivation refers to behaviour undertaken as a means to some extrinsic end, such as money and status.

9.1.1 Extrinsic rationale

Participants who had a primary extrinsic rationale for taking the job experienced identity threat during their first months in the new role. The extrinsic ends included factors such as economic safety, hierarchical progression, and getting closer to the role they really wanted. Among the extrinsically-motivated participants, three groups are observed, each one of these relating to a different type of transition: those who were changing organisations took *stepping-stone roles;* those who were trying to start their

own ventures took *supporting roles*; while those making internal moves in the organisation took *gift roles*.

a) Stepping-stone roles: Individuals may choose a role which does not match their professional identities, but increases the chances of reaching an ultimate goal. Although they are aware of the rationale for the decision, it implies a temporal threat on their identities. Particularly, this may happen when undertaking big career changes, and hence the labour market penalises the individuals for not being coherent in their career trajectories. Two participants took stepping-stone roles. Participants 20 and 4 had problems in re-entering the labour market, so decided to take jobs which did not reflect their professional identities but which seemed to open doors to future positions that would be consistent with their identities.

> "I think the market charged me for those more than two years outside the labour market. […] I came back to where I could, not where I wanted. [...] What is the good thing? Well, that it is a young company, part of a multinational firm, with opportunities and more interesting positions than this one. So, I take it as an intermediate position for a following goal." (Participant 20, First interview)

> "The truth is that, when I started to work here, it was 'great', I thought the proposal was good, and I was willing to start from where I had to start and wait for some other opportunity to emerge but with a foot inside. Because many times that happens." (Participant 4, First interview)

b) Supporting roles: Individuals may choose an entrepreneurial professional identity and perform an entrepreneur role. However, as new ventures usually take time to provide economic benefits, individuals may feel forced to take *supporting roles*

related to their prior professional identities in parallel to sustain themselves. This provokes an identity threat on their current entrepreneurial identities. Three participants took a supporting role. For example, Participant 16 had been a construction engineer and was now an internet entrepreneur. However, he took a temporal position at a construction company to be able to provide for his family.

> "Although my horizon is in the venture, today I cannot separate myself from reality, in which I have to cover for fixed costs in some way. This gives me oxygen to continue with my venture." (Participant 16, Diary)

c) Gift roles: Sometimes, individuals are looking for a change which would enable them to enact a possible self, and the organisation proposes a new role that does not reflect the possible self. As may happen with gifts, individuals may accept this lateral move or promotion even though this was not really what they wanted. Although the change may provide them with extrinsic benefits, they experience an identity threat as they wished their activities and their roles were different by now. Four participants took gift roles. For example, Participant 9 was wishing for a role in the commercial area, but was offered a position in manufacturing. Although this was not what he wanted, he took the role for economic safety reasons.

> "I had applied to a position in the commercial department and did not get it. […] When I received this compulsory offer a couple of months ago, I thought 'well, I need to keep paying for my kids' school, in a labour market which is not demanding a lot of people these days… I am 42 years old, I have some experience but I don't know how attractive I am to the market'." (Participant 9, First interview)

9.1.2 Intrinsic rationale

Among the participants who took the role because of intrinsic reasons, implying that

this role was consistent with individuals' career aspirations and interests at that point in life, some also experienced identity threat. This happened when once they had accepted the jobs, they found out that the roles were not as expected. This could happen for causes related to unexpected facts or to prior misconceived perceptions of the role.

a) Unexpected facts: Internal changes in the company may make the role unnecessary or change the tasks associated with it. This happened to Participant 21 who moved to France to be the project manager of a French company's project in Spain. His background as project manager and speaking Spanish were his assets. However, soon when he got to France, the project was cancelled and he was assigned to a role that was the only he could perform as he did not speak French.

> "When the other project was cancelled, and they put me to work with this guy, on the one hand I felt bad because I said 'I had accepted a job, I was going to be the head of the project, and now I am…' but the truth is that thinking rationally, I know I was not capable of doing the job." (Participant 21, Follow-up interview)

b) Prior misconceived perceptions: Individuals may accept a job thinking they would be able to enact their identities in the role and then discover this is not the case. This happened to Participant 5 who entered a company through an MBA scheme. The programme meant that for the first year he would be trained, but not have a specific job. Although he knew about the scheme when accepting the job, he did not expect he would not be able to enact his sales executive identity for a whole year.

> "I started as account executive, but this first year I don't have clients

and I don't have a sales quota or plan; but it is supposed to be a year of training, which is weird. Because I was used to having clients, having a quota, all the routine that my colleagues are doing. Even though there is a change in industry to which I have to adapt, it is weird to be in this situation in which I am a salesman but with no sales basically." (Participant 5, First interview)

"But, in my place, the truth is that I expected much more interaction with the clients. In fact, I was expecting… I don't know if final responsibility over business but at least… I mean, at least a small number of clients with whom I could work directly. That was my expectation before entering the programme and the company. I mean, hiring a person who has commercial experience with sales responsibilities, and have him for a year without clients, a sales quota and so on… The truth is that I can't stop surprising myself." (Participant 5, Follow-up interview)

In total, 11 of the 24 participants experienced a threat on their professional identities. The following findings described in this chapter are based on the data from these participants' interviews and diaries.

9.2 Stronger threats

In all cases, participants' concern for their identity threat got stronger during the research process, with them reflecting on these much more in their diaries and follow-up interviews than during the first interviews. There were two contributory factors. The first one was the realisation that the mismatch between their identities and the tasks demanded by the role was greater than expected. Although most participants

realised soon that their professional identities were at stake, as they performed their roles and they had to do tasks which were even more misaligned, the threats grew stronger.

> "So, I end up doing operational stuff like printing things for my boss. And then I get mad… I mean, there are a lot of situations that the truth is that I did not studied a Masters… I did not work so many years, to be now doing certain things which are operational but at the same time take time, they tire you out… So, no, the truth is that I am not happy at all." (Participant 6, Follow-up interview)

The second factor was time. The results show that if doing something away from the identity is temporal, the threat to the identity is not that important, but it becomes stronger the longer this lasts or if individuals think it could last longer, as it is hard to ignore. Even if the research period lasted for only four months, data show that the pass of time had made the threat to grow stronger.

These two factors relate to Petrieglieri's (2011) proposition that when the threatening experience is of big magnitude (bigger than anticipated) and it is encountered frequently (time), the threat is strong. In the case of these experienced newcomers, where these two factors combined, the threat became more powerful. For instance, Participant 20 who found himself with a subordinate on health leave and hence he had to do her work, was concerned about for how long he would need to perform these tasks.

> "The feeling is ambiguous. On the one hand I know it is a temporal thing until we replace her or she comes back (hard), but on the other hand (the stronger one), it is like going backwards 15 years when I

started working, little thinking and lots of doing. This shocks me, more
after having a degree and a postgraduate study!!! I'm not getting
humiliated for doing this, I just do it. The doubt or the anxiousness is
related to knowing if this is a passing circumstance or it will happen
repetitively in time." (Participant 20, Diary)

9.3 Responses to identity threats

A threat to a current professional identity means that individuals define themselves in a certain way but are unable to enact that identity, at least temporarily. Pratt et al. (2006) studied junior newcomers who had a conception of what their professional identities would be like, but these were founded mostly on their training and not on work experiences. In their study, when experiencing identity threat, individuals made changes to the meaning of their professional identities. However, experienced newcomers have clearer ideas of who they are and who they want to be as they have acted and reflected on it for many years. Hence, participants did not easily change their identities, but used diverse responses that allowed them to maintain their identities, similarly as 'old' people do (Berger, 2006). This coincides with Feldman and Brett's (1983) findings which showed that experienced newcomers tended to use strategies to control and change their situation, while junior newcomers tended to rely more on organisational resources. Participants tried to protect their identities in three ways: 1) actively trying to change the activities they performed, 2) positive framing, and 3) role indifference.

9.3.1 Changing activities

As the identity threat may be caused by the transition implying entering new roles in which the activities to be performed do not match the professional identities,

individuals respond by trying to change these activities. They can do this by a) fighting typecasting, b) role stretching, and c) planning.

a) Fighting typecasting: As individuals undertake activities that do not match their identities, they may be afraid that others see them as only capable of doing that, diminishing their opportunities of doing the kind of tasks they feel they should be doing. To avoid this, individuals tell relevant others in the role set about their professional identities. The role set refers to the various roles that are more or less directly linked to a certain role, such as subordinates, supervisors, colleagues, members of staff and senior managers (Ashforth, 2001). Two participants actively fought typecasting. For example, Participant 21 tried to tell people around him about his identity, explaining what he used to do in his previous job.

> "In fact, they type casted me as technical and I tried to tell them what I used to do. […] Sometimes, when I run into someone, not now but when I had the chance of running into the Big Projects' Manager and such, I try to tell them about my experience, what I did before, so that I do not remain type casted in a mere technical position, which is not what I am, it is not the experience I have, and it is not what I did."
> (Participant 21, Follow-up interview)

b) Role stretching: This refers to performing activities related to the desired identity which are not responsibilities of the current role, trying to do work besides their role description (O'Mahony and Bechky, 2006) to get closer to their identities. Usually these activities are related to skills or knowledge individuals carry from previous experiences. This response is related to Nicholson's (1984) concept of role development, though on a small scale as when experiencing identity threat individuals may not have the necessary discretion to develop the role as they

would like to. Three participants engaged in role stretching. For example, Participants 21 and 5 were active in finding tasks related to their identities in which they could contribute to the organisation, and for which they used their prior knowledge and skills.

> "This guy I am working with and who is in charge of the project leans a lot on me. Not just engineering, but the project planning needs to be done and I do it; the budget, I do it. It is good for both of us." (Participant 21, Follow-up interview)

> "Today, my agenda is more of support to the local operation, a parallel agenda to the one of the programme. I asked for it. I told him that I wanted to do something with the local operation." (Participant 5, First interview) "I managed to participate in some sales. I could do this on some occasions since it made sense considering my background to support an executive in an industry he or she did not know much about, or in a type of product they did not manage completely..." (Participant 5, Follow-up interview)

c) Planning: Another response is to develop a plan to get a role that reflects the identity. Setting a deadline for the current role is an important part of the planning, as it assures individuals they will not get drowned in the role. In addition, if the individual understands the situation and foresees the change, he can wait longer as there is a plan. Planning was the 'activity-changing' response most used, with eight participants getting involved in it. For example, Participant 20 set a deadline for this role during the diary keeping period, and this helped him manage the identity threat. However, as time passed, he realised that the deadline was not realistic in terms of the company's timing and decided to extend it a little longer.

"I will wait until mid year to get an opportunity in a position matching my professional and economic expectations. What I've been going through has allowed me to learn the whole functioning of the company. The operational effort has been dealt with; all of this is useful if in the short term a better opportunity comes. If not, my motivation will start decreasing dangerously, so I need to set a realistic and concrete deadline based on my self-knowledge, and that is what I've done." (Participant 20, Diary)

"Some months ago I set mid-year as a deadline and I realise that even if the intentions at the company are the best, this is a special year in terms of business volumes [...] that is why I decided to wait a little longer." (Participant 20, Follow-up interview)

All these responses are benefited by having another person, usually the supervisor, getting involved. This social support makes an identity-protection response more likely (Petriglieri, 2011). To achieve this, participants had to express to their bosses the threat they were experiencing on their identities to get their help in responding. All cases (seven) who expressed this concern got a positive reaction. For example, Participant 21 told other senior people about his identity as project manager and his skills in working with budgets and he was assigned to a special side project to analyse costs. At first the reaction to him trying to do stretchwork was not positive but it eventually had positive results.

"I felt that I had tried to boost something because I really thought I could make a contribution and also to do other things, right? Both reasons. And in the meeting I felt like they didn't care and they actually told me 'no, no, there is a person here that takes care of this', and they

told this person 'you talk' (laughs). Then somebody asked me a question, and I told them what I had analysed that they hadn't realised. And well… it generated a lot of interest. At the end, they put a group together to work on this issue and last week we had the first meeting." (Participant 21, Follow-up interview)

Another example, Participant 7, told her boss that although she had accepted the gift role, she needed another type of change. A few months later, she was offered a new position according to her expectations.

"In my annual evaluation they asked me about my expectation and I was able to express them clearly (I am proud about that because that was something I typically used to struggle with)."

Three weeks later: "Today I got an offer to change function. It is something I wanted and was asking for." (Participant 7, Diary)

The only participant who could have expressed her concern to her boss but did not because of their conflicting relationship or lack of social support (see chapter 7), was the one who was feeling most negatively and wanted to leave the organisation as will be explained in the next section. The other participants who did not express their concerns to their bosses did not have the chance because they were either entrepreneurs or did not have the need because it was clear from the start that it was not a chosen role and it was only temporary.

9.3.2 Positive framing

Individuals need to make sense of why they take roles that do not match their identities. Many participants did this through positive framing, which is a cognitive self-management mechanism that new employees use "to alter their understanding of a

situation by explicitly controlling the cognitive frame they place on the situation" (Ashford and Black, 1996, p.202). They tried to assign positive meanings to their roles by identifying skills and other career resources that these jobs were providing them. Nine participants undertook positive framing. For example, Participant 23 was looking for a promotion to the role of Head for the Latin American region, but he was offered and he accepted a *gift role* which implied a lateral change. Although he was feeling threatened by not being able to perform the "Head" role, he identified how this job broadened his skills and image for the position he really wanted:

> "I think it was an important change because it gave me the vision of the whole region from the commercial point of view as well. I am recognised in the whole region. I realise that from anywhere in the world, if there is an issue related to Latin America, they come to me not to my peer. Before having this role I did not have this internal image because I was shadowed. This is important for the next step." (Participant 23, Follow-up interview)

9.3.3 Role indifference

To protect their identities, individuals may get detached psychologically from the role through role indifference. When individuals perform a role, they usually identify with it, making it part of their identities. Identification is the social process by which individuals define themselves in relation to other category groups or roles, while role indifference refers to not having a psychological connection to the role (Ashforth, 2001). Individuals experiencing identity threat may protect their identities by not allowing the role to contribute to their professional identities. This means taking the role as something that needs to be done but does not represent who they are. Two participants engaged in role indifference. For instance, although Participant 20 was

having some success in his role, he was not deriving any pride from this as he was detached from it. Because this was a role he just wanted to progress through as quickly as possible, the role achievements did not have a positive impact on his emotions.

> "Participant: If you came into our department five months ago, there was a certain work environment, and today there is one totally different. And you can see it. My boss sees it.
>
> Researcher: So, is there some pride then?
>
> Participant: No, not yet. I think this is still too little to… no.
>
> Researcher: You mean you knew you could do it and so you are not surprised by it?
>
> Participant: No, no, and besides, as my expectations are different, what I feel is frustration because my expectations are far from my reality…"
> (Participant 20, Follow-up interview)

In terms of Petriglieri (2011) all of these correspond to the identity-protection category, but do not coincide with any of the responses identified in her review article. Probably, the difference can be attributed to Petriglieri's (2011) article including many types of threats (like having a homosexual identity threatened at work), while the results reported here are specific to professional identity threat produced by role changes that derive in the individual having a position in which the activities are not aligned with his or her identity.

Regarding how these responses interact, in her review article Petriglieri (2011) wondered whether individuals use one or multiple responses. Results show that experienced newcomers having their professional identities threatened use multiple responses. For instance, Participant 20, one of the participants who suffered the most from identity threat made use of all three types of responses: he actively planned for a

role change to achieve the kind of job that would allow him to enact his identity. However, in the meantime, he constantly explained his current situation to others by indicating this role was the best possible option among the available ones and he had decided to take it because he thought it improved his chances to get a proper role. Finally, he also took a role indifference response, by refusing to integrate the role into his identity.

All these identity responses were reported substantially in the diary writing of participants and in the follow-up interview compared to the first interview. As participants had great freedom to report and reflect on what was relevant to them, this signals how as time passes the need to react to the identity threat grew stronger, and participants put more effort in building responses that protected their identities.

9.4 Effects of identity threats

In spite of individuals' efforts to face the threat as was identified above, with time the threat becomes strong and produces negative consequences for the present and the future.

9.4.1 Under-performing

As the current role does not match their identities, individuals spend a lot of time thinking how to secure a role that does, which detracts attention away from their jobs. Consequently, they may not be motivated to perform well or have the necessary skills as their experience and training do not match the role. Five participants were conscious of being under-performing, including participants going through the three types of extrinsically-motivated roles. Participant 20 who took a *stepping-stone role* recognised that his performance might suffer because of motivation and not having the right skills:

"I mean, I think to myself 'this could be done in the company, or this other thing could be improved', but I'm still not at that level of responsibility, which is the one where I want to be, so this generates anxiety that sometimes generates worrisome because you say 'I am looking there but I am standing here. First I have to do this right to get there. Am I doing it right? Am I motivated to do this?'."(Participant 20, First interview) "I am ready to play as the 10 and they put me in the reserve team and I pass the ball badly to my teammate... And this sometimes is related to the expectations you have. When you are not satisfied with what you are doing, you may not do it right... besides sometimes for certain tasks you need competencies you don't have, the competencies you need are different. If you have an operational role, you need certain competencies which are different from the ones you need as a manager. Sometimes, if they ask you to do something which is aligned to another level of competencies, you may do it wrong, and that invalidates you as a professional. But you are simply not in the right time doing what you should be doing, that's it." (Participant 20, Follow-up interview)

Participant 8 complains that the architect *supporting role* distracts him from performing the entrepreneur real estate role:

"What happens is that all this architect work blurs my sight when I want to look at the future from the real estate side..." (Participant 8, Follow-up interview)

Participant 12, who took a *gift role*, recognises that he is not motivated to perform well:

"What happens with my job is that if I didn't have the economic need, when they asked me to perform this role for two months, I would have said 'no, I'm leaving at the end of May'. It is being very hard. I mean, it never happened to me not to have the energies to do something at work. Never like this. On the one hand, I try to be as professional as possible but on the other hand, I am not interested in the job that I am doing. […] I thought I was going to behave professionally and if I had a responsibility I would do it the best I could, and today I see that I can't, it is really hard." (Participant 12, Follow-up interview)

This effect is quite dangerous as participants needed to perform well to be able to achieve other desired positions. Especially in the case of stepping-stone roles, research suggests that performance is decisive in order to have this stepping-stone role directing the individual where he or she wants (Hopp and Minten, 2012).

9.4.2   Emotional distress

Results suggest that identity threat during a career transition has a significant impact on individuals' emotions. This in line with Markus and Nurius (1986, p.958) who suggest that "...affect derives from conflicts or discrepancies within the self-concept. To the extent that individuals can or cannot achieve particular self-conceptions or identities they will feel either positively or negatively about themselves." Eight participants were feeling emotional distress as a consequence of the threat on their professional identities. The participants who were experiencing strong identity threats experienced negative emotions with most of them feeling anxious at the beginning of the transition and then frustrated as months passed by and things did not change. For example:

"Anxious because I am prepared to perform at a much higher level than what the position demands me. And, sometimes, you need first to walk a path. Sometimes I am looking ahead at the things that could be done if I had such or such position, but I am still in another place which is previous, so that generates anxiety." (Participant 20, First interview)

"With some frustration… because of knowing what I can do versus what I am doing." (Participant 20, Follow-up interview)

"Well, anxious, a little, because I've made a change, I started in a new company, some months have passed and... maybe, this thing that I see this programme kind of slow, it generates me anxiety to see what's going on, how it is, how do I move on…" (Participant 5, First interview)

"A mixture of frustrated, discouraged, because, in a way, I would have had expected it to move at a faster pace. […] I think the company made a mistake in the way it handled the programme. That is more or less my conclusion. I do not think they understood the profile of the people they were getting into the programme, or they did not know, in a way, how to generate the conditions or characteristics for a programme according to the profile... From any of the two sides I consider it is the company's mistake. I think it is a pity, because this generates a level of demotivation... like a wearing out, a tiredness that one generally would not find in the first year." (Participant 5, Follow-up interview)

Previous research also suggests that workers who have 'target trajectories with transition expectations', referring to those who have an unsatisfactory job and are

seeking for a better one, manage to construct their professional identities in spite of the situation. However, when future prospects are too vague or when the waiting period is too long, this can lead to frustration (Fullin, 2004 cited in Valenduc et al., 2006).

9.4.3   Looking for changes

Most participants who were in a role that did not match their identities were looking for another role, even leaving the organisation. This is line with previous research that suggests that the ability of the organisation to facilitate the individual's professional expectations and to strengthen his or her professional identity increases the individual's organisational identification (Baruch and Cohen, 2007). Eight participants were looking for further changes, even when they had changed jobs less than a year before. For example, as was mentioned above, Participant 6, who took a *supporting role*, was also having a conflicting relationship with her boss and had been in the role for five months, was one example of this:

> "The idea is to try to find something else, and when something comes up, leave…" (Participant 6, Follow-up interview)

9.4.4   Fearing identity change

If doing something different to the identity is undertaken for too long, individuals can become afraid of actually changing the identity. Three participants experienced this fear. For instance, although Participant 20 was very certain about what his identity was, at some point in the follow-up interview he expressed that he was afraid that doing something different for too long might change his identity permanently. This is related to skills and to the perception of others.

"Participant: You go to do operational tasks, you pass on to a second level, and all of that... I mean, you decapitalise that experience if you go down and stay.

Researcher: But do you feel that is happening to you?

Participant: Yes, sometimes yes. Objectively I cannot measure it because today I keep doing these tasks... I've been doing this type of job for a year.

Researcher: So, when you get to do other tasks, you don't know if it will be natural to you again.

Participant: Exactly, that is the fear. Yes, that is a concrete fear. But that is why I am setting a deadline.

Researcher: I see, but if you were once able to do it, I mean, passing from operational to management…

Participant: Yes, but what happens is that along that, the age is running.

Researcher: How old are you?

Participant: 38. I don't know, I think one has to be realistic. In the labour market you need to be a certain age for certain things…

Researcher: I see, so it is not only related to your skills but also to how others see you?

Participant: What you offer to what is out there in the market. If you say 'I was a Marketing and Commercial Manager, and then I came to Sales Administration Supervisor, and I want to get a management position again… two things that the person looking at the CV analyses are: why did you go backwards and what are you going to offer? The

last year's or the 5 years' ago experience?" (Participant 20, Follow-up interview)

Participant 21 was also afraid that his identity might change if he was denied a consistent role for too long. Similar to Participant 20, his fear was based on how to market himself successfully, if he was doing something different from his identity for too long.

> "Now I am satisfied with the decision... I am not sure if in the future I will say 'this was good for the career, for the CV'. I mean, although I am now in the commercial area developing the business, I tell you with total honesty, that the only thing that unsettles me is what if in the future I don't get to be in charge of the project. Because the intention is for me to do it, they have told me that, but the other project was going to happen and it got cancelled. If this project is also cancelled, I don't know how it can be explained in a CV that you were a Project Manager with subordinates, and not now, and now my position is 'Transport development engineer'... in that sense I don't know if it was a good decision or not." (Participant 21, Follow-up interview)

9.5 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the origins of professional identity threat during the career transitions of Argentinean MBA graduates. The rationale for accepting the job played a crucial role in whether participants experienced an identity threat or not. Intrinsically-motivated participants only experienced the threat when unanticipated events happened which changed the characteristics of the new role or when the role was not as expected. All participants who took the job for extrinsic reasons, including *stepping-stone roles*, *supporting roles* and *gift roles*, experienced an identity threat.

