

Building career capital:

Helping workers to enhance career mobility within our uncertain times

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Literature review

Within our 'vuca' (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) societies, our working environment is ever more challenging (1). With growing commercial pressures on organisations, a job for life is perhaps less realistic for individuals than it once was (2). In addition, it is widely predicted that people will be working for longer, 'for some into their 70s or even 80s' (3). Consequently, individuals are likely to need to transition between roles more frequently (4), whilst seeking out opportunities within the careers landscape.

Here, career mobility is defined as an individual's ability to undertake such role transitions.



Average job tenure: Source: theundercoverrecruiter.com
 Over 50s 13-20 years
 Under 30s 2-3 years (5)

Often work transitions are experienced as stressful (6), especially for business leaders where stakes are arguably higher (7). Therefore, role holders will increasingly need to cultivate resources to facilitate role transitions, defined here as career capital.

What and in what way does career capital facilitate role transitions?

Research aim

To explore career capital required by business leaders to facilitate role transitions within a single business within UK

Research methodology

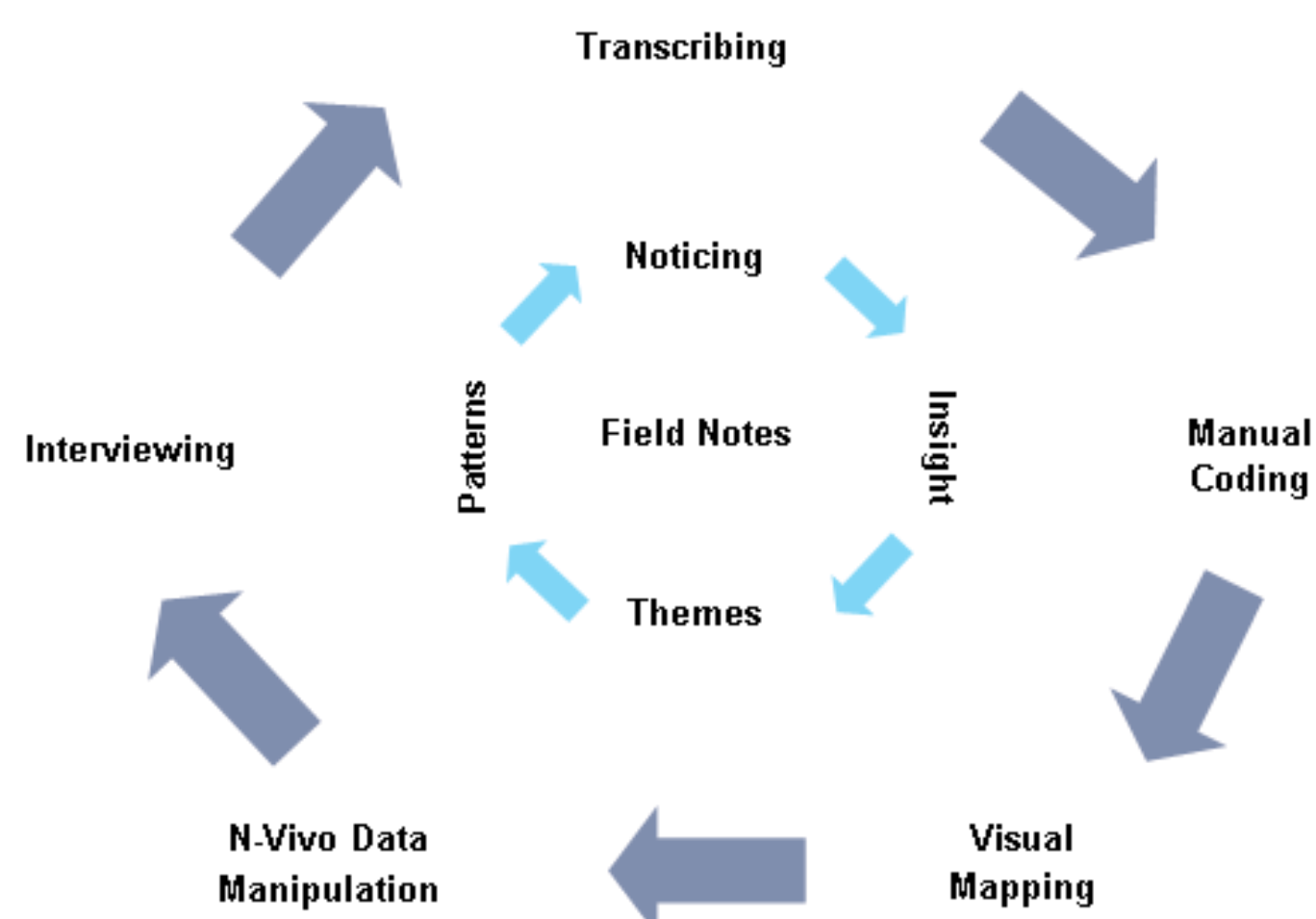
Methodology: interpretative

Design: case study, event-based narrative interviews

Case organisation: UK manufacturer of interior lining systems

Case population: 36 business leaders who recently experienced an organisational role transition within previous 3 years

Analytical approach: thematic analysis, iterative approach



Source: own

Sample of unique knowledge contributions

Theoretical:

Career capital theoretical framework; Worker typology; agency and attachment; Updated theoretical framework

Empirical:

