

MULTIPLASTICITY: A GROUNDED THEORY OF GRADUATE'S ADAPTATION TO ANEMPLOYMENT

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Abstract

Worldwide, changes in labour markets have brought out new types of work arrangements. Simultaneously, the number of Portuguese higher education (HE) graduates increased, representing 15% of the working population (Pordata, 2014). The experience of work alternating precarious relations and unemployment is a reality in Portuguese graduate's careers which we reframed as *anemployment* construct. The purpose of this study was to generate a theory on how graduates deal with anemployment, using Grounded Theory approach. Twenty semi-structured interviews on professional life story and anemployment were systematically coded in Nvivo software. Multiplasticizing is the core category in our findings and so, four different anemployment profiles emerged: Embracing anemployment, Accepting anemployment, Enduring anemployment and Fighting anemployment. These profiles have implication in HE policies and employability programs for graduates.

Key-words: Multiplasticity, higher education graduates, anemployment

Introduction

Psychology is increasingly aware of how new work relations affects the lives of human beings. Labour flexibility, job insecurity and quality of work life are currently ideological focus of political debate in Europe, also addressed in the Constitution for the European Union Treaty draft (Urban e Velo, 2005). Labour markets are changing and the two biggest players involved – workers and organizations – are constantly trying to adapt. However, difficulties arise in conceptualizing this “phase in history and organizing the transition from one social order to another, especially against a background of widespread globalization” (Urban e Velo, 2005).

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These labour market transformations influence people's and organization's ways to maintain labour bonds and brought out new work relations that do not fit the classical polarity employment-unemployment, also called as 'shades of grey' (Eurofound, 2012b) which include several designations, for example, precarious, flexible, contingent or atypical work relations.

Simultaneously, a worldwide massification of higher education (HE) is occurring. In Portugal, in particular, the number of HE students graduating each year has more than quadrupled: in 1991, 18.671 graduated and in 2012, the number rose to 81.410. Currently, HE graduates represents 15% of the Portuguese population within working age (Pordata, 2014).

Facing new patterns in human experience, science must reformulate and study phenomena from a new point of view and an employment studies aim to do that, since one can always be a worker in a multitude of labour relations available in each country, but being an employee, with an employer and a stable work contract, is becoming less common.

The research focus has evolved to study related phenomena: unemployment (Jahoda, 1981; Fryer, 1986; Glyptis, 1989), psychological contracts (Rousseau, 1997), boundaryless careers (Arthur e Rousseau, 1996), flexicurity (Klammer, 2005), portfolio workers (Handy, 2006), employee-organization relationships (EOR) (Coyle-Shapiro e Shore, 2007), job insecurity (Burchell, 2005; Cesário e Feijão, 2014), job insecurity climate (Cuyper *et al.*, 2009), contingent work (Chambel e Fontinha, 2009), flexible and atypical work (Nienhueser, 2005), precarious work (Kalleberg, 2012) and an immense diverse terminology and range of study that seek to comprehend how the market changes affect workers.

Nevertheless, few studies focus on HE graduates, few approach the subject from a psychological and phenomenological point of view (instead, research approaches social and organizational impacts), and few take into account these experiences with the lenses of involuntariness: the majority of these workers wants an employment contract.

To redirect and reframe this area of research we proposed the construct of anemployment (a neologism composed by the word 'employment' to which is added the negation prefix, an- [an-employment]), explored and defined as the experience of work, throughout one's career, alternating atypical work arrangements of several types and moments of unemployment, most prominently in HE graduates (Araújo e Jordão, 2011; Araújo et al., 2014; Araújo, 2015). To be in this situation, HE graduates don't want to be entrepreneurs and still wish to attain employment. Research on anemployment started with a case study using qualitative data analysis, which described in detail, impacts of precarious work and unemployment in Portuguese graduates (Araújo, 2009; Araújo e Jordão, 2011). Later, Araújo, Jordão and Castro (In Press) conducted a worldwide integrative literature review on impacts of precarious work relations and impacts of unemployment in HE graduates concluding that, although not intentionally, some investigations already approached simultaneously the effects of precarious work and effects of unemployment in graduates. Recently, Araújo,

Jordão and Castro (2015a) conducted a quantitative descriptive study with 170 Portuguese graduates in order to describe the work relations and experiences throughout their careers. In the study, graduates had experienced in average 4 kinds of different work bounds. At last, a descriptive qualitative study by Araújo, Jordão and Castro (2015b) with 9 interviews generated over 60 categories of analysis using Nvivo Software and described the effects of anemployment and strategies graduates use to deal with it.