Those taking a *supporting role* had two roles: an intrinsic one and an extrinsic one. In support of Petriglieri's (2011) proposition, evidence was found that the threat gets stronger as it is bigger than expected (magnitude) and with time (frequency).

Figure 9.1 summarises the identity threat origin explained in this chapter which is part of the integrated model presented in chapter 11.

Figure 9.1: Identity threat origins
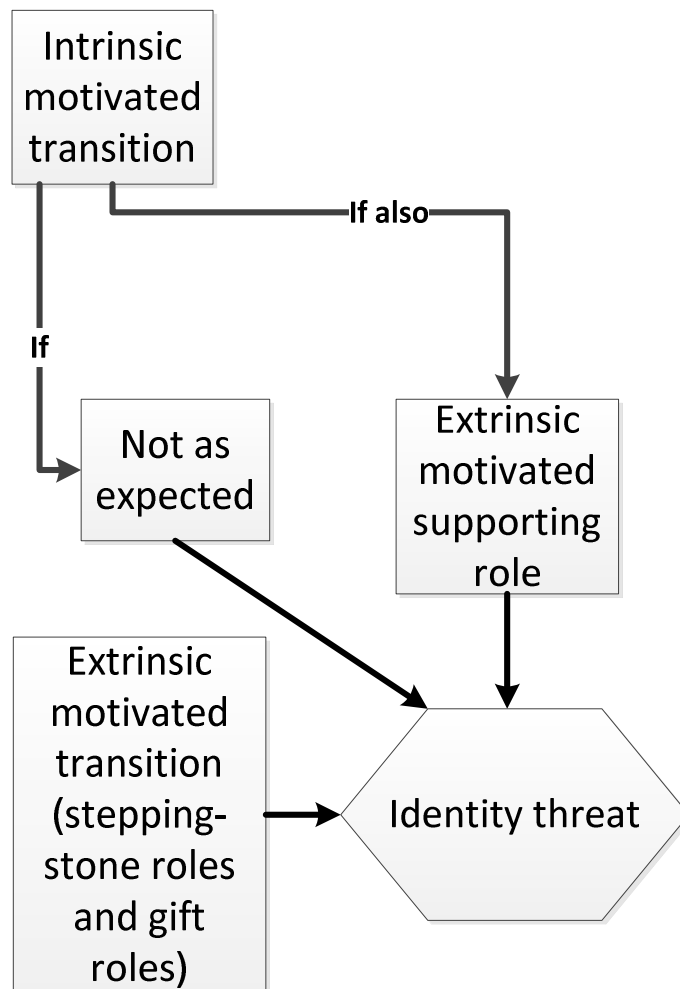
Recapitulating, chapters 8 and 9 have identified two types of behaviours experienced newcomers undertake when adjusting to a new role. The first one relates to adjusting the personal professional identity and the second one to protecting the social

professional identity. The first one has a focus on performance and on making changes to fit in with the new role and the environment. This type of reaction has been identified before by Nicholson (1984) who suggests that the transition process can have four outcomes: replication, absorption, determination and exploration. Replication takes place when the person performs in much the same manner as in previous jobs and also similarly to previous occupants of the role. Absorption relates to role learning and implies a big amount of personal development. Determination takes place when the newcomer actively modifies the role to fit him or her and does not perform personal changes. Exploration refers to those instances in which both the newcomer and the role experience changes. Nicholson and West (1987) test these transition outcomes and suggest that exploration is the most usual one, indicating that managers who perform role innovation also undergo personal change.

In the present study, these outcomes were observed. For example, participants making small transitions mainly benefited from previous work roles, hence replicating previous behaviours; other participants going through big transitions undertook internalised changes, involving personal change. In addition, another outcome was observed, which can be referred to as performativity (Hodgson, 2005). In some instances, participants may have seemed to be adopting absorptive or exploration behaviours but were actually 'acting' or 'performing' to adjust. This means that they were not incorporating these traits to their professional identities since they did not like them. Accordingly, as newcomers got to know the new role, they became aware of the performances demanded of subjects occupying such roles and therefore they performed non-internalised changes such as role temporal changes, occasion specific changes and acting. These were intended to last for a limited temporal frame and did not imply a personal change.

The other outcome observed in this study is identity protection. Participants used multiple strategies to protect their professional identities in the face of identity threat. These were: activity changing, positive framing and role indifference. To perform activity changing responses, participants usually benefited from social support at the workplace, achieved by explaining to their supervisors and other senior colleagues their problem. The responses identified in this study are all aimed at identity protection (Petriglieri, 2011). However, they differ from the ones identified in Petriglieri's recent review article. This could be due in part to Petriglieri incorporating threats in which someone was being detrimental about individuals' identities as could happen with 'dirty workers' such as garbage collectors and prison guards (Ashforth et al., 2007). However, in this study, the threat originated as participants were not able to enact their professional identities after a career transition, with the results reported here being more specific to experienced newcomers. Although participants tried hard to protect themselves from the threat, the threat had effects such as: under-performing, emotional distress, looking for new changes, and fearing identity change.

The next chapter introduces another emerging behaviour or outcome of the transition: experimentation. The study suggests that experienced newcomers undergo the adjustment phase of the transition cycle with an experimentation attitude which has consequences on their present and future careers.

CHAPTER 10: EXPERIMENTING WITH POSSIBLE SELVES

This chapter analyses the identity work undertaken by professionals when a transition takes place both in relation to current and remaining possible selves (career aspirations). As participants entered the new role, they experienced the transition as an identity experiment. Ibarra (2003) introduced the concept of experiments when analysing how individuals make decisions on radical career changes. She suggests that individuals should experiment with future selves when deciding the next steps in their careers, since individuals can only learn about themselves by observing themselves in action (Baumeister, 1998). Although the author suggests that individuals undertake this experimenting behaviour during the transition search process, once they make the change they may still in a 'highest investment experiment', as they are continuously evaluating whether they feel at ease with the new identity. This was the case for all participants, who experienced the first months at the new role as an experiment in which:

1) they reinforced their hypotheses about possible selves, or

2) they challenged hypotheses about possible selves they thought they liked, and

3) with all this new information, they reflected about remaining possible selves, reinforcing or challenging what they thought they wanted for their futures.

Although they did not set the transitions to be experiments, the reflections observed in the diaries and in follow-up interviews provide evidence that the transition to a new role functions as an experiment as it allows individuals "to move, even if gradually, from exploration to confirmation..." (Ibarra, 2003, p.99) or to challenge previous ideas when they do not receive confirmation. As Ashforth (2001, p.86) suggests: "role entry is not just settling into the role and context, it is also about situating and learning about the self and using the role as a platform for expressing that self". This chapter explores

when participants reinforced hypotheses about possible selves, the circumstances of challenging hypotheses about possible selves they thought they liked, and how this new information affected the remaining possible selves.

10.1   Reinforcing hypotheses about possible selves

Professionals starting a new role in which they can enact once possible selves may reinforce these identities by realising they feel comfortable and happy with them. In the diary and follow-up interview reflections, some of the participants undertaking an intrinsically-motivated transition evidenced the reinforcement process they were experiencing and how relevant this was to them. The words 'confirmation' and 'reinforcement' were broadly present in the data, suggesting that an important identity process was taking place. The importance of this reinforcement is in line with Dutton, Roberts and Bednar's (2010, p.273) suggestion regarding how:

> "an individual develops by constructing, experimenting with, discarding, and adapting current identities to achieve a sense of authenticity, coherence, meaning, distinctiveness, assimilation, maturity, or any combination of such attributes. When there is a greater fit between the identity content and internal or external standards, then a work related identity is considered more positive."

All participants who made a small magnitude intrinsic transition experienced this reinforcement, as they could anticipate quite well the new role. For example, Participant 26, who undertook an incremental role change with which he is very satisfied, commented after being in the role for five months:

> "Researcher: On our previous talk, when discussing how you saw yourself in the future, you thought you would like to stay in this

company for a couple of years and then become independent, do you still have that idea?

Participant: Yes. I don't know if a couple of years or quite a lot of years." (Participant 26, Follow-up interview)

Many participants who made a big magnitude intrinsic transition also experienced this reinforcement. For example, Participant 14 devoted a gap year to understanding the type of job he wanted and search for the transition opportunity. During this year he was offered jobs as Project Manager which was his prior professional identity, but he knew he did not want that identity any longer and so he looked for another identity and for a job that would allow him to enact it. Now that he has started working at the new role, he has confirmed he took the right decision.

"Participant: This job consolidates or brings together the engineering part, the project management part and the management part the MBA gave me, as well as the coaching part and the team building part. So, it has all the faces that my career could have or has had, all in this role.

Researcher: So, are you satisfied with the change?

Participant: Yes, yes. Yes, because as I was telling you all the other options meant doing more of the same.

Researcher: And that would be project management?

Participant: Yes, I knew what I was going to encounter. I could have solved a short term problem, but I personally felt that in a year I would be in the same situation as before, and that was something I did not want for myself." (Participant 14, First interview)

Participants who had taken a job following an extrinsic rationale could also reinforce possible selves. By having to perform a role that did not match their desired identities, they reinforced this was not right for them and continued to long for their possible selves. For example, Participant 23 is experiencing an identity threat because he wants a Director position as he feels that one to be his professional identity, but he accepted a *gift role* as manager. By performing the manager role, he reinforced that he really wanted the Director position and hence this identity.

> "I would love to be able to do more things, having the power to do them. The position for me is perfect; I would change the title so instead of being manager I would put director. And with the director's empowerment I would change a lot of things; I would make other areas do things. Because right now I have to get into working with other departments, I need to achieve results with other areas. And as a director it is much easier than as a manager." (Participant 23, Follow-up interview)

10.2   Challenging hypotheses about possible selves

During the transition, individuals may challenge prior possible selves they thought they wanted to adopt. This may happen because individuals cannot foresee all characteristics of a new role or their anticipation of themselves in the job, and the setting may differ from reality (Louis, 1980b). This could happen for two reasons: 1) no fit or 2) new identity.

10.2.1 No fit

Participants may realise that they had dreamt about a possible self and now that they are enacting it, they do not feel comfortable with it. Participant 16 provides an

example of this first type of identity challenge. He had always wanted to be the president of a company and with this role he achieved it. However, he discovered that being the president of a company was not that ideal as it required him to perform tasks he did not enjoy.

> "I think the most important challenge was personal... in fact, adjusting to the day to day. I don't like it. Sincerely, I don't like it... having to deal with the client, in what would be a long term relationship. [...] I don't want to be the president of a company as I said before. That is obviously good, I like it, but you need to be in contact with day to day operations and now that I've lived it..." (Participant 16, First interview)

10.2.2 New identity

The new role may be different from what they expected, and so they need to develop a new identity to perform it, and they discover they prefer this unexpected identity. Participant 11 is an example of this second type of identity challenge. She took the job thinking it was 'more of a desk job' and soon discovered it implied a great amount of interaction with people and having constant meetings and presentations, which were not part of her analytical identity. She confessed that if she had known what this job was actually like she probably would not have taken it. This type of identity challenge may happen when the individual has low levels of autonomy and hence cannot adapt the role to him or herself. This implies that they are immersed in what Nicholson (1984) calls an 'absorption behaviour' in which "the person's energies are mainly devoted to the task of assimilating new skills, social behaviors, and frames of reference to meet the requirements of the new situation" (p.176). Although this could have resulted in identity threat, as Participant 11 started building new skills and

changed her profile to perform the role (chapter 8), she incorporated these to her identity, and discovered she liked it more than her previous self.

> "I believe a lot in that, that resources appear out of need. I didn't know this job would be like this. I've learnt a lot of interpersonal management, I was a lab rat. That's the truth. And people always used to tell me 'human relationships are the most important thing' and I would say 'no, that's a lie, I mean it is important but not that much'. And it is so important; here it is everything, because you have to achieve things through personal relationships. […] I am getting tired of the analysis and all that... there are some parts that I like and there are some parts I would like I had someone to help me with because they take too long." (Participant 11, Follow-up interview)

10.3   Remaining possible selves identity work

Participants had other possible selves remaining of who they would like to be professionally in the future, and these were transformed during the first months of the new role. This means that as individuals started enacting the new role, even when they had just started, they were already thinking, reconsidering and reconstructing these remaining possible selves. Considering that: "as representations of potential, possible selves will thus be particularly sensitive to those situations that communicate new or inconsistent information about the self" (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p.956), the information provided by reinforcement, challenging and threats on current identities modified the remaining possible selves. Following motivation theories which suggest that individuals are motivated by achieving goals and avoiding threats, possible selves guide current behaviour as individuals try to achieve and keep away from them.

10.3.1 Reinforcing remaining possible selves

In most cases, as individuals take a role and reinforce that this new identity suits them, their corresponding medium and longer term possible selves are also reinforced. For example, Participant 18 had transitioned from being a functional manager to being a product manager as she had hoped for. Now that she is enacting this new identity, she confirms she likes it and hence confirms her future path.

> "I have a career plan... (laughs). My career plan says that at some point I want to be director of my area, and some day, far away, I want to be General Manager (laughs). The worse thing is that I think I can make it! Because I am very young and I am already Product Manager, although I was a manager before but a functional manager... for the career I would like to pursue, being at Product Manager at 28, with five years at this position, I nail it (laughs). So I will be ready to be a Director at 32-35 years old. I could be a Director for 10 more years... The numbers are good, I can do it." (Participant 18, First interview)

10.3.2 Changing remaining possible selves

Participants changed remaining possible selves in response to three situations: a) crafting new possible selves as a result of changing profile and new opportunities arising, b) exiting and crafting remaining possible selves as a result of challenging prior possible selves, or c) exiting and crafting remaining possible selves as a result of identity threat.

a) Crafting new possible selves as a result of changing profile and new opportunities arising: Individuals who have possible selves that are transformed through the current role into current identities may confirm they like this new current identity,

but possible selves may start changing as the current identity opens up opportunities they had not thought about. For instance, Participant 2 reinforced he liked the new lawyer-business identity he had been hoping for and now multiple opportunities opened up for him which he had not expected. He was having a hard time in deciding whether to take these opportunities and change his remaining possible selves into a more business type identity, or to continue with the mix but with more focus on his legal identity.

> "For instance, in terms of personal preferences, I would go into a more regulatory issue, and on the other hand my coach tells me 'No, look, maybe the career acceleration takes place more in the business itself. Get yourself into topics around marketing, strategic marketing…' I mean, another type of recommendation. [...] The sales people I know have another brain matrix. They really come formatted in another way... It is really hard to make that jump… so abrupt of saying 'I forget about all my training and now I devote myself purely and exclusively to analysing Excel spreadsheets." (Participant 2, Follow-up interview)

b) Exiting and crafting remaining possible selves as a result of challenging possible selves: When participants challenged their prior possible selves (or current identity), their remaining possible selves also changed. As explained above, the challenge on a prior possible self or current identity could happen for two reasons: 1) they realise that they had dreamt about a possible self and now that they are enacting it, they do not feel comfortable with it, or 2) the new role is different from what they expected, and so they need to develop a new identity to perform it, and they discover they like more this unexpected identity than the one they had.

Individuals who experience the first type of challenge, realising the once desired possible self does not fit them, soon realise that the remaining possible selves also need to be changed. After Participant 16 realised he did not enjoy the president identity, he exited the 'president of a big company possible self' to that of 'investor'.

Individuals who discover through the role a new unexpected identity which they enjoy, inevitably change their remaining possible selves as they no longer want a continuation of what they used to be but a continuation of their new selves. Participant 11 is an economist who had always worked on her own doing calculations and forecasts specifically. Her new role surprised her by demanding much more interaction with people and hence constructed a management identity she enjoys and is willing to continue on this new managerial path, instead of a specialist one.

> "Researcher: Thinking about your next job, would you like something more similar to this or more of a desk job?
>
> Participant: I would like something with more execution. My job is not about much execution... I talk more like saying 'this is not working, something needs to be done with this', but the solution, the execution does not get to me. I would like something which I could solve, instead of saying 'it is not working'. A big part of the solution is to identify the issue, but I would like something more practical in that sense.
>
> Researcher: And that would probably imply quite a lot of interaction with people, you wouldn't mind?
>
> Participant: Not at all. I am getting tired of the analysis and all that... there are some parts that I like and there are some parts I would like I

had someone to help me with because they take too long." (Participant 11, Follow-up interview)

c) Exiting and crafting remaining possible selves as a result of identity threat: Although individuals use multiple strategies to face identity threats, when the threat is too strong, the possible selves could be affected. This is because:

> "...possible selves are not well-anchored in social experience, they comprise the self-knowledge that is the most vulnerable and responsive to changes in the environment. They are the first elements of the self-concept to absorb and reveal such change." (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p.956).

This consequence becomes more likely with time and when there is the provision of an alternative identity. Petrieglieri's (2011, p.651) suggestion that identity exits are more likely "when there is a strong threat coupled with the provision of an alternative identity" applies as well to possible self identity exits. Participant 9 was undergoing a severe identity threat as he had to make an internal move which took him to a role far away from his desired possible self. By the time of the follow-up interview, he started doubting his possible self as senior colleagues provided alternative ones which seemed more feasible. He was starting to consider them, although not fully convinced.

> First interview: "A year ago I wanted to go into the commercial area, I was close to get there, but well… in the final selection phase they chose the other person; it was devastating for me". "I still want to transition to the commercial department." (Participant 9, First interview)
>
> Follow-up interview: "And well, he was telling me 'bear it in here that in one or two years you will have more opportunities in manufacturing;

223

manufacturing is acquiring more power, you will have more possibilities here.' […] …and I am now generating employability in operations, I can get to be Operations Manager in a smaller firm, and have manufacturing at my charge, that is true." (Participant 9, Follow-up interview)

10.4   Conclusion

This chapter explores how individuals construct dynamics professional identities. It shows how identity work in terms of adjustment (chapter 8) and in terms of identity threat management (chapter 9), along with reinforcement and challenge of possible selves, affect individuals' wishes for their future career paths (remaining possible selves). This contributes to the need "to discover the range of the means by which possible selves are created, embellished, redefined, and adjusted" (Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010, p.20).

Figure 10.1 summarises the main findings reported in this chapter, showing the trajectories experienced newcomers undertake during the first months in a new role in terms of the dynamics of possible selves. If the transition is of small magnitude, as was explained in chapter 8, in relation to personal professional identity they will mainly benefit from knowledge and skills acquired in previous roles. At the same time, considering that it is quite easy to imagine oneself in a new role when the change is small, these participants reinforced possible selves, and as no new identity information or reflections emerged during these months, they also reinforced the remaining possible selves for their futures.

However, the trajectories are more varied in the case of big transitions. It was observed that when transitioning to a role which is quite different from previous ones, experienced newcomers need to make several changes to their profiles to be able to

perform (chapter 8). At the same time, it is harder to project oneself into a role that is quite different from previous ones. Consequently, once participants started enacting this new role, they may either reinforce these once possible selves or challenge them. When reinforcing, they could either also reinforce the remaining possible selves or be presented with new alternatives they had not anticipated and hence change the remaining possible selves. When challenging possible selves, they inevitably challenged the remaining possible selves.

Finally, when participants experienced identity threat (chapter 9), they could follow two different trajectories. Some of them reinforced remaining possible selves as enacting the current role reinforced the idea that they wanted something else. However, others were fronted with strong threats which combined with the appearance of alternatives for the future, drove them to challenge the remaining possible selves.

Figure 10.1: Dynamics of possible selves

225
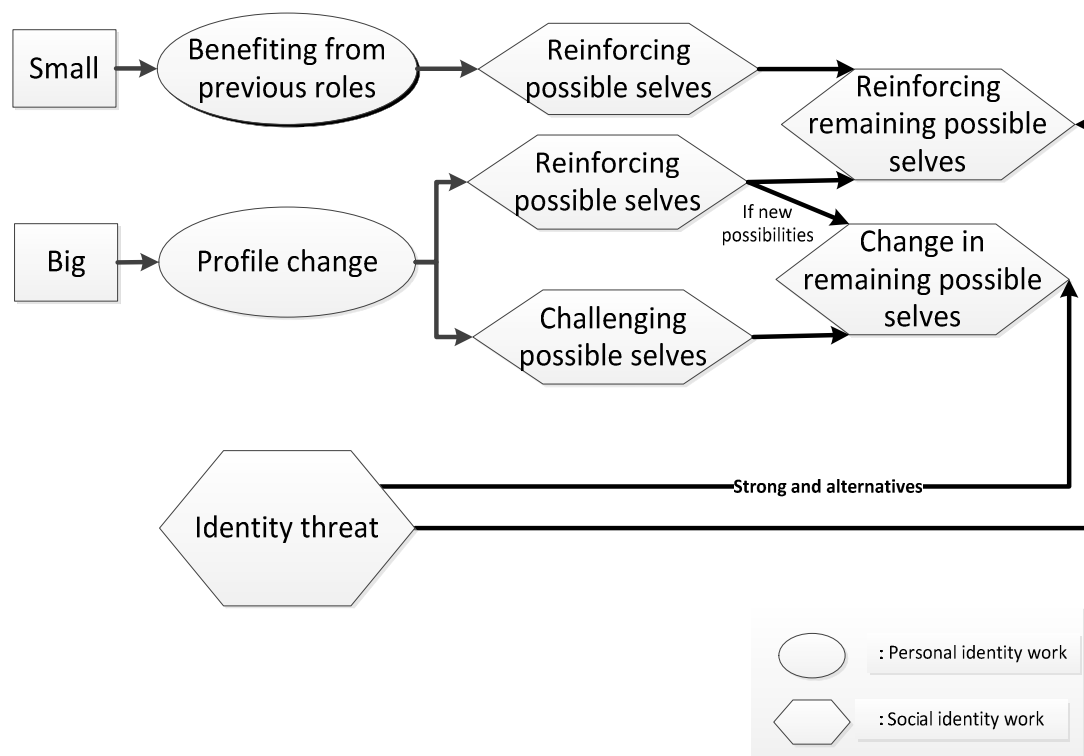
CHAPTER 11: CONSTRUCTING POSSIBLE SELVES

Integrating the previous chapters, it can be observed that participants experienced identity work processes after making this career transition in different ways. This depended on whether the transition had an intrinsic or extrinsic rationale, the presence of unexpected events in taking the role, the magnitude of the transition, whether it produced a reinforcement of an identity or not, and the appearance of new alternatives for the future. The dynamic interaction of these various factors is represented in the following model, which shows how they interrelate to shape the identity work participants experienced during the first months at the new role, and how they constructed their dynamic possible selves.

