A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH REGARDING IDENTITY ASPECTS OF ROMANIAN MANAGERS

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Abstract

The article presents the process of grounding a theory on Romanian managers' identity. It is about personal identity (or individual identity), about that identity given by the definitions of someone about him or herself, by self identification. There are presented the qualitative research stages: the specific methods and techniques of data collection that were used, data analysis methods and techniques that were applied and the process of grounding theory. The research subjects work in the private economic sector (and have leading positions). 20 of them work in Brasov County (I selected them by using theoretical sampling). The other 25 are managers and entrepreneurs recognized at national level. The last ones were interviewed by reporters of "Money Express" Review and on the documents resulted I applied a secondary analysis. It was grounded a theory about the identity characteristics of managers. These are referring at the life circumstances they lived in: childhood and adolescence circumstances – physical environment, relational environment, school environment, family environment, material circumstances; maturity circumstances – professional and relational circumstances. The grounded theory also refers to the self-identification characteristics of managers: general traits, inter-relational characteristics, specific traits corresponding to the leading position, individual and collective identification; to the self-processes: self-image and self esteem.

Keywords: *qualitative research, grounded theory, managers' identity, self-identification.*

1. Introduction

The article describes the process of creating a theory of Romanian manager's identity. I am referring to the personal identity (or the individual identity), the one given by the own definitions of the self, by self-identification; it is the self-identity, the identity for the self or the subjective identity (depending on the one that defines it).

No socio-psychological researches having as subjects managers have been conducted in Romania, or at least the results of such studies have not been published (I have come across prospective studies of entrepreneurial behaviour – on individuals that do not hold and have never held management positions). There

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is no other image, therefore, than that of the common knowledge perspective of the Romanian managers.

The study of manager's identity has been realized until nowadays – internationally – mostly through inventories, tests and measurement scales; therefore, as researches were based on quantitative principles, the results were scores and profiles of different dimensions of the identity. This is why this article presents the study of manager's identity from a *qualitative* perspective. It is an essay of creating a baseline of self-identity through the processing and interpretation of the unstructured or semi-structured data derived from a narrative research. The novelty of this approach, the authenticity and the freshness of the collected data have uncovered some unexpected results – certainly new, unprecedented, detailed and most importantly, dynamic - coming directly from the subjects with the possibility to peek into the context.

Identity held in the research described in this article (and conducted in 2008) the status of what the specialty literature names "sensitizing concept" (took from Blumer). It describes

'The way in which symbolical interactionists (and generally speaking, qualitative researchers) use the concepts in their research. Socio-psychological concepts such as family, victim, stress, stigma, and so on are defined in a loosened manner at the beginning of the study; they are not given operational definitions so that the researcher could explore the way in which the concept manifests and how it is given a particular meaning in the set of circumstances which are being investigated. These concepts are not emic or indigenous concepts, but they are generated by the researcher from existing studies and theories. They are used in order to give a general direction and orientation to the study' (Schwandt, 2007: 274).

Hence, I started from a basic definition of identity. In *Dictionary of Sociology* Gadrey (1998) defines identity as a body of circumstances that make a person be that actual person. I tried to identify which are the circumstances that made my subjects become managers.

Besides the abstraction of identity starting from the definition of life circumstances, manager's identity was outlined through the identification of several identity-related concepts in their discourse, as well as of some processes of the self, already known and defined in the specialty literature. I am speaking of self-image, self-esteem, individual identification and collective identification.

Next, I will describe the methodological aspects of my research (data collection, theoretical sampling, and data analysis) and I will present the theory – empirically based – referring to the identity of studied Romanian managers.

2.   Methodological aspects of the research

As far as I proposed myself to find out whom and how are managers in Romania, I have decided that the best method to collect data is the biographical interview (a narrative interview centred on biographical aspects). The applied techniques (in the order applied) were: unstructured interview, semi-structured interview and structured interview.

The first interview that took place with each of the subjects was unstructured. I have considered that the subjects know best what is important to be known about them, what is significant, that what they choose to tell is much more important (and even closer to what they really are, what represents them) than anything else someone would ever ask them. They have been asked to talk about themselves, about the things and people that influenced their formation. It was the starting request, as during the interview there was no return to it, but rather stories of themselves in different periods of their lives have been encouraged: childhood, teenage and maturity. The only specific questions addressed during the unstructured interview were those of making a situation clear. They were made and addressed on that very occasion and only in relation to an idea forwarded by the subject. Generally, these questions requested the subject to offer more details, explanations or clarifications about what he or she had said.

