

Young Diplomats' Socialization to the Networked Professional Cultures of Their Workplace Communities

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Abstract The purpose of the present investigation was to examine young diplomats' socialization to the professional expert culture of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland over a six-month on-job training period, as part of their preparation for service in the diplomatic corps. Using social network analysis, we analyzed departments' internal social structures, prevailing social relations, and the young diplomats' role and position in the networks of knowledge acquisition, practical know-how, and professional collaboration. Data collected by contextual event sampling and theme interviews and analyzed by qualitative content analysis were used to characterize the young diplomats' personal social support networks, resources obtained, as well as associated reflections regarding their functioning in and socialization to the departmental workplace community. The results indicated that across the six-month training period, the young diplomats became involved to the workplace communities' networked expertise and were socialized to its expert culture, even if their achieved networking positions differed. The results revealed differences between levels of collective operational practices in the workplace communities as well as the nature of assignments in which the young diplomats participated and for which they were responsible. It was proposed that these differences mirrored distinction between expansive natures of young diplomats' workplace communities as learning environments.

Keywords Socialization · Networked expertise · Diplomatic training · Personal social networks · Social network analysis

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Abbreviations

- DTC The Training Course in International Affairs for Newly Recruited Diplomats
MFAF the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

Introduction

The purpose of the present study is to examine the nature of professional socialization. Toward that end, we examine the interdependence between newcomers' participation in networking structures and social practices of their professional community and their active cultivation of personal agency (Billett 2006). Such relational processes play a crucial role in enabling newcomers to become central actors within a workplace community rather than go through a slow, gradual transition from the periphery to the center of professional activity. At the beginning of their careers, new employees often simultaneously go through the processes of organizational and professional socialization. Organizational socialization is characterized as a process through which a new employee appropriates the organization's operational models, practices, and procedures; his or her professional roles and positions in the organization and the culture of the workplace. As well he or she gets to know its institutional memory, i.e., the organization's knowledge capital, information resources, and experience that are stored in the social networks (Ashforth et al. 2007; Coleman 1988; Jablin 2001; Moreland and Levine 2002; Morrison 1993; Van Maanen and Schein 1979; Walsh and Ungson 1991). Professional socialization involves preparation for a certain professional role by formal education and learning in the workplace; it includes the development of professional identity and imbuing of professional norms and values (Ajjawi and Higgs 2008). Deliberate and systematic workplace training appears to be needed to assist integration of academically trained newcomers to practices of a complex knowledge-intensive organization (Zuccheromaglio and Alby, *in press*; Fuller and Unwin 2010). Participation in professional practices may be elicited through providing carefully considered planned activities as well as managerial, epistemic and discursive resources that enable meaningful observation and participation in professional activity. The emerging networking connections provide access to the information, shared concepts and discourses as well as opportunities of collaboration. Deliberate professional training provides newcomers contacts with people, knowledge and access to places, familiarization to tools and instruments, and socialization to recurring professional activities, gradually transforming their participation from peripheral to central. The purpose of the present investigation is to analyze young diplomats' socialization to the culture of diplomatic expertise at personal, community and process levels (see Bryman 1992). We examine their networking position and role in the first work community of their diplomatic career, their personal social support networks, and the progress of the socialization process.

Mere formal qualifications or personal strengths do not ensure successful professional socialization; organizational culture and practices play a crucial role as well (Clark et al. *in press*). Altogether, workplaces are truly important places for guiding and teaching newcomers as well as facilitating their learning and professional development. The culture of an organization has a major impact on