Figure 11.1: Constructing possible selves following a career transition
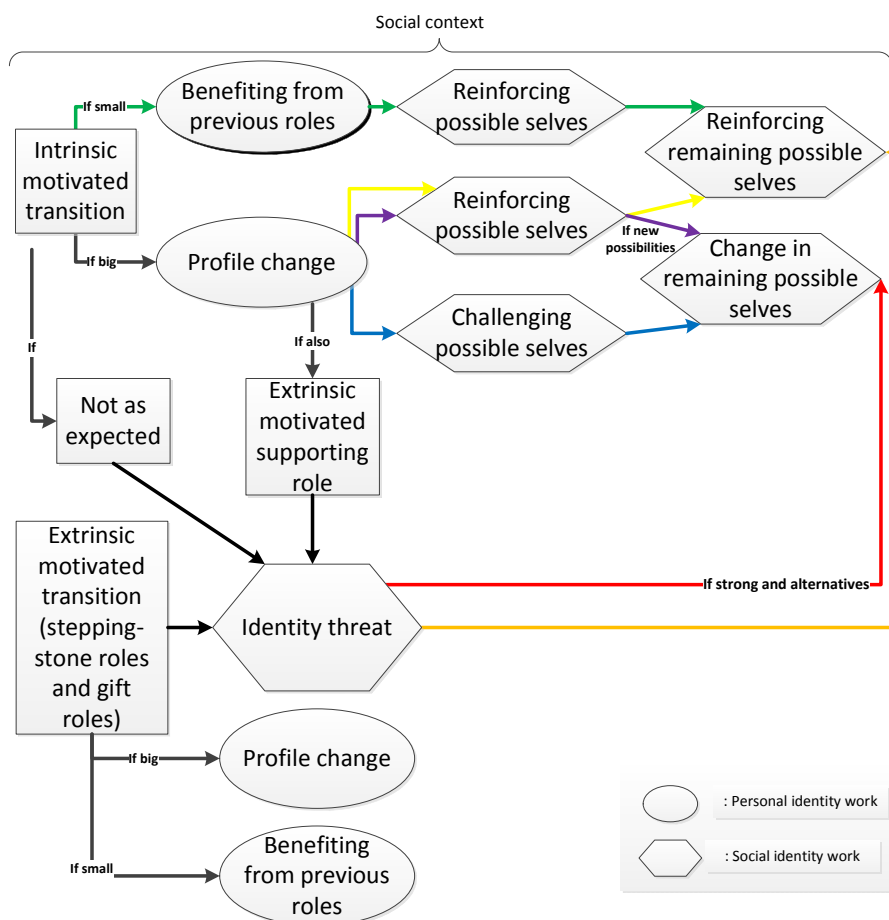
To construct the model, first it was observed that the magnitude of the transition and the main rationale for it, extrinsic or intrinsic, were key factors in describing different trajectories. Then, cases were grouped considering these factors and the trajectories in terms of presence of identity threat, personal identity profile changes, reinforcement or challenge of possible selves, and reinforcement or change of remaining of possible selves was assessed for each case. Then, by comparing cases, other factors that differentiated trajectories were identified such as the role not being as expected, the dimension of the identity threat, and the presence of new possibilities/alternatives for the future. This resulted in the trajectories presented; with all cases belonging to one trajectory.

The lines represent the trajectories participants undertook in terms of their professional identities during the study and are all based in the data. Other trajectories may be possible, but were not suggested by the data. Some of the findings described in previous chapters were not included in the model as they were descriptions of the adjustment process but did not affect the trajectories for constructing possible selves. So, with the intent of simplifying a complex model, some findings were not incorporated, such as types of profile change (internalised and non-internalised changes) and responses and effects to identity threats which did not have an observable short-term effect on the construction of possible selves. As follows, the model is explained.

Individuals who take roles with an intrinsic rationale perform mostly personal identity work with the aim of adjusting, while individuals who take jobs with a main extrinsic reason perform mostly social identity work to overcome the identity threat imposed by the new role.

Focusing on intrinsically-motivated transitions, if the magnitude of the change is big, individuals will try to change their profiles to adjust to the role. However, there are some individuals who make small transitions, by assuming roles which allow them to exercise prior knowledge, practiced skills, and established relationships, and so they benefit from the experience acquired in previous roles and do not undertake much personal identity work. In terms of social identity work, individuals undertaking an intrinsically-motivated transition are usually transitioning to a desired possible self. As they start enacting these prior possible selves, individuals making small changes will reinforce their identities, while professionals making big changes can either validate they feel comfortable with it or challenge it because:

- they realise that they had dreamt about a certain possible self and now that they are enacting it, they do not feel comfortable with it, or

- the new role is different from what they expected and while adjusting to the role, they discover they like more this unexpected identity than the one they used to wish for.

When individuals reinforce their prior possible selves, most of them also reinforce the remaining possible selves, meaning that they continue with their career plans. However, in some cases, individuals confirm they enjoy the identity, but as they start enacting it, they visualise new alternatives for the future they couldn't see before, so they may change their remaining possible selves. When individuals do not validate the possible selves, they change their remaining possible selves as they no longer want a continuation of the previous identity.

Some individuals undertaking an intrinsically-motivated transition may need to take a *supporting role* for some time as the new role may not be economically safe; this is

usually the case of entrepreneurs. These individuals have two roles, an intrinsic one and an extrinsic one. The intrinsic one requires a profile change and can then derive in a possible self reinforcement or challenge. The extrinsic *supporting role* can be performed benefiting from previous experiences and provokes an identity threat as they need to keep doing activities related to old identities.

Other professionals undertaking an intrinsically-motivated transition may experience that the new role is not as expected. This could happen for causes related to unexpected facts or to misconceived perceptions of what the role was, and provoke identity threat.

Focusing on individuals undertaking extrinsically-motivated transitions, social identity work is performed to face the threat. They respond to it through changing activity, positive framing and role indifference, but they also experience effects such as under-performing, emotional distress, looking for more changes, and fearing identity change. If the threat is strong and individuals perceive alternative possibilities for the future, they may change the remaining possible selves and leave aside the ideas they had for the future, trying to incorporate the new alternatives which are more feasible considering the current role. If not, they will usually keep their possible selves. In terms of personal identity work, if the change is big, they will change profile, although in most cases, they can benefit from the experience acquired in previous roles.

The social support (or lack of it) identified in chapters 6 and 7 is present throughout the whole process, as it influences individuals' identity work process by affecting opportunities to change profile with the learning acquired through relationships; to respond to threats with the aid of relevant others such as supervisors, senior colleagues, friends and mentors; and to discuss remaining possible selves and open new opportunities with these same relevant others.

11.2   Identity work trajectories while starting a new role

The model can be summarised into six main identity work trajectories. These are:

1) The incremental pathway

2) The anticipated big career change

3) The big career change with a plus

4) The unexpected big career change

5) The threat with remaining selves

6) The threat plus new alternatives

As follows, these are explained and an example of each is provided.

11.2.1 The incremental pathway

These are experienced professionals who are following an incremental career pathway with this transition. The change implied a new role which was a natural progression from the previous job, and for which they did not need to make too many changes to their profiles to adjust. These individuals are represented with the green line in Figure 11.1 (p.219) and three participants followed this path (another participant seemed to be also following this path but as there are only data from the first interview, no analysis can be made about his remaining possible selves). Participant 26 provides an example of this trajectory.

Participant 26 did almost all his career in the same company. He gradually climbed up the hierarchical ladder through his skills and proactive behaviour. After being in the previous role for a year, he started feeling he wanted a change involving more responsibility. So, he communicated this to his supervisor with whom he had a very good relationship. Together they re-structured the area and consequently he was offered a new position. This new position implied an incremental change in his

professional identity, passing from Manager to Director. It was a transition of small magnitude and so he could benefit from previous roles as he could still use much of his knowledge, skills and relationships. One of the relevant changes was that in this role he had people from the USA reporting to him and not just from Latin America, as used to be the case. However, he felt his previous roles had also prepared him for this.

"I've been working with people from the USA since day one, 10 years ago. So, undoubtedly, there is a whole preparation that I've been unconsciously having that today makes me feel comfortable with having people from USA reporting to me." (Participant 26, First interview)

Benefiting from previous roles, together with his working style, accelerated his adjustment. In his diary he mentioned how positive he felt about this.

"Today I feel satisfied with the level of progress I have achieved in these first months in my new role. I am very enthusiastic to keep working because there is a huge amount of opportunities to deliver high business impact results and we have a methodology in place to communicate results which facilitates acknowledgement." (Participant 26, Diary)

Through this role, he reinforced the Director possible self as he is very happy with the position.

"Researcher: How happy are you with this change from 1 to 10?

Participant: 10, definitely." (Participant 26, Follow-up interview)

As he thinks about his future, he reinforces the remaining possible selves.

"Researcher: On our previous talk, when discussing how you saw

yourself in the future, you thought you would like to stay in this company for a couple of years and then become independent, do you still have that idea?

Participant: Yes, probably quite a lot of years." (Participant 26, Follow-up interview)

In summary, Participant 26 had a small and progressive career change and is being incremental about his remaining possible selves as he wants to keep developing his career in the same company and same line of work, until there are no more possibilities and he becomes independent. Considering that for personal reasons he wants to live in Argentina, he thinks that at some point the possibilities for development in this company could be over and this is when he would become independent.

11.2.2 *The anticipated big career change*

These are experienced professionals who made a big transition towards a desired possible self, are reinforcing this possible self or current identity, and are also reinforcing the remaining possible selves. The big transition implied an important amount of personal identity work to change their profiles to be able to perform in this new role. These individuals are represented with the yellow line in Figure 11.1 (p.219) and four participants followed this path. Participant 18 is an example of this.

Participant 18 also developed most of her career in the current organisation. She had developed her career in a support function and her prior position was functional manager. However, she had a marketing possible self, which she achieved through this transition. To achieve this big career change, she undertook a company sponsored MBA as it would give her more 'business knowledge'.

"So the MBA appears as this element that would give me a more global vision, which would allow me to insert myself in the business, for this knowledge it theoretically would give me." (Participant 18, First interview)

Her mentor was also a big support for getting this career change and is still a source of consultation.

"When I am identified as *key talent* in the company I was assigned a mentor, and I've been working with her for years. Not a lot, some meetings, but basically she was orienting me on some issue: like the MBA, she was also the link to start doing some marketing activities, to start inserting me… and when this position opened up, she also guided me." (Participant 18, First interview)

Once in the new role, most of her identity work effort was in terms of changing her profile to adjust to this big transition. At the beginning, she started behaving as she used to and soon discovered this was not effective at this new position. So, she undertook multiple types of changes to adjust. She made some internalised changes such as trying to be more strategic:

"Before, I used to be like a fish in the water. So, first thing that came to mind, I did it. I had a lot of intuition. And here I don't have that intuition but I have the same attitude of replying right away and taking decisions. So, I need to stop, think, and take into account a lot of variables… I am not interacting with the same people; it does not have the same impact. So, I need to change, at least until a get the rhythm and knowledge." (Participant 18, First interview)

She also made other changes like 'acting':

> "At this workshop with everyone from the department, I realised that
> they are all more careful. And there are a lot of lies. I mean, a lot of lies
> in the sense of appearances, right? Like trying to look like something
> else, like acting, knowing what to say to make a good impression. And
> I am a little more of a rebel, which does not suit this position. So, I
> have to moderate my character and be more strategic when I talk."
> (Participant 18, Follow-up interview)

During the time she was still acquiring these new skills, she was not having a good
time as performing was hard, but she knew it was temporal.

> "I think that in some time from now I will remember this like a moment
> in which I had a bad time, and it passed." (Participant 18, First
> interview)

At the same time, she reported in her diary feeling very positively when she received
signs of adjustment.

> "Happy when we won a prize for being the country with the biggest
> growth for my product in the region." (Participant 18, Diary)

By performing this role she is confirming this possible self and also her remaining
possible selves.

> "I have a career plan... (laughs). My career plan says that at some point
> I want to be director of my area, and some day, far away, I want to be
> General Manager (laughs). The worse thing is that I think I can make
> it! Because I am very young and I am already Product Manager,
> although I was a manager before but a functional manager... for the

career I would like to pursue, being at Product Manager at 28, with five years at this position, I nail it (laughs). So I will be ready to be a Director at 32-35 years old. I could be a Director for 10 more years... The numbers are good, I can do it." (Participant 18, First interview)

11.2.3 Big career change and more

These are experienced professionals who made a big transition towards a desired possible self, who are reinforcing this possible self or current identity, but are also discovering other possible selves for the future which they had never thought about. These participants did quite a lot of both personal and social identity work as the big transition implied an important amount of personal identity work to change their profiles to perform and the new possibilities for the future elicited social identity work in terms of deciding their remaining possible selves. These individuals are represented with the violet line in Figure 11.1 (p.219) and four participants followed this path. Participant 2 is an example of this.

Participant 2 is a lawyer who studied an MBA as he did not want to practice law in the traditional way. Throughout his current corporate role, he is confirming that it was a good decision as the MBA opened him the doors to a business-lawyer identity which he is enjoying.

"I believe that this job is an excellent opportunity to make 'the leap', to make that link between what is strictly legal and the corporate world. It is a job in which it is important to have a legal knowledge base, or at least understand the paradigm of the legal world, to then translate it to the codes of the company. I'm not strictly a lawyer, or the financial person in the company. It's a nice mix." (Participant 2, Diary)

The new role implied quite a big profile change in terms of learning as he had to become an expert in a topic and in an industry which were very specific and he knew nothing about. He learnt a lot through his supervisor who became his mentor, by being physically located around people who were talking about the issue all day long, and by reading.

> "A lawyer doing an MBA, who today is learning this whole business of the company, which I can assure you, is not really simple. […] My coach who really understands the business very well, and has a great disposition towards me, open doors permanently. Besides, I am strategically located: in the unit surrounding me I have sales men, brand managers, product managers. Everyone is talking about this business all day. I can ask, I listen. For example, there is a sales meeting, in which I don't have anything to do, but my coach sends me to it anyway. It is full immersion. From 9 in the morning one day to 9 in the morning the next day. Because it is not even 9 to 6. I take books home. I buy the newspaper on Saturdays that has a supplement on this, which I didn't use to do before. I am really dedicated to …" (Participant 2, First interview)

After seven months in this role, the company is already offering new possibilities for the future, but many of these imply leaving aside the lawyer identity and become a full business professional. He had never thought of this possibility. He is getting different types of advice from his mentor and other senior colleagues, and he is wondering what to do.

> "For instance, in terms of personal preferences, I would go into a more regulatory issue, and on the other hand my coach tells me 'No, look,

maybe the career acceleration takes place more in the business itself. Get yourself into topics around marketing, strategic marketing…' I mean, another type of recommendation. [...] You bring your knowledge, your training… and no one can take it from you. But, there may be a moment in which you should be skilled enough to let the degree aside, and be more of a joker. I mean, they put you in any position and you can do it. The thing is that when you do benchmarking with others who have more experience than you, you will always see yourself lacking behind. So, there is also this thing of saying 'well, in a way I dare to make the jump, do something completely different, and what if I fail?" (Participant 2, Follow-up interview)

11.2.4 The surprising big career change

These are experienced professionals who made a big transition towards a desired possible self, but through performing the role are challenging this possible self. As the change was big, they are performing personal identity work to adjust. At the same time, since they are challenging the possible self, they are doing social identity work in terms of changing the remaining possible selves. These individuals are represented with the blue line in Figure 11.1 (p.219) and three participants followed this path. Participant 16 is an example of this.

Participant 16 is a civil engineer who developed most of his career within one organisation. He had always wanted to be the president of a company. He thought that growing up the hierarchical ladder till president in a company was a long pathway and very few made it, so he decided the way to achieve this career aim was by founding his own firm. Through this role he has achieved that professional identity and his remaining possible selves were related at first to being the president of a big company.

"Participant: I want to be the president of some company. I either have a professional career and take 20 years and maybe get there. Or I build my own company and I am the president. That is a personal desire. Now I am president, that's it.

Researcher: And what now?

Participant: What now? What now? I want to be the president of a big company! (laughs)" (Participant 16, First interview)

During the MBA he started developing the business plan with a work colleague, and used all the MBA learning and professors' knowledge to give shape to his idea. The business plan won an international prize. The support from his business partner was crucial to achieve the transition:

"I always wanted to have my own venture. I wished I had done it before but I didn't find the right partners. Being an entrepreneur, in my case, because of a personal issue, has to be in partnership with someone. I don't have the strength to do it on my own. I tried and no… I always run out of gasoline before getting there." (Participant 16, First interview)

In terms of personal identity work, the new role required him to have more commercial and client skills. He did not enjoy having to make these profile changes to adjust and this is why he is challenging his possible self.

"I think the most important challenge was personal... in fact, adjusting to the day to day. I don't like it. Sincerely, I don't like it... having to deal with the client, in what would be a long term relationship. [...] I don't want to be the president of a company as I said before. That is

obviously good, I like it, but you need to be in contact with day to day operations and now that I've lived it..." (Participant 16, First interview)

Therefore, his remaining possible selves are changing. Through performing this role he has challenged the president possible self and started thinking of new ones. He has realised that what he really enjoys is being strategic.

"I want to devote myself to developing things… that is what I like doing. The amazing part of this role was setting up the business. That first year when together with my partner we starting building it, developing it, researching… that was the part I enjoyed the most and that is what I want to do." (Participant 16, First interview)

So, for the future, he would like to be an investor.

"I see myself as an investor… an investor with strategic participation in each one of the businesses. That is the role I want to have." (Participant 16, First interview)

During the research period, Participant 16 took a *supporting role* as an engineer because he could not provide for his family with the income from the venture.

"Although my horizon is in the venture, today I cannot separate myself from reality, in which I have to cover for fixed costs in some way. This gives me oxygen to continue with my venture." (Participant 16, Diary)

He responded to the threat through positive framing, by emphasising the skills and money he was acquiring through performing this *supporting role* – skills that were useful for his entrepreneurial identity.

"My role is project coordinator and in some way I am doing the same that I do in my venture, I coordinate and provide the general guidelines.

On the other hand, the difference with my venture is that the scale is much bigger and that helps me a lot because I learn every day. This gives me oxygen to continue with my venture." (Participant 16, Diary)

In spite of having this supporting role, he is quite sure of where he is aiming.

"I try to feel more like a business man, more like an entrepreneur or a project person. I tend more to that side." (Participant16, Follow-up interview)

11.2.5 The threat and remaining wishes

These are experienced professionals who took roles that represented real threats to their professional identities. The origin of the threat could be a *stepping-stone role*, a *gift role* or the role not being as expected. These individuals responded to the threat and suffered its effects. In terms of personal identity work, depending on the magnitude of the difference between the current role and previous ones, they had to change profile to adjust or could benefit from previous work roles. In terms of social identity work, the threat did not change their possible selves, and they kept longing for those professional identities. These individuals are represented with the orange line in Figure 11.1 (p.219) and seven participants followed this path. Participant 23 is an example of this.

Participant 23 had been working as a manager in a company for a year when he was offered a new role. Hierarchically the position was equivalent, but he had new responsibilities and new challenges and so he accepted this *gift role*, although he was really looking for a director position. His identity was threatened by the company not offering the director position he thought he should have, even more with a vacancy for such position.

"Every time I talk to my boss, one of the topics I set is this one and he says that they are taking me into account. But if they had wanted to give the position to me, they would have done it directly. There is evidently something they are looking for that I lack in my skills or my training, I don't know. I don't understand what they could be looking for. If you see the search profile, I can assure you, being objective, that it is my profile. I mean, it is my profile, my experience, my everything." (Participant 23, First interview)

By the time of the follow-up interview he was still in the same position and reflected:

"I've been working in this for 20 years. What is it an executive director in the Argentinean market? I mean, how old does he need to be? 50? It has to be an elder person. Because if I've been for 20 years in the market, I have postgraduate studies in the best business schools, I have… I mean, what else? I mean, my CV supports me, my results support me. So…" (Participant 23, Follow-up interview)

He responded to the threat mainly through 'changing activities'. He performed role stretching by undertaking the tasks the new director would take:

"The truth is that I felt very well because I had the opportunity of presenting to the Vice-president. In this meeting I had to present all Latin America, not only my region. This motivated me quite a lot because the future director should do this presentation." (Participant 23, Diary)

He also did some planning and was proactive in seeking the change by a) applying to a director position and b) suggesting a new structure for the area in which he presents himself as the leader.

> a) "I saw the position and I postulated myself very quickly" (Participant 23, First interview)
>
> b) "Considering that the organisation is growing and during the next few weeks there should be definitions regarding new growth projections, I have presented new proposals in which I suggest a new structure for the region." (Participant 23, Diary)

He also responded through positive framing, by recognising some good consequences of his current *gift role*.

> "I think it was an important change because it gave me the vision of the whole region from the commercial point of view as well. I am recognised in the whole region. I realise that from anywhere in the world, if there is an issue related to Latin America, they come to me not to my peer. Before having this role I did not have this internal image because I was shadowed. That was a big change." (Participant 23, Follow-up interview)

However, after dealing with the threat for seven months, the effects were clear. He was emotionally distressed:

> "I feel so adapted to my current position, and this is why I feel so anguished because I am not a director. […] I was told I was not going to become Director this year, and I felt much unmotivated, really bad." (Participant 23, Follow-up interview)

He is also looking for opportunities outside the company to secure a role according to his possible self.

> "I want to be a director at some point. That is my career plan, and if it is not here it will be where it can be." (Participant 23, First interview)

> "Well, the thing is that with all this uncertainties and anxieties I started looking at the market. I started a little to look outside because there are too many uncertainties." (Participant 23, Follow-up interview)

As there are no alternatives, his possible selves remain the same.

In term of personal professional identity, considering the change was small and his career has been very coherent, he has mostly benefited from previous knowledge and experiences.

11.2.6 The threat plus new alternatives

These are experienced professionals who had a similar experience to the 'threat and remaining wishes' but who had a very strong threat coupled with new alternatives emerging for possible selves. Consequently, they were doing social identity work to change their possible selves. These individuals are represented with the red line in Figure 11.1 (p.219) and two participants followed this path. Participant 6 is an example of this.

Participant 6's possible self had been to be an independent consultant. She tried it for a year but found it economically impossible, so she took the current *supporting role* with the expectation that it would be an easy-going work that would give her money to continue developing her independent work identity in parallel.

"I have it because it gives me certain economic stability that we all need, but the idea is to continue developing the other thing." (Participant 6, First interview)

In terms of personal identity work, the corporate role was related to work she had done before, so she did not need to make a big profile change.

"There are things I am used to because I come from working in a very similar American company. So, in that sense, that facilitates things here." (Participant 6, First interview)

She experienced a strong identity threat because she had to do tasks which were too junior for her identity.

"I don't know if the effort I am making is worth it and I don't feel I am learning much. I am doing things that I already know how to do and without motivation." (Participant 6, Diary)

At the same time, a very bad relationship with her boss also threatened her working style.

"Now, he suddenly is in a hurry for things to get done and even though I feel I have things quite advanced, any missing detail, he demands it to me as if I hadn't done it because I was not in the mood. I feel very pressed and with fear." (Participant 6, Diary)

"If you do it in a good way, you can get from me whatever you want... Now, if I feel pressured... […] This is not the way I work: I like working as a team, understanding, collaborating." (Participant 6, Follow-up interview)

It was hard for her to respond to the threat, so she mainly experienced its effects, such as being very emotionally distressed.

> "I don't want to come to work. I lock myself in the restroom to cry. I am having a very bad time." (Participant 6, Diary)

She was also looking for opportunities outside the organisation.

> "The idea is to try to find something else, and when something comes up, leave…" (Participant 6, Follow-up interview)

In terms of possible selves, during the first four months at the role, she discovered that having a corporate job and working independently at the same time was hard because she was very responsible and devoted a lot of time to her corporate role.

> "I got this job through a friend and she had told me it was very relaxed… And I was doing consulting and my own projects, and in theory this job would allow me to keep doing my things. And the truth is that no. I mean, it is very demanding. […] And I am very responsible and I won't stop from doing my job." (Participant 6, Follow-up interview)

Although she still hoped to be independent some day, she has changed her short-term remaining possible selves. Through this experience, she realised that she cannot have the consulting role and an extrinsic corporate job, so she thinks she would enjoy working in an organisational job but in a company that would give her satisfaction and learning.