Now, in this paper, we aim to present a grounded theory (GT) on how Portuguese graduates are dealing with anemployment.

Method

Founders of GT defined it as “the discovery of theory from the data – systematically obtained and analysed in social research” (Glaser e Strauss, 1967). Anemployment research is incipient -since it is an emerging construct- hence, GT is the ideal methodology to approach complex phenomena and “to understand the process by which actors construct meaning out of intersubjective experience” (Suddaby, 2006) which is the case of anemployment. Therefore, the research question that guided the study was: How do graduates deal with anemployment?

Participants

Twenty HE graduates from distinct scientific areas participated. Overall, participants are predominantly female and childless, 10 are married/cohabiting and 10 are single and with an average age of 32.06 (± 5.57).

Concerning academic levels, we categorized participants according to the European Qualifications Framework (European Commission, 2015) which comprises 8 academic/qualifications levels (HE graduates fit in level 6, 7 or 8). Thirteen of the graduates in our study had level 6 (degree), five had level 7 (master degree) and two had level 8 (PhD).

Regarding professional experience, participants had, in average 8.51 (± 4.96) years of experience after graduation.

Data collection

In GT, the “process of data collection is controlled by the emerging theory” (Glaser e Strauss, 1967), so the GT principle of theoretical sampling was always present in raising and selecting participants throughout data collection process. The two criteria had to be cumulatively met by participants: to be a HE graduate and to have experienced anemployment. Then, we sampled theoretical relevant cases, for example, graduates in different scientific areas, geographical districts, ages, marital status, years of experience, number and type of work relations experienced and other diverse work experiences.

The purposes of the study and anemployment concept were explained

before the interview started. The final script contained four core sections: (1) tell me your professional history; (2) which are anemployment effects in your life?; (3) Which strategies did you use to deal with those effects?; (4) finally, the interviewees were invited to offer insight on the phenomenon, giving suggestions and closing up the interview.

Interviews were scheduled and held on dates, times and locations compatible with participant's availability and preferences. Participants signed a Free and Informed consent, with the possibility to choose fictional names for themselves and employers.

Audio-recorded semi-structured interviews were conducted over a period of approximately one year. Data collection ended after achieving theoretical saturation as "saturation means that it is increasingly unlikely that collecting more data will help you develop your grounded theory any further" (Gibson e Hartman, 2014). At interview number 18, theoretical saturation seemed to be attained, but two more interviews were collect to confirm that fact.

Data Analysis

Interviews were fully transcribed, imported to NVivo *software* and following classic GT methodology (Glaser e Strauss, 1967), constant comparative method was used in data generation, data analysis and coding. The first researcher was the sole interviewer, transcriber and coder of the data, which represented an advantage throughout coding, conceptualization and abduction process. Two other trustworthiness techniques were used following recommendations from Whitemore *et al.* (2001): (i) Peer debriefing. Specific thematic meetings were held with two senior researchers, (co-authors); (ii) Data triangulation (time, space and person), investigator triangulation and theory triangulation (Patton, 2015).

Initially, interviews were read thoroughly and coded and 61 categories were generated. Aggregating them into larger conceptual categories was the next task: similarities and differences were analyzed resulting in nine conceptual categories: four related to anemployment effects, four concerning strategies and at last, the core category was identified.

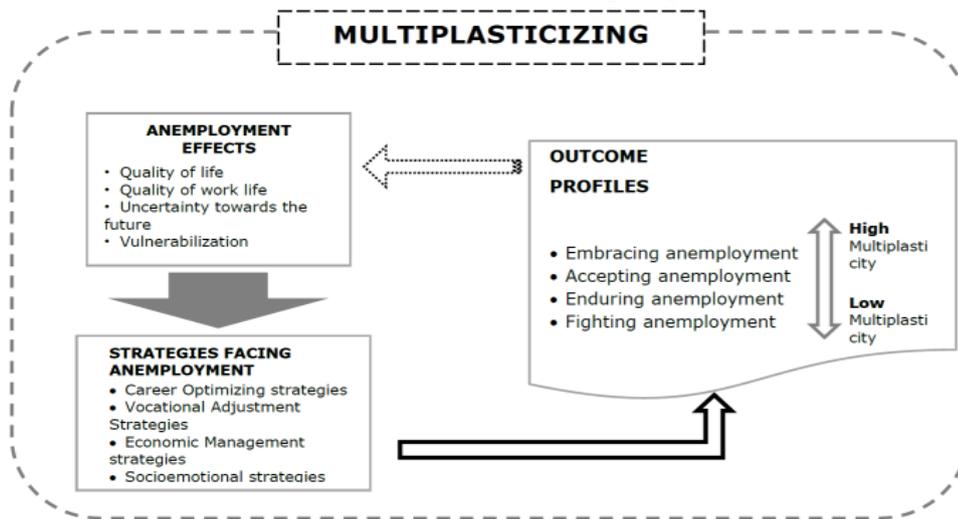
Results: The Theory of Multiplasticity facing anemployment