learning in the workplace: Investigations of Collin et al. (2008) indicated that social structures and practices that hinder newcomer's engagement in the workplace community constrain their learning and growth of professional identity. In order to foster a sense of belonging ("we-ness"), it is essential to cultivate practices that elicit active and meaningful participation of newcomers in the social community. In examining various ways of fostering employees' learning and development, Fuller and Unwin (2004a) distinguished "expansive" from "restrictive" workplace learning environments. The expansive workplace environments provide employees with opportunities to participate in various kinds of communities of practice, gain diverse experience from inside and outside the organization, learn through pursuing challenging professional assignments, and appropriate extended professional roles. Moreover, in an expansive environment, employees have recognized status as learners, and they can deploy and pass their prior skills and knowledge in the new circumstances as well. The features of a restrictive environment are opposite to the ones above; they rather limit employees' possibilities for legitimated professional participation and provide only constrained possibilities for professional learning and growth (Evans et al. 2006; Fuller and Unwin 2010, 2004a).

As Billett (2006) has argued, workplace learning is mediated through interdependent personal and social agency. When the work place provides structures and practices that channel newcomers' activities in significant ways, they are able to cultivate personal agency in respect of creative appropriation, interpretation, and transformation of social resources. This process of cultivations makes the process of socialization unique to each participant as well as allows personally diverging socialization processes to take place in the same environment. As Nyström (2009) argued, active participation plays a crucial role in the formation of professional identity. Rather than passive adaptation, socialization is a process involving a newcomer's active and improvisational efforts to adjust to the workplace environment and develop the professional identity in social interaction and through shared social-cultural activities (see Holland et al. 1998). Socialization to the culture of expertise and becoming an expert are long standing processes that include both individual and communal challenges, for example, newcomers have a sense of insecurity experienced and initially feel a lack of full acceptance from the old-timers. Identity formation takes place, during professional socialization, through the interaction between the affordances provided and constraints imposed by the workplace community and the growth process of personal agency (Billett 2006).

A journey to become an expert takes place through an interactive participation process during which a newcomer is socialized in the culture of expertise and moves to the centre of professional social networks (Lave and Wenger 1991; Mieg 2006). Researchers, in recent years, have tended to see expertise no longer as merely an individual or mental capacity, but as a process distributed among individual activities as well as social and cultural frames; it has frequently been examined as a networked phenomenon (e.g., Hakkarainen et al. 2004; Hutchins 1995; Mieg 2006; Nardi et al. 2000). Acquiring an expert's knowledge and competence and becoming an expert him- or herself requires that the newcomer have an opportunity to genuinely participate and socialize in practices of distributed expert culture (Hakkarainen et al. 2004). In general, novices become experts under the guidance of experienced actors who are experts themselves and have already gone through a similar kind of a

developmental path as that required of the newcomer (Gruber et al. 2008). In addition to a versatile operational environment and provision of instruction by experienced professionals, development of expertise takes a great deal of deliberate practice in real-life professional assignments (Ericsson 2006).

The ability to be part of a professional diplomatic network as well as the personal capacity to grow, develop and transform have become one of the most important characteristics of the diplomat, because the nature of the diplomatic career has changed in Finland, as elsewhere in Europe and in the global knowledge society. Career advancement that used to progress evenly on the basis of seniority, is currently more and more dependent on the participant's own efforts in managing his or her professional development. Because of rapidly transforming global and globalizing environment of activity and more complicated international relationships, young diplomats do not know anymore to what kind of diplomatic career they commit themselves. New kinds of requirements in working life, such as rapid creation and enhancement of knowledge and flexible acclimatization to life under continuous instability and uncertainty, are essential aspects of the diplomatic profession. Under these conditions, the significance of social relations and their utilization is emphasized. By creating, strengthening and developing rich and versatile network connections, young diplomats can respond to the changing demands of the diplomatic profession. Social network connections enable professional development and provide newcomers resources that support their daily activity (Lin 1982, 2001; Nardi et al. 2002; Parks 2007). Gradually, by socializing to the organizational culture and growing up into the social networks, the new employees' initially weak ties become strong, reciprocal and intensive networking linkages (Granovetter 1973; Hansen 1999); these evolve (consolidate or fade) according to the nature of enacted professional practices. To elaborate, by the concept of "social networks" we refer to community-level social structures, i.e., social systems prevailing in the professional workplace community that are composed of social relationships and connections. These connections arise through communication, collaboration, and knowledge acquisition as well as putting in place the personal social networks that the participants must actively maintain and expand so as to promote development of their expertise (Ibarra and Andrews 1993; Mehra et al. 2001; Nardi et al. 2000).