> "This role reaffirmed me that I put a lot of passion to what I do and I need to enjoy it, feel valued and feel part of a team… It is too much

time for me to do something I don't like or that I 'just take'."

(Participant 6, Follow-up interview)

11.3   Conclusion

This chapter presented a model of the identity work these experienced professionals performed during the first months after a career transition. At the same time, it showed how the model was applied by illustrating the six trajectories observed. Referring back to the literature review on professional identity, this model includes: the social dimension; how individuals become skilled and are agents of their professional profiles; the contestation or threat on identities; and how individuals actively construct dynamic identities throughout their careers (Brown, 1997). In the next chapter the main findings are discussed, along with the limitations and avenues for future research.

12. CONCLUSIONS

This study has analysed how experienced newcomers undergo the first months following a career transition within a management context. Previous research suggested that new studies were needed to look at this phenomenon, given that with increased mobility, professionals increasingly experience being newcomers during the course of their careers (Carr et al., 2006; Saks et al., 2007). However, existing research on this phenomenon has focussed mostly on socialisation tactics used by organisations (e.g. Allen and Meyer, 1990; Ashforth and Saks, 1996) and on information seeking behaviours (e.g. Brett et al., 1990; Miller and Jablin, 1991), requiring new studies to reinstate richness by:

> "focusing on the complexities of the process through which socialization occurs, including the role of equivocality and surprise, conflict, defense mechanisms, key events, mistakes and chances, obstacles, friendships and rivalries, exploration and experimentation, personal development, and markers of progress" (Saks and Ashforth, 1997, p.270).

Therefore, the general research question for this study was: How do experienced newcomers, Argentinean MBA graduates in particularly, undergo the adjustment period to a new work role? Research sub-questions were:

- What do experience newcomers reflect about during the first months at a new role? What are their main concerns and interests during this time?

- How do experienced newcomers react to these issues? What strategies do they perform?

- How do work experience and career expectations relate to adjustment to the new role?

To summarise the answers to these questions, this chapter is divided into six sections. First, as the research questions were quite broad and a grounded theory perspective was utilised, several broad themes emerged, which are presented and briefly discussed. Considering that experienced newcomers devoted great energy and time to reflecting and constructing their professional identities during the adjustment period to a new role, the theme of constructing a professional identity was chosen as focus for the thesis. Therefore, secondly, an overview of the thesis is presented which shows how each chapter contributed to understanding this phenomenon. Third, the findings for each chapter are summarised, along with suggested avenues for future research. Fourth, the limitations of the study are identified. Fifth, implications for management, career advisors and universities are considered. Finally, the concluding remarks are presented.

12.1 Emerging themes

Following a grounded theory approach, several broad themes or issues emerged while trying to understand what was relevant to these experienced newcomers during the adjustment period after a career transition. These included:

MBA impact

Having recently undertaken an MBA and having invested a vast amount of time and, in most cases money, participants reflected on the impact that the learning and the contacts acquired during the MBA was having on their adjustment and careers.

Labour market

Many participants had struggled with job searches, as they discovered that getting the desired job was harder than expected. This was even more the case for those participants who were trying to make a big transition to an area where their prior expertise was not directly applicable.

Developing relationships

Participants devoted much reflection on the importance of developing relationships on adjustment, as these helped or limited their performance, their learning, their information seeking, their positioning in the organisation/industry, and their career prospects. Across interviews and diaries, they reflected on how they developed various types of relationships, how these changed through time, and the impact these had on them.

Learning at the new role

Starting a new role undoubtedly stimulates a great amount of learning. Throughout the data, it is evident how these experienced newcomers learnt through many different means, while they were both restricted by, and were able to benefit from, their environments. Some of the key issues included: formal and informal learning; from whom to learn; and learning changing through time as individuals first acquired information but then processed it and achieved their own conclusions.

Performing

Participants were concerned about performing in the new role. They reflected on adjustment strategies they used and how these proved useful or not, on feedback received that led to adjustments, on being overwhelmed, on daily achievements, and on how the context affected their performance.

Reflecting on professional identity

Identity emerged as a crucial topic in data analysis, as individuals devoted a great amount of time and energy to work on their identities during the adjustment period. Three main processes of identity work emerged from the data: changing aspects of the personal professional identity to adjust to the new role, dealing with identity threats, and experiencing transitions as experiments to construct possible selves.

Thinking about the future

Although participants were concerned about their current roles, they were already considering their future career plans, reflecting on how their current situation affected these and what they could do to direct their careers to where they wanted.

12.2   Thesis overview

Although all these themes were extremely interesting and helped in answering the research question, one central theme was identified throughout the data: constructing a professional identity. 'Reflecting on professional identity' was extensively discussed by participants and it was very revealing in terms of how these experienced professionals socialised into a new role. A literature review on identity suggested that professional identities have a strong social dimension, require individuals to become skilled, can be contested, and are constructed actively throughout the career (Brown, 1997).

Therefore, the thesis explores how these mid-career professionals, with high social and human capital, undertaking voluntary transitions, focused considerable attention during the first months in their new roles on the development of their professional identities. In the first place, they were occupied with developing relationships that would ease their adjustment to the current role and opportunities for professional identity development (chapter 6). This concern for developing relationships, along

with data that provided unique information on how those relationships formed and developed through time, allowed for increasing knowledge on how professionals build their networks at work, contributing to a gap in the literature (Ibarra and Desphande, 2007).

Secondly, the theme of managing conflicting relationships brought new light into the role that social relationships have on newcomers' adaptation by exploring obstacles and rivalries during socialisation (chapter 7). So far, research had mostly highlighted the helping role that colleagues exert on newcomers' adjustment by providing information, friendship, advice, guidelines and so on (e.g. Morrison, 1993b). However, some of the professionals of this study were struggling with colleagues and supervisors who complicated their daily lives and questioned their professional identities. Chapter 7 explores the situations in which participants experienced conflicting relationships, how they responded to these relationships, the effects these had on them and the dynamics over time. This finding introduces a new perspective on the role the social environment plays on newcomers' adjustment.

Thirdly, in terms of becoming skilled, results indicate how past experience affects adjustment and the different types of changes participants made to their profiles (chapter 8). It was observed how different types of changes occur, depending on whether individuals want to integrate the new characteristic into who they are, or whether they just want to be able to perform in that specific role, exploring in this way how personal development takes place during career transitions.

Fourthly, the theme on managing identity threat introduces the existence of conflict and defence mechanisms during socialisation (chapter 9). Considering that these newcomers are taking voluntary career transitions and have recently graduated from a top MBA programme, it is astonishing to observe how strongly they were dealing

with threats to their professional identities. The clear distinction between those who were suffering this phenomenon and those who were not, due mainly to having undertaken a transition with an extrinsic or intrinsic rationale, also conveys an interesting finding and invites career practitioners to reflect on this when advising clients who are mid-career changers. What is more, the time and energy spent by participants on managing the threat could have negative effects on current adjustment and on future career aspirations.

The fifth finding illuminates the dynamics of professional identity development, looking into exploration and experimentation (chapter 10). This contributes to the research gap on possible selves by showing the process of how these possible selves are created, redefined and adjusted (Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010). Finally, chapter 11 integrates previous findings by introducing an identity work model and identifying six pathways that experienced newcomers may undergo following a career transition. The particular trajectory followed was related to whether the transition had an intrinsic or extrinsic rationale, the presence of unexpected events in taking the role, the magnitude of the transition, whether it produced a reinforcement of an identity or not, and the appearance of new alternatives for the future.

12.3   Summary of findings

The previous section explored what was relevant to participants as they experienced the adjustment period to a new work role in terms of the development of the professional identity. Now, the conclusions within each chapter will be summarised and avenues for future research introduced.

12.3.1 Contributions and future research on developing relationships

The social network literature has studied how different network structures affect diverse career outcomes (e.g. Burt, 1992; Granovetter, 1977; Podolny and Baron, 1997). In the case of newcomers, network structure also affects their socialisation to a new role (Morrison, 2002). So far, social network research has mostly concentrated on the effects of different types of networks and ties on diverse outcomes. However, very recently, the focus shifted to the dynamics of social networks and how they get formed and developed. Some endeavours include a study by Agneessens and Wittek (in press) on the role of status and social capital in the formation of advice relations; the analysis of migrant's changing personal networks (Lubbers et al., 2010); and network development during R&D projects' life cycle (Simon and Tellier, 2011). Chapter 6 follows this trend in the socialisation environment, focussing on how newcomers develop their networks to perform and learn in the new workplace over a period of four months.

The focus on newcomers has two advantages in increasing knowledge on the development of relationships at work. First, it allows us to understand the process of developing social networks in the case of individuals who especially need to do it to be successful in their adjustment. Secondly, focussing on this population allows us to observe change. As newcomers are currently developing their relationships, their networks change in a short period of time. Probably, if we observed the networks of individuals who had been in the same role for years, it would be difficult to examine the creation of new ties, as networks would probably be more stable.

Findings suggest that in understanding who are the colleagues chosen to become friends, strategic informants or mentors, it is notable that this seems to depend on the type of relationship. Social network research recognises that individuals build

different relationships to obtain different resources (Podolny and Baron, 1997). This study shows that these resources affect relationship formation. In the case of those relationships providing strategic information, the perception that the colleague has good information is the main criteria for approaching that person, showing a clear utility principle. To shape these impressions of 'good information', individuals look out for signals, such as their colleagues' position or job and tenure in the organisation or market. Hence, having a certain position or long tenure increased the colleague's reputation for having good information (Kilduff and Krackhardt, 1994). However, as time passed, newcomers could still base their judgements on reputation, or could also observe clearer signs, like colleagues' good results and performance.

In terms of friendship relationships, the criteria for choosing a colleague as a friend are more diverse. The most important one is feeling that the colleague contributes to one's work, followed by having developed a trusting relationship over time. Although in relation to the first criteria, a degree of utility can be observed, participants' quotes suggest that the help to one's work is not valued mostly for its actual contribution, but more for the effort and attention the colleague is devoting to the individual. Despite the dissimilarity between the main reasons for choosing strategic informants and friends, some of the remaining criteria are similar. First of all, in both cases, homophily plays a role. In terms of gender, 73% of relationships providing strategic information at the beginning and 67% four months later were of the same gender, while 84% of friendship relationships at the beginning and 73% four months later were also of the same gender.

The changes in these percentages observed as time passed are good news. Previous studies had already indicated that individuals tend to include in their networks people like them (Mollica et al., 2003). However, this can be detrimental for minorities, such

254

as women, since males usually occupy higher positions in organisations. This means that women may not receive critical information about job openings, sponsorship, and visibility, confirming the glass-ceiling phenomenon (Ibarra, 2010). Consequently, the findings of this study that indicate that when individuals enter a new role they inevitably receive information and trust mainly from people of the same gender, and then gradually build more diverse networks, is encouraging. Future studies could follow up this issue during a longer period of time to assess whether networks continue to become more diverse and how this happens.

Homophily also plays a role in terms of matching working styles. Besides gender, individuals look for strategic information, for friendship, and also for mentoring, from others who are similar to them in the way they work. It seems that sharing working styles signals to the newcomer that the colleague will provide valuable information and will be dependable. If colleagues are not 'good' professionally, it is hard for individuals to have them as friends. In fact, having different working styles was also a source for the emergence of a conflicting relationship with the supervisor. Companies may recruit newcomers with different working styles to the one predominating in the organisation when they wish to implement a change. The present findings suggest that these newcomers will try to find others alike to form relationships. Future research could explore how newcomers form alliances with similar colleagues to achieve change in an organisation.

Regarding the factors that favour the creation of these relationships, there is correspondence between what contributes to strategic and friendship relationships. The first factor is previous relationships. Prior relationships can turn into new types of relationships as a newcomer changes role. At the same time, relationships can introduce others. This last situation suggests that newcomers may build dense and

redundant networks, at least in the beginning, as once they meet a person, they will continue to meet the colleagues in his or her network. This may limit the diversity of the strategic information received (Burt, 1992) but may be beneficial in terms of friendship, since diverse networks can be detrimental to identity development in the new work setting as it may confuse individuals regarding what is required (Podolny and Baron, 1997). Diversity is defined by range, referring to the number of social systems or domains to which network members belong to, and by density, referring to the extent to which network members are connected amongst themselves (Brass, 1995). Social network research exposes many advantages of diverse networks such as providing access to a broader range of perspectives (Burt, 1992; Higgins, 2005; Kunda, Barley and Evans, 2002), promoting cognitive flexibility (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998), providing opportunities for participating in new projects (Higgins, 2001a), increasing creativity, (Shalley and Perry-Smith, 2008), and facilitating knowledge transfer through the effect of multiple perspectives and the ability to convey complex ideas to diverse audiences (Reagans and McEvily, 2003). Given the advantages of diverse networks, future studies could explore whether newcomers' networks become more diverse with time and how this process takes place.

The next factor is task interacting. As newcomers enter a new role, having the excuse to interact with others is an important way to meet people and develop a relationship. This factor was observed both in positive and negative ways. For example, one participant had a very clear role, known by everyone in the company, and therefore he was approached by others with relevant information, increasing his learning and his chances for developing relationships. Another participant complained repeatedly that because he had no clear role, he did not interact with others much in terms of his

work, and hence it was hard to form relationships. Having a clear role emerged as a central factor in facilitating or complicating the development of networks at work.

The third factor is physical proximity. It has already been recognised in the literature that physical proximity affects communication (e.g. Allen and Fustfeld, 1975; Sailer and Pen, 2009), and this study shows that it affects both newcomers' formation of relationships with strategic informants and with friends. Newcomers' proactivity is also relevant. This is in line with recent studies that suggest the importance of individuals in taking charge of their own socialisation into a new work setting (Ashford and Black, 1996). Finally, some positive behaviours and attitudes newcomers naturally express at work may favour the creation of relationships, suggesting the indirect benefits for the social environment of contributing to others and of good performance.

This study suggests that networks are quite unstable when individuals start a new role, particularly in terms of strategic relationships but also in terms of friendships. One third of colleagues recognised as providing strategic information at some point were not fulfilling this role one or two months later, while 11% of friendship relationships were also dropped. In the case of strategic relationships, the reason for change is mainly related to the usefulness of these relationships. For example, these changed when participants identified better informants, when they required different types of information as they were more adjusted to the role or because they had changed activities or professional identity, or when they replaced some relationships with others providing similar information. In the case of friendships, some relationships ended when participants felt that these individuals were no longer helping them with their work, and were created when individuals bonded to a friendly level with colleagues who they were just starting to get to know before. For both types of

relationships, chance was also a factor, as when colleagues left the company or began maternity leave.

In terms of mentoring relationships, participants were eager to experience a continuation of their mentoring relationships through their career transitions. This could be done when mentors were active in helping the newcomer achieve the new job and when participants transitioned to a role that was a continuation of their professional identities. When they could not continue the relationship, consistent with previous studies, this was found to be emotionally stressful to participants (Chao, 1997). At the same time, participants were enthusiastic about developing new mentoring relationships facilitated by the new role. Most of these relationships were formed with the supervisor, and by the time the data collection phase was over, these relationships were also the more developed ones. At the same time, these seemed to be the most efficient since participants involved in this type of mentoring relationships were more satisfied and received more mentoring functions from their mentors. However, participants who had new mentoring relationships with other senior colleagues were struggling with getting those relationships to work.

The mentoring literature suggests that mentoring relationships go through four phases: initiation, cultivation, separation and redefinition (Scandura and Pellegrini, 2008). Individuals with mentoring relationships with supervisors had in a few months experienced the initiation phase and were already moving into a cultivation phase in which the mentor promotes the protégé's performance, potential and visibility (Chao, 1997). However, participants who had new mentoring relationships with other senior colleagues were still clearly in the initiation phase as most of them were learning about each other's personal style and work habits. In fact, they stated that it was hard to arrange meetings because of the lack of time and the need to avoid upsetting

supervisors by trying to communicate with people higher in the hierarchy. These results suggest that it is easier and faster for newcomers to build mentoring relationships with supervisors. However, previous research shows that mentoring has better career results when mentors have higher status (Higgins and Thomas, 2001). Future research could explore further how newcomers form relationships with different types of mentors and how these contribute to their careers in the longer term.

Finally, in the case of entrepreneurs, work and personal networks became mixed. Entrepreneurs recognised family in many roles, specially their wives, as providing friendship. Because entrepreneurs have fewer colleagues, they may choose to share their work issues and look for support from family members, who also need to understand the situation to bear the economic sacrifices imposed by the constraints typical of the first months of a new venture.

12.3.2 Contributions and future research on conflicting relationships

Chapter 7 explored the origins, management and phases of conflicting relationships that newcomers experienced during the first months in the new role. These emerged in relation to conflicts raised by the position when referring to colleagues, and in relation to different working styles and to the position in the case of supervisors. Regarding colleagues, previous incumbents in the role, aspiring incumbents and individuals occupying positions with contradictory interests were sources of conflict. Relationships with supervisors were conflictual when they had very different working styles to that of the newcomer, when they did not understand the newcomer's role (hence asking for behaviours that could not be performed), when there were more than one supervisor with different interests, and when the newcomer perceived the boss as inferior.

In relation to how newcomers manage these conflicting relationships, literature usually indicated that individuals have different interpersonal conflict styles; for example some individuals use avoiding behaviours, while others dominating ones (Rahim 1983). However, similarly to recent studies (Gallanan, Benzing and Perry, 2006), the findings suggest that although newcomers probably have a preferred style, they use the strategy which is more appropriate for the specific situation and colleague or supervisor. Even in relation to the same colleague or supervisor, the newcomer may try different strategies as time passes and/or when first strategies are not successful. In the case of conflictual colleagues, participants eventually learnt the most appropriate conflict management strategy, leaving negative emotions aside. In the case of conflictual supervisors, the relationship produced stronger negative effects on emotions, learning constrains, and turnover intentions, and on occasions, newcomers were not able to improve the situation significantly, even after trying several strategies.

The dynamics of the relationship with conflictual colleagues presented three phases: discovering the problem, feeling negatively, and managing the relationship. When dealing with conflictual supervisors, two dynamics were observed depending on the ability of the newcomer to anticipate the conflict. If the conflict was visible, four phases were identified: 1) identifying the problem, 2) reacting, 3) discovering the problem was smaller than anticipated, and 4) managing a minor conflictual relationship. However, in the delayed-recognition model, the dynamics were quite different. The relationship phases included: 1) the newcomer receiving signs of conflict but not recognising them, 2) eventually recognising the problem, 3) then reacting. This could result in managing a relationship with little conflict (if the strategies had been successful) or wanting to leave the role if they had not. In the

visible model, although the participant who experienced this phenomenon was quite successful in his strategies, in phase 3 the newcomer may discover that the problem is not in fact smaller than anticipated and the outcome could also be negative. Two new conflict management strategies emerged in this study in relation to how newcomers manage conflicting relationships: 'protecting themselves' by informing their line managers that the problem with a colleague could impact negatively on performance and 'realising that it was not personal', a strategy that was performed in relation to both colleagues and supervisors, and which required the newcomer to have built trust with others in the work setting.

In relation to all types of relationships, probably, more than four months are required to observe newcomers' social network development. Future studies should analyse network patterns over a more extended period. However, similar to recent studies trying to uncover these dynamics this represents a first step, considering that:

> "characterizing the co-evolutionary dynamics of social structures and individual behavior remains a problem of general sociological relevance […] at the current stage of development the subtleties and nuances of social influence and social selection processes are such that carefully documented case studies conducted in specific settings such as the one we presented may stimulate progress toward more general results." (Lomi et al., 2011)

12.3.3 Contributions and future research on changing profile to perform

This study advances our understanding on how work identities change and how this interacts with the adjustment process to a new role. First, as explored in chapter 8, participants made efforts to change their skills and attitudes to do well in the new role.

They thought that it was important to perform to continue successfully with their career plans. This perspective on the future is crucial to understand this behaviour since previous studies on experienced newcomers' adjustment suggest that individuals may be too attached to their existing knowledge, skills and attitudes and do not want to change them (Beyer and Hannah, 2002). However, this was not observed in the present study. The main difference between the samples of these two studies is the impact of performance in the current role on the future. Beyer and Hannah (2002) made an important contribution when studying experienced newcomers by introducing the relevance of past experience for adjustment. However, the participants of that study were entering a two year assignment. Probably, the fact that those were temporal assignments and newcomers knew they were going back to their previous roles had an effect on their adjustment processes. Temporal role identities are usually not internalised, either because the individual decides not to invest effort in it or there is no time for internalisation to be achieved. Consequently, this thesis highlights the importance for future studies of considering possible selves, career aspirations, and the potential consequences of performance in the role when exploring experienced newcomers' adjustment.

Participants making small transitions mainly benefited from the skills and knowledge acquired in previous roles. However, participants making big transitions undertook different types of changes to be able to perform in the new role. These changes differ in terms of internalisation and temporality. Some experienced newcomers undertook internalised changes, which were usually related to skills learning that are then incorporated into the professional identity. Participants were happy to learn these competencies as they thought they made them more employable. The two previous types of changes had been observed by Nicholson and West (1987) in their study of

middle and senior managers' job transitions. A new type of change was observed in the present study: participants also undertook non-internalised changes referring to modifications in behaviours or working styles that are expected to last as long as the role lasts, or even for a more limited temporal frame, only being undertaken on special occasions, as participants did not totally agree with behaving this way but felt it was necessary to achieve a good performance. These include role temporal changes, occasion-specific changes and acting.

12.3.4 Contributions and future research on identity threat

Although participants were willing to change their professional personal identities when they thought the new skills would be useful for the current and future roles, chapter 9 shows that they were not willing to change their social identities that easily. This means that they accepted that new environments required new skills and they needed to develop them temporarily or permanently, but they were certain about their desired social professional identities and were not willing to change them. This differs from the adjustment of inexperienced professionals (Pratt et al., 2006). In Pratt and colleagues' (2006) study of medical residents, they identified how newcomers changed their social identities as they experienced identity violations. However, the present research shows that experienced newcomers make great efforts to avoid changing their professional social identities even when faced by strong threats. Consequently, this study shows that the adjustment process of mid-career experienced newcomers is different to that of junior professionals.

Another contribution of this research project is that it provides the reasons for why individuals with high human and social capital experience identity threat following a voluntary career transition. The rationales for accepting the role emerged as the main factor. These results contribute to the concept of protean careers, which refers to a

career orientation in which the person is in charge, where the person's core values are driving career decisions, and where the main success criteria are subjective or psychological success vs. position or salary level (Hall, 2004). Results show that when individuals base their career decisions on intrinsic factors, 'following what their hearts say', they have far fewer possibilities of experiencing identity threat. Considering the relevance of this factor for the participants of this study, future research could test these ideas on larger samples to validate the results.

As the self-concept is a significant regulator of individuals' behaviours (Markus and Nurius, 1986), this identity work has strong effects on socialisation and adaptation. While individuals who are performing a role they like put all their efforts in adjustment, individuals who do not find a match between the role and their current professional identity, devote much time and energy to responding to the threat, causing among other effects under-performance in the role and intentions to leave. Accepting *stepping-stone roles*, *supporting roles* and *gift role* seems then to be a risky strategy for professionals.