The interviews followed the biographical method described by Rosenthal (2004: 50). The author describes the sequences of the narrative interview as follows: "The period of main narration," when the interviewer formulates the initial narrative question and the interviewee presents the main narration or the self-structured biographical self-presentation, and "the questioning period," with internal narrative questions – related to already presented information and external narrative questions – related to topics that interest us and have not been discussed.

After finishing the unstructured interviews, they have been transcribed and scanned. On this basis I formulated questions that would clarify certain aspects, if they have not been clarified during the unstructured interview. The next step would be the semi-structured interview, conducted with the scope of clarifying any ambiguous, vague or imprecise information. If the questions happened to lead the interviewee to other events, people or personal circumstances, he/she was encouraged to provide details about them.

The data collected from the unstructured and semi-structured interviews has been analyzed (I will reveal the methods and techniques later in this article), and on the basis of these analyses I have created a guide for a structured interview. It had the scope of collecting data that would fill the empty spaces in categories and saturate the categories identified in the data analysis. I also pursued the testing of some hypotheses derived from the analysis.

I have also gathered social documents like the "LIDERO" volume of 2008, which comprises interviews of Romanian managers and entrepreneurs. The

interviewees are nation-wide renowned managers and entrepreneurs leading successful businesses that had been interviewed by journalists from the "Money Express" magazine. These interviews reveal things that lay "behind the numbers," and that speak about the managers' way of being, their thinking and their acts. I have realized a secondary analysis on this material.

Regarding the subjects, 45 people have been interviewed, all of them holding management positions. We are speaking solely about the "business leadership," as all of them work in the private economic sector; they are either entrepreneurs – managing their own business, or managers – leading teams, departments or some else's business.

Twenty of the subjects – managers and entrepreneurs – were interviewed from Brasov County: seven women and thirteen men all aged between 26 and 69. The other twenty-five subjects interviewed by the "Money Express" magazine journalists were: thirteen entrepreneurs and twelve managers, out of which one woman, all aged between 37 and 66.

Therefore, the sampling was theoretical – it complied with the relevance criteria of the cases to be studied in the research. I have chosen people with management positions in business: entrepreneurs, managers of someone else's business, department managers or team leaders of private businesses. I have chosen both men and women – with a bigger share of men as it is reflected in the distribution of the population in the management positions: 2/3 is men; in upper management positions the share is even higher. In regard to age, I have covered the interval of 26-69 years old, with a slightly bigger share of those between 40 and 49, this being the climax age of people who become managers. Of course, in the case of managers in Brasov, the theoretical sampling was applied function of what the analyzed data revealed: for example, after the first interviews I have learned that there were no real and significant differences between managers and entrepreneurs, and consequently the sampling which was to follow did not take into consideration this aspect.

When speaking about the analysis of the data, I have resorted to coding – going through all the three specific procedures of grounding a theory: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Open coding allowed me to extract, from the field work that has been done, over 3800 codes which were later grouped into 40 categories. Given the impossibility of analyzing such an amount of analysis units by hand, I have used the NVivo 7 software. I also resorted to the two sources of labelling the categories: "borrowing" the labels from the specialty literature (when the discovered phenomena described an already existent concept in literature – for example: self-perception, motivation or autonomy) and that of the subjects – when certain formulations presented interest – for example: what kind of leader people follow, what are they proud of or self-bragging.

For the interpretation of the data (grounding a theory based upon the analysis of empirical data) I have realized analytical induction.

3.   Identity's characteristics of the studied Romanian managers

A first direction in the identification identity's characteristics of managers was the description of the circumstances of their lives.

The analysis of the data revealed two important temporal categories of life circumstances: childhood and teenage / maturity. Considered life stages, childhood and teenage comprise the following characteristics, grouped by sub-categories: the physical medium, the relational medium, the school medium, the familial medium and the material circumstances. In Table 1 I have schematically presented the circumstances in which the studied managers spent their childhood and teenage.