The purpose of this research was to develop a theory on how graduates are dealing with anemployment. In this section, we use a diagram to illustrate the full scope of the theory (Figure 1.) which is an effective and rich instrument of presenting GT, recommended by its founders (Glaser e Strauss, 1967). Then, we present the major conceptual categories and, at last, we bind together the theory explaining the core category.

Since "in discovering theory, one generates conceptual categories or their properties from evidence, then the evidence from which the category emerged is used to illustrate the concept" (Glaser e Strauss, 1967), we will use direct quotations from participants (each one will be identified by the inter-

view number [e.g. interviewee number one will be identified by the acronym (I.1)].

Figure 1: Multiplasticizing: A Grounded Theory on how Graduates deal with anemployment



Overall, theory postulates that anemployment affects graduate's lives in so many areas, that graduate's way to cope was the development multiplasticity, using several and distinct strategies to deal with those effects.

In the diagram we use solid arrows to represent direct relations, and dashed to refer to indirect relations. In sum: HE Graduates perceive a lot of effects or impacts of anemployment in their lives and to deal with those impacts, they use several kinds of strategies that constitute different profiles. Overtime, depending on each profile they fit, they will perceive new or the same effects in new ways and adjust strategies, and this becomes a dynamic process of adjusting and adapting to anemployment: they multiplasticize.

Anemployment effects

Four major categories of perceived effects of anemployment emerged from the data: Effects on Quality of life (QOL), Effects on Quality of work Life (QOWL), Uncertainty towards the future and Vulnerabilization.

Effects on Quality of life (QOL)

Quality of life is a well-developed conceptual construct in social sciences (Drobic, Beham & Prag, 2010) . Although GT often uses new constructs, if an existing construct fits, works and as explanatory power, it is adequate to used it (Glaser e Strauss, 1967). So, we choose the conceptualization of QOL from the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) which embodies experiences of European citizens, since it is based on the European Quality of Life Survey which is "an established tool for documenting and analyzing quality of life in the EU" (Eurofound, 2012a).

Some of categories relating to employment and work emerged from the

data, but were conceptualized in a separate construct, Quality of life at Work (so, in this paper, they will be presented separately).

Graduates reported several effects of unemployment in their quality of life, which we assembled into three main categories: (i) Family; (ii) well-being and (iii) work-life balance. In the subcategory Family, graduates experiencing unemployment report having to depend on others, social relations affected and spending more time with their families (either in moments of unemployment either because of precarious partial-time jobs). Depending on others was the most coded subcategory: Interviewee 11 states "it comprises a lot of things, even in a marriage! Because...when a person depends on others, conflicts appear and we feel like 'if I had a stable job this wouldn't be like this, isn't it?'

Effects on well-being comprises seven different subcategories: fear of unemployment, increasing self-knowledge, loss of professional identity, feeling unuseful, self-blame and doubting their skills, stigma of being unemployed or precarious worker, worsening of mental health and worsening of physical health. Overall, graduates are experiencing negative feelings (stress, anxiety, anger, frustration) because of unemployment. A graduate stated: "It comes a time when this situation puts us in the situation and thinking...: do I really have value? Am I really competent? (I10). Another graduated said: "All this instability, how is it going to be this year, will I make it, where will I go, will I be near or far, will I be able to pay all the bills, will I come home often, or...will I have work? It will be very difficult, the anguish is too big, the stress it's too much!"(I1). The only positive state of well-being which emerged was the increasing self-knowledge, as I.16 stated: "I usually say that, most of all, I think that... in the end, I went along discovering myself...".

Lastly, effects on work-life balance were endorsed by four female participants: "I sent resumes (...) everywhere and had some interviews out of town, some of them asked to work at night, but with my daughter, it was difficult because I didn't have anyone to leave her with and so, I gave up finding a job in my field of graduation. I decided to find any job" (I11).

