



Doctoral dissertation

**Professional Identity Development of Interns:
Strategies for Image Management and Effects on
the Professional Development**

**Desarrollo de la Identidad Profesional de los
Pasantés: Estrategias para la Gestión de la
Imagen y Efectos en el Desarrollo Profesional**

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Abstract

Professional identity development and management is thought to play a central role in determining the manner individuals perceive themselves and communicate this to others. Although the development of professional identity has increasingly attracted scholarly attention as a key in understanding social processes in the workplace, little empirical research has investigated how individuals at an early career stage, such as interns, face and cope with the professional devaluation of their group and develop professional identity. In this study, I examine how interns construct their professional image in the workplace, how they understand and deal with their temporary professional identity devaluation using new strategies for image management, and how it relates to different forms of outcomes and their professional identity development. This qualitative research utilizes a sample of 23 interns (students during or after their first internship in Europe). Data was collected using retrospective, in-depth, open-ended interviews and analyzed using open, axial, and selective coding. I found that interns' image discrepancies (negative discrepancy and positive discrepancy), resulting from interns' expectations about their professional image, drive interns to engage in new impression management strategies (in-group differentiation, assimilation and positive image maintenance) to meet expectations related to their desired professional image. I discovered a number of outcomes in terms of self- discovery, self-confidence, interpersonal and career management. Building on these findings, I present a process model of professional identity discovery that shows how interns' image management leads to possible identity development. I discuss the findings in light of the social identity approach and present practical implications for managers and organizational leaders, where new strategies of management can be designed, in order to value and improve the internship experience.

Resumen

La literatura ha estudiado profusamente el papel que juega el desarrollo de la imagen profesional en la forma en la que los individuos se perciben a sí mismos. A pesar de la creciente atención académica, hay una ausencia de estudios que aborden el desarrollo de la identidad profesional por primera vez en los inicios de la carrera profesional. Cuando se hacen unas prácticas, los individuos tienen una primera experiencia profesional y, a la vez que definen y clarifican su propia imagen profesional como individuo, deben de afrontar que pertenecen a un grupo social devaluado en el trabajo (el de “los becarios”).

El objetivo de esta tesis es clarificar en cómo los estudiantes en prácticas construyen su imagen profesional en el trabajo, (1) cómo perciben que temporalmente pertenecen a una identidad profesional devaluada, (2) qué estrategias siguen para gestionar su imagen como y (3) como a estas estrategias se relacionan con diferentes consecuencias o resultados para su carrera profesional.

Este estudio de tipo cualitativo se basa en la información recopilada de las experiencias de 23 becarios que tuvieron su primera experiencia laboral realizando unas prácticas en el extranjero. La información se obtuvo mediante entrevistas retrospectivas en profundidad Y se analizó por medio de codificación abierta, axial y selectiva.

Los resultados muestran que las discrepancias en la imagen percibida (discrepancias negativas y discrepancias positivas) son el resultado de las expectativas de los becarios sobre cómo serían percibidos. Estas discrepancias llevan a que los precarios desarrollen estrategias de gestión de la impresión personal de “diferenciación en grupo”, “asimilación” y “mantenimiento de imagen positiva”, que se describen profusamente en el estudio.

Index

CHAPTER 1: Introduction: Internships and Professional identity development	15
1.1. Internships: Improving the prospects for professional and career development in a globalized environment	17
1.2. State of the art: Social identity devaluation in internships and Professional identity development	19
1.3. Research question and objectives	21
1.4. Main contributions and relevance of this study	26
1.5. Structure of the work	28
1.6. References in the chapter	31
CHAPTER 2: Literature Review: Internships	36
2.1. Internships: An Important Step in Professional and Career Development	39
2.1.1. Definition	39
2.1.2. Features of an internship	40
2.1.2.1. Internship Duration.....	40
2.1.2.1.1. What we don't know about internship duration	43
2.1.2.2. Job Characteristics or Work design	44
2.1.2.2.1. What we don't know about job characteristics or work design.....	48
2.1.2.3. Work environment Characteristics	49
2.1.2.3.1. What we don't know about work environment characteristics	54

2.1.2.4. Contextual factors	55
2.1.2.4.1. Paid Versus Unpaid internships.....	57
2.1.2.4.2. What we don't know about contextual factors	61
2.1.2.5. Individual factors	62
2.1.2.5.1. What we don't know about individual factors	66
2.1.3. Outcomes from an internship	67
2.1.3.1. Outcomes for interns	67
2.1.3.1.1. Job-related benefits.....	67
2.1.3.1.2. Career-related benefits.....	70
2.1.3.1.3. Job market benefits	74
2.1.3.1.4. Psychosocial benefits.....	78
2.1.3.2. Outcomes for employers	83
2.1.3.3. Outcomes for schools/universities.....	87
2.1.3.4. What we don't know about outcomes from an internship.....	90
2.2. An Agenda for Future Internships Research	91
2.3. Theoretical Frameworks used to observe Internships.....	94
2.4. References in the chapter	104
CHAPTER 3: Theoretical Framework: Social Identity Theory, Identity devaluation and Professional Identity development	115

3.1. Theoretical framework for this study: Social Identity Theory, Identity devaluation and professional identity development	117
3.1.1. Social identity theory: relating individual’s identity with behaviors	117
3.1.1.1. Postulates of social identity theory	117
3.1.1.2. What is social identity?.....	118
3.1.1.3. The process of social identity development	118
3.1.1.4. Factors influencing social identity development	120
3.1.2. Social identity devaluation and identity management strategies	122
3.1.2.1. Social identity devaluation	122
3.1.2.2. Identity management strategies	124
3.1.3. Professional identity development	128
3.1.3.1. What is professional identity	128
3.1.3.2. The process of professional identity development	128
3.1.3.3. Factors shaping professional identity development	130
3.1.3.4. Outcomes from professional identity development	134
3.1.4. Social identity devaluation in the professional context.....	138
3.1.4.1. Strategies for identity devaluation management	138
3.1.4.2. Outcomes from identity devaluation management strategies.....	144
3.1.5. Social identity devaluation in internships	146
3.2. References in the chapter	149
CHAPTER 4: Research Methods	160
4.1. Research design	163

4.2. Study setting	165
4.3. Sample and data collection	170
4.3.1. Description of the sample	170
4.3.2. Data collection.....	176
4.3.2.1. Recruitment of participants	176
4.3.2.1.1. Phase one or pilot study participants	176
4.3.2.1.2. Phase two participants	177
4.3.2.1.3. Phase three or validation phase participants	177
4.3.2.2. Data process.....	178
4.3.2.2.1. Phase one or pilot study data process	179
4.3.2.2.2. Phase two data process	180
4.3.2.2.3. Phase three or validation phase data process.....	181
4.4. Data analysis	181
4.4.1. Open coding	183
4.4.2. Axial coding	184
4.4.3. Selective coding	185
4.5. References in the chapter	188
CHAPTER 5: Findings and Propositions	190
5.1. Introduction to the findings	193
5.2. Interns' expectations about their professional image and interns' image discrepancies	194
5.2.1. Intern's negative discrepancy	195

5.2.2. Intern's positive discrepancy	203
5.3. Intern's image discrepancies and impression management strategies	210
5.3.1. In-group differentiation strategies	212
5.3.2. Assimilation strategies	222
5.3.3. Failure of negative image discrepancy management strategies	224
5.3.4. Maintaining positive professional image strategies	226
5.4. Impression management strategies and outcomes of the professional identity discovery process.....	231
5.4.1. Mechanisms leading to the outcomes of the professional identity discovery process ..	231
5.4.2. Intermediate outcomes of the professional identity discovery process	233
5.4.2.1. Self-confidence outcome	233
5.4.2.2. High-quality relationships outcome.....	234
5.4.2.3. Meeting performance (context-specific) standards outcome.....	234
5.4.2.4. Career management outcomes	235
5.4.3. Outcomes of the whole process: A possible professional identity	236
5.5. Theory development: A process model of interns' image management and professional identity development.....	240
5.5.1. Strategies in response to intern's negative image discrepancy	242
5.5.2. Strategies in response to intern's positive image discrepancy	243
5.5.3. The role of the feedback in the process of intern's image management	245
5.6. References in the chapter	249
CHAPTER 6: Conclusions, Contributions and Future Avenues	255

6.1. Introduction to the conclusions	257
6.2. The research’s goals achieved	257
6.3. Theoretical contributions to the Literature on Professional Identity Development among Devalued Group Members	262
6.4. Practical implications	264
6.4.1. Implications for managers	264
6.4.2. Implications for organizational leaders	265
6.5. The study’s limitations and future research avenues	266
6.6. Concluding remarks	269
6.7. References in the chapter	270
ANNEX.....	271

Index of tables

Table 1: Research objectives	24
Table 2: Summary of works studying the Impact of Internships duration on Internship outcomes	42
Table 3: Summary of works studying the Impact of Job Characteristics on Internship outcomes	46
Table 4: Summary of works studying the Impact of work Environment Characteristics on Internship outcomes	52
Table 5: Summary of works studying the Impact of contextual factors on Internship outcomes	58
Table 6: Summary of works studying the Impact of Individual factors on Internship outcomes	64
Table 7: Internship job-related outcomes for interns	69
Table 8: Internship career-related outcomes for interns	73
Table 9: Internship job-market outcomes for interns	76
Table 10: Internship psychosocial outcomes for interns	80
Table 11: Internship outcomes for employers	85
Table 12: Internship outcomes for schools/universities	89
Table 13: Summary of internships studies	96
Table 14: Qualitative description of the interns and their internship experience	172
Table 15: Dimensions of interns' negative discrepancy	197
Table 16: Dimensions of intern's positive discrepancy	206
Table 17: The interns located according to the type of discrepancy perceived and the strategies employed	210
Table 18: SIM strategies derived from intern's negative discrepancy	220
Table 19: SIM strategies derived from intern's positive discrepancy	230

Index of figures

Figure 1: Social identity development	119
Figure 2: Factors influencing social identity development	122
Figure 3: Social identity devaluation	123
Figure 4: Identity management strategies	127
Figure 5: Professional identity development	130
Figure 6: Factors shaping professional identity development	134
Figure 7: Outcomes from professional identity development	137
Figure 8: Organizational identification: strategy for identity devaluation management	138
Figure 9: SIT identity management: strategies for identity devaluation management	140
Figure 10: Outcomes from identity devaluation management strategies	145
Figure 11: Social identity devaluation in internships	148
Figure 12: This Grounded Theory Study Research design	164
Figure 13: Percentage of students participating in an internship since 2013 in EU	167
Figure 14: Phases of participants' recruitment	178
Figure 15: Data structure	186
Figure 16: Origination of discrepancy matrix	195
Figure 17: Process model of intern's image management and professional identity construction	241

CHAPTER 1:

Introduction:

Internships and Professional Identity

development

Index of chapter 1

1.1. Internships: Improving the prospects for professional and career development in a globalized environment	17
1.2. State of the art: Social identity devaluation in internships and Professional identity development	19
1.3. Research question and objectives	21
1.4. Main contributions and relevance of this study	26
1.5. Structure of the work	28
1.6. References in the chapter	31

1.1. Internships: Improving the prospects for professional and career development in a globalized environment

The global labor market needs individuals who possess skills, knowledge, and attitudes that can be applied in a variety of situations in the workplace and who have the ability and willingness to continually adapt in a changing environment (International Labor Organization, 2020). However, significant concerns exist about the increasingly broad gap between the skills and capabilities of graduates, and the requirements and demands of the work environment, in an increasingly mobile and globalized community (International Labor Organization, 2021; Andrews and Higson, 2008). In this context, internships have increased its relevance and popularity as a means for graduates to gain and reveal the necessary set of professional skills and attributes.

An internship refers to a short-term temporary work experience where students or young graduates invest a period of time, in any profession, reflecting on and putting into practice what they have learned from formal study (Sybouts, 1968) and noveling responsibilities that require learning and normative pressure to perform in order to enhance professional training (Beenen & Rousseau, 2010; Narayanan, Olk, & Fukami, 2010). There are several reasons why internships are important in today's environment and gaining popularity:

- Internships offer job-related benefits for interns: the vocational development (Gerken et al., 2012) such as enhancing career preparation, the skills development (Hurst, Good and Gardner, 2012) such as improving communication, technical and analytical skills, and the motivational development (Beenen, 2014) such as influencing interns' motivation to learn and perform.

- Internships provide students with career-related benefits such as the positive impact of internship programs on career choice (Karakiraz et al., 2021) and the opportunity to assess the hosting company as a future employer (McHugh, 2017).
- Internships have job market benefits for interns such as enhancing employability (Ishengoma and Vaaland, 2016) by increasing career resources (Inceoglu et al. 2019) and facilitating graduate students' transition into the labor market (Ebner and Soucek, 2021).
- Internships constitute central transition experiences that help students to gain psychosocial benefits such as intern's satisfaction (D'Abate et al., 2009), socialization (Beenen & Rousseau, 2010) and professional identity creation (Glaser-Segura et al., 2010).
- Internships offer many benefits for the employers such as talent screening (Beckett, 2006), reducing turnover costs (Rothman and Sisman, 2016), reducing recruitment, selection and training costs (Knouse, Tanner, and Harris, 1999) and being an important source of employment (Hurst, Good and Gardner, 2012).
- Internships provide schools/universities with a variety of benefits such as filling an important need for experiential and vocational learning (Maertz, Stoeberl and Marks, 2014), offering the chance to adapt/reconsider and update curricula (Cojocariu, Cîrtita-Buzoianu, and Mares, 2019) and promoting themselves to potential students (Narayanan, Olk and Fukami, 2010).

Internships' prevalence in Europe is growing as they are considered such as fruitful ways to engage students intensely in the cultures and communities in which they are placed. This can be noticed in the increase of the number of young adults having internships within the European labor market and the vast number of internships opportunities available over the past decade. Almost every

sector and type of company, from a large multinational corporation to a small startup, now offers internships.

The prevalence of internships has been shown in many surveys. Clear data gathered from the Flash Eurobarometer N° 378 survey —conducted in 2013 on behalf of the European Commission (involving 12 921 respondents with internship experience from the 27 EU member states)— indicates that almost 43% of respondents completed at least one internship, 22% completed two internships, 15% completed three internships, and 20% completed four or more internships. Moreover, a 2017 report in the UK noted that almost 83% of young adults (aged from 21 to 29 years old) have done an internship in European companies (Roberts, 2017). The same report also showed that almost half (46 %) of employers offer graduate internships and provide evidence on the impact of internships on young adults' employability.

Internships constitute the context in which this study is developed. The empirical analysis of this research focuses on the perceptions of a sample of interns involved in internship experiences in European companies, to discover how these interns understand and cope with their temporary devaluated professional identity.

1.2. State of the art: Social identity devaluation in internships and Professional identity development

This dissertation employs social identity theory to contribute to the growing literature of professional identity development and devaluation management (e.g., Philippa et al., 2021; Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2010; Petriglieri et al., 2011; Petriglieri et al., 2019), given that individuals' sense of who they are determines how they perceive themselves within their

professional context and how they communicate their identity to others. Extant research in this field has largely studied the development of a professional identity through social interaction with others within the work environment (Ibarra, 1999; Pratt et al., 2006; Cardoso et al., 2014; Ibarra, 2004; Gersick et al., 2000; Higgins & Kram, 2001), the adaptation to a particular professional group (Ladge and Little, 2019; Roberts, 2005; Alvesson & Wilmott, 2002; Hewlin, 2003, 2009; Schlenker & Pontari, 2000), organizational identification (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003; Pratt, 1998), organizational socialization (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979; Pratt, 2000) and management of identity devaluation (Manzi et al. 2021; Scheifele et al., 2021; Hebl et al., 2020; Little et al., 2015; Roberts, 2005).

Within this research stream, some studies focus on devalued professional identities (e.g., Ahuja, 2022; Pratt et al., 2006; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). These studies consider how members of socially devalued categories develop their professional identity in response to work interpersonal interactions that denigrate it (Hatmaker, 2012). To attempt social equality, these stigmatized individuals downplay their identity devaluation through social identity theory identity management and organizational identification (Lent et al. 2021; Derks et al., 2007; Clair et al., 2005; Button, 2001). A devalued identity in the professional context is a negatively perceived social identity with negative stereotypes and beliefs attached to this identity (Cocker et al., 1998; Goffman, 1963) —i.e., older workers are perceived to be lower performers. Importantly, social identity devaluation within the professional context results in lowered power and status and discriminatory outcomes such as lower job satisfaction (Lim et al., 2008) and worse well-being and performance (Singletary, 2009).

Social identity theorists have provided a useful, but incomplete, view of how individuals in the workplace cope with their devaluated professional identity. Yet, while the existing large literature

on professional identity development focused heavily on identity management and organizational identification among professionals of devalued identities (Lent et al. 2021; Derks et al., 2007; Clair et al., 2005; Button, 2001), we know little about the manner individuals at an early career stage, such as interns, use to manage their temporary identity devaluation. And how these individuals discover the implications of being assigned to a devalued category in the workplace and deal with the professional devaluation of their category when their desired professional image is not clear yet is an overlooked area.

This literature has paid considerable attention to the manner professionals of strongly stigmatized groups, such as women, ethnic minorities, homosexuals or people with disabilities —i.e., individuals that have chronic threats to their social identity— use to manage their professional devalued identity (i.e. Derks et al., 2007). They tend to develop effective coping behavioral strategies as part of their identity process to avoid and minimize devaluation in the workplace (James et al., 2021; Manzi et al. 2021; Lyons et al., 2017; Shih et al., 2013). These stigmatized individuals carry out organizational functions, are committed to their category identity, have established perceptions and are aware that they are assigned to a devalued professional category and the implications of being associated with such a category (i.e. the impact on the professional image). Therefore, this study is a first step toward a different and distinctive perspective in studying professional identity development among members of devalued categories.

1.3. Research question and objectives

This research is not only exploratory but also theory-building research (Ketokivi and Choi, 2014; Welch et al., 2012). It seeks to conceptualize the phenomenon of each intern's experience, and

build a theory based on the interpretation of interns' shared experiences. The research question of this dissertation is: How interns understand and cope with their temporary devaluated professional identity?

The general main objective of this study is to investigate the experiences and perceptions of interns in the workplace *to enhance our understanding about how interns face and deal with the professional devaluation of their category*. Particularly, this broad objective is divided into seven more specific objectives: one empirical objective which is: 1) to develop qualitative data that is rigorous to build theory about how interns understand and cope with their temporary professional identity devaluation, and six theoretical objectives which are: 2) to make a literature review about internships, 3) to provide a theoretical framework in observing the internship experience, 4) to identify and describe different dimensions of the interns' devaluated social identity, 5) to identify and describe the strategies interns use in response to manage their professional image derived from their social identity devaluation, 6) to identify and describe the outcomes of interns' professional identity discovery process, and 7) to propose a theoretical model that explains how interns manage their professional identity and connects discrepancies, strategies and outcomes. Table 1 summarizes the research goals of this study.

First, the empirical goal of this study is to develop qualitative data that is rigorous to build theory about how interns face and deal with their temporary devaluated professional identity. I seek to develop theory from the data in order to examine interns' experiences and perceptions through using a qualitative approach and employing the grounded theory methodology. I intend to achieve this goal by using an inductive approach to analyze data collected through in-depth interviews with 23 interns that have had a recent first internship experience. This approach will allow to explore significant concerns that provide a rich understanding of interns' experiences in creating their

professional self. I pursue to discover new insights in the existing literature of professional identity development and include instances that demonstrate intern's social identity devaluation.

Second, in this study, I purpose to make a literature review about internships, constituting the context in which this study is developed and being considered as an important step in professional and career development. This literature review provides evidence of the impact of internships on a variety of positive outcomes for interns, employers or schools/universities and the need for future research into the role and effectiveness of internships as a bridge between education and employment. It also points to the need for more empirical studies on internships that have a dominant theoretical perspective and uses theoretical frameworks to observe the internship experience, filling in theoretical and practical holes.

Third, this study examines how interns understand and cope with their temporary professional identity devaluation and its effect on professional identity discovery process. As this phenomenon, which is professional identity development in early career stages, has not been adequately explained by existing theory, I aim to employ the social identity theory as a theoretical framework to observe the internship experience. Providing a theoretical framework allows for rich assessment of the interns' experience, going beyond descriptive analysis and anecdotal evidence. It adds to the body of knowledge on internships as it is more focused theorizing.

Fourth, by analyzing the data extracted according to the goal of the study, I seek to identify and describe different dimensions of the interns' devaluated social identity, as the main dimensions identified for positive and negative discrepancies that interns face drive them to manage this identity devaluation. These dimensions stem from sharing information and knowledge, comparing and discussing new interpretations with others, as these are important factors that frame interns' professional identity process. Driven by these negative and positive discrepancies, interns are

aware of how others' perceptions of their attributes and competence at work is shaped by their devaluated social identity and thus, they seek to engage in impression management strategies.

Table 1: Research objectives

<p>General objective</p>	<p>Explaining how interns face and deal with the professional devaluation of their category.</p>
<p>Specific objectives</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developing qualitative data that is rigorous to build theory about how interns understand and cope with their temporary professional identity devaluation. 2. Making a literature review about internships. 3. Providing a theoretical framework in observing the internship experience. 4. Identifying and describing different dimensions of the interns' devaluated social identity. 5. Identifying and describing the strategies interns use in response to manage their professional image derived from their social identity devaluation. 6. Identifying and describing the outcomes of interns' professional identity discovery process. 7. Proposing a theoretical model that explains how interns manage their professional identity and connects discrepancies, strategies and outcomes.

Source: own elaboration

Fifth, I aim to identify and describe the strategies interns use in response to manage their professional image derived from their social identity devaluation, as these impression management strategies play an important role in constructing interns' desired professional image and shaping their professional identity process. By drawing on the analysis describing interns' negative and positive discrepancies and specifying the different dimensions of each discrepancy, I discuss the diverse categories of strategies interns employed to manage their image discrepancies and adapt to the professional environment. The aims for using each strategy and the role that each strategy plays in shaping others' perceptions of interns as professional members are also discussed. Identifying these impression management strategies is important as these strategies are beneficial in shaping interns' perceived professional image and providing interns several outcomes.

Sixth, I seek to identify and describe the outcomes of interns' professional identity discovery process. Determining the several outcomes of the impression management strategies that interns employed is relevant as these outcomes play an important role in how interns construct their professional self. Discovering a number of outcomes interns mentioned at the end of their internship experience shows that, engaging in impression management strategies is effective and the behaviors identified are successful in developing interns' desired professional image and shaping their professional identity process.

And finally, I attempt to propose a theoretical model for professional identity discovery, that includes the categorization of discrepancies, impression management strategies and outcomes. To achieve this goal, I seek to review the relevant literature about the professional identity development among socially devalued members, search for and identify a possible model (i.e., Roberts, 2005). Building on this study's findings, I aim to refine and extend the identified model

and present a theoretical model that shows how interns' image management leads to possible identity construction.

1.4. Main contributions and relevance of this study

This research contributes to the literature of professional identity development (e.g., Dutton et al, 2010; Clarke et al., 2009) in several ways. First, there is consensus in this literature that the degree of inconsistency between one's desired professional image (i.e., how individuals desire to be perceived) and perceived professional image (i.e., how individuals think they are perceived) results in professional identity devaluation (Reid, 2015; Roberts, 2005). This identity devaluation emerges from negative discrepancies (Roberts, 2005; Tajfel, 1978). However, I find that positive and negative discrepancies coexist even if interns' professional category is devalued. Interns experience positive discrepancy when they think that others perceive them as more competent than expected and meeting or exceeding expected standards of performance and behavior. However, interns experience negative discrepancy when others' perceptions of their work performance and behavior are not meeting expectations. I further specify the various dimensions of the devaluation of intern's identity and their association with either positive or negative discrepancy. This finding offers a novel view on how image discrepancies take place among beginners of work experience (i.e., interns) that extends the studies of Roberts (2005)— by specifying the different dimensions of image discrepancies including negative and positive ones and the study of Hebl et al. (2020)— by further suggesting the existence of positive discrepancy among devalued group members.

Second, Roberts (2005) directed particular attention to the strategies employed to manage professional image discrepancies. These strategies consist of social identity impression

management (SIM) behaviors and concentrate on reducing the salience of one's devalued identity— social re-categorization (Little et al., 2015)— or emphasizing the importance of one's distinction— positive distinctiveness in order to build the desired professional image. The manner how interns respond to and manage image discrepancies differs from other devalued group members' manner. Nevertheless, I find new strategies appropriate for elucidating how individuals at an early career stage behave when confronted with either positive or negative discrepancies in the workplace. Therefore, interns employ in-group differentiation— differentiating oneself within the professional group— and assimilation— resembling to others by highlighting distinctiveness from being an intern and similarities with others— to downplay their negative discrepancy. Whereas they engage in positive image maintenance— maintaining or increasing positive image discrepancies by presenting themselves in a more positive manner— to play up their positive discrepancy. This way, I specify how the SIM strategies described by Roberts (2005) take place in the case of interns. I describe many distinct types of in-group differentiation, assimilation and image maintenance strategies interns employed. This provides detail about the manners individuals at an early career stage react to delineate different types of discrepancies and increases our capacity to predict interns' impression management behaviors and their outcomes.

Third, researchers have largely described that the engagement in impression management behaviors has beneficial consequences such as intrapersonal, interpersonal and organizational relevant effects (Little et al., 2015; Meister, Jehn & Thatcher, 2014; Roberts, 2005). However, I find that the outcomes derived from the associated behaviors may exist in the form of not only intrapersonal (i.e. self-confidence), interpersonal (i.e. recommendations) and organizational performance, but also in the form of career resources (e.g. experience, skills development) and career re-orientation. I connect the impression management strategies that interns employed (in-

group differentiation, assimilation and positive image maintenance) with several outcomes of the process of image management such as increasing self-confidence, improving relationships quality, enhancing performance, obtaining career resources, considering career reorientation, and creating a possible professional identity. I further explain the mechanisms leading to these outcomes such as perceivers' (supervisors and peers) feedback, mentorship and encouragement. Accordingly, I refine and extend the conceptual model presented by Roberts (2005) to reflect on how the process of image management among individuals at an early career stage may help them to develop possible professional identities. Employing social identity theory to address this issue in the context of internships, I propose a new model for professional identity discovery in early stages of professional careers, describing different dimensions of devaluated social identity, the strategies employed in understanding and coping with identity devaluation along with the derived outcomes from the identity management process.

Practically, in order to value and to improve the internship experience, this study findings imply for managers to design new strategies aiming to provide interns organizational and emotional support to be effective and successful. Additionally, the findings suggest for organizational leaders to provide interns with feedback regarding their skills assessment and social interactions, helping them to develop their technical competences and meet behavioral and performance standards.

1.5. Structure of the work

This work is structured in six different chapters: introduction, literature review, theoretical framework, research methods, findings and propositions, and discussion and conclusions.

In this first chapter, I introduce the concept of the internship experience and its growing popularity as a means to improve the student's or young graduates' prospects for professional and career development in a globalized environment. I also briefly present the state of the art based on the identification of extant studies on the topic of professional identity development among members of socially devalued categories and the precision of the existent gap in this specific topic. I then include the purpose of this study and the research questions and objectives and end this chapter by justifying the importance of the topic.

In chapter two, I present a detailed literature review on internships as an important step in professional and career development including definition, features of an internship, and outcomes from an internship for interns, employers and schools/universities. Drawing on this review, an agenda for future internships research is offered after specifying many knowledge gaps. One of the theoretical and practical holes identified is the lack of theoretical frameworks that have been used to observe internships, that this research attempts to fill in the body of knowledge on internships.

In chapter three, I make the review of social identity theory, identity devaluation and professional identity development literatures to offer an integrative theoretical framework to this study. Then, a detailed state of the art is presented, based on the identification of existing studies in the literature of social identity devaluation and identity management strategies, professional identity development and social identity devaluation in the professional context and in internships.

In chapter four, the research design and methods are presented. At the beginning, I precise the appropriate approach and the methodology for this study. Then, the data collection including the description of the sample and the recruitment of participants and data analysis are described while reflecting on the research quality.

In chapter five, the research findings obtained from the data analysis according to the goal of the study and a series of developed illustrative propositions are presented. I begin this chapter by describing interns' image discrepancies and continue by discussing the three diverse categories of strategies derived from these image discrepancies. Then, the several outcomes of the professional identity discovery process—elaborated from the associated strategies interns deployed—are determined after identifying the variety of mechanisms that lead to these outcomes.

Finally, in chapter six, I conclude with the discussion of the main achievements derived from this study. The main theoretical contributions of this work to the literature of professional identity development among members of devalued groups are also developed. Then, the implications for managers and organizational leaders are raised. I end this chapter by explaining the limitations of this study and propose research for future avenues.

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CHAPTER 2:

Literature Review:

Internships

Index of the chapter

2.1. Internships: An Important Step in Professional and Career Development39

 2.1.1. Definition39

 2.1.2. Features of an internship40

 2.1.2.1. Internship Duration.....40

 2.1.2.1.1. What we don’t know about internship duration43

 2.1.2.2. Job Characteristics or Work design44

 2.1.2.2.1. What we don’t know about job characteristics or work design.....48

 2.1.2.3. Work environment Characteristics49

 2.1.2.3.1. What we don’t know about work environment characteristics54

 2.1.2.4. Contextual factors55

 2.1.2.4.1. Paid Versus Unpaid internships.....57

 2.1.2.4.2. What we don’t know about contextual factors61

 2.1.2.5. Individual factors62

 2.1.2.5.1. What we don’t know about individual factors66

 2.1.3. Outcomes from an internship67

 2.1.3.1. Outcomes for interns67

 2.1.3.1.1. Job-related benefits.....67

 2.1.3.1.2. Career-related benefits.....70

 2.1.3.1.3. Job market benefits74

 2.1.3.1.4. Psychosocial benefits.....78

 2.1.3.2. Outcomes for employers83

 2.1.3.3. Outcomes for schools/universities.....87

2.1.3.4. What we don't know about outcomes from an internship.....	90
2.2. An Agenda for Future Internships Research	91
2.3. Theoretical Frameworks used to observe Internships.....	94
2.4. References in the chapter	104

2.1. Internships: An Important Step in Professional and Career Development

2.1.1. Definition

The Council of the European Union (EU) has defined an internship (or a ‘traineeship’, as it is sometimes called in Europe) as ‘a limited period of work experience and training spent in a business, public body or non-profit institution by students or young graduates, whether paid or not, which includes a learning and training component, undertaken in order to gain practical and professional experience in a specific field or career area of their interest (Heyler & Lee, 2014 ; Zopiatis, 2007), with a view to improving employability and facilitating transition to regular employment’ (Council Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships (n 5) para 27). It exists three main types of internship in Europe: internships which are linked to a course of academic study, work experience undertaken as part of an active labor market program and open market internships that are work experience in firms or organizations which do not fall under either of the previous criteria.

Internships are considered beneficial in several ways (Beenen & Rousseau, 2010; Liu, Xu & Weitz, 2011; Narayanan, Olk, & Fukami, 2010). They are a form of experiential learning that assist in the development of relevant skills, values and attitudes tied to job contexts (Mihail, 2006; Garavan & Murphy, 2001), allow the students to close the gap between abstract classroom theory and practical work reality (Wesley & Bickle, 2005; Zopiatis, 2007; Mele et al, 2021), ease the transition from student to professional (Herr & Cramer, 1988; Paulson & Baker, 1999; Taylor, 1988; Coco, 2000; Navarro, 2008), and increase employability and starting salary (Gault et al., 2000; Callanan & Benzing, 2004; Gault, Leach & Duey, 2010; Finch et al., 2013; Inshengoma & Vaaland, 2016).

Internships also provide interns true job preview where they can acquire truthful information about the organization like job characteristics and work-environment (Premack & Wanous, 1985). Through the internship experience, interns qualify their professional competences and identity (Pratt et al., 2006; Donnellon et al., 2014), choose their career and access to job sources in an increasingly mobile and globalized society. The internship as a socio-culturally activity, comprises relational dynamics such as the role of the tutor (Ripamonti et al., 2018), that support the learning process it entails, that is, interns' processes of meaning-making, relationships with others and their impact at the identity level (Popov, 2020).

2.1.2. Features of an internship

2.1.2.1. Internship Duration

Internship duration is an essential feature of the internship experience (Fulmer et al., 2004). From a human capital perspective, the longer the duration of the internship, the higher the human capital an intern would develop, because longer internships favor the accumulation of experience and knowledge (Becker, 2009). Moreover, longer internships would also provide interns better learning experience and emphasize on skills development (Fulmer et al., 2004). Consequently, interns might perceive that the shorter the internship, the harder it is to develop skills associated with the job, and thus perceive longer internships as more beneficial (Lowden et al., 2011).

In addition, interns learn more if they engage in activities within a project that can be fully completed (Rothman, 2007; Alpert et al. 2009) and adapt better with the organization (Karunaratane and Pereera, 2015), which is more likely to occur in longer internships. In an exploratory case study, Mihail (2006) found that an internship period of 4 to 6 months is required

for interns to become productive to a company and that a period ranging from 6 to 12 months would benefit both interns and employing firms. Previous research indicates that longer-term placements (the time frame generally given is around 6 months) increase the probability of finding a job within six months after graduation (Mason et al., 2009).

A company may be more willing to provide support, training and time resources to an intern if it believes that the intern will stay in the company long enough to make this investment “pay off” (Mihail, 2006). Because training an intern is a time-consuming task, supervisors could perceive that the costs outweigh the benefits in very short internships, and their involvement could likewise be lower. As a result, interns may not have access to a formal orientation program, potentially reducing their learning and employability gains (Tovey, 2001; Alpert et al, 2009).

However, learning and employability gains could decrease over time. A longer internship experience can lead to the acquisition of redundant resources in terms of both human capital (knowledge and experience) and social connections, and saturation effects might occur (Bittman & Zorn, 2019). During the initial months, interns need to quickly develop basic professional skills and understanding; however, the marginal gains in learning curves could decrease over time, as it takes longer to master more complex and fine-grained skills.

Moreover, too long internships tend to be conflicting and may break the tacit logic of this labor relationship based on the idea of using the “labor force in exchange for skills development”. Although a company may be increasingly satisfied with the return on investment in the relationship – increasingly skilled employees for very low economic compensation – interns’ interest and motivation could decrease over time. As the performance gap between interns and regular employees decreases over time, the economic compensation of the intern becomes increasingly

unfair. In this context, equity conflicts may become apparent, and employability gains might be lower. Table 2 summarizes works studying the impact of internship duration on internship outcomes.

Table 2: Summary of works studying the Impact of Internship Duration on Internship Outcomes

Internship outcome/ dependent variable	Internship Duration	Relation of duration to outcome	Author/Study	Research Method	Sample Description (for quantitative studies)
Adaptation to the organization	Long	+	Karunaratane and Pereera (2015)	Mixed method approach; Quantitative: Self-administered questionnaire before internship; Qualitative: Semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 14 interns and their mentors after internship period.	A sample of 110 students of a business school
Usefulness of the experience	Long	+	Lowden, Hall, Elliot and Lewin (2011)	Qualitative method: Interviews and qualitative case studies	
Securing graduate employment	Six months	+	Mason, Williams and Canmer (2009)	Quantitative method: Semi-structured interviews and graduate survey data; Measures and regressions	A sample of 60 academic staff and 10 careers staff in 34 departments in eight universities
Learning	Long	+	Rothman (2007)	Quantitative; Content analysis	A sample of 345 interns enrolled in a for credit business school internship class.
Learning	Long	+	Alpert, Heaney and Kuhn (2009)	Quantitative method: Questionnaires, means of the surveys and between group analyses	A sample of 35 students enrolled in the bachelor of marketing program, 29 academics and 20 business respondents
Learning	Long	+	Tovey (2001)	Using an established university level internship program; Evaluations by students and their supervisors	
Becoming productive	4 to 6 months	+	Mihail (2006)	Qualitative: An explorative case study methodology (semi-structured face-to-face interviews)	
Reducing unemployment	Long	-	Silva, Lopes, Costa and Seabra (2016)	Quantitative method: Analysis of empirical data on a large-scale study	A sample of Portuguese first-cycle

					study programs including internships
Different stakeholders' perspectives on employability	Long/Short	not significant	Irwin, Nordmann and Simms (2019)	Quantitative and qualitative items were presented to explore perceptions of work experience.	A sample of 175 participants (62 students, 57 employers, 56 academics) with CV excerpts
Saturation effect	Long	+	Bittman & Zorn (2019)	Quantitative; Estimating linear and logistic regression models using data from Austria	

Source: own elaboration

2.1.2.1.1. What we don't know about internship duration

The internship benefits depend on several characteristics of the internship, among which duration plays an important role. The contradictory arguments and evidence of the literature above suggest that the relationship of duration with the internship outcomes remains somewhat unclear. Prior evidence is scarce and inconclusive. Silva et al. (2016) found that shorter internships are more effective in terms of reducing unemployment than longer internships, while Irwin, Nordmann and Simms (2019) found no significant relationship between the duration of the internship and different stakeholders' (including students') perspectives on employability (one of the internship outcomes). Empirical studies that examine the duration effects on internships outcomes for interns, employers or schools/universities is still limited and the factors that might moderate the relationship between duration and internship outcomes (i.e. employability) remains unexplored to date.

The internship duration is likely to influence the extent of career resource acquisition. If the internship is very short – e.g., less than one month – there is not enough time for an intern to acquire the skills and knowledge that might increase positive outcomes. In addition, because the

intern is staying for only a very short time, companies might refrain from expending significant resources to provide proper training. For internships lasting too long (e.g., more than 6 or 9 months), the marginal effects of time on benefits begin to diminish over time. Interns in such situations have had enough time to develop basic professional skills, and the pace of learning over time flattens. Yet, the optimal internship duration that effectively increases interns' outcomes is still unknown. There is a need for more empirical studies that are capable to precise this optimal duration. It is the period during which the intern's motivation to learn is still high and the time is sufficient to allow the intern to acquire professional skills and the balance between training costs and the benefits of interns' work is more beneficial for firms.

2.1.2.2. Job Characteristics or Work design

Extant literature on internships has identified 3 main internship job design features that positively affect internship outcomes (Feldman, Folks, & Turnley, 1998; D'Abate et al., 2009): (1) clear task goals and expectations, (2) autonomy, and (3) feedback. First, to provide students highly qualified learning experience, it may be better to clarify the purpose of the internship and to identify task goals, requirements (program standards) and responsibilities (Hurst et al., 2012; Knouse and Fontenot, 2008; Fulmer et al., 2004). *Clearer expectations and goals* better orient interns' learning efforts (Beneen, 2007; Beenen & Rousseau, 2010; McHugh, 2017) and allow them to maximize the outcomes of their experience such as intern's effectiveness and satisfaction (Feldman and Weitz, 1990; D'Abate et al., 2009). The specification of task goals facilitates task learning and help interns to better identify, acquire and perform appropriate activities (Jackson & Schuler, 1985).

Second, Velez and Giner (2015) found that predictors of internship effectiveness were largely dependent on input from host organizations including greater *autonomy* during the internship. Autonomy may be considered one of the core dimensions of job that enhances motivation and commitment (Feldman and Weitz, 1990). In a study of 72 paid interns enrolled as upper-class students in a large public university business school, Feldman and Weitz (1990) found that autonomy is positively related to internship satisfaction. In addition, providing the intern with autonomy has been shown to facilitate task learning (Feldman, Folks & Turnley 1999; Beenen & Rousseau, 2010). Giving interns greater autonomy helps them to learn and be more responsible of their work requirements (Beenen, 2007) and improves their problem-solving capabilities (Seligman, 1975). Moreover, McHugh (2017) assumed that paid internships with higher autonomy will contribute to greater developmental value, higher appeasement, and push toward work targets. Also, Beenen, Pichler & Levy (2016) stated that task autonomy is one of the mechanisms by which perceived autonomy support motivates subordinate feedback seeking during organizational entry.

Finally, multiple studies noted that regular and continuous *feedback* can also enhance the quality of the internship experience (Brooks et al., 1995; Coco, 2000; Johari & Bradshaw, 2008; Narayanan et al., 2010; Gamboa et al., 2014; Liu, 2012). For example, Hurst & Good (2010) in their literature review about how the nature of internships has changed over the past 20 years found that feedback is one among important factors in internship success. In addition, Narayanan et al. (2010) found that interns get the most from their experiences when they receive job-relevant and sufficient feedback from their supervisors. Feedback allows information interchange among interns, helps them understand their performance levels and increases satisfaction (D'Abte e al., 2009). It helps interns better appraise their effectiveness (Beenen, Pichler & Levy, 2016), and understand their strengths and weaknesses (Wong, 2011). Formative feedback about internship

performance may help interns pursue a career choice where there is a fit between job demands and the intern's skill set (Shoenfelt et al., 2013). In table 3, I summarize works studying the impact of internship job design on internship outcomes.

Table 3: Summary of works studying the Impact of Job Characteristics on Internship Outcomes

Internship outcome/ dependent variable	Internship Job Characteristics	Relation of job characteristic to outcome	Author/Study	Research Method	Sample Description (for quantitative studies)
Internship satisfaction	-Task clarity -Feedback	+ +	D'Abate, Youndt and Wenzel (2009)	Quantitative: Survey; Pilot interviews with twelve juniors and seniors who recently completed internships in a method like the one described by Trochim (2005); Three-item version of Hackman and Oldham's (1975,1980) general job satisfaction scale /The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient/ Multi item scales derived from the relevant literature Herzberg, 1965, 1974) and pilot interviews/ Regression analyses.	Sample of 303 students (261 of them responded and 43% of the respondents had participated in internships) enrolled in classes in the Department of Management and Business at a liberal arts college in the northeastern United States.
Internship satisfaction; Enhancing motivation and commitment	-Formalization -Clear expectations and goals -Autonomy -Task identity -Skill variety	+ + + + +	Feldman and Weitz (1990)	Quantitative; Questionnaires before the start of the internships and during the last week of the programs	A sample of 72 upper level business students and their 72 supervisors
Learning efforts orientation; Socialization and learning	-Formalization -Clear expectations and goals -Autonomy -Challenging assignments	+ + + +	Beenen and Rousseau (2010)	Quantitative: Survey methodology used at 2 time periods. Descriptive statistics for study participants (EFA, CFA and mediation analysis).	Sample of 110 MBA interns across 3 full-time MBA programs (class of 2007) in mid-western US.
Internship effectiveness	-Autonomy	+	Velez and Giner (2015)	Quantitative method: Questionnaires	80 college Hospitality students ready to conduct their internships out of campus.

Socialization and learning	- Autonomy -Challenging assignments	+ +	Feldman,Folks, and Turnley (1999)	Quantitative; Questionnaire: Hierarchical regression and multiple regression analyses to test hypotheses	A sample of 138 interns (second-year masters' students in international business at a large university located in the united states) on six-months overseas assignments
Internship satisfaction Development	-Autonomy -Task clarity	+ +	McHugh (2017)	Quantitative: Survey methodology/observation methods (Retrospective Self-reported measure; separate regression models; hierarchical regression analysis)	Sample of undergraduate students specializing in 26 different majors from 17 different universities in the US
Task learning	- Task clarity - Autonomy	+ +	Beneen (2007)	Quantitative: Survey methodology used at two time periods.	Sample of 122 MBA interns from three schools (class of 2007) over 12 weeks between 1st and 2nd year MBA program.
Internship Effectiveness	-Task clarity	+	Hurst, Good and Gardner (2012)	Quantitative: Survey methodology (on-line, self-administered, survey questionnaire); descriptive statistics (SPSS); Path analysis (AMOS)	Sample of 160 interns (college juniors and seniors) at three universities in the USA who completed a retail/service internship during summer 2008
Internship Effectiveness	-Task clarity	+	Knouse and Fontenot (2008)	Research review	
Subordinate feedback seeking Proactive relationship building	-Perceived autonomy support (task autonomy, informal feedbacks)	+	Beenen, Pichler and Levy (2016)	Quantitative: Survey methodology collected at two time periods; Confirmatory Factor Analysis(CFA), Mediation Analysis (SPSS Mediate), SEM analysis.	Sample of 468 MBA fulltime interns from 10 MBA programs in the US between 1st and 2nd year MBA program.
Job involvement	-Task autonomy - Workload -Contract type	- not significant not significant	De Cuyper et al. (2010)	Quantitative: Survey distributed during group sessions or through the internal mail service of the hospital; four items from the QPS Nordic quest/scale developed by Jackson, Wall, Martin, and Davids (1993)/ Cronbach's alpha/ six items developed by Kanungo (1982)/ the dedication subscale of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003)/ Kanungo's (1982) job involvement scale/means,SD & correlations.	A Belgian sample of 516 respondents from two organizations: A public hospital (N = 316) and an organization from manufacturing industry (N = 200) and a Finnish sample of 736 respondents from four hospitals from the Central Finland Health Care District, all offering high quality and specialized health care/
Effectiveness in interns' task implementation	-High autonomy	-	Kanfer and Ackerman (1989)	Quantitative method: Measures and reliabilities	A sample of 1010 U.S. Air Force interns
Job satisfaction	-Task significance -Feedback	not significant not significant	Brooks, Cornelius, Greenfield, and Joseph (1995)	Quantitative (Career Development Survey, Job Characteristics Inventory, Occupational alternatives Question)	165 college seniors with and without career related experiences

Intern's job pursuit decision	-Formative feedback	+	Shoenfelt, Stone, and Kottke (2013)	Quantitative method	All Swiss university graduates in 2006
Intern's understanding of strengths and weaknesses	-Feedback	+	Wong (2011)	Qualitative method (Interviews)	
Enhancing the quality of the internship experience	-Continuous feedback	+	Coco (2000)	Qualitative content analysis	
Enhancing the quality of the internship experience	-Continuous feedback	+	Gamboa, Paixao and Taveira (2014)	Quantitative: Analysis of variance and analysis of covariance with repeated measures	A sample of 191 interns
Internship success	-Feedback	+	Hurst and Good (2010)	Relevant literature review	
Task learning	-Clear task goals	+	Jackson and Schuler (1985)	Meta-analysis methodology	
Enhancing the quality of the internship experience	-Continuous feedback	+	Narayanan, Olk and Fukami (2010)	Literature review; exploratory analysis	
Enhancing the quality of the internship experience	-Continuous feedback	+	Johari and Bradshaw (2008)	Qualitative method: intern interviews, status-review notes, e-portfolios, mentor interviews, and mentor evaluations	
Enhancing the quality of the internship experience	-Continuous feedback	+	Liu (2012)	Quantitative method: Survey; A structured equation model is constructed to describe the explanatory framework of the student satisfaction with CAE programs based on the CPA firm internship	A sample of 192 accounting interns at 14 local CPA firms in South China

Source: own elaboration

2.1.2.2.1. What we don't know about job characteristics or work design

The literature suggests that job characteristics or work design including task goals and expectations, autonomy, and feedback are positively associated with internship outcomes such as satisfaction, learning and motivation. However, evidence of the relationship between some job design features (such as autonomy and feedback) and internship outcomes (i.e. learning) is still not clear. De Cuyper et al. (2010) declared that the relationship between autonomy and job

involvement was positive for permanent workers, but not for temporary workers such as interns. High autonomy can lead to ineffectiveness in interns' task implementation by diverting their attention from learning toward searching task strategies while having limited time to fulfill their responsibilities (Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989). In addition, in some studies, feedback did not prove to be significant predictors of intern job satisfaction (Brooks et al. 1995). In fact, for an effective internship, task goals should be comprehensive and interns should be directed to the skills and activities needed to job accomplishment, taking into consideration the intern's experience in order to determine how much autonomy and feedback are necessary (Beenen & Rousseau, 2010). Therefore, there is a need for more investigation into the necessary amount of autonomy and feedback provided to the intern and the conditions (i.e. intern's level of experience) under which these factors determine the effectiveness of internships. This helps to deepen our understanding of what makes for a 'good' internship in its effectiveness in interns' learning and development.