Participants simultaneously used several responses to manage the identity threat. These included responses aimed at changing the activities they performed such as fighting typecasting, role stretching and planning. All of these were facilitated by a good social environment. The results suggest the importance of supervisors in helping newcomers manage an identity threat. Other responses included positive framing and role indifference. In spite of participants' efforts to manage the threat, they did experience its effects. These were under-performing, feeling emotionally distressed, looking for work changes and fearing identity change. Under-performing was related to not having the motivation or the skills to perform the current role. Emotions were widely negative, with anxiety and frustration predominating during this period.

Although these individuals had changed jobs very recently, they were already looking for new jobs elsewhere. Finally, although they did not want to change their social professional identity, some of them were afraid that it would be difficult for others to grant them the professional identity they claimed if they performed other tasks for too long.

This last issue connects with the next point by highlighting how identity threat is a central part of identity construction. Experiencing a threat affects how individuals build their dynamic professional identities and consider possible selves. Future research could explore how experiencing an identity threat affects long term career achievements, and how this differs in relation to age, as this was a concern for older participants. At the same time, considering the important number of professionals with high human and social capital experiencing identity threat following a voluntary career transition, this study suggests that career and socialisation research should consider this, and not assume that these transitions are 'positive' or enjoyable.

12.3.5 Contributions and future research on dynamics of constructing the professional identity

The first months at a new role proved to be a crucial moment for developing the social professional identity. Chapter 10 shows that as participants started enacting the new role, they were experimenting with it, by either reinforcing or challenging ideas they had of who they wanted to be. This finding identifies a new behaviour newcomers undertake during the adjustment period of the transition cycle. Nicholson and West (1987) suggest two main behaviours undertook during this phase: role innovation and personal change. The present study has identified three more: performativity behaviours referring to non-internalised changes aimed at achieving performance (chapter 8), identity protection (chapter 9), and experimentation of possible selves

(chapter 10). Experimentation took place in the following way. All participants who made intrinsic, low magnitude transitions reinforced their possible selves as it was easy for them to anticipate how they would feel in the new role. Some of the participants undertaking intrinsic big transitions also reinforced their hypotheses as they confirmed they felt comfortable with the new identity. However, some participants making big intrinsic transitions challenged the identities they thought they would like, as they found no fit with the new role or by adjusting to the new job, they developed a new identity they enjoyed better. These reinforcements, challenges and threats, affected the development of the remaining possible selves, referring to who they wanted to be next professionally. Participants who reinforced their possible selves also reinforced the remaining ones, as they received no information that would make them think otherwise. Participants who changed their remaining possible selves did so as a result of changing their profile to adjust and in doing this, new opportunities appeared for the future, exiting and crafting remaining possible selves as a result of challenging once desired possible selves, or as a result of identity threat.

Consequently, the research brings together socialisation, career, and identity work literatures, by showing that soon after starting a new role, professionals are already undertaking social identity work and planning their careers. In addition, considering possible selves' functions of giving meaning to current experiences and motivating behaviour to achieve those desired possible selves, the description of how possible selves change as individuals undertake a "committed exploration of a desired identity" (Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010, p.17) contributes to our understanding of the adjustment behaviour, illuminating the complexity of this process. Future research looking into socialisation and adjustment would benefit from recognising the presence of identity development processes during the first months in a new role.

12.3.6 Contributions and future research on identity work trajectories following a

  career transition

The thesis concludes, in chapter 11, by integrating previous findings into six identity work trajectories which experienced business professionals undergo following a career transition. These are: the incremental pathway, the anticipated big career change, the big career change with a plus, the unexpected big career change, the threat with remaining selves, and the threat plus new alternatives. The 'incremental pathway' represents the identity work undertaken by experienced newcomers who are following a natural career progression with this transition. These newcomers experience an 'easy' adjustment process as they can benefit from skills, knowledge and relationships built before and their social professional identity is not at stake. The 'anticipated big career change' represents the identity work undertaken by professionals who are able to achieve a desired big transition. The magnitude of the transition implies that they will need to make great efforts to adjust by changing their profiles. But, as they are happy with being able to enact this possible self, they accept the challenge. Similarly, the 'big career change and more' represents the identity work undertaken by experienced newcomers who take a role they wished for to a position which differs greatly from previous jobs. However, there is an additional element compared to the previous trajectory: as these experienced newcomers start performing the new role, they visualise new unexpected opportunities for the future, which stimulate reflection on what to do next. The 'surprising big career change' refers to the identity work undertaken by professionals who achieve a big transition to a desired possible self but then realise it does not suit them. They will need to change profile to be able to perform but they will inevitably start planning for a new change. The 'threat and remaining wishes' is the identity work trajectory undergone by

experienced newcomers who take a *stepping-stone role*, a *gift role* or a role which is not as expected. This requires most of the energy to be devoted to managing the threat. Finally, the 'threat plus new alternatives' is similar to the previous trajectory, but these newcomers may visualise new options for the future and hence reflect on whether to take them or not.

These trajectories show that experienced newcomers may undergo very different adjustment processes during the first months in a new role. The six trajectories are supported in the data, and each participant is represented in one of them. Future studies could sum new trajectories. For example, participants going through an 'incremental pathway' may also be suggested new alternatives for the future and hence spur reflections on remaining possible selves.

Ultimately, this study makes a contribution to the socialisation literature by explaining the complexities of the identity work newcomers undertake when they enter a new role, as well as a contribution to identity work theory by showing the process of how possible selves are created and changed. The model introduced in chapter 11 shows the diverse identity pathways experienced newcomers may undergo as they enter a new role. The factors that affect the pathway taken are: an intrinsic or extrinsic rationale, the magnitude of the transition, the presence of unexpected events, the reinforcement or challenge of an identity, and the appearance of new alternatives for the future. These factors should be considered in future endeavours designed to continue developing knowledge in this area.

12.4   Contributions on methods

The particular combination of research methods used in this study are quite unique and proved to be very effective in unleashing the intricacies of process and

newcomers' reflections. Data collection proved to be strenuous and time consuming. However, the longitudinal design proved to be very valuable, as the findings presented in this thesis would have been difficult to achieve in other ways. Unstructured diaries seem to be a very appealing data collection technique, as they allowed relevant themes to emerge and made the experience enjoyable and hence doable for participants. The diary writing time frame seemed to be good since participants wrote evenly during the three months, suggesting that it was not too burdensome.

In terms of achieving compliance, although time consuming, it seems valuable to communicate with participants periodically to remind them of the research project. Doing this by contributing interesting articles to them was an effective strategy. At the same time, creating both a hard-copy and an electronic writing space was appreciated by participants. This suggests that in order to increase diary writing, researchers need to accommodate different writing preferences. However, this can have some effects, since hard-copy booklets seem to encourage a larger amount of writing and more reflective thoughts, while electronic diaries might promote more expeditious writing.

Conducting pilot interviews was very valuable. The final interview protocols' combination of narrative, exercises and joint reflection seemed to provide a comfortable and enjoyable setting for interviewees and provided very rich data. At the same time, crafting each follow-up interview based on participants' diaries, allowed for a thorough exploration of emerging themes.

Continuing with the methodology reflection, this study suggests the need to be cautious when collecting social network data through questionnaires. Although individuals are reliable when assessing typical patterns of social interaction (Freeman, Romney and Freeman, 1987), it can be hard for them to differentiate different types of

relationships. When collecting the data for this project, individuals were given instructions on what each type of relationship meant. However, on some occasions, when they were asked why they had identified a certain person for a particular type of relationship, the reasons did not match the instructions. At the same time, some individuals had problems in understanding the instructions and needed several examples to make sense of what they were being requested. For types of relationships such as friendship, special care needs to be taken when comparing individuals' networks as, although they were all presented with the same instructions, individuals would have different friendship requirements, with some including people with whom they could have nice conversations and others including only those who they could really trust. These issues were taken care of in this study as data collection took place face to face and individuals were prompted on their answers. However, as most social network data collection in done through questionnaires, it is necessary to think of ways to overcome these potential problems.

Finally, it is uncertain whether this study could be replicated in other countries. The tendency Argentineans have for discussing their feelings with another person (Moffett, 2009) was an important element of the study. Consequently, the country setting was an advantage as it allowed the project to explore deep into newcomers' socialisation processes. One possible approach would be to replicate this study in other countries by focusing on full-time MBAs who are usually starting a new role at a specific time. One of the main challenges and time consuming issues of this project was to identify potential participants as these were part-time MBA graduates. At the same time, it would be interesting to compare the current findings with those of full-time MBA graduates.

12.5   Research limitations

This study has undoubtedly some limitations. First, in terms of social relationships, as the study collected data on ego networks, no claims can be made about the bigger network in which these are immersed or on reciprocity. At the same time, data collection was mainly unstructured and the priority was for individuals to talk about their own perceptions and use their own meanings. The data collection on networks cannot, therefore, be much compared across cases. For example, the Relationships Diagrams that participants completed presented three levels of communication frequency, which individuals were free to establish according to their circumstances. So, someone who worked mostly alone and talked once a week with his boss may have indicated this was a high frequency relationship, while, for others whose position implied constant interaction with people, once a week could have been understood as low frequency.

Secondly, although the diary proved to be a unique way of obtaining process data and material to reflect in the follow-up interview, it might have affected results since participants were encouraged to be reflective. Although this was clearly recognised at the beginning of the study, it is uncertain whether newcomers not writing in a diary experience the adjustment process similarly. Hence, this project allowed for process and rich theory to emerge which should be tested in future studies with different methodologies. At the same time, participants had not been in the new role for exactly the same amount of time. On the one hand this was inconvenient as data could not be directly compared, but considering the general approach to research and to data analysis, this ended up not being a major problem and actually provided information on newcomers through the whole first year at the new role.

Third, data were obtained from 24 participants. Although there was a vast amount of data on each case, it is not possible to generalise. Future studies should try to extend the ideas and model developed in this study to larger populations, and to individuals with other characteristics such as different nationalities and professions. At the same time, it would be interesting to be able to distinguish findings across gender as previous research suggests this is an important factor. In addition, as organisational characteristics have traditionally been the focus of socialisation research, it would be worthwhile to explore the interaction of the processes observed here within different organisational contexts.

Finally, the methods adopted in this study proved to be useful to understand process and to bring light into individuals' concerns, emotions, and sensemaking during the adjustment process. As participants represented a variety of transitions and business professional profiles, the concepts introduced here are challenged across a variety of types of transitions. The diverse sample also allowed for a broad model to be constructed as the identity work in different types of transitions could be studied and compared. However, the diversity limited the number of cases in each category, suggesting a need for future studies to confirm the results.

12.6   Implications for practice

The results show the relevance of identity work processes during the first months at a new role. Most adjustment research as well as company practices have focussed on the need of individuals to acquire the information to perform their roles. Others, such as Nicholson and West (1987), focus on role innovation and personal change, in reference to whether newcomers fit the role to themselves or change to adapt to the role, or both. Although this is certainly important, the results suggest that managers

also need to care for individuals' identity work processes in terms of identity protection and experimentation.

First of all, if newcomers are being threatened by their new jobs, they may feel negatively about going to work and under-perform, affecting the contribution they make to the company. Since both literature and results suggest that identity work is a social process, social relationships at work can be highly influential during these months. For example, managers could help individuals performing *stepping-stone roles*, *supporting roles* and *gift roles* with their identity threat responses. They could do this by showing them they are not being type casted, offering opportunities for stretchwork, and talking with them about their future plans so that they can perceive a deadline for this role and visualise an identity-matching role in the short term future. At the same time, managers should involve employees when deciding organisational career pathways to avoid offering *gift roles*, or to be aware that they are offering such roles and hence individuals will probably experience an identity threat.

In reference to identity as experiments, it is important that managers oversee this process in order to understand what newcomers are going through and act accordingly. For instance, if an individual challenges an identity he or she was wishing for, the manager could think that the person is satisfied with the job as he or she is performing a once desired possible self, and this may not be the case. The individual would probably start wishing for a new role, and if the company is not aware of this and does not provide opportunities, the professional may look for the job outside the organisation, resulting in the loss of a valuable member and all the costs associated with the hiring and learning of a new person. Managers and Human Resources professionals could work together with the individual to understand why he or she is challenging the once desired possible self and see whether it is possible to

adapt more the role to the individual, or help him or her make a good judgement about the new possible self before putting again a lot of effort in achieving a new transition. Ultimately, this study has identified the presence of experimentation behaviours during the adjustment phase of the transition cycle, making it essential for Human Resources professionals to understand this concept of experimentation to be able to accompany experienced newcomers during their socialisation to a new role.

The findings also contribute to the development of on-boarding or induction programmes. Human Resource departments usually create these programmes to facilitate the adjustment of newcomers. Results suggest that depending on the magnitude and rationale for the transition, experienced newcomers will probably benefit from different types of on-boarding programmes since the identity work trajectory undertaken affects the needs they will have during the first months in a new role. For example, those in an 'anticipated big transition' pathway will need support to develop the skills and knowledge to be able to perform. They will be motivated to acquire new competencies, but the magnitude of the transition will require great efforts, which could be eased by the organisation, with initiatives like training programmes and mentors. Human Resource professionals should also be attentive to whether someone going through this trajectory passes to a 'big career change and more' pathway. This will happen if the company foresees that the individual could make a stronger contribution in another area of the business. If this occurs, apart from requiring support in learning new skills, the individual would benefit from counselling in relation to what to do next. After taking a big transition, thinking about another big transition can be frightening. If the organisation believes that a new possible self could be beneficial for the organisation, the newcomer should be supported throughout the reflection process.

This suggests that Human Resource professionals and managers need to customise their on-boarding programmes to the needs of the newcomer. Probably, junior newcomers can be exposed to a standardized programme that will cater for most needs. However, in the case of experienced newcomers, their pasts, in terms of knowledge, skills, working styles, differences with the new role, and the identity work trajectories will affect the socialisation required.

As social relationships are very important to newcomers for learning and identity development, organisations can help them develop these. Findings suggest that special attention should be given to physical proximity as this will enhance or limit individuals' possibilities to form new relationships. At the same time, providing the newcomer with a clear role is crucial. Those newcomers who know what they need to do and who have a clear objective in the eyes of others, will have more 'excuses' to interact with peers. The role of supervisors seems very important. Assigning newcomers to supervisors who have similar working styles and who understand the newcomer's job will decrease possibilities for conflicting relationships. Companies should train managers to avoid conflicting behaviours towards newcomers. At the same time, considering the benefits of having mentors higher in the hierarchy, supervisors should encourage, and not limit, newcomers interacting with other senior colleagues.

The benefits of transitions with an intrinsic rationale suggest that, when possible, individuals should seek these roles. Individuals and career advisors should be aware that if taking an extrinsically-motivated role, professionals will very likely suffer identity threat and this could result in under-performing, diminishing the chances to achieve eventually the desired role. However, this may not be always possible considering economic and contextual circumstances, and in fact, previous studies

suggest that career guidance should encourage realistic expectations (Wise and Millward, 2005). Probably, career advisors could help professionals craft desired but realistic possible selves by encouraging an open-mind and the consideration of multiple possibilities and not just one possible self. This would contribute to the development of a multidimensional professional identity with broad repertories of personal characteristics that leave open multiple ways in which individuals can see themselves functioning effectively at work (Beyer and Hannah, 2002). If professionals are allowed to build their own unrealistic possible selves but then encouraged to take a position that does not match that identity in the hope of achieving another role in the future, it could be very frustrating.

Finally, the findings provide implications for universities, and MBA career offices in particularly. It is important to help graduates in achieving intrinsically-motivated transitions. For this to happen, the work of career offices is vital in terms of liaising with potential employers so that graduates can actually choose the new role and not just take any available one for extrinsic reasons. At the same time, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, career advisors working within universities could help students to explore the multiple possible selves in which they could develop their skills, interests and careers, to avoid them developing a fixation on only one type of new role. On the other hand, recognising that in a harsh economic climate, professionals may need to accept jobs for extrinsic reasons, MBA students could be trained to manage identity threats positively to avoid trapping themselves into behaviours that can be detrimental to their future careers. At the same time, in terms of soft skills, MBA programmes could teach their students different strategies to manage conflicting relationships with colleagues and supervisors, and encourage a proactive attitude towards building relationships and identifying 'good informants' at work.

12.7   Concluding remarks

Overall, this thesis has contributed knowledge on how experienced business professionals undergo the adjustment period to a new role, identifying the factors and situations that are relevant to them during the transition. During the first months following a career change, identity development emerged as a major concern. This process was influenced by social relationships at the new workplace such as friendships, strategic informants, conflicting colleagues and supervisors, mentors, and managers. At the same time, the magnitude and the rationale for the transition, intrinsic or extrinsic, shaped strongly the identity work trajectories followed by professionals while starting a new role. The findings also contribute to socialisation, identity work, social network and career literatures and provide implications for theory, management, career advisors and MBA programmes.

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APPENDIX 1: EMAIL SENT TO EMPLOYERS

Dear [],

I am Pamela Suzanne, PhD Candidate at University of Warwick. My doctoral research project is about the changes that some people undertake after studying an MBA, such as promotions, lateral moves, changing companies. The method involves interviews with MBA graduates who have recently changed jobs, who also write in a transition diary for three months.

There are some themes that are repeatedly emerging in interviews related to the effect of studying an MBA on labour market opportunities. I think these are very interesting and I wanted to share them with you to hear your perspective about them.

The first one is related to the value the MBA degree has in the labour market. Many graduates think that an MBA opens doors, and then they learn this does not happen. In fact, many finish an MBA and then have difficulty in finding a good job. Related to this, they also ask themselves if companies value differently the MBAs of special universities. This theme of little value is interesting when we compare it to other countries in which companies strongly recruit MBA graduates.

Another theme is that many individuals studying an MBA expect to then be able to change area or function. Some enter the MBA with this idea, expecting that the programme will help them achieve the change, and others discover new interests while studying. However, they all mention how difficult it is to achieve this type of changes They affirm that companies are looking for candidates with previous experience on exactly the type of job advertised, and are not willing to offer career changes of this type; making it almost impossible to achieve them. However, it seems

it can be a little easier if these are lateral changes within the same company, although not that simple.

Finally, in those cases in which the MBA is sponsored by the company, many graduates mention that there does not seem to be a plan for them post-MBA, suggesting that the sponsorship is a short term retention tool and not an investment.

Considering that to this moment I have MBA graduates' perspective, it would be good to incorporate employers' perspective. If you would like to talk about these themes, we could have a telephone or face to face talk. It would be very interesting to me. In this case, please provide me with your contact details and when you would like me to call you.

Thank you very much.

Kind regards,

Pamela

APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE WITH REQUIREMENT FOR INFORMATION SENT TO TOP FOUR UNIVERSITIES

MBA part-time						
Number of student starting the MBA in 2007	_____					
Number of student starting the MBA in 2008	_____					
Number of student starting the MBA in 2009	_____					
Number of student starting the MBA in 2010	_____					
Number of student starting the MBA in 2011	_____					
Number of student starting the MBA in 2012	_____					
In reference to those students starting in 2008, 2010 and 2012:	**Starting in 2008**		**Starting in 2010**		**Starting in 2012**	
University degree	Degree 1	%	Degree 1	%	Degree 1	%
	Degree 2	%	Degree 2	%	Degree 2	%
	Degree 3	%	Degree 3	%	Degree 3	%
	Degree 4	%	Degree 4	%	Degree 4	%
Average age	_____		_____		_____	
Average years of work experience	_____		_____		_____	
Total cost of programme in pesos						
% of men	_____		_____		_____	
Nationality	Nationality 1	%	Nationality 1	%	Nationality 1	%
	Nationality 2	%	Nationality 2	%	Nationality 2	%
	Nationality 3	%	Nationality 3	%	Nationality 3	%
	Nationality 4	%	Nationality 4	%	Nationality 4	%
% of students with finantial aid from their companies	_____		_____		_____	
Percentage that worked in each type of industry when they entered the MBA						
(a classification is proposed but if you have the data in another format, please provide it as you have it)						
AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHING	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
MINING AND QUARRYING	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
MANUFACTURING	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
ELECTRICITY, GAS, STEAM AND AIR CONDITIONING SUPPLY	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
WATER SUPPLY; SEWERAGE, WASTE MANAGEMENT AND REMEDIATION ACTIVITIES	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
CONSTRUCTION	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE; REPAIR OF MOTOR VEHICLES AND MOTORCYCLES	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
TRANSPORTATION AND STORAGE	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD SERVICE ACTIVITIES	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
FINANCIAL AND INSURANCE ACTIVITIES	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
REAL ESTATE ACTIVITIES	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ACTIVITIES	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT SERVICE ACTIVITIES	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEFENCE; COMPULSORY SOCIAL SECURITY	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
EDUCATION	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
HUMAN HEALTH AND SOCIAL WORK ACTIVITIES	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT AND RECREATION	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
OTHER SERVICE ACTIVITIES	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
Hierarchical position in which they worked when they started the programme						
(a classification is proposed but if you have the data in another format, please provide it as you have it)						
Director/President	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
Sr Executive	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
Manager	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
Supervisor/Team leader	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
Sr Analyst	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
Jr Analyst	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
Independant consultant	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
Others	_____	%	_____	%	_____	%
It would be important to gather data regarding on how the students' careers developed once they graduated. I specify some questions that, if you have the answer, it would be very interesting to have. However, please include any reports, information or graphs you have that pertain to the issue. Please indicate how you calculated the numbers.						
	Starting in 2008		**Starting in 2010**		**General aggregate** **(indicate the cohorts that are included)**	
Average number of job changes per person since starting the MBA						
Average salary increase after one year of graduation						
Average number of company changes each person undertook after starting the MBA						
Number of graduates who became entrepreneurs						
Average number of graduates who obtained a promotion one year after graduation						
Average number of graduates who obtained a promotion two years after graduation						
Average number of graduates who changed department /specialisation after starting the MBA (for example from finance to marketing)						

Note: Although it was time consuming, the four top universities replied to the email requesting this information in different formats. Some of them completed the questionnaire while others provided 'raw data' which I analysed afterwards to complete the questionnaire. They requested the information to be only used for the

purpose of this thesis, and this was guaranteed to them. In return to their contribution,

the four MBA directors were provided with the integrated information.

WARWICK INSTITUTE *for* EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH **IER**

Research Project on Argentinean MBA graduates' career transitions

I am Pamela Suzanne, PhD candidate at University of Warwick Institute for Employment Research. I am doing my thesis on Argentinean MBA graduates' career development, in particular on processes of career change.

Professionals many times undertake an MBA expecting to generate a change in their careers. Research shows that many MBA graduate actually make changes to positions higher in the hierarchy, to other firms, to other functional departments, to other industries, and to ventures. However, there is not much knowledge on the nature of these transitions. This research aims at obtaining a better understanding of the exploration, decision making and adaptation to a new job after doing an MBA in Argentina. The approach is qualitative, through interviews and personal diaries that aim at understanding the individual's perspective regarding this important transition moment. This study will make a significant contribution to the knowledge on Argentinean MBA graduates and will contribute to theory on career transitions, topic of special relevance in a context of constant change.

I would like to invite your university to be part of this study. Participation involves introducing me to recent graduates, when it is possible, providing me with contact details of graduates who are making changes in their careers, and facilitating information on the programme such as characteristics of the students and other relevant issues. The study is anonymous and strict confidentiality norms will be used. In appreciation of participation, both participants and universities will have early access to results. At the same time, participants will receive periodically news on

management/professional development on topics which might be of interest to each one of them.

I am available for further information through email or by telephone. My email address is _____ and my telephone number _____.