Effects on Quality of work Life (QOWL)

QOWL has become an important policy issue at European level since the inclusion of the indicators in the European Employment Strategy in 2001 (Drobnic *et al.*, 2010). Since Eurofound also studies QOWL through the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) we used their terminology (Eurofound, 2010). Effects on quality of life at work was the most coded subcategory and generated six subcategories: career prospects, economic and remuneration effects, job demanding and job stressful, job satisfaction, job security and contractual relations and Skills development. Generally, graduates effects on QOWL are characterized by economic instability, added taxes and expenses, few career prospects and the willingness to accept precarious or overqualified work. Two graduates said: "It is unfair, no doubts, that it is unfair and it brings us an enormous insecurity" (I3); "the negative part that I can think right now

is the taxes issues ...hum...we pay social contributions, IRS (Income Revenue Service), etc. (...) so the financial impacts are very relevant (I2).

Graduate's expectations defraudation was one of the most endorsed sub categories. Participants stated: "It's ... a frustration, having studied and worked so hard... worked, in books, burned eyelashes as people say, and not feeling rewarded, right? (...) it is a bit demoralizing because a person invests, invests, invests and then...doesn't have what we wanted, isn't it? (I12); "This is not what I expected. I am a bit frustrated. I like everything I did and I learn something, but I would like to work in my area and all doors are closed." (I18).

Nevertheless, graduates identified positive aspects of anemployment, for example, job satisfaction and recognition: "the positive side... it's that I really like what I do... and that's why I strive and still try, year after year, because if I didn't like what I do, which is teaching, I wouldn't submit myself so much" (I1); "I met a lot of people, I worked with a lot of well-known people and my experience over the years that I was working in that company was fantastic. I learned a lot!" (I3).

Uncertainty towards the future

Uncertainty towards the future, in our theory, can be defined as feeling uncertain and incapable of planning ahead and has three different areas: Incapacity to plan the future and get independence; Personal instability and Postponing other life projects (Marriage, maternity or paternity, travelling, buying a house, and others).

Graduates expected that studying longer and obtaining a degree would grant them a stable career and economic stability and since this didn't happened they now feel uncertainty facing their future: "I know I can't take that a leap ...all is stagnated. Because, in order to have a personal life, I need to have a professional one...I might not say stable, but at the least comfortable". (I4). Another graduate stated: "I can't plan anything in the present circumstances!" (I19). Talking about instability, a 32 years old graduate, with over 10 years of experience, states: "For better or worse I have been able to get some jobs... but it's complicated to live in this instability!? In my age ...its already many years living this" (I1).

Vulnerabilization

Overall, anemployed graduates are becoming a vulnerable group: they are overqualified for the jobs available, they depend from family and welfare, and official organisms do not understand the particularities of being *anemployed* (one of the reasons that lead us to go forward with this research).

Nine subcategories were grounded in the data: accrued difficulties due to accumulating jobs, corporate exploitation, depending on welfare, devalorization of academic work experience, discrimination, exclusivity in precarious work, inadequate solutions from official organisms, over-experienced and overqualified and overeducated.

Corporate exploitation was the most coded subcategory. Graduates feel that Portuguese companies are taking advantage of them (through low wages, multiple internships, work overload, etc.) and escaping organizational and fiscal duties, as a graduate said “the government should fiscally oversee if these companies really have professionals (...) or if there are false contracts isn’t it? The company hires, than dismisses the professional...than hires them again, then dismisses again?!” (I13). As another graduate refers, employability programs are becoming another way to exploit graduates: “there are many companies that do that: they ask for a graduate to do an internship, and then they send them away and others come”(I20). Regarding overqualification, I.9 said: “Yes, yes, an employer already told me that I had too many qualifications...and it is really bad to ear that!”.

Strategies facing anemployment

Confronted with anemployment effects, graduates used four major categories of strategies: career optimizing strategies, vocational adjustment strategies, economic management strategies and socioemotional strategies.

Career optimizing strategies

Graduates use actively career optimizing strategies facing anemployment: rethinking their career, accumulating multiple jobs, networking, searching incessantly for new opportunities, elevating educational levels and qualifications and giving their best at work. Interviewee 3 stated: “I want to work, I don’t want to be inactive, I want to be active, because to stop is to die. In my scientific area or in any other, all I want is to work. All the opportunities I had, I grabbed them! I never refused a job, never (...) because my strategy was “I’ll accept anything; the important thing is not to stop” (I3). Another graduate said: “I do the best I can, the best I know to give my best in every situation at every moment. To take in, to learn as much as possible with people around us at that moment” (I7).

At some point in their careers, 15 of our 20 participants had multiple jobs simultaneously and 16 graduates reported that being more available to move geographically has a way to find work: “I sent résumés and spontaneous applications every week! Every week I searched the internet, to see what was new, sent everywhere, all proposals, all job advertisements, either five or 500 kilometers from home, I applied to all... and I never got an answer! (I3); “At one time I accumulated job number 1, 2 and 3, and I was running around from one place to the other!” (I16).