2.1.2.3. Work environment Characteristics

Work environment refers to the environment of the host organization in which the intern is engaged (e.g. organization culture, co-workers, career growth and development, learning outcomes). Extant literature suggests that the main work environment characteristics that have positive impact on the success of the internship experience include (1) supervisory support (having a supportive supervisor who acts as a mentor) and (2) opportunity to learn (meaningful tasks relevant to academic courses and interests, acquiring new knowledge and skills) (Hurst, Good & Gardner, 2012; D'Abate, Youndt & Wenzel, 2009; Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou, 2017).

First, mentoring (Narayanan, Olk, and Fukami, 2010) where *supervisors offer support and guidance regarding personal development and career planning* (Russell and Adams, 1997) is one

of the key factors of internship success (Hurst, Good and Gardner, 2012). While feedback tends to focus on information exchange about a specific job or activity, mentoring also focuses on information exchange and dialogue aimed at the broader development of the intern. During the internship, the quality of the learning process is determined by the way supervisors organize the learning context and how interns comprehend it (Wong, 2011). Wong (2011) suggested that encouraging and supporting intern morally, observing intern on site, helping intern understand his/her present strengths and areas of improvement and offering intern problem-solving when needed are important factors that facilitates learning in an internship. Supervisor's concern for learning focuses on motivating interns to develop their technical skills and analytical capabilities through special activities (Beenen 2014; Coco, 2000); It functions as a way of situational encouragement to set challenging objectives and enlarge interns' chance of success (Beenen, 2014). When interns are motivated to learn, they may perform better because they have acquired interpersonal skills and experience in problem solving and decision making.

Furthermore, supervisors play a crucial role in helping interns build their work identity by guiding them how to act correctly in host firms, especially at the start of their internships when they feel uncertain and fearful (Woo, Putnam & Riforgiate, 2017). Interns build their own knowledge by interacting with their supervisors in a local context, using their pre-existing understandings needed to interpret new learning while sharing, comparing and debating with them for the aim of making sense of their new experience (Wong, 2011). A supervisor can also provide social approval (Beenen & Pichler, 2014), making the intern feel socially validated, which increases both self-esteem and self-rated abilities (Knouse & Fontenot, 2008; Arnold et al., 1995), creating a favorable cognitive and affective framework for professional learning and development and stimulating interns' acquisition of additional career resources (Feldman, Folks & Turnley, 1999; Narayanan et

al. 2010; Zhao & Liden, 2011; Maertz, Stoeberl & Marks, 2014; Inceoglu et al., 2019; Mele et al. 2021).

Second, providing interns *the opportunity to learn* and acquire new knowledge and skills through the internship experience is a key element to prepare them for their future success (Gamboa et al., 2013, 2014; Liu, 2012). D'Abate and colleagues (2009) found that internship satisfaction is highly affected by the opportunity to acquire new lessons and experience different from classroom knowledge base. They also suggested that interns should participate in company meetings for training programs in order to get more involved in the larger organizational environment. Moreover, Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou (2017) proposed that learning new skills and knowledge in a professional environment was among the most important antecedents of intern satisfaction. In fact, interns desire to be treated as a part of the organizational staff (Pianko 1996; Coco 2000; Gault, Redington, and Schlager 2000). They place value to learning in a work environment that promotes a more horizontal development context allowing them to participate in significant tasks that helps to acquire new information and develop practical skills (Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou, 2017). So, assigning interns professional work that make them more responsible may maximize the success of the internship learning experience. In table 4, I summarize works studying the impact of work environment characteristics on internship outcomes.

Table 4: Summary of works studying the Impact of Work Environment Characteristics on Internship Outcomes

Internship outcome/ dependent variable	Work environment Characteristics	Relation of Work Environment Characteristics to outcome	Author/Study	Research Method	Sample Description (for quantitative studies)
Internship success Professional learning and development	Supervisory support	+	Narayanan, Olk and Fukami (2010)	Literature review; Exploratory analysis	
Internship success	Supervisory support	+	Russell and Adams (1997)	Literature review	
Internship success	Supervisory support	+	Hurst, Good and Gardner (2012)	Quantitative: Survey methodology (on-line, self-administered, survey questionnaire); descriptive statistics (SPSS); Path analysis (AMOS)	Sample of 160 interns (college juniors and seniors) at three universities in the USA who completed a retail/service internship during summer 2008
Internship success Learning Building own knowledge	Supervisory support	+	Wong (2011)	Qualitative method (Interviews)	
Learning	Supervisory support	+	Beenen (2014)	Quantitative; Survey methodology; CFA, mediation analysis (SPSS mediate), SEM analysis, OLS analysis interaction analysis.	Sample of 508 MBA interns from 10 full time MBA programs in the U.S and who worked for over 245 organizations.
Developing technical skills and analytical capabilities	Supervisory support	+	Coco (2000)	Qualitative content analysis	
Building work identity	-Supervisory support -Amount of supervision	+ -	Woo, Putnam and Riforgiate (2017)	Qualitative method: Semi -structured face to face interviews; retrospective survey, open coding, axial coding, interviews analysis, discussion and comparison.	Sample of 40 interns of average age 20 currently involved in or have just completed an internship program, represent diverse types of organizations, work in either paid or unpaid positions, and work in different types of internship positions
Social approval	Supervisory support	+	Beenen and Pichler (2014)	Quantitative; Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA); A five-factor model (P-O fit, social aspects tactics,	Sample of 106 experienced full-time MBA interns (5.7 years)

				proactive employment information seeking inside/outside, employer learning) ;(OLS) regression, logistic regression, SPSS macros (descriptive analysis), moderation analysis & centered analysis	working in different industries in the mid-western United States.
Increasing self-esteem and self-rated abilities	Supervisory support	+	Knouse and Fontenot (2008)	Research review	
Increasing self-esteem and self-rated abilities	Supervisory support	+	Arnold, Auburn and Ley (1995)	Quantitative method; Scale means, standard deviations, alpha reliabilities and inter correlations to test the hypotheses	A sample of 330 undergraduate psychology students at six UK universities
Professional learning and development	Supervisory support	+	Mele, Español, Carvalho and Marsico (2021)	Qualitative method; Interviews while doing the internship	Nine female psychology interns in four different countries (Brazil, Denmark, Italy and Spain)
Professional learning and development	Supervisory support	+	Feldman, Folks and Turnley (1999)	Quantitative; Questionnaire: Hierarchical regression and multiple regression analyses to test hypotheses	A sample of 138 interns (second-year masters' students in international business at a large university located in the united states) on six-months overseas assignments
Stimulating interns' acquisition of additional career resources	Supervisory support	+	Zhao and Liden (2011)	Quantitative method; A longitudinal study; hypothesis testing one-way multivariate analysis of variance means, standard deviations, and internal reliabilities of variables, as well as the inter correlations among variables.	A sample of 122 intern-supervisor dyads in the United States
Professional learning and development and stimulating interns' acquisition of additional career resources	Supervisory support	+	Maertz, Stoeberl and Marks (2014)	Literature review	
Stimulating interns' acquisition of additional career resources	Supervisory support	+	Inceoglu, Selenko, McDowall and Schlachter (2019)	Systematic literature review (40 studies)	
Quality internship Preparation for future success	Opportunity to learn	+	Gamboa, Paixao and Taveira (2014)	Quantitative: Analysis of variance and analysis of covariance with repeated measures	A sample of 191 interns
Quality internship Preparation	Opportunity to learn	+	Liu (2012)	Quantitative method: Survey; A structured equation model is constructed to describe the	A sample of 192 accounting interns at 14

for future success				explanatory framework of the student satisfaction with CAE programs based on the CPA firm internship	local CPA firms in South China
Internship satisfaction	Opportunity to learn	+	D'Abate, Youndt and Wenzel (2009)	Quantitative: Survey; Pilot interviews with twelve juniors and seniors who recently completed internships in a method like the one described by Trochim (2005); Three-item version of Hackman and Oldham's (1975,1980) general job satisfaction scale /The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient/ Multi item scales derived from the relevant literature Herzberg, 1965, 1974) and pilot interviews/ Regression analyses.	Sample of 303 students (261 of them responded and 43% of the respondents had participated in internships) enrolled in classes in the Department of Management and Business at a liberal arts college in the northeastern United States.
Internship satisfaction Learning and developing practical skills	Opportunity to learn	+	Marinakou and Giousmpasoglou (2017)	Quantitative: Self-administered survey (qualitative questions) distributed at the end of the internship and collected in 4 months/Quantitative data approaches; content validity method; T-tests; multiple response frequencies (for analysis of motivation); regression	Sample of 172 (63 international) and (109 Greek) undergraduate students (18 to 24 years) employed in 4/5 stars hotel for a 6 months summer internship.
Learning and developing practical skills	Opportunity to learn	+	Pianko (1996)	Literature review	
Learning and developing practical skills	Opportunity to learn	+	Coco (2000)	Qualitative content analysis	
Learning and developing practical skills	Opportunity to learn	+	Gault, Redington, and Schlager (2000)	A survey of intern and non -intern business alumni of a northeastern U.S. public university	

Source: own elaboration

2.1.2.3.1. What we don't know about work environment characteristics

The information included in Table 4 shows that the literature focuses extensively on the relationship between the interns and their supervisors as the key to the entire internship experience, overlooking the role of other work environment characteristics that might have important impact on the success of the internship experience. To be specific, while supervisory support is important

to interns, the role of the co-workers might even be more important in interns' career growth and development. Supportive co-workers might help interns in their professional assignments and challenging work as they have always direct contact with them in the same department. Thus, there is a need to conduct research that can help us understand the relationship between co-workers' support and positive internship outcomes such as interns' learning and job performance. Additionally, more qualitative studies are needed to improve our understanding of the role of the supervisory and co-workers' support in social processes occurring during the internship (i.e. building work identity) rather than practical learning and personal development. Table 4 shows that over half of the studies employed quantitative methods with very few of the qualitative studies using in depth interviews. Moreover, more research should be conducted to investigate the amount of supervisory support provided to the intern. Undergraduate students do not have as much academic experience as those of MBAs and therefore might need more supervisory support.

2.1.2.4. Contextual factors

Contextual factors are the specific factors related to the task factors such as commute, working hours, stipend and location. These factors differ from work environment characteristics in that the latter come from more affect-based characteristics of the organizational environment in which the intern is working such as supervisory support (mentoring).

Despite that long shuttle leads to interns' dissatisfaction and flexible work hours is accompanied with interns' satisfaction (Rothman, 2003), there is evidence that the internship learning experience itself might be of general value, independent of the specific contextual factors (Green & Farazmand, 2012). D'Abate, Youndt and Wenzel (2009) in a study aimed to understand the factors leading to interns' satisfaction and the determinants that may enhance both learning- and

work-related results, concluded that contextual factors (such as flexible work hours, pay satisfaction, desirable location) had no influence on interns' satisfaction. In addition, Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou (2017) as well as Bohlander & Snell (2010) and Kim & Park (2013) proposed that learning new skills and knowledge from the internship experience in a professional environment and the career expectations were the most important factors that considerably related to the intern satisfaction regardless the long working hours, the poor pay and the lack of coordination they have challenged.

Moreover, monetary recompenses did not appear to be the determining factor in appraising internship experiences. Paid or not, internships value has increased since fruitful internship programs rely on the proficiency and motivation of both interns and firms. After surveying 281 paid and unpaid student interns at a northeastern U.S. college, D'Abate (2010) found that once employed, interns tended to be promoted faster, have greater organizational commitment, and be more satisfied with their vocational choices. Also, Woo, Putnam & Riforgiate (2017) in their study of investigating the communicative tensions interns faced and how two different groups of interns, satisfied versus dissatisfied, reported their responses to these tensions in order to manage them on identity work, asserted that about 60% of the interns in the satisfied category and 50% in the dissatisfied category carried paid internships.

However, it is still unclear whether pay status makes a difference for internship experiences and outcomes (Taylor, 1988; Brooks et al., 1995; Feldman et al., 1999). It remains somewhat inconclusive whether unpaid interns who donate their time and efforts to organizations are the same or different from their paid counterparts in terms of work attitudes, behaviors, and experiences, and whether any such differences have varying levels of influence on an intern's career development and future employment outlook (Rogers et al., 2021).

2.1.2.4.1. Paid Versus Unpaid internships

The issue of paid versus unpaid internships is still debatable (Hurst & Good, 2010). On the one hand, paid internships are associated with better post-internship labor market outcomes than unpaid ones (O'Higgins and Pinedo Caro, 2021) and paid interns reveal more developmental advantage from their internship experience compared to unpaid interns (McHugh, 2017). Paid internships have a positive impact on interns' social skills, maturity, ability to better understand what they have learned in class, confidence in finding work after graduation, and ability to make career choices (Cook, Parker, and Pettijohn, 2004). Although the decision-making about paying the interns or not differs from industry to another, paid internships may attract talented candidates and expect higher performance (Hurst & Good, 2010).

On the other hand, interns' perceptions of the industry can be negatively impacted by inequitable pay and advantages and undesirable practices of co-workers (Kim and Park, 2013). Poor pay during internships play a considerable role in making interns refusing the existing work conditions (Zopiatis and Constanti, 2007). In addition, unpaid internships lack of considerable advantages that should be gained by the intern during the internship experience (Perlin, 2011; Scheuer & Mills, 2015) and lead to outcomes which are worse than not participating on an internship (e.g. negative impact on wages and weakly on chances of finding employment) (International Labor Organization, 2021). Unpaid internships may result in less mentoring, less developmental value and lower job pursuit aims and unpaid interns may experience informal performance feedback and meet few performance standards due to the reduced orientation and training they receive (McHugh, 2017).

However, considering the intern as a trainee, employers can offer an unpaid internship (Hurst & Good, 2010) while giving the priority to engaging interns in the real-word of work and guiding

them instead of focusing on the intern’s effectiveness in work production (Narisi 2008). Moreover, unpaid work in the not-for-profit sector is able to deliver desirable social and cultural capital and resources (Leonard et al. 2015). Unpaid work may enhance employability through the development of interpersonal, social and professional skills and networks (Gault et al. 2000, 2010; Knouse and Fontenot 2008), although it may have negative outcomes including exploitative and unsafe work practices and social exclusion (Allen et al. 2013; Burke and Carton 2013). In table 5, I summarize works studying the impact of contextual factors on internship outcomes.

Table 5: Summary of works studying the Impact of Contextual factors on Internship Outcomes

Internship outcome/ dependent variable	Contextual factors	Relation of Contextual factors to outcome	Author/ Study	Research Method	Sample Description (for quantitative studies)
Intern’s satisfaction	-Flexible work hours	+	Rothman (2003)	Quantitative (a content analysis)	143 senior and junior year business school students enrolled in a semester-long internship course for credit (74 males and 69 females)
Intern’s satisfaction Learning	-Flexible work hours -Pay satisfaction -Desirable location	-not significant -not significant -not significant	D’Abate, Youndt and Wenzel (2009)	Quantitative: Survey; Pilot interviews with twelve juniors and seniors who recently completed internships in a method like the one described by Trochim (2005); Three-item version of Hackman and Oldham’s (1975,1980) general job satisfaction scale /The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient/ Multi item scales derived from the relevant literature Herzberg, 1965, 1974) and pilot interviews/ Regression analyses.	Sample of 303 students (261 of them responded and 43% of the respondents had participated in internships) enrolled in classes in the Department of Management and Business at a liberal arts college in the northeastern United States.
Valuable internship experience	-Specific contextual factors	-not significant	Green and Farazmand (2012)	Quantitative: Data was analyzed by two methods: comparison between students who had completed an internship (n=55) and those who had not (n=77) using t-Tests; and determining what factors (variables) influence learning outcomes using multiple regression.	A sample of 132 students that have participated in the live-case projects during the three semesters of which 55 had completed an internship and 77 had not.

Intern's satisfaction	-Long working hours -Poor pay -Lack of coordination	-not significant -not significant -not significant	Marinaku and Giousmpa soglou (2017)	Quantitative: Self-administered survey (qualitative questions) distributed at the end of the internship and collected in 4 months/Quantitative data approaches; content validity method; T-tests; multiple response frequencies (for analysis of motivation); regression	Sample of 172 (63 international) and (109 Greek) undergraduate students (18 to 24 years) employed in 4/5 stars hotel for a 6 months summer internship.
Intern's satisfaction	-Long working hours -Poor pay -Lack of coordination	-not significant -not significant -not significant	Kim and Park (2013)	Quantitative: a self-administered questionnaire; frequency statistics; Paired-sample <i>t</i> -tests performed to examine significant differences of mean scores for the respondents' expectations and perceptions on seven career factors.	A sample of 120 students who had completed their internships in six hospitality and tourism colleges providing internship programs in the Seoul metropolitan, the capital city of Korea
Negative interns' perceptions of the industry	-Pay inequity	+	Kim and Park (2013)	Quantitative: a self-administered questionnaire; frequency statistics; Paired-sample <i>t</i> -tests performed to examine significant differences of mean scores for the respondents' expectations and perceptions on seven career factors.	A sample of 120 students who had completed their internships in six hospitality and tourism colleges providing internship programs in the Seoul metropolitan, the capital city of Korea
Management of tensions at work Identity work	-Monetary recompenses	-not significant	Woo, Putnam and Riforgiate (2017)	Qualitative method: Semi - structured face to face interviews; retrospective survey, open coding, axial coding, interviews analysis, discussion and comparison.	Sample of 40 interns of average age 20 currently involved in or have just completed an internship program, represent diverse types of organizations, work in either paid or unpaid positions, and work in different types of internship positions
Intern's career development and future employment outlook	-Monetary recompenses	-not significant	D'Abate, Youndt and Wenzel (2009)	Quantitative; Survey methodology/ Pilot interviews with twelve juniors and seniors who recently completed internships in a method like the one described by Trochim (2005); Three-item version of Hackman and Oldham's (1975,1980) general job satisfaction scale /The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient/ Multi item scales derived from the relevant literature Herzberg, 1965, 1974) and pilot interviews/ Regression analyses.	Sample of 303 students (261 of them responded and 43% of the respondents had participated in internships) enrolled in classes in the Department of Management and Business at a liberal arts college in the northeastern United States.
Intern's career development and future employment outlook	- Monetary recompenses	-not significant	Rogers, Miller, Flinchbaugh and Giddarie (2021)	Literature review	
Vocational development	- Monetary recompenses	-not significant	Taylor (1988)	Quantitative (A quasi-experimental design)	Interns from five academic programs with matched cohorts at pre-internship, post internship, college graduation, and postemployment measurement periods.

Vocational development	- Monetary recompenses	-not significant	Brooks, Cornelius, Greenfield, and Joseph (1995)	Quantitative (Career Development Survey, Job Characteristics Inventory, Occupational alternatives Question)	165 college seniors with and without career related experiences
Socialization and learning	- Monetary recompenses	-not significant	Feldman, Folks, and Turnley (1999)	Quantitative; Questionnaire: Hierarchical regression and multiple regression analyses to test hypotheses	A sample of 138 interns (second-year masters' students in international business at a large university located in the united states) on six-months overseas assignments
Higher performance	- Monetary recompenses	+	Hurst and Good (2010)	Literature review	
Being engaged in the real-world of work	-Pay inequity	+	Hurst and Good (2010)	Literature review	
Developmental advantage Job pursuit Development Meeting performance standards	-Pay inequity	-	McHugh (2017)	Quantitative: Survey methodology/observation methods (Retrospective Self-reported measure; separate regression models; hierarchical regression analysis)	Sample of undergraduate students specializing in 26 different majors from 17 different universities in the US
Skills development Confidence in finding work after graduation Ability to make career choices	-Pay satisfaction	+	Cook, Parker, and Pettijohn (2004)	Quantitative: A Longitudinal Case Study	A sample of 351 student interns from 12 different colleges and universities
Refusing the existing work conditions (feeling of exploitation)	-Poor pay	+	Zopiatis and Constanti (2007)	Mixed method approach: Quantitative survey and qualitative semi-structured interview data; Response rate for hospitality students was (n=166) and for hospitality professionals (n=77). Quantitative questionnaires were completed by all ten hospitality educators interviewed.	A sample of 402 students pursuing an accredited hospitality degree in a private or government sponsored educational institution in Cyprus, and who have completed at least one hospitality internship practice
Considerable advantages gained by the intern	-Pay inequity	-	Scheuer and Mills (2015)	Critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the United States internship phenomenon	
Desirable social and cultural capital and resources	-Pay inequity	+	Leonard, Halford and Bruce (2015)	Qualitative method: Case-study approach, valuable for enabling intensive examination and theoretical analysis	
Employability Development of interpersonal, social and professional skills and networks	-Pay inequity	+	Gault, Leach and Ducey (2010)	Quantitative; Survey method; Measures through a five-point Likert scale; Descriptive statistics	A sample of 185 employers of 392 interns enrolled in an AACSB-accredited business college in a Northeastern US university.

Employability Development of interpersonal, social and professional skills and networks	-Pay inequity	+	Gault, Redington, and Schlager (2000)	A survey of intern and non -intern business alumni of a northeastern U.S. public university	
Employability Development of interpersonal, social and professional skills and networks	-Pay inequity	+	Knouse and Fontenot (2008)	Research review	
Negative outcomes Exploitative and unsafe work practices and social exclusion	-Pay inequity	+	Allen, Quinn, Hollingworth and Rose (2013)	Qualitative method: Drawing on interview data with students, staff and employers	
Negative outcomes Exploitative and unsafe work practices and social exclusion	-Pay inequity	+	Burke and Carton (2013)	Critical Discourse Analysis	

Source: own elaboration

2.1.2.4.2. What we don’t know about contextual factors

Evidence of the impact of contextual factors– in particular, pay status– remains unclear. There is a need for more investigation into the specific contextual factors leading to desirable outcomes from the internship experience such as vocational development. Internships can potentially contribute to the integration of young people into the labor market (O’Higgins and Pinedo Caro, 2021), although very clearly some internships do a better job of it than others. In particular, paid internships are associated with better post-internship labor-market outcomes than are unpaid internships (International Labor Organization, 2021). However, there is a great deal of variation in the results, depending on the types of internships (e.g. full-time internship, internship abroad, open-market internship, college internship), labor-market outcomes (i.e. employability) and the samples used in the studies. Additionally, the information included in Table 5 shows that, in studies

investigating the impact of pay status on internships' outcomes, data collection is limited. There is a need to investigate internships using a sample of paid and unpaid interns from multiple universities, gathering a rich array of data from multiple academic disciplines, as well as wide variety of industries (e.g. private, nonprofit, and public organizations) and capturing all years of school (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, master's and doctoral students) in order to maximize the impact of the research.

There is also limited research on the unintended consequences and the negative implications of unpaid internships on job structure and other outcomes (i.e. labor-market outcomes). Rogers et al. (2021) have argued that pay status matters for the design of internships, and ultimately intern satisfaction and career development. There is a need to consider how pay status, and in particular how a no-pay condition, might negatively affect the nature, structure, and design of work itself. Moreover, from the unpaid intern perspective, there is a need to consider whether intangible rewards such as recognition, the ability to develop networks, or training and learning opportunities can compensate for the lack of pay, and whether or not this influences satisfaction and career development perceptions.

2.1.2.5. Individual factors

Interns themselves play a proactive role in shaping their own work experiences (Gruman, Saks, & Zweig, 2006; Yongmei et al., 2011). Extant literature has identified three main individual factors that positively affect internship outcomes: (1) commitment, (2) intrinsic capability and (3) the personal network.

First, the individual *commitment* of interns (Chen & Shen, 2012) and their responsibility for and engagement in determining the attributes are significant for promoting their satisfaction and

employability (Su and Feng, 2008). When interns have a positive proactive attitude of learning (Knouse and Fontenot, 2008) and are willing to dedicate themselves to work and learning, they may contribute to the improvement of their various career prospect (Binder et al., 2015). The more active and involved role interns play in their internship experience, the more likely they are to have a positive internship that proves to be satisfying and developmental for their career (Rogers et al., 2021).

Second, *intrinsic capability* of interns such as critical thinking ability, learning orientation, self-promotion and ingratiating behaviors (Zhao & Liden, 2011) may result in enhanced value of internship experience (Rogers et al., 2021). The success of an internship program depends on the intern's level of inter disciplinary knowledge, ability to connect theoretical knowledge to work, and adaptations to the organizational social framework (Grantz and Thomas, 1996). Interns' competence may contribute to self-determined motivation, task engagement, learning, performance, vitality, and well-being (Sheldon, Ryan, & Reis, 1996) and form the core of an intern's adoption of identity (Woo, Putnam & Riforgiate, 2017).

Third, *the size of a newcomer's informational network* may favor the acquisition of organizational knowledge, task mastery, and the sense of social integration (Morrison, 2002). Interns' emotional expressions and social activities at work may be significantly related to the learning they obtain and mentoring they receive during the internship (Yongmei et al., 2011).

However, the relationship between the intern's experience including his/her acquired skills (i.e. problem solving) and learning outcomes remains unclear. Beenen (2007) found no effect of interns' experience on their learning while Beenen and Rousseau (2010) found that the relationship between task goal clarity and learning is stronger for less experienced interns with low autonomy, and stronger for more experienced interns with high autonomy. Taking into consideration the

intern's experience in order to determine how much autonomy and feedback are necessary seems important. Feeling of ambiguity is moderated by existence of prior work experience of interns. In table 6, I summarize works studying the impact of individual factors on internship outcomes.

Table 6: Summary of works studying the Impact of Individual factors on Internship Outcomes

Internship outcome/ dependent variable	Individual factors	Relation of Individual factors to outcome	Author/Study	Research Method	Sample Description (for quantitative studies)
Self-efficacy	Proactive behaviors.	+	Gruman, Saks and Zweig (2006)	Quantitative: means, standard deviations, and inter correlations of the study variables	A sample of 140 co-op university students who completed surveys at the end of their work term
Satisfaction Employability	-Individual commitment	+	Chen & Shen (2012)	Quantitative: Structure Equation Modelling (SEM,) questionnaire, hypothesis testing	A sample of students at twenty universities
Satisfaction Employability	-Being responsible and engaged	+	Su and Feng (2008)	Holistic approach: Discussion of the identification and assessment of graduate attributes	
Improvement of career prospect	-Positive proactive attitude	+	Knouse and Fontenot (2008)	Research review	
Improvement of career prospect	-Dedication to learn	+	Binder, Baguley and Miller (2015)	Quantitative: Investigating main effects and interactions for student background characteristics; using ordinal logistic multi-level modelling	A longitudinal sample (n > 15,000) that covers an extensive range of subjects and disciplines for large Undergraduate cohorts.
Satisfaction and career development	-Active and involved role	+	Rogers, Miller, Flinchbaugh and Giddarie (2021)	Literature review	
Valuable internship experience	-Intrinsic capability of interns	+	Zhao & Liden (2011)	Quantitative method; A longitudinal study; hypothesis testing one-way multivariate analysis of variance means, standard deviations, and internal reliabilities of variables, as well as the inter correlations among variables.	A sample of 122 intern-supervisor dyads in the United States
Successful internship experience	-Level of inter disciplinary knowledge	+	Grantz and Thomas (1996)	Critical assessment of the literature	

	-Ability to connect theoretical knowledge to work -Ability to adapt the organizational social framework	+ +			
Motivation Task engagement Learning Performance Vitality Well-being	-Intern's competence	+	Sheldon, Ryan and Reis (1996)	Quantitative method: Questionnaire, correlations and semi partial correlations	A sample of 60 students in a psychology class at the university of Rochester who participated for extra class credit
Adoption of identity	-Competence	+	Woo, Putnam and Riforgiate (2017)	Qualitative method: Semi - structured face to face interviews; retrospective survey, open coding, axial coding, interviews analysis, discussion and comparison.	Sample of 40 interns of average age 20 currently involved in or have just completed an internship program, represent diverse types of organizations, work in either paid or unpaid positions, and work in different types of internship positions
The acquisition of organizational knowledge Task mastery A sense of social integration	-The size of informational network	+	Morrison (2002)	Quantitative method; Survey and hypothesis testing	A sample of 154 new auditors
Learning and receiving mentoring	Emotional expressions and social activities	+	Yongmei, Jun and Weitz (2011)	Quantitative: Hypothesis testing; Means, Standard Deviations, and Inter Correlations Among Variables	A sample of 167 college student interns working in the retail industry
Learning	-Intern's experience	not significant	Beneen (2007)	Quantitative: Survey methodology used at two time periods.	Sample of 122 MBA interns from three schools (class of 2007) over 12 weeks between 1st and 2nd year MBA program.
Minimizing the feeling of ambiguity Learning	-Prior work experience	+	Beenen and Rousseau (2010)	Quantitative; Survey methodology used at 2 time periods. Descriptive statistics for study participants (EFA, CFA and mediation analysis).	A sample of 110 MBA interns across 3 full-time MBA programs (class of 2007) in mid-western US.

Source: own elaboration

2.1.2.5.1. What we don't know about individual factors

The intern's prior work experience is one of the individual factors that seems also to play an important role in their internship outcomes such as performance and career development. It can serve as backbone experience that help interns to set and precise their expectations from the internship experience and to use previous acquired skills in job performance and self-development. Thus, experienced students might be more aware to benefit during their internship experience from any factor that yields to the outcomes they have expected.

It has been assumed that organizations, rather than workers, mostly or completely shape the work design (or job characteristics) and its consequences. However, there is a need to know whether interns, especially those in poorly-designed jobs (whether paid or not), shape their internship experience and are able to transform it into a more beneficial one. Experienced students might have the opportunity to tailor their internships in ways that better suit individual needs and desires and this might affect their perceptions of career development. Therefore, the existence of prior work experience of interns could possibly moderate the relationship between the internships' features (i.e. work design) and outcomes (i.e. vocational self-development). Accordingly, more research should be conducted to improve our understanding of the effect of interns' prior work experience on internship outcomes such as interns' career development.

2.1.3. Outcomes from an internship

2.1.3.1. Outcomes for interns

2.1.3.1.1. Job-related benefits

The developmental value of internships is the core focus of educational and vocational investigators being an important part of job examination and growth (Super 1990; Virtanen, Tynjälä, and Eteläpelto, 2014). The internship is a tool for experiential learning and collaboration, a necessary part of career development (Einstein, 2015). Extant research has identified main job-related benefits: the vocational development, the skills development and the motivational development.

First, the most cited benefit of internships to college students is the intern's vocational development (Brooks, Cornelius, Greenfield, & Joseph, 1995; Gerken et al., 2012; Taylor, 1988). Gerken et al. (2012) noted that internships provide students with the opportunity not only to understand the workplace, but also to enhance career preparation and obtain relevant working experience. Internships serve a developmental function for students, helping them to sort out their career aspirations, allowing them to obtain a greater awareness of their own abilities, interests, needs and work values and attitudes (Brooks et al., 1995; Taylor, 1988). Internships provide individuals with opportunities for career exploration – the types of jobs they are capable of and prefer performing, the values inherent in jobs and potential employment opportunities. The internship job characteristics have been shown to be important determinants of intern vocational development (Brooks, Cornelius, Greenfield, & Joseph, 1995; Taylor, 1988). For example, greater autonomy, more relevant and complex work tasks, and more frequent feedback would help interns

to develop their vocational-self (Taylor, 1988). In addition, interns who received greater feedback and had more opportunities to deal with others during their internships reported higher vocational development (Brooks et al., 1995). Also, interns' satisfaction with the job and interpersonal aspects of their internships helped them find their experiences beneficial for their future careers (Rothman's, 2003).

Second, developing new skills and acquiring new knowledge through the internship experience is a key element to prepare interns for their future success. Internships result in interns' job learning (Ashforth, 2001) and provide students with the opportunity to develop and improve work skills in a professional work environment (Gerken et al., 2012; Narayanan et al., 2010). During internships, interns engage in the real world of work trying to focus on effectiveness in work production, developing job-related skills (Velde & Cooper, 2000; Gault, Redington, & Schlager, 2000; Knouse et al., 1999), enhancing their skills abilities (Mihail 2006). These real-world experiences offer students the chance to reinforce their work capabilities and competencies (Hurst, Good and Gardner, 2012) such as planning, communication skills, self-awareness, self-motivation self-esteem, and self-efficacy which are considered essential for any position in a company. Previous studies found that completing internships reinforce technical competencies and improve analytical skills (Coco, 2000) as well as organizational, participative and socio-emotional competencies.

Finally, successful internships contribute to self-determined motivation, task engagement, learning, performance, vitality, and well-being and influence interns' motivation to learn and perform, above and beyond their own goal orientations (Beenen, 2014). Fruitful internships motivate interns to focus on relevant activities and develop skills required to the job (Beenen & Rousseau, 2010), leading to meet desirable job performance (Beenen & Rousseau, 2010; Hurst &

Good, 2010) and resulting in highly qualified learning experience (Fulmer et al., 2004; Deschaine & Jankens, 2017). In table 7, I summarize the internship job-related outcomes for interns.

Table 7: Internship job-related outcomes for interns

Job-related outcome/ dependent variable	Internship features	Relation of internship feature job-related outcome	Author/Study	Research Method	Sample Description (for quantitative studies)
Vocational development	Internship Characteristics of task variety, feedback, and opportunities of dealing with people	+	Brooks, Cornelius, Greenfield, & Joseph (1995)	Quantitative (Career Development Survey, Job Characteristics Inventory, Occupational alternatives Question)	165 college seniors with and without career related experiences
	Supervision in academic internships	+	Gerken, Rienties, Giesbers and Könings (2012)	Combining the findings of a literature review with insights from a concept-mapping exercise with 22 experts from 15 business schools	
	College internships (autonomy)	+	Taylor (1988)	Quantitative (A quasi-experimental design)	Interns from five academic programs with matched cohorts at pre-internship, post internship, college graduation, and postemployment measurement periods
	Positive aspects of internship (Job Characteristics)	+	Rothman (2003)	Quantitative (a content analysis)	143 senior and junior year business school students enrolled in a semester-long internship course for credit (74 males and 69 females)
Skill development	Supervision in academic internships	+	Gerken, Rienties, Giesbers and Könings (2012)	Combining the findings of a literature review with insights from a concept-mapping exercise with 22 experts from 15 business schools	
	Effective internships	+	Narayanan, Olk and Fukami (2010)	Literature review; exploratory analysis	
	Internship program	+	Velde and Cooper (2000)	A multimethod approach was adopted including interviews	

				with students, vocational educators and employers	
	Internship experience	+	Gault, Redington and Schlager (2000)	A survey of intern and non - intern business alumni of a northeastern U.S. public university	
	Business college internships	+	Knouse, Tanner and Harris (1999)	Quantitative	Sample of 117 graduates (mean age 25 years) from a university business program
	Effective internships	+	Mihail (2006)	An explorative case study methodology (semi-structured face-to-face interviews)	
	Supervisory support expectations, psychological contract of employer obligations, job satisfaction, perceptions of advancement opportunities and affective organizational commitment	+	Hurst, Good and Gardner (2012)	Survey methodology (online, self-administered, survey questionnaire); descriptive statistics (SPSS); Path analysis (AMOS)	Sample of 160 interns (college juniors and seniors) at three universities in the USA who completed a retail/service internship during summer 2008
	Internship experience	+	Coco (2000)	Qualitative content analysis	
Motivational development	The role and structure of the internship	+	Hurst and Good (2010)	Literature review	
	Learning and performance goal orientation, supervisor concern for leaning and performance	+	Beenen (2014)	Survey methodology; CFA, mediation analysis (SPSS mediate), SEM analysis, OLS analysis interaction analysis	Sample of 508 MBA interns from 10 full time MBA programs in the U.S and who worked for over 245 organizations
	The clarity of the task goals and the intern's autonomy in pursuing these goals	+	Beenen and Rousseau (2010)	Survey methodology used at 2 time periods. Descriptive statistics for study participants (EFA, CFA and mediation analysis)	Sample of 110 MBA interns across 3 full-time MBA programs (class of 2007) in mid-western US
	Effective internship experiences	+	Deschaine and Jankens (2017)	Literature review	

Source: own elaboration

2.1.3.1.2. Career-related benefits

The internship is considered as the first step towards students' future career (Mele et al., 2021; Bilsland et al., 2014) and professional trajectory (Albin et al., 2000; Knoetze & McCulloch, 2017;

Kullasepp, 2011). Existing research has given considerable attention to the positive impact of internship programs on *career choice* (Karakiraz et al., 2021; Ko & Sidhu, 2012). Through the internship experience, interns can visualize a future career (early realistic job preview) with limited devote of time and resources (Rothman & Sisman, 2016), comprehend better the real business world and decide whether they will pursue the same career (Gault et al., 2000) or they make other career choices. Internships provide interns valuable opportunities to discern whether the jobs offered by firms match their personal strengths and career interests (Knouse et al., 1999; Pedro, 1984). Rothman & Sisman (2016) in their study about the impact of internship on career consideration among business students affirmed that the internship had a positive effect on students' career considerations as they learned valuable information about themselves in relation to this work experience. The experience of an internship is valuable for students for the reason that it familiarizes them with lifestyle factors and displays for them job functions and industries essential for moving confidently along a career track. As well, it gives them the opportunity to view what the employer expects while reflecting on that experience about how they fit into that job. They concluded that over half the interns (54%) who completed an internship in a business specialty confirmed their interests in pursuing those same job functions in the future. Nevertheless, less than half the interns (45%) preferred continuing a job search in the same industry as their internship.

Internships can also be beneficial *to assess the hosting company as longer term fit (as a future employer)*. In this sense, extant research suggests that positive perceptions of the internship's practices are related to increased person–organization fit, person–job fit, and intentions to join the organization at the end of the internship (Harris and Pattie, 2020; Resick, Baltes, & Shantz, 2007). The affective organizational commitment contributed by interns' perceptions of advancement

opportunities influences their decision to accept a fulltime position upon graduation. When internship employer fulfills the expected psychological contract obligations that are dependent on supervisory support expectations, interns are more satisfied with their job and will remain with their internship company because they feel a sense of belonging with the organization (Hurst, Good and Gardner, 2012). Moreover, learning opportunities may be important factors for motivating interns to stay with an employer. Learning through internship improves self-beliefs related to the employment as reflecting on work experience well makes students ready for person-job fit (Drewery et al., 2016). For example, MBA interns are highly motivated to accept a job offer when they learn better from their internship (Beenen & Rousseau, 2010). Furthermore, paid internships with greater supervisor mentoring, higher supervisor support, higher task goal clarity and autonomy will lead to higher developmental value; this efficacy and developmental value of the internship may result in greater job pursuit intentions of the intern (McHugh, 2017). Adding to all this the role that the newcomers' environment (social aspects tactics), their individual trusts (pre-entry P-O fit), and on-the-job behavior (information seeking) play in affecting their job acceptance (Beenen & Pichler, 2014). Interns are more motivated to pursue employer information outside their assigned division through person- environment interactions (P-O fit \times social aspects tactics). Also, organizational activities (social aspects tactics) played an important role in improving interns learning about their employer, that tend to attract talented employees throughout internships, and acquiring employer information leading into job-acceptance intentions (Beenen & Pichler, 2014). In table 8, I summarize the internship career-related outcomes for interns.

Table 8: Internship career-related outcomes for interns

Career-related outcome/ dependent variable	Internship features	Relation of internship feature job-related outcome	Author/ Study	Research Method	Sample Description (for quantitative studies)
Career choice	Internships	+	Ko and Sidhu (2012)	Quantitative; Survey and analysis using masculinity index and logistic regression test (+interviews)	Sample of 818 Singapore university students
	Internships	+	Karakiraz, Üstündag, Karatas and Özdemir (2021)	Case study (Quantitative and Qualitative methods)	A sample of 133 graduates for the quantitative data and 9 graduates during a focus group session for the qualitative data
	Internship work experience	+	Rothman and Sisman (2016)	Quantitative and Qualitative; Open-ended questions (coding)/ Reflection/ Information through internet/ Consultation of completed course enrollment documents/ Qualitative content analysis methodology/ Inter judgment comparisons/ Discussions between researchers after categorization.	Sample of 198 undergraduate business students aged 20 to 23 years old enrolled for academic credit in an internship class during their last few terms of university in the USA.
	Internship experience	+	Gault, Redington and Schlager (2000)	A survey of intern and non -intern business alumni of a northeastern U.S. public university	
	Business college internships	+	Knouse, Tanner and Harris (1999)	Quantitative	Sample of 117 graduates (mean age 25 years) from a university business program
	Participation in an internship	+	Pedro (1984)	Quantitative (Rokeach Value Survey, Minnesota Importance Questionnaire, Career Orientation Scale, and Job Satisfaction Scale)	Sample of 90 female business majors who had participated in a retailing internship.
Assessing the hosting company as a future employer	Interns' perceptions of HR practices	+	Harris and Pattie (2020)	Quantitative; hypotheses developed with signaling theory and attraction, selection, attrition (ASA) theory; Utilizing of a time lagged study design	Sample of 71 interns employed in a United States based service firm
	Internship experience	+	Resick, Baltes, & Shantz (2007)	Quantitative (hypothesis testing)	Sample of 299 participants in a 12-week internship program
	Supervisory support, psychological contract of employer obligations, job	+	Hurst, Good and Gardner (2012)	Quantitative; Survey methodology (on-line, self-administered, survey questionnaire); descriptive statistics (SPSS); Path analysis (AMOS)	Sample of 160 interns (college juniors and seniors) at three universities in the USA who completed a

	satisfaction, perceptions of advancement opportunities, affective organizational commitment				retail/service internship during summer 2008
	Work-term (internship) quality, variables related to role characteristics, interpersonal dynamics, and organizational elements	+	Drewery, Nevison, Pretti, Cormier and Barclay (2016)	Quantitative (A multiple linear regression analysis)	A sample of 1,937 students at a large Canadian university enrolled as full-time undergraduates with at least one full year of studies, one previous work-term experience, and just returned from a work-term experience
	Task goal clarity, autonomy and learning	+	Beenen and Rousseau (2010)	Quantitative; Survey methodology used at 2 time periods. Descriptive statistics for study participants (EFA, CFA and mediation analysis).	Sample of 110 MBA interns across 3 full-time MBA programs (class of 2007) in mid-western US.
	Internship efficacy (the developmental value of the internship)	+	McHugh (2017)	Quantitative; Survey methodology/observation methods (Retrospective Self-reported measure; separate regression models; hierarchical regression analysis)	Sample of undergraduate students specializing in 26 different majors from 17 different universities in the US
	Organizational activities, proactive information seeking, Intern learning about the employer	+	Beenen and Pichler (2014)	Quantitative; Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA); A five-factor model (P-O fit, social aspects tactics, proactive employment information seeking inside/outside, employer learning); (OLS) regression, logistic regression, SPSS macros (descriptive analysis), moderation analysis & centered analysis	Sample of 106 experienced full-time MBA interns (5.7 years) working in different industries in the mid-western United States.

Source: own elaboration

2.1.3.1.3. Job market benefits

Enhancing employability is one of the known and main job market benefits from internships for graduating students (Gault et al., 2000; Ishengoma & Vaaland, 2016; Smith 2010; Kapareliotis, Voutsina and Patsiotis, 2019), and students report being more confident in their employability after their internship (Qenani, MacDougall, & Sexton, 2014). Internships contribute to the integration of young adults into the labor market (O'Higgins and Pinedo Caro, 2021) and provide opportunities for students to evaluate and develop their employability and identify the skills employers find most valuable (Shoenfelt, Stone, and Kottke, 2013).

Researchers have identified internships as providing essential skills such as integrity and professionalism, targeted by employers (Knouse et al., 1999). Such experiences build interns' confidence and gives them an opportunity for networking (Bhattacharya and Neelam, 2018; Knouse and Fontenot 2008). Through the internship valuable experience, students try to focus on enhancing their skills abilities (Inceoglu et al., 2019) and accessing to job sources for the aim of increasing their chance for future employment (Mihail 2006). However, there is still a need for more research on understanding the elements of an internship program that contribute to the desired employability (O'Connor & Bodicoat, 2015).

There is a significant amount of research on the positive relationship of internships on students' employability perceptions and individual professional competencies. Ebner and Soucek (2021) in a study about beneficial effects of internships on employability perceptions, proposes that work experience not only enhances skills, knowledge and networks, but also reduces career-entry worries and thereby enhances employability perceptions. A wide range of perceived employability skills were found to be developed in the course of the internships, such as self-management in the workplace or problem-solving skills (Jackson, 2013), the ability to work in teams, self-confidence, or leadership (Wilton, 2012; Messer, 2018), verbal and written communication, effective collaboration, working as a team member, using technology, problem solving, time management, taking initiatives and assuming responsibility (Chhinzer and Russo, 2018; Gault et al., 2000) adaptability, flexibility and interpersonal skills (Beck and Halim, 2008).

The influence of the internship experience on perceived employability has been scarcely examined in previous research, and the extant studies have focused mainly on how some of the internships' features significantly affect employability outcomes. When considering future work situations and

self-perceived employability, assessing internships in other ways seems to be relevant (Yorke, 2011). In table 9, I summarize the internship job-market outcomes for interns.