Thank you in advance for considering participating.

Sincerely,

Pamela Suzanne

APPENDIX 4: EMAIL SENT TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

Subject: MBAs' career development – Contact by [name of person at university]

Dear [potential participant's name],

My name is Pamela Suzanne. I am doing my PhD at University of Warwick on Argentinean MBA graduates' career development, in particular on processes of career change. The project incorporates graduates from the top universities in Argentina, and it would be important to include graduates from [university]. [Contact person], MBA Director, recommend some graduates, including you.

In a global context in which individuals have more mobility between professions and companies, the world is wondering how to facilitate the transition between professional roles. In Argentina, studies show that 50% of senior executives leave their jobs before two and a half years, emphasising the importance of fast and effective adjustment to the new position.

The project will try to describe the transition process individuals experience when they change jobs. For this purpose, **we are looking for MBA graduates who have recently changed jobs, including promotions, a functional change in the same or in another firm, a change of organisation, or the launch of a personal venture.** Considering that it is very difficult to find MBA graduates who are just going through the transition period, if between May and December 2010 you are changing jobs, your participation is extremely important.

The study will contribute to the development of MBA programmes, suggesting to Argentinean universities how to support their students in their future employments. It will also be useful for Argentinean firms in order to understand who MBA graduates

are, their aspirations, and how to best contribute to their performance in new jobs. In the case of those graduates who decide to become entrepreneurs or independent contractors, this study will be of great value to future colleagues who would like to follow the same steps.

On the other hand, it is necessary for us to build Argentinean research so that universities and companies can base their programmes and actions on our reality, and not on studies coming from abroad which many times do not reflect the local situation. **It is for these reasons that your participation is essential**.

The study is anonymous and strict confidentiality norms will be used. In appreciation of your participation, we will provide you periodically with news that could be of your interest and early access to the study's results.

If you would like to know more about the project to consider your participation,

please contact me through email or telephone.

Thank you very much.

Kind regards,

Pamela

Pamela A. Suzanne

PhD Candidate

Institute for Employment Research

University of Warwick

Email address: _____

Mobile phone: _____

APPENDIX 5: PARTICIPANTS' CHARACTERISTICS

Participant[11]	Gender	Age[12]	Type of transition	New job and sector[13]	Tenure[14]	Months since graduation[15]	Undergraduate degree
2	Male	29	Entered an MBA scheme, going from a public to a private organisation, and moving location	MBA scheme at private company. Manufacturing.	3	2	Law
4	Male	33	Promotion and permanent position in a company he had been working for 3 months	Product Manager. Manufacturing.	1	3	Marketing
5	Male	31	Industry and company	Sales executive. Information and communication.	5	3	Engineering
6	Female	33	Was self-employed and got a demoted job at a company	Marketing analyst. Financial and insurance activities.	1	16	Communication

[11] Participants were assigned numbers when the Project started. After months of referring to them in this way, it became natural and easy, and so they were kept for this thesis
[12] Age at First interview
[13] ISIC Rev. 4
[14] Months into the new role at beginning of the research process
[15] Months since MBA graduation when starting new job

			(demoted from the one before being self-employed)				
7	Female	31	Promotion at same company	Risk analysis and prevention Manager. Wholesale and retail trade.	5	1	Political science
8	Male	33	Became entrepreneur	Entrepreneur. Construction.	2	6	Architecture
9	Male	42	Lateral move in the same organisation	Manufacturing Supervisor. Manufacturing.	2	9	Engineering
10	Male	35	Lateral move to a project based role, moving country	Project Manager. Mining and quarrying.	1	12	Engineering
11	Female	29	Promotion in a new company	Demand & Business Planning Chief. Manufacturing.	3	9	Economics
12	Male	31	Lateral move to another department	Supply Chain Project Manager. Manufacturing.	2	9	Engineering
13	Male	36	Industry and company	Regional controlling Manager. Transportation and storage.	6	18	Accountant
14	Male	40	Promotion and company	Project Operations Manager.	10	13	Engineering

				Professional, scientific and technical activities.			
15	Female	33	Lateral move to another department	Content Digital Manager. Information and communication.	5	18	Accountant
16	Male	35	Became entrepreneur in new industry	CEO. Information and communication.	7	23	Engineer
17	Male	29	Lateral move and company	Capacity Leader. Information and communication.	5	6	Business administration
18	Female	28	Lateral move	Product Manager. Professional, scientific and technical activities.	3	12	Business administration
19	Male	32	Promotion in another department	Manufacturing Manager. Manufacturing.	2	4	Engineer
20	Male	38	Was self-employed and got a demoted job at a company (demoted from the one before being self-employed)	Sales Administration Manager. Wholesale and retail trade.	3	9	Accountant

21	Male	36	Expatriate in new company, demotion	Development Engineer. Construction.	7	4	Engineer
22	Male	37	Became independent/ entrepreneur	Investment consultant. Professional, scientific and technical activities.	3	20	Engineer
23	Male	40	Lateral move in the same company	Regional Services Manager. Manufacturing.	3	20	Engineer
24	Male	33	Started a new venture	CEO. Information and communication.	3	8	Information systems
25	Male	33	Changed company	Marketing Manager. Information and communication.	1	24	Business administration
26	Male	30	Promotion	Director International Trade Compliance. Professional, scientific and technical activities.	1	12	International trade compliance

APPENDIX 6: PILOT INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

a) Pilot interview Protocol 1

In the last time, we have seen that careers are more and more characterised by change. I am very interested in understanding how individuals, and particularly MBAs students and graduates experience transitions in their careers, including job transitions, study transitions, time off, maternity leave. It would be great if you could tell me about your experience of the transitions you've had in your career so far, including the present one.

Clarification (if needed) "How you explored options and decided among them. And once you made the transition, how was that experience…?"

<u>Prompts</u>

Exploration

When you **started the MBA**, what were your **career intentions**? Why did you want to do this?

Did it **change during the MBA**? Why?

What options were you considering after the MBA?

How did you explore them? How did you **decide** among the different options?

What **difficulties** did you experience in this **exploration phase**? What would have been **useful?**

Who was influential in your options and decisions? Are you very close to these people? **How did they influence you?**

Adjustment

Once you made the change, what things were different than **expected**?

What **difficulties** did you encounter when adjusting to the new job?

Which were the greatest **challenges**?

What helped you during the transition?

What **strategies** did you use to speed up adjustment?

Who assisted you during the adjustment phase? **How** did they help you? Consider people at work, at home, friends…

How did your **previous work experience and the MBA** helped or not/ influenced the transition?

Joint reflection:

- **Social networks** in exploration and adjustment: mentoring, peer effect, role models, casual conversations

- **Prior work experience** on exploration and adjustment (career imprints)

- **Work-life balance**

- **Critical incidents**

b) Pilot interview Protocol 2

In the last time, we have seen that careers are more and more characterised by change. I am very interested in understanding how individuals, and particularly Master students and graduates experience transitions in their careers. I am really interested in YOUR individual experience, and on your thoughts and reflections of this process.

Exploration

- **Options**

During the Master, what possibilities came to mind regarding future career options?

(I make a list for myself, and then prompt about each naturally)

- **Activities**

What did you need to know before you could make the change or transition? How did you go about finding out?

What activities did you undertake to explore each further?

Did you try them out in any way?

How did those experiences feel? Did they increase or reduced your desire to follow that path? What things did you discovered that you liked and that you didn't like?

- **Social networks**

Did you talk to people (who)? What things did they said that were relevant to your decision?

- **More options**

After the Master, did you think of any other options? Can you remember when you first considered them?

- **Career support (social networks)**

With whom did you discuss your career future during the Master and after?

If no-one in particular, make questions for partner, parents, co-workers, boss, professors, Master colleagues.

Do you remember conversations with these people? Can you remember something specific each one told you? If you had to summarise each person's opinion on your career, how would you that?

Did they provide you with any specific job opportunities, directly or by referring you to someone else?

For how long have you known this person? Do you know many people in common?

- **Career support (Master)**

What did your Master colleagues and friends do after the Master? Did you use to discuss with them which companies were good to work at, what factors were important for your next job? Did you tend to agree on those things?

How has the Master affected the way you think about your career?

Did the university provide you any support for exploring these options? Would you have liked any other support from the university?

Choice

When was the first time you considered your current type of job? Or was it something you've always wanted? How did you decide to take your current job? How did it appear?

What factor did you consider when making the decision?

What was it that enabled you to feel that you were moving in the right direction?

Why did you decide not to do Y, Z and W?

What were you hoping for in the future or as an outcome of this change or transition?

- **Type of decision maker**

How have you made decisions about your career?

(Consider

- Planned or unplanned?

- If unplanned, how do they tend to operate? (E.g. do they tend to take opportunities as they present themselves – or is their process more chaotic?)

- Are decisions based on practical, logical considerations or reflections?

- Do they tend to follow their head or their heart?

- Do they feel that they have been able to exercise choice over their career decisions, or do they feel constrained by the circumstances in which they find themselves?)

- **Wok-life balance**

Who else did you need to consider in this change and transition process?

Did your family affect the decision in any way?

- **Other decisions**

Do you consider this a significant change in your career? Or can you think about other changes you've done that were more significant?

Adjustment

- **Challenges**

What are/were the main challenges of adjusting to your new job?

- **Proactivity**

Can you think of actions you've taken to tackle these?

- **Past experience**

Was it there anything you learnt previously that helped you during this process?

How is the new job different from previous ones you've had? What new things do you have to learn? Do you feel comfortable in the new job?

Tell me a bit about what you see as your strengths and weaknesses for this new job. In what ways would your boss say you need to develop? What are you doing to work on your weaknesses?

- **Support / role models**

Can you think of anyone who helped you during this process? Can you remember of a time when they did something that assisted you?

Which people have played a significant role in your professional development? Who has been most helpful to you in "learning the ropes"? Is there anyone at work or elsewhere who is a role-model? Why is this? Or a negative role-model, someone you clearly don't want to be like? How is your relationship with this person? Do you talk often? Do you talk also about issues not related to work?

- **Role innovation**

Do you know who was the previous person doing your job? Do you know if you perform the job differently from him/her? In what aspects? Why do you like to do things differently? Why is it hard or easy to do things your own way?

- **Work-life balance**

Is your new work affecting your personal or family life in any way? How? How are you dealing with this?

Reflections on the transition process

What patterns can you see in how you coped with/managed your previous work and learning changes and transitions?

What strategies or approaches would you use in a future change or transition?

What strategies of approaches would you recommend to another person experiencing a work and learning change or transition?

Reflections on the career

How would you summarise your career so far, your present job and your future aspirations?

Are you clear about who you are and who you want to be professionally?

On what does it depend that you get there?

Is there anything you would like to try in your career? Prompts: why don't you do it?

What would be the conditions that would let you do it?

What are your goals as you move forward?

Do you consider your career successful until now?

APPENDIX 7: FIRST INTERVIEW PROTOCOL[16]

In this interview we are going to be exploring your career story so far, your aspirations for the future, and your new job. Many of the questions are reflexive, relating to things we don't usually think about, so be aware that I expect you to take some time before answering them.

1) Explain research project and its relevance

2) Career history: Chapters exercise

"If you wanted to write an autobiography, what would be the chapter titles, starting from you where 18 years old? Try to avoid titles that could be used for anyone like "university", "employment", but titles that really reflect or sum up a particular period of your life. Feel free to be creative and we can think of it together."[17]

The interviewer writes the chapters' titles on a big paper stuck on the wall[18]. After having identified all chapters, the researcher sits with the participant and, looking both at the paper, start exploring each chapter.

3) Exploration of chapters:

   a. Explore chapters considering:

- Timeframe, e.g.: from 1992 to 1995

- Competencies learnt in role

- Comparisons of the current job: similar or different from the previous one?

---

[16] This protocol is more appropriate for participants changing organisation. It was adapted for other types of transitions.

[17] While identifying chapters, encourage the individual to tell the story but not necessarily encourage reflection. If the participant reflects to justify the titles probe further, but do not explore other issues. The idea is let them tell the story first at will.

[18] Having the researcher and not the participant write down the agreed titles ensures that the titles get written down. During pilots, when giving the pen to participants, some of them failed to write down and just talked about it, making reflection harder afterwards. Having the paper very visible allows for exploration of each chapter, with participants focusing more on the question. During pilots, it was identified that when things were written and visible it was easier to reflect on them.

- Relationships: Can you think of people who were significant? Significant in the sense that they supported you, said something or offered an opportunity that was important for your career success or transitions to the next chapter.

b. Explore transition points between chapters: reasons, influences, adjustment (things you did that worked out in becoming efficient in the job).

c. What was the job event during your career that led to most satisfaction? Another one?

d. Explore the MBA experience: Why did you decide to do the MBA? What effects, if any, did it have on your career?

- Relationships
  - Have others in the MBA also changed jobs? Do you know why?
  - Did you discuss with them your current job opportunity? What did they say?

- Cognitive flexibility
  - Have you changed the way you think about your career following your MBA?

e. Attitudes

- What do you consider are the most important skills/ competencies of a good manager?

4) Exploration of current chapter

a. So, your current chapter is "X", can you tell me more about it?

b. Why did you choose this job? What did you expect from it? Were you considering other options? Why do you think the company offered you this job?

c. Did people around you expect you to take a job like this one? (friends, family, MBA colleagues)

d. Do you have a partner? Did the decision to take this job affect her/him in any way?

e. What are your responsibilities? What are your main tasks?

f. I am interested in what you do on a day-to-day basis. Could you talk me through what you did yesterday? Was it typical?

5) Adjusting

a. What have you done that has been very beneficial for your adjustment to the new job?

b. What are your strengths that are allowing you to get to grips with this job? (How did you acquire them?)[19]

The researcher will write on the paper on the wall a column with all the "good" things. If "not so good things" appear, she will write them in another column (no headlines for columns). She will encourage participants to name as many good things as they can think of and explore them, once they are have finished, she will probe for "the not so good ones"[20].

c. Did the organisation offer you an induction or mentoring programme? How was it? How has it been your experience of it?

---

[19] Several authors emphasise the importance of positive interviews. This allows the participant to feel confident and talk about his experience, and when reflecting about the "good things", they may recognise "Well, actually this was not so perfect…".

[20] If the researcher probes about the "not so good ones" before, she will lose the possibility of having more of them appearing, because by talking about bad things, the participant will feel he or she does not want to explore this any further and will finalise by saying "I can't think of any other".

d. Every organisation has certain expectations of their managers/employees that aren't written on paper. I refer to these as the informal "organisational norms".

- What did "good leadership/employee" look like in the organisation you just left? What types of leadership/work behaviours were rewarded? What kind of behaviour could get you into trouble? How were employees expected to relate to their managers?

- How does the new work culture compare with the work culture that you've just described to me?

- Could you give me a few characteristic qualities of what you would consider a good manager in this company?

- How do you compare yourself to those qualities?

- Are there any things that are better done at this organisation than the previous one? And the other way around?

e. What adjustments, if any, do you think you might have to make to your leadership/work style to succeed here?

f. What feedback are you getting from your boss, peers, and work team about how you are adapting to this new work setting?

g. What could the organisation do to contribute to your adjustment to this new job?

h. Do you think that having undertaken the MBA gives you an advantage in performing this job? Can you give me an example?

i. What aspects of this new job are still a little unknown to you?

  j. If you had to summarise how you feel at work with a couple of words, which ones would you choose?[21]

  k. Has the job lived up to your expectations so far?

6) Social relations exercise (to be completed in the diary)

7) Future chapters

  a. Have you ever considered becoming some of the following?[22]

  b. Can you identify someone you would like to be similar to in the future? What do you admire/like about that person?

  c. So, what would you like the title of your next career chapter to be?

Closure: Career story summary

- To what extent do you consider yourself to have "planned" your career?

- So, how would you summarise your career so far, where you are and where you are going?
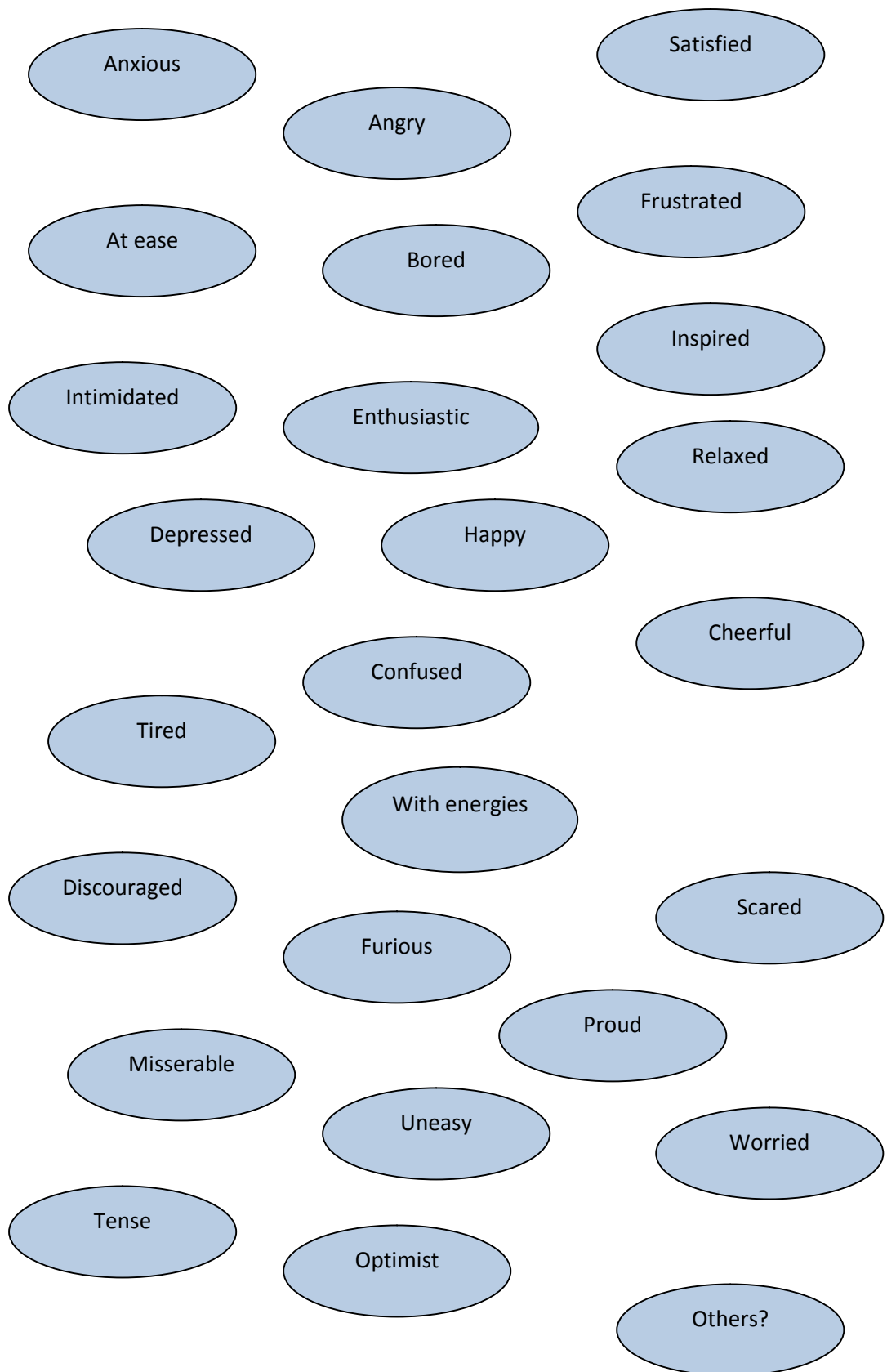
Explain how to complete the diary.

Ask for consent to call regularly to see how things are going.

Suggest: "usually, when people change jobs, there are lot of things going on and we want to talk about them. We usually turn to our friends and family. I would like to offer you to be an "ear" every now and then through this process. You can directly call me and just talk. It would be great for the research and it could be good for you to give people around a rest!

---

[21] The interviewer will have a list on paper with options (see Exercise 1).

[22] The interviewer shows Exercise 2. The aim of this question is to explore possible selves. The participant is asked to tick the possible selves and comment on them. Possible probes: How probable is it for you to become it? How much would like it to be true for you? Do you know anyone in that situation? What do you like about it?

Exercise 1

Anxious
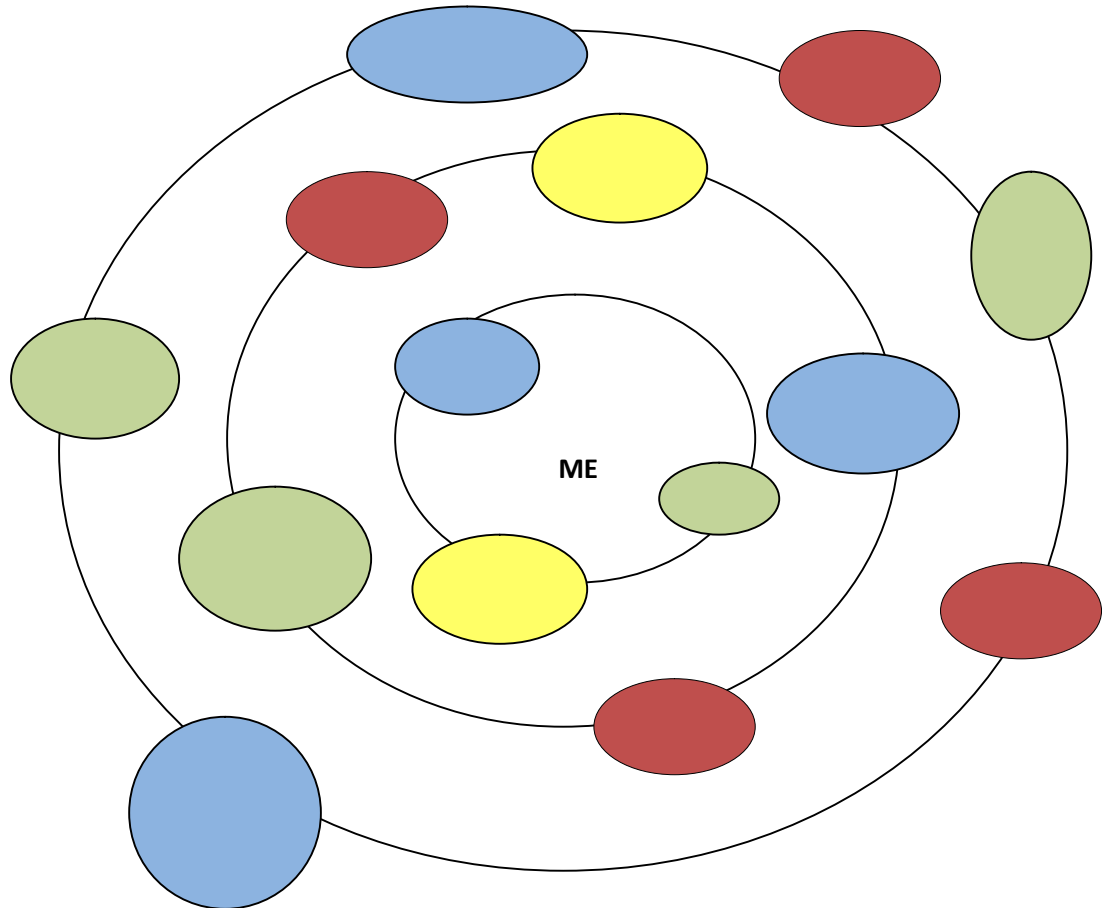
Satisfied

Angry

Frustrated

At ease

Bored

Inspired

Intimidated

Enthusiastic

Relaxed

Depressed

Happy

Cheerful

Confused

Tired

With energies

Discouraged

Scared

Furious

Proud

Misserable

Uneasy

Worried

Tense

Optimist

Others?