On the other hand, graduates also are starting to put aside their degree and accepting any job since ‘forgetting that one has a degree’ is also a strategy: “I started to ‘forget’ that I had a Law degree and started to accept every job offer that came along!” (I18).

Vocational adjustment Strategies

Participants use several vocational adjustment strategies to deal with an employment: readjusting meanings of unemployment and precarity, reformulating work centrality in one's life, mediating expectations and making less plans, advising next generations to avoid HE or go abroad, increasing personal management and keeping oneself occupied.

Increased personal management is a strategy clearly associated with an employment: if you have multiples jobs, or if you can't predict when or where you will have work, and if you have added taxes, you have to upgrade your personal management skills. A graduate stated: "There was a time when I was teaching, and I also gave private tutoring, I collaborated in a center...the classes...I have my thesis to finish, so, I remember that, in those times I said...the tolerance between activities was 15 to 30 minutes! (...) I things scheduled and I had a 15 minutes or so between each one! I couldn't live without an appointment book!" (15);

Regarding mediating expectations, a graduate said: "the point is that I had to stop being so...I had to mediate my expectation so that they weren't so high, meaning...I had to know how to wait, what I expected from the situation was year to year (...) so these ten years have been a redesign and re-evaluation of what I want and the expectations I have" (11).

Economic management strategies

Three economic management strategies emerged: fiscal and juridical and political awareness and knowledge, greater economic planning and control and tax and social benefits avoidance, as a few graduates state: "In the last few years, last 2 years I had to have an enormous financial control because money, my income has declined significantly" (12); "Other than the house loan, I didn't contract any more debts and so I think everything is done with more careful" (17).

The tax and social benefits avoidance category is described by participants, not only in their perspective, but also in the organizations perspective: amongst innumerable strategies used, the illegal work (informal economy) continues to exist. A statement from a graduate illustrates this category and, simultaneously refers to other categories in this study, like loss of social benefits, low wages, etc.: "The Company proposed that I stayed there...but illegally (...) and so, I worked full-time, with no rights to holidays, no food allowance, nothing, no social benefits. Only the 400 euros per month"(19).

Socioemotional strategies

Graduates used socioemotional strategies to cope with an employment: enhancing positive aspects, keeping hope and optimism, gratitude for what one has, practicing activities to manage anxiety (sports, yoga, etc.), readjusting emotions and philosophy of life and social support. Three graduates mentioned: "I had to live with what I had ... to appreciate what I have every day ... to

grasp every opportunity as if it was the last, as if tomorrow you do wouldn't have another one (I3); "I think the secret exactly that: I mean, going on living the experiences with optimism and... in a positive way, without dramatizing, because if we stop to think like, it is really is dramatic..." (I7); "I think I became calmer over time... all these negative events forced me to really calm down, to make long-term decisions because... the short-term... I know that the decision was the same and I just couldn't get stressed!"(I4).

Multiplasticizing: the core category

All of these strategies facing anemployment effects led us to conceptualize our core category. Human beings have always adapted to changes in their environment but the swift and challenging labour market defies graduates to a new, all-around, always alert, kind of adaptive behaviour: Multiplasticity.

The core category in GT methodology "is the centerpiece of the model, an abstraction that represents the main theme of the research" (Mewborn, 2005) and it's based on "the reconceptualizing and often based on a creative leap" (Isabella, 1990). Since gerunds are advised in describing concepts that emerge from a grounded theory (Russell, 2014) we choose to name the core category multiplasticizing, to illustrate the social process of graduate's ability to adapt in multiple areas when facing anemployment (in some situations, we use the noun multiplasticity).

Evolutionary scientists confirmed that throughout human life history, adaptation has been an essential mechanism of survival and it became a central concept in psychology, anthropology, sociology, geography and in many fields of biology (Simonet, 2010). The notion that human development manifests the capacity for plasticity is also widely embraced by developmental and neuro psychologists (Belsky e Pluess, 2009). Nevertheless, the concept hasn't been introduced into career and organizational psychology and now emerges as the core category in our work.

Simonet (2010) calls plasticity the real adaptive capacity of life and in a detailed review he defines it as the property of the any system that is susceptible to adapt in a coherent and autonomous manner in order to respond to internal and external stress.

Multiplasticity, the core category in this research, is the capacity of adapting to labor market changes and continuous transformations, by adjusting all areas of life, using adaptive strategies of multiple kinds. So, Multiplasticizing is the dynamic process which graduates are developing to adapt, mold and use all kinds of strategies to survive in the new labor market, without giving up hope to achieve a stable employment.