Table 9: Internship job-market Outcomes for interns

Job-market outcome/ dependent variable	Internship features	Relation of internship feature job-related outcome	Author/Study	Research Method	Sample Description (for quantitative studies)
Enhancing employability	Internship experience	+	Gault, Redington and Schlager (2000)	A survey of intern and non - intern business alumni of a northeastern U.S. public university	
	Student internship	+	Ishengoma and Vaaland (2016)	Quantitative; Descriptive analysis, Mann-Whitney U - test and Kruskal-Wallis test	A sample of 404 respondents located in Tanzania, comprising students, faculty members and employees from 20 companies operating within the oil and gas industry and mining
	Internships (training)	+	Smith (2010)	Drawing on recent research	
	Internship employment (placement)	+	Kapareliotis, Voutsina and Patsiotis (2019)	Quantitative; Online survey data	Sampling frame provided by an institution of higher education in Greece
	Internship	+	Qenani, MacDougall and Sexton, (2014)	Quantitative; Regression analysis	Sample of 978 of college students
	Internship	+	Shoenfelt, Stone, and Kottke, 2013	Quantitative	All Swiss university graduates in 2006
	Business college internships	+	Knouse, Tanner and Harris (1999)	Quantitative	Sample of 117 graduates (mean age 25 years) from a university business program
	Internship design, conduct, evaluation and feedback	+	Bhattacharya and Neelam (2018)	Mixed method approach (survey + interviews of 8 students) and qualitative research approach by conducting semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 14 interns and their mentors after internship period.	Sample of 110 students of a business school

	Effective internship experience	+	Knouse and Fontenot (2008)	Research review	
	Effective internships	+	Mihail (2006)	An explorative case study methodology (semi-structured face-to-face interviews)	
	Effective work placements (internships)	+	Inceoglu, Selenko, McDowall and Schlachter (2019)	Systematic literature review (40 studies)	
	Internships	+	O'Connor and Bodicoat (2015)	Drawing on data from a pre-1992 university	
	Positively evaluated internships	+	Ebner and Soucek (2021)	Quantitative A two-wave study among graduate students currently in an internship	Sample of 80 students (mean age 24.6 years, 60% female) from various fields of study aiming at both Bachelor's and Master's degrees
	Internships (work integrated learning)	+	Jackson (2013)	Quantitative; Survey data; Data analysis using SPSS software	Sample of 131 work integrated learning students in an Australian university
	Work placement (internship)	+	Messer (2018)	Quantitative method; Questionnaires	A sample of 300 14-15-year-old students who provided a pre- and post-placement self-reports about their employability skills and their work-experience hosts provided ratings of employability skills at the end of the placement.
	Valuable Internships (work placement)	+	Wilton (2012)	Drawing upon both longitudinal quantitative and qualitative data.	A cohort of business and management graduates who completed their undergraduate studies in 2003
	Work-term (Internship)	+	Chhinzer and Russo (2018)	Quantitative; An exploratory factor analysis to derive factors influencing employer perceptions of employability; Assessment of 153 written comments using a critical incident technique.	A sample of 122 employer assessments of graduate students at a Canadian university who completed a work-term with the employer in either 2014 or 2015; individual data (e.g. academic achievement, work experience) from student files at the university
	Internships	+	Beck and Halim (2008)	Quantitative; Qualitative data, with quantitative analysis and testing of hypothesis	A sample of 250 accounting students in Singapore who have completed eight weeks of internship

Source: own elaboration

2.1.3.1.4. Psychosocial benefits

Previous research identifies many psychosocial benefits such as intern's satisfaction, socialization and professional identity creation associated to successful internships (e.g. D'Abate et al., 2009; Gupta, Burns, & Schiferl, 2010; Narayanan, Olk, & Fukami, 2010). First, interns' perceived learning opportunities (D'Abate et al., 2009), enhanced competencies in employability (Chen, Shen and Gosling, 2018), comprehensible job expectations (Feldman and Weitz, 1990) and quality task performance (Bhattacharya and Neelam, 2018) predict student *satisfaction* with an internship program. Moreover, supervisory support influences intern satisfaction (D'Abate et al., 2009; Liu et al., 2011; Gault et al., 2010; Narayanan et al., 2010). Supportive supervisor's role is a key factor leading to job satisfaction and clarifying the aim of employee's career planning (Knight et al., 2006). Intern's satisfaction may be related to the impressions that interns gain through supervisor-intern relationships (Gerstner & Day, 1997). Satisfactory internships are also determined by team spirit and involvement, autonomy (Gault et al., 2010), a clearly defined assignment, periodic feedbacks, opportunity to work across departments and respectful treatment (Narayanan et al., 2006; Rothman; 2007).

Second, research studies show that structured internship experiences, job design, proactive behavior, and positive emotional expression results in positive learning and *socialization* outcomes (e.g., Beenen & Rousseau, 2010; Feldman, Folks, & Turnley, 1998; Feldman & Weitz, 1990; Gruman, Saks, & Zweig, 2006; Liu et al., 2011; Taylor, 1988). Through interaction with employers and work-integrated learning, professional socialization occurs through which interns gain the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for successful entry into a professional career (Weidman et al., 2001). Furthermore, independently of the newcomer behavior, supervisors and mentors play an important role in the socialization tactics by supporting interns psychologically and socially and

providing them career-related information about their potential employer (Chong, Beenen, Gagné and Dunlop, 2021). Participative mentoring from the supervisor, in terms of setting learning and performance expectations for interns (Beenen, 2014) and providing them with autonomy and challenging assignments, has been shown to facilitate interns' socialization and learning outcomes (Feldman, Folks & Turnley 1999; Beenen & Rousseau, 2010).

Finally, a successful internship is an effective way to shape students' *professional identities* (Glaser-Segura et al., 2010). By trying on a professional role, interns renegotiate their identities as they confirm, challenge or develop new preferences, values and orientations about the professional world and about themselves, and thus fine-tune their future career plans (Mele et al., 2021; Popov ,2020). Interns' identity formation is supported through their engagement in learning such as debates, use of role play, and simulations (Noble, Coombes, Nissen, Shaw, and Clavarino, 2014). During internships, interns build their own knowledge by interacting in a local context, using their pre-existing understandings needed to interpret new learning while sharing, comparing and debating with others (Wong, 2011), trying to establish a career identity. Studies have also emphasized the importance of autonomy and support during internships (Arnold et al., 1995; Auburn, 2007; Feldman & Weitz, 1990), which are important for identity construction. Furthermore, supervisors play a crucial role in helping interns build their work identity by enabling social learning and guiding them how to act correctly in host firms, especially at the start of their internships when they feel uncertain and fearful (Woo, Putnam & Riforgiate, 2017; Inceoglu et. al., 2019). In table 10, I summarize the internship psychosocial outcomes for interns.

Table 10: Internship Psychosocial Outcomes for interns

Psychosocial outcome/ dependent variable	Internship features	Relation of internship feature job-related outcome	Author/Study	Research Method	Sample Description (for quantitative studies)
Satisfaction	Job characteristics, work environment characteristics and contextual factors	+	D'Abate, Youndt and Wenzel (2009)	Quantitative; Survey methodology/ Pilot interviews with twelve juniors and seniors who recently completed internships in a method like the one described by Trochim (2005); Three-item version of Hackman and Oldham's (1975,1980) general job satisfaction scale /The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient/ Multi item scales derived from the relevant literature Herzberg, 1965, 1974) and pilot interviews/ Regression analyses.	Sample of 303 students (261 of them responded and 43% of the respondents had participated in internships) enrolled in classes in the Department of Management and Business at a liberal arts college in the northeastern United States.
	The nature of the internship experience and the benefits received.	+	Gupta, Burns and Schiferl (2010)	Quantitative; Factor analysis	A sample of 88 business interns (marketing students that have completed internships)
	Internship effectiveness	+	Narayanan, Olk and Fukami (2010)	Literature review; exploratory analysis	
	Interns' expectations about the internship, the socialization procedures used, the design of the work itself, the extent to which summer internships fit into tentative career plans, and the attitudes and expectations of internship supervisors.	+	Feldman and Weitz (1990)	Quantitative; Questionnaires before the start of the internships and during the last week of the programs	A sample of 72 upper level business students and their 72 supervisors
	Enhanced competencies in employability during an internship program	+	Chen, Shen and Gosling (2018)	Quantitative; Hypothesis testing (reliability analysis)	A sample of 550 students at a public hospitality and tourism university during the first month after completion of their internships and return to school
	Internship design, conduct, evaluation and feedback	+	Bhattacharya and Neelam (2018)	Quantitative; Mixed method approach (survey + interviews of 8 students) and qualitative research approach by conducting semi-structured, in-depth interviews with	Sample of 110 students of a business school

				14 interns and their mentors after internship period.	
	Learning and mentoring from supervisors during the internship	+	Liu, Xu and Weitz (2011)	Quantitative; Reliability analysis by a composite score; hypothesis testing by regression analysis	A sample of 167 college student interns working in the retail industry
	Internship experience	+	Gault, Leach and Duey (2010)	Quantitative; Survey method; Measures through a five-point Likert scale; Descriptive statistics	A sample of 185 employers of 392 interns enrolled in an AACSB-accredited business college in a Northeastern US university.
	Work experience (internship)	+	Knight, Crutsinger and Kim (2006)	Quantitative; Self-administered questionnaires; Hypothesis testing by multiple regression analysis	A sample of 470 students enrolled in academic programs with a merchandising focus.
	Task clarity communication, clear expectations, feedback, mentoring and respectful treatment	+	Rothman (2007)	Quantitative; Content analysis	A sample of 345 interns enrolled in a for credit business school internship class.
Socialization	Task goal clarity, autonomy and learning	+	Beenen and Rousseau (2010)	Quantitative; Survey methodology used at 2 time periods. Descriptive statistics for study participants (EFA, CFA and mediation analysis).	A sample of 110 MBA interns across 3 full-time MBA programs (class of 2007) in mid-western US.
	Mentoring	+	Feldman, Folks, and Turnley (1999)	Quantitative; Questionnaire: Hierarchical regression and multiple regression analyses to test hypotheses	A sample of 138 interns (second-year masters' students in international business at a large university located in the united states) on six-months overseas assignments
	Interns' expectations about the internship, the socialization procedures used, the design of the work itself, the extent to which summer internships fit into tentative career plans, and the attitudes and expectations of internship supervisors.	+	Feldman and Weitz (1990)	Quantitative; Questionnaires before the start of the internships and during the last week of the programs	A sample of 72 upper level business students and their 72 supervisors
	Organizational socialization tactics, newcomers' self-efficacy, proactive behaviors	+	Gruman, Saks, and Zweig (2006)	Quantitative; Surveys; Means, standard deviations, and inter correlations of the study variables. Multiple regression analyses to test the relationships	A sample of 140 undergraduate university students enrolled in a cooperative management program (co-op) at a large Canadian University who were completing a 4-month full-time work term.

	Learning and mentoring from supervisors during the internship	+	Liu, Xu and Weitz (2011)	Quantitative; Reliability analysis by a composite score; hypothesis testing by regression analysis	A sample of 167 college student interns working in the retail industry
	Learning and performance goal orientation, supervisor concern for leaning and performance	+	Beenen (2014)	Quantitative; Survey methodology; CFA, mediation analysis (SPSS mediate), SEM analysis, OLS analysis interaction analysis.	Sample of 508 MBA interns from 10 full time MBA programs in the U.S and who worked for over 245 organizations.
	College internships (autonomy)	+	Taylor (1988)	Quantitative (A quasi-experimental design)	Interns from five academic programs with matched cohorts at pre-internship, post internship, college graduation, and postemployment measurement periods.
	Organizational socialization tactics and perceived autonomy-supportive supervision	+	Chong, Beenen, Gagné and Dunlop (2021)	Quantitative; Structural equation modeling analyses from a time-lagged study; A post hoc moderation analysis to test the hypothesized model	A sample of 489 MBA interns
Professional identity development	Practical learning activities (internships)	+	Glaser-Segura, Mudge, Bratianu and Dumitru (2010)	Quantitative; Online survey; Regression analysis on a measure of professional identity to test three main hypotheses	A sample of 364 students in an English-language BBA program at a prominent Romanian university; 97 valid responses were obtained from this sample
	The internship experience	+	Popov (2020)	Dialogical methodology and the focus group method	
	The internship experience	+	Mele, Español, Carvalho and Marsico (2021)	Qualitative method; Interviews while doing the internship	Nine female psychology interns in four different countries (Brazil, Denmark, Italy and Spain)
	The internship experience: the context of work	+	Noble, Coombes, Nissen, Shaw, and Clavarino (2014)	A qualitative approach using in-depth interviews	Fifteen interns (community and hospital) from one school of pharmacy in Australia
	The mentor role	+	Wong (2011)	Qualitative method (Interviews)	
	Autonomy and supervisory support	+	Arnold, Auburn and Ley (1995)	Quantitative method; Scale means, standard deviations, alpha reliabilities and inter correlations to test the hypotheses	A sample of 330 undergraduate psychology students at six UK universities
	Supervised internship experience (placement learning)	+	Auburn (2007)	Qualitative method; Discourse analytic methodology; semi-structured interviews	
	Interns' expectations about the internship, the socialization procedures used, the design of the work itself, the extent to which summer	+	Feldman and Weitz (1990)	Quantitative; Questionnaires before the start of the internships and during the last week of the programs	A sample of 72 upper level business students and their 72 supervisors

	internships fit into tentative career plans, and the attitudes and expectations of internship supervisors.				
	Supervision (close vs distant)	+	Woo, Putnam and Riforgiate (2017)	Qualitative method: Semi -structured face to face interviews; retrospective survey, open coding, axial coding, interviews analysis, discussion and comparison.	Sample of 40 interns of average age 20 currently involved in or have just completed an internship program, represent diverse types of organizations, work in either paid or unpaid positions, and work in different types of internship positions
	Effective work placements (internships)	+	Inceoglu, Selenko, McDowall and Schlachter (2019)	Systematic literature review (40 studies)	

Source: own elaboration

2.1.3.2. Outcomes for employers

Previous research identifies the following benefits for the employers. First, researchers most frequently identify talent screening as a reason for employer participation in internship (Beckett, 2006; Hurst & Good, 2010; Keller, 2012; Rothman & Lampe, 2010). Internship programs are beneficial for organizations because they are considered as means to get access to highly skilled and motivated people that generate positive outcomes for the organization (Willison, 2012; Gault et al., 2000). Through internships, organizations bring novel and updated content knowledge and technical skills that can enhance organizational know-how and productivity and increase the opportunities to develop the supervisory skills of junior employees (Degraevl et al., 2012). Employers still look to interns to accomplish important work and perform organizational tasks and meaningfully contribute to organizational objectives (Rogers et al., 2021).

Second, the internship experience saves time and money for the employer while potentially allowing him to avoid costly turnover in the early stages of employment (Rothman & Sisman, 2016). It may be a chance to a free job fit assessment that gives to competent candidates the priority to full time employment (Yiu & Law, 2012; Hurst, Good and Gardner, 2012; Cook, Parker, & Pettijohn, 2004).

Third, employers reduce recruitment, selection, and training costs by establishing from internships ongoing relationships among college students and schools (Knouse, Tanner, & Harris, 1999; Pedro, 1984; Pianko, 1996).

And finally, interns are considered as a vitally important source of employment in today's recovering economy because they constitute a trained labor force ready to create a direct impact on the organization (Hurst, Good and Gardner, 2012). Internships are adopted by most employers as a measuring instrument in the process of choosing new hires (Narayanan, Olk & Fukami, 2010; Zhao & Liden, 2011; Coco, 2000; Gerken, Rienties, Giesbers, & Könings, 2012; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2010). In table 11, I summarize the internship outcomes for employers.

Table 11: Internship Outcomes for employers

Employers' outcome/ dependent variable	Internship features	Relation of internship feature job-related outcome	Author/Study	Research Method	Sample Description (for quantitative studies)
Talent screening	Support of internships by retailers and educators; Internships pay as a legal issue; Structure of internship	+	Hurst and Good (2010)	Relevant literature review	

	programs; Interns socialization				
	The internship experience	+	Rothman and Lampe (2010)	Quantitative method; Survey	A sample of 381 undergraduate students enrolled for credit in a business school internship course
	The internship experience	+	Willison (2012)	Short case studies and research papers	
	Internship experience	+	Gault, Leach and Duey (2010)	Quantitative; Survey method; Measures through a five-point Likert scale; Descriptive statistics	A sample of 185 employers of 392 interns enrolled in an AACSB-accredited business college in a Northeastern US university
	Academic internships	+	Degravel, Hertz and Koutroumanis (2012)	Literature review; An exploratory analysis	
	Paid vs unpaid internships	+	Rogers, Miller, Flinchbaugh and Giddarie (2021)	Literature review	
Reducing turnover costs	The internship work experience	+	Rothman and Sisman (2016)	Qualitative method; Open-ended questions (coding)/ Reflection/ Information through internet/ Consultation of completed course enrollment documents/ Qualitative content analysis methodology/ Inter judgment comparisons/ Discussions between researchers after categorization	Sample of 198 undergraduate business students aged 20 to 23 years old enrolled for academic credit in an internship class during their last few terms of university in the USA
	Supervisory support; Psychological contract of employer obligations; Perceptions of advancement opportunities	+	Hurst, Good and Gardner (2012)	Quantitative; Survey methodology (on-line, self-administered, survey questionnaire); descriptive statistics (SPSS); Path analysis (AMOS)	Sample of 160 interns (college juniors and seniors) at three universities in the USA who completed a retail/service internship during summer 2008
	The internship experience	+	Yiu and Law (2012)	Literature review	
	The internship experience	+	Cook, Parker and Pettijohn (2004)	Quantitative: A Longitudinal Case Study	A sample of 351 student interns from 12 different colleges and universities
Reducing recruitment, selection and training costs		+	Knouse, Tanner, and Harris (1999)	Quantitative method; A survey at the time of graduation; Data analyzed using t-test and chi-square routines of (SPSS)	A sample of 1117 of Alumni who graduated from spring 1993 to Spring 1997 from the college of Business Administration at a large southern university

	The internship experience (Characteristics of the job)	+	Pedro (1984)	Quantitative method; The quasi-experimental design selected for this study is titled Institutional Cycle by Campbell and Stanley (1963). It combines both longitudinal and cross-sectional comparisons. Values were measured via the Rokeach Value Survey (1967). Analysis of data using the Mann-Whitney U Test	A sample of 90 students seeking degrees in a business related major, retailing, at a large Midwestern university participating in an internship program
	Power internships (with exciting assignments and enticing perks)	+	Pianko (1996)	Literature review	
Source of employment	Supervisory support; Psychological contract of employer obligations; Perceptions of advancement opportunities	+	Hurst, Good and Gardner (2012)	Quantitative; Survey methodology (on-line, self-administered, survey questionnaire); descriptive statistics (SPSS); Path analysis (AMOS)	Sample of 160 interns (college juniors and seniors) at three universities in the USA who completed a retail/service internship during summer 2008
	Internship effectiveness	+	Narayanan, Olk and Fukami (2010)	Literature review; exploratory analysis	
	Internship experience	+	Coco (2000)	Qualitative content analysis	
	The internship experience	+	Zhao and Liden (2011)	Quantitative method; A longitudinal study; hypothesis testing one-way multivariate analysis of variance means, standard deviations, and internal reliabilities of variables, as well as the inter correlations among variables.	A sample of 122 intern-supervisor dyads in the United States
	Supervision in academic internships	+	Gerken, Rienties, Giesbers and Könings (2012)	Combining the findings of a literature review with insights from a concept-mapping exercise with 22 experts from 15 business schools	

Source: own elaboration

2.1.3.3. Outcomes for schools/universities

Previous research identifies the following benefits for the schools/universities. First, filling an important modern need for experiential and vocational learning is one of the benefits of internships

for schools (Feldman et al., 1999; Tovey, 2001; Maertz, Stoeberl & Marks, 2014). These valuable experiences create the opportunity to incorporate internship experience into the academic curriculum and therefore build, through transfer, learning opportunities in the content of the courses provided (Cojocariu et al., 2019). It is significant for business schools to connect internships directly to their educational program and elaborate relevant and suitable experiential-learning experiences for their students (D'Abate, Youndt and Wenzel, 2009). This may help them implement and perform acquired classroom theory and knowledge to practice in the actual workplace while developing deeply their management and decision-making competences.

Second, internships experiences offer for universities the ability to adapt, reconsider and update curricula based on relevant feedback received, both from students and employers (Maertz, Stoeberl & Marks, 2014). They create the context for a real partnership between students, employers, university, and community (Weible, 2009; Cojocariu et.al, 2019), providing universities with the opportunity to improve their performance in the process of hiring graduates.

Third, through internships, educational institutions (schools and universities) may be able to promote themselves to potential students by assuring that all motivated and qualified students can have an internship in their chosen field. They can become a competitive educational marketplace (Maertz Jr, Stoeberl & Marks, 2014) as internships can potentially boost their reputation and help recruit more students (Narayan et al., 2010).

However, educational institutions play a focal role in the internship experience (Marinakou and Giousmpasoglou 2013). Universities need to focus their efforts on providing quality information and guidance to their students to ensure that they understand the skills or capabilities required by employers (Li, Morgan, & Ding, 2008; Speight, Lackovic, & Cooker, 2012) and learn about the real workplace conditions (Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou, 2017). Educational institutions should

prepare students appropriately to deal effectively with the obstacles they will face in the industry, taking into consideration their expectations about their internship experience (Tse, 2010). In table 12, I summarize the internship outcomes for schools/universities.

Table 12: Internship Outcomes for schools/universities

Schools'/universities' outcome/ dependent variable	Internship features	Relation of internship feature job-related outcome	Author/Study	Research Method	Sample Description (for quantitative studies)
Filling an important need for experiential and vocational learning	Mentoring	+	Feldman,Folks, and Turnley (1999)	Quantitative method; Questionnaire: Hierarchical regression and multiple regression analyses to test hypotheses	A sample of 138 interns (second-year masters' students in international business at a large university located in the united states) on six-months overseas assignments
	Socialization, motivation and acculturation of interns into the workplace	+	Tovey (2001)	Using an established university level internship program; Evaluations by students and their supervisors	
	The internship experience	+	Maertz, Stoeberl and Marks (2014)	Literature review	
	Job characteristics; Work environment characteristics; Contextual factors	+	D'Abate, Youndt and Wenzel (2009)	Quantitative method; Survey methodology/ Pilot interviews with twelve juniors and seniors who recently completed internships; Three-item version of Hackman and Oldham's (1975,1980) general job satisfaction scale /The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient/ Multi item scales derived from the relevant literature Herzberg, 1965, 1974) and pilot interviews/ Regression analyses.	Sample of 303 students (261 of them responded and 43% of the respondents had participated in internships) enrolled in classes in the Department of Management and Business at a liberal arts college in the northeastern United States.
	The internship (the content, the volume and the quality of the	+	Cojocariu, Cirtita-Buzoianu, and Mares (2019)	Qualitative method (Analysis of 26 out of 40 interviews)	

	specialized practice)				
Chance to adapt/reconsider and update curricula	The internship experience	+	Maertz, Stoeberl and Marks (2014)	Literature review	
	The internship experience	+	Weible (2009)	Quantitative method; A survey instrument	A sample of 619 deans of all U.S. business programs (29% respondents)
	The internship (the content, the volume and the quality of the specialized practice)	+	Cojocariu, Cîrtita-Buzoianu, and Mares (2019)	Qualitative method (Analysis of 26 out of 40 interviews)	
Promote themselves to potential students	The internship experience	+	Maertz, Stoeberl and Marks (2014)	Literature review	
	Internship effectiveness	+	Narayanan, Olk and Fukami (2010)	Literature review; exploratory analysis	

Source: own elaboration

2.1.3.4. What we don't know about outcomes from an internship

The literature suggests that internships are broadly positively associated with outcomes for interns, employers and schools/universities. Many outcomes for interns have been identified in the literature. These can be categorized as job-related outcomes, career-related outcomes, job market outcomes and psychosocial outcomes. For employers, hiring an intern for a full-time position after the assignment can reduce recruitment, selection and training costs. The outcomes of internships for schools can be also significant. These include filling an important modern need for experiential and vocational learning.

Research has emphasized positive outcomes and studies that shed the light on internships negative consequences are narrow. Many studies through the years have made arguments for the potential

benefits of internships (e.g. Feldman *et al.*, 1999; Mihail, 2006; Taylor, 1988), far fewer have studied potential costs. Maertz, Stoeberl & Marks (2014) were the first to clearly define in their paper costs of internship programs for interns (e.g. assigning career-irrelevant “busy work” tasks that provide no value for the intern, having little supervisory support), for employers (e.g. costs in the form of committing human resources to plan, supervise, and evaluate interns, threat of legal liability related to non-compliance with equal employment opportunity law or workman’s compensation law) and for schools (i.e. the compensation-related opportunity costs of administrators and faculty providing internship supervision). They concluded that the costs of the internship are minimal for most interns and potential pitfalls stem from the fact that employers and interns often do not have consistent or shared expectations regarding the internship. In addition, Rogers et al. (2021) in their literature review noted that the few recognized drawbacks of internships for employers mainly deal with the costs of coordination and supervision. They said that interns typically do not have any prior relevant work experience, and thus need constant guidance, training, support and feedback in their daily work (Gerken et al., 2012).

Yet, research on how internships negatively affect outcomes for interns, employers and schools is still limited and the contingencies under which internships may not deliver on their potential benefits have not been clarified to date.

2.2. An Agenda for Future Internships Research

Researchers have investigated the impact of specific features of the internship (duration, work design, work environment characteristics, contextual factors and individual factors) on a variety of positive internships outcomes for interns, employers or schools/universities. However, evidence of the impact of internships remains limited. There is a need for more investigation into the factors

underlying the success or failure of internships, in order to deepen our understanding of the role and effectiveness of internships as a bridge between education and employment.

More specifically, the knowledge gap regarding insufficient work about the optimal internship duration that effectively increases interns' outcomes points to interesting future research, that could explore the factors that might moderate the relationship between duration and internship outcomes (i.e. employability). For example, how the amount of autonomy and feedback provided to the intern affect the determination of the sufficient time allowing the intern to acquire career resource (i.e. professional skills)? How the supervisory support affects the intern's motivation to learn that still needs to be high during the optimal internship duration? How the pay status affects the determination of the duration that balance between training costs and the benefits of interns' work for employers? Future studies should address these questions to help us understand the optimal internship duration that effectively increases outcomes for both interns and employers.

Future studies could also extend previous research findings about the relationship between some work design features (such as autonomy and feedback) and internship outcomes (i.e. learning) and explore interactions between individual characteristics and work design features. For example, do specific amount of autonomy and feedback have a larger effect on learning and performance for some interns (i.e. more experienced interns) than for others? What is the effect of the intern's level of experience on the amount of autonomy and feedback that should be provided to the intern?

The knowledge gap regarding scarce research investigating the role of the co-workers in interns' career growth and development implies that, future research might employ qualitative approaches that could explore the relationship between co-workers' support and positive internship outcomes such as interns' learning and job performance. Qualitative approaches going into the depth of interns' experiences, could also improve our understanding of how the supervisory and co-

workers' support help interns in social processes occurring during the internship. For example, what is the role of supervisory and co-workers' support in helping interns creating a better understanding of career paths and creating their work identity? A qualitative study addressing this research question could be a new line of future inquiry.

To provide an important basis for generalization, future research would also benefit from using a substantial sample of paid and unpaid interns from multiple universities, gathering a rich array of data from multiple academic disciplines, as well as wide variety of industries (e.g. private, nonprofit, and public organizations) and capturing all years of school (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, master's and doctoral students). Future research would also consider the types of internships (e.g. full-time internship, internship abroad, open-market internship, college internship), as it might influence the relationship between pay status and different internships' outcomes.

Regarding the lack of evidence of the impact of unpaid internships on different internships' outcomes, future studies might investigate the economic and social costs arising in connection with unpaid internships and the negative implications on career opportunities of those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Future research might examine the effect of unpaid internships on enhanced employability and employment outcomes. Specifically, how and at what (or whose) cost could employability be enhanced with unpaid internships deficient in either learning content or working conditions? Future studies could also benefit from employing data collection approaches (i.e. in-depth interviews) that allow to explore how unpaid or poorly paid interns lacking training and guidance are able to benefit from the internship experience and develop their professional self and career.

Future research could also explore the effect of internship features on actual employment. Many positive outcomes for interns have been identified in the literature such as enhanced employability but it does not explore whether it translates into actual employment opportunity. I call for more research on the scope and features under which internships favor employability. Further studies could also explore the effect of internship features on other outcomes, such as the time to find employment or the quality of employment. Future research should also address internships' negative consequences. Specifically, how some specific internship features negatively affect outcomes for interns, employers and schools? And what are the contingencies under which internships may not deliver on their potential benefits?

Future studies might also triangulate data and include supervisors' insights on interns' experiences and performances as a way of adding complexity to features driving internships outcomes. Extant research highlights interns' perceptions regarding their benefits from the internship experience, but it does not explore the perceptions of others in the host organization.

2.3. Theoretical Frameworks used to observe Internships

Over the past decade, both scholars and practitioners have shown a growing interest in understanding the internship experience characteristics and its related positive effects on students, employers and educational institutions (Beenen, 2007; D'abate et., al, 2009; Beenen & Rousseau, 2010; Hurst & Good, 2010; Wong, 2011; Hurst, Good and Gardner, 2012; Beenen, 2014; Beenen & Pichler, 2014; Maertz Jr, Stoeberl and Marks, 2014; Rothman & Sisman, 2016; Beenen, Pichler & Levy, 2016; McHugh; 2017; Deschaine & Jankens, 2017; Woo et al, 2017; Kapareliotis, 2019; Bittmann & Zorn, 2019; Popov, 2020; Ebner & Soucek, 2021; Rogers, et al., 2021). In table 13, I

summarize the internships studies. Despite their popularity and extensive history, surprisingly empirical studies on the topic lack a dominant theoretical perspective and are largely descriptive and anecdotal (Narayanan et al., 2010). In addition, theoretical frameworks that account for the intervening of psychological processes in understanding the effectiveness of the internship experience are rare. Most studies focus on the relationship between job characteristics and intern job satisfaction (D'Abate et al., 2009; Rothman, 2003), and impression management and selection (Zhao & Liden, 2011). Other studies use a newcomer socialization perspective to show that structured entry experiences, work design, proactive behavior, and positive emotional expression result in positive learning and socialization outcomes (e.g., Beenen 2014; Beenen & Rousseau, 2010; Feldman, Folks, & Turnley, 1998; Feldman & Weitz, 1990; Liu et al., 2011; Taylor, 1988). For instance, in a review in the journal *Human Resource Management*, Rogers et al. (2021) employed human resource management and volunteerism literatures to propose differences in job design, satisfaction, and vocational development among paid versus unpaid internships. Also, Popov (2020) drew on dialogical methodology and used the focus group method allowing participants to express about the evolvement of their identity in relation to their internship experience. Applying the analytical lens the “work readiness” concept, Kapareliotis et al. (2019) used a literature review examining empirical evidence to study the role of internships for business graduates’ employability prospects. A very limited number of studies in this area with theoretical frameworks are used to observe internships (e.g. Little (1993)). For example, building on existing career theories, transition theory (Schlossberg, 1981) and career construction theory (Savickas, 1997), Inceoglua et al. (2019) investigated the role of supervised work experiences as a transitional step enabling social learning processes and helping in the development of professional identity and thus affecting positively a person’s perceived employability. Accordingly, this research attempts

to fill in the theoretical and practical holes and is more focused theorizing adding to the body of knowledge on internships. Going beyond descriptive analysis and anecdotal evidence, this study draws upon social identity theory to enhance understanding of how interns understand and cope with their temporary professional identity devaluation and its effect on professional identity discovery process.

Table 13: Summary of Internships Studies

Citation	Theoretical base	Research Question(s)	Data/Methods	Main Results	Dependent variable	Independent variables
Beneen (2007)		-How task output clarity, autonomy and experience can affect interns' learning?	-Sample of 122 MBA interns from three schools (class of 2007) over 12 weeks between 1st and 2nd year MBA program. Survey methodology used at two time periods.	-Task learning is high when both task clarity and autonomy are high regardless experience.	-Task learning	1) task output clarity 2) autonomy 3) experience
Beenen, Pichler & Levy (2016)		-What are the mechanisms by which perceived autonomy-supportive supervision is related to subordinate feedback seeking during organizational entry?	-Sample of 468 MBA fulltime interns from 10 MBA programs in the US between 1st and 2nd year MBA program. Survey methodology collected at two time periods; Confirmatory Factor Analysis(CFA), Mediation Analysis (SPSS Mediate), SEM analysis.	-Perceived autonomy support motivates subordinate feedback seeking by task autonomy, Informal feedbacks from supervisors and a proactive relationship building.	-Subordinate feedback seeking	1)Perceived autonomy support 2)Task autonomy 3) competency 4) relatedness
Beenen (2014)		-What motivational antecedents predict the learning of key managerial skills, and job performance in MBA internships?	-Sample of 508 MBA interns from 10 full time MBA programs in the U.S and who worked for over 245 organizations. Survey methodology; CFA, mediation analysis (SPSS mediate), SEM analysis, OLS analysis interaction analysis.	1)Prove performance has a greater effect on interns learning and performance when combined with supervisor concern for performance. 2) Supervisors advocating a balance of learning and performance activities has multiplicative effects on intern performance.	1)Intern's learning 2) Intern's performance	1)Learning goal orientation 2) Performance goal orientations(PPGO-APGO) 3) Supervisor concern for learning 4) Supervisor concern for performance

Beenen & Rousseau (2010)	-How is the structure of MBA intern roles related to intern learning and job acceptance?	-Sample of 110 MBA interns across 3 full-time MBA programs (class of 2007) in mid-western US. Survey methodology used at 2 time periods. Descriptive statistics for study participants (EFA, CFA and mediation analysis).	<p>1) Task goal clarity is positively related to learning</p> <p>2) Learning is positively related to job acceptance intentions</p> <p>3) The relationship between task goal clarity and learning is stronger when autonomy is low and weaker when it is high</p> <p>4) The relationship between task goal clarity and learning is stronger for less experienced interns with low autonomy, and stronger for more experienced interns with high autonomy.</p>	<p>1) Intern's learning</p> <p>2) Intern's job acceptance</p>	<p>1) the clarity of the task goals to be accomplished during the internship</p> <p>2) the intern's autonomy in pursuing these goals</p> <p>3) the intern's prior work experience</p>
McHugh (2017)	-How internships' design and content (compensation, mentoring and support and job characteristics such as task goal clarity and autonomy) can affect intern's outcomes and alter the efficacy of the internship experience?	-Sample of undergraduate students specializing in 26 different majors from 17 different universities in the US; Survey methodology/observation methods (Retrospective Self-reported measure; separate regression models; hierarchical regression analysis)	<p>1) Paid internships with greater supervisor mentoring, higher supervisor support, higher task goal clarity and autonomy will lead to higher developmental value, higher satisfaction, and greater job pursuit purposes.</p> <p>2) Unpaid internships will result in less mentoring, less developmental value and lower job pursuit targets.</p>	-Internship efficacy (the developmental value of the internship; the job pursuit intentions of the intern; and intern satisfaction).	<p>1) compensation</p> <p>2) supervisor behaviors</p> <p>3) work design</p>
Hurst, Good & Gardner (2012)	-How supervisory support expectations, psychological contract of employer obligations, job satisfaction, perceptions of advancement opportunities and affective organizational commitment govern/control the intern's conversion intentions to agree to receive an offer for full-time employment?	-Sample of 160 interns (college juniors and seniors) at three universities in the USA who completed a retail/service internship during summer 2008; Survey methodology (on-line, self-administered, survey questionnaire); descriptive statistics (SPSS); Path analysis (AMOS)	-When internship employer fulfills the expected psychological contract obligations that are dependent on supervisory support expectations (interaction between employee and supervisor), interns are more satisfied with their job and will remain with their internship company because they feel a sense of belonging with the organization. This affective organizational commitment contributed by perceptions of advancement opportunities influences their decision to accept a fulltime position upon graduation.	-Interns' conversion intentions (to accept an offer for full-time employment)	<p>1) Supervisory support</p> <p>2) Psychological contract of employer obligations</p> <p>3) Job satisfaction</p> <p>4) Perceptions of advancement opportunities</p> <p>5) Affective organizational commitment</p>

Woo,
Putnam &
Riforgiate
(2017)

1)What types of dialectical tensions do interns report they experience in doing identity work? 2)How do types of tensions differ for students who report being satisfied versus dissatisfied with their internship experiences? 3)How do responses to tensions differ for interns who fall into the categories of satisfied versus dissatisfied with their internship experiences? 4)What sources do interns draw on to engage in identity work? 5)How do sources for identity work differ for participants who report satisfaction versus dissatisfaction with their internships?

-Sample of 40 interns of average age 20 (13 participants suggested by a university internship director and referred by initial interviewees and 27 participants at two large public universities in the Midwest and the West Coast), currently involved in or have just completed an internship program, represent diverse types of organizations, work in either paid or unpaid positions, and work in different types of internship positions/Semi-structured face to face interviews(50 min each);retrospective survey, open coding, axial coding, interviews analysis, discussion& comparison.

-Inexperienced student worker versus competent employee, formed the core of an intern's adoption of identity. The student worker identity interfaced with the now orientation of the time frame and the close supervision pole in capturing the expectations that many students held for internships, particularly that they necessitated close supervision for vocational and organizational training. The competent employee status aligned with how interns imagined themselves in the future, including having the experience of distant supervision with less monitoring and control. Interns in the satisfied category create their identities by moving beyond the tensions, and accept their internships as a gain (seizing opportunities), whereas interns in the dissatisfied category tried to connect the opposites, they wanted to be seen as competent workers, but also preferred close supervision that aligned with student worker identities and consider their internship as a loss (lack of opportunities). Interns in the satisfied category used reframing, transcendence, and reflexivity, whereas interns in the dissatisfied category used defensive technique and failed to balance, integrate or merge tensions when responding to them.

-Intern's Identity Work

- 1)Intern's identity tension (Inexperienced student vs competent employee)
- 2) Temporal relevance of internship (focus on present vs future)
- 3) Supervision (close vs distant)
- 4) Intern's satisfaction vs dissatisfaction with their internship experience

De Cuyper,
Mauno &
Kinnunen
(2010)

-How does job demand (workload) and job control (autonomy) affect job involvement (signal of motivation) in temporary and permanent workers?

-A Belgian sample of 516 respondents from two organizations: A public hospital (N = 316) and an organization from manufacturing industry (N = 200) and a Finnish sample of 736 respondents from four hospitals from the Central Finland Health Care District, all offering high quality and specialized health care/Survey (questionnaire) distributed during group sessions or through the internal mail service of the hospital; four items from the QPS Nordic quest./scale developed by Jackson, Wall, Martin, and Davids (1993)/ Cronbach's alpha/ six items developed by Kanungo (1982)/ the dedication subscale of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003)/ Kanungo's (1982) job involvement scale/means,SD & correlations.

-The relationship between autonomy and job involvement was positive for permanent workers, but not for temporary workers. The interaction term between workload and contract type did not contribute in explaining variance in job involvement, workload is a psychological contract obligation to return investments on the part of the employer.

-Job involvement (as indicator to motivation)

- 1) Job demand (workload)
- 2) Job control (autonomy)

Beenen &
Pichler
(2014)

1) How do organizational socialization tactics impact job pursuit in the context of internships? 2) What mediating and moderating mechanisms explain these relationships?

-Sample of 106 experienced full-time MBA interns (5.7 years) working in different industries in the mid-western United States. Data is collected at four points of the job-pursuit process: pre-entry, post-entry, post-internship, and post-decision/Online survey methodology (by mail); Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA); A five-factor model (P-O fit, social aspects tactics, proactive employment information seeking inside/outside, employer learning) ;(OLS) regression, logistic regression, SPSS macros (descriptive analysis), moderation analysis & centered analysis

-Pre-entry person-organization (P-O) fit and social aspects tactics in combination motivate proactive information seeking about the employer (from those inside and outside the assigned department) during the internship, and interactively motivate information seeking outside the assigned department. So far, only information seeking inside the assigned department is related to learning about the employer. Learning about the employer also predicts job-acceptance intentions, which in turn predicts job-acceptance decisions.

-Intern's job pursuit

- 1) Employer Social aspects tactics (organizational activities)
- 2) Intern Pre-entry Person-Organization (P-O) fit
- 3) Proactive information seeking (inside & outside dep.)
- 4) Intern learning about the employer
- 5) Intern job acceptance intention
- 6) Intern job acceptance decision

D'Abate, Youndt & Wenzel (2009)	-How job characteristics, work environment characteristics, and contextual factors contribute to the intern's job satisfaction?	-Sample of 303 students (261 of them responded and 43% of the respondents had participated in internships) enrolled in classes in the Department of Management and Business at a liberal arts college in the northeastern United States. Survey methodology/ Pilot interviews with twelve juniors and seniors who recently completed internships in a method like the one described by Trochim (2005); Three-item version of Hackman and Oldham's (1975,1980) general job satisfaction scale /The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient/ Multi item scales derived from the relevant literature Herzberg, 1965, 1974) and pilot interviews/ Regression analyses.	-There is no relationship between contextual factors and internship satisfaction. Job characteristics (task significance and feedback) strongly influenced internship satisfaction. Work environment characteristics (having a very supportive supervisor who acts as a mentor, opportunities to learn new information and lessons) highly affected internship job satisfaction.	-Intern's satisfaction (student's satisfaction with their internships)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Job characteristics (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, feedback) 2) Work environment characteristics (learning opportunities, supervisory support, career development opportunities, coworker support, organization satisfaction) 3) Contextual factors (flexible work hours, reasonable commute, paid versus unpaid, pay satisfaction, desirable location)
Hurst & Good (2010)	-How the nature of internships or internship programmed has changed over the past 20 years?	-Relevant literature review	-Companies depends frequently on internship programs to recruit new employees. The issue of paid versus unpaid internships is still debatable; Paid or not, internships are valuable, still interns have more liability toward paid jobs. The project-oriented approach in internships is well approved. The recognition of interns' socialization into the company culture has increased because interns like to be treated as full-time employees. Mentoring and providing feedback are important factors in internship success.	-Internships or internships programs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Interns recruiting tool 2) support of internships by retailers and educators 3) Internships pay as a legal issue 4) Structure of internship programs 5) Interns socialization

Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou (2017)

1)How much students are satisfied with their internship experience? 2)What are the factors that contribute to their satisfaction? 3)What are the elements of the internship they value most?

-Sample of 172 (63 international) and (109 greek) undergraduate students (18 to 24 years) employed in 4/5 stars hotel for a 6 months summer internship. Self-administered survey (qualitative questions) distributed at the end of the internship and collected in 4 months/Quantitative data approaches; content validity method; T-tests; multiple response frequencies (for analysis of motivation); regression/recruitment of satisfaction in 4 categories (bad/fair/VG/Exc).

-Students suggested that the overall internship experience was very good. Learning new things from the internship experience and the real working environment were the most important factors that significantly related to the overall satisfaction. Interns placed more value to learning in a professional environment (opportunity to learn and acquiring new knowledge) and the career prospects regardless the long working hours, the poor pay and the lack of coordination they have challenged.

-Interns (students) overall satisfaction

1)Real working conditions (professional environment, career prospects, working hours, pay, level of coordination, relationship with coworkers, interesting work)

2) Learning experience (meaningful tasks, relevant to academic courses, relevant to interests, availability and level of supervision and guidance, acquiring new knowledge and skills.

Rothman & Sisman (2016)

1) After completing an internship in a particular job function, would students confirm or disconfirm their interest in continuing to search for a job after graduation in that job function? 2) After completing an internship in a particular industry, would students confirm or disconfirm their interest in continuing to search for a job after graduation in that industry?

-Sample of 198 undergraduate business students aged 20 to 23 years old enrolled for academic credit in an internship class during their last few terms of university in the USA. Open-ended questions (coding)/ Reflection/ Information through internet/ Consultation of completed course enrollment documents/ Qualitative content analysis methodology/ Inter judgment comparisons/ Discussions between researchers after categorization.

-Internship had a positive effect on students' career considerations as they learned valuable information about themselves in relation to this work experience. Over half the interns (54%) who completed an internship in a business specialty confirmed their interests in pursuing those same job functions in the future. However, less than half the interns (45%) preferred continuing a job search in the same industry as their internship.

-Interns' career-related preferences (intentions to explore future opportunities within the same or different job functions or industries as their internship)

-Internship work experience

Maertz Jr, Stoeberl & Marks (2014)	1)What types of internships are possible? 2) Should we engage initially or increase internships? 3) How should we attempt to maximize outcomes from internships?	-Literature review (defining internships through identifying 11 key dimensions, listing the potential benefits and costs/pitfalls of internships for interns, schools, and employers and summarizing recommendations to help maximizing the benefits obtained from internships while minimizing the costs and avoiding common pitfalls/ adopting a talent management decision-making perspective (Vaiman et al., 2012)).	-For interns, job-related benefits, career-related benefits, and networking/job market benefits have been identified in the literature. The costs of the internship for most of them are minimal. Prospective pitfalls derive from the fact that employers and interns often do not have consistent or shared expectations regarding the internship. For schools, the benefits of internships include filling an important modern need for experiential and vocational learning. For employers, hiring an intern for a full-time position after the assignment can lead to savings in the areas of recruitment and selection.	-Outcomes from internships	-Internship overall experience (dimensions, benefits, costs, pitfalls)
Kapareliotis Voutsina & Patsiotis (2019)	-How internship employment (placement) is implicated in the young business graduates' employability prospects?	-Sample of 275 interns online survey data have been used.	-Students who attend internship programs assessed positively all aspects of the work readiness construct. They knew what it was expected by employers from them to do at work. They were able to effectively apply basic academic skills, high-order skills and professional skills required by employers on the job and placed greater importance to the intrinsic rewards than the extrinsic ones	-Students' perceptions regarding their degree of "work readiness" (role clarity, ability and motivation)	-Completing an internship program.
Bittmann & Zorn (2019)	-What is the effect of mandatory and voluntary internships on outcomes (income, job mismatch, and overall job satisfaction)?	-Estimating linear and logistic regression models using data from Austria	-Voluntary internships are associated with significantly better labor market outcomes while no complementary effects were found for mandatory internships. no significant interaction effects were found between internships and other working episodes during the time of study. Both students, with and without field-related working experience, profit from extra-curricular internships.	-Outcomes (income, job mismatch, and overall job satisfaction).	-Mandatory and voluntary internships

Popov (2020)	-How young people's reflections on their internship experience suggest the importance of their identity project?	-Dialogical methodology and the focus group method	-Interns' identity projects are articulated, refined or enhanced through internship experience and driving future cycles of boundary crossing by shaping their plans for the future.	-The intern's identity project	-The internship experience	
Ebner & Soucek (2021)	-Why internships have a positive effect on students' self-perceived employability.	-A two-wave study among graduate students currently in an internship investigated these relationships. Data on career-entry worries, perceived employability and an evaluation of the internship was collected from 80 students (mean age: 24.6 years, 68% female) from various fields of study aiming at both bachelor's and master's degrees.	-Positively evaluated internships contributed to graduates' self-perceived employability by means of reduced career-entry worries over an eight-week period.	-Students' self-perceived employability	-Positively evaluated internships	
Rogers, Miller, Finchbaugh & Giddarie (2021)	-Drawing upon theories from human resource management and volunteerism	-Why unpaid internships might exhibit less job structure than paid internships, and how this possibly influences the intern job satisfaction and vocational development?	-Literature Review	-As internships continue to be performed by a mix of paid and unpaid workers and as the proportion of unpaid interns steadily increases, it becomes ever important to understand how mainstream workplace concepts such as job design apply to workers who do not receive monetary compensation for their labor.	-Intern job satisfaction and vocational development	-Paid vs Unpaid internships

Source: own elaboration

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CHAPTER 3:

Theoretical Framework:

Social Identity Theory, Identity devaluation and

Professional Identity development

Index of chapter 3

3.1. Theoretical framework for this study: Social Identity Theory, Identity devaluation and professional identity development	117
3.1.1. Social identity theory: relating individual’s identity with behaviors	117
3.1.1.1. Postulates of social identity theory	117
3.1.1.2. What is social identity?.....	118
3.1.1.3. The process of social identity development	118
3.1.1.4. Factors influencing social identity development	120
3.1.2. Social identity devaluation and identity management strategies	122
3.1.2.1. Social identity devaluation	122
3.1.2.2. Identity management strategies	124
3.1.3. Professional identity development	128
3.1.3.1. What is professional identity	128
3.1.3.2. The process of professional identity development	128
3.1.3.3. Factors shaping professional identity development	130
3.1.3.4. Outcomes from professional identity development	134
3.1.4. Social identity devaluation in the professional context.....	138
3.1.4.1. Strategies for identity devaluation management	138
3.1.4.2. Outcomes from identity devaluation management strategies.....	144
3.1.5. Social identity devaluation in internships	146
3.2. References in the chapter	149

3.1. Theoretical Framework for this study: Social Identity Theory, Identity Devaluation and Professional Identity Development

3.1.1. Social Identity Theory: Relating Individual's Identity with Behaviors

3.1.1.1. Postulates of Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory (SIT), in social psychology, was developed as an integrative theory to explain how individuals create and define their place in society (Tajfel, 1979). It focuses mainly on intergroup relations. It proposes that group membership helps people to define who they are and to determine how they relate to others. Groups (i.e. social class) which people belong to give them a sense of social identity: a sense of belonging to the social world (Tajfel, 1972; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

SIT further proposes that people strive to achieve or maintain a positive social identity derived from favorable comparisons between the group to which they belong (the in-group) and the others (the out-group) (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012). From the perspective of SIT, people tend to favor members of their own group, to reward them more, and evaluate them more positively than out-group members (Ellemers and Van Nunspeet, 2020).