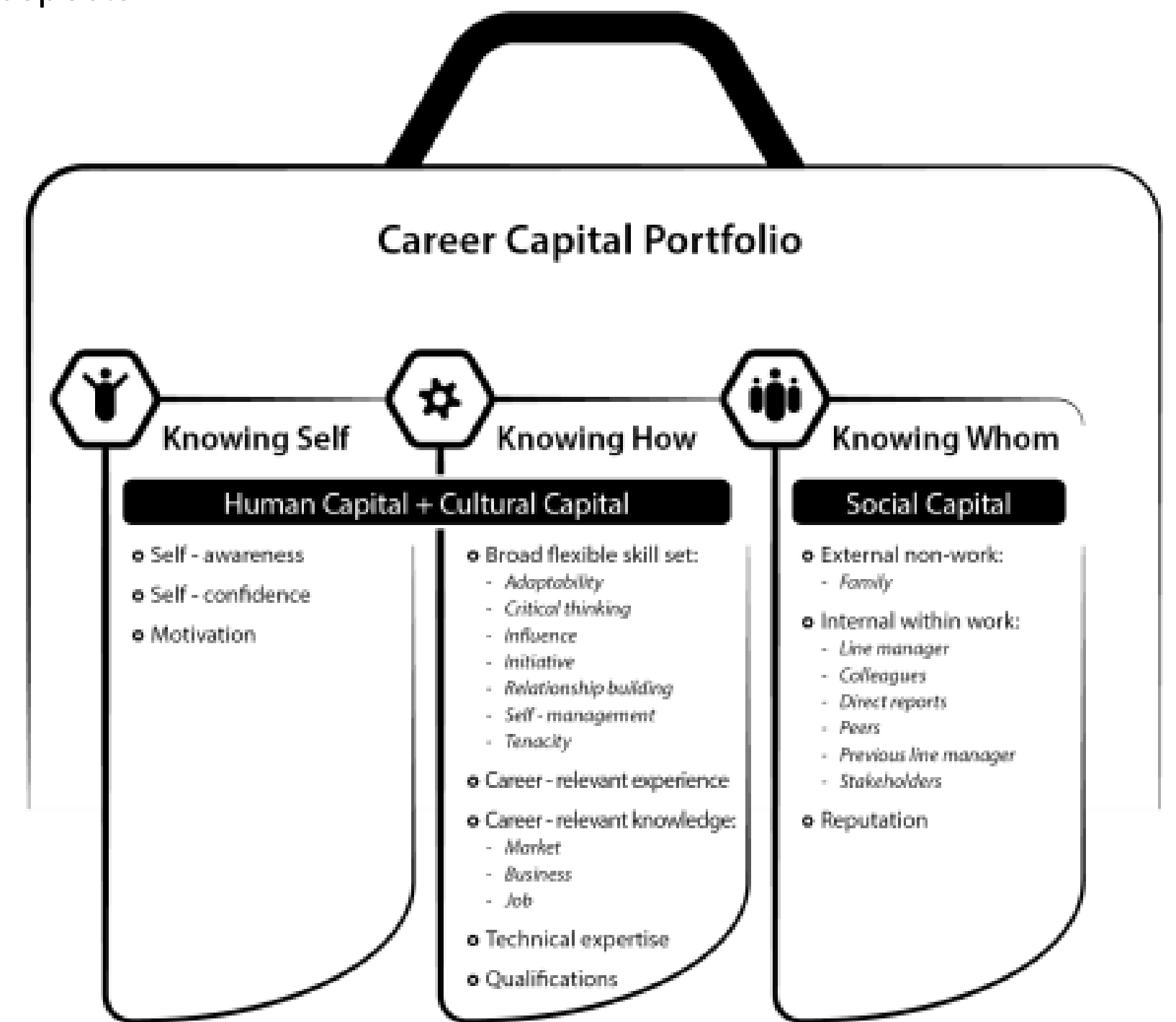
Transition dimension: role congruency; Line manager as capital gateway; Role of power in transitions; Career capital as a barrier; Career capital erosion

Practice:

Career mobility diagnostics: current and anticipated; Agency and attachment diagnostics: exploring current and desired relationship

Emerging results

Business leaders use a career capital portfolio, comprising 5-14 of these career capital aspects:



Source: own

However, as well as being an asset, career capital can be a liability, acting as a barrier during the transition. For example: business leaders may have had too much, hindering their transition, and also, they may have lost key relationships:

"I took far too much on. When I moved into the role, one I was very eager to impress with my peers and customers and I welcomed with open arms anything that came my way rather than prioritising and pushing back. And so I found for the first few months I was just, yes, I was swamped [...] if I am honest I didn't deliver much quality."

"My previous boss was a bit distraught I think because I wanted to leave that role, not because I was so bloody brilliant but because it left him with a problem. And he still brings it up now that I was stolen away and he mentions it to my boss on a fairly regular basis. So I got kicked around the room a few times for no real reason other than he didn't like it and he was having a bit of a stomp and I say this with the greatest love for [Stakeholder] I think that he is a really nice guy but he was a bit of an arse during that time."

Through role transitions, career capital has fluidity; as well as being eroded, it can develop and also be perceived differently, echoing Bourdieu's capital circularity and symbolic capital (8), respectively:

"I guess for my personality, I think that when you are thrown into the deep end your confidence suffers a bit."

"My direct reports at the time helped giving me knowledge because I came in with no understanding about the plant and [...] no understanding of how it works."

"Are we going to have a functional [...] clockwork worker?' because that is not what they wanted. They wanted someone different, so I had to prove that I was somebody different."

Source: handwsc.co.uk

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