Research Aims

The purpose of the present investigation was to analyze the young, newly recruited diplomats' socialization to the workplace communities' culture of networked expertise during their six months' training period in the Training course in International Affairs for Newly Recruited Diplomats in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. The present study had the following four objectives: 1) to analyze the structure of the workplace communities' social networks and the position of the young diplomats, 2) to identify the young diplomats' social support networks, and 3) resources obtained from them, as well as 4) to analyze their considerations about the progress of the socialization process and issues promoting and hindering it.

Method

The Training Course in International Affairs for Newly Recruited Diplomats

The present investigation was carried out in the context of the Training Course in International Affairs for Newly Recruited Diplomats (hereafter, "DTC"—diplomats' training course) that began in May 2008. The course is a training program organized by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (hereafter, MFAF) that qualifies the participants for a diplomatic career. Many hundreds of agents with a university degree apply for the DTC every year. A gradually smaller and smaller group is selected by a half-year-long multi-staged recruiting process in which their suitability for diplomatic work is tested and evaluated; in the present case, the final group selected for the DTC included 12 participants.

The DTC is a two-year-long higher-education-level study program involving study modules and practical training periods. The present investigation was undertaken during the first six months' full-time departmental training; before that, the DTC trainees had completed a joint four-week study module. Each trainee completed departmental training in some of the units functioning within the frames of the ministry's 12 departments. The departments were obligated to take part in the training process, and the training was required to involve meaningful professional tasks. The departments were, further, expected to initiate the DTC trainees into their activities, elicit building of their professional competencies and provide feedback. The departments also provided each of the DTC trainees with a tutor who assumed responsibility for the training and assisted his or her initiation. During the departmental training, the DTC trainees had an opportunity to take part in various educational activities organized by the department and the DTC.

Participants

The participants of the present investigation were the DTC trainees as well as their respective workplace communities where they were pursuing the training. By "workplace community" we refer to all employees of young diplomats' training departments, that is, diplomatic professionals as well as administrative staff. This was a multiple case study in nature and focused on analyzing organizational and professional socialization of four volunteering DTC trainees. Although four trainees took part in the investigation, the social network analyses and qualitative content analysis reported here focuses only on one female ("Miia") and one male ("Sami") because of their representative networking positions. Miia's structural networking position in the departmental social networks was fairly peripheral, like that of the two DTC trainees' not reported in this article. In comparison with Miia and the two other trainees investigated, Sami's position during the training was exceptionally central.

In order to protect the participants' anonymity, we will provide here only a deliberately fuzzy participant description. The trainees were in their thirties. They had completed a master's degree and had some previous experience of government service. In Miia's workplace community (hereafter, "workplace community A"), there were 10 members. As explained below, only 8 of them responded to our data

collection instruments. There were 6 who had worked less than six years in the department and 2 six to fifteen years. Just 1 participant had worked less than six years in the ministry, 2, six to fifteen years and 5, more than fifteen years. In Sami's workplace community (hereafter, "workplace community B"), there were 12 members; 9 of them responded to data collection instruments. All of them had worked less than six years in the department. Further, 5 participants had worked less than six years in the ministry and 4 more than fifteen years.

Collecting and Analyzing Data

The data collection took part during the six months' departmental training and relied on both quantitative and qualitative methods that allowed one to analyze the socialization process both at personal, community, and process levels. The data were collected by a network questionnaire, event sampling and theme interviews, and analyzed by the methods of network analysis and qualitative content analysis.

Network Methods

The social-network data allowed us to examine the workplace communities' internal social structures, prevailing social relations as well as Miia's and Sami's role and position in the communities. They were collected by administering a printed version of a networking questionnaire to all professional members of Miia's and Sami's workplace communities at the end of departmental training (October–November 2008). In Miia's workplace community, 8 out of 10 employees responded to the questionnaire so that the response rate was 80%. In Sami's workplace community, 9 out of 12 professionals responded to the questionnaire; the response rate was 75%.

The networking questionnaire involved a name list of members of the workplace community as the first column and seven networking dimensions that were determined according to earlier studies (Palonen 2003; Tuomainen et al. 2010) as the other columns. Accordingly, the questionnaire was dichotomous in nature (Scott 1991) in respect of requiring the participants to assess whether a social relation was present or not. In relation to each other, participants were asked to indicate and mark by x whether or not they 1) ask advice regarding professional substance issues, and 2) practical professional problems, 3) get new professional ideas and novel work-related information, and 4) ask guidance regarding one's job description and professional tasks. In addition, the participants assessed with whom they 5) collaborate, 6) discuss, and exchange professional thoughts, and 7) are interacted with, informally. The data were transformed to seven matrixes representing relations between workplace communities' members.

The network data were analyzed by using UCINET 6 program (Borgatti et al. 2002). To simplify data analysis, the seven networks were merged to three types: a knowledge-acquisition network (networks 1, 3, and 4; correlations varied between .409 and .593); a practical know-how network (network 2), and a professional collaboration network (network 5, 6, and 7; correlations varied between .425 and .651). The correlations were calculated using QAP correlation analysis. The knowledge-acquisition network described how the employees of the workplace communities sought professional information and advice from each other in

professional subject matters. The practical know-how network, in turn, revealed how they sought information that was related to practical matters and facilitated the daily work. The network connections for these two networks were not reciprocal. The professional collaboration network described how the employees interacted and collaborated with each other in professional issues. In this network, the connections addressed reciprocal networking relations between participants. The cohesion of the three networks was analyzed according to density- and centrality measures. The networks' centralization and the participants' centrality were measured by Freeman's degree. Proximity of network actors was analyzed according to MDS analysis, and geometric network distances determined by it were visualized by using the NetDraw program.

Qualitative Methods

Event sampling was used for repeatedly collecting information about the DTC trainees' experiences and associated reflections regarding their functioning in and socialization to the new workplace community across the training period. Collection of the event sampling data was started in July and continued until November 2008. Across the four-and-half-months' collection period, the participants were asked to respond to the same six questions at two-week intervals by email. The questions related to 1) emerged questions about acting in a new workplace community, 2) problems that arose during the departmental training, 3) participants' solutions to these problems, 4) their success experiences, 5) persons from whom they sought advice, as well as 6) young diplomats' experiences about degree of professional initiation provided by the department. Reporting by email was very convenient for the participants. Data collection produced 9 reports from Miia and 10 from Sami. Event sampling data allowed us to analyze how the contents of reflections changed in the course of training period and socialization process (Reis and Gable 2000).

Theme interviews were, further, conducted with the DTC trainees at the end of training period, on October 2008, to complement the event-sampling data. The interview themes emerged partially from issues, questions, and problems addressed in the event-sampling reports. They involved 1) Miia's and Sami's experiences about the departmental training as a diplomatic working experience and the particular workplace community as a learning environment, 2) actual realization and methods of socialization (specifically the nature and practices of interaction in the workplace community, especially between the young diplomats and their colleagues; colleagues' actions for promoting young diplomats' integration; the young diplomats' own actions to promote integration; challenges related to the integration). Further themes were 3) young diplomats' position in the workplace community (e.g., the nature of relations between the members of the workplace community, especially between the young diplomats and their colleagues; the nature of the young diplomats' professional assignments; young diplomats' sense of belonging; distribution of young diplomats' knowledge), and 4) success and developmental needs of initiation provided by the department. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the first author.

Event sampling and interview data were analyzed according to qualitative analysis of content. The interview data were analyzed first. The analysis was

started by identifying and clustering contents corresponding to research questions from the data. Thematic expressions were clustered according to three main categories: the participants' social support networks, resources provided by the network, and socialization to the workplace community. Main categories were divided into smaller ones, i.e., associated specific themes. Event sampling data were analyzed using thematic categories that emerged while analyzing the interview.

Results

The Structure of the DTC Trainees' Departmental Networks and Their Networking Position

Results of the analysis of the network data are presented at the workplace communities' network level by assessing their structure; and at the individual level by concentrating on describing the participants', especially Miia's and Sami's, role and position in the network. A summary of network measures regarding both communities' varying internal centrality and density values is provided in Table 1 (see Appendix 1). It should be noted that, regarding centrality in the context of knowledge-acquisition and practical know-how networks, the table presents each participant's own estimate (Out Degree) and that of the person's workmates (In Degree). The participants' centrality was assessed using only on incoming links (In Degree) reported by workmates. This measure revealed how many actors selected him or her as an information source within the network in question. The network regarding reciprocal professional collaboration was symmetrized so that centralization and centrality were assessed using reciprocal Degree measures. The networking positions of actors who did not respond to the networking questionnaire were determined entirely according to links incoming from their workmates. It should be taken into consideration that this method of determination affected the structure of network graphs constructed.

From Table 1, it can be seen that in workplace community A, the network of knowledge acquisition (68%), and in workplace community B the network of professional collaboration (61%) were the most dense in that two thirds of all potential networking linkages were present. In workplace community A, the second densest network was that of professional collaboration (52%) and in workplace community B knowledge-acquisition (45%). The density of the practical know-how network was relatively low in the both workplace communities; one third of all possible linkages were present in workplace community A (37%) and only one fifth in workplace community B (23%). The centrality value indicated that, in workplace community A, centralization of the knowledge-acquisition network (51%) was notable; half of networking was centralized around certain actors. The second centralized network was that of practical know-how (33%). The professional collaboration network was little centralized (19%); only one fifth of collaboration is centralized around particular individuals. In the workplace community B, the networks of practical know-how (45%) and professional collaboration (42%) were

equally centralized; in the context of these networks, one half of networking interaction is concentrated around certain actors. The knowledge-acquisition network was not as centralized as the above mentioned two networks; only one third (31%) of interaction was concentrated around certain persons.

From Fig. 1 representing the knowledge-acquisition networks of workplace community A and B, one can see that the actors were not homogeneously positioned; participants who were close to one another engaged in denser interaction than remotely located actors. None of the communities' participants was, however, completely isolated; everybody had some knowledge-acquisition-related interaction with at least two of his or her workmates. In the lowest corner of community A's network graph, there was a group of six actors (A1, A2, A5, A7, A8, A10); and in the middle of community B's network graph, was a cluster of five actors (B1, B4, B6, B11, and B12) engaged in intensive networking action that both Miia (A5) and Sami (B4) attended. Miia, by contrast, was located at the fringe of the knowledge-acquisition network. She was related to four workmates; only one of them sought information from her. One of her interaction fellows had worked 6–15 years and one more than 15 years in the MFAF. Sami was located at the centre of knowledge-acquisition network being related to all other, except one workmate. Among his networking partners were actors who had worked less than 6 years as well as more than 15 years in the MFAF. There were 5 workmates who used Sami as knowledge resource. He was acquiring information from 9 workmates.

From Fig. 2 representing the network of practical know-how, it can be observed that the participants were located quite close to one another, except three peripheral actors (A2, A4, and A8) in community A and two actors (B1 and B7) in community B. In community B, one of the participants (B2) responding to the networking questionnaire was an isolate; he or she did not have any networking relations to the workmates regarding practical competence. Both Miia and Sami were active information seekers in the practical know-how networks. Miia had