According to SIT, social identity development is the cognitive process that reinforces the generation of behaviors and actions (Turner, 1982). The salience of social identity is highly dependent on the social context, and can transform rapidly as the context changes (Stets and Burke, 2000). Accordingly, individuals tend to behave in a way to improve their self-esteem and self- efficacy (Turner et al., 1987) trying to delineate the interpretations associated with the social category (Hogg et al 1995), reflecting the salience of their social identity.

3.1.1.2. What is social identity?

Social identity can be defined as people's sense of "who they are" (Ashforth and Mael, 1989) in terms of the groups to which they belong, together with some value and emotional significance of that group membership (Tajfel, 1978). A social identity is the outcome of a process of social categorization and of identification with the groups people belong to, which they then characterize as part of themselves. To categorize in-group and out-group and to identify with one's own group entails social comparison between groups; People define their groups, and more generally who they are, partly by comparison with others. In line with the normative social change agenda of SIT, social identity is not just about "being" but also about "becoming" (Spears et al., 2001).

3.1.1.3. The process of social identity development

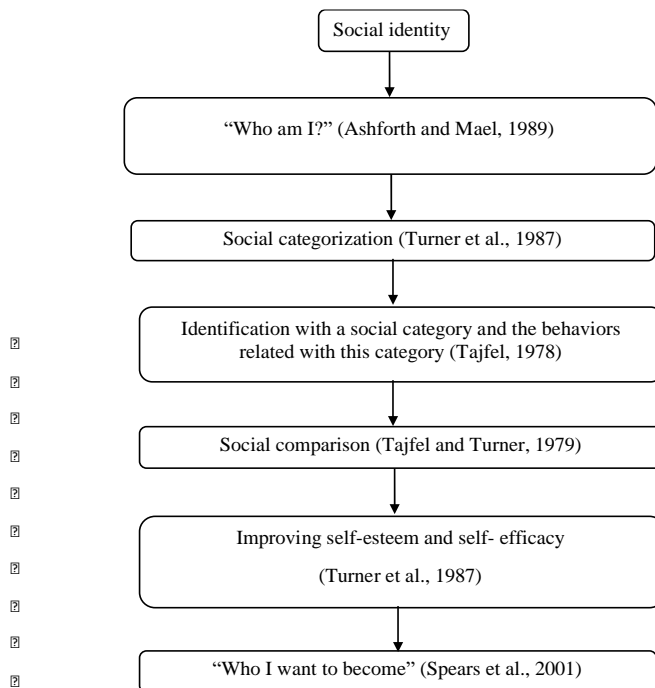
According to the SIT, three psychological processes are central in explaining how individuals create and define their place in society: social categorization, social identification and social comparison (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). These processes take place in a specific order. Figure 1 describes the process of social identity development.

The first process is categorization. Through social categorization, people tend to perceive themselves and others in terms of particular social categories. They find out things about themselves by knowing what categories they belong to and divide the world into "out-group" (others not belonging to the category) and "in-group" (category they belong to). People define appropriate behavior according to attitudes, beliefs and behavioral norms of categories they belong to (Pratt, 2000; Stets and Burke, 2000; Hogg & Mullin, 1999; Hogg and Abrams 1988; Tajfel, 1978).

The second process is identification. Through social identification, people adopt the identity of the social group they have categorized themselves as belonging to (in-group) and conform to the norms of and the behaviors related with the group (Tajfel, 1978). This process leads people to evaluate their in-group positively and their out-group negatively. There will be an emotional significance to people’s identification with a group, and their self-esteem will become closely associated with group membership.

The final process is social comparison. Through this process, people determine the relative value of a particular group and its members. Once people have categorized themselves as part of a group and have identified with that group, they then tend to compare that group with other groups. If their self-esteem is to be maintained (Turner et al., 1987), their group needs to compare favorably with other groups.

Figure 1: Social Identity Development



Source: own elaboration

3.1.1.4. Factors influencing social identity development

Previous research suggests that social interactions, individual agency and role models are important factors in shaping one's social identity as they constitute the raw materials of a broad "identity set" that individuals can draw upon to develop identity. Figure 2 illustrates the factors affecting identity development, namely: social interactions, individual agency and role models.

First, *social interactions* shape social identity development as individuals strive to communicate to others, a preferred version of self or group identity (Harding, 2007; Petriglieri and Stein, 2012; Sveningsson and Larsson, 2006). Social interaction is the interplay of the individual with the social environment (Acker, 1990; Alderfer & Smith, 1982; Alvesson & Billing, 1998; Carbado & Gulati, 2000; Cooley, 1902; Deaux & Ethier, 1998; Goffman, 1959; Mead, 1934; Meyerson, 2001; West & Fenstermaker, 1995; Wharton, 1992; Markus and Kitayama, 1991), where self-comparisons with other categories occur to enhance self-esteem and reduce uncertainty about one's place in that category (Hogg and Abrams 1988). Individuals attempt to influence how their identity is perceived by others, through social interactions (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003; Watson, 2008). People understand who they are and who they want to be by determining others' reactions to their behavior (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Others are important for social comparison, for reflected appraisal and in their role in validating one's new behaviors and providing feedback about how to improve. Feedback that is clear and salient at an emotional level (Ibarra 1999) plays a critical role in helping individuals to gain insights about their enduring preferences, talents, and values (Schein, 1978).

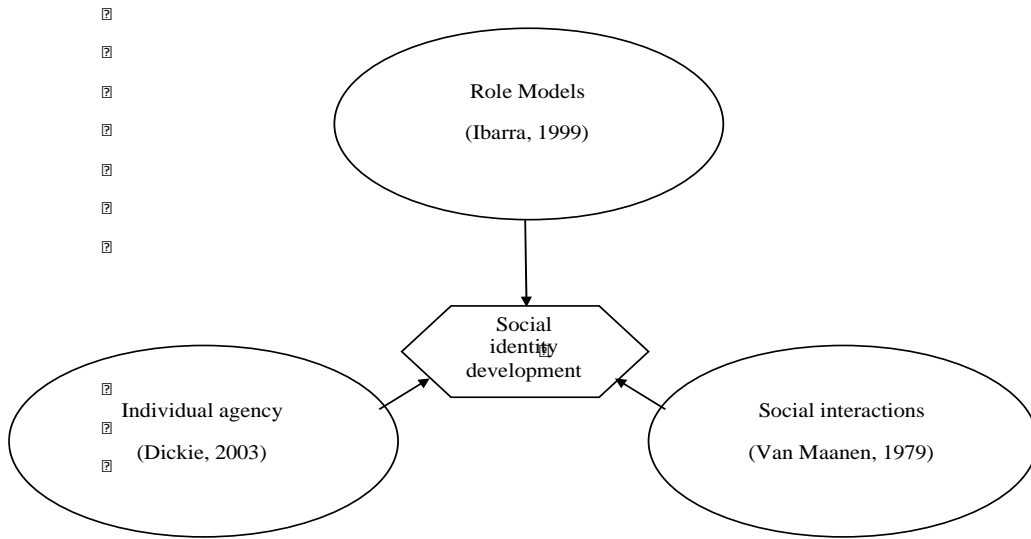
Second, *individual agency* plays an important role in the process of individuals' identity development in social contexts (e.g. Dickie, 2003; Ibarra, 1999; Snow & Anderson, 1987). Individual agency is the capacity of individuals to have the power and resources to fulfill their

potential. “People are not just milquetoasts who passively sit back as targets of others’ treatment and absorb any identity relevant information they encounter” (Polzer et al., 2002), individuals tie their social identities to their abilities (Ashforth, Harrison, and Corley, 2008). By relying on own technical and analytic skills, people try to overcome uncertainties in expressing themselves and to improve their ability to reflect their real persona (Ibarra, 1999). The individual characteristics of the person including the preexisting set of skills, talents, preferences, past experiences, and self-conceptions help predicting social identity change (Ibarra,1999). Individuals create and become more facile with a repertoire of resources from which they develop diverse self-presentation strategies. They attempt to project a preferred image of themselves (Goffman, 1959; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Roberts, 2005) in order to adapt to a particular group identity (Alvesson & Wilmott, 2002; Hewlin, 2003, 2009). As individuals engage in self-presentation strategies by conveying qualities (e.g. competence, intelligence, trustworthiness) to construct positive personas and seek others approval (Goffman, 1959; Schlenker & Pontari, 2000), they are building possible identities (Ibarra, 1999).

Third, *role models* play a key role in the process of social identity development (Ibarra, 1999). A role model is someone who inspires others to imitate his or her good behavior and help them to change behaviors, attitudes and emotions to get where they want to go. “Imitating role models” (Ibarra, 1999) shapes individuals’ behaviors and relationships in the social context. By observing, comparing and evaluating different role models’ traits and behaviors, individuals learn and acquire skills, attitudes, and impression management strategies and combine these with one’s self to develop a more self-tailored identity. Role models (Ibarra, 1999) are potential sources in people’s social identity development as they create the need for identity development, provide the raw

materials for such development, and provide opportunities for validating the new developed social identity (Ashforth, 2001).

Figure 2: Factors influencing social identity development



Source: own elaboration

3.1.2. Social Identity Devaluation and Identity management strategies

3.1.2.1. Social Identity Devaluation

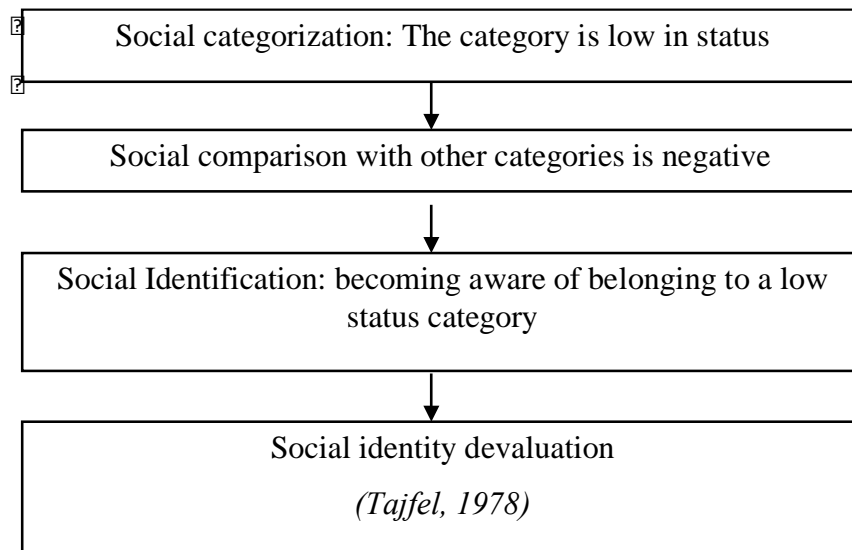
Social identity devaluation (Tajfel, 1978) is seen as the outcome of three processes (see figure 3, below). The first process is social categorization by which people interpret their low position in the social context and their negative perceptions of others (i.e. stereotyping), as well as their own behavior in categories (i.e. social influence). Thus, the low social status of a category is the

outcome of the negative feedback and subjective judgments about one's social position provided by the social context (Hogg & Abrams, 1988).

The second process is social comparison with other categories by which people determine that the relative value or social status of their category and its members is low. Therefore, the outcome of self-comparisons with other categories is negative and the category is regarded negatively by others. For instance, compared with university professors, schoolteachers can be seen as having lower social status.

The third process is social identification by which people become aware of being socially devalued and belonging to a low status category, together with some emotional and significance of that category membership. Thus, people's devalued social identity indicates who they are in terms of the devalued category to which they belong.

Figure 3: Social identity devaluation



Source: own elaboration

3.1.2.2. Identity management strategies

Being part of a low-status category is damaging to morale (Ellemers & Barreto, 2001), threatens the category's identity and stimulates the desire to improve its position (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002). To restore a satisfactory social identity, individuals engage in identity management strategies (Martiny & Rubin, 2016). Figure 4 illustrates the variety of identity management strategies (Tajfel, 1978) individuals employ when their social identity is negatively perceived by others (devalued social identity), namely: individual mobility, social competition, and social creativity. The strategy employed depends on the perceived legitimacy of the inter category relation, its perceived stability, and the perceived permeability of category boundaries (Tajfel, 1982). However, SIT remains vague regarding when each sub-strategy is applied (Niens and Cairns, 2003).

- Individual mobility: According to SIT, individual mobility is defined as an individual-level solution for overcoming category devaluation and pursuing individual status improvement irrespective of the category (i.e. assimilation). Thus, individuals' opportunities and outcomes are viewed as dependent on their talents, life choices, and achievements rather than on their social categories. Individual mobility is dissociating oneself socially and psychologically from a category and requires conformity to the norms and practices of the higher-status category to gain acceptance into a more elevated status position. An individual emulates the values and behavior of the higher-status category in order to gain the opportunity to entry (Ellemers, van Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1990; Ellemers, Wilke, & Van Knippenberg, 1993). This can be achieved for example, by getting a better education to unlock doors to a high-status profession, moving to a different country, marrying into a wealthy family or studying a foreign language.

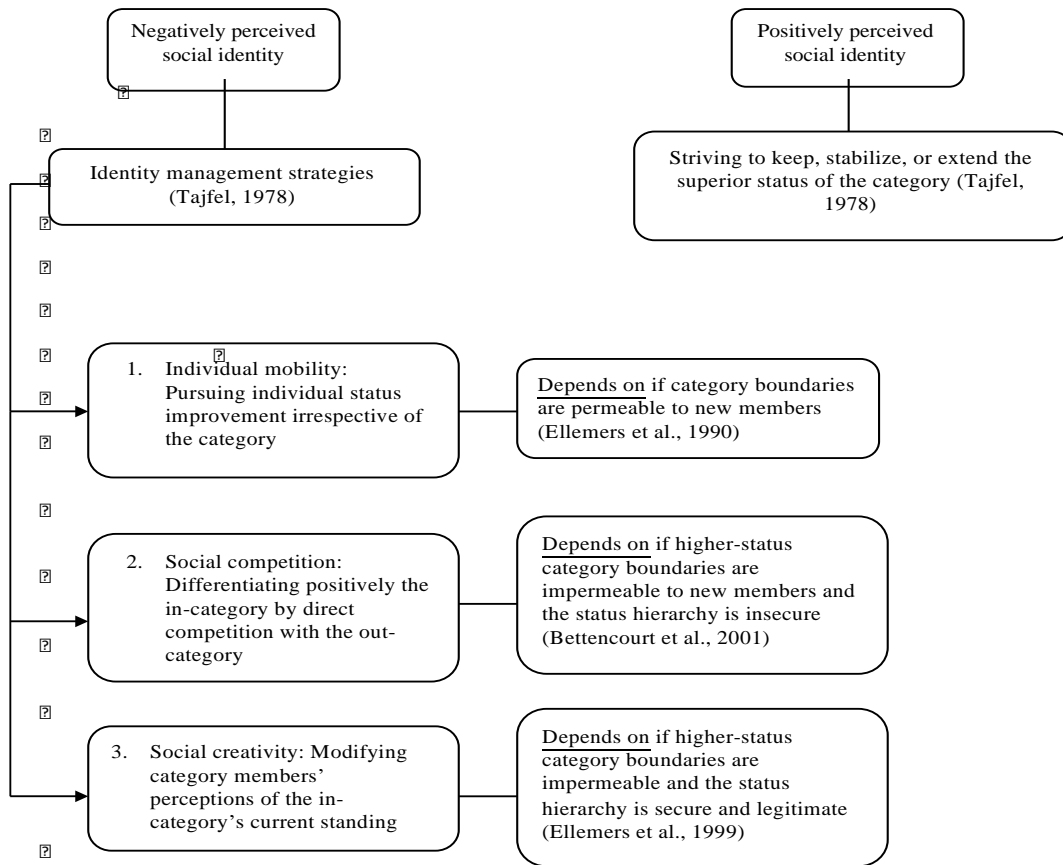
Individual mobility is easier to implement when category boundaries are permeable to new members (Ellemers et al., 1990) and individuals can move from a lower-status to a higher-status category, such that individuals are not bound or restricted by their category memberships in pursuing status improvement (i.e., if it is possible to achieve higher status individually). The social mobility strategy is the preferred strategy used by members of low-status categories (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986).

- Social competition: According to SIT, social competition is defined as a category-level (collective) strategy that requires category members to collaborate together and combine efforts to help each other improve their collective performance or outcomes. This strategy focuses on positive distinctiveness and favoritism of the in-category and requires positive differentiation by direct competition with the out-category. For example, in minimal category investigations, individuals reveal a compatible bias both towards increasing in-category gain and toward increasing differential gain to the advantage of the in-category, even when the total in-category gain suffers. Social competition can be used when the change of category membership is impossible or dissociating oneself socially and psychologically from a category is costly (i.e. when identification with the in-category is very strong and cannot be rejected). This strategy is employed by lower-status individuals striving for equal or superior status if higher-status category boundaries are impermeable to new members and the status hierarchy is insecure (Bettencourt et al., 2001; Ellemers et al., 1993; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The status hierarchy is insecure when it is perceived by the lower-status category to be illegitimate and liable to change (Turner & Brown, 1978; Ellemers, 1993).

- Social creativity: According to SIT, social creativity is defined as a category-level (collective) strategy that implies that low-status category members modify their perceptions of the in-category's current standing instead of altering objective outcomes, to regain or maintain positive distinctiveness for the social categories with which they identify. This strategy concerns reinterpreting or redefining the elements of the inter-category comparison in a favorable way for the in- category (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), rather than improving the status of the in-category through social competition with a relevant out-category on the comparison dimension causing the status difference. Social creativity aims to improve the category's status without changing its structure, thereby increasing satisfaction with the category's identity. This may be achieved by comparing the in-category to the out-category on some new dimension. For example, individuals could say "we are poor but we are happy" (Becker, 2012). A second possibility is changing the values assigned to the attributes of the category (i.e. downplaying how important a certain attribute is). For example, individuals could say "we are poor but we don't care much about money" (Becker, 2012). A third possibility is choosing an alternative out-category by which to compare the in-category (i.e. avoiding comparisons with higher status out-categories). For example, individuals could say "we are poor but they are even poorer than us" (Becker, 2012). Social creativity is pursued by a category seeking prestige in a different area if higher-status category boundaries are impermeable (Jackson et al., 1996) and the status hierarchy appears to be secure and legitimate (Ellemers, Barreto, & Spears, 1999; Ellemers et al., 1993; Hinkle et al., 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The status hierarchy is legitimate when lower-status categories believe that the criteria used to determine the social structure are equitable (Spears, 2008).

SIT postulates that a precondition for identity management is a negatively perceived social identity. In the case of positive social identities, individuals should instead strive to keep, stabilize, or extend the superior status of their category (Tajfel, 1978).

Figure 4: Identity Management Strategies



Source: own elaboration

3.1.3. Professional Identity Development

3.1.3.1. What is professional identity?

Professional identity is the social identity displayed at work and therefore related to the intergroup processes of categorization, group identification, and social comparison (Tajfel, 1981). The professional identity is defined as the individual's social identity when this individual is identified with a professional category and when he/she self-defines in a professional role with regard to his/her qualities, beliefs, motives, and experiences (Cardoso et al., 2014; Schein, 1978). A professional identity is people's viewpoint of "who they are" (Ashforth and Mael, 1989) as professionals in terms of the professional categories to which they belong, together with some value and emotional significance of that professional category membership (Tajfel, 1978) and "who they want to become" in the future (Cardoso et al., 2014). Professional identity is described as 'the sense of being a member of a profession' (Paterson et al. 2002) involving the individual's application of knowledge and skills, social interactions with colleagues and clients, and place within the professional organization and the professional discourse. It is thus socially bestowed, socially sustained and socially transformed.

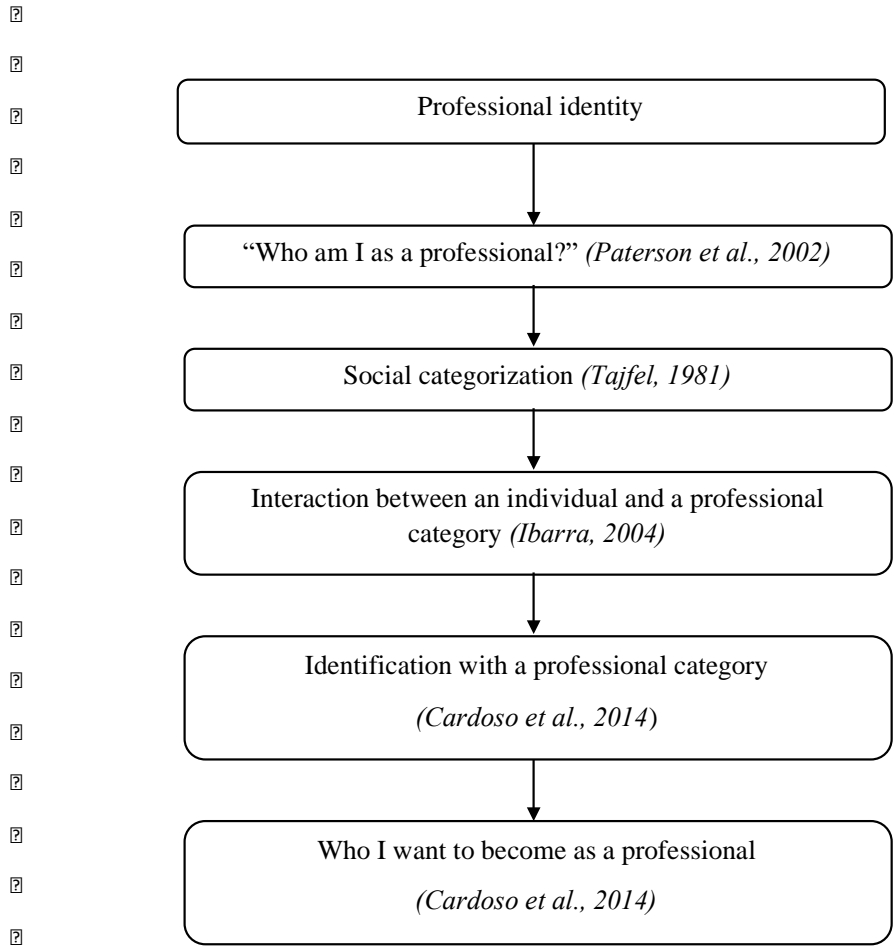
3.1.3.2. The process of professional identity development

Professional identity development is similar to social identity development in that both professional identity and social identity are developed through a process of social categorization and of identification with the categories (i.e. professional category) individuals belong to, which they then characterize as part of themselves. Figure 5 describes the process of professional identity

development. First, individuals categorize themselves with a particular professional category (Tajfel, 1981) and define appropriate behavior according to attitudes, beliefs and behavioral norms of the professional category they belong to (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Second, individuals begin interacting and developing connections with others in the professional context (i.e. the professional category), learning about oneself through engaging in activities associated with the professional role, and crafting new narratives regarding oneself (Ibarra, 2004). Third, individuals identify with the cultural and situational context of the professional category they have categorized themselves as belonging to (Cardoso et al., 2014) and self-reflect on feelings, needs and values related with this category (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). They become able to relate their self with the profession.

The development of professional identity is an ongoing, dynamic and flexible process that is developed through the interaction between an individual and a professional category. During this process, new professional experiences and the interpretation of these experiences play a significant role (Lutovac, 2020), leading to a growth in understanding about professional practice and a commitment to the profession (Marcia, 2002; Larson et al., 2013; Dahl et al., 2014; Bagnasco et al., 2019; Horberg et al., 2019). The development of professional identity is thought to play a central role in the career development process and help individuals to decide who they want to become as professionals (Cardoso et al., 2014).

Figure 5: Professional Identity Development



Source: own elaboration

3.1.3.3. Factors shaping professional identity development

The development of a professional identity and learning about the profession occur simultaneously (Pratt et al., 2006). Studies have approached different aspects of this topic such as organizational identification (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003; Pratt, 1998), image and identity in professional adaptation (Ladge and Little, 2019; Ibarra, 1999), identity formation among professionals (Petriglieri et al., 2019; Cardoso et al., 2014; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Pratt, Rockmann &

Kaufmann, 2006) and management of identity devaluation (Scheifele et al., 2021; Hebl et al., 2020; Little et al., 2015; Roberts, 2005).

Existing research in this area indicates that the process of professional identity development is shaped by 1) the professional environment (e.g. relationships with peers at work, interactions with supervisors and others at work) (Gersick, Dutton, & Bartunek, 2000; Higgins & Kram, 2001; Pratt, Rockman & Kaufmann, 2006), 2) the individual agency (i.e. individual's knowledge and skills (Ibarra, 1999)) and 3) role models in the professional context (Ibarra, 1999; Pratt et al., 2006) (see figure 6, below).

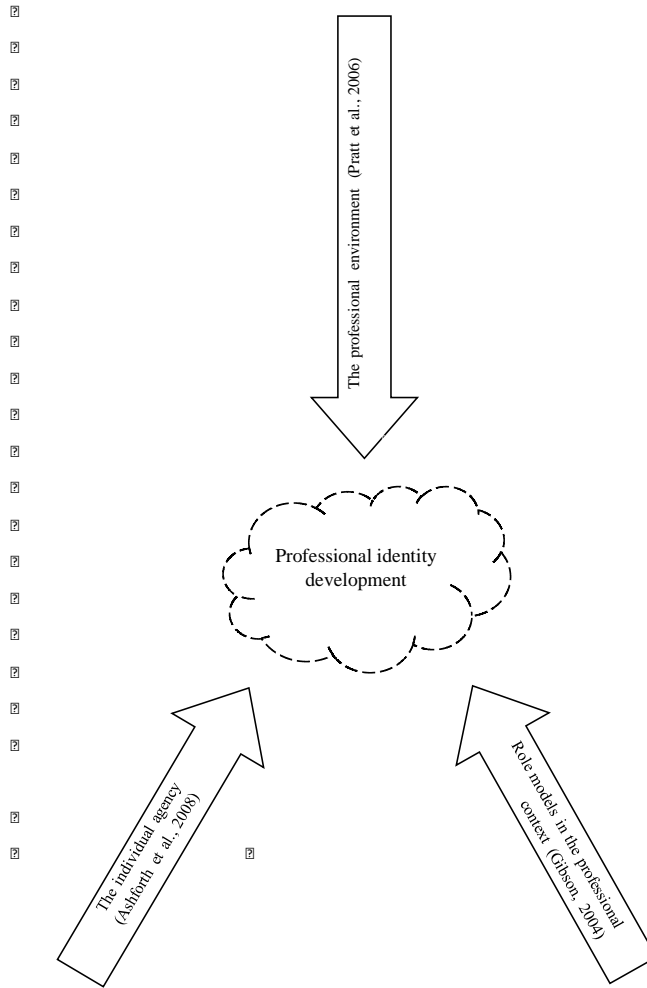
First, *the professional environment* is one of the main factors that affect the development of professional identity (Philippa et al., 2021; Petriglieri et al., 2019). The professional environment is the social environment at work including the setting, social aspects (social relationships and interactions) and physical conditions within which people perform their job and interact. It plays a critical role in creating professional identity (Petriglieri et al., 2019) as it constitutes the social context that enable sense making (Petriglieri and petriglieri, 2010) and gaining a clear understanding of professional standards, expectations, ethical values and technical skills (Nadelson et al., 2015; Paterson et al. 2002). Professional environments facilitate organizational socialization during which social interaction with mentors and others (e.g. managers, and peers) in the profession and participation in meaningful social activities occur (Fathi and Derakhshan, 2019). The relationships with peers the individual has in the work domain (Pratt, Rockman & Kaufmann, 2006), as well as the support from mentors impact the development of professional identity (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979; Pratt, 2000). Mentors facilitate the organizational identification process through allowing the representation of organizational values, standards, and norms and reducing employees' uncertainty (Hogg, 2001).

Second, *the individual agency* (see section 3.1.1.4., paragraph 3) is another important factor that can influence professional identity development as individuals tie their professional identities (social identities within the professional context) to their abilities (Ashforth, Harrison, and Corley, 2008). The individual's commitment and affirmation with the relative professional category (Mancini & Montali, 2009; Mancini & Tonarelli, 2013; Meyer et al., 2006), the individual's knowledge and skills such as critical thinking and ability to manage change and the individuals' positive or negative emotional experiences that conflict with novice individuals' beliefs (Cheng, 2021), might play a significant role in shaping professional identity (Philippa et al., 2021). Undeveloped professional identities of newcomers to a professional context become more developed over time as individuals experiment with possible selves and receive feedback from others in the professional domain (Burleson et al., 2021; Ibarra, 1999). Individuals adapt to a particular category and build possible identities by projecting a preferred image of themselves and seeking others' approval within the professional environment (Roberts, 2005; Alvesson & Wilmott, 2002; Hewlin, 2003, 2009; Schlenker & Pontari, 2000; Ibarra, 1999).

Third, *role models in the professional context* are central to the professional identity development process (Ibarra, 1999; Pratt et al., 2006). Role models provide learning, motivation and inspiration, and help individuals define their professional self (Gibson, 2004). How individuals perceive their role models in the professional context impact how they develop in their career (Gibson, 2004). A role model (see section 3.1.1.4., paragraph 4) is a developmental target that help in the process of identification and comparison with professional categories, based on perceived similarity and desire to increase similarity by the individual (Ibarra, 1999). Individuals identify with multiple role models, and the role model construct is better thought of as a selection process of attributes rather than a search for a "whole" role model. Emulating role models is critical and useful in shaping

individuals' behaviors and relationships in the professional context (Ibarra, 1999). Individuals emulate specific attributes of various role models, choosing those attributes that are particularly applicable to their current needs and wants. The advantage of specific traits is that they can be selectively applied to an individual's repertoire of skills; they also provide requisite variety by offering a broader range of possible skills that might be applied flexibly to changing situations (Weick, 1995). For example, individuals can learn about client interaction by seeing other people at work do it and trying it themselves. By actively selecting out role model attributes, the individual may create a cognitive "composite role model" of what they would like to become as a professional.

Figure 6: Factors shaping professional identity development



Source: own elaboration

3.1.3.4. Outcomes from Professional Identity Development

The manner how individuals develop professional identities influences their performance, status and well-being has frequently been a focus of extant research (e.g., Petriglieri & Obodaru, 2019; Petriglieri et al., 2019; Cardoso et al., 2014; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Pratt, Rockman &

Kaufmann, 2006; Roberts, 2005; Hewlin, 2003, 2009; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Figure 7 illustrates the outcomes from professional identity development.

First, researchers investigating professional identity emphasize the importance of examining the effects of identity development trajectories on performance. Positive identity development in the workplace improves job performance (Yaakup, Azman, Sani and Shin, 2020) by increasing motivation. A positive work environment, proper training in the workplace and implementation opportunities facilitate people's identification with a profession (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) and increases people's motivation while working which in turn affect positively their professional performance (Ashforth, et al., 2008; Riketta, 2005; Van Knippenberg, 2000). Motivated people are more likely to devote more effort to improve their work performance because doing so aligns their self-interest and the interest of the organization (He and Brown, 2013).

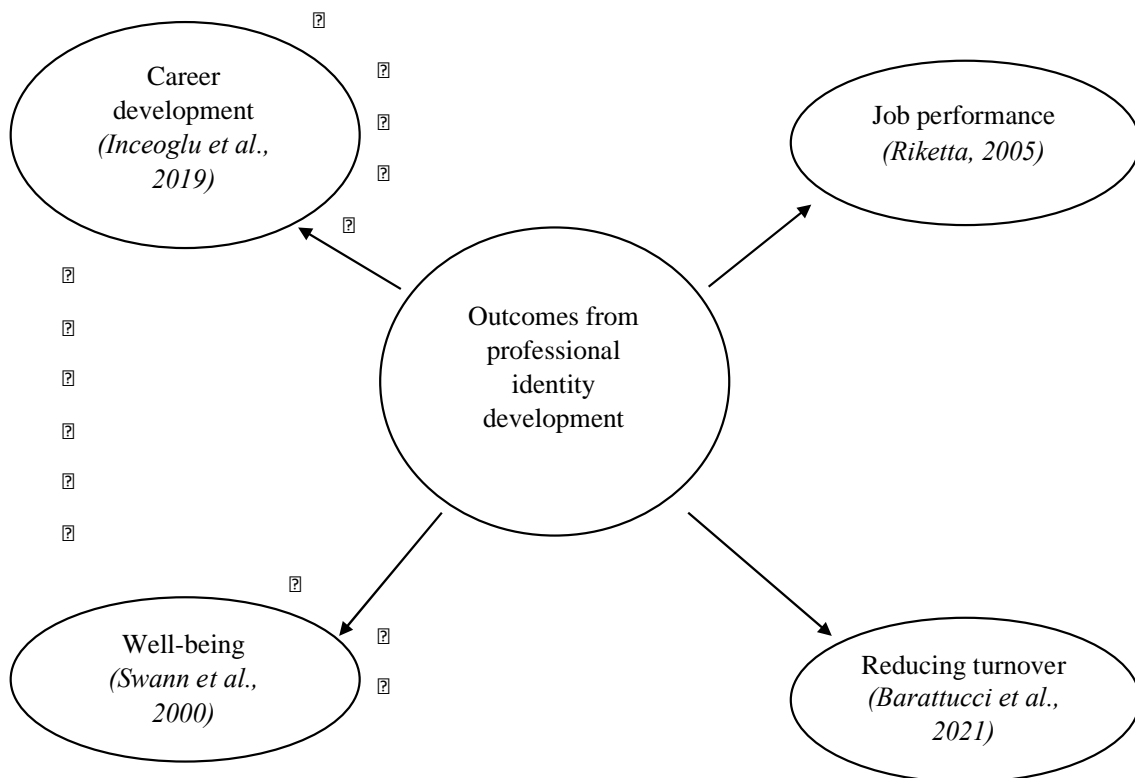
Second, the development of professional identity reduces turnover by increasing work related-commitment (Meyer et al., 2004; 2006), professional success, and retention (Ashforth, et al., 2008). For example, students with well-developed professional identities report lower intentions to leave higher education than those whose professional identities are less developed (Burlison et al., 2021). Organizational identification induces organizational attitudes and behaviors and discourages turnover intentions (Barattucci et al., 2021). Barattucci and his colleagues, in their study investigating the role of organizational development as a mediator between manageable antecedents (i.e. professional environment) and work outcomes (i.e. commitment and retention), suggested that individual's perceptions of supportive professional environment (e.g. supervisor support, the sharing of values, and morality) have significant effects on turnover intentions through organizational identification. When these perceptions are internalized by workers, they influence their behaviors and commitment to their work.

Third, positive identity development in the workplace is linked to well-being through job satisfaction and the quality of interpersonal relationships (Swann, Milton, & Polzer, 2000). Individuals with a developed professional identity might be more satisfied than individuals with a less developed professional identity because of a more supportive and empathetic environment, as individuals' understanding of each other will reduce uncertainty in relationships and promote empathy (Thatcher & Greer, 2008). Job satisfaction have a strong and positive impact on individual's well-being (Sironi, 2019), as it provides social connections and contributes to the individual's sense of purpose, social identity and overall well-being. For example, when individuals experience a positive response while implementing their job (are satisfied with their job), they are more likely to believe that they are identified by others more positively and their colleagues respect and value them. Thus, they are likely to enjoy working with their colleagues and are more engaged with their professional category and behaviors serving this category, and therefore have more positive interpersonal relationships at work.

Finally, professional identity development is significantly related to career development (Inceoglu et al., 2019) such as employability (Fugate et al., 2004), self-directed career management (Hirschi, 2012), career growth (Latack & Dozier, 1986) and career-life preparedness (Lent, 2013). Inceoglu et al. (2019) suggest that having developed a new professional identity, individuals might set themselves different career goals or objectives such as engaging in different career activities. According to Inceoglu and colleagues (2019), individuals develop their career through identity change and identity validation through social environments. Identity changes (change in comparison standards, norms and values that are acquired through social learning processes during work) affect career attitudes, attitudes towards work and work values (Pratt et al., 2006), as attitudes are generally informed by identity (Ashforth and Schinoff, 2016). Such attitudes may

lead to new evaluations of career choices (re-evaluation and re-orientation of career-related attitudes and desired careers). Social interactions and constructs measuring aspects of social capital (networks of relationships at work) or the influence of role-models experienced during work might act as sources of new possible professional identities and opportunities for novel professional identity validation.

Figure 7: Outcomes from Professional Identity Development



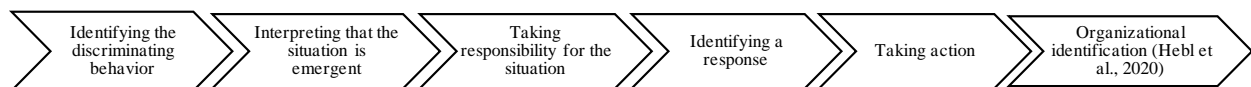
Source: own elaboration

3.1.4. Social Identity Devaluation in the Professional Context

3.1.4.1. Strategies for Identity Devaluation Management

Experiencing social identity devaluation within the professional context, can induce social identity concerns. Extant research on the professional identity development among members of socially devalued categories (i.e., women and ethnic minorities) suggests that stigmatized individuals develop their professional identity through SIT identity management and organizational identification (Hebl et al., 2020) (see figure 8, below). Figure 9 illustrates the SIT strategies people use to manage their identity devaluation in the professional context. Searching for social equality, some individuals manage their identity devaluation by maintaining positive self-concept (keeping a positive perception about oneself that helps to cope successfully with situations and make positive impact on others) when they are offered ways to protect their social identity (Derks et al., 2007). Others use the strategy of focusing on individual effort to improve the position of their low-status category (Scheifele et al., 2021), or maintaining the perception of competence through professional image maintenance (Little et al., 2015).

Figure 8: Organizational identification: strategy for identity devaluation management



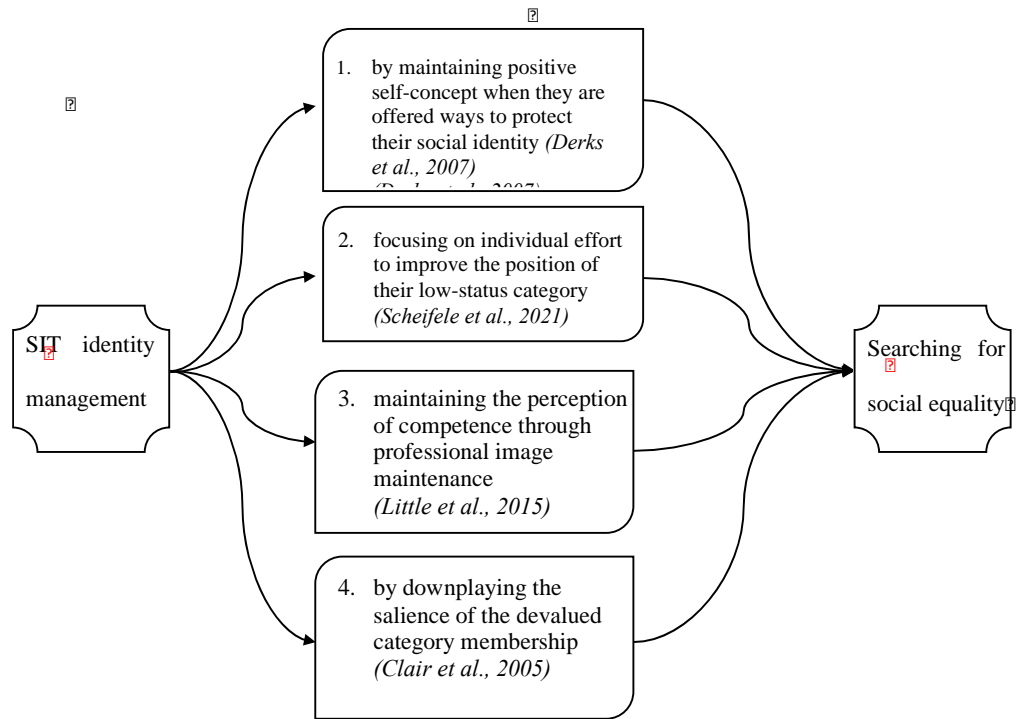
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Source: own elaboration

Research explains how and why individuals who belong to negatively stereotyped social identity categories may attempt to develop positive identities by downplaying the salience of the devalued category membership, such as avoiding stereotypical behavior, or attempting to educate and advocate on behalf of their social identity category in the professional context (Chattopadhyay et.al, 2004; Clair, Beatty, & MacLean, 2005; Roberts, 2005).

Several studies have assessed different types of identity management strategies (Anderson, Croteau, Chung, & Distefano, 2001; Button, 2001; Creed & Scully, 2000). For example, Woods (1994) conceptualized identity management for gay and lesbian workers as consisting of three overarching strategies: counterfeiting (i.e., fabricating a false heterosexual identity), avoiding (i.e., eluding questions about personal life), or integrating (i.e., revealing an LGB identity). These ideas can be contrasted with Clair and colleagues' (2005) theoretical classification of a variety of identity management behaviors as either "revealing" or "concealing." For example, pregnant women reported lower perceptions of discrimination when they indicated integrating (i.e., a revealing strategy) their pregnancy at work rather than an avoiding or counterfeiting their pregnancy (i.e., concealing strategies).

Figure 9: SIT identity management: strategies for identity devaluation management



Source: own elaboration

In the same line of research, Jones and King (2014) concluded that revealing a stigmatized identity tends to result in favorable interpersonal and intrapersonal outcomes, whereas concealing a stigma leads to more negative outcomes. Also, Lent et al. (2021) offered a view of how social cognitive variables may operate along with person inputs and the positivity of the social environment to predict use of sexual identity management behaviors and affective organizational commitment. They identified three primary identity management behavioral strategies that stigmatized sexual minority persons use to adapt to the work environment. These strategies include representing tendencies toward revealing one's identity or concealing it either by avoiding discussions of sexuality or by pretending a heterosexual identity.

Shih et al. (2013) focus on how individuals experiencing discrimination might manage their social identities and stereotypes to alleviate its negative consequences (Shih, Pittinsky, & Trahan, 2006). Specifically, they identify two classes of identity management strategies: identity switching (changing the identification with a particular category while keeping the stereotypes associated with the identities) and identity redefinition (changing the stereotypes associated with the identities while keeping the identity constant). In addition, organizational signals and climate (such as putting some color-blind signals for color blind staff members or adopting a multicultural ideology) may also affect the types of identity management strategies that stigmatized individuals choose to enact (Shih et al. 2013).

In the same line of study investigating the strategies individuals use to manage identity devaluation within the professional context, Hebl et al. (2020) said that although the efficacy of these different strategies may vary depending on contextual factors, stigmatized individuals can leverage identity management strategies as a way to regain some control over the construal of their identities (Lyons et al., 2017). They have demonstrated in their research that individuals cope with the discrimination by identifying the discriminating behavior, interpreting that the situation is emergent, taking responsibility for the situation, identifying a response, and taking action.

A well-studied stigmatized social identity is that of women who face gender stereotype more frequently in the workplace and throughout their professional life and thus develop more effective coping strategies as part of their identity process (Manzi et al. 2021). Barrett (2005) found that, in order to avoid devaluation in the workplace, middle-aged women identified themselves more readily with younger generations compared to men. Scheifele et al. (2021) investigating SIT tenets in the gender context, found that women's high identification with the organization was linked to individual effort to improve the position of low-status groups (Ouwerkerk et al., 2000) regardless

of which strategy they have to apply. Inconsistent with SIT predictions, high gender identification was uniformly related to higher use of all strategies, including individual mobility.

Furthermore, James et al. (2021) examined how socially marginalized women deal with the disadvantages associated with their identity through social resourcing. They described how social identities of race and gender created inequality and caused social exclusion and discrimination to respondents. They identified women's capacity to create, negotiate, maintain and transform identity (Kašperová and Kitching, 2014) making use of limited but available resources. In the absence of tangible resources, women turned to social resources available within their relationships such as word-of-mouth, advice and modest finance.

Most of these studies have been developed in a professional context, where individuals that are strongly stigmatized and have chronic threats to their social identity manage their identity devaluation by responding to severe negative threats that affect their established perceptions about their professional image. Hence, these individuals are committed to their category identity (Doosje et al., 2001). From a social identity perspective, Ellemers et al. (2002) suggests that the category commitment is an important determinant of how individuals respond to the social context and its implications.

As individuals at an early career stage, such as interns, don't carry organizational functions and don't have an established professional image yet, they are not committed to their category identity. The threats to their social identity only make sense in a temporary context in which there is hope and scope to cope with different types of image discrepancies that result from expectations about their professional image. Thus, the strategies used by individuals at an early career stage to manage their identity devaluation may differ from those previously identified in the existing literature.