Table 1: Circumstances of manager's life – childhood and teenage

The physical medium	Characteristics of the physical medium	- contact with jobs	- observed at others
			- apprenticeship
		- they have own responsibilities	- watching for younger siblings
			-house chores
	Reaction to the physical medium	- they work	
		- „steal" skills	
The relational medium	Characteristics of the relational medium	- do no have relationship problems	
		- impose themselves in relations	
The school medium	They are very good pupils		
The familial medium	Authoritarian parents		
	Strong principle medium		
Material circumstances	Rather poor families		
	Make money		
	Manage their money themselves		

For the period of maturity the categories become less but they comprise more. Therefore, responders talk only about the professional and relational circumstances; Table 2 and Table 3 show these categories, sub-categories and the corresponding codes.

Starting from the idea that identity is formulated as the sum of the ideas and feelings a certain person thinks and feels about itself – that identity is the mental representation of a person related to the self, I have tried to discover in data, what really represents manager's self-identity (what do they think of themselves, with whom and what they identify themselves, *see* Iluţ, 1999).

Table 2: Professional circumstances – maturity

Professional circumstances	Characteristics of the profes- sional medium	- diversity in jobs
		- entry-level jobs
	Reaction to the professional medium	- professional evolution
		- ambition to find a job that fulfils the needs
		- „steal" the necessary skills, learn them
		- fascinated by power
	Peer reaction	- acknowledge the merits
	The ideal job	- professional development
		- climbing up the hierarchy
		- relationships
		- professional challenges
		- important power positions
	Self-definition	- ability to lead others
		- in-born ability to lead

Table 3: Relational circumstances – maturity

Acquaintances	- lots of acquaintances but few that one can rely on	
Friends	- minimization of friendship	
Other people	-persecute them	- treated unjust by superiors
		- betrayed by close people
	- envy them	
	- admire them	- praise them
	- want to be admired	- motivated by other's respect and appreciation
	- rational in relationships with others	
Subordinates	- want a good relation with their inferiors	- is their friend
		- is highly appreciated
		- how harmful is a close relation
	- resort to different strategies	- adjust their intellectual level
		- struggle to please them
		- help them improve
		- „know" what motivates them
Role models	- did not have a role model	- did not admire anyone
		- were not influenced by anybody
		- were not helped by anyone
	- consider that they can be role models themselves	

The manager's self-identification is achieved on two dimensions: general characteristics (*see* Table 4) and inter-relational characteristics. They have appeared directly from interviewee's discourses, without being brought into discussion by the interviewer.

The main and the most widespread trait is ambition. Irrelevant the sex, the manager or the age, all subjects define themselves as being ambitious. There is, nevertheless, a sex differentiation when one self-defines itself. Female managers set themselves apart from the male managers (in self-definition) through their attitude towards discipline: they are clean and tidy, disciplined, serious and hard-working, whereas male managers try to discipline themselves but they are relaxed, lazy, non-conformist, undisciplined and characterized by a laissez-faire attitude. Women are severe to themselves, auto-criticizing and perfectionist, while men are severe to others, cold and prudent.

Table 4: Self-identification – general characteristics of studied managers

General characteristics	
Male managers	Female managers
- ambitious	- ambitious
- intelligent	- intelligent
- relaxed	- tidy
- laissez-faire attitude	- disciplined
- non-conformist	- hard-working
- undisciplined	- self-criticizing
- prudent	- perfectionist
- severe to others	- severe to themselves
- distant and cold to others	

Related to socializing, the majority of studied subjects are sociable, settled, loyal and correct. Following, I will illustrate and prove my words with extracts from the interviews conducted. The subjects, interviewed according to the procedures described above in the article, received a code name; those whose names appear explicitly, are the managers interviewed by "Money Express" magazine – their interviews are public.

I am settled and loyal, I even keep in touch with my childhood friends and I often visit them. (M10 S.I)

Usually, I have very good relationships with any kind of people, employed or unemployed, friends, people I know and people I don't - because I am a sociable person. (M20 V.N)

I enjoy going out with people, I enjoy giving interviews and I enjoy listening to people… (M43 Mişu Negriţoiu)

Loyalty and uhmm fairness towards my fellow people… (M29 A.B)

I have insisted a lot on being in very good relations with people; I know how to raise – or at least I try – to a certain level, and I know very well how to lower myself, so that I make each person I talk to feel important. Or feel that he counts for something. (M29 A.B)

Some of the managers (depending on their personality) are rather distant and reserved, they hardly attach to someone, they are hard to impress and do not trust people; others have good relationships with people, are sensitive to their needs and problems and help them whenever they can. Part of the first category is the young managers, and of the second, female managers – that mostly regret their openness towards people, and older managers – that would like to be a little tougher.