Facing Anemployment: Multiplasticity profiles

Individual may vary in their capacity of multiplasticizing, and so we went back to the data and reanalyze it considering several levels of Multiplasticity, from high to low, and so, four different profiles emerged.

Profile I: *'Embracing anemployment'*: Embracing anemployment means that some graduates are recognizing positive aspects of alternating precarity with unemployment and even preferring these experiences, emerging as a new kind of workers. Graduates perceive and acknowledge some negative effects, but they emphasize on positive effects.

Similar profiles have been described in history, for example, the Japanese 'Freeter' (フリーター *furītā*) which, in Japanese, originally included highly educated young people who deliberately chose not to become salary-men, even though jobs were available at the time (Gennari e Albuquerque, 2013). They value free time, liberty and embrace precariousness, working only when they need money. An akin concept, the 'jobbers', was presented by Gorz (1997) observing new realities in Europe, where workers no longer aspired for a permanent employment, and stepped away from the 'rat race' and sought new values and trajectories. To "achieve this, workers develop adjusting strategies to precarity, managing periods of work and non-work, occupying productively during leisure time and adjusting consumption dynamics" (Gennari e Albuquerque, 2013).

Profile II: *'Accepting anemployment'*: accepting anemployment profile is characterized by a graduate's attitude of acceptance of this new work reality in the Portuguese labor market. They are able to see some positive aspects, but they want a classic permanent employment contract. Graduates with this profile, attribute the appearance of anemployment to a market phase or cycle and to the economic crisis and they are understanding of the situation and are confident and hopeful that it will pass, thus, they are waiting for better days to come and to full-employment to return.

Profile III: *'Enduring anemployment'*: Graduates with this profile do not see positive aspects at all and see anemployment as negative for all areas of their lives. They maintain a passive position, making tremendous efforts, and hoping that it will pass but they feel severe effects on their lives: Anger, frustration and dissatisfaction are the core feelings of graduates who are enduring anemployment.

Profile IV: *'Fighting anemployment'*: Some graduates are angry, frustrated and feel their lives have been very negatively affected. They studied and worked hard and they desperately want a stable employment situation. They blame the economic crises but mainly they blame Portuguese governments and employability measures and they feel this is a horrible state of employability for graduates, which must be fought. Graduates in Profile IV are actively trying to end all forms of work that doesn't fit in classic employment contract and all social benefits associated with it. These are also the graduates that may maintain an active position, and be involved in active social movements to fight these changes.

Discussion

To discuss findings, we will visit several studies in related areas, namely, unemployment, precarious work and others.

European research has showed that job insecurity, pressure at work, difficulties in work-life balance, long commuting time per day, low career prospects affect quality of life (Drobnic *et al.*, 2010). The same study revealed that amongst 15 European countries, Portugal has high levels of perceived adverse conditions at work and high job insecurity, demanding and stressful jobs and low perceived quality of life at work, which affects quality of life.

Depending on others, one of the most endorsed subcategories, seems to be an effect present in many European's lives, as a recent report of the European Commission (2014) states: "this principle of family solidarity represents the absolute point of reference in Spain, Portugal and Greece. Many of the unemployed we interviewed returned to live with their parents. Some even admitted to living on a parent's retirement or disability pension" (2014).

On the other hand, uncertainty facing the future and graduate's vulnerabilization are new contributions of our study.

Work sociology has discussed similar ideas to vulnerabilization, namely Castel (1998), which defined four different stages of social exclusion: (a) integration; (b) vulnerabilization, (c) assistance and (d) disaffiliation. Graduates fit in the vulnerability zone, which the author described as being in expansion and including unemployed people and groups with specific vulnerabilities, for example, precarious workers (Castel, 1998).

Graduates are becoming a new vulnerable population: overeducated, overqualified, and exploited by companies, for example, with accrued work overload which European studies have confirmed "Another emerging issue is intensification of work. Employees in all countries experience demanding and stressful work but more affluent societies are confronted with an additional issue: increasing time pressure and intensification of work" (Drobnic *et al.*, 2010)

Vulnerabilization of Portuguese graduates affects all political and social life and relates directly to their citizenship and social participation as European citizens (Rodrigues, 2000)

Besides vulnerable, graduates are also uncertain towards the future. The "inherently interdisciplinary nature of uncertainty" (Smithson, 2008) is undebatable. According to the author, psychology, behavioral economics, management science, risk management, philosophy, neuroscience, environmental science and political science are some of the scientific areas devoted to study human uncertainty. Uncertainty research has been linked with decision-making models, which until some years ago, only too into account cognitive explanations, but "we do not just think we are uncertain, we also feel uncertain" (Smithson, 2008) and so, Damásio (1994) brought emotions back onto center stage of this study. In psychological approaches, uncertainty has been a concept in career planning and counselling and new strategies like 'positive uncertainty' have been introduced into counselling practices (Gelatt, 1989).