Roberts (2005) highlighted in her study the importance of social identities in the development of professional identity in the workplace. Building on social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978) and impression management theory (Goffman, 1959, 1961; Leary & Kowalski, 1990), Roberts (2005) explicates a process of individuals' awareness of how others' perceptions of their attributes and competence at work is shaped by their social identities and when they desire to engage in impression management. She presented a conceptual model in which she explains the process of professional image construction through an evaluation of how individuals expected to be perceived at work (desired professional image) and how they think others see them at work (perceived professional image). Discrepancies between one desired and perceived image may lead to devaluation of one's social identity — beliefs that others are denigrating qualities of one's social identity group within a particular context, or positive discrepancy —beliefs that one's perceived image is more positive than he or she expected (Roberts, 2005).

Social identity devaluation drive individuals to employ de categorization as they desire to be viewed only in terms of their individual characteristics not as members of a devalued social identity group (Roberts, 2005). Positive discrepancy drive individuals to embellish their understanding of how they would like to be perceived (Roberts, 2005) or of desired self (Higgins, 1989; Markus & Nurius, 1986). Therefore, the model clarifies the process by which social (e.g. professional) identities are constructed in the workplace along with its effect on significant organizational outcomes such as well-being, performance, and high-quality relationships (Thatcher & Greer, 2008) while integrating the social identity lens onto professional image development.

Explicitly, the process described by Roberts (2005) by which individuals discover identity devaluation is clear and structured, but implicitly, it is not purely clear. Yet, while it has been assumed that individuals are aware of their desired image and the implications of being associated

to a devalued professional category (i.e. pregnant female (Little et al., 2015)), little attention has been devoted to how individuals (i.e., interns) discover the implications of being assigned to a devalued category in the workplace, the various dimensions of the identity devaluation and its associated outcomes.

3.1.4.2. Outcomes from Identity Devaluation Management Strategies

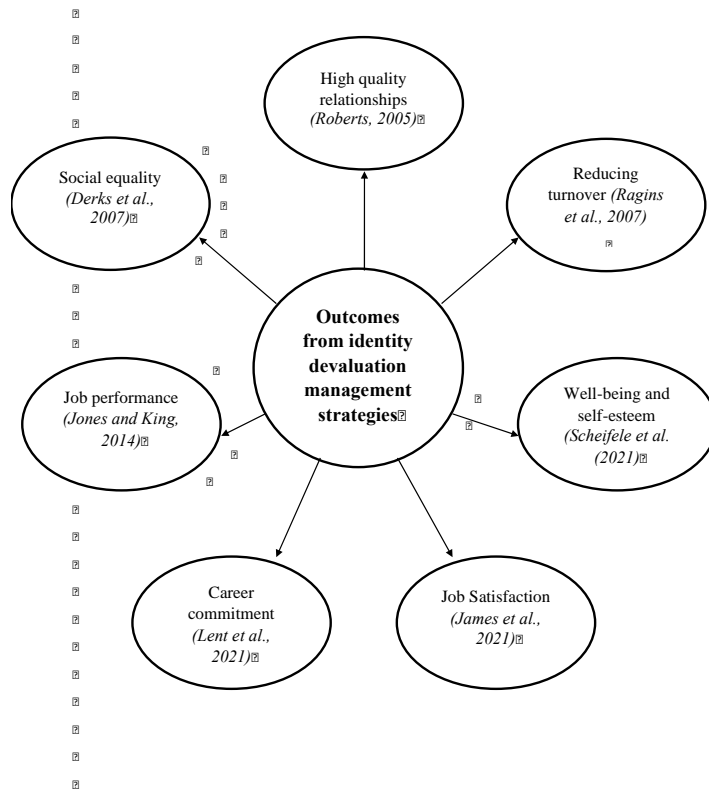
Devalued identity management behaviors within the professional context influence proximal outcomes immediately following the interaction. Existing work argue that professional identity management among socially devalued members results in significant organizational outcomes. These outcomes are illustrated in figure 10. For example, degree of disclosure of one's sexual orientation at work has been linked to increased job satisfaction, career commitment, as well as decreased intentions to turnover (Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007).

Roberts (2005) suggests that professional image management contributes to well-being (Higgins, 1987; Markus & Nurius, 1986), performance, and high-quality relationships. In addition, Derks et al. (2007) show that the employment of identity management strategies leads to better group outcomes, leading to social equality rather than improving personal outcomes. Jones and King (2014) mentioned important outcomes including performance, job attitudes, and well-being.

In addition, Lent et al. (2021) identified affective organizational commitment as a relevant outcome associated with job satisfaction (Meyer et al., 2002). Manzi et al. (2021) suggested that organizational identification lead to positive psychological outcomes. James et al. (2021) also found satisfaction, sense of achievement and confidence through the identity of respondents as entrepreneurial women.

Furthermore, Scheifele et al. (2021) mentioned in their study work related well-being and self-esteem as important outcomes (Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Haslam, Ellemers, Reynolds, & Schmitt, 2010). Yet, how individuals at an early career stage (i.e. interns) develop professional identities may influence organizational outcomes, such as well-being, performance, and high-quality relationships (Roberts, 2005), differently.

Figure 10: Outcomes from identity devaluation management strategies



Source: own elaboration

3.1.5. Social Identity Devaluation in Internships

Despite the extensive studies understanding the effectiveness of internship programs (Beenen, 2007; D'abate et. al, 2009; Beenen & Rousseau, 2010; Narayanan, Olk, and Fukami, 2010; Hurst & Good, 2010; Wong, 2011; Hurst, Good and Gardner, 2012; Beenen, 2014; Beenen & Pichler, 2014; Maertz Jr, Stoeberl and Marks, 2014; Rothman & Sisman, 2016; Beenen, Pichler & Levy, 2016; McHugh; 2017; Deschaine & Jankens, 2017; Woo et al, 2017; Kapareliotis, 2019; Bittmann & Zorn, 2019; Popov, 2020; Ebner & Soucek, 2021; Rogers, et al., 2021), there is no work that has been done on internships, theoretical or empirical, addressing social identity in interns. For decades, management scholarship has largely focused on the relationship between internship job features and other related outcomes such as career development, psycho-social benefits and many other positive outcomes helping students and interns to prepare for and decide upon future careers. Yet, scholars have to explore what role the intern's social identity (i.e. low status) might play in the interns' professional identity development process.

Based on the literature review on professional identity and internships, I suggest the process described in figure 11 of social identity devaluation in internships. Interns are students, graduates or job-seekers spending a period of time in an organization, performing any combination of productive work, shadowing a more experienced worker, or performing low-level tasks for those who already occupy roles in the workplace (Hadjivassiliou et al. 2012; Harthill 2014). The intern's role (a) is characterized by limited task autonomy, minimal decision-making impact, few upper-level support (Aronsson et al., 2002; De Cuyper et al., 2008; Parker, Griffin, Sprigg, & Wall, 2002), low status, presumed incompetence, and temporary tenure (Frenette, 2013). The intern's low status is perhaps most visible in terms of workspace. In addition, employees do not typically

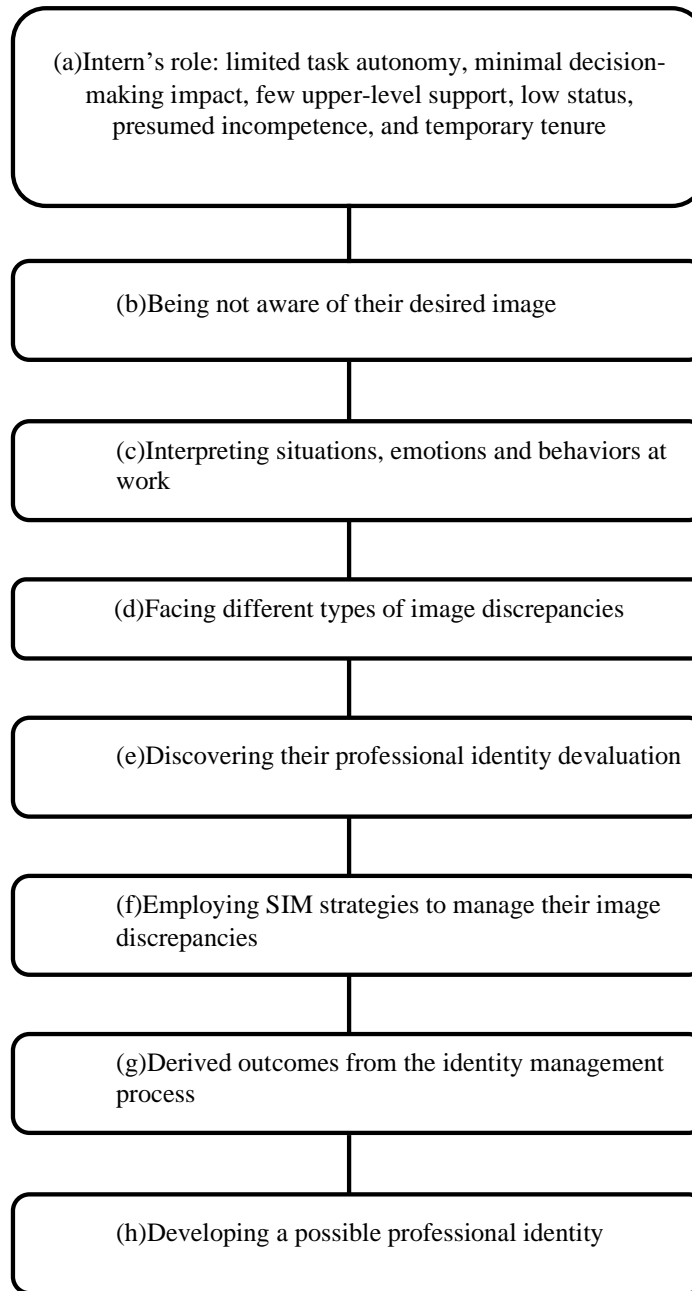
assume interns to be competent and committed to work, therefore they often do not trust them enough to delegate much work responsibilities (Frenette, 2013).

When interns enter the professional environment, they are not aware of their desired image (b), as internships represent one of the first work experiences a young adult has. They begin interacting with others (e.g. mentors, managers, and peers) using their pre-existing understandings needed to interpret new learning (c), while sharing, self-comparing and debating with others (e.g. employees and peers) (Wong, 2011) to enhance their self-esteem (Hogg and Abrams 1988). After evaluating how they expect to be perceived at work (i.e. hardworking) and how they think others perceive them at work (i.e. low performing), they begin facing different types of image discrepancies (d). These image discrepancies lead interns to discover that their professional identity is devalued by others (Tajfel, 1978) (e). Interns' social identity devaluation drives them to employ social identity based impression management (SIM) strategies to manage their image discrepancies (f) resulting from misperceptions (Roberts, 2005).

As individuals at an early career stage's manner in responding to identity devaluation may differ from other devalued group members' manner in the workplace, along with the derived outcomes from the identity management process (g), approaching the study of how interns develop a professional identity (h) through image management is timely. I believe that the SIT can serve as a valuable lens to address this issue. SIT allows for rich assessment of an individual's self-concept since social identity is the cognitive process that reinforces the generation of behaviors and actions in all social contexts including devalued professional identities (Turner, 1982). As well, I believe that internships are a meaningful venue for examining the tenets of SIT in a professional environment where individuals have to cope with devalued professional positions. I will use the

figure 11 below as my reference theoretical model, as a starting point for the qualitative study described in the following chapters.

Figure 11: Social identity devaluation in internships



Source: own elaboration

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CHAPTER 4:

Research Methods

Index of chapter 4

4.1. Research design	163
4.2. Study setting	165
4.3. Sample and data collection	170
4.3.1. Description of the sample	170
4.3.2. Data collection.....	176
4.3.2.1. Recruitment of participants	176
4.3.2.1.1. Phase one or pilot study participants	176
4.3.2.1.2. Phase two participants	177
4.3.2.1.3. Phase three or validation phase participants	177
4.3.2.2. Data process.....	178
4.3.2.2.1. Phase one or pilot study data process	179
4.3.2.2.2. Phase two data process	180
4.3.2.2.3. Phase three or validation phase data process	181
4.4. Data analysis	181
4.4.1. Open coding	183
4.4.2. Axial coding	184
4.4.3. Selective coding	185

4.5. References in the chapter188

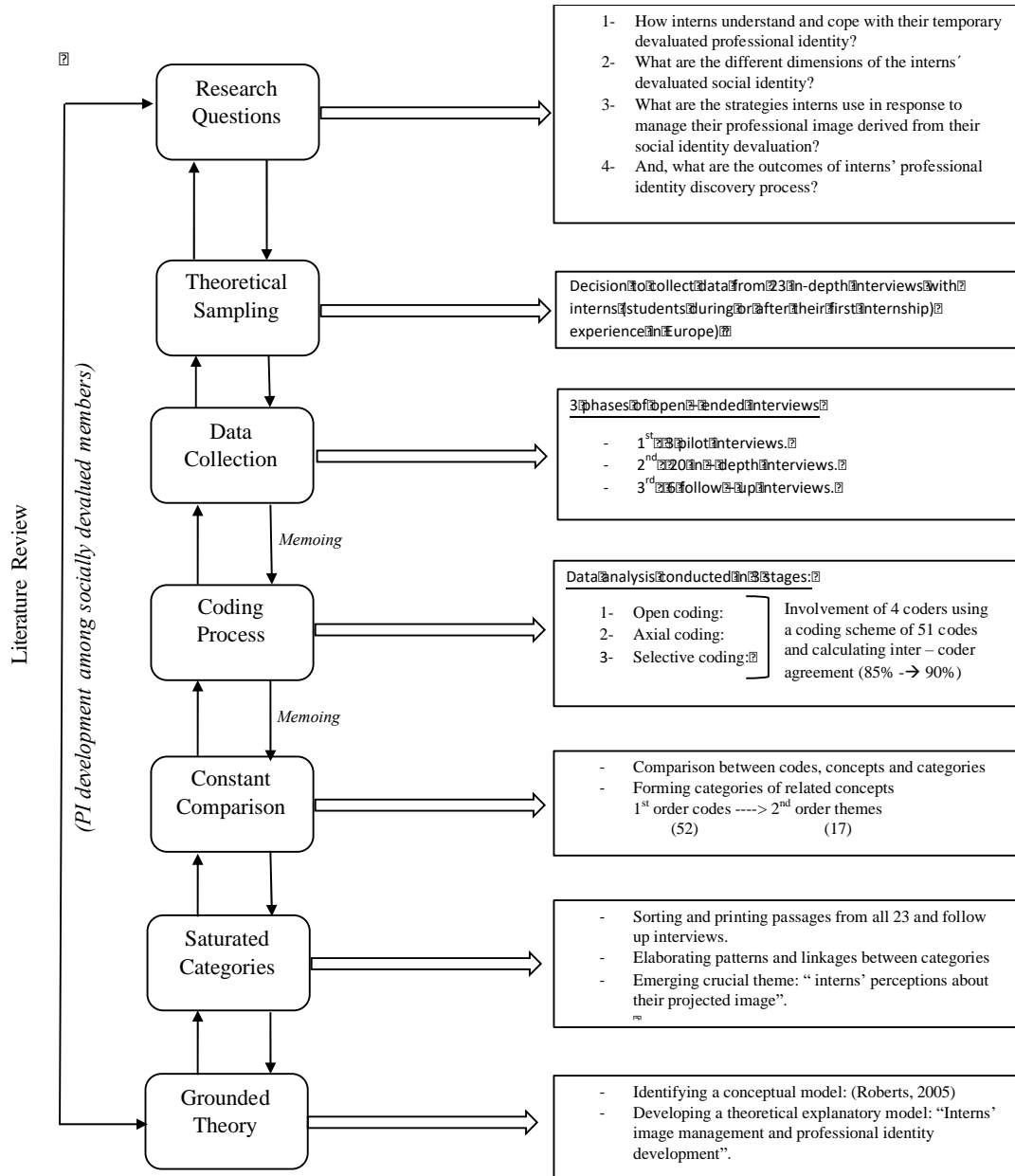
4.1. Research design

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the research methodology for this study. A qualitative study is appropriate when the goal of the research is to explain a phenomenon by relying on the perception of an individual's experience in a given context (Stake, 2010). Because the purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences and perceptions of interns in the workplace, a qualitative approach was the most appropriate choice.

Following a qualitative approach has allowed me to obtain a rich understanding about interns' experiences in creating their professional self. This study has employed grounded theory methodology (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) which is "the discovery of theory from data" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) -see Figure 12. I seek to 1) conceptualize the phenomenon of each intern's experience, 2) understand the interviews' data in abstract terms that are built through coding, and 3) build a theory based on the interpretation of intern's shared experiences. Reflecting on the evolving theory throughout the research helped to guide changes in the interview questions during the study and uncover more details of the theories that emerged. The tenets of the grounded theory methodology used in this study are coding, analyzing data as it is generated to build theory, selecting core categories from coding, and generating theory (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007).

Employing qualitative methods have also allowed me to develop theory around the following exploratory research question: How interns understand and cope with their temporary devaluated professional identity? Particularly, what are the different dimensions of the interns' devaluated social identity? What are the strategies interns use in response to manage their professional image derived from their social identity devaluation? And what are the outcomes of interns' professional identity discovery process?

Figure 12: This Grounded Theory Study's Research Design



Source: own elaboration

I believe that grounded theory methodology is appropriate for this study because the context of professional identity among members of devalued categories is unique and individual and the phenomenon being examined which is professional identity creation in early career stages has not been adequately explained by existing theory. This is also coherent with previous studies on devalued professional identity management in other contexts that also use interviews (i.e., Little et al., 2015 for pregnant women). This research is not only exploratory but also theory-elaborating research (Ketokivi and Choi, 2014; Welch et al., 2012). It employs the SIT lens to discover new insights in the existing literature of professional identity development. The creation of professional identity in interns was chosen to include instances that demonstrate extremely high values on the constructs of interest (i.e. Intern's social identity devaluation).

4.2. Study setting

In conducting a qualitative research, the research setting, that explains the context in which the study is developed, is an important component of the methodology as it influences behaviors and outcomes. Following the theoretical sampling principle recommended when conducting a qualitative research (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007), the empirical analysis focused on the perceptions of a sample of interns involved in internship experiences in European companies.

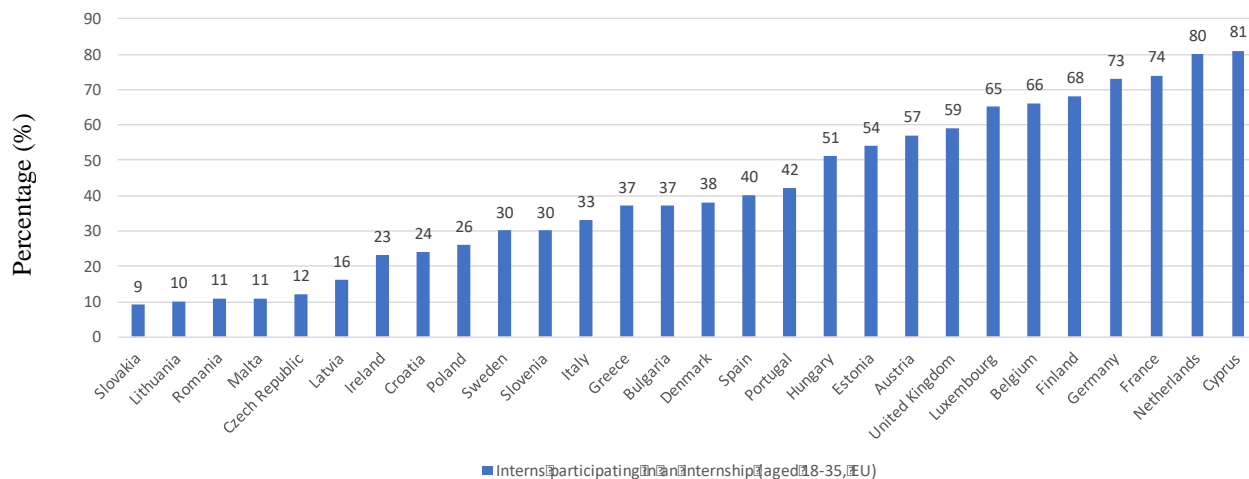
An internship is an arrangement for the performance of work within a business or organization, a primary purpose of which is to gain experience, skills and/or contacts that will assist the worker to gain employment or other work opportunities in the future, but which does not seek in a structured way to provide all the skills needed for a particular occupation (International Labor Organization, 2021).

For the purpose of this study, I have considered internships regardless whether the internship is undertaken during, after or as part of a formal scheme of education, training or government assistance. There are three main types of internship in Europe: a) internships which are linked to a course of academic study, b) work experience undertaken as part of an active labor market program and c) open market internships that are work experience in firms or organizations which do not fall under either of the previous criteria.

Over the past decade, the status of interns within the European labor market has attracted an increased degree of attention, presumably owing, in part, to their sheer number within the labor market. For instance, 4.5 million internships are done in Europe every year (Flash Eurobarometer 378, 2015). Moreover, 60% of college students from the classes of 2013 to 2017 had an internship in Europe (NACE, 2017). Furthermore, employers expect to increase intern hiring by 9.1 % for the 2023 academic year (NSCI, 2021). Figure 13 below represents the percentage of students participating in an internship since 2013 in the European Union (EU). The figure shows that 40 per cent or more of people aged from 18 to 35 had an internship since 2013 in EU. The proportion ranged from as high as 79 per cent in the Netherlands and 74 per cent in Germany, to only 8 per cent in Lithuania and Slovakia. As well, a 2017 report in the UK found that the understanding that internships are an informal prerequisite is taking hold: 46 % of 21–23 year olds report they have completed an internship, compared with 37 % of 27–29 year olds. Of these, 70 % of internships are unpaid (Roberts, 2017). The same report also indicated that almost half (46 %) of employers offer graduate internships, with large employers twice as likely to do so as small businesses (Roberts, 2017). In addition, surveys of employers in the United Kingdom (UK) (e.g. Institute for

Public Policy Research 2017; UKCES 2015) provide evidence in favor of the notion that work experience during higher education is helpful for securing employment upon graduation.

Figure 13: Percentage of students participating in an internship since 2013 in EU



Source: International Labor Organization (2021)

Clear data on the prevalence of internships in Europe comes from a survey conducted in 2013 for the European Commission in the 28 countries that were members of the EU (Flash Eurobarometer 378, 2013). Based on this survey involving 12,921 respondents aged from 18 to 35 across the EU, I can describe the demographics of interns.

- Many students make more than one internship.
- 40.9% made at least one internship.
- 21.8% had two internships.
- 14.5% had three internships.
- and 19.8% had four or more internships.

- 50.2% were male.
- 55% had internship experiences during their academic studies.
- 21.2% were interns when they were about to finish their studies.
- 21.9% had internships after completing their studies.
- 61% were university graduates.
- 9% had done an internship abroad.
- 59% had no financial compensation for their internships.
- 62% had a written traineeship agreement or contract with the host organization or company.
- 71% think that their experience was useful or that it would be useful to find a regular job, especially those involved in work experience in large companies lasting for more than six months.
- 25% of the interns received a job offer after their last internship, and an almost equivalent share were offered a renewal or extension of the internship.
- There is significant cross-country variation, with interns from Romania, Ireland, Belgium, Spain and Portugal benefiting more from work experience in labor-market outcomes than those from Poland, Cyprus, Lithuania and Germany.

Building on the results of the Flash Eurobarometer N° 378 survey (2013), I can conclude that while the majority of internships are either of good or acceptable quality, some of them are substandard either in terms of learning content or working conditions. Additionally, a large share of young people has to do several internships before finding a job and some internships may not deliver on the promise of useful training and skill development.

Many concerns have been expressed in recent years about the role and effectiveness of internships as a bridge between education and (paid) work. These were summarized by the Council of the European Union (EU) in a recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships (QFT) on 10 March 2014 in these terms: socio-economic costs arise if internships, particularly repeated ones, replace regular employment, notably entry-level positions usually offered to trainees. Moreover, low-quality internships, especially those with little learning content, do not lead to significant productivity gains nor do they entail positive signaling effects. Social costs can also arise in connection with unpaid internships that may limit the career opportunities of those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Council recommended member states improve the quality of internships, in particular their learning and training content and working conditions such as through the requirement of a formal internship agreement, with the aim of easing the transition from education, unemployment or inactivity to work.

In summary, internships are very helpful in ensuring smooth education-to-work transitions, but only if they provide a solid learning content and safe working conditions (internship lasting at least 3 months, mentorship during the internship, insurance coverage and certification) (International Labor Organization, 2021). However, there is a great deal of variation in the results, depending on the types of internships, labor-market outcomes and countries where internships are taking place (e.g. educational internships in the UK seem to be more effective than similar programs in Italy). In particular, paid internships are associated with better post-internship labor-market outcomes than are unpaid internships. Furthermore, more and better regulation of internships is likely to be important to ensure that internships by European companies are structured and do meet some basic standards, thereby to increase their chances of providing young people the capability to navigate the complexities of entry into the current labor market. (International Labor Organization, 2021).

4.3. Sample and Data Collection

As suggested by Gibbert and Ruigrok (2010), careful documentation and clarification of the sampling and data collection procedures is essential to ensure the reliability of qualitative research.

4.3.1. Description of the sample

The sample was drawn from a population of interns who were currently involved in or had just completed an internship program within the previous 12 months, and provided variability about:

- Industry of the host organizations
- Pay, I looked for students that worked in either paid or unpaid positions (about half of the interns were in paid positions and a few of the unpaid interns obtained course credit in exchange to their work).
- Functional area, interns carried out different business functions or types of internship positions.
- Nationality, the participants were from different nationalities (3 German, one Croatian, 2 Italian, 5 French, 1 Greek, 1 Uruguayan, 1 poles, 1 Portuguese, 1 English, and 7 Spanish).
- Gender, the participants consisted of 14 females and 9 males.
- Age, the interviewees had an average age of 23.
- Academic year of study, the majority were graduated and the rest were seniors
- Major, participants were from distinctively different fields: 4 majoring in literature and languages, 1 in entrepreneurship management innovation, 2 in environmental sciences, 1 in engineering, 8 in business administration including accounting, marketing, and economics, 1 in International Development studies, 3 in psychology, 2 in hospitality and 1 in programing.

- Language, all participants had to be fluent in English language, but English did not have to be their native language.

Host organizations ranged from travel agencies, electronics stores, home appliances sales companies, car sales companies to translation companies, international consultancy companies, hotels, accounting and administrative services companies, marketing companies, non-profit organizations, programming and software companies to schools and universities to renewable energies, oil and gas companies. Table 14 summarizes the qualitative description of the study's sample and includes information about the interns and their internship experiences. Regarding the interns, information about nationality, gender, age, academic background and number of internships done before is showed. Table 14 also includes descriptive information about the internship experiences, such as the industry of the host company, the country where the internship was developed, the internship timing, duration, compensation, location (international or local), and type (compulsory versus non-compulsory).

Table 14: Qualitative description of the interns and their internship experience

Interns	Nationality	Gender	Age	Majors	Industry of the host organizations	Internship country	Internship timing	Internship duration	International versus domestic	Number of internships done before	Compensation Paid versus Unpaid	Compulsory versus non-compulsory
Intern #1	French	Male	22 years old	Foreign Languages	Travel Agency	France	Last year of the bachelor	3 months	Local internship	One internship	Paid	Compulsory
Intern #2	Spanish	Male	24 years old	English Literature	Secondary School	UK	After the bachelor	3 months	International internship	None	Unpaid	Non-compulsory
Intern #3	Greek	Male	27 years old	Literature	University	Greece	After the bachelor	3 months	Local internship	None	Unpaid	Non-compulsory
Intern #4	French	Male	21 years old	Entrepreneurship management innovation	Electronics store	France	During the bachelor	3 months	Local internship	Three internships	Paid	Compulsory
Intern #5	Spanish	Male		Environmental sciences	Renewable energies, oil	Poland		3 months	International internship	One internship	Unpaid	Non-compulsory

			24 years old		and gas company		Third year of the bachelor					
Intern #6	Portuguese	Female	22 years old	Business Administration	Marketing company	Spain	After the bachelor	6 months	International internship	One internship	Paid	Non-compulsory
Intern #7	French	Female	22 years old	Business economics	International consultancy company	France	During the bachelor	3 months	Local internship	None	Paid	Non-compulsory
Intern #8	French	Male	24 years old	Environmental Engineering	University Laboratory	Norway	During the bachelor	3 months	International internship	None	Unpaid	Compulsory
Intern #9	Spanish	Female	22 years old	Business Economics	Home appliances sales company	Germany	During the bachelor	3 months	International internship	None	Unpaid	Compulsory
Intern #10	Polish	Female	25 years old	International Business Management	Translation company	Poland	During the bachelor	2 months	Local internship	None	Unpaid	Compulsory
Intern #11	German	Female	24 years old	International Development studies	Non-Profit organization	Germany	After the bachelor	1 month	Local internship	Many	Unpaid	Non-compulsory
Intern #12	German	Female		Psychology	Car sales company	Germany	During the bachelor	6 months	Local internship	None	Paid	Non-compulsory

			28 years old									
Intern #13	Spanish	Female	22 years old	International Business	International consultancy company	Spain	During the bachelor	2 months	Local internship	One internship	Unpaid	Compulsory
Intern #14	Spanish	Female	24 years old	Hospitality	Hotel	Belgium	After the bachelor	6 months	International internship	Two internships	Paid	Non-Compulsory
Intern #15	English	Female	21 years old	English literature	School	Spain	Second year of the bachelor	9 months	International internship	None	Unpaid	Non-compulsory
Intern #16	French	Female	23 years old	Business Accounting	Accounting and Administrative service company	France	During the bachelor	1 month	Local internship	2 internships	Unpaid	Compulsory
Intern #17	Spanish	Male	24 years old	Hospitality	Hotel	Belgium	After the bachelor	3 months	International internship	None	Unpaid	Non-compulsory
Intern #18	Uruguayan	Female	25 years old	English literature	University	Ireland	During the bachelor	3 months	International internship	None	Unpaid	Compulsory

Intern #19	German	Male	21 years old	Environmental sciences	Non-Profit organization	Germany	During the bachelor	3 months	International internship	None	Unpaid	Compulsory
Intern #20	Italian	Male	23 years old	Business Administration	Non-Profit organization	Italy	During the bachelor	4 months	Local internship	None	Unpaid	Non-compulsory
Intern #21	Italian	Female	23 years old	Programing	Programming and software company	Italy	After the bachelor	One year	Local internship	One internship	Unpaid	Non-compulsory
Intern #22	Croatian	Female	25 years old	Psychology	International consultancy company	Croatia	Last year of the bachelor	2 months and a half	Local internship	One internship	Unpaid	Non-compulsory
Intern #23	Spanish	Female	21 years old	Business Management	International consultancy company	Belgium	Last year of the bachelor	3 months	International internship	None	Paid	Compulsory

Source: own elaboration

4.3.2. Data collection

Data collection spanned a period of 23 months, from November 2017 to September 2019. During this time span, I made pilot interviews that were the first step of the entire research data process and analysis. Some interviews were excluded as the internship was done outside Europe and new ones were scheduled and made. I made follow-up interviews with some interns as well during this period to make sure there is no bias in the responses over time. Data collection was divided into two distinct stages: (1) the recruitment of participants and (2) the data process.

4.3.2.1. Recruitment of participants

4.3.2.1.1. Phase one or pilot study participants

The first phase consisted of recruiting the participants of the pilot study. These participants were recruited through placement websites (i.e. “Erasmus Intern”) only. ErasmusIntern.org is an online platform funded by the European Commission in order to enhance student’s international opportunities on the European job market. This platform provides a place where companies can publish their internship offers and search for interns, and where students that want to do an internship abroad can have their profiles, search and apply for internships vacancies. The interns that fit the selection criteria were emailed after reviewing their uploaded CV to “Erasmus Intern” website, using a template that you can find in Appendix A. The participants of this phase included 4 pilot interviewees of which one was excluded as the internship was done outside Europe. So, this stage’s interviewees were limited to 3 participants.

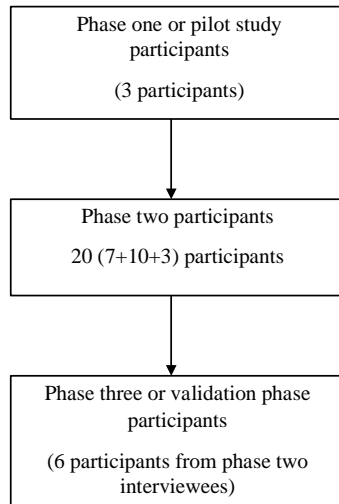
4.3.2.1.2. Phase two participants

The second phase consisted of recruiting the remaining participants of the main study. In phase two, 22 new participants were recruited. Also, 2 interviewees out of 22 were excluded because internships were done outside Europe. So, phase two was limited to 20 participants. 7 out of 20 participants were recruited through placement websites (i.e. “Erasmus Intern”) only. The interns that fit the selection criteria were emailed after reviewing their uploaded CV to “Erasmus Intern” website, using the template that you can find in Appendix A. Another 10 out of 20 participants were recruited through the international office of the University of Almeria (UAL). The office was contacted and provided the names and emails of students that have participated in internships through the Erasmus program. These 10 participants were also contacted by email to schedule meetings using the same template. The remaining other 3 out of 20 participants and their emails were suggested by some of the initial interviewees provided by the international office of UAL, using snowball sampling technique. These 3 participants were contacted by email as well using the same template.

4.3.2.1.3. Phase three or validation phase participants

The third phase, or validation phase, consisted of recruiting the participants of the follow up interviews used to validate data collected previously. In phase three, 6 participants were recruited and contacted via email to schedule a second meeting with them. These participants were selected randomly from phase two interviewees list, after a one year period of interviewing them. Figure 14 below illustrates the three different phases of the recruitment of participants.

Figure 14: Phases of participants' recruitment



□

Source: own elaboration

4.3.2.2. Data process

The second stage involved the process of data through the use of different sources. My study has used the interview as the main source of data. Through interviews, participants would have the opportunity to give candid feedback and to be reflective while describing their internship experiences. Interviewing and scheduling interviews were occurring simultaneously.

Memos were also used to capture any research thoughts during and after each interview. Memo writing occurred regularly in every part of the study (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Birks and Mills, 2011), as it is a reflective activity that help in minimizing bias and ensuring objectivity throughout the study (Birks and Mills, 2011). Memos were used as a reminder for thoughts and helped in differentiating between thoughts imposed on the theory and theory that emerges from the data. Memos encompassed issues such as ideas or concerns related to the study,

interpretation of relevant references, considerations of the quality of the process, and reflections on prominent codes, categories, and the theories.

As the use of multiple data sources increases the internal and construct validity of research (Benbasat et al., 1987), basic data of all the interviewees' professional profiles on internet platforms such as Linked in or Erasmus intern were triangulated after the interviews were made. In five cases, I also got in touch with the hosting company to check basic data provided in the interview.

I personally conducted three rounds of retrospective, in-depth, open-ended interviews with a total of 23 interns (students during or after their first internship experience). All interviews were conducted in English. The typical interview lasted about an hour through Skype, was videotape-recorded and later transcribed with the help of Dragon Naturally Speaking 13 software.

4.3.2.2.1. Phase one or pilot study data process

In phase one, 4 pilot interviews were performed with students from different nationalities (Italian, Croatian, and Spanish) that had done an internship. One interview was excluded because the internship was not done in Europe. So, the pilot interviews were limited to 3. These interviews aimed to explore key issues and to develop the elementary interview guide. Conducting these pilot interviews prior to the main following interviews was an important way of testing, revising, and sharpening the research interviews. To ensure valid data collection, data collection "instrumentation can be revised—in fact, should be revised," (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

The interviewer (I) began by asking general questions and asked participants to "tell a story" that reflected their experience of being an intern. Specific questions guided the story telling procedure and were semi structured that encompassed inquiries about the overall internship

experience such as: how do you evaluate your experience, which expectations did you have, how where you perceived, when did you screw up, how did you handle to accomplish your assigned activities (tasks), could you provide examples or stories from when you faced uncertainties. After performing, transcribing and coding the 3 pilot interviews by two raters, initial themes that needed to be saturated were identified and a new set of a semi-structured questions is developed.

4.3.2.2.2. Phase two data process

In phase two, 22 new participants were interviewed. Also, 2 interviews out of 22 were excluded because internships were done outside Europe. So, phase two was limited to interviews done with 20 participants. Grounded theory allows for discovering the phenomenon during the research process (Charmaz, 2006). Because the theory emerges from data, it is possible to add some interview questions or modify existing questions during the research study (Urquhart, 2013). As some initial themes surfaced during the three pilot interviews, most of the initial questions were kept, but additional ones were included to probe more specifically about issues not fully addressed in the early interviews such as: how have you tried to overcome difficulties, what motivated you to keep trying when you fail to do some tasks, and what did you do (if any) to ensure that other viewed you the way you wanted to be perceived. First, I made 12 interviews using the new developed semi-structured questions, transcribed and coded the interviews. With these 12 interviews, some concepts were saturated, but still I decided that I need to perform more interviews and refine the semi-structured questions. Then, I made 8 more structured and oriented interviews using the new refined questions to saturate concepts that were not saturated yet.

4.3.2.2.3. Phase three or validation phase data process

In phase three, six follow up interviews were performed with phase two interviewees selected randomly after a one year period of interviewing them. The aim of these interviews was to validate previous collected data and provide a richer understanding of interns' responses to questions over time. In this phase, in addition to some questions addressed in phase two interviews, participants were also asked new questions about what are the outcomes of their internship, what is the perception they have about their career after one year of doing the internship, and how the internship has changed their perceptions about themselves.

Because grounded theory methodology was applied to reveal focal concepts, sampling broadly at the early stage was appropriate (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The target was to capture patterns across a variety of internship experiences in order to discover the factors under which conceptual categories might alter (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As I attempted to obtain sources offering information about specific concepts, I began sampling more carefully once conceptual categories became evident (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The sampling and data collection was stopped after 23 interviews when theoretical saturation was obtained. That means, when I stopped finding any new or different data regarding a category and the categories' dimensions and characteristics were well established (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

4.4. Data Analysis

The quality and validity of the qualitative research depends on what the researcher sees and hears. To ensure the reliability of the study, it is important for the researcher to analyze and interpret what the data tells in an unbiased manner. Transcribing the whole interviews and coding them manually aided to guarantee an extensive comprehension of the interview content and the interviewee intention. The process of analyzing, reanalyzing and comparing new data

to existing data (constant comparative analysis) along the study indicates the links between the analysis and resulting theories (Charmaz, 2006). Highlighting the codes and categories that had the analytical influence to be used in developing the theory was critical in providing integrity to the theories that emerged. Further, revealing saturation was an element to assure the accuracy of the data and inclusion of sufficient data in the collected data that gives credibility to the asserted theory (Charmaz, 2006).

I conducted an inductive qualitative analysis applying the fundamentals and procedures of grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Data was analyzed through a systematic process of codification and categorization, grouping raw data around common themes and subsequent theoretical constructs of greater order. I and three researchers experienced in academic research conducted the systematic rounds of data coding and analysis and met to discuss the findings. And applying the principle of constant comparison, each evaluator's independent coding was compared and emerging theoretically themes and dimensions were contrasted. The discussion rounds served to refine the coding and to resolve discrepancies. Also, I followed an iterative process of data collection and codification, meaning that data was codified and analyzed after each data collection round. This process helped identify the following data to be collected and facilitated the dynamic building and revising of theoretical themes and dimensions.

Coding the interview transcripts, or dividing data into meaningful passages, used in grounded theory was a critical component in the analysis of data. It contributed to the focus of the interview analysis on the experience of the interns in an organized manner. Coding during the research process helped the interviewer to make certain the analysis of the entire interview is thoroughgoing early in the study (Stake, 2010).

Coding of the transcriptions was accomplished in the order of the conducted interviews, allowing to revise and improve the interview questions as concepts began to emerge from data.

Coding was conducted manually and with the aid of computer assisted qualitative data analysis software “NVivo 12”. This software was used to help in the data management as the amount of data was massive and was not used for data analysis. NVivo 12 was useful as a repository and for sorting through data and to query keywords for comparison with manually coded categories and themes.

All of the coding is iterative. As every phase of coding began, I continued reviewing the data in previous phases, while analyzing, reanalyzing and comparing new data to existing data (constant comparative method), to ensure making connections regularly until saturation happened. Data analysis was conducted in three stages: Open coding, axial coding and selective coding.

4.4.1. Open Coding

In stage one, I engaged in an open coding (Locke, 2001) of the three phase one interview transcripts or 1st-order analysis. With these first interviews, microanalysis, was utilized, or detailed line-by-line coding, to establish key concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) or themes of concern that interns raised about their experiences. Eventually, these statements were grouped into abstract codes. Various interesting issues started to emerge in this early phase of research, including intern’s concerns and beliefs about their own and others’ perceptions of their competence. In the final step of stage one, the first-order codes that appeared in these interviews, that were about 70 codes, were used to analyze the remaining phase two interviews.

Involving multiple investigators is also a form of triangulation as it helps handle the richness of contextual data and lends more confidence to the findings of the research (Benbasat et al., 1987; Eisenhardt, 1989). To improve reliability, I and three researchers independently coded the phase two and three interview transcripts of interns, divided into meaningful passages,

using the final coding scheme while making minor revisions. The final coding scheme was discussed among all 4 researchers who met via Skype and agreed about the final version of it containing 52 codes. The 4 researchers also implemented changes in the definition or description of codes based on responses and discrepancies that revealed a lack of clarity or precision in the naming or definition of codes. Each passage could be assigned up to three codes, and almost all passages were assigned multiple codes. Then I and every researcher met via Skype, separately from the other researchers, and jointly discussed the coded transcripts to resolve discrepancies. After calculating the inter-coder agreement (Krippendorff, 2011) that was ranging from 85% to almost 90%, with an average of ~ 89.77% —90.66% with the first researcher; 87.33% with the second researcher; 91.33% with the third researcher, I mostly ended up to assign additional codes to passages.

4.4.2. Axial Coding

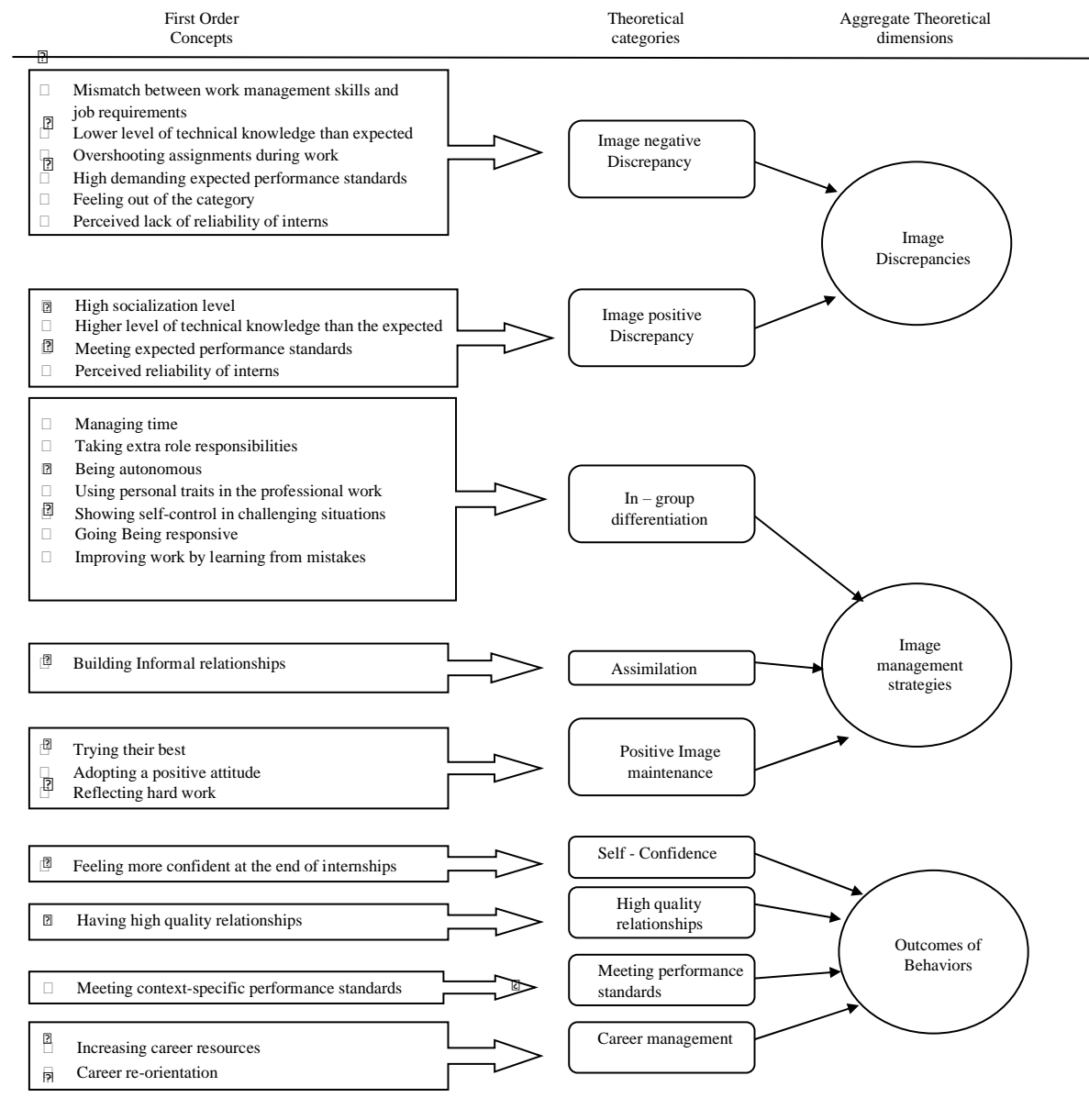
In the second stage, known as axial coding (Locke, 2001) or 2nd-order analysis, I examined and compared the emergent topics among the descriptive codes, grouping codes based on resemblances and disparities, and creating larger narrative and 2nd-order of abstract and theoretical level of themes and categories, including perceived image of being interns concerns, interns' perceptions about their experience, and others. During this stage, asking whether these emergent themes suggested concepts that might help in describing the development of professional identity of interns was important. I focused particular attention on growing concepts that didn't seem to have adequate theoretical framework in the existing literature of professional identity creation. Once a feasible set of themes was ready and theoretical saturation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) was attained, probing whether it is possible to refine these emergent 2nd-order themes more into 2nd-order aggregate dimensions was appropriate.