Young managers:

I have somehow become more distant and reserved. (M14 C.Z)

When it comes to important decisions, I don't really trust people, whoever they might be; I even don't trust my associates fully, I have to know everything. (M20 V.N)

I am a person that is not easy to be impressed. (M33 A.M)

I don't get attached to people rather easy. (M9 I.E)

I am not an authoritarian person – or a tyrant – but I don't really trust people; I always have to check upon them, which is a consequence of their poor quality. (M20 V.N)

Older managers:

I am not that severe as I should be. (M19 Marius Ivan)

I know I don't want to hurt anybody, I think things many times, and most of the times with my heart, not with my mind, almost in all relations. (M8 I.C)

In contrast to other leaders, I have – so to say – a stronger emotional implication with those around me. (M44 Dan Pascariu)

Women:

I have given my 100%, always. Therefore, when I know there is something to be done, I always leave myself in the second plan and do what I have to do for the other. (M17 R.J)

Oh, and because I am so open to people, most of the time I make mistakes by telling all the secrets. (M17 R.J)

I have always been an open-minded woman. (M8 I.C)

But I have always been very loyal and I am very sincere... Sometimes, people tend not to believe my words because of my pure sincerity! And I am very trustworthy. Yes, loyal and trustworthy... and I expect the same thing from my friends. (M8 I.C)

Self-identification is supplemented by the personal view of the responders in regard to how a leader should be, what qualities he/she should possess. By enumerating the qualities of a leader, managers define themselves indirectly, showing and identifying their professional self. Most of these self-identifications

are to be found in the "LIDERO" interviews. As a rule, managers define their qualities by reporting themselves to employees:

It is one of the quintessential qualities of a true leader – being capable of learning his/her people rapidly and put them in the position they are best. (M1 Dinu Patriciu)

Being loyal and correct towards your team. (M19 Marius Ivan)

It's all about the way you relate to people, the way you communicate with them, the respect you have for each of them, the way you handle specific situations and tasks, they way you show direction, intuition and... flair. Also, it is important to care about people's problems; to be able to work with the most diverse personalities, with teams that are made up of individuals with very distinct personalities, to make them work together as a team, but in the same time respect their personality. (M2 Aliz Kosza)

It really counts to get the best of everyone and show them the way; to motivate them and give them an impulse, when they need it... (M4 Florentin Ţuca)

As well, they reveal their qualities through the abilities that one requires in order to be in a management position: vision, audacity, courage, initiative and an adequate attitude.

The main quality of leadership is vision. It is very important your vision about the company, what you want to build. (M1 Dinu Patriciu)

Vision, that is, the ideas a leader shares with the rest. (M19 Marius Ivan)

Vision and the understanding of where the industry is going. What do the clients / consumers want? What will they want tomorrow? (M26 Mihai Ghyka)

A true entrepreneur is the one that "sees" things, a bold, courageous person who takes the initiative. (M19 Marius Ivan)

The idea is that you have the courage to take the first step, to start building an organization from 2 to 4, then to 100 people. (M22 Florin Andronescu)

By definition, a true leader has to have courage. (M30 Florin Talpeş)

To feel like a winner and have that attitude is the vital element of leadership. The idea of permanent improvement – never settling for what you have done, always wanting more... (M30 Florin Talpeş)

Being a leader is all about attitude. It is obvious that without a positive attitude you will never be a leader. (M38 Dragoş Dinu)

From these words we can conclude that they are dedicated to their work, they have charisma, they are intelligent and they have the ability to make firm and quick decisions. The list of qualities continues:

Vocation, dedication, intelligence, trust, perseverance and charisma. (M23 Ion Nestor)

Empathy and you showing it; assuming your failure and success with the same intensity and openness; taking intelligent risks and equilibrium. (M35 Valeriu Nistor)

To be able to adapt yourself: to the environment and to your own weaknesses and qualities. (M26 Mihai Ghyka)

The most important ability is that of prioritizing and always sticking to your established priorities. (M31 Dan Viorel Şucu)

Intelligence, the capacity to take decisions and assuming responsibilities. (M37 Emanoil Viciu)

To be an entrepreneur doesn't take much – only hard work, assuming responsibilities and never be a false-optimist. (M40 Florentin Banu)

Tenacity, stubbornness and respect for the others. (M41 Radu Enache)

People that have inside them a burning desire to build, to change and develop. (M42 Gabriel Alexandru)

To feel fine working in a stressful environment, to be inspired when taking decisions, to have the ability of quick speculation and to make money. To inspire their own team, to inspire those in the market, and those looking for a role model through action, attitude and opinions – but as well through achievements and results. (M43 Mişu Negriţoiu)

Determination, responsibility, gut-feeling, energy, charisma and ethics. (M5 Marius Ghenea)

In what follows, I will show the way managers evolve, by comparing themselves with other managers and through the discussion of identity's dimensions: resemblance (how are they similar with others) and difference (how are they distinct).