In previous case studies instability and incapacity to plan the future were also confirmed (Araújo e Jordão, 2011) and several studies have described si-

milar findings: workers are postponing marriage and having children (Alves *et al.*, 2011). A Swiss study provides evidence for long-term consequences of employment uncertainty showing that an increase in employment uncertainty causes people to abandon their intention to have a child (Hanappi *et al.*, 2014).

Facing all these effects, graduates multiplasticize, adopting a large and diverse set of adaptive strategies.

Throughout several decades, research on unemployment coping strategies has been abundant (Jahoda, 1981; Mcfayden, 1995; Waters, 2000) but on coping with precarious work arrangements is scarce.

Some of our findings are confirmed from previous research on unemployment: Anemployed graduates use social support, active job search, coping through leisure and changing their behaviour and philosophy of life to deal with the problem (Araújo, 2009). A report from the European Commission named "Facing the crisis: The coping strategies of unemployed people in Europe" (European Commission, 2014) confirms that several strategies our graduates used, are also been used by unemployed Europeans.

Regarding to economic management strategies, the report states that European are learning to live with less, searching cheaper products and avoiding debts and credits: "Controlling all daily expenses after making heavy sacrifices, at the same time keeping away from banking institutions, enables people to cope with spiralling debt, something that almost always leads to mental distress" (European Commission, 2014). The same report confirms that European are avoiding taxes, keeping alive the informal economy. Both these findings also emerged in our research. Our main discovery in regards to economic management strategies is the increased fiscal and juridical and political awareness and knowledge: due to the instability and multiple kinds of work relations they experience, anemployed graduates have to be permanently aware of new legislation and constantly changing fiscal laws.

Some socioemotional strategies have always been used to cope with life events. For example, social support has been a fundamental strategy to cope with unemployment (Mcfayden, 1995). Our graduate's emotional strategies are overall characterized by being positive instead of negative, so, we may understand them as a type of savoring strategy, which was first used by Bryant (1989) and it can be described as the ability to appreciate, savor and intensify positive life experiences. Other than social support and trying to keep hope and optimism which was a confirmed strategy facing unemployment in previous research (Author, 2011) new strategies emerged that represent new contributions.

Participants are using vocational adjustment strategies, like readjusting of unemployment and precarity that had previously been approached by other authors: since this stigma affects the person identity, individuals often use other ways of reframing self-categorizations (Mcfayden, 1995). Other cognitive strategies, for example reformulating work centrality in one's life, maybe related to savoring strategies referred.

At last, regarding career optimizing strategies, pursuing further studies,

learning to wait for better opportunities, maximize the work experience that one has at the moment has been used by Greek graduates facing unemployment and precarious arrangements to try to escalate to better jobs (Karamesini, 2010) which our findings confirm.

Active job search is becoming a common strategy: “The unemployed we surveyed were generally observed to take a very active approach to the job search. Very few were so discouraged that they gave up” (European Commission, 2014). And our findings regarding networking strategies, is confirmed by the same report: “The tendency to tap one’s personal network has increased during the crisis, particularly in Portugal and Romania” (European Commission, 2014).

Our findings suggest a blossoming of new strategies that literature didn’t refer so far, for example, accumulating multiple jobs, actively network, to forget that one has a degree and availability to go abroad or accept jobs away from home.

The multiplasticity that graduates are developing partially explains several phenomena that have been rising in Portugal: overqualified work (hence lower wages), graduates going abroad, reduction in birth rate and marriages, rise of informal economy, and all of these represent social issues in need of attention. But our focus is psychological, and so, HE graduates are multiplasticizing as they can to deal with an employment, regardless of the impacts this may have on the economic, fiscal and social Portuguese life.

With the changing labor markets and work relationships, graduates are fighting a battle, and to do so, they have equipped themselves with a new property: multiplasticity. They juggle an employment effects in their lives and apply all-around strategies to adapt and survive.

William James (1890) in his book ‘The Principles of Psychology’ was the first to introduce the word ‘plasticity’ defining it as the susceptibility of human behavior to modify. Neuroplasticity was confirmed in the 1960’s and refers to the brain’s ability to adapt as a result of experience (before that, researchers believed that changes in the brain only took place during childhood and that in adulthood the brain’s physical structure was permanent).