4.4.3. Selective Coding

In the third stage of analysis, selective coding, I sorted and printed coded passages from all 23 and follow-up interviews for those coding categories that were emerging as principal and significant for the aim of expanding the developing model. In this stage, when the codes and categories that emerged during open coding and axial coding are compared and relationships are found between the codes and categories, I brainstormed alternative conceptual frameworks to further develop properties and dimensions of these central categories and discern interrelations among categories. One crucial theme kept emerging (i.e., interns' perceptions about their projected image). Once reviewing the relevant literature about the professional identity development among socially devalued members, a possible model (i.e., Roberts, 2005) was identified. Therefore, I intended to search for dimensions of the interns' identity devaluation and the strategies that interns employ to manage misperceptions about their professional image. The aim was to develop the identified conceptual framework and thus discuss the outcomes in relation to the extant literature.

Constructing a data structure was a crucial step in the whole research approach as a full set of 1st-order concepts, 2nd-order themes and aggregate dimensions are obtained. In order to support the case study findings by data and demonstrate how the evidence led to these conclusions (Miles and Huberman, 1994), data structure is represented in figure 15.

Figure 15: Data Structure



Source: own elaboration

Finally, as I was gathering in-depth insights into professional identity devaluation among interns, after comparing and analyzing our data we note that the differences in types and characteristics of internships were not a distinguishing factor in our findings. Factors such as organization types, structural features of internship programs (i.e., monetary compensation), or

internship destinations (i.e., international or domestic internship) did not distinguish participants' perceptions about their professional image. More specifically, interns who experienced either paid or non-paid internships and who made either a domestic or international internship faced the same type of image discrepancy (i.e., negative discrepancy).

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CHAPTER 5:

Findings and Propositions

Index of chapter 5

5.1. Introduction to the findings	193
5.2. Interns' expectations about their professional image and interns' image discrepancies	194
5.2.1. Intern's negative discrepancy	195
5.2.2. Intern's positive discrepancy	203
5.3. Intern's image discrepancies and impression management strategies	210
5.3.1. In-group differentiation strategies	212
5.3.2. Assimilation strategies	222
5.3.3. Failure of negative image discrepancy management strategies	224
5.3.4. Maintaining positive professional image strategies	226
5.4. Impression management strategies and outcomes of the professional identity discovery process.....	231
5.4.1. Mechanisms leading to the outcomes of the professional identity discovery process	231
5.4.2. Intermediate outcomes of the professional identity discovery process	233
5.4.2.1. Self-confidence outcome	233
5.4.2.2. High-quality relationships outcome.....	234
5.4.2.3. Meeting performance (context-specific) standards outcome.....	234
5.4.2.4. Career management outcomes	235
5.4.3. Outcomes of the whole process: A possible professional identity	236
5.5. Theory development: A process model of interns' image management and professional identity development.....	240
5.5.1. Strategies in response to intern's negative image discrepancy	242
5.5.2. Strategies in response to intern's positive image discrepancy	243

5.5.3. The role of the feedback in the process of intern's image management245

5.6. References in the chapter249

5.1. Introduction to the findings

This chapter presents the research findings in relation to how interns understand and cope with their temporary devaluated professional identity. The data were extracted and analyzed according to the goal of the study. The goal was a) to identify and describe different dimensions of the interns' devaluated social identity, b) the strategies interns use in response to this devaluation, and c) the outcomes of this process that involves professional identity discovery.

Professional identity is understood as the identification of an individual with a professional role and is key in the interpretation of situations, emotions and behaviors. The degree of inconsistency between one's desired professional image (i.e., how individuals desire to be perceived) and perceived professional image (i.e., how individuals think they are perceived) results in professional identity devaluation (Reid, 2015; Roberts, 2005). When interns enter the professional environment, they are not aware of the image they desire to project. They begin interacting with others (e.g. mentors, managers, and peers) using their pre-existing understandings. These understandings are needed to interpret new learning while sharing, self-comparing and debating with others (Wong, 2011) to enhance their self-esteem (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). After evaluating how they expect to be perceived at work (i.e. hardworking) and how they think others perceive them at work (i.e. low performing), they begin facing different types of image discrepancies. I begin my analysis by describing the two main types of image discrepancies: interns' negative discrepancies and interns' positive discrepancies and specifying the different dimensions of each discrepancy. Drawing on this analysis, I discuss the three diverse categories of strategies interns used to respond to these image discrepancies. I, then, determine several outcomes of these strategies, which play an important role in how interns construct their professional self. Building on these findings, I present a theoretical model that shows how interns' image management leads to possible identity construction.

5.2. Interns' expectations about their professional image and interns' image discrepancies

Internships represent one of the first work experiences young adults have. This experience takes place when their desired professional image is not clear yet. Thus, for interns, it is a process of discovery. In this process, they may perceive that they belong to a devalued professional category: that of an intern (see section 2.3.5). When interns interact with other employees, they begin interpreting the situations, emotions and behaviors occurring at work. This interpretation of how they expect to be perceived at work (i.e. productive) and how they think others perceive them at work (i.e. incompetent), leads interns to discover that their professional identity is devalued by others (Tajfel, 1978). This devaluation is based to an important extent on the low status frequently associated to interns in the organizational scale.

Interns face different types of image discrepancies between their perceived and desired professional image (see figure 16, below). Interns experience negative discrepancy when they believe that others' (i.e. supervisors, colleagues and customers) perceptions of their work performance and behavior are not meeting expectations. A positive discrepancy happens when interns believe that others had high expectations of their performance (Roberts, 2005) and perceive them as competent and meeting or exceeding performance standards.

Figure 16: Origination of Discrepancy Matrix

		Interns' desired image (for being interns)	
		NEGATIVE	POSITIVE
Interns' perceptions about how others see them (Perceived image)	POSITIVE	Existence of Positive discrepancy	No existence of Discrepancy
	NEGATIVE	No existence of Discrepancy	Existence of Negative Discrepancy

Source: own elaboration

5.2.1. Interns' negative discrepancy

Despite the continuous rise in the proportion of hiring interns, it remains uncertain how they try to succeed professionally and thrive. Employers characterize interns as untalented who need significant preparation in order to be effective in the workplace (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Jaschik, 2015). Following the data analysis technique outlined in the methods chapter above, I identify six main dimensions of interns' negative discrepancy:

- a) mismatch between work management skills and job requirements,
- b) lower level of technical knowledge than the expected,
- c) overshooting assignments,
- d) high demanding expected performance standards,

- e) feeling out of the social category,
- f) and perceived lack of reliability of interns.

These dimensions are illustrated with quotes from the interviews in Table 15.

Mismatch between work management skills and job requirements. Interns perceive that colleagues at work see them as unable to perform, due to lack of work management skills (e.g., time management, communication, problem solving...) or experience. For example, one participant stated:

"The main challenge on the professional side was trying to work in the same direction as my coworkers, (...) I need to feel like being on the same page, and knowing how to manage time (...) I think I wasn't as efficient (...) and that really challenged me!" (Intern 23).

Through their internship experience, interns faced difficulties as they lacked flexibility, communication skills and technical and self-management skills to complete the required job before the deadline. Interns' adaptation to the organization's and colleagues' way of accomplishing tasks at the beginning of the experience was hard, as they didn't possess enough skills to get on with others and understand well job requirements and what customers and coworkers want.

Therefore, this mismatch between work management skills and job requirements challenges interns and makes reaching intended learning goals and outcomes in the internship more difficult. It triggers interns to find effective ways to enhance their performance, gain competencies and acquire the necessary work technical and social skills as individuals tend to behave in a way to improve their self-esteem and self-efficacy (Turner et al., 1987). It helps them to make efforts to collaborate with other employees to understand their roles in terms of task goals and meet performance standards and job expectations.

Table 15
Representative Quotes

Dimensions of Interns' Negative Discrepancy	Illustrative Quotes from Interviews
Mismatch between work management skills and job requirements	<p><i>"I'm not sure I was perceived the way I wanted to be perceived... I had a little problem because I found precisely the work I wanted to do on the internet, like perfectly done, and it was made by the "accounting expertise", much better than how can I do, and as I had deadline... even if I do something on my own it would be longer...I couldn't do better...It wasn't really hard. It was just that I wasn't really skilled for the job." (Intern 16)</i></p> <p><i>"people thought I was shy, because I didn't talk too much ...when I was making the calls I was talking so slowly, I couldn't talk too much, ...at the first week, I was like the last one so, I was feeling bad like oh my god, how can I do it that bad? When we were calling we had minimum amount of calls that you had to do during the day, and the first week I couldn't reach those calls" (Intern 9)</i></p> <p><i>"of course, there were tasks which I couldn't do, something I can't evaluate because I am too young or I don't have enough experience in comparison to other colleagues... it's really professional and my colleagues are pretty skilled" (Intern 12)</i></p> <p><i>""The main challenge on the professional side was trying to work in the same direction as my coworkers, (...) I need to feel like being on the same page, and knowing how to manage time (...) I think I wasn't as efficient (...) and that really challenged me!" (Intern 23)</i></p>
Lower level of technical knowledge than the expected	<p><i>"When I find a student that asks a lot of questions and he's not satisfied and keeps asking, I usually tell them to give their email, so, I research a little bit more on their questions and send them an email later. So, instead of trying to confront a problem right away with the danger making a lot of mistakes, I just tell them honestly that I'm still learning and I want to research about what they want... When some students look at you in a bad way (eye contact), of course, it affects you." (Intern 3)</i></p> <p><i>"Sometimes it was hard because I was not a teacher... sometimes they show less respect, they won't listen to let them change their ideas... it's like sometimes they were just upset and you had to know how to make them stop or relax. I was teacher and psychologist somehow! You had to keep in mind the right way to teach the students... it was hard for me to deal with students, maybe they got angry, or maybe they started crying because they had an argument with that friend and they were angry" (Intern 2)</i></p>
Overshooting assignments	<p><i>"one time I want to advice people on buying (choice of this smart phone, and I've succeeded to sell a smart phone, that after this initiative, this goal, my manager and my supervisor come to me to tell me, it was not your job (it's not allowed), it was not your task, your role, some seller are here for that, so please, don't do this again, please make your job and not the job of others." (Intern 4)</i></p>
High demanding expected performance standards	<p><i>"so, you know my boss was expecting that I was during my course, I was researching by myself, like to improve my work, but you know I couldn't because I have to focus like compulsory, in the other course, he was like blaming me because I didn't give like everything for the work you know, I didn't like give everything for the work because I should be in my free time like reading and discovering." (Intern 6)</i></p>

	<p><i>"I can say that my boss sometimes I can't say impolite, but she was being rude if the customer wasn't glad about the estimate of the project like or any testing document, she was really annoying sometimes... it was hard in the beginning because I was not sure about what should I do about that work... It was very tough, I was working at home, sometimes keeping coming to work" (Intern 21)</i></p>
Feeling out of the social category	<p><i>"Maybe they thought I was lazy, the teachers, probably because they are teachers, they thought I should be following them with books you know like listening to everything and learning... and what I got is a sense of a lot like stress ... I'm a very shy person, so, I'm not a kind of person that is going to classes and just sit there watch because everyone was staring at me, oh who is she? You know it was uncomfortable and the university was huge, I didn't understand anything... they were all working very hard... I really couldn't count on anyone!" (Intern 18)</i></p> <p><i>"They were not helping me. They had other stuff to do... the rest of the employees were not that helpful and communicative... they all have what they have to do and deadlines... but I think, I was there only one month and they have millions of interns, like every month they have new coming and going." (Intern 10)</i></p> <p><i>"...because I think we needed more... like to take advantage of practical work, to go out from ourselves to see how this organization work... but...the rest of them (Colleagues) they had different job, so, we were not interacting, related to work subjects, we were not so much interacting with each other" (Intern 20)</i></p>
Perceived lack of reliability of interns	<p><i>"I had said even I am an intern, I have to learn and see, because it's a huge chance when you work for this kind of firm...at the beginning the first week, you don't really understand what you're doing, but days after... I don't know, I started to ask questions to be more in the internship...because they were working on so many confidential subjects, so, they can't give all the information about that" (Intern 7)</i></p> <p><i>"I did everything right but still... I felt like I wanted to be perceived as equal to others (employees), I didn't feel equal in terms of status, I am an intern and all of them are employees... I imagine it differently! the whole experience I thought that I will do so much things but I didn't have you know the opportunity to do all these things because I was an intern" (Intern 22)</i></p> <p><i>"I didn't have that pressure, like it was not a real job position, I was like there for helping, so, I didn't have pressure that "Fernando, you have to do this, this and this," no... Because I was an intern, so, they are not putting on me a lot of pressure... I was cool (intern) out of the game... But like I was helping them in their work, but not exactly the same work as anybody... I was not with responsibilities like an employee... They were making some graphs also, and they were teaching me how to make it but I was not doing that analysis" (Intern 5)</i></p>

Source: own elaboration

Lower level of technical knowledge than expected. In some cases, interns thought that others perceive that they lack the technical knowledge even if they had the personal skills to perform the job. Interns found difficulties because they didn't have the expected technical ability or job-specific skills needed in the workplace to accomplish specific tasks alone or in collaboration with others. For example, one participant said:

"Sometimes it was hard because I was not a teacher... sometimes they show less respect, they won't listen to let them change their ideas... it's like sometimes they were just upset and you had to know how to make them stop or relax. I was teacher and psychologist somehow! You had to keep in mind the right way to teach the students... it was hard for me to deal with students, maybe they got angry, or maybe they started crying because they had an argument with that friend and they were angry" (Intern 2)

Consequently, this perception of the lack of technical knowledge that others expected interns to have decreases their confidence while performing the job. It makes interns doubt about the quality of their work and the qualifications they possess to deliver the work. So, interns begin searching for manners to develop suitable responses to the expected requirements trying to understand some of the job-specific needs and delineate the interpretations associated with their devalued social category (Hogg et al 1995).

Overshooting assignments. Some interns expected to do tasks related to their majors that would help them develop their practical skills and enhance their professional development. However, they think that others perceive that they overshoot their assignments and go beyond their role in doing tasks. Thus, interns perceived that they didn't receive the expected significant developmental value of the internship and the opportunity to experience more challenging tasks and cultivate their practical knowledge.

As one intern stated:

"one time (...) I've succeeded in selling a smartphone. After this initiative, my manager and my supervisor came to me to tell me, it was not your job (...) some sellers are here for that, so please, don't do this again, make your job and not the job of others." (Intern 4)

This perception of overshooting assignments induces in interns the feeling that they are perceived as less-capable than they would like to. Therefore, they lose the chance to improve their professional knowledge and thus demotivates them. It creates a sense of nervousness toward their supervisors and uncertainty, preventing them of taking the initiative to try to do new tasks or work independently without supervision. This sense of inability to be trusted pushes interns to find successful behaviors (Turner, 1982) to share knowledge with other employees in order to regain their confidence in accomplishing tasks.

Demanding performance standards. For some interns, meeting the expected performance standards feels impossible because their supervisors are very demanding about the work. Accordingly, it is difficult for interns to complete the tasks and progress with their work as expected, as they have other commitments during the internship such as compulsory courses. Interns considers the lack of significant help and adequate information related to the work activities as a barrier for a satisfactory performance as they think that these inputs would make understanding work process easier. As one participant declared:

"so, you know my boss was expecting that I was during my course, (...) like to improve my work, but you know I couldn't because I had to focus like compulsory, on the other course, he was like blaming me (...)" (Intern 6)

Not being able to implement work as expected creates a feeling of being perceived unable to meet performance standards, while they would like to be perceived as capable and productive individuals. Thus, the gap between the demanding performance standards and the ability to meet these expected standards of performance confuse interns and decrease their trust while implementing their tasks as they think that they would never meet the expectations. The difficulties that interns face due to this issue, turn into a motivator to do extra effort in order to develop their skills and learn. As individuals tie their social identities to their abilities (Ashforth, Harrison, and Corley, 2008), it stimulates the development of the sense of commitment that makes interns accept doing all the assigned tasks to show to their supervisors their ability to accomplish work as expected.

Feeling out of the social category. Some interns believe that they don't belong there as they join the organization where employees are busy doing their stuff and have already established social connections. Therefore, they feel out of the social category at work (Turner et al., 1987; Tajfel & Turner, 1985). They think they are perceived as outsiders; their colleagues are less caring about their well-being and are not ready to respond to them whenever they needed help. For example, one participant stated:

“They were not helping me. They had other stuff to do... the rest of the employees were not that helpful and communicative (...)” (Intern 10)

Since interns are not going to stay for long in the organization, other employees don't take the time to socialize with them. This creates the feeling of being perceived "worthless" to socialize with, while they would like to be perceived as interesting and valuable individuals. Accordingly, the absence of social interaction with and support from other employees creates a sense of inequality and caused social exclusion to interns. It induces them to make individual efforts to lower the perceptions of discrimination and

improve their position in the social category (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002). So, interns begin searching for effective behaviors to reflect a good image to other employees (Martiny & Rubin, 2016). They start thinking to make use of their own capacities to progress and respond to the requirements as a way to be recognized from others.

Perceived lack of reliability of interns. Some interns think that they are not perceived as reliable and trustworthy to perform their job consistently, as required by the company. They consider that not being perceived as reliable (Brown, 2000) works as a barrier to get along with and work well with others. Colleagues do not expect interns to show up for work in a timely and professional manner and to adequately use their knowledge and skills. As one participant said:

“(...) I felt like I wanted to be perceived as equal to others (employees), (...), I thought that ‘I will do so many things’ but I didn’t have, you know, the opportunity to do all these things because I was an intern” (Intern 22).

Hence, the perception of lack of reliability of interns makes them realize that other employees associate them with wrong attributes. It encourages the feeling of losing their real selves and drives them to search for manners to get other employees treat them fairly. They try to overcome uncertainties in expressing themselves and to improve their ability to reflect their real persona (Ibarra 1999). So, they begin finding ways to learn and gain a clear understanding of professional standards, expectations and technical skills, trying to find the opportunity to change the association of mistaken attributes about their selves.

In this section, six main dimensions of interns’ negative image discrepancy that are related to the devaluated social identity of interns were identified. These dimensions embodied the experience when interns believe that others’ (i.e. supervisors, colleagues and customers) perceptions of their work performance and behavior are not meeting

expectations. Being part of a devalued category and experiencing negative discrepancy in all its kinds is damaging to morale (Ellemers & Barreto, 2001), threatens the category's identity and incites the desire to improve its status (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002). To re-establish a satisfactory social identity and adapt to the professional environment, interns attempt to project a preferred image of themselves (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Roberts, 2005) and look for effective manners to reflect positive qualities to gain others' acceptance.

In the following section, I identify the dimensions of intern's positive discrepancy as these negative and positive discrepancies that interns face drive them to engage in impression management strategies.

5.2.2. Interns' positive discrepancy

Interns are rarely positively stereotyped as other members of the organization (i.e. supervisors, colleagues and customers) think that they lack the knowledge and skills to meet professional expectations. Even though interns were associated with a devalued category, some of them "went the extra mile" where positive discrepancy exists. Positive expectations regarding interns also had different dimensions. Following the data analysis approach outlined in the methods chapter above, I find four primary dimensions of interns' positive discrepancy:

- a) perceived reliability,
- b) meeting expected performance standards,
- c) higher level of technical knowledge than expected,
- d) and high socialization level.

These dimensions are illustrated with quotes from the interviews in Table 16.

Perceived reliability of interns. Some Interns think that they are perceived as reliable and trusted to perform better than expected. Sometimes they are perceived as capable of taking on important responsibilities and challenging work, as other employees see that “interns can bear fruit” and could perform their intended job adequately without failure. Thus, the perceived reliability builds trust in interns and helps them to be committed and accountable for their work. It stimulates the development of the sense of responsibility in interns as others expect interns to perform job-related tasks and meet deadlines. So, interns are motivated to find useful strategies to maintain the image of being reliable persons (Tajfel, 1978). As one participant stated:

"(...) it's very horizontal the integration, since it doesn't matter if you're an intern, (...) so they basically expected you like you just came from university, tell us something like contribute with something that really can guide us (...)" (Intern 19)

Meeting expected standards of performance. Some interns are perceived as able to meet performance standards that others expected from them. Although others are very demanding about the work and work itself is new and hard to them, interns could perform well at their job. Interns think that others see that they “can make it” as they possess some professional skills useful to meet job requirements and believe in their capacity to meet adequate performance outcomes and willingness to develop. As one intern said:

"They were really impressed that I was learning so quickly (...) I was lucky that they treated me very well! It was quite nice because my expectations were low (...) my boss said: (...) you're doing really more than I was expecting" (Intern 13)

Interns perceive this ability to meet the standards of performance that others expected from them as an incentive for a satisfactory performance. Therefore, it increases their confidence in task performance as they believe they are capable to meet the expected

work performance standards. It inspires interns to try to work harder to maintain high expectations of their abilities (Roberts, 2005) others think that they possess to perform or their desired-self (Higgins, 1989; Markus & Nurius, 1986). It broadens their opportunities to follow successful ways to prove to their supervisors that they can fit into their positions.

Table 16

Representative quotes

**Dimensions of
Interns' Positive
Discrepancy**

Illustrative Quotes from Interviews

Perceived reliability
of interns

"They gave me a lot of responsibilities and I just want to deal with it... they gave me the sign like the person in charge... I say ok, oh my god! What should I do now; yes, it's hard... I've got to know how complicated it is to organize... so, the first day, at the beginning, it was hard because everything was new and there was even no supervisor, and there was no like activities told to me, so, in the first moment, it was hard. I feel like ok, I'm a little bit like alone and I have to organize myself and I have to deal with this... But, also, I recognized after some days that worked very well, then I got like more self-confident, I said ok, I want to do this, and really actually I can do it...it's important (I mean) to do my tasks and my activities because it's also my responsibilities" (Intern 11)

"It has been very satisfactory because the role that was assigned to me is very important for the organization... it's very horizontal the integration, since it doesn't matter if you're an intern, or you have been working there for years, everybody is the same and so it was the case and I really like to be on the same playing level...so they basically expected you like you just came from university, tell us something like contribute with something that really can guide us. It really took me some time to like get into the discussion." (Intern 19)

"If I want to compare my experience with my friends' experience, it was totally different. They told me when I will arrive to the hotel, I am going to be there, doing nothing... For example, when I arrived to the hotel, normally a trainee has to work in different areas, you know like housekeeping, to try everything, but for me it was different because from the first day to the last day I worked in the front office... doing my first check out, you know. ... It's not the easiest thing but it's like you feel yourself you are meeting people, you are talking with people, it's beautiful, it's the best thing to do in the hotel... I was there like any employee or more... I was in the reception with my colleagues, so, I was working like a normal employee, I was handling responsibilities as other employees... So, it was great... I am so grateful to the hotel" (Intern 17)

Meeting expected
performance standards

"They were really impressed that I was learning so quickly... I was lucky that they treat me very well! It was quite nice because my expectations were low, I knew all my friends doing internships in (...), and they were not nice at all, so, if I compare with them, for me, it was perfect... He (My boss) said: yes, you learned really quickly, you don't look like an intern, you were like an actual employee that was maybe 2 or 3 years in the company. So, it was quite good! I think, I really hard worked and they quite appreciated that, and also, I have really good interpersonal skills, so, it was quite good, of course maybe at the beginning, the first interview, they don't see myself that much, but when I started working, like already my boss in this internship, I was there 3 days and he really told me oh my god, you're doing really more than I was expecting" (Intern 13)

Higher level of technical knowledge than the expected

"I don't see myself as a teacher, I still see myself as a student, I'm still learning how to go to the next stage like others, so I don't want to be seen as like a total teacher or the same, I wanted the teachers to teach me how to be like them to that extent... I think, one of mentors was saying like "the students really enjoyed being with you there, they always want to come out, that's always very good, so keep doing what you are doing" and yes... I really enjoyed it. I thought I would hate it, but I loved it." (Intern 15)

High socialization level

"I know we have those weekly meetings with the whole department and I was included as an intern, which was good...I had a good feeling about the team in the workplace, so, I felt that I was in good internship, so, I felt that I wanted to perform those tasks in respect to the team, I mean doing all those tasks maybe won't be so useful in the future, and I didn't plan to do any, but it's not lost anyway, like any knowledge or skills, it's not lost or you can obtain some experience you will not think of, like as I said we did the job as a team, so I get some teamwork experience, so, yes, I was really to the stuff, and I mean it's a good work experience. (Intern 8)

Source: own elaboration

Higher level of technical knowledge than expected. In some cases, others (colleagues and/or supervisors) believe that interns were alive and kicking and had a higher level of technical knowledge than they expected to perform the job. They perceived that interns were talented and competent to deal with others and possessed the job-related qualifications essential in the workplace, as they were able to get the job done in their own smart and specific way without others' assistance. For example, one participant said:

"I don't see myself as a teacher, I still see myself as a student, I'm still learning how to go to the next stage like others, so I don't want to be seen as like a total teacher or the same, I wanted the teachers to teach me how to be like them to that extent... I think, one of mentors was saying like "the students really enjoyed being with you there, they always want to come out, that's always very good, so keep doing what you are doing" and yes... I really enjoyed it. I thought I would hate it, but I loved it." (Intern 15)

Therefore, this perception of possessing the necessary technical knowledge that others expected interns to have helps them to believe more in themselves and the quality of work they can offer. It pushes them to look forward and search for attitudes that make them see things possible. It keeps them motivated to maintain their high level of work as they always desire to keep the positive image in the eyes of their colleagues (Roberts, 2005).

High socialization level. Some interns developed a sense of belonging to the company as other workers believed that they must socialize with interns as they add value to the team, by providing it with additional necessary skills and useful information. Employees took time to provide support and guidance to interns and connect with them. This led to a more comfortable and stimulating work environment and higher productivity. For example, one participant said:

“I know we have those weekly meetings with the whole department and I was included as an intern, which was good...I had a good feeling about the team in the workplace, so, I felt that I was in a good internship, (...) I was really to the stuff, and I mean it’s a good work experience” (Intern 8)

This perception of being part of the group boosts interns’ morale. It constitutes a holding environment (Petriglieri, Wood, and Petriglieri, 2011) for them that facilitates communication and knowledge sharing. This creates a feeling of safety (Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2010) and equality, providing appropriate adaptive challenges and support to interns. It encourages them to make social connections (Ibarra, 2004) which helps them to perform their work and reflect competence. Accordingly, interns search for persuasive manners to stabilize their status in the category, as social interaction within the work environment plays an important role in building professional identity (Cardoso et al., 2014).

In this section, four main dimensions of interns' positive image discrepancy were identified even though interns were associated with a devalued professional category. These dimensions embodied the experience when interns believe that others (i.e. supervisors, colleagues and customers) have high expectations of their performance (Roberts, 2005) and perceive them as competent and meeting or exceeding performance standards. Experiencing positive discrepancy drives individuals to keep, stabilize, or extend the positive perception of their category (Tajfel, 1978). Thus, interns attempt to enhance their understanding of how they would desire to be perceived (Roberts, 2005) to maintain their positive image in the eyes of their supervisors and colleagues.

In conclusion, the dimensions identified for positive and negative discrepancies stem from sharing information and knowledge, comparing and discussing new interpretations with others, as these are important factors that frame interns' professional identity process. Driven by these negative and positive discrepancies, interns are aware of how others' perceptions of their attributes and competence at work is shaped by their devaluated social identity and, therefore, they seek to manage this identity devaluation. For this aim, interns engage in impression management strategies. As interns engage in self-presentation strategies by conveying qualities (i.e. intelligence) to construct positive personas and seek others approval (Goffman, 1959), they are building possible professional identity (Ibarra, 1999). I continue in the following section to identify these impression management strategies as these strategies play an important role in constructing interns' desired professional image and shaping their professional identity process.

5.3. Interns' image discrepancies and impression management strategies

Interns were interested in building their desired professional image and shaping others' perceptions of their personal characteristics as professional members (Roberts, 2005) to live up to others' expectations (McDonald, Fielding, & Louis, 2013). The motivation to act is driven by positive reinforcement including approval, relationship, ability, support and other rewards to meet these expectations (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Thus, I found that interns employ different types of social identity-based impression management (SIM) strategies to downplay their negative discrepancy as well as to play up their positive discrepancy. Table 17 summarizes the interns located according to the type of discrepancy perceived and the strategies employed. They engaged in in-group differentiation and assimilation discussed in previous literature (Roberts, 2005) when they experienced negative discrepancy, whereas they engaged in positive image maintenance when they experienced positive discrepancy.

Table 17: The interns located according to the type of discrepancy perceived and the strategies employed

Interns	Type of discrepancy perceived	Dimension of the discrepancy	Strategies employed
Intern 1	Negative discrepancy	Personal Identity threat/ Threat to self-image	/
Intern 14	Negative discrepancy	International dimension- Language	/

Intern 9/ Intern 12/ Intern 16/ Intern 23	Negative discrepancy	Mismatch between work management skills and job requirements	-Building Informal Relationships -Being Autonomous -Improving Work by Learning from Mistakes -Managing time -Showing Self- Control
Intern 2/ Intern 3	Negative discrepancy	Lower level of technical knowledge than expected	-Being Autonomous -Using Personal Traits in the Professional Work -Showing Self- Control -Managing time -Being Responsive
Intern 4	Negative discrepancy	Overshooting assignments	-Building Informal Relationships
Intern 6/ Intern 21	Negative discrepancy	Demanding expected standards of performance	-Being Autonomous -Being Committed to Their Responsibilities
Intern 10/ Intern 18/ Intern 20	Negative discrepancy	Feeling out of the category	- Taking Extra-Role Responsibilities -Using Personal Traits in the Professional Work -Managing time
Intern 5/ Intern 7/ Intern 22	Negative discrepancy	Perceived lack of reliability of interns	-Building Informal Relationships -Taking Extra-Role Responsibilities -Managing time

Intern 11/ Intern 17/ Intern 19	Positive discrepancy	Perceived reliability of interns.	-Trying their best -Adopting a Positive Attitude -Reflecting hard work
Intern 13	Positive discrepancy	Meeting expected standards of performance	-Trying their Best -Reflecting hard work
Intern 15	Positive discrepancy	Higher level of technical knowledge than expected	-Trying their Best -Adopting a Positive Attitude
Intern 8	Positive discrepancy	High socialization level	-Trying their Best -Adopting a Positive Attitude

Source: own elaboration

5.3.1. In-group differentiation strategies

In-group differentiation strategies are self-presentation behaviors individuals use to convey their individual characteristics and differentiate themselves within the social category (Tajfel, 1978). Interns employed in-group differentiation where several behaviors focused on the goal of differentiating oneself within the professional group. Therefore, they desired to be assessed according to their individual characteristics, not as members of a devalued social identity group. They “wore the mask of the professional” for the aim of conveying personal uniqueness.

I identify eight different in-group differentiation strategies derived from interns’ negative discrepancy:

a) managing time,

- b) taking extra-role responsibilities,
- c) being autonomous,
- d) using personal traits in professional work,
- e) showing self-control in challenging situations,
- f) going the extra mile,
- g) being responsive,
- h) improving work by learning from mistakes.

These strategies are illustrated with quotes from the interviews in Table 18.

Managing time. The most common of these strategies included interns' "time management", planning and controlling deadlines and how much time to spend on every activity assigned to them. By managing time effectively, they increase their productivity and submit their work on time and meet deadlines. For example, one participant said:

"I made sure to give my work on time, because I think it's very important if you want colleagues to believe that you are a good person (employee), you have to give your work on time, to be polite and everything" (Intern 7)

When interns perceived a lack in the technical knowledge that others expected them to have, a mismatch between work management skills and job requirements, a feeling that they are out of the social category or a lack of reliability, they "*managed their time*" to develop suitable responses to the expected requirements. They employ this individual capacity (time management) to improve their qualifications in the eyes of other category members (i.e., employees) (Turner et al., 1987) by delivering work on time. This way,

they lower the perceptions of discrimination as they become recognized for being reliable with deadlines and time-efficient by other employees. So, the latter appreciate more their work as they are respecting deadlines, which increases their trust in performing the job.

Taking extra-role responsibilities. The second most common in-group differentiation strategy was to “take extra-role responsibilities”. Interns asked to perform extra tasks that were not part of their job requirements as a way to demonstrate good attitude and work-ethic. As one participant (school teacher) stated:

"I asked the teachers for extra materials...I was open to every idea, I was telling everyone, all the teachers, if you need any help, let me know... this is my mail" (Intern 18)

The perception of lack of reliability of interns and the feeling that they are out of the social category drive them to “take extra-role responsibilities” to impress other colleagues that they are interested in the work and can be part of the team. This helps them to manage the wrong attributes that other employees associated interns with (Hogg et al., 1995) and gain their support. Therefore, interns begin feeling equal to their colleagues and that they improve their position within the “interns” category, as their peers recognize and think that interns are contributing to the work like other employees and feel they are included and engaged within the workplace.

Being autonomous. Sometimes interns felt they had to distinguish themselves in the eyes of their supervisors and colleagues by working on their own without the others’ aid. They tried to “be autonomous” to show their capacity of accomplishing work independently without the need of strict supervision, and accepted the consequences of their behavior and work. For example, one participant stated:

"I started working alone, I do meetings alone, I did everything myself, I worked like with 2 projects, they asked me (to do this and this)" (Intern 21)

Some interns use this strategy when they perceived a lack of the technical knowledge that others expected them to have, a mismatch between work management skills and job requirements, or demanding expected standards of performance in order to develop their skills and learn and respond to the expected requirements. They try to “*be autonomous*” in doing their work to prove to supervisors or other employees that the intern’s role should not be characterized by limited task autonomy as presumed and, thus, gain their approval (Goffman, 1959; Schlenker & Pontari, 2000). The logic is to avoid appearing as dependent, inexperienced, or unprepared in front of other peers. Frequently interns are perceived as a burden by other employees because interns typically have no previous experience. As a consequence, regular employees usually have to provide interns training and supervision. This strategy is aimed to avoid this situation, as they show to other employees and supervisors that they are “not a burden”. They are capable to perform work as expected. As one interviewee said:

“Actually, after completing my tasks alone, if I have done my work without error, I am the happiest person in the world... They (other employees) told me you are really hardworking... They told me that I did everything they assigned to me, “you are really good, you can work with us whenever you want after your bachelor”, they had a good impression about me” (Intern 21)

Using personal traits in professional work. Some interns chose to “use personal traits in the professional work” as a way to demonstrate their professional distinctiveness. They succeeded in finding a way to get the job done by employing their personal abilities and their own skills acquired before the internship experience as a way to respond to the

requirements and deal with customers and understand their needs. As one interviewee declared:

“as far as I know, I have communication skills, I compel my colleagues to do the job, I also contributed like (...) through my communication skills, it was the main area here I was good in, I was convincing them” (Intern 20)

The perception of feeling out of the category and lacking the technical knowledge that others expected them to have push some interns to “*use their personal traits in the professional work*” to respond to the job-specific needs. By employing this strategy, interns make use of their own skills (Ibarra, 1999) to get the job done as prescribed and change the image of incompetence other employees have about interns. They aim to show to other colleagues that even though they are interns and they lack experience and knowledge, they are special as they possess other skills (i.e. communication skills). Interns try to compensate the lack of technical knowledge with other skills they have in the sight of other colleagues. Their purpose behind using personal traits while working is to manifest to other employees that they are qualified to work and worth to be part of the social environment in the organization. They are able to offer good service to customers.

Showing self-control in challenging situations. Other interns select the technique of “Showing self-control” at work working to appear as professional as others. Consequently, interns handled challenges at the workplace by showing self-control, keeping themselves calm under stressful situations, and developing healthy responses. For example, one participant said:

“you have to be patient...you have to be empathic and to be able to fit in the position. So, you have to make it, I think if you are under pressure and you make it right, it’s like you have succeeded personally, so you have to overcome difficulties” (Intern 2)

Some interns tried to “*show self-control*” to other colleagues. They employ this individual characteristic as an attempt to overcome difficulties due to the lack of specific job-related competencies (Ibarra, 1999) and respond to the expected job requirements. By doing so, they were searching for ways to enhance their performance and show to other category members (i.e. supervisors) their ability to meet job expectations. Using this strategy helps interns to adapt to the organization’s and colleagues’ way of accomplishing tasks (Alvesson & Wilmott, 2002) by handling the challenges they’ve faced to reach intended work performance and gain recognition from other employees. The logic is to avoid appearing as unsophisticated and immature in front of other peers. Interns are often perceived as ignorant and lacking awareness in hard situations by other employees. As a consequence, regular employees usually have to guide interns in completing their tasks. This strategy is aimed to influence peers’ perceptions by showing them that interns can communicate easily and reflect the appropriate way of thinking and behavior. By being patient and regulating their behavior in challenging situations, they can achieve specific goals and get positive outcomes. Self- controlling helps interns show other employees that they are dedicated to their work as they are able to see and search for alternative perspectives effectively, and not as presumed, immature and dependent on other peers to do the expected job.

Going the extra mile Interns were “committed to their responsibilities” by accepting to do all the assigned tasks, even when it seemed it was hard for them and required extra efforts. They saw this both as a way to develop their skills and learn and to prove to others that they could count on them whenever needed to accomplish the required tasks. As one intern stated:

“Sometimes I was doing extra hours because you know I didn’t have the knowledge, I was working slower and you know I had responsibilities to finish we have like dates and

hours you know that you have to stand them (...) I wanted others to see me like a responsible person... someone looking really for the way to find solutions, like someone they can count on " (Intern 6)

"*Going the extra mile*" is a strategy used by interns who perceived demanding expected standards of performance to overcome difficulties. They employ this way and accept doing everything they can to implement the job in order to gain their supervisors' recognition and support (Goffman, 1959; Schlenker & Pontari, 2000). Employing this strategy is a signal about interns that although they are 'interns', but they are distinctive because they work harder. They aim to show to other colleagues that they possess better attitude than others by working overtime. Interns try to send a message that they do the extra mile that others actually don't. As a result, their supervisors appreciate more their work and they become more able to meet the expected work performance standards.

Being responsive. Sometimes, interns were "responsive" to show exceptional performance and differentiate themselves. These interns respond to others quickly and in an appropriate manner and reply to them with the desired information whenever they need their help. They were ready to do everything they were asked and meet requirements. For example, one participant said:

"...like to see the students happy and without any questions after they leave the class, that's why I always made myself available either directly or through the email, to answer immediately...and I always respond fast" (Intern 3)

Being perceived as having a lower level of technical knowledge than expected drives interns to "*be responsive*" to colleagues and customers whenever they need help. The aim of using this strategy is to obtain colleagues' help and support in return and acquire job-specific skills needed in the workplace to accomplish required tasks. This helps them

to overcome difficulties as they didn't have the expected technical ability to do the job and gain more confidence while performing the job. By doing so, they increase their interaction with other peers (Cardoso et al., 2014) and improve the quality of their work and their relationships within the professional environment (Higgins & Kram, 2001; Pratt, Rockman & Kaufmann, 2006).

Improving work by learning from mistakes. A number of interns used to “improve work by learning from mistakes” in order to keep progressing at work and reach a good level of performance. Therefore, interns have learned from making mistakes the right way of doing tasks and tried later not to repeat them, searching for continuous improvement. For example, one participant said:

“I was not sure that I was in that state of mind because I think I was quite upset about this point, but maybe it was that mistake that gave me the ways to do other things... but I don't think in that point I was optimistic, but maybe that helped to do better job...I think it was ok because I had restarted to do the work... I had to do it more quickly and better”
(Intern 16).

Table 18**Representative quotes**

SIM strategies derived from interns' negative discrepancy	Illustrative Quotes from Interviews
Managing time	<p><i>I tried to be always on time, I always tried to be very responsible, and have every task made on time...To all I always tried to respond with kindness, and to always be available (Intern 3)</i></p> <p><i>This is a surprise, because I could not be anywhere on time, but there I was! (Intern 10)</i></p> <p><i>I try to manage my time to finish on time! (Intern 23)</i></p> <p><i>I made sure to give my work on time, because I think it's very important if you want colleagues to believe that you are a good person, you have to give your work on time, to be polite and everything (Intern 7)</i></p>
Taking extra-role responsibilities	<p><i>I did some extra work and I even ask for more work, so they were very pleased about that, they saw that I was motivated in this internship, so, they were very pleased I think! For example, others, they just do their work and stop, I was not like this, I would ask for even more tasks, and they were very proud of this kind of attitude (Intern 7)</i></p> <p><i>I asked the teachers for extra materials...I was open to every idea I was telling everyone, all the teachers, "do you need any help, let me know", "this is my mail" (Intern 18)</i></p>
Being autonomous	<p><i>Well, because we have some working periods during the day, to prepare worksheets and reading activities for students, I could do it there and after school, I could do it at home, I've used to supervise some of the material, because I wanted to do it right, so, I used to dedicate a lot of time, so, sometimes, the things that I did work too long for sometimes, so, I think I make it right, all the tasks they ask me to do, they were ok (Intern 2)</i></p> <p><i>I started working alone, I do meetings alone, I did everything myself, I worked like with 2 projects, they asked me (to do this and this) (Intern 21)</i></p>
Using personal traits in the professional work	<p><i>I was trying to be closer to them, funny sometimes... Being funny with them, telling some jokes, if they are bored, mainly jokes so they would be here (Intern 2)</i></p> <p><i>As far as I know I have communication skills, to let I compel my coworkers like colleagues to do the job, I also contributed like, I was showing my contribution too, so, that was are things I did though my communication skills, it was the main area here I was good in, I was convincing them (Intern 20)</i></p>
Showing self-control in challenging situations	<p><i>You have to be patient...you have to be empathic and to be able to fit in the position. So, you have to make it, I think if you are under pressure and you make it right, it's like you have succeeded personally, so you have to overcome difficulties (Intern 2)</i></p> <p><i>Those situations were like the most difficult one...the factor that helped me is to keep trying and be patient (Intern 23)</i></p>

Going the extra mile	<i>Sometimes I was doing extra hours because you know I didn't have the knowledge, I was working slower and you know I had responsibilities to finish we have like dates and hours you know that you have to stand them, so, you know if I did something that it needs to be finished for tomorrow and I couldn't do it today, I stayed extra hours just to finish... I wanted others to see me like a responsible person... someone looking really for the way to find solutions, like someone they can count on (Intern 6)</i>
Being responsive	<i>...like to see the students happy and without any questions after they leave the class, that's why I always made myself available either directly or through the email, to answer immediately...and I always respond fast (Intern 3)</i>
Improving work by learning from mistakes	<i>I was not sure that I was in that state of mind because I think I was quite upset about this point, but maybe it was that mistake that gave me the ways to do other things... but I don't think in that point I was optimistic, but maybe that helped to do better job...I think it was ok because I had restarted to do the work... I had to do it more quickly and better (Intern 16)</i>

Source: own elaboration

Some interns used this strategy when they perceived a mismatch between work management skills and job requirements to enhance their performance and gain competencies. They tried “*to improve work by learning from mistakes*” to adapt to the organization’s and colleagues’ manner of doing tasks. This strategy helps interns to show to supervisors and employees that an intern’s role is not only limited to shadow other experienced employees (Roberts, 2005; Alvesson & Wilmott, 2002; Hewlin, 2003; 2009), but to learn, perform and contribute to the organization. By communicating constantly with other employees and asking for more information about the work process, interns are more likely to change the perception of irresponsibility and uncaringness other employees have about interns. They aim to show to other colleagues that even though they are interns, they are open to change and curious to learn from mistakes and achieve goals. Showing interest to improve to other colleagues results in improving interns’ ability to meet context-specific expectations as they receive other employees’ feedback and support after making a mistake.

In this section, eight in-group differentiation strategies derived from interns' negative discrepancy were identified. These strategies were used by interns to convey their individual characteristics and differentiate themselves within the professional category. Their aim is to change perceptions of interns' work performance and behavior in the eyes of supervisors and colleagues (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003; Watson, 2008). Employing these different behaviors helps interns to adapt to the professional environment, reflect a satisfactory image, boost their morale and gain others support and acceptance. I continue in the following section to identify assimilation strategies, another type of behaviors employed by interns to downplay their negative discrepancy.

5.3.2. Assimilation strategies

Assimilation strategies are self-presentation behaviors individuals use not to differentiate themselves within the social category (Tajfel, 1978), but to emphasize distinctiveness from one's social identity category and similarities with members of more positively regarded social identity category (Ellemers et al., 2002). Interns employ assimilation strategies where they highlight similarities with the rest of employees, and present themselves as members of better valued professional identity groups (Ellemers et al., 2002; Roberts, 2005).

Building informal relationships. Building informal relationships is the main strategy employed by interns to assimilate into the dominant organizational environment (Roberts, 2005). Interns tried to socialize and interact with other peers and build good informal relationships to reflect their real self and search for social equality. Using this behavior is a way to reflect their features as individuals and overcome the categorization as "interns".

It is also a manner to integrate themselves into the same social category of other employees. For example, one participant said:

“I’ve tried to integrate myself into the team (...) I’ve tried to speak to all the employees (...) to laugh with them, to interest myself in what they do and to know each other” (Intern 4).

The perception of lack of reliability of interns, overshooting assignments and mismatch between work management skills and job requirements drive interns to try to “*build informal relationships*” with other colleagues. They employ this strategy to gain their colleagues’ support and help during the work, and to adapt to the organization’s social norms (Pratt, Rockman & Kaufmann, 2006). Socializing would facilitate collaborating with other employees to understand their roles in terms of task goals (Pratt, 2000). They would also be able to learn from them some specific job-related competencies and respond to the expected job requirements and meet performance standards. By doing so, they would feel part of the organization and motivated to work and improve their professional knowledge. This strategy helped interns ensure that other colleagues did not associate them with false attributes and thus minimized misperceptions.

In summary, interns employed eight in-group differentiation strategies and one main assimilation strategy to downplay their negative discrepancy. The aims for using each strategy and the role that each strategy plays in differentiating interns’ selves within the professional category and assimilating into the dominant organizational environment were discussed above. Next, I will discuss some cases in which interns failed to manage their professional image.

5.3.3. Failure of negative image discrepancy management strategies

Despite that most of the interns facing negative discrepancies were successful in managing misperceptions and constructing their professional image, some of them failed in different ways. Some interns had difficulties in understanding how to communicate with supervisors. They expressed uncertainties and nervousness about approaching their supervisors. As one intern said:

“It was really offensive to me... he doesn't like to speak and exchange... It was more like he was there to discipline me and tell me the do's and don'ts and not to share his knowledge” (Intern 4).

Some got no feedback at all and some missed a constructive conversation about their performance. As one intern stated:

“So, I had a supervisor, but she was not giving me enough time, enough guidance, like providing me enough knowledge, like sometimes I need her and she's not there for me... (Intern 22).

When interns didn't receive enough supervision, they failed in developing job skills to perform their tasks. Thus, they didn't succeed to enhance their image as they desired, as supervisors' feedback plays an important role in shaping interns' responses to discrepancies to meet their own needs. As intern 22 stated:

“I expected that she would also provide me with more knowledge, but she couldn't... I learn about the selection and recruitment process, but only on a superficial level... it wasn't the experience I expected”.