What can be said – about the interviewed managers – without any doubt, is that a dominant in their identification is the individual or personal identity, and not the collective or social identity. Managers satisfy through self-identification their need for uniqueness and not the need of affiliation (as personal identity is very well built and social identity is completely neglected). They do not identify themselves with groups at all (even in the identification with managers – which they only discuss when induced – they point out their distinctions rather than similarities) or with communities. Their entire discourse is based on their uniqueness, their distinction from the others, even personal uniqueness (the sense of distinction and the need of uniqueness dates back to their childhood).

I never did things like the other children. (M8 I.C)

I didn't like being just another kid; I enjoyed being a bit different. (M14 C.Z)

I think that my whole life I have been strange. (M17 R.J)

Probably I am a bit eccentric and probably I am a bit different than the others. (M28 R.S)

I am different. (M20 V.N)

I used to do things differently. (M33 A.M)

The difference between managers and ordinary people is always the latter's superiority over the last. This feeling of superiority over others is characteristic to all stages of life.

Ever since I was young, I have started outstanding things, unusual things that very few have done. (M7 C.B)

They are superior at school:

I was a better student. (M10 S.I)

I went straight to first grade; pupils there wrote sticks and I was already able to read and write, and I didn't have anything to do with them, I thought that was stupid; I was able to tell the numbers and count... (M7 C.B)

I was a step forward, even in upper primary school. (M10 S.I)

I had the best grades in school, I was a valedictorian. (M10 S.I)

Or they are superior through other abilities:

Me being amongst the most skilled. (M16 O.C)

I was only 9 and I was training along with 25 year-olds. (M7 C.B)

I was very resourceful. (M8 I.C)

Out of the whole high school, I was the only capable to make that part. (M7 C.B)

I was a very skilled lather, I was amongst the best in high school at what I did there, and not only at that part, but at everything that could have been made by a lathe, from fine tuning to sharpening knives. (M7 C.B)

Or through their early maturity:

Whenever I talked, when I was about 15 or 16, people said that I was very mature in my thinking. (M6 I.A)

I knew what I wanted when I was only 16! I had a goal in life. (M6 I.A)

I was more mature than the other children, I had more profound thinking. (M16 O.C)

Managers are superior through what they do.

They do certain things other people do not:

I can tell you that at the age of... 18, I was doing things nobody else could. (M16 O.C)

I was amongst the first ones, as a kid, to take up this sport – judo. (M7 C.B)

I always said I could do the thing others couldn't. (M8 I.C)

They do certain things better than others:

I was a very crafty man working with iron. (M16 O.C)

There were 300 women and out of those I was ranked third or fourth. (M8 I.C)

I see that I can do a thing better than somebody else could do it. (M10 S.I)

I alone can do what somebody else did, maybe even better than that before me. (M12 F.P)

Therefore, there is no place for similarities with other managers; they differ in their perception from an early age from the others; the difference is always in their favour, they are superior, without a doubt, from many points of view – especially when it comes to doing things. There are no affiliations to groups and the majority of characteristics distinguish them at an intra-group level (for example, if they practice a sport, they differ from the others as being the youngest or the fact that

they become national champions; if they work, they differ from the other workers as being the most skilled or having the best results). Therefore, the studied managers establish distinctions that are positive for them in contrast to others (and as well for the group of managers they belong in contrast to other groups).

If we were to build a scale of identity orientation function of the importance that individuals give to personal or social aspects of their identity (as did Cheek *apud* Seta *et al.*, 2006), managers, through the importance given to personal aspects of identity, would be situated in the extreme left of the personal / social continuum.

By applying Ashforth's (2007) theory about the levels of identity, it can be said that studied managers characterize themselves underlining the personal level of their identity (traits, knowledge, abilities, skills, characteristic behaviours) and the interpersonal or relational given especially by their role as manager (with subordinates or business partners). The third level of identity, the collective one, is very poorly contoured in the economy of manager's identity.