So, to discuss the emerging anemployment profiles, we can see them through two different lenses: either we assume that full-employment is the norm or we view full employment was an aberration in economic cycles, and assume that other work arrangements and relations (new and similar to old ones) are the future.

Regarding this matter, Wallman (2004) states:

“The optimistic view is that full employment will come back when industry “recovers”, and all will be well when it does. This view neglects the fact that the massive economic growth that sustained full employment is more likely to have been the aberration of a couple of decades than the beginning of an endlessly progressive upward curve”. (Wallman, 2004).

So, if we adopt the view that full-employment will come back and that anemployment is a phase, graduates with Profile IV, are more adjusted to the reality and will help full-employment to return, since they are contributing for that to happen.

On the other hand, if we subscribe to the view that full-employment was a merely phase (which is ending), then graduates with profile I are the most adapted ones, since they are preparing themselves for the end of employment.

Since generating GT means that usually, in the end, another hypotheses arise (Glaser e Strauss, 1967), we hypothesize that the second view is the more adequate: these work arrangements, flexible, precarious or other designations, are here to stay and full-employment will not return, on the contrary, it will most likely decrease. Henceforth, in the sense of evolutionary theory which defends "survival of the fittest", graduates adopting profile I, who have higher levels of Multiplasticity, may become the best adapted, multiplasticizing more and, consequently, adjusting more effectively and maintaining a better quality of life in general.

Conclusions

The main conclusion of this research is that graduates are employing extreme efforts and diverse strategies to adapt to the new work reality, process which we conceptualized as Multiplasticizing.

These results have implications on HE policies and employability programs for graduates which we will address in the next section. On the other hand, these findings seem to uncover a 'cobra effect' in Portuguese employability programs and graduates labour market.

The cobra effect was originally described in British rule of colonial India, where government offered a bounty for every dead cobra, in order to stop the epidemic of cobras. Initially, the initiative was successful but soon, some people started to breed cobras for the income. When incentives were ended, cobra breeders set snakes free and the cobra population increased further.

The economist Siebert (2001) book described that the cobra effect occurs when an attempted or apparent solution to a problem actually makes the problem worse, using the term specifically to illustrate the causes of incorrect stimulation in economy and politics. Later, a similar economic law was described: the law of unintended consequences (Norton, 2015).

Programs promoting graduate's employability have been a central point in Portuguese politics in the last years. But the cobra effect is here: instead of fighting precarity, these programs generate more. Instead of an incentive to hire graduates, Portuguese companies view this as an opportunity to have cheap qualified workers and so, they hire one graduate after another, that rarely end up with a stable work contract, situation that has been observed in other countries (Wallman, 2004).

Limitations, practical implications and future research

Unemployment, precarious work and anemployment in HE graduates is a recent phenomenon, and so, specific investigations with HE graduates are rare and it is urgent to research further. On the other hand, it is important to research anemployment in other academic levels. In our research, findings are limited to Portuguese graduates. Several European countries (and even many other ones) are experiencing these market changes and new approaches must be thought to implement graduates employability programs.

In terms of practical implications, regardless of the evolutionary lenses we adopt, graduates that fit in profiles I and II demonstrate an entrepreneurial mindset and so employability interventions could redirect them to entrepreneurship programs since many authors, for example, Strauss (2011), at the World Entrepreneurship Forum in Singapore, that defend that “only entrepreneurship can save the world”.

Regarding profiles III and IV, career counseling has to change. Almost twenty years ago, many new theoretical views on career guidance (CG) emerged, including Savickas (1997) who defended that increasing a client's career adaptability is a central goal in CG. Graduates need new CG programs that include promotion of new skills, for example, risk and uncertainty management, adaptation skills and entrepreneurial skills. These programs might be held by HE institutions and public and other services promoting employability.

At last, regarding Portuguese official organisms that deal directly with employment vocational training, employment statistics and similar issues, there is a need to change their approach: on one hand because there is solid evidence that many employability programs fail to promote professional insertion and, on the other hand, because the classical polarity employed-unemployed is no longer adequate (Wallman, 2004) and many workers are being excluded from the social scenery and misunderstood by the official organisms, often losing social benefits and other rights because they do not fit in that polarity.

Our study is a first step in research on anemployment. Substantive theory is a strategic link in the formulation and generation of grounded formal theory: it is necessary to start the formal theory from a substantive one (Glaser e Strauss, 1967) and so, this work may be the departure point to a formal theory on graduate's multiplasticity facing anemployment or even a formal theory on new career counselling approaches.

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