Moreover, some interns failed to interact and work collaboratively toward intended learning goals and outcomes in the internship. They missed sharing information and knowledge, comparing and discussing new interpretations with others. Even though interns had basic skill competencies and made efforts to meet the goals, they were not able to build their own understanding. This may be because interns perceived that they didn't receive the adequate support. As one participant declared:

"They were not helping me. They had other stuff to do... the rest of the employees were not that communicative... so, these people are not as helpful... they all have what they have to do and deadlines" (Intern 10).

They were unable to obtain the necessary resources that they needed and were originally promised, when accomplishing a task that required team work. Some interns didn't have the chance to interact and deal with others to show if they are a good fit for the team. Thus, they struggled to demonstrate their own abilities in a new challenging environment and learn new skills.

Further, very few interns lacked commitment and enthusiasm and were not serious about their role. They were not interested in the company or the type of work as their managers didn't assign them real responsibilities nor appreciated their presence and willingness to contribute to the team. They were passive and didn't try to volunteer to help their colleagues or other interns with their tasks, as they perceived they were considered to be out of the team. As one intern said:

"I was telling myself that I'm not an employee and I had not like that much responsibilities, everything they wanted from me, I was helping them, if I could, but if I could not... you know and I was not putting that much pressure and I was working like I

wanted to work... I was not saying no, but I was maybe not dedicating the whole time I should dedicate... I was doing it, but not that good! (Intern 5).

Next, after identifying the strategies that interns use to downplay their negative discrepancy, I will identify interns' positive professional image maintenance strategies to emphasize their positive discrepancy. I will also discuss the role of these strategies in keeping positive image discrepancies and the expectations that others (e.g. colleagues and supervisors) have about interns' work performance.

5.3.4. Maintaining positive professional image strategies

Interns use various behaviors (SIM strategies) to maintain a positive professional image. They try to maintain or increase positive image discrepancies (Tajfel, 1978) by presenting themselves in a positive manner. These strategies aim to obtain good performance, show good attitude and demonstrate interns' ability to keep up the expectations of their performance. I found a variety of SIM strategies derived from interns' positive discrepancy. These strategies are illustrated with quotes from the interviews in Table 19. Differently from in-group differentiation (discussed in the previous section 5.3.1) —focusing on the goal of differentiating interns' selves within the professional group by conveying their individual characteristics to downplay their negative discrepancy—, interns aimed to maintain their positive image in the eyes of their supervisors and colleagues to preserve the superior status of their group and expand their vision of how they would desire to be perceived (Tajfel, 1978; Roberts, 2005). Instead of concentrating on reflecting personal attributes, interns attempt to try their best, adopt a positive attitude and reflect hard work, to emphasize the positive discrepancy and keep up high expectations.

Trying their best. The most common of these strategies involved interns' "trying their best", which involves striving to perform at high standards and in accordance to the prescriptions, in order to test their own limits and to prove that they are competent and reliable persons. As one participant stated:

"I tried my best and I always try my best because if I don't try my best, then I'm not... in this internship, I would say I tried to be motivated every day, I was looking for solutions, I've been creative, sometimes I stayed longer to stay with the children, I was open, I was smiling, I was talking to everybody..." (Intern 11).

When interns perceived they had higher level of the technical knowledge that others expected them to have, reliability, ability of meeting expected standards of performance and high socialization level, they "*tried their best*" in doing their work to keep up the peers' positive perceptions. They did their utmost to communicate well and share their acquired knowledge with other employees and in some cases with supervisors, to reflect the expected competence. They strived to keep a high level of interaction with their colleagues (Cardoso et al., 2014) and perform the tasks always to the expected level. The logic why interns use this attitude is to appear as independent and well prepared in the eyes of other peers, although interns do not feel it among themselves. As interns are expected to be competent by other employees, they tried their best to perform without supervision and as prescribed. This strategy is aimed to show to other employees and supervisors that interns are, as they perceive them and not as presumed about an intern, "dedicated and productive". They are capable to perform work as other peers expected them to. This resulted in good social connections within the professional environment that gained them credibility and trustworthiness regarding the consistent quality of their work.

Adopting a positive attitude. Interns “adopted a positive attitude” by trying to think positively and seeing things possible. They believed that negativity for its own sake rarely serves a purpose. As a consequence, they showed their ability to cope with the problems they have faced, trying to reflect that they are always fine and happy getting along with their co-workers. For example, one intern stated:

“Maybe not every day because when the things were not working, it was sometimes, but most of the time I was quite positive...I was not having any conflict with anyone, I was being peaceful with everyone” (Intern 8)

By approaching stressful situations with positivity and productivity, interns feel more comfortable and motivated to maintain the high level of work that other colleagues desire them to deliver. Positive attitude makes interns to be perceived as a positive influence in the company. Positivity also helps to overcome work-related problems. Being perceived as resolute and problem solving helps interns overcome any negative prejudice associated to their categorization of "interns". This leads to receiving more appreciation and good evaluation from supervisors (Ibarra, 1999; Pratt et al., 2006) and maintaining the positive image projected.

Reflecting hard work. Interns were trying to reflect to others, especially their supervisors, that they were able to occupy their positions and to show them that they can rely on them whenever it was needed. They didn't limit themselves to what they can and what they know, they were trying a little harder to maintain the expectations of their abilities. As one participant said:

“Of course, as I told you hardworking, like I really wanted them to know I was there to work hard (...) and also like try to be friendly and always able to help them when they needed” (Intern 13)

Being perceived as hard working and able to meet performance standards that others expected from interns drive them to be viewed as productive and efficient. Interns use this strategy trying not only to reach a satisfactory task performance, but to think about the significance of their work in the eyes of their supervisors and colleagues. Reflecting hard work makes interns to be perceived as an added value and a source of new perspectives. Hardworking also helps to effectively collaborate and share knowledge with other colleagues (Ibarra 1999) and impact work performance and environment (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). Being perceived as a contributor to the goals of the organization helps interns ensure to supervisors and colleagues that interns are reliable, as they thought about them, and not as it's known "shadowing experienced employees".

Table 19

Representative Quotes	
SIM strategies derived from interns' positive discrepancy	Illustrative Quotes from Interviews
Trying their Best	<p><i>I would say that I was doing my best to do the job that I was given (Intern 8)</i></p> <p><i>I tried my best and I always try my best because if I don't try my best, then I'm not... in this internship, I would say I tried to be motivated every day, I was looking for solutions, I've been creative, sometimes I stayed longer to stay with the children, I was open, I was smiling, I was talking to everybody... (Intern 11)</i></p> <p><i>If you know how to do the things, just do it as best as you can... and they quite appreciated that (Intern 13)</i></p> <p><i>And to say that, I'm doing my best and well, then when you evaluate that this is your very best, then you say like I did whatever I could or whatever I know (Intern 19)</i></p> <p><i>I think I will always try to give it my best. Of course, there would be days when you were like tired or just bored or whatever but you should always try to give your best in anything (Intern 15)</i></p>
Adopting a Positive Attitude	<p><i>Maybe not every day because when the things were not working, it was sometimes, but most of the time I was quite positive...I was not having any conflict with anyone, I was being peaceful with everyone (Intern 8)</i></p> <p><i>I've been always being positive around students, always like being happy, because if they see you unhappy or like board or something like that, then what can I get to teach them how to get out of that (Intern 15)</i></p> <p><i>For me, at the beginning was really hard... but you have to be strong and of course to think positively and tomorrow will be another day... Finally, you are thinking like that... (Intern 17)</i></p>
Reflecting Hard Work	<p><i>Of course, as I told you hardworking, like I really wanted them to know I was there to work hard and not just because I want money and just I wanted to pass my internship, so, that's the good thing and also like try to be friendly and always able to help them when they needed (Intern 13)</i></p> <p><i>Because I knew I am going to be there for three months... I worked hard and I did everything I can do... I was doing anything in order to satisfy the client, of course, go with him, and talk with him as much as I can, park his car... (Intern 17)</i></p>

Source: own elaboration

Engaging in self-presentation strategies (in-group differentiation, assimilation and positive image maintenance) results in a variety of outcomes of the professional identity

discovery process. In the following section I explain the mechanisms leading to these outcomes (including the feedback) and identify the outcomes.

5.4. Impression management strategies and outcomes of the professional identity discovery process

5.4.1. Mechanisms leading to the outcomes of the professional identity discovery process

Interns frequently consider how to improve professional performance and practices and effectively apply learning from past experiences. They tend to enhance their professional practice by developing themselves professionally, trying to build a professional identity. One of the mechanisms that serves this purpose is the **feedback** (Smith et al., 2013) received from peers and clients. Feedback is defined as helpful information or criticism about prior action or behavior from an individual, communicated to another individual (or a group) who can use that information to adjust and improve current and future actions and behaviors. It is a tool that can help individuals evaluate themselves and their work and also how others perceive them. Interns employed different types of strategies that resulted in trusted relationships with colleagues and customers in an environment that includes collaborative work activities as well as social activities. This gives interns the opportunity to reflect on what was done well and what could be done better. The feedback helped interns to learn, develop and adapt to the work environment leading to interpersonal outcomes such as high-quality relationships and meeting performance (context-specific) standards.

Another important mechanism mediating the strategies that interns used and the outcomes is **mentorship**. Mentorship is defined as the guidance provided by a mentor, especially

an experienced person in a company or educational institution. Mentoring helps interns to achieve professional and personal growth by providing them knowledge, advice, challenge and support (Moss et al., 2014). The mentoring relationship built on trust encourages interns' self-reflection, professional growth and receptivity to feedback (Petrilla et al., 2015). It helps reduce their stress while building competences (i.e. problem-solving) and enjoying better career outcomes (Sweitzer, 2008) such as performance and career resources (i.e. recommendation letter). The collaboration between mentor and intern supports the professional socialization process, where the sharing and demonstration of professional values and standards helps establish a strong professional culture (Kay, 2015).

The third mechanism leading to several outcomes such as feelings of confidence and self-efficacy (Smith et al., 2013) is **encouragement**. Encouragement is defined as inspiring or stimulating someone with the courage or confidence to do something by approval or support. A motivational environment encouraged interns to ask questions, share their interests, concerns and experiences with a professional community and take part in special work projects. It facilitates professional growth, innovation, pride, confidence, and a sense of belonging that internalizes the values, beliefs and attitudes of a profession (Kay, 2015), re-orienting interns towards their preferable career. When interns are empowered to perform and have professional responsibility, they can have the chance to be accepted and evaluated positively by other members in the organization or clients. Being welcomed and accepted as coworkers and having the opportunity to interact with peers and contribute to the company provide a sense of validation and being valued as part of a team, leading to high quality relationships. These acceptance and approval increase self-efficacy giving on to the focus on task mastery, where the intern is motivated to learn for the goal of self-improvement.

Employing different types of impression management strategies was necessary for interns to manage their image discrepancies trying to seek others' approval and meet their expectations. These impression management strategies along with perceivers' (supervisors and peers) feedback, mentorship and encouragement are not only beneficial in shaping interns perceived professional image but also in providing interns several outcomes.

5.4.2. Intermediate outcomes of the professional identity discovery process

I discovered a number of outcomes of the process such as increasing self-confidence, improving relationships quality, enhancing performance, obtaining career resources, considering career reorientation, and thus creating a possible professional identity.

5.4.2.1. Self-Confidence outcome

Self-confidence. At the end of their internship experience, interns mentioned feeling more self-confident in task performance and relationships (Feo et al., 2017; Bagnasco et al., 2019), as they trust and appreciate their skills and abilities in many work tasks such as dealing with customers, communicating with colleagues and solving problems. For example, positive feedback and the encouragement from others push interns to believe in themselves and identify their strengths. As one intern stated:

“Well, for my internship, I would say that it was good for me to create good confidence in how I work and that I am able to do things that before I thought I wasn't able to do... I think it gave me confidence and how the market is.” (Intern 13)

5.4.2.2. High quality relationships outcome

High quality relationships. Moreover, interns' SIM behaviors were effective in improving relationships quality and value (Cheng, 2021; Meister et al., 2014). Interns have built informal relationships and made friends with whom they have interacted outside the workplace, in a nice and friendly environment. That helped them to know other professionals and develop positive and supportive professional links with their colleagues. As one intern indicated:

“I did actually make good friends and professional friends as well, who still speak to me even a year later! For me the best thing was to meet people there... best relations with my colleagues” (Intern 3)

5.4.2.3. Meeting performance (context-specific) standards outcome

Meeting performance (context-specific) standards. The feedback and support from others played a role in enhancing interns' performance (Petriglieri & Obodaru, 2019), as interns became more competent and succeeded in acquiring the necessary technical and social skills and were able to meet performance standards and job expectations. For example, one intern said:

“I value the skills I've learned with them... I am grateful for the things they were trying to teach me... through this feedback that I was receiving from other people, from my colleagues, and my boss... I think that the outcomes are good... because I think at the beginning I was really lost and I didn't really know how to work, have responsibilities, to really understand what a client needs and you need to do you know! And now, I learn like you know, for example, I like try to add value to what I'm doing, I really like to understand what I am doing, so I think that professionally, I grow a lot, because yes now I know so

many things I'm taking in account when I'm doing the things so, now I'm much better professional" (Intern 6)

5.4.2.4. Career management outcomes

Career resources. After engaging in SIM behaviors, interns enhanced their career management (Inceoglu et al., 2019) by obtaining career resources. One of the main facets of career resources is gaining experience about how a real job is exactly, as interns have the opportunity to acquire the necessary professional knowledge and apply it to get the job done through receiving advice and feedback from others. As one intern stated:

"I think I saw what practical work is, how it was organized in the company and what was really asked by the clients (...) how to be competent and to respond better to the client... I think the best way to understand what the work is really is when you do it" (Intern 16).

Another aspect of career resources is learning how to behave and interact within the work environment and developing new skills such as problem solving, teamwork and communication skills (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). As one intern said:

"I guess it really helped me to certify the skills I gained, also useful for my next job that I'm taking now, or any other career jobs that I will take, because you know it's providing me like leadership skills, communication skills, it just gave me a lot of skills that I can use now in different job aspects when I'd like" (Intern 15).

One of the beneficial consequences of their successful behaviors, that interns were satisfied about, was obtaining a recommendation or reference letter, as they consider it important for increasing their chances of finding a future job. As one intern declared:

“It was actually one of my best moves because I got to know a lot of doctors, a lot of people and they helped me with recommendation letters later on. Actually, that helped me get this job that I have right now, which is very important!” (Intern 3)

Career re-orientation. One of the benefits resulting from SIM behaviors engagement and that also enhances interns’ career management is being re-oriented to a career that is desirable for them. At the end of their experience, interns changed their perceptions about their career and got a clearer idea about what type of position they would like to occupy. This outcome has been triggered by the evaluation of their experience satisfaction and assessment of their interests and skills regarding that specific career. As one intern said:

“I’d like to work like international work pretty much and since I experienced that, I am changing my focus on international work... What I want to do is recruitment or talent acquisition because it’s a pretty interesting field and that what I want to do in my future job” (Intern 12)

5.4.3. Outcomes of the whole process: A possible professional identity

Discovering new traits in oneself and decision about career re-orientation. The development of professional identity of interns is a discovery process that is developed through interaction with others (e.g. mentors, peers, clients and colleagues) within the work environment (Cardoso et al., 2014), learning about oneself through engaging in activities associated with the professional role, and the relationships interns establish with others in the professional context (Ibarra, 2004; Pratt, Rockman & Kaufmann, 2006; Samaniego and Carcamo, 2013).

Interns don't carry organizational functions and don't have an established professional image yet. They adapt to the professional group and build possible identities by projecting a preferred image of themselves and seeking others' approval (Roberts, 2005; Hewlin, 2009; Ibarra, 1999) through the management of an identity that is a priori devaluated (Little et al., 2015; Roberts, 2005). Roberts (2005) states that discrepancies between one desired and perceived image may lead to devaluation of one's social identity. However, interns' awareness of how others perceive their attributes and competence at work is shaped by their devaluated social identity, where negative and positive discrepancies coexist. Interns manage their identity devaluation by responding to different types of image discrepancies that result from expectations about their professional image.

To change perceptions of interns' work performance and behavior in the eyes of supervisors and colleagues, they employ three diverse categories of strategies. I found that eight in-group differentiation strategies derived from interns' negative discrepancy were used by interns to convey their individual characteristics and differentiate themselves within the professional category. They also employed assimilation strategies to highlight similarities with the rest of employees, presenting themselves as members of more positively valued professional identity groups (Ellemers et al., 2002; Roberts 2005).

When facing positive image discrepancy, interns aimed to maintain their positive image in the eyes of their supervisors and colleagues to preserve their superior status in relation to the group and expand their vision of how they would desire to be perceived (Tajfel, 1978; Roberts, 2005). Instead of focusing on reflecting personal attributes, interns attempt to try their best, adopt a positive attitude and reflect hard work, to emphasize the positive discrepancy and keep up high expectations.

Employing these different behaviors helps interns to adapt to the professional environment, reflect a satisfactory image, boost their morale and gain others' support and acceptance. This resulted in self-confidence, interpersonal and career management outcomes which play an important role in how interns construct their professional self.

Feedback reflects "interns' preferred self" through their work behaviors (Pratt, Rockmann & Kaufmann, 2006). So, receiving and interpreting feedback (Smith et al., 2013) from peers and clients through social interactions at work helps them to take their first step in defining their professional identity (Van Maanen, 1979). In addition, social interaction with and support from mentors and others in the profession, positively impact the development of professional identity in interns (Ibarra, 1999; Pratt et al., 2006). Mentors and supportive employees allow the representation of organizational values, standards, and norms and reduce interns' uncertainty (Hogg, 2001), and thus facilitate the organizational identification. Furthermore, motivational environments are necessary for crafting interns' professional identity (Petriglieri, Wood, and Petriglieri, 2011), as they constitute a safe social context encouraging interns to clearly understand professional expectations, technical skills, the ability to reflect, learn and develop (Nadelson et al., 2015).

Hence, as professional identity is negotiated and developed through social interaction (Goffman, 1959) and as interns identify discrepancies, experiment with behavior, and evaluate their progression toward their ideal image, they are developing possible professional identity (Ibarra, 1999). By receiving and evaluating feedback from others concerning work performance about how to improve and concerning others' reaction to their behaviors (strategies), interns can learn more about who they are and who they want to be (Spears et al., 2001; Ibarra, 1999) through discovering new traits in themselves:

“Well, it gave me input basically, the fact that I met new people, I worked in a new environment which actually made me more flexible, I believe that if you force yourself to go somewhere you never know and you push your limits to become more experienced in an environment that you’ve never had any experience with, it just opens your mind, it broadens your horizon, and eventually help you get the skills for your next job... I think it is useful because you learn a lot about yourself, a lot about what makes you comfortable, what are you good at, or what other things that you think ok, I don’t see myself working on this, I could do it every day?!... I discovered that I don’t like very much working in sales, it’s difficult to be very much patient” (Intern 9)

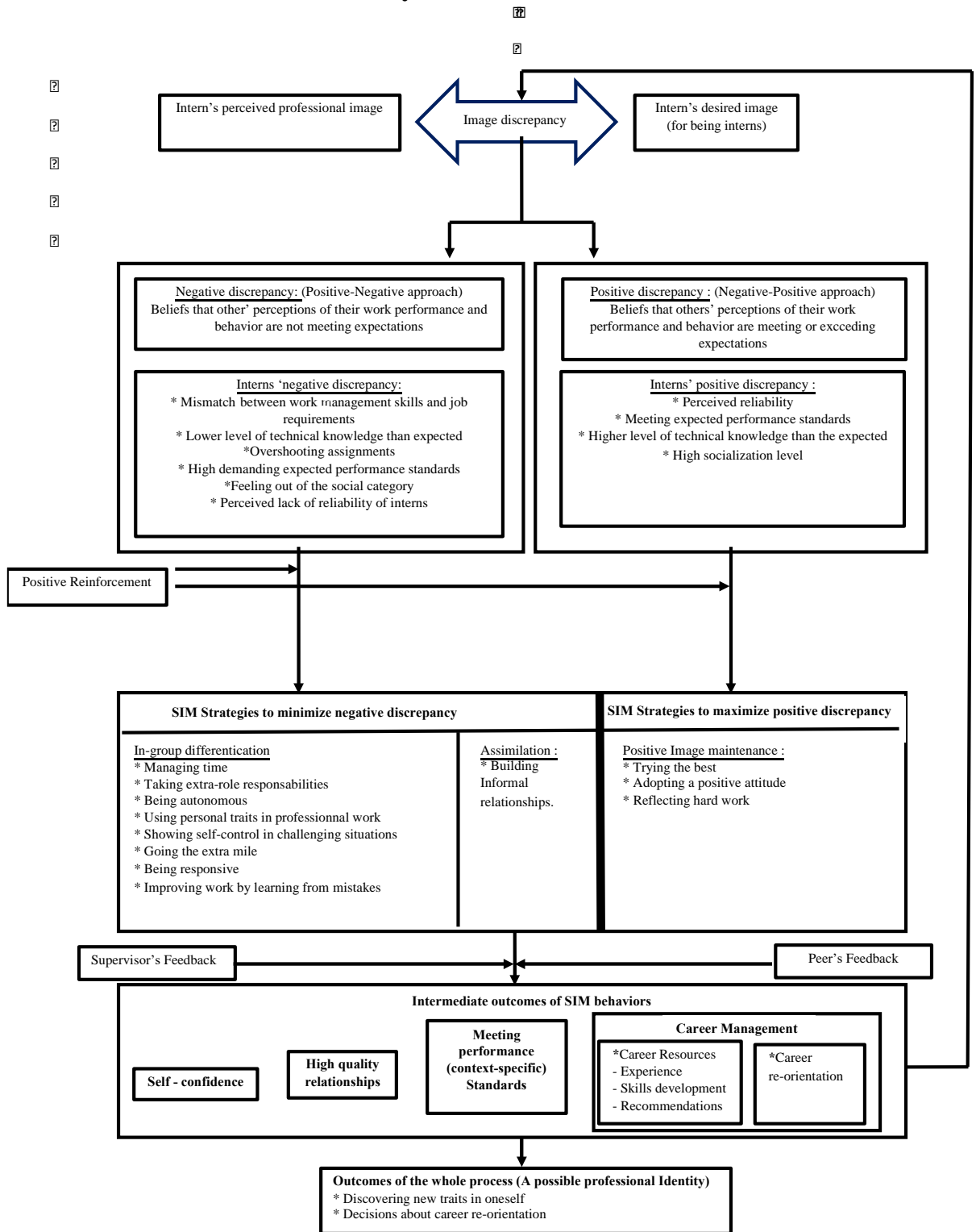
and thus, deciding which career path to take:

“I mean of course any kind of experience change your own perspective, so, let’s say perceptions of yourself... It gave me everything I needed to make up my mind and find who I am and I want to do in the future. So, this gave me a path to follow and find who I want to be... I actually succeeded in finding the real me. Yes, because I know that I want to be a consultant too, I know what I want in life... Today I know what kind of tasks I can do, the limit I can go through, I think I know myself better now, thanks to this experience” (Intern 7).

5.5. Theory development: A process model of interns' image management and professional identity development

In figure 17, I present the proposed model for professional identity discovery, including the categorization of discrepancies, SIM strategies and outcomes. This model reflects on how the process of image management among interns may help them to develop possible professional identities. It describes different dimensions of devaluated social identity, the strategies employed in understanding and coping with identity devaluation along with the derived outcomes from the identity management process.

Figure 17: Process model of interns' image management and professional identity construction



Source: own elaboration

5.5.1. Strategies in response to intern's negative image discrepancy

By focusing on research studying how people navigate their social interactions in the workplace and negotiate social identities (e.g., Alvesson & Billing, 1998; Carbado & Gulati, 2000; Goffman, 1959; Meyerson, 2001), we can see links between an individual's negative image discrepancy and image management strategies. Professional image construction is a critical element in navigating these interactions (Roberts, 2005). Individuals employ social identity-based impression management strategies to reduce image discrepancies and demonstrate that they possess desirable personal characteristics. Individuals who experience a negative image discrepancy are motivated to reduce the discrepancy and present themselves in an effort to influence others' perceptions of their personal traits (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Prior research suggests that negative image discrepancy drives individuals to enact personas and employ self-presentation strategies to promote their own characteristics, abilities and competence. For example, self-promotion is expected of employees in situations such as internships (Zhao & Liden, 2011). Most interns are motivated to look competent in the eyes of their supervisors and use self-promotion to craft a likable image, because as interns, they are usually portrayed lacking the qualities or characteristics of real employees (Angler, 2012). So, to promote themselves and project a desired image, interns experiencing negative discrepancy employ in-group differentiation strategies to highlight their positive individual characteristics and differentiate themselves within the professional category (Tajfel, 1978).

Moreover, Ellemers et al. (2002) suggest that negative discrepancies drive individuals to assimilate with others by emphasizing distinctiveness from one's own social identity group and similarities with members of more positively regarded social identity groups. Interns' socialization into the company culture has increased because interns desire to be

treated as a part of the organizational staff (Pianko 1996; Coco 2000; Gault, Redington, and Schlager 2000). For example, Mowday et al. (1979) suggested that during the socialization stage, interns establish their job expectations according to intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, work content, context components, and professional relationships. Given the importance of relationships in assimilating into the work environment (Ibarra, 2004), interns who experienced negative discrepancy try to socialize and interact with other peers and build good informal relationships to reflect their real self and their desired professional image.

Thus, I propose the following.

Proposition 1: The interns' perception of a negative image discrepancy increases the likelihood of using social impression management strategies. This effect is present for both, a) in-group differentiation and b) assimilation strategies.

5.5.2. Strategies in response to intern's positive image discrepancy

A positive image discrepancy is when the individual's perceived professional image actually more positive than his or her initially desired professional image. Experiencing sometimes a positive image discrepancy might inspire the individual to expand his or her vision of who he or she would like to become and how would like to be perceived (Roberts, 2005; Roberts et al., 2009). In these situations, research shows that, while at work, individuals have the desire to see themselves positively (Ashforth et al., 2007; Dutton et al., 2010). Thus, people may employ impression management maintenance strategies to support a desired image in social interactions (Baumeister, 1982; Goffman,

1959; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Schlenker, 1980) and live up to the others' expectations (Meister et al, 2014).

Individuals believe they need to maintain the positive perceptions of others, which may not align with reality, and may utilize impression management techniques in an attempt to uphold a false representation of themselves they believe they are seen (Hewlin, 2003, 2009). For example, possibly an individual believes his colleagues evaluate him in a more positive light than he sees himself—they perceive him as “leader” yet does not believe he is a leader. By looking into more organizational responsibility or volunteering to lead the team, he may begin to see himself as a leader. That is, because he believes that the way others see him offers him potential for future benefit or gain, he may desire to uphold or maintain this external image as positive image discrepancies often induce positive affect (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000; Schneider, 2004). Additionally, perhaps a new university graduate acquires his first position in an organization. While he still feels like an inexperienced university graduate, he believes his supervisor sees him as capable, having asked him to lead a large project. Completing the project successfully, the individual begins to believe he is indeed capable and not an inexperienced graduate, shifting his self-views.

Moreover, if an individual believes that others identify him more positively than he actually sees himself, this may offer him an opportunity for self-improvement, and he will attempt to incorporate this external view into his work-related identity (Hewlin, 2003, 2009). For example, the high impression colleagues have of interns puts pressure on them to rise to the challenge and fulfil others' expectations. To maintain their beliefs of how others see them, these individuals actively attempt to use impression management strategies by presenting themselves in a more positive fashion. Because interns placed value on learning and discovering their professional selves in the new work environment,

they perform well, show a good attitude and pretend demonstrations of ability when others in the workplace have high expectations of their performance. By employing various impression management behaviors (trying their best, adopting a positive attitude and reflecting hard work), interns attempt to maintain positive image discrepancies. When interns think that they were perceived as reliable and trusted to perform better than expected, they try their best while working to perform at high standards, adopt a positive attitude and reflected hard work to their supervisors. When interns are perceived as able to meet performance standards that others expected from them, they try their best to perform their work as prescribed and reflect hard work to others. When interns perceive a high socialization level and others believe that interns had a higher level of technical knowledge than they expected to perform the job, they try their best to perform their work to high standards and adopt a positive attitude by seeing things possible.

This leads to the second proposition.

Proposition 2: The intern's perception of a positive image discrepancy, increases the likelihood of using image maintenance strategies.

5.5.3. The role of the feedback in the process of interns' image management

Feedback is important for interns. It helps them understand their performance levels and increases satisfaction (D'Abate et al., 2009). Interns seek feedback proactively for appraising their effectiveness (Beenen, Pichler & Levy, 2016) trying to understand their strengths and areas of improvement (Wong, 2011), to act correctly at work (Woo, Putnam & Riforgiate, 2017) and to evaluate if they satisfy their expectations to meet their ideal image. Thus, receiving others' feedback and understanding how they are perceived is vital

as it can affect their identity (Humberd et.,al, 2015; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2002). As one intern said:

“Because the feedback shows you how well you’ve done and like the internship you’ve been working so hard on, I guess also, you know that you’ve done good, so, I think a good feedback is always what people want... but you would also like some criticism to see like how you can improve later on and see where you go wrong as well!! I think anyone wants feedback to help them be a bit more positive about what they’ve been doing, it just helps them understand that they’ve been doing something good, achieving and helping!!... It helped me understand that it’s something I’m thinking about doing, and I guess just when I feel ready to, like until I get the certificate and to be an English teacher then, yes I would definitely like to do it!” (Intern 15).

Individuals in the workplace attempt to engage in image management strategies to project a positive image of themselves (Goffman, 1959; Roberts, 2005) and seek others’ approval (Schlenker & Pontari, 2000), in order to adapt to a particular work group (Hewlin, 2003, 2009) and build possible identity. Others (supervisors and peers) are important for social comparison, for reflected appraisal and in their role of validating one’s new behaviors and providing feedback about how to improve. For example, Mele et al. (2021) showed the important role of the colleagues in interns’ professionalization process. Interns interact with their professional environment by employing different types of impression management strategies and receiving and interpreting feedback of mentors, employees and peers. Feedback that is clear and salient at emotional level (Ibarra 1999) plays a critical role in helping individuals to gain insights about their enduring preferences, talents, and values (Schein, 1978).

In addition, supervisory feedback helps newcomers to decrease their ambiguities concerning job responsibilities, co-workers, and supervisors and acclimatize themselves with the new organizational culture (Van Maanen, 1975), thus facilitating the organizational identification process (Hogg, 2001). Supervisors' feedback plays a crucial role in helping interns build their work identity by guiding them how to act correctly in host firms, especially at the start of their internships when they feel uncertain and fearful. Moreover, regular feedback helps interns develop their technical knowledge and analytical capabilities (Coco, 2000) and makes them feel socially validated, which increases both self-esteem and self-rated abilities (Knouse & Fontenot, 2008). Hence, supervisor's feedback offers the opportunity for positive validation, creating a favorable cognitive and affective framework for professional learning and development and stimulating interns' acquisition of additional career resources (Feldman, Folks & Turnley, 1999; Narayanan et al. 2010; Zhao & Liden, 2011; Maertz, Stoeberl & Marks, 2014; Inceoglu et al., 2019; Mele et al. 2021).

Interns employed different types of impression management strategies to manage their image discrepancies trying to meet others' expectations (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Ibarra, 1999) and build a desired image. On the one hand, these impression management behaviors were helpful in shaping interns' perceived professional image and providing interns several outcomes when they received enough feedback from their supervisor and had the chance to collaborate and interact with other colleagues. Others helped them in achieving their intended learning goals and outcomes as they were source of a constructive feedback about their performance and behaviors. For example, intern 15 *tried the best* to perform and *adopted a positive attitude* when he/she perceived a higher level of technical knowledge than expected. This intern has received a positive feedback from his/her mentor about his/her performance. The mentor appreciated his/her work and

encouraged him/her to keep going, which resulted in self-confidence and career outcomes. This intern knows which career path he/she may like to choose in the future. As well, intern 20 chose to *use personal traits in the professional work*, such as communication skills when he/she was perceived out of the category as a way to respond to the job-specific needs and demonstrate her/his professional distinctiveness. This intern benefited from the affective feedback received from his/her colleagues who appreciated and recognized his/her contribution. This resulted in high quality relationships and the achievement of performance standards as colleagues begin communicating with and supporting him/her.

On the other hand, even though some interns used impression management strategies to shape their perceived professional image, they didn't succeed when they didn't obtain the necessary resources and feedback from others. For example, interns 4 and 22 employed the strategy of *building informal relationships* to respond to overshooting assignments and the perceived lack of reliability, respectively. But as these interns didn't receive enough supervision and feedback about their performance, they failed in developing job skills to perform their jobs and improving their image as they desired. As such, receiving feedback during social interaction in the professional environment was necessary in validating intern's image management behaviors and helping them to learn and achieve desirable outcomes.

Therefore, I propose the following:

Proposition 3: The supervisor's and peers' feedback moderates the relationship between SIM strategies and intermediate outcomes of SIM behaviors. So, the higher the feedback, the stronger the relation between strategies and outcomes.

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CHAPTER 6:

Conclusions, Contributions and Future

Avenues

Index of chapter 6

6.1. Introduction to the conclusions.....	257
6.2. The research's goals achieved	257
6.3. Theoretical contributions to the Literature on Professional Identity Development among Devalued Group Members	262
6.4. Practical implications	264
6.4.1. Implications for managers.....	264
6.4.2. Implications for organizational leaders.....	265
6.5. The study's limitations and future research avenues	266
6.6. Concluding remarks	269
6.7. References in the chapter	270

6.1. Introduction to the conclusions

As I state in the introduction, this study discusses a topic that is important but overlooked by extant research: how interns, face and deal with the devaluation of their category and develop possible professional identities. I present a theoretical model for professional identity discovery. This model manifests the process by which interns' image discrepancies, resulting from interns' expectations about their professional image, guide interns to engage in impression management strategies, along with its effect on important outcomes. In the previous chapters I found that positive and negative discrepancies coexist among interns even though their professional identity is devalued. Results also allow to elucidation of different dimensions of each discrepancy. Also interviews allow to identify a wide variety of SIM strategies derived from either negative or positive discrepancies and several outcomes elaborated from the associated behaviors interns deployed. This chapter discusses the study's goals, its theoretical contributions, its practical implications, its limitations and future research avenues.

6.2. The research's goals

This section presents the main achievements derived from the investigation of the experiences and perceptions of interns in the workplace. In the introduction, the study's main goals were:

- 1) to develop qualitative data that is rigorous to build theory about how interns understand and cope with their temporary professional identity devaluation,
- 2) to make a literature review about internships,
- 3) to employ a theoretical framework in observing the internship experience,

- 4) to identify and describe different dimensions of the interns' devaluated social identity,
- 5) to identify and describe the strategies interns use in response to manage their professional image derived from their social identity devaluation,
- 6) to identify and describe the outcomes of interns' professional identity discovery process, and
- 7) to propose a theoretical model that explains how interns manage their professional identity and connects discrepancies, strategies and outcomes.

First, I developed qualitative data that is rigorous to build theory about how interns face and deal with their temporary devaluated professional identity. By using a qualitative approach and employing the grounded theory methodology explained in chapter four, I developed theory from the data in order to examine interns' experiences and perceptions. Through developing a large and varied number of 23 in-depth interviews, I discovered new insights in the existing literature of professional identity development and I included instances that demonstrate intern's social identity devaluation. I used to code the data from the interviews to conceptualize the phenomenon of each intern's experience and understand it in abstract terms. It contributed to the focus of the interview analysis on the experience of the interns in an organized manner. By coding with three other raters, analyzing data as it is generated to build theory, selecting core categories from coding, I generated theory about the development of professional identity in interns, based on the interpretation of interns' shared experiences and derived from the quotations interns said to reflect on their internship experiences.

Second, I devoted chapter two to make a literature review about internships, constituting the context in which this study is developed and being considered as an important step in professional and career development. I began by defining the internship experience. Then,

I continued by identifying the features of an internship (duration, job characteristics, work environment, contextual factors, individual factors), followed by the outcomes for interns (job-related benefits, career-related benefits, job market benefits, psychosocial benefits), for employers and for schools/universities. Based on this literature review, I identified main gaps that need more investigation such as: the factors underlying the success or failure of internships, the optimal internship duration that effectively increases interns' outcomes, interactions between individual characteristics and work design features, the role of the co-workers in interns' career growth and development, the impact of unpaid internships on different internships' outcomes, the effect of internship features on actual employment, and supervisors' insights on interns' experiences and performances. I also provided an agenda for future internships research pointing to the knowledge gaps, of which the lack of empirical studies on internships that have a dominant theoretical perspective and uses theoretical frameworks to observe the internship experience.

Third, in chapter three, I reviewed the social identity theory as a theoretical framework to observe the internship experience, as the phenomenon of professional identity development in early career stages has not been adequately explained by existing theory. By applying the lens of social identity theory, I investigated how interns understand and cope with their temporary professional identity devaluation and its effect on professional identity discovery process. Reviewing social identity theory helped in the analysis process of the data and, in the generation of new findings not explained before by the theory, thus in the theory development.

Fourth, in chapter five, I identified and described different dimensions of the interns' devaluated social identity (e.g. mismatch between work management skills and job requirements, lower level of technical knowledge than the expected, overshooting assignments, high demanding expected performance standards, feeling out of the social

category, perceived lack of reliability of interns, perceived reliability, meeting expected performance standards, higher level of technical knowledge than expected, and high socialization level). This goal was achieved by analyzing the data obtained from the individual interviewees in chapter four. Through engaging in first order analysis, I established key concepts that interns raised about their experiences (such as, intern's concerns and beliefs about their own and others' perceptions of their competence). Then, I engaged in second order analysis to create larger categories (such as perceived image of being interns concerns and interns' perceptions about their experience). The last step of analysis was refining the central categories into aggregate dimensions after theoretical saturation. At the end of this analysis process, I developed dimensions of these categories (image discrepancies, image management strategies and outcomes of behaviors) and discern interrelations among categories to investigate interns' perceptions about their projected image.

Fifth, in chapter five also, I identified and described different strategies interns use in response to manage their professional image derived from their social identity devaluation. This goal was achieved by drawing on the analysis that describes interns' negative and positive discrepancies and specifies the different dimensions of each discrepancy. Then, the diverse categories of strategies (e.g. managing time, taking extra-role responsibilities, being autonomous, using personal traits in professional work, showing self-control in challenging situations, going the extra mile, being responsive, improving work by learning from mistakes, building informal relationships, trying their best, adopting a positive attitude and reflecting hard work) interns employed to manage their image discrepancies and adapt to the professional environment were discussed in accordance to the social identity theory. The aims for using each strategy and the role that

each strategy plays in shaping others' perceptions of interns as professional members were also discussed.

Sixth, I identified and described the outcomes of interns' professional identity discovery process in chapter five. This goal was achieved by drawing also on the data analysis—obtained from the individual interviewees— that describes the diverse categories of strategies interns employed and their role in managing image discrepancies. I determined several outcomes interns mentioned at the end of their internship experience (e.g. self-confidence, high quality relationships, meeting performance (context-specific) standards, career management) derived from the impression management strategies used by interns.

And finally, at the end of chapter five, I proposed a theoretical model for professional identity discovery, that includes the categorization of discrepancies, impression management strategies and outcomes. This goal was achieved by reviewing the relevant literature about the professional identity development among socially devalued members, searching for a possible model and identifying Roberts' (2005) model of professional image construction. Building on this study's findings, I refined and extended the identified model and presented a theoretical model that shows how the process of image management among interns— experiencing professional identity devaluation—may lead to possible identity development. This model describes different dimensions of devaluated social identity, the strategies employed in understanding and coping with identity devaluation along with the derived outcomes from the identity management process. And based on the literature review on professional image management and identity development and the findings of this research, I also suggested three new propositions that opens up new horizons for interesting future investigation within the same research stream.

6.3. Theoretical contributions to the Literature on Professional Identity Development among Devalued Group Members

This study builds and extends research in the area of professional identity development among members of devalued groups (Scheifele et al., 2021; Hebl et al., 2020; Little et al., 2015; Derks et al., 2007; Roberts, 2005) in several ways.

First, the proposed process model describes how individuals at the early stages of a professional career understand and cope with their assignment to a devalued professional category. While Roberts (2005) explicates a process of individuals' awareness of how others' perceptions of their attributes and competence at work is shaped by their social identities, I suggest that interns are not aware of their desired professional image as they are new in the professional world. When they arrive to the workplace, they discover the existence of an image discrepancy between their perceived and expected professional image. Therefore, I highlight the difference between the process described by Roberts (2005) by which individuals' discovery of image discrepancies is clear and structured and the process that I propose where the discovery of image discrepancies is unstructured. I contribute and expand on Roberts' (2005) conceptualization of image discrepancies by specifying the different dimensions of these discrepancies including negative and positive ones.

Furthermore, Little et al. (2015) describes how individuals (i.e., pregnant women) face threats to existing desired professional image and try to maintain the perception of competence when social identity is temporally devalued. However, I describe how individuals at an early career stage try to create new impressions about their professional image at the same time as they discover and build their professional identity.

Second, this work also expands on Hebl et al. (2020) research by further suggesting the existence of positive discrepancy among devalued group members. Consistent with the social identity theory, Hebl et al. (2020) focus only on the existence of discrimination in the professional context that can have negative effect on one's social identity. This negative discrepancy will result in identity devaluation and drive stigmatized individuals to use identity management strategies to build positive social identity. Nevertheless, I argue that individuals at an early career stage face negative discrepancy when they believe that others' perceptions of their work performance and behavior are not meeting expectations. And, inconsistent with social identity theory, individuals at an early career stage, even if their social identity is devalued, face positive discrepancy when they believe that others had high expectations of their performance and perceive them as competent and meeting or exceeding performance standards. I additionally explore how individuals respond differently to each type of discrepancy and engage in new different forms of social identity based impression management strategies (Roberts, 2005).

Third, Scheifele et al. (2021) suggest that stigmatized individuals use all SIT strategies (e.g., individual mobility, social competition and social creativity) to maintain positive self-concept. Moreover, Derks et al. (2007) state that individuals employ individual mobility to communicate that their high performance is valued while Roberts (2005) asserts that social identity devaluation drive individuals to employ de categorization as they desire to be viewed only in terms of their individual characteristics not as members of a devalued social identity group. However, I show how individuals at an early career stage manage discrepancies differently by providing new insights into many distinct types of strategies interns employed. Therefore, I suggest that interns employ different types of in-group differentiation and assimilation strategies to downplay their negative discrepancy. As well, consistent with SIT assertion (Tajfel, 1978) that individuals

experiencing positive discrepancies should keep and stabilize the superior status assigned to them, I propose that interns employ various types of positive image maintenance to emphasize their positive discrepancy.

In doing so, I enhance our understanding of the manners individuals react to delineate different types of discrepancies, suggesting that they may indeed lead to important outcomes for individuals and career future that influence the process of identity development. These outcomes can guide the understanding about the reasons why some individuals at an early career stage succeed in their professional roles and are retained while others are not satisfied, potentially leading to career re-orientation. Through this understanding I generate a set of propositions that create the foundation for a model of professional identity development via management of different types of image discrepancies. My propositions lay the groundwork for new research questions on professional identity development and uncover practical insights about the process of professional image management among individuals at an early career stage.

6.4. Practical implications

6.4.1. Implications for managers

This study sheds some new light on a possible self-fulfilling process, starting with interns' expectations about their professional image and a desire to meet them and leading to negative discrepancy. However, I also delineate another process whereby interns experienced positive discrepancy and were perceived as able to meet workplace ideals. For the aim of reducing bias and devaluation, organizations may need to understand the psychological processes of interns to help them avoid discrepancies and feeling unable to meet behavioral and performance expectations. Organizations and managers should

concern themselves with interns' caregiving needs, providing them organizational and emotional support. By designing strategies with the supposition that interns have specific work and psychological demands, organizations would help interns to prevent dissipating their efforts seeking to personify expectations about what it means to be an effective and successful intern and encourage them to explore and experiment.

Moreover, companies and human resources management officers should be more aware of the intern's struggles and provide training to peers that makes them visibly commit to a policy that reduce stigmatization in the workplace. Through training sessions, peers could recognize the important and meaningful ongoing roles they could play in breaking down stigmatization. Addressing the influence of discrimination and devaluation by others on intern's behavioral needs, peers could take actions in response that could affect intern's job prospects and career outcomes. Peers could learn the importance to be conscious of language and remember that words matter, to listen and encourage intern's opinions and input when possible and to validate their contributions to the work.

6.4.2. Implications for organizational leaders

Research studies suggest that when interns interact with their mentors while sharing, comparing and debating with them new understandings, they are making sense of their new experience (Wong, 2011). For example, interns who receive supervisors' support, guidance and feedback regarding their career planning and personal development, they succeed in building their work identity (Woo, Putnam & Riforgiate, 2017) as this feedback will help them develop their technical knowledge and analytical capabilities (Coco, 2000). Organizational leaders need to remember their role in the identity development process of interns during their early work experience. Being aware of the importance of feedback and grapevines provided to interns not only regarding their skills assessment, but also with regard to social interactions and relationships at work will help

interns to identify their strengths and weaknesses, build self-confidence and meet behavioral and performance standards.

6.5. The Study's limitations and future research avenues

This grounded theory research was valuable to study the professional identity development phenomenon in interns, to provide insights into the behaviors and perceptions of the interns regarding their projected professional image. It involves a deep dive and thorough understanding of the data collection methods and inferring the data. However, there are several notable limitations that must be acknowledged and might guide future research.

First, as with all attempts to build and elaborate theory from a considerable sample, one must be careful when generalizing these findings as it is not statistically representative. Although the context of professional identity among members of devalued categories is unique and difficult to replicate, the analysis was based on interns' opinions and judgments. The research was open ended, so, participants had more control over the content of the data collected which reduces generalizability. While I presented a series of developed illustrative propositions about how interns understand and cope with their temporary professional identity devaluation through image management, I could not test these propositions with the existing data. However, these untested propositions help to develop ideas for potential future quantitative research with statistical data that could reveal a broad and more generalizable set of findings. So, a promising research avenue could consist on developing measures for the strategies and outcomes identified in this study, test the propositions suggested and testing contextual factor affecting the process.

Second, the sample in this research focuses only on international interns' experiences in Europe mostly. Unfortunately, findings in this study are not necessarily representative of other interns' views and understanding of professional identity or their experiences, as other geographical or cultural backgrounds could affect other findings. For instance, interns with different cultural backgrounds than the European ones might follow different strategies, unaddressed or not identified in this study and further research is needed with samples in other cultural environments. However, this does not diminish the value of the conclusions achieved. They have helped to understand in depth the process of how interns understand and cope with their temporary professional identity devaluation through image management. I believe those conclusions may open up a new possible investigation and draw guidelines to work with interns throughout globally areas.