If we were to follow the four perspectives of social identity (*cf.* Brewer and Silver *apud* Abrams and Hogg, 2002) at the studied managers, it can be said that: the collective identities – created or maintained through collective actions are no longer representative for managers. They existed in childhood (in their group of children), at school or in teenage. Then, the social identities based on group – given by memberships mentioned in categories are, as well, not represented at the studied managers. There are missing in their discourse referrals to categories they belong to – only to that of manager and only when the discussion about this affiliation is invoked by the interviewer. The same happens with social relational identities – given by interpersonal relations inside the group (relations to other managers are never brought into discussion). In regard to the social identities based on the person – given by the internalization of group properties as a concept of the self, it can be said that the studied managers define themselves through characteristics proper to the manager category, and as proof of this internalization, they act accordingly. For example: there are people in power positions that lead and have lots of responsibilities (they identify with the group of managers through the intermediary of positive characteristics that are in their favour):

I enjoy having power. I enjoy being in charge. (M9 I.E)
I realized that I have a vocation for the leadership work. (M35 Constantin Stroe)
I am very good at leading my men. (M45 G.B)
I am a leader because I have gained respect and/or trust through the decisions I made in crisis moments; this is how you gain respect and you become a good manager – by taking good decisions and showing the people you work that you take them out of the problems they have during work and so on. (M16 I.A)
The company I manage acts following specific rules, therefore "hazardous" decisions do not belong here. (M36 Stere Farmache)
I also like being a manager because I have huge responsibilities. (M9 I.E)

The moment things become serious, you have a responsibility towards people. (M10 S.I)

You are just the same as they are, but with higher responsibilities. (M2 Aliz Kosza)

I consider that I have enough responsibilities. (M6 I.A)

Having so many responsibilities... (M8 I.C)

I have lots of responsibilities because I work in the financial department. (M14 C.Z)

If we apply professor Ilut's (1999) ideas regarding the types of individual identification, it can be said that it is distinct neither the interpersonal identification (managers do not identify themselves with people – *see* the importance of role models), nor the identification with the group of managers (even less with other groups), but the identification with the *role* of being manager (assuming and practicing the formal and informal requests of the specific position held):

80% of the time is taken finding and placing people in the best positions inside the company, function of its interests. It is one of the essential characteristics necessary to a leader – being capable to know its employees and place them where they are at their best. (M1 Dinu Patriciu)

You have to encourage them a lot. The way you direct them, the way you prioritize their objectives, the route and the stages... (M43 Mişu Negriţoiu)

I have to consider the interests of: the "many", the whole collective, other institutions, shareholders – and not the interests of the individual. (M44 Dan Pascariu)

I think that this is why I enjoy being a manager: huge responsibilities, especially towards the subordinates, but also because I have to take decisions that influence the life of a person; but I have my moments when I dislike my "being a little God," especially when I have to fire someone. (M9 I.E)

...And it was very difficult, because when you let go of a person, you have to explain that he/she doesn't have the specific competences and he/she can't keep up; also, you have to give him/her feedback, make him/her understand why he/she's been let go. It is very difficult...but the moment someone makes a mistake, or steals... this I don't tolerate. (M2 Aliz Kosza)

When you have to sanction someone, the coercive measure has got to be very well motivated and explained. Regardless how you put it, this is the worst part in the activity of a manager. (M37 Emanoil Viciu)

You have to break up from various reasons. When I reach this conclusion, I feel the need "to sweeten the pill," to sweeten a bit that bitter pill. And when I let someone go, I always try to make it on good terms. (M44 Dan Pascariu)

Besides the role of manager, no other role is this accurately exemplified. If we were to create a hierarchy of identities associated to roles, the identity of managers seems to be on top at the studied managers. It is very true that being interviewed as managers they might have described more extensively the identity aspects related to management, but nevertheless, there are strong proofs in their discourse that

show that they choose the aspects related to management behaviour to the detriment of others (*see,* for example, family behaviour of managers – they spend little time at home, they consider chores or family vacations a great waste of time; or spare time behaviour – they do not have spare time and they do not want it; as soon as they arrive at home, they think about tomorrow's duties, etc.).

The studied managers have a positive image of themselves: they have remarkable school and professional results and remarkable personal abilities. As well, there are many signs that entitle me to conclude that they have a very high self-esteem. Whatever would be the definitions of self-esteem, however conceptualized, its dimensions and indicators can be identified in discourse and always reveal high self-esteem's level (*see* Table 5).