Exercise 2

CEO

Entrepreneur

Employee /manager at a NGO

Director in the area of my current expertise

Professor

Middle manager

Upper Manager

Artist

Independent consultant

Expatriate

Governement official

Business owner

Other

Manager in another functional area than my own
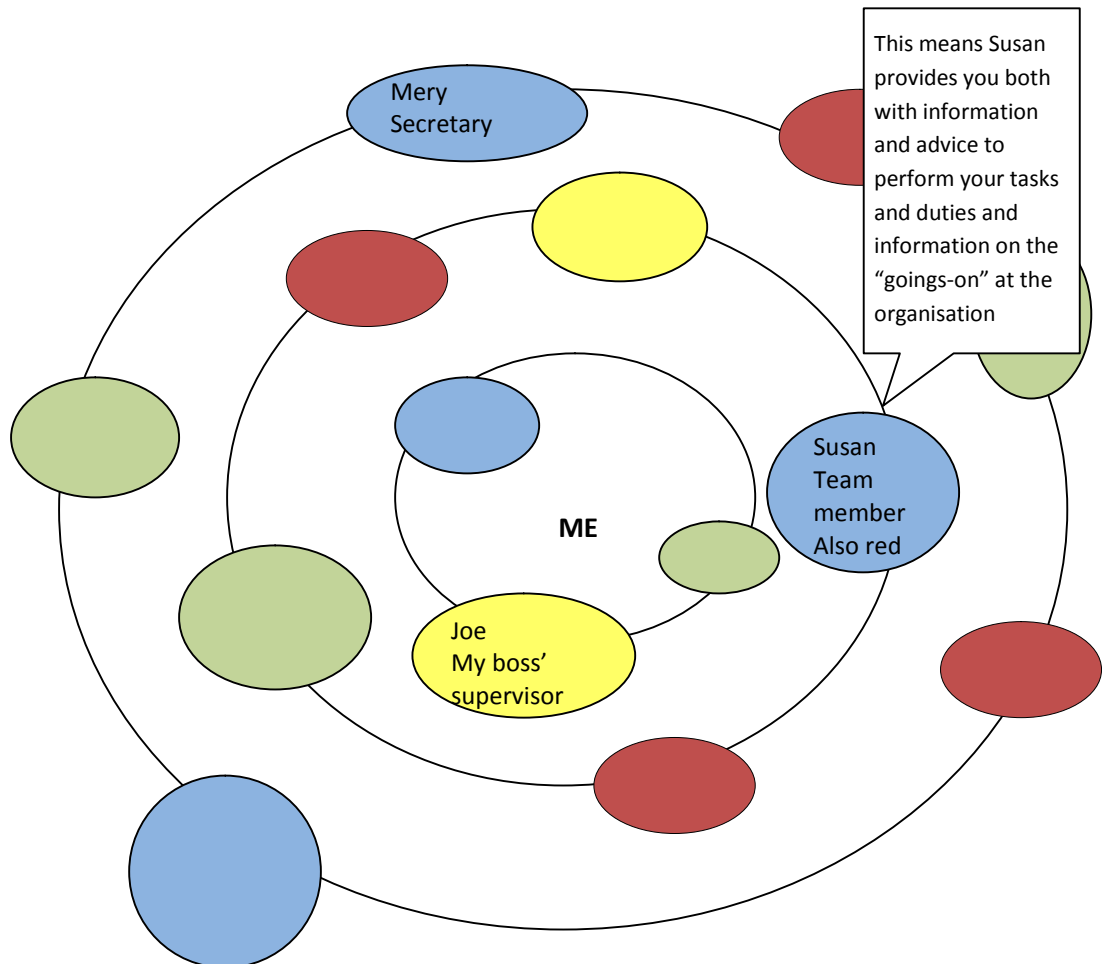
My relations at work

First completion (during interview or in a close date) - Date:

Instructions:

- This graph is for you to represent your social relations at your new work place.
- Please write their names and position in the company in relation to you (e.g.: my supervisor, my team member, secretary at another department).
- The blue circles represent work-related contacts who provide you with information and advice to perform your tasks and duties.
- The red circles represent work-related contacts who provide you with information on the "goings-on" at the organisation – people who give you special insights into the goals and strategies of important individuals, divisions, or perhaps even the firm as a whole.

- The green circles represent work-related contacts who provide social support in terms of friendship and support in the face of anxiety and uncertainty.
- The yellow circles represent any individuals you regard as a mentor – that is, someone who has taken a strong interest in your professional development by providing you with opportunities and/or access to facilitate your career advancement.
- There may be individuals who you would recognise in more than one role. Please indicate this by writing their names in one of the circles (any colour) and writing below the other colour they would also fit in (see a completed example below). The inner circles represent people with whom the relation is more intense (e.g. you talk more frequently), while the outer circles represent more distant relations.
- Feel free to add circles of any colour.
- You will be asked to complete this diagram once a month during the next three months. This will allow us to see how your relationships change as time in the new job goes by. Understanding and being able to identify social relations has been proven to be a very valuable to success in the workplace. When you complete the diagram you will also have a section for comments, in case you want to reflect on why or how your relationships have changed, or introduce us to the new characters.

APPENDIX 9: STRUCTURE OF HARD-COPY DIARY

Work transition diary

Instructions:

- This hard-copy diary complements the online version of your transition diary. It was created for those times you may be on the way, on a journey (e.g. on a bus or a train), or away from a computer, and would like to use that moment to write on your transition diary.

- You will notice that this version of the diary provides free space for you to write about your transition experience. Feel free to write on whatever topic has caught your attention or thinking during these last days. Some ideas include:

    o Have you met new people? Who are they? How is your relationship with them? How is the relationship with your teamwork developing?

    o Have you learnt new things? Which? How is the way you perform at work changing?

    o Have you made innovations at work to change how things used to be done? Examples? How did you manage to introduce the changes?

    o Have you had important events or conversations? What have you learnt through them?

    o How is your knowledge on the organisation, its culture, unwritten rules, and key players changing?

    o Are you happy with your job?

    o What are your career aspirations?

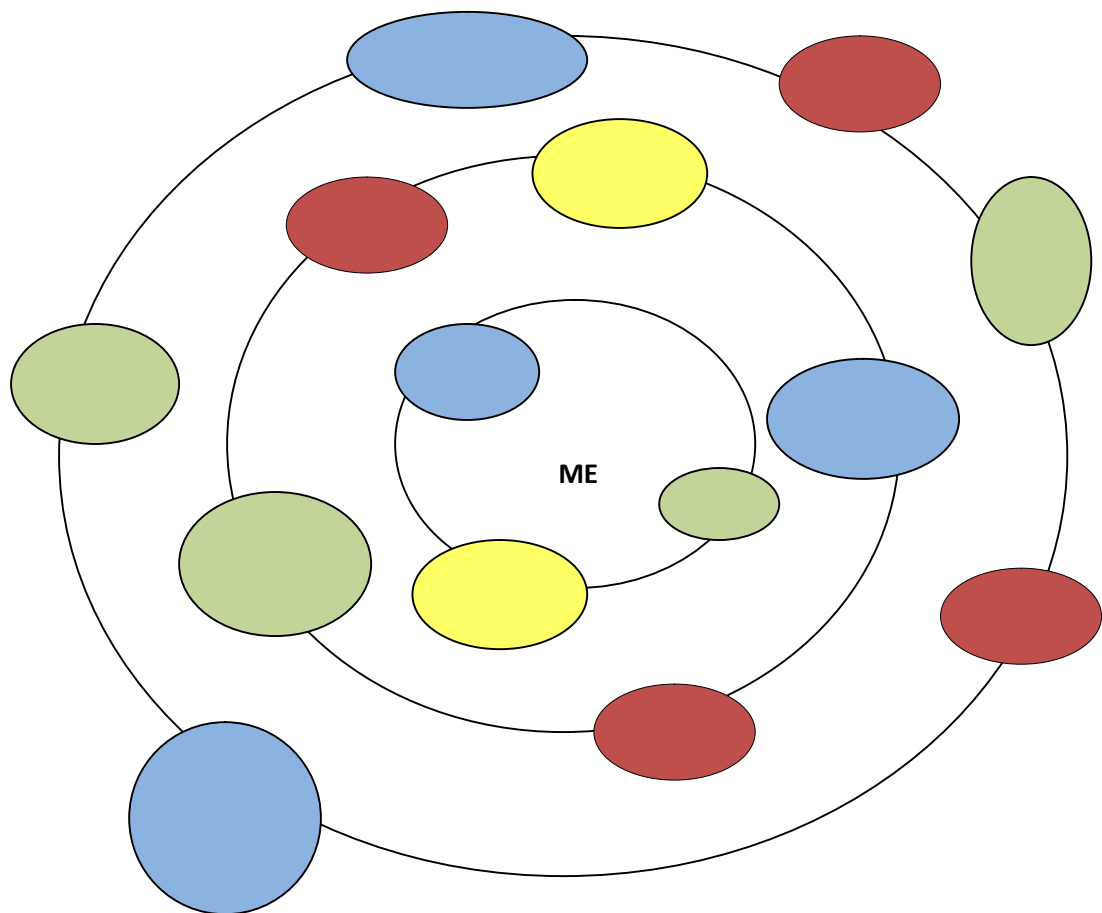   o Your reflections about how all the above change over time.

Please do not forget to write the date of each one of your entries!

Thank you very much for participating in this project. I know writing a diary can be time consuming but I am sure it will allow you to reflect and learn from this important experience in your work life. It is crucial that you write at least once a week either on your electronic or hard/copy diary for the research project to be successful.

If you have any comments or questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at _____@warwick.ac.uk or by phone at _____.
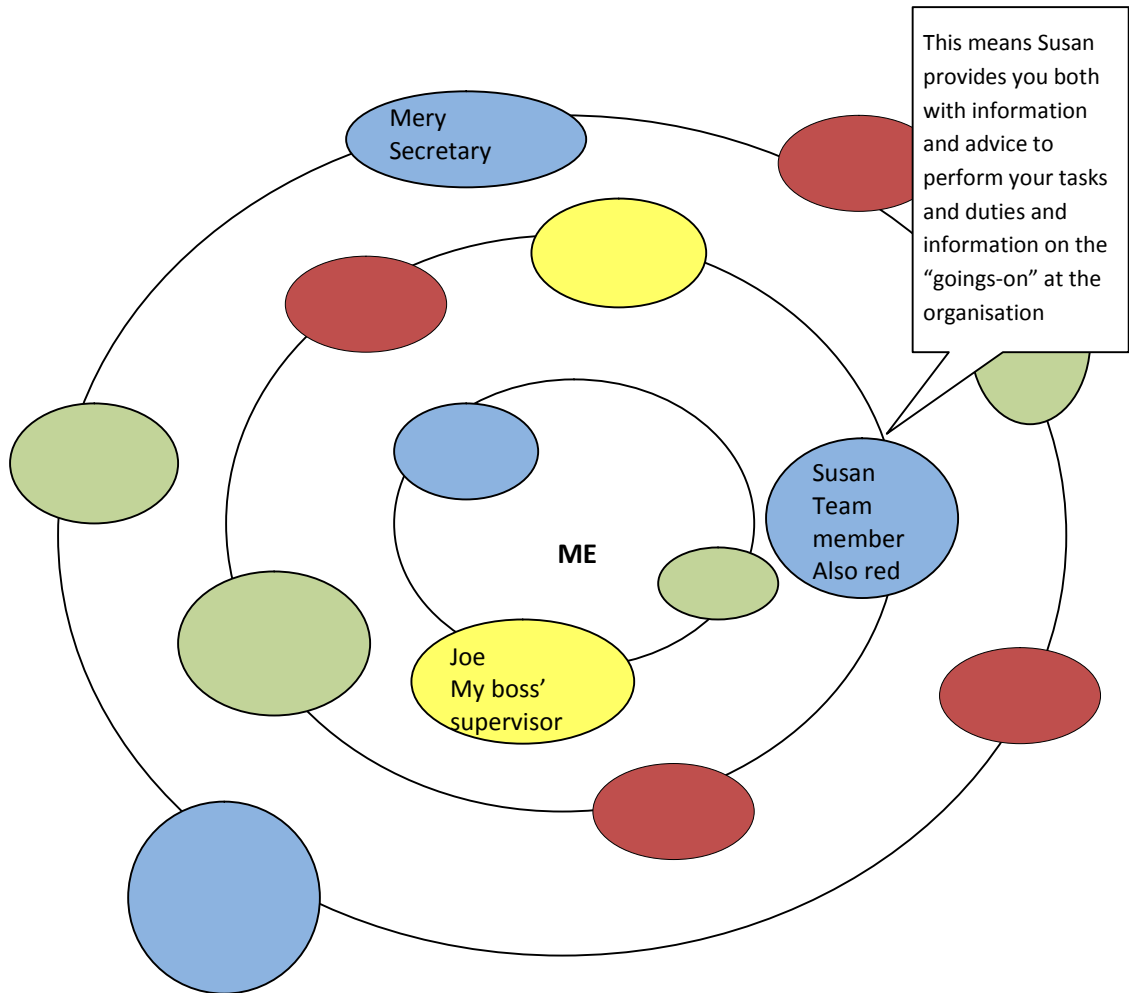
My relations at work

First completion (during interview) - Date:

Instructions:

- This graph is for you to represent your social relations at your new work place.
- Please write their names and position in the company in relation to you (e.g.: my supervisor, my team member, secretary at another department).
- The blue circles represent work-related contacts who provide you with information and advice to perform your tasks and duties.
- The red circles represent work-related contacts who provide you with information on the "goings-on" at the organisation – people who give you special insights into the goals and strategies of important individuals, divisions, or perhaps even the firm as a whole.
- The green circles represent work-related contacts who provide social support in terms of friendship and support in the face of anxiety and uncertainty.

- The yellow circles represent any individuals you regard as a mentor – that is, someone who has taken a strong interest in your professional development by providing you with opportunities and/or access to facilitate your career advancement.
- There may be individuals who you would recognise in more than one role. Please indicate this by writing their names in one of the circles (any colour) and writing below the other colour they would also fit in (see a completed example below). The inner circles represent people with whom the relation is more intense (e.g. you talk more frequently), while the outer circles represent more distant relations.
- Feel free to add circles of any colour.
- You will be asked to complete this diagram once a month during the next three months. This will allow us to see how your relationships change as time in the new job goes by. Understanding and being able to identify social relations has been proven to be a very valuable to success in the workplace. When you complete the diagram you will also have a section for comments, in case you want to reflect on why or how your relationships have changed, or introduce us to the new characters.

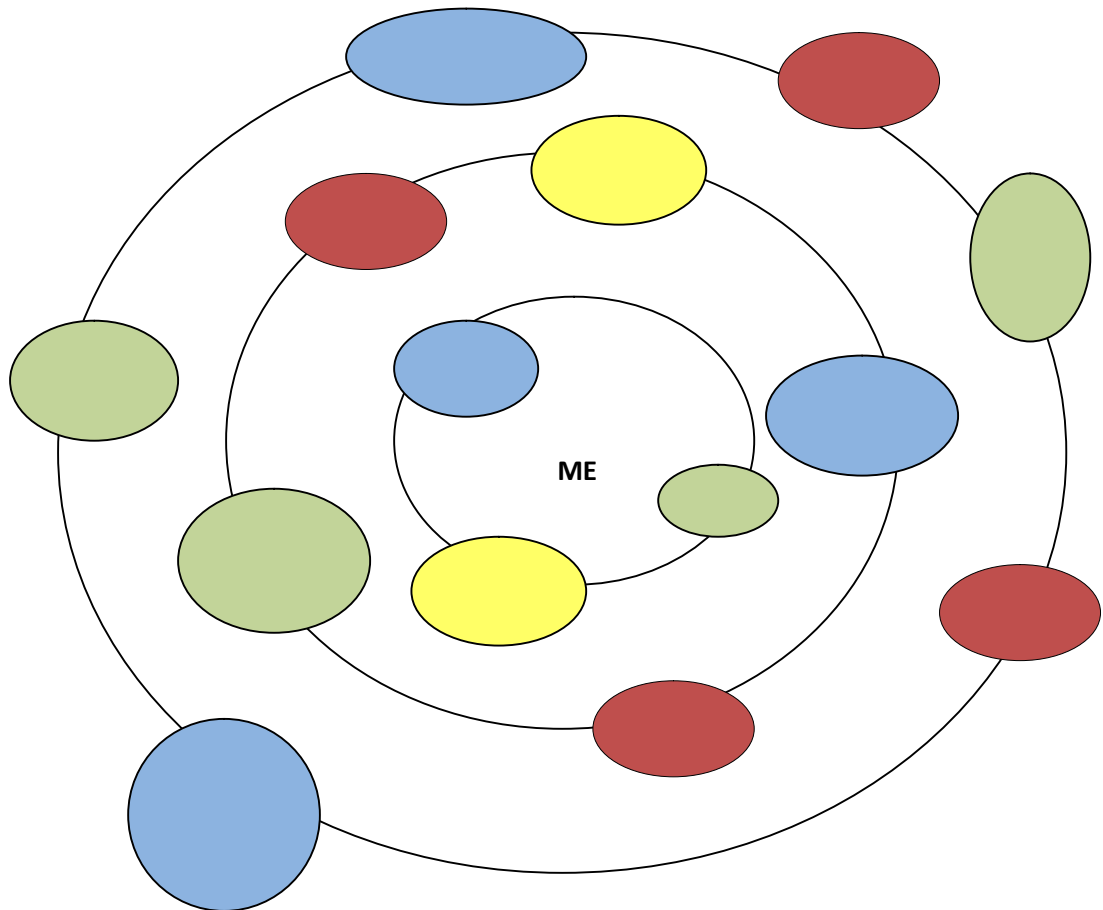# My relations at work

Second completion (one month after the interview)

Suggested completion date:
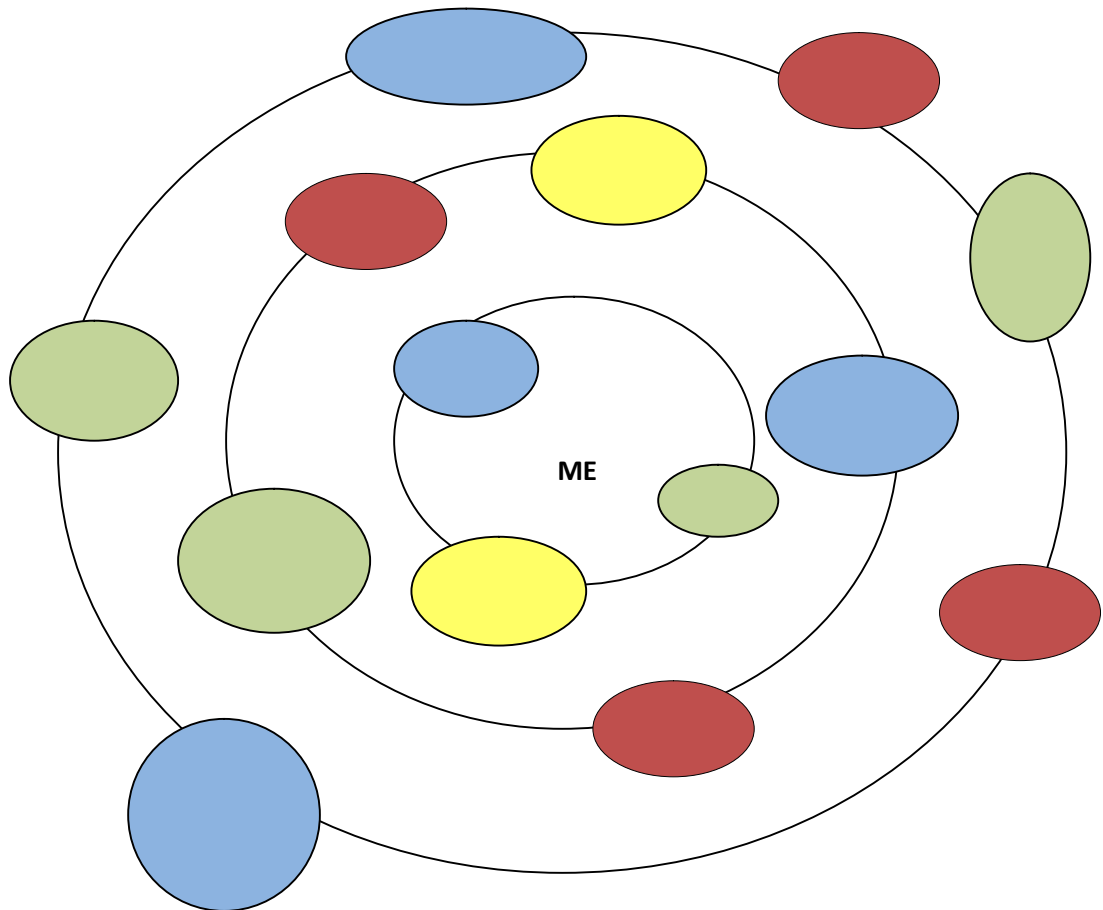
Actual completion date:

ME

Comments:
_____
_____
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My relations at work

Third completion (one month after the interview)

Suggested completion date:

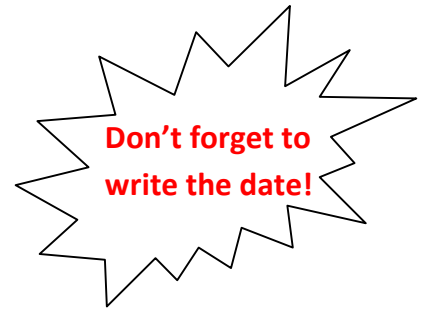Actual completion date:

ME

Comments:

These days work has been…

Don't forget to write the date!

Example of a diary section

Wednesday 14/04/2010

I went to a meeting with the people from 'purchasing'. Actually, my manager had to attend this meeting but his agenda got complicated and so he sent me; he said it would useful to start getting into topics. I didn't understand much what they were talking about. It seems there's a project that has been around for a couple of months. I don't know really what it is about, it has to do with 'purchasing' and with us, and it seems to be something innovative that will produce much profitability. I would like to talk it over with someone before preparing the meeting summary, but John is note here today. Mary is, but I still don't have much trust with her. There are some times when she appears to be nice, but then she makes comments that leave me speechless. I'd better wait to talk it over with

John. Some days ago I had questions about a similar issue and he really helped me.

Friday 16/04/2010

Today I feel with lots of energies. The job is definitely good; it was an excellent decision to take this position. I am learning a lot and it is a job with a lot of visibility. Today I had a talk with one of the VPs. I ran into her in the elevator and she asked me who I was and what I was doing. Really nice. She said she was very interested in my project and that once I do some progress I should let her know so that she invites me to present at the VPs' meeting.