Third, this study did not account for the respondent's other work experience beyond their internship. Work experiences can influence expectations and perceptions of the internship experience, strategies interns adopt and outcomes that were the focus of this research. Future research might also take interns' prior work experiences as a measure or variable that can affect the perceptions of the internship experiences.

Fourth, a shortcoming of the current study is the fact that I do not have feedback or performance measures from employers. This study highlights interns' perceptions regarding their professional identity and responses to image discrepancies, but it does not explore the perceptions of others in their host organizations. Future research might incorporate supervisors' insights on interns' experiences and performances as a way of adding complexity to image management.

Fifth, in this study, the theory is developed using in-depth, retrospective interviews to collect accounts of internship experiences. One drawback of retrospective accounts is that the image discrepancies faced by interns may appear as discrete and unchanging since

they are based on past episodes. For example, the adoption of some strategies to respond to image discrepancies might change over the intern's life span. Although this type of data is suitable for building theory, a longitudinal study tracking interns' experiences will be better preferred in the future at capturing how the process of professional identities evolves over longer periods of time.

Finally, as professional identity development is an ongoing process and alters over time, future research should examine factors influencing path of professional identity change. Some of these factors, such as individual characteristics (e.g. personality, motivation, locus of control) and external factors (e.g. Supervisor's support, friendly environment, peers' support), may have important implications for understanding differences in professional identity development of interns.

6.6. Concluding remarks

The main purpose of this study has been to contribute to the literature of professional identity development by enhancing understanding of how individuals at an early career stage such as interns understand and cope with their temporary professional identity devaluation. Given the vitality and extent of interest in and importance of identity research in the management field, employing a theoretical framework that helps to observe the internship experience makes this study particularly timely. By taking a distinctive perspective and focusing on early stages of professional careers, this study opens up new possibilities for seeing and appreciating the different image management strategies in the process of professional identity development. In a world where workplaces have significant effects on trainees via diverse ways, I hope to open up considerations of how organizations can be valuable spaces of professional identity development in early career stages in a rewarding and fruitful manner to the individual and beyond.

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ANNEX

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DESIGNING SUCCESSFUL INTERNSHIPS: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF DURATION, FORMALIZATION AND MOTIVATIONAL PRACTICES

Abstract

Purpose – This study sheds light on how internships' features drive employability outcomes and answers the question of how we can design internships that maximize the employability of interns. It is assumed that the duration of an internship, degree of formalization and the use of internship-specific motivational practices by companies are likely to influence interns' perceptions of employability.

Design/methodology/approach – A study among interns investigated the relationship between different internship features and interns' employability. Data on the duration of the internship, motivational practices specific to internships and the formalization of the internship process were collected from a large sample of 13,565 interns in 27 European countries from 15 to 35 years old.

Findings – The findings suggest that internship duration has a curvilinear effect on employability with increasing effects on employability at the beginning of the internship, followed by a decrease over time. In addition, the use of practices specifically designed to motivate interns also favors their employability. Finally, formalization of the internship placement moderates the effect of motivational practices on employability.

Originality/value – By identifying key features of the internship experience—duration, formalization and motivational practices—the authors contribute to theory related to the development of career resources and employability in young adults and show that these features significantly shape young adults' employability perceptions.

Keywords Internship, Employability, Formalization, Duration, Motivational practices

Paper type Research paper

1. INTRODUCTION

Previous research underscores the key role of internships as a predominant tool to increase the employability of young adults (Callanan and Benzing, 2004; Drewery *et al.*, 2016;

Finch *et al.*, 2013; Gault *et al.*, 2010; Inceoglu *et al.*, 2019; Ishengoma and Vaaland, 2016; Pereira *et al.*, 2020; Silva *et al.*, 2016). Young people are three times as likely as adults to be unemployed (International Labour Organization, 2020) and the study of young people's employability has secured a central position in the public discourse of scholars, companies and public administrations over the past decade.

Employability is a key measure of an internship's success. There is evidence that perceived employability facilitates proactive behaviors and better adaptation (Fugate *et al.*, 2004) and positively impacts job-related and general well-being (Bakker *et al.*, 2004; De Cuyper *et al.*, 2011). While previous studies have explained how individual and contextual factors such as personal traits, socio-demographics, education, skills and labor market factors influence perceived employability, little attention has been devoted to the features of the internship experience itself. Therefore, "it is currently not possible to assess which aspects of the placement experience contribute to positive changes in psychological factors, career resources and career outcomes" (Inceoglu *et al.*, 2019; p.326). In other words, despite its widespread use, we have very limited knowledge about how organizations can design internships that maximize interns' employability. Thus, a significant research opportunity exists to identify the key features of an internship and explore their link with interns' employability.

The purpose of this study is to build on the theoretical model proposed by Inceoglu *et al.* (2019), which in turn builds on transition theory (Schlossberg, 1981) and the career resources model (Hirschi, 2012) to shed light on how internships' features drive employability outcomes. How can we tell the difference between an internship that increases interns' employability from one that does not? Specifically, we propose that the duration of an internship, the degree of formalization and the use of internship-specific motivational practices are likely to influence interns' perceptions of employability.

To test our model of perceived employability, we analyzed data from a relevant stratified dataset of 13,422 respondents with internship experience from the 27 EU member states. Our data and results provide a reasonable basis for generalization and overcome a common limitation of current research, as most previous studies on the impact of internships on young adults' employability have been based on convenience samples of university students.

This study makes important contributions to the employability literature. We contribute to theory related to the development of career resources and employability in young adults (e.g., Beenen, 2007; Beenen, 2014; Beenen and Rousseau, 2010; D'Abate *et al.*, 2009; McHugh, 2017; Narayanan *et al.*, 2010) by showing that internship duration, formalization and motivational practices significantly affect employability outcomes. Specifically, extant research suggests that internship duration is an essential feature of the internship experience (Fulmer *et al.*, 2004; Milstein and Krueger, 1993). However, the relationship with employability seems unclear and previous studies found no significant relationship (e.g., Irwin *et al.*, 2019). We find support for a curvilinear relationship between duration and employability. Very short internships could be insufficient for the acquisition of career resources and very long internships could not be worthwhile for the intern.

We also identify a number of motivational practices specific to the internship context and link them to interns' employability (e.g., intern compensation, tutorship and fair working conditions) (Anson and Forsberg, 1990; McHugh, 2017; Narayanan *et al.*, 2010; Russell and Adams, 1997). Although these practices would not be considered motivational in regular work relationships or other labor contexts, we found that they determine the employability outcomes of an internship.

Finally, we show that formalization of internships drives the effect of duration and motivational practices on perceived employability. The degree of formalization may help interns comprehend job expectations and goals (Feldman and Weitz, 1990). Formalized, well-planned placements avoid conflicts and distractions and strengthen interns' learning process, allowing them to maximize internship outcomes.

Our findings also have evident practical implications for all those involved in the design and implementation of internships in the public sector (e.g., higher education institutions), the private sector (e.g., firms that use interns) and individuals (e.g., interns) by providing a notion about how to design successful placements.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

2.1. Theoretical framework: Internships and employability

Perceived employability constitutes an important resource for career development that contributes to job-related and general well-being (Bakker *et al.*, 2004; De Cuyper *et al.*, 2011). Individuals with higher perceived employability tend to feel that they have control over their careers (Fugate *et al.*, 2004; Vanhercke *et al.*, 2014; Zehr and Korte, 2020). Perceived employability also leads to more proactive behaviors and higher levels of adaptation (Fugate *et al.*, 2004), work engagement and life satisfaction (De Cuyper *et al.*, 2008).

Previous literature emphasizes the relevance of perceived employability – an “individual's perception of his or her possibilities of obtaining and maintaining employment” (Vanhercke *et al.*, 2014; p.594) because the intern's behavioral responses must be based on their perception of reality.

Inceoglu *et al.* (2019) found in their literature review that internships play an important role in increasing work-related self-efficacy and therefore have the potential to positively influence self-perceived employability (Ebner *et al.*, 2021). Building on transition theory (Schlossberg, 1981) and career development theory (Hirschi, 2012), Inceoglu *et al.* (2019) indicated that internships constitute education-work transitions and can be conceptualized as transition events in career development. They propose a theoretical model in which the internship experience generates career resources through mechanisms of social learning and identity development. These career resources in turn shape subjective and objective career outcomes. In other words, internships lead to intra- and inter-individual transformations that provide career resources (i.e., human capital, psychological resources such as perceived employability, career identity and social resources) that help young adults to anticipate and adjust to future career demands (Inceoglu *et al.*, 2019; Hirschi, 2012).

Schlossberg (1981) indicated that the characteristics of the transition (experience), an individual and the environment influence the individual's perception of the experience and his/her subsequent adaptation. Previous studies addressing the factors that influence perceived employability after an internship experience have centered on individual and contextual factors.

Self-perceived employability has been studied from an *individual perspective* focusing on personal factors such as demographics (i.e., race, age, gender); personality traits, such as self-confidence and persistence (Álvarez-González *et al.*, 2017; Messer, 2018; Qenani *et al.*, 2014); individual knowledge and skills acquired during formal education, such as critical thinking (Dacre *et al.*, 2014; De Guzman and Choi, 2013); and attitudes and behaviors, such as organizational commitment and proactivity (Knight and Yorke, 2002; McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005). Wittekind *et al.* (2010) suggested that generic skills (i.e.,

adaptability, communication, self-management, flexibility and negotiation) and a willingness to develop new competencies or change jobs predict perceived employability. For students, academic performance is also related to perceived employability (Álvarez-González *et al.*, 2017). Other individual factors that influence perceived employability include personal circumstances (i.e., health, wellbeing, engagement, and life satisfaction) and contacts (i.e., social relationships) (De Cuyper *et al.*, 2008; Hillage and Pollard, 1998). Furthermore, social capital can spur perceived employability, as it enhances knowledge of the labor market and self-presentation skills for the labor market (Forrier and Sels, 2003; Fugate *et al.*, 2004).

Regarding *contextual factors*, the labor market structure and conditions play an important role in shaping individuals' perceived employability (Berntson *et al.*, 2006; Rothwell *et al.*, 2008; Sok *et al.*, 2013). Brown *et al.* (2003) indicated that employability differs according to the economic context. Contexts of economic prosperity lead to more positive perceptions of employability (Berntson *et al.*, 2006). Other contextual factors, such as teachers' performance in transmitting knowledge and helping students to develop attitudes related to employment, have also been found to be relevant antecedents of perceived employability (Tsui *et al.*, 1997).

The influence of the *internship experience* on perceived employability has been scarcely examined in previous research, and the extant studies have focused mainly on the type of internship (i.e., international/domestic or compulsory/voluntary). Gannon (2019) found that international internships positively developed participants' perceived employability as they developed psychosocial and cultural intelligence and human capital. However, Pinto and Pereira (2019) did not find significant differences in the perception of employability between domestic and international voluntary internships. Both seem to be positively related to better evaluations of job suitability and employability skills.

Regarding the specific design features of an internship experience, several studies seem to agree that internships that provide interns with higher autonomy tend to increase their self-rated abilities and self-esteem (Arnold *et al.*, 1995; Auburn *et al.*, 1993; Feldman and Weitz, 1990; Inceoglu *et al.*, 2019).

In the following section, we explain how additional features of the internship experience shape young adults' employability perceptions. We argue that the internship duration, the degree of formalization and the use of motivational practices to manage the internship are likely to influence the extent of career resource acquisition and, in particular, young adults' self-perception of employability (Hirschi, 2012; Inceoglu *et al.*, 2019; Schlossberg, 1981).

2.2. Hypotheses

2.2.1. Internship duration and employability

Previous research suggests that internships increase the probability of finding a job and lead to better job opportunities in terms of job matching and retribution (International Labour Organization, 2021; Nunley *et al.*, 2016; Passaretta and Triventi, 2015; Roberts, 2017). However, these benefits depend on several characteristics of the internship, among which duration plays an important role. In an exploratory case study, Mihail (2006) found that an internship period of 4 to 6 months is required for interns to become productive to a company and that a period ranging from 6 to 12 months would benefit both interns and employing firms. Previous research indicates that longer-term placements (the time frame generally given is around 6 months) increase the probability of finding a job within six months after graduation (Hall *et al.*, 2009; Mason *et al.*, 2009) and in general, contribute to the integration of young adults into the labor market (International Labour Organization, 2021).

However, the relationship between internship duration and an intern's perceived employability is complex. From a human capital perspective, the longer the duration of the internship, the higher the human capital an intern would develop, because longer internships favor the accumulation of knowledge, skills and work experience (Becker, 1994; Berntson *et al.*, 2006; Comyn and Brewer, 2018). The human capital developed through internship experiences can potentially strengthen the perception of employability for both interns and employers, as it signals a higher level of human capital on the labor market (International Labour Organization, 2021). Moreover, longer internships would also provide the opportunity for interns to gather more knowledge about the labor-market demands and adapt their profiles to enhance perceived employability (Grant-Smith and McDonald, 2018).

Consequently, interns might perceive that the shorter the internship, the harder it is to develop skills associated with the job, and thus perceive longer internships as more beneficial (Lowden *et al.*, 2011). In fact, students tend to reject internships that are too short (Alpert *et al.*, 2009). In addition, interns learn more if they engage in activities within a project that can be fully completed (Alpert *et al.* 2009; Rothman, 2007), which is more likely to occur in longer internships.

A company may be more willing to provide support, training and time resources to an intern if it believes that the intern will stay in the company long enough to make this investment "pay off" (Mihail, 2006). Because training an intern is a time-consuming task, supervisors could perceive that the costs outweigh the benefits in very short internships, and their involvement could likewise be lower. As a result, interns may not have access to a formal orientation program, potentially reducing their learning and employability gains (Alpert *et al.*, 2009; Tovey, 2001).

However, employability gains could decrease over time. A longer internship experience can lead to the acquisition of redundant resources in terms of both human capital (knowledge and experience) and social connections, and saturation effects might appear (Bittman and Zorn, 2020; Bruun and Bearden, 2014). During the initial months, interns need to quickly develop basic professional skills and understanding; however, the marginal gains in learning curves could decrease over time, as it takes longer to master more complex and fine-grained skills.

Moreover, very long internships may break the tacit logic of this labor relationship based on the idea of using the “labor force in exchange for skills development”. Although a company may be increasingly satisfied with the return on investment in the relationship – increasingly skilled employees for very low economic compensation – interns’ interest and motivation could decrease over time. As the performance gap between interns and regular employees decreases over time, the economic compensation of the intern becomes increasingly unfair. In this context, equity conflicts may become apparent, and employability gains might be perceived as lower.

Prior evidence is scarce and inconclusive. Silva *et al.* (2016) found that shorter internships are more effective in terms of reducing unemployment than longer internships, while Irwin *et al.* (2019) found no significant relationship between the duration of the internship and different stakeholders’ (including students’) perspectives on employability.

These contradictory arguments and evidence suggest that the relationships between internship duration and interns’ perceived employability might be curvilinear rather than linear, as shown in Figure 1 and proposed in hypothesis 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Hypothesis 1: There exists a curvilinear relationship between internship duration and an intern's perceived employability.

2.2.2. *Internship-specific motivational practices and employability*

Based on previous studies on organizational practices for managing internships, we propose that an internship is more effective for enhancing perceived employability when the company uses motivational practices specifically designed for interns. These practices include assigning a tutor who guides the work of interns, providing some financial compensation (although this compensation might be well below the standard for regular work arrangements), and offering interns working conditions similar to those of regular employees in terms of work hours, workload, treatment, and company benefits.

A tutor can provide an intern with support, and feedback may facilitate a positive cognitive and affective framework for the intern. Tutors' feedback provides interns with the key guidelines to successfully complete work, which favors task goal clarity, learning and motivation for the intern (Beenen and Rousseau, 2010). A tutor can also provide social approval (Beenen and Pichler, 2014), making the intern feel socially validated, which increases both self-esteem and self-rated abilities (Arnold *et al.*, 1995; Knouse and Fontenot, 2008). Therefore, in-company tutors offer feedback, mentoring, and opportunities for positive validation, creating a favorable cognitive and affective framework for professional learning and development and stimulating interns' acquisition of additional career resources (Feldman *et al.*, 1999; Inceoglu *et al.*, 2019; Maertz *et al.*, 2014; Narayanan *et al.* 2010; Zhao and Liden, 2011).

Internship compensation has received limited attention in previous literature, and the relationship between compensation and internship-related outcomes is not clear (e.g.,

McHugh, 2017). Some studies (e.g., D'Abate *et al.*, 2009; McHugh, 2017) have considered retribution a key issue with regard to internship satisfaction and internship developmental value. While D'Abate *et al.* (2009) did not find empirical evidence, Smith *et al.* (2015) and McHugh's (2017) results support this relationship. These results show that the developmental value of an internship is perceived to be higher in paid than in unpaid internships. Similarly, very recent research reported that unpaid internships lead to underemployment and less favorable career development outcomes (Hunt and Scott, 2020; International Labour Organization, 2021).

Some financial compensation that covers basic costs (i.e., housing, food, transport) should increase interns' motivation. Unpaid interns may experience inequity and lower satisfaction than paid interns (Feldman and Turnley, 2004; Siebert and Wilson, 2013). A lack of compensation covering basic costs may cause discouragement, perceived unfair treatment and lack of developmental opportunities for interns (McHugh, 2017). Consequently, interns may lower their performance in order to increase equity in the labor relationship, resulting in poorer learning processes and, therefore, lower career resource acquisition.

Similar arguments apply for working conditions other than salary. Although students may accept a lower salary in exchange for a learning experience, the perceptions that the working conditions (e.g., working hours, access to a PC and equipment, overtime work, benefits) are unfair and very different from those of regular employees may cause equity problems. Interns may react by performing worse in order to increase equity in the labor relationship, which may negatively affect the developmental value of the internship.

The motivation of interns facilitates the quality of their developmental experience (D'Abate *et al.* 2009; Narayanan *et al.*, 2010). Although each individual intern may

display different levels of intrinsic motivation during an internship, extrinsic motivation can be maximized by the company. The use of practices to motivate interns may contribute to obtaining greater levels of career resources, particularly perceived employability, through learning and motivation processes that favor perceived employability. Hence,

Hypothesis 2. Motivational practices specific to internships positively affect an intern's perceived employability.

2.2.3. *The moderating effect of formalization*

The analysis of previous literature suggests that the developmental value of internships is context dependent (e.g., Lain *et al.* 2014; Narayanan *et al.*, 2010). In this article, we examine the role of the level of formalization of the labor relationship between the intern and the company. The internship relationship is formalized to a greater extent when there are written contracts and documents regulating the labor relationship and the content of the internship and when those documents are mutually accepted and signed in advance. For instance, those documents can be a written contract, a written job description, health insurance, or an official certificate signed by the firm.

The formalization of internships should receive greater attention because the regulations for internships are frequently unspecific and much more flexible than those for regular labor relationships. As a consequence, not all companies manage the process in the same way (i.e., there is a large degree of variability), and subtle differences might significantly affect outcomes. For instance, Lain *et al.* (2014) analyzed the differences between internships that are directly arranged between the intern and the company and those “governed” by a formal education program (e.g., in a university). The authors found that governed internships generate greater benefits for interns because their design is subject

to formal mechanisms imposed by educational institutions. Such formal mechanisms, which establish obligations for both sides, are frequently thought to provide a stable and fair labor relationship and to favor developmental experiences for interns.

We propose that more formalized internships help interns to comprehend job expectations and goals from the start (Feldman and Weitz, 1990). Clearer expectations and goals better orient interns' learning efforts (Beenen and Rousseau, 2010) and allow them to maximize the outcomes of their experience.

A greater level of formalization also implies some level of preparation on the side of the company, which has to determine in advance the functional area, specific tasks, hierarchical relationships, and internship compensation. This process frequently obliges the company to more deeply reflect on the goals, necessary training, and required resources for the intern, resulting in better planning of the internship experience. Conversely, a lack of formalization of the labor relationship is likely to result in inadequacy of the candidate for the position, leading to wasted resources and time.

The effect of formalization gains relevance as the duration of an internship increases. The effect is less relevant for shorter internships because the advantages derived from higher formalization have insufficient time to materialize. As internship duration increases, the effect of having a sound internship plan, being assigned to a receptive functional area, defining clear hierarchical relationships or receiving proper training and resources strengthens the acquisition of career resources over time.

These arguments suggest that the formalization process of the internship may act as a contingency factor in the relationship between internship duration and the intern's perceived employability. We then propose the following:

Hypothesis 3. The formalization of the internship moderates the relationship between internship duration and an intern's perceived employability.

Furthermore, we propose that formalization of the internship enhances the effect of internship motivational practices on perceived employability. Formal documents and contracts that specify the tasks to be performed by the intern allow both sides, company and intern, to anticipate the content of the internship and to share clear goals and expectations about the internship (Lain *et al.*, 2014).

Clear, formal goals strengthen the effect of motivational practices. Clear written and challenging goals enhance motivation through choice, effort and persistence, as goal-setting motivation theory has emphasized (Locke and Latham, 2002; 2006). Stajkovic *et al.* (2006) found that assigning conscious goals promotes motivation and increases task performance. Previous research has emphasized that formalized work-related learning promotes perceived internal employability because it triggers motivation more than informal work-related learning does (Houben *et al.*, 2020). Basically, the explanation proposed by Houben *et al.* (2020) is that because formalization involves the specification of learning goals, it is easier for interns to engage in work-related learning related to these goals. As such, interns feel more motivated and attribute improvements in perceived employability to these goals.

The existence of a well-defined labor relationship also diminishes the probability of demotivating conflicts during an internship. Conversely, a lack of written agreements governing an internship may cause incoherencies between an intern's expectations and reality that may lead to perceptions of lack of equity and demotivation. Conflicts may occur, for instance, when the work schedule or compensation is not agreed upon in advance, when the tasks assigned are not expected by the intern, or when the intern

becomes sick and his/her lack of health insurance becomes a major issue. In those cases, a gap between expectations and reality may result in frustration and loss of motivation, obfuscating the effect of motivational practices on employability.

Finally, internship formalization also makes acquired career resources (e.g., skills and experience) more visible and demonstrable to others (Houben *et al.*, 2020; Nelissen and Bulck, 2017), for instance, by means of official labor contracts or internship certificates. Making acquired career resources more tangible may also reinforce the effect of motivational practices and motivate interns to achieve a higher degree of employability. Accordingly, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 4. The formalization of the internship positively moderates the effect of internship motivational practices on an intern's perceived employability.

3. METHODS

3.1. Sample

We used data gathered from the Flash Eurobarometer N° 378 survey to test our hypotheses. This survey is part of the Eurobarometer series conducted regularly on behalf of the European Commission to address diverse topics in European companies. Access to this database was provided by the Central Archive for Empirical Social Research (University of Cologne, Germany). Eurobarometer surveys have been widely used in empirical academic research in the field of management (e.g., Antolín-López *et al.*, 2015; Tether, 2005; Tether and Tajar, 2008).

Eurobarometer N° 378 was requested by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. It includes data from 13,655 valid interviews in the 27 EU member states (in 2013) and Croatia. Each country contributes

with about 500 interviews, except Cyprus and Malta that contribute with 302 and 300 interviews, respectively. The sample is representative in terms of region and city size of the population aged 15 to 35 years old for each country. The fieldwork was conducted between 29 April and 18 May 2013. The multistage and random sampling approach consisted of choosing random telephone numbers (including fixed and mobile lines and excluding businesses) stratified according to the NUTS2 region and urbanization to approximate a geographically representative sample. This type of data selection and collection controls for the possibility of nonresponse bias.

To screen those respondents who had similar but different experiences, we distinguished between internships, apprenticeships and regular jobs. We selected only those respondents affirming that they had an internship experience. Due to missing values for some variables used in our statistical analyses, the final sample consisted of 13,422 respondents.

Descriptive statistics show that 5,784 respondents had at least one internship (40.9%), 21.8% had two internships, 14.5% had three internships, and 19.8% had four or more internships. 50.2% of the respondents were male. Of the respondents, 55% had internship experiences during their academic studies, 21.2% were interns when they were about to finish their studies, and 21.9% had internships after completing their studies. Furthermore, 61% of the respondents were university graduates; only 9% had done an internship abroad; most respondents had no financial compensation for their internships (59%) and 76% were hosted by SMEs. 62% had a written traineeship agreement or contract with the host organization or company. The majority of the interns (71%) think that their experience was useful or that it would be useful to find a regular job. After their last internship, 25% of the interns received a job offer and an almost equivalent share were offered a renewal or extension of the internship. We believe that the dataset is

relevant and guarantees sufficient variability for studying the relationship between different internship features and interns' employability.

3.2. Measures

3.2.1. Dependent variable

We operationalized the extent to which the internship was useful to increase interns' *employability* using a score from a two-item measurement. In case respondents had more than one internship experience, they were instructed to refer to the most recent one. The original items referred to the level of agreement with the following statements: "This traineeship was or will be helpful for you to find a regular job" and "During this traineeship, you learnt things that are useful professionally". Both items were measured with a 4-point Likert scale (1 = totally disagree; 4 = totally agree). We summed the responses to both questions.

3.2.2. Independent variables

We measured the **duration of the internship** (in months). We used a scale where 1 = less than one month; 2 = between 1 and 3 months; 3 = between 3 and 6 months, and 4 = more than 6 months. If a respondent had more than one internship experience, the duration was determined based on the duration of the most recent internship.

We operationalized **motivational practices specific to internships** by measuring the extent to which a) the working conditions were equivalent to those of regular employees (in terms of equipment, work hours, workload, treatment, etc.), b) the intern could turn to a mentor who helped him/her and explained how to do the work, and c) the intern received financial compensation that was sufficient to cover basic living costs such as rent and food. The potential values ranged from 0 = totally disagree to 3 = totally agree on a four-

point Likert scale. We summed the values of the 3 items and obtained a score ranging from 0 to 9.

The formalization of the internship. To operationalize the companies' attempts to formalize the internship process in a structured, written way, we used four items to identify the practices used by a firm to formalize internships successfully. We include internships managed by educational institutions, but also other types of internships which are directly arranged between the intern and the company. These practices are as follows: a) the intern had a written contract signed in advance, b) the intern was covered by health insurance during the internship, c) the advertisement made it clear how much the intern would be paid, and d) the intern received a certificate with a job description at the end of the internship. We summed the number of practices in place in each company.

3.2.3. Control variables

To account for possible alternative explanations, we included several variables. First, a control variable for *firm size* was included, since larger firms may have more resources to provide a structured internship management process and offer better working conditions and compensation to interns. *Prior internship experience* may have a significant effect on young adults' employability perceptions by increasing their human capital and the perception that they are more prepared to work (Andrews and Higson, 2008; Silva *et al.*, 2016). Accordingly, we controlled for the number of previous internship experiences. We also controlled for *internships in foreign countries*, since international placements could have a greater effect on employability. Moreover, we controlled for *age*, *gender* and the *age when the respondent finished his/her studies* as relevant sociodemographic factors.

Since the context and particularly the labor market situation is an important predictor of perceived employability (Berntson *et al.*, 2006; Rothwell *et al.*, 2008; Sok *et al.*, 2013), we introduced *dummy variables for each country*, with Spain as the reference category.

3.3. Common method bias

A major concern in survey research is the use of perceptual data for both the independent and dependent variables (self-reported data), which can result in common method bias. Although common method bias cannot be eliminated in this study, we feel confident that it presents no serious problems in testing the hypotheses. Because the hypotheses tested in this paper are quite different from the European Commission's aims when the survey was designed, the likelihood that respondents were able to anticipate our hypotheses is extremely low. Therefore, the probability of social desirability affecting the relationships in this study is almost nonexistent. In addition, several procedures were used during both the questionnaire design and the reporting stages to reduce the potential for common method variance (OECD/Eurostat, 2005; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003).

Moreover, a latent class factor analysis was conducted using EQS 6.1 to estimate the presence of common method biases in the data. If there was common method variance in our data, a single-factor model would emerge as the best statistical solution. The Bayesian information criterion (BIC) and consistent Akaike information criterion (CAIC) were selected to compare the model solutions based on their fit and parsimony. The BIC indicated better performance than the other classification criteria (Biernacki and Govaert, 1999), and CAIC is preferred over AIC2 or AIC3 for large samples because it imposes a much larger penalty, which leads to a smaller number of factors (Bozdogan, 1987). Applying the minimum CAIC and BIC values rule, we determined that the optimal number of factors in these data was five using both criteria. Thus, both approaches

indicated that a model with one factor was not the most appropriate, suggesting that common method bias is not a serious problem in this study.

4. RESULTS

We used the software SPSS version 27 to analyze the data and the hierarchical regression analysis to test our hypotheses. The base model that includes only the control variables serves as a reference to the other models. The main-effects model estimates the direct effect proposed in H2, and the curvilinear effect model estimates the curvilinear effect proposed in H1, by introducing additionally to the main effects, the squared factor of duration. Contingent models 1 and 2 test the moderating effects proposed in H3 and H4 respectively, introducing together with the main effects, the interaction terms between the independent and each moderating variable. Contingent model 3 simultaneously introduces the two interaction terms, which maintain their sign and significance.

Table I shows the correlation matrix for all the study variables. All correlations are well below 0.70, suggesting *discriminant validity* of the variables (Cohen *et al.*, 2003).

The low values of the correlation matrix suggest that *multicollinearity* is not a concern in this sample. Moreover, variance inflation factor tests were conducted to verify the absence of this problem. The results were satisfactory, as all values were between 1.0 and 1.5, and the tolerance values were widely far from 0, with the lowest value being .681. Therefore, there is evidence to rule out multicollinearity in the data (Hair *et al.*, 1998).

Insert Table I about here

Our hypotheses were tested using hierarchical regression analysis because an interaction effect exists only if the interaction term makes a significant contribution beyond the direct effects of the independent variables.

The results are displayed in Table II. The base model displayed in the first column explains a nonsignificant portion of the variance. The main-effects model in the following column makes a significant contribution beyond the base models ($\Delta R^2 = 0.091, p < 0.05$). Hypothesis 2 suggested that motivational factors affect employability, and the regression coefficient for motivation is significant ($\beta = 0.26, p < 0.001$). *This result provides support for H2.*

Insert Table II about here

We tested the curvilinear effect in a separate model. As recommended in the literature, we included both the linear and nonlinear effects in the regression (Dawson, 2014). The curvilinear effect model makes a significant contribution beyond the base model ($\Delta R^2 = 0.03, p < 0.05$), and the regression coefficient for duration-sq. ($\beta = -0.14, p < 0.05$) is significant. Therefore, *we find support for H1* in our data.

The two interactions were entered separately for each dependent variable, as recommended in the literature (Cohen and Cohen, 1983). The first interaction of duration and formalization reported in Contingent Model 1 of Table 2 makes a significant contribution beyond the main effects ($\Delta R^2 = 0.013, p < 0.05$), but the regression coefficient of the interaction between duration and formalization ($\beta = -0.06$) is nonsignificant. Hence, this result *does not support Hypothesis 3.*

The second interaction between motivation and formalization reported in Contingent Model 2 of Table 2 makes a significant contribution beyond the main effects ($\Delta R^2 = 0.14$, $p > 0.05$). The regression coefficient for the interaction between motivation and formalization ($\beta = -0.22$, $p > 0.01$) is significant; hence, the results provide *support for hypothesis 4*. To determine the nature of the significant interaction, we plotted the effect of motivation on the dependent variable for values of formalization at the mean and one standard deviation above and below the mean, as suggested by Cohen and Cohen (1983). This plot is reported in Figure 2.

Insert Figure 2 about here

5. DISCUSSION

High rates of youth unemployment, which reached an average of almost 25% in European Union countries during the previous economic crisis, represent one of the most important challenges of the current European economies. Internships have become an increasingly common feature of the labor market and an important tool to combat youth unemployment. However, while both researchers and practitioners acknowledge their importance in preparing young adults to enter the labor market (Finch *et al.*, 2013; Ishengoma and Vaaland, 2016; Rynes and Bartunek, 2013), we lack more comprehensive explanations of how we can design internships that effectively increase young adults' employability (Inceoglu *et al.*, 2019; Narayanan *et al.*, 2010). In this sense, identifying internship features that increase perceived employability is important because it could help to maximize the outcomes of a labor relationship that is extremely widespread and could alleviate the problem of unemployment among young adults.

Our empirical study supports the proposed curvilinear relationship between internship duration and interns' perceived employability. If the internship is very short – e.g., less than one month – there is not enough time for a student to acquire the skills and knowledge that might increase future employability. In addition, because the intern is staying for only a very short time, companies might refrain from expending significant resources to provide proper training. For internships lasting too long (e.g., more than 6 or 9 months), the marginal effects of time on employability begin to diminish over time. On the one hand, interns in such situations have had enough time to develop basic professional skills, and the pace of learning over time flattens. On the other hand, interns' motivation starts to decrease because their perception of equity diminishes. The gap between their performance and that of regular employees decreases, while the differences in compensation and benefits are still large.

Our results expand previous knowledge by suggesting that there is an optimal internship duration (e.g., 1 to 6 months). In this period, the intern's motivation is still high (despite limited economic compensation), and the time is sufficient to allow the student to acquire professional skills. In addition, the company benefits from interns' labor during a longer period of time, and the balance between training costs and the benefits of interns' work is more beneficial for firms. Therefore, during this period, or “sweet spot”, internship duration effectively increases interns' employability.

This finding extends the results of previous studies suggesting that companies seek an adequate return on investment and invest fewer resources in interns' development (e.g., lack of formal orientation programs or limited supervisor support) when internships are short (Alpert *et al*, 2009; Tovey, 2001). This behavior is negatively associated with interns' perception of employability.

The results of this study also speak to the literature on motivational practices specific to internships (e.g., Beenen and Pichler, 2014; Beenen and Rousseau, 2010; Inceoglu *et al.*, 2019; Maertz *et al.*, 2014; Narayanan *et al.* 2010), which constitute a somewhat unconventional type of labor relation for which labor regulations are different from those for conventional work (in some countries, internships are not even regulated). Previous studies focused on different facets of intern motivation and possible outcomes. We provide a more operational approach by focusing on specific practices that companies can implement to externally motivate interns. These practices include providing interns with working conditions equivalent to those of regular employees, supporting interns with mentors who provide on-the-job guidance and resolve technical questions and problems, and providing financial compensation that allows interns to cover basic living costs. Such practices –that would hardly motivate regular employees— contribute to providing interns with a better developmental experience that positively influences their perception of employability.

Finally, we have analyzed the contingent effect of the level of formalization of the internship process. We have found evidence that the positive effect of a motivating internship experience on the perceived employability of interns grows stronger when the level of internship formalization is high. Interns perceive greater formalization as a signal that a company supports their professional development (Narayanan *et al.*, 2010).

However, the results do not provide support for the suggested moderating effect of formalization on the relationship between internship duration and perceived employability. Although we can only speculate about this issue, the lack of support for our hypothesis may be attributed to the complex nature of the curvilinear relationship between duration and employability. It may also be due to the way formalization is

measured in this study, which may obviate other alternative means of formalization. We hope that future additional work will provide more insight into the effect of formalization on the duration–employability relationship.

Limitations and future lines of research

This study has some limitations partly resulting from the characteristics of the database design. On the one hand, the database is quite suitable because it was compiled from data from a large number of interns; it covers a considerable number of countries and includes an extensive range of different sectors of the target population by education and age. These features guarantee a reasonable basis for the generalization of the results and differentiate our study from most previous research that used small convenience samples of university students. However, this database has some shortcomings. First, its cross-sectional nature makes it impossible to test for causal effects. Second, the database includes subjective employability measures through direct questions to respondents. Because of the EU's anonymity policy, it is not possible to correlate this information with a secondary objective dataset. Although the possibility of common method bias in the dataset cannot be excluded, the nature of the hypotheses, the application of Podsakoff *et al.*'s (2003) recommendations and the statistical tests applied suggest that common method bias is not a cause for concern in this study.

This work also points to interesting new lines of future inquiry. The empirical study is based on a sample of European young adults from 28 countries. While we account in our study for the potential effect of the country context, as EU countries share some common political, socio-economic and cultural characteristics, future studies should explore the same relationships in other contexts. For instance, different cultural backgrounds might have different influences on young adults' employability perceptions, or capability

acquisition might have a different timing. However, the inclusion of 28 countries in our study provides an important basis for generalization.

Future research might also triangulate data and include supervisors' insights on interns' experiences and performances as a way of adding complexity to features driving employability outcomes. Our research highlights interns' perceptions regarding their own employability, but it does not explore the perceptions of others in the host organization.

Future studies could also explore the effect of internship design on actual employment. Our research highlights interns' perceptions regarding their own employability, but it does not explore whether these perceptions translate into actual employment opportunities. We call for more research on the scope and features under which internships favor employability. Further studies could also explore the effect of internship features on other outcomes, such as the time to find employment or the quality of employment. Last, future studies could also bridge these findings with previous ones and explore interactions between individual characteristics and internship features. For example, do specific internship features (e.g., motivational practices, duration, formalization) have a larger effect on perceived employability for some individuals than for others?

Implications for practice

This study also has implications for young adults, institutions that manage internships (e.g., universities, employment agencies) and organizations running internship programs. First, for young adults, our research can serve as a reference for assessing and identifying internships that provide the right conditions to effectively improve employability. Therefore, when planning their internship, young adults can focus on appropriate opportunities that might make them more employable. If young adults take

more responsibility in their decisions to undertake internships, they could thus increase their chances of success in career development.

Second, this study is important for institutions that manage internships such as universities or employment agencies to the extent that they can identify internship features that help improve employability among young adults. Considering the factors highlighted in the findings (i.e., duration, motivational practices and formalization), universities should be selective in the companies they partner with and negotiate short-term, work-relevant experiences that prepare students for the workplace and enhance their employability.

Third, organizations running internship programs can use this study for the purpose of designing more effective and fruitful internships. Our findings can serve as a guide that specifies the necessary tools and practices that provide interns with more career resources. Internship programs are beneficial for hosting organizations because they are considered a means to obtain access to highly skilled people (Willison, 2012). Hence, implementing a clear strategy based on our findings would assist in building a pool of potential employees who have undergone personal and professional growth.

Conclusion

Research on internships is interesting because they are an unconventional type of labor relation, where the logic behind labor agreements and regulations are different from those of conventional work. Despite the widespread use and relevance of internships as a means of increasing young adults' employability, there is still much to learn about how to manage interns successfully.

Our study contributes modest but significant insights on how to design successful internships. Internships with an appropriate duration in companies that implement motivational practices specifically designed for the particularities of interns are more likely to enhance the perceived employability of interns. These effects are strengthened when the labor relationship is highly formalized. We hope that our findings are useful for young adults who seek their first work experience with the aim of forging a brighter future. We also hope that companies perceiving traditional HRM tools as inapplicable in their internships will find our study useful.

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Figure 1. Relationship between internship duration and interns' perceived employability

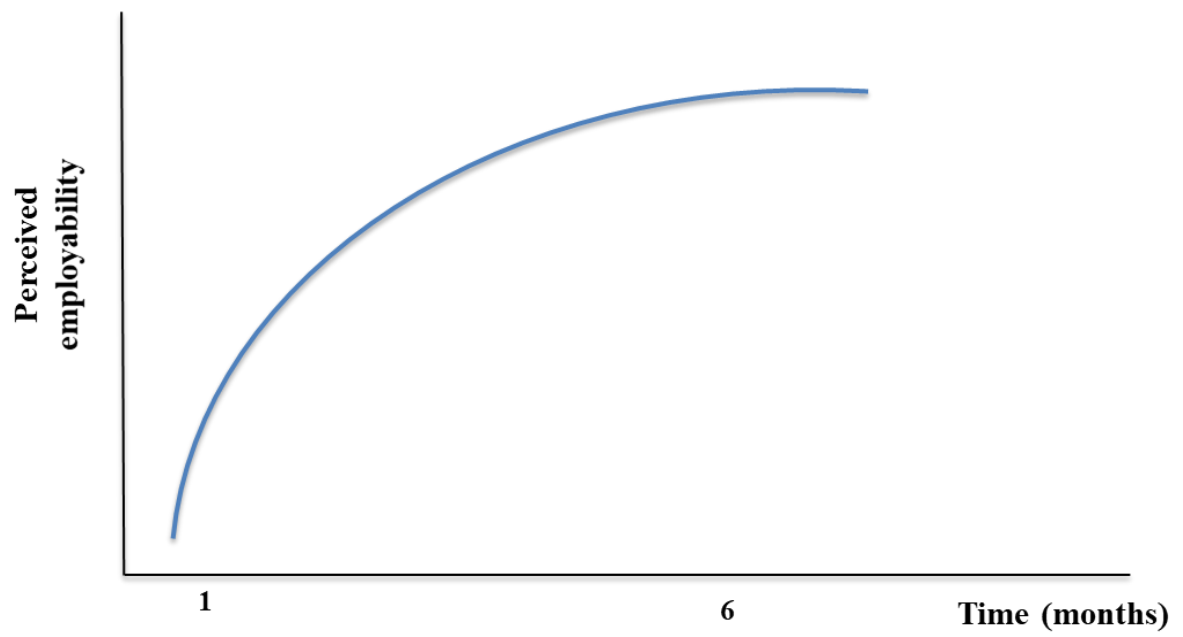


Table I . Descriptive Statistics

	Var. Name	Ave.	Std. Dev.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Gender	0.50	0.50	1								
2	Size	0.25	0.43	0.019	1							
3	Education	0.34	0.47	-.088**	.119**	1						
4	Age	26.70	5.30	-0.014	.093**	.273**	1					
5	Internship experience	2.35	1.65	-.028*	-0.001	-.039**	-0.012	1				
6	Internship exp. abroad	0.19	0.59	0.006	0.012	.128**	.068**	.171**	1			
7	Duration	2.32	1.01	-0.023	.074**	.141**	.177**	-.076**	0.014	1		
8	Formalization	2.43	1.12	.069**	.073**	0.001	-.033*	.064**	.065**	.132**	1	
9	Motivation	3.04	3.83	-.035**	.061**	.187**	.025**	0.001	.045**	.149**	.281**	1

Country dummies not shown

* p < .05; ** p < .01; N=13.565

Table II. Regression results

D.V.: Perceived Employability	Base Model		Main Effects Model		Curvilinear Effect Model		Contingent Model 1		Contingent Model 2		Contingent Model 3	
	Std. coef.	<i>t</i> statistic	Std. coef.	<i>t</i> statistic	Std. coef.	<i>t</i> statistic	Std. coef.	<i>t</i> statistic	Std. coef.	<i>t</i> statistic	Std. coef.	<i>t</i> statistic
Control variables												
Gender	0.03	1.80†	-0.01	-0.71	-0.03	-1.82†	-0.01	-0.73	-0.01	-0.66	-0.01	-0.65
Size	0.03	1.96*	0.01	0.67	0.02	1.35	0.01	0.83	0.01	0.87	0.01	0.88
Education	0.01	0.75	-0.02	-0.87	-0.02	-0.85	-0.01	-0.68	-0.01	-0.58	-0.01	0.56
Age (18-35)	-0.04	-2.26*	-0.04	-2.49*	-0.06	-3.51**	-0.04	-2.29*	-0.04	-2.35*	-0.04	-2.33*
Internship experience	0.11	6.38***	0.12	7.21***	0.12	6.76***	0.12	6.62***	0.12	6.62***	0.12	6.61***
Internship exp. abroad	0.00	0.15	-0.02	-1.09	0.00	-0.22	0.02	1.01	0.02	-1.02	0.02	-1.01
(Country dummies)												
Main effect variables												
Duration			0.12	7.03***	0.32	3.60**	0.16	3.78**	0.15	6.65***	0.15	3.53***
Formalization			-0.09	5.71***			0.11	2.79**	0.23	3.32**	0.25	3.41***
Motivation			0.29	17.39***			0.28	16.59***	0.36	9.08***	0.36	8.93***

Curvilinear effect						
Duration - sq.			-0.14	-2.01*		
Interactions						
Duration x Form.				-0.06	-1.2	-0.05 -0.88
Motivation x Form.					-0.2 -2.38*	-0.19 -2.26*
Model						
R^2	0.047	0.169	0.069	0.154	0.154	0.155
Adjusted R^2	0.038	0.160	0.060	0.145	0.145	0.145
F statistic	5.46***	20.40***	8.01***	16.90**	16.96**	16.53***
ΔR^2	-	0.122	0.022	0.107	0.107	0.107
Change in F	-	14.94	2.55	11.44	11.50	11.07

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; $N=13.565$

Figure 2. Plot of the relationship between internship duration and interns' perceived employability

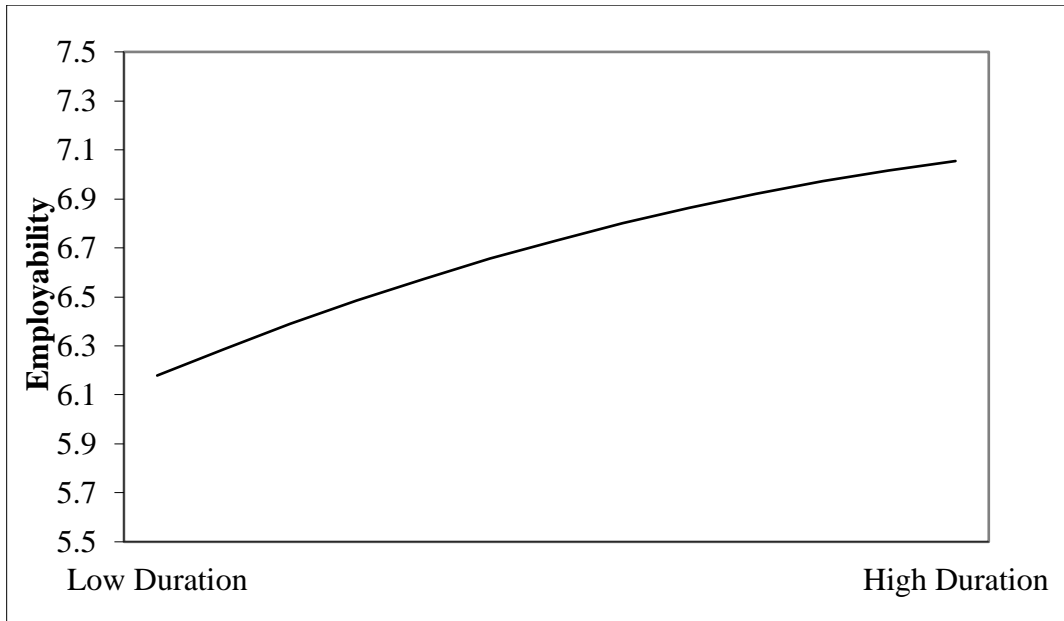


Figure 3. Interaction effect of motivational factors on perceived employability