Table 5: Self-esteem at studied managers

- they have a good opinion of themselves		
- they are proud of themselves and of their achievements		
- they have the feeling that they are loved by the others		
- they have the sense of competence when resolving tasks		
- they have the sense of competence when resolving individual tasks		
- they trust themselves		
- they have and materialize the ideas they value	- they have become what they wanted; they feel fulfilled	
	- their life is just the way they wanted	
	- they do the things they like	
	- they have the job they ever wanted	- they work with pleasure
		- they give work a lot of time
		- they consider it highly important
- they have small discrepancies between the concept of the self and the ideal of the self	- they do not wish they were somebody else	
	- they do not wish to change themselves in the future	
	- those that do not have, wish for a future business of their own	- they have plans to remedy this issue
- they have few flaws	- they depreciate their negative attributes	
- are not embarrassed of their physical appearance		

4. Conclusion

I would like to explain in conclusion two observations that can be formulated on the basis of the results obtained in the research at hand: are these revealed identity's aspects proper to all managers, or are they characteristic to other people

that do not have a management position as well? And, can we consider as being truthful responder's discourses, or are we building identity specificities on the basis of some exaggerations/fabulations?

It is possible that the life circumstances in which the future managers lived and that made them what they have become, might not be special circumstances; it is also possible that some of identity's particularities at the studied managers might be mere universal characteristics. I think that many of those that did no become managers can easily identify in the discussed life circumstances, some of their own lives. Very much so as there are people with high self-esteem who are not managers.

Nonetheless, I think (this is a hunch worth being put to the test) that what really gives future managers specificity is, for example, the reaction they have to context, or medium. It is about their response strategy to the medium that is categorized in a scheme of personal development. I am not talking about subsequent interpretations of experiences with a potential for personal growth, but immediate responses through actions that bring forth learning and personal development. In other words, the studied managers not only interpret their life circumstances and their response to them as generating personal growth, but also act as a response to them in a way that is generating personal, social and professional potential.

For example, as a response to the not very plentiful medium in which they grew, the future managers take responsibilities and start working from an early age. They do not lose the occasion to learn from their „teachers", they do not let life lessons administered by their parents or teachers get easily by them. They move from one job to another, from one activity to another, in a search of a better salary – consciously deserving it, of personal recognition, but mostly in the search of an appealing job description, of bigger and bigger responsibilities. Most of managers start with a humiliating job description, situated under their field of competence and ability; but even so, they learn something from each work they carry out and they are motivated by each promotion. Managers are very rational even in relation to others: they seek the company of those offering – which grow their self-trust and through which they satisfy their need of being admired.

Of course, each of the hypothetical decisions resulted from this study remain to be tested in quantitative studies, statistically representative.

When it comes to the truth of subject's discourse, qualitative researches pay little interest in the message the interviewed subjects convey in their „fabulations" or „embellishments of reality". What is of real interest is the interpretation of their discourse. It is not very important, as well, if my subjects really were leaders of their groups when they were children; it is of interest the fact that my subjects considered this aspect – or its invention – relevant. Most probably, they wanted to demonstrate that they actually possessed leadership abilities from an early age, that the leadership ability manifested from an early age. This is actually the way

responders explain their own evolution, and all I am interested in – as a qualitative researcher – is their own perception and not the „truth".

As well, it is not important if my subjects actually have charisma, if they truly do not have regrets, or if they are loyal etc, but it is of great importance what they wanted to convey when they say these things about themselves. I have read stories of people's lives that were not of Romanian origin – but American or Israeli and I have read stories of people's lives that were not managers – but teachers, priests or artists. None of those stories resembled in any way those of my subjects. And it is not of great importance how honest was each of the responders, but the pattern that resulted from the data analysis. Managers tell different things about themselves in a different way, and this is what gives them uniqueness and expresses their identity, not the truth in their words.

Not trying to exaggerate the role of qualitative research in general, I conclude in a manner that I think would be appreciated by quantitative researchers: qualitative research offers genuinely interesting ideas and hypotheses to be tested in larger quantitative studies. I insist, though, on the role of qualitative research in the study of identity. It gives me the opportunity to observe the complexity, the richness and the „beauty" of identity's characteristics so obtained. They are nowhere near comparison with the schematic, indifferent, out-of-the-context information that results from tests, scales and inventories or from other quantitative instruments of data collection in general.

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