Thursday 22/04/2010

There are times when it is kind of frustrating. I can't get the people who work for me to commit. I just don't get them. You explain things to them once, twice, thrice... but enough! You obviously expect that they would be able to do it on their own, but no, every time they have a small drawback they are down at my desk. And it seems they don't mind coming to ask me. I would be embarrassed. Actually, the other day I was unsure about the procedures to contact a provider. And I have excuses because I am

relatively new. But anyway, I think I shouldn't go and ask Rob (my boss). I don't know, but you try to impress your boss. Although once I heard that good questions also can make a good impression. But the questions these people are making to me are definitely not good. I need to re-think whether I am doing anything wrong as a supervisor. I never had people depending on me before and it is quite a challenge. During the MBA we studied thousands of things on this. I am going to have a look at my folders and see if I find anything I can apply here.

These days work has been…

Don't forget to write the date!

Diary

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APPENDIX 10: ELECTRONIC DIARY HOME PAGE

WARWICK

Text only | Notify | Edit | Sign out

IER More...

Search IER

Warwick Institute for Employment Research

Staff | Publications | Research | Knowledge Sharing | Software packages | Advanced study | Quality Management

PhD students » Pamela Suzanne » Example 🗎 » Files 🗎

Work transition Diary

Welcome to you work transition Diary!

Thank you very much for participating in this research project. Your contribution is extremely important to learn about the professional development of Argentinean MBAs, and specially, about the role changes they make

Instructions:

- It is very important that you write in the diary at least once a week.
- Below you will find different questions and phrases to complete.
- The first one invites you to write freely on this week's work experience.
- The following ones propose different topics you could consider. Although you can include comments on these topics in the general phrase, the aim is to provide you with triggers to reflect on your transition experience.
- To write, click on one of them and then on "Reply".
- On the "Files" tab, you will be able to read articles we hope you find useful. We will be periodically including new articles.
- You can contact me anytime at _____@warwick.ac.uk

THREAD	REPLIES	AUTHOR	LATEST
These last days at work have been...	2	Pamela Suzanne	00:18 12 Aug
In relation to my work, today I feel...	1	Pamela Suzanne	00:17 12 Aug
Have you had any interesting / revealing conversation these days?	0	Pamela Suzanne	00:15 12 Aug
How do you think this job is being useful for your future career?	0	Pamela Suzanne	00:14 12 Aug
Was it there any particular work event that called your attention?	0	Pamela Suzanne	00:13 12 Aug
Did you have any particular achievements this week?	0	Pamela Suzanne	00:12 12 Aug
Have you made changes compared to how things used to get done?	0	Pamela Suzanne	00:11 12 Aug

Pages: **1**

WARWICK IER

Contact us
Warwick Institute for Employment Research
University of Warwick Coventry CV4 7AL
Tel: +44(0)2476 523284 ier@warwick.ac.uk
Page contact: Pamela Suzanne

🔒 Staff Intranet
Sitemap

in

Last revised: Sun 12 Aug 2012

Signed in as Pamela Suzanne (ieriac) Sign out | Powered by Sitebuilder | © MMXII | Privacy | Cookies | Accessibility

APPENDIX 11: EMAIL SENT TO PARTICIPANTS AFTER THE FIRST

INTERVIEW

Hi [participant's name],

It was a pleasure meeting you today! You should have just received the emails with the questions to be able to write in the diary by replying to those emails. Every time you would like to write in the diary via email, you have to answer one of the emails you have just received. Please, the first time you do this, check that what you wrote in the email actually gets to the website, just in case.

The diary's website is: www.warwick.ac.uk/go/diario10

The user name is:

The password is: (I suggest you change it the first time you log in to increase security)

As I was telling you, there is a section called "Interesting files" to which I will frequently upload articles and news that may interest you. If there is any topic in particular you would like to read about, please let me know so that I can upload articles related to that.

I am attaching a power point file for you to complete the relationships diagram there the next two times, in case you prefer this format to paper. In a month I will be sending you a reminder.

Thank you very much for participating!

Kind regards,

Pamela

APPENDIX 12: ANALYSIS OF EMAIL EFFECT ON DIARY WRITING

The incidence on the writing frequency of the email sent to participants informing of the upload of a new file to their electronic diaries is evaluated. It was considered that the email had an effect if the participant wrote the day of the reception of the email or in the following two days. For each participant the proportion of times that this happened was computed. If there was no effect, the probability of writing after receiving the email and in any three-day-period should be the same for each participant. This was evaluated for the 18 participants who wrote on their diaries at some point.

Email	Proportion of times that the email had effect (pe)	Proportion of times that the participant wrote in a three-day period (pc)
P2	0.40	0.15
P4	0.50	0.10
P5	0.00	0.09
P6	0.14	0.08
P7	0.50	0.22
P8	0.13	0.06
P9	0.13	0.14
P10	0.00	0.08
P11	0.50	0.17
P14	0.00	0.08
P16	0.29	0.14
P18	0.75	0.11
P20	0.20	0.20
P21	0.25	0.10
P22	1.00	0.41
P23	0.67	0.07
P25	0.50	0.03
P26	0.00	0.05

pe: Proportion of times that the email had effect.

pc: Proportion of times that the participant wrote in any three-day period.

Hence, under the null hypothesis, it is assumed that the distributions of pe and pc are the same, and the alternative hypothesis implied that the reception of the email had a positive effect on the writing activity.

H0: pe=pc   vs   Ha: pe>pc

A two-paired samples t-test was performed, and the corresponding p-value is 0.015, hence the conclusion is that the reception of the email had a positive effect on diary writing. The 95% confidence region corresponding to this test, suggests that the maximum significant difference in the proportion of pe and pc is 10%, indicating that the email increased the probability of writing in the diary by 10%.

APPENDIX 13: DIARY WRITING TREND ANALYSIS

It was analysed whether participants wrote more on the first half of the study (from day 1 to day 45) than on the second part of study (from day 46 to day 90). A two paired samples t test was performed, the null hypothesis was that the mean number of times that each participant wrote is the same for both periods and the alternative hypothesis is that participants wrote more times at the beginning of the experiment. The p-value is 0.14 meaning that there is not enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis. Hence, there is no evidence of more writing activity at the beginning of the experiment.

It was also tested whether there was a difference between the number of words that participants wrote during the study in the two identified periods. The same procedure was applied as in the previous case. The number of words written on the first half of the writing period was compared to the number of words written on the second half. The corresponding p-value is 0.51, which means that there are no significant differences on the number of words written by participants over time.

APPENDIX 14: EXAMPLE OF FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Returning to the diary and our previous meeting…

What methodology did you use to define the product strategy and the budget?

You were saying that at the training you had after the international congress you could study others' attitudes and gestures, what did you observe?

How are the weekly meetings going? How are they contributing to you?

You were saying that one of your challenges was to find natural leaders who would help you in implementing your strategy, what are you doing to achieve this? And to get more involved with the sales force?

Why were you saying that your boss was worried about the team's motivation? What does she do about it? Does it work?

In relation to the end of year lunch, you were saying that you felt quite integrated, what makes you feel this way?

You were writing about the prize you received and not knowing if these were frequent and how others would take it; are they frequent? Did you have any reactions to it?

What did you do on the first week of January when you had to consult a client about the promotional material and the one you knew was on holidays? How do you feel now about visiting clients?

How did you learn that you have to get suggestions from the sales force regarding the events in which to participate and that they need to check the promotional material?

You were saying that you talked with Andrés and he advised you on how to approach the leaders, what advice did he give you? Were these useful? How did you feel in the first meeting you had? And in the rest? And with that client who was interested in your previous work?

You were saying that in order to make an effective strategy you still needed to know more about the business and the clients, what did you do about it?

How did you prepare your presentation for the sales force? Who did you ask advice from?

How does your boss show you that she trusts you? How do you think you won over her trust?

You were talking about visibility in the region, how do you feel about it? Are you doing anything to increase your visibility?

How is your relationships with you functional boss form the USA? Do you ask him for help on anything?

How is your involvement with the launch of the new product developing?

You were saying that probably you were not as permeable as in June but you needed to increase your listening capacity, how did it go with the sales manager?

What did you learn from the teleconference with the Peru's product manager? Was there anything useful for your market?

How did you manage to find an international speaker for the event without much time? What did you do to achieve it?

Did you have any reactions from that time when you corrected someone in front of the sales force?

After the meeting in Pinamar you were saying that you thought you were still lacking lots of things for this role, why?

Why do you say this thing that you cannot trust anyone? Who was it that told you that everyone does their own game and take water to their mill?

You were saying that you had to discuss your goals with your boss and that you expected a clearer idea of the aspirations she had on you, or at least quantifiable ones, why did you say this?

You were saying that you were struggling through this moment because you are very demanding on yourself, is this still going on?

How do you feel with the knowledge you have of the product?

Do you still feel 'new'?

Relationships

Ask about the hierarchy of each one.

Did you know María from before or the relationship formed in this role? How did it develop? And about Florencia?

Mercedes became strategic, why? How often do you talk to her? Had you chosen her as a mentor?

You are including Florencia as a friend, how did this friendship develop?

You are identifying Natalia as friend and mentor, how did the friendship develop? Were there key moments?

You incorporated Maximiliano, Juan and Patricio, why are some of them red and others blue?

Are you happy about your relationships? Is there anything you would like to be different?

Feelings

Do the exercise.

Learning

It seems you are learning a lot… like in this role the skills needed are quite different from the ones you brought, how are you managing?

What is the most interesting or important thing you have learnt in these months?

How are you using the skills and knowledge acquired throughout your career? And throughout the MBA? Which one do you think was the most useful learning form the MBA? Would you recommend a friend to study an MBA?

What could have the MBA provided you that would be useful for this job?

Do you think you need training to develop your job and your career as you would like?

Outcomes

How adapted do you feel to this job?

If you left this job, would your partner/friends/family be surprised?

Are you looking for a job now?

To this moment, has this job met your expectations?

Do you feel identified with the company? With your work team? With your role?

How would you feel if you had to leave this job?

Would you recommend your job to a close friend?

Do you have to stay working late sometimes or on weekends? How do you feel about it? Why do you do it?

Are you proud to tell people about your work?

Career development

Do you think this was a big transition in your career?

In a scale from 1 to 10, how happy are you with this transition?

Do you like this role? Do you feel comfortable? Would you like to keep working in a role like this one?

How do you define yourself professionally?

How would you summarise your career so far, where you are and where you are going?

What are your plans for the future? Would you like to stay here?

Learning from changes and transitions

What patterns can you observe in the way you have handled your leaning and work transitions?

What strategies or approaches would you use in future changes?

What strategies would you recommend to someone going through a work or learning transition?

Feedback on methods

How did you feel about writing in the diary?

I know you have thousands of things to do during the day, how did you find time and energy to write?

How did you remember to write?

How did you decide what to write about?

Future research

Would you be willing to participate in an interview in the future?

APPENDIX 15: PARTICIPANTS' COMPLETION OF DATA COLLECTION

TECHNIQUES

Participant	First interview	Diary words written	Times Relationships Diagram was completed	Follow up interview
2	YES	3,102	2	YES
4	YES	3,457	3	YES
5	YES	1,379	3	YES
6	YES	1,330	2	YES
7	YES	2,821	3	YES
8	YES	1,203	1	YES
9	YES	2,881	3	YES
10	YES	1,520	2	YES
11	YES	2,498	3	YES
12	YES	0	1	YES
13	YES	Mid-interview undertaken	3	YES
14	YES	1,591	2	YES
15	YES	0	1	YES
16	YES	2,204	3	YES
17	YES	0	2	YES
18	YES	3,432	3	YES
19	YES	0	0	NO
20	YES	2,421	3	YES
21	YES	1,678	3	YES
22	YES	3,141	3	YES
23	YES	685	3	YES
24	YES	0	2	YES
25	YES	356	1	NO
26	YES	1,611	3	YES
Total	24	37,310[23]	2.29	22

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[23] The words include the responses to the emails asking about feelings. The average amount of words of only those who wrote is 2,072.

APPENDIX 16: THE WARWICK INSTITUTE FOR EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH

ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR RESEARCH PROCEDURE

Institute for Employment Research

Ethical Approval for Research

Doctoral Student Guidance

All research undertaken by the students and staff within the Institute for Employment Research must conform to the University's ethical guidelines (see Links section below). This guidance note outlines the procedure to be followed by doctoral students in IER.

All doctoral students receive training in research ethics as part of their research methods training. All research has an ethical dimension, and students are expected to have read and understood the University's ethical guidelines (see Links section below) prior to undertaking research. Ethical approval for research should be sought early in the MPhil stage of doctoral student's registration, and certainly before the student conducts any fieldwork.

Before undertaking research, doctoral students are required to complete an Application for Ethical Approval form. Completion of the form provides an opportunity for the student to discuss ethical issues with their supervisor and is intended as a learning exercise as much as an administrative process to ensure compliance with the University's ethical guidelines.

The student should complete the form, which they should then sign and pass to their supervisor for countersignature. The signed form should then be returned in hard copy to the IER Administrator (Room C0.10).

The completed form will be reviewed by the IER's Director of Graduate Studies and a decision made on whether to give ethical approval for the proposed research, approve subject to minor amendments, or decline. The decision will be communicated to the student by email with a copy to the student's supervisor. If the form requires

amendment before approval, it will be returned to the student so that changes can be made prior to resubmission.

The form will be retained in the doctoral student's departmental file.

Links

Further guidance and support is available from the University's website:

http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/services/ethics/statement/guidance

http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/services/ethics/governance/codeofconduct/ethics_statement.pdf

http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/services/ethics/statement/guidance/ethicsguidance.pdf

and from the ethical codes of appropriate organisations, including the:

- British Educational Research Association (www.bera.org.uk)
- British Sociological Association(www.britsoc.org.uk)
- Market Research Society (http://www.mrs.org.uk/standards/codeconduct.htm)

Institute for Employment Research
Application for Ethical Approval for Research Degrees

Name of student: Pamela Suzanne   Academic Year: 2009-2010

Project title: The work-role transition experience of business professionals: The case of Argentinean MBAs

Supervisor: Jenny Bimrose, Robert Lindley
Funding Body (if relevant): University of Warwick

Please ensure you have read the University's Guidance for the Ethical Conduct of Research (http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/services/ethics/statement/)

1.	**Methodology**	Individual interviews.
	Please outline the methodology you will use e.g. observation, individual interviews, focus groups, group testing, collection and analysis of data, etc.	Diary keeping. Analysis with NVivo. All data will be collected in Buenos Aires, Argentina.
2.	**Participants** Please specify all participants in the research (including ages of children and young people where appropriate). Also specify if any participants are vulnerable e.g. as a result of learning disability.	Participants are Master in Business Administration (MBA) students and graduates, aged between 28 and 50 years old. They have undertaken MBAs in prestigious Argentinean universities.
3.	**Respect for participants' rights and dignity** How will the fundamental rights and dignity of participants be respected, e.g. confidentiality, respect of cultural and religious values?	Confidentiality is guaranteed to participants. The principle of 'informed consent' guides the procedure of securing participation. In advance, participants state their willingness to be involved and an interview date is arranged. The objectives of the study will be explained together with the methodology that will be used, the potential benefits of the project, and what is required to participate. The intensity of the study (regarding diary writing) will be emphasised, acknowledging that it can be time consuming and so it would be understandable if they would rather not participate. The approach taken by the research project respects participants' vision and values. Since the aim is to understand their experience through their eyes, respect for their dignity, cultural and religious values will be particularly emphasised.

4.	**Privacy and confidentiality**	Data will be handled carefully. As soon as possible after the interviews are over, the recording will be passed onto a Truecrypt vault and deleted from the recording machine.
	How will confidentiality be assured? Please address all aspects of research including protection of data records, thesis, reports/papers that might arise from the study.	All other information from participants, such as resumes, will also be held in a Truecrypt vault.
		Emails will be kept under secure passwords.
		No names will be passed to third parties, neither to other participants.
		When writing reports/thesis, pseudonyms will be used along with some participant characteristics to understand their contexts but these will be general enough not to allow identification, such as age and undergraduate degree. The characteristics used in reports will be agreed with participants if they would like to check them.
		Online diaries will be protected with a password only known by participants. The only people having access to the diaries are each participant, the researcher, and web administrators assigned by Warwick/IER.
		Hard copy diaries will be held by participants during data collection. They would be responsible for the confidentiality of their own data. After it has been handed to the researcher, she will make sure it is saved in a safe place. At the same time, diaries will not have names, rather codes (the codes will be kept in a Truecrypt vault).

5.	**Consent**	
	a. Will prior informed consent be obtained?	Yes
	- from participants?	No
	- from others?	
	b. Explain how this will be obtained. If prior informed consent is not to be obtained, give reason:	Informed consent will be obtained in writing before the initial interview. The Consent proforma (attached) explains to participants what the research involves, how data will be handled, who is sponsoring the project, contact details of the researcher, and their rights such as to withdraw at anytime. Participants are given two copies of the consent proforma, signing one and giving it to the researcher and keeping one to themselves. The Consent proforma will be written in participants' first language to guarantee full comprehension.
	c. Will participants be explicitly informed of the student's status?	
		Yes
6.	**Competence** How will you ensure that all methods used are undertaken with the necessary competence?	I have received training, I have read and studied about them (and will continue to) and I will liaise with my supervisors.
7.	**Protection of participants** How will participants' safety and well-being be safeguarded?	Interviews will be undertaken in safe places, such as universities or the work places of participants.
8.	**Child protection** Will a CRB check be needed?	No
9.	**Addressing dilemmas** Even well-planned research can produce ethical dilemmas. How will you address any ethical dilemmas that may arise in your research?	I will discuss them with my supervisors and I will prioritise at all times participants' rights and confidentiality.

10.	**Misuse of research** How will you seek to ensure that the research and the evidence resulting from it are not misused?	I will keep raw data confidential, except for quotes that may be used in the thesis and academic articles. There should not be much room for data misuse.
11.	**Support for research participants** What action is proposed if sensitive issues are raised or a participant becomes upset?	I will try to calm them and be sympathetic during the interview, and will refer them to specialists.
12.	**Integrity** How will you ensure that your research and its reporting are honest, fair and respectful to others? What agreement has been made for the attribution of authorship by yourself and your supervisor(s) of any reports or publications?	Participants will be given the opportunity to read my reports in advance. They will also be offered an electronic copy of their interviews.
13.	**Other issues?** Please outline any other relevant issues not discussed above, if any, and how you will address them.	

APPENDIX 17: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

WARWICK INSTITUTE *for* EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH IER

RESEARCH ON MBA graduates' CAREER DEVELOPMENT

You have been invited to participate in a research project on Argentinean MBAs career development. The purpose of the study is to improve our understanding of MBA graduates' career trajectories and work changes.

If you are willing to participate in this study, this will involve:

- Engaging in an informal conversation/interview about your career development and your new job, which should take approximately 90 minutes? The interview will be recorded to allow for a better analysis of results. An electronic copy of the recording will be available if requested.
- Writing in a work transition diary during a period of approximately three months. You will be asked to write regularly in this diary about your experiences and reflections regarding your new job.
- Engaging in an informal conversation/interview after the three month period. The interview should take approximately 90 minutes and will be recorded to allow for a better analysis of results. An electronic copy of the recording will be available if requested.

Your identity will be treated in the strictest confidence and no names will be used.

All the information you provide will be treated in strictest confidence, in conformity with the requirements of the Data Protection Act, 1998. No information that could identify individuals will be passed to any third party. Any personal data that is held will conform to the data security procedures of IER.

Please sign below to confirm that your involvement in the interview has been explained and that you agree to take part.
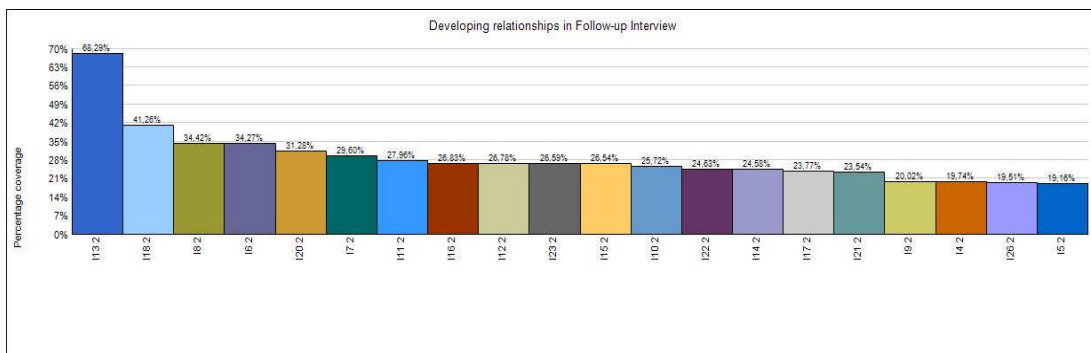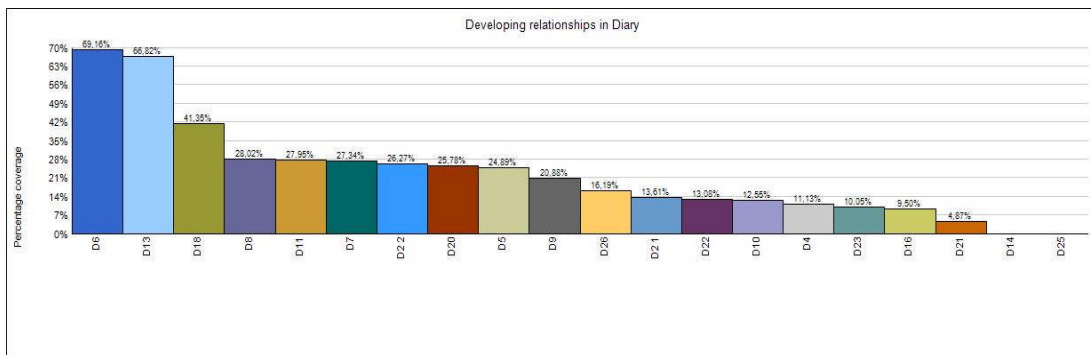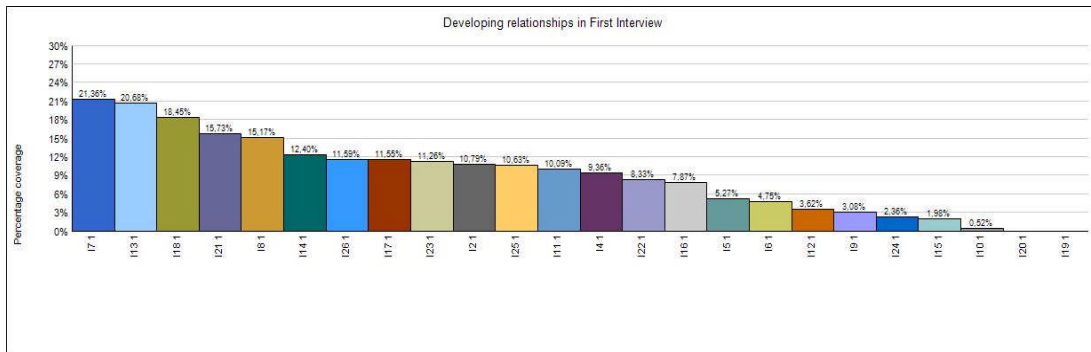
Signature:

Name:

Date:

APPENDIX 18: DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS CODE COVERAGE

This Appendix shows the percentage of characters of each interview and diary coded at this code.

Developing relationships in First Interview

Developing relationships in Diary

Developing relationships in Follow-up Interview

Note: The abbreviations indicate data collection technique and participant. For example:

17 1 refers to Participant 7's first interview,

D6 refers to Participant 6's diary,

I13 2 refers to Participant 13's follow-up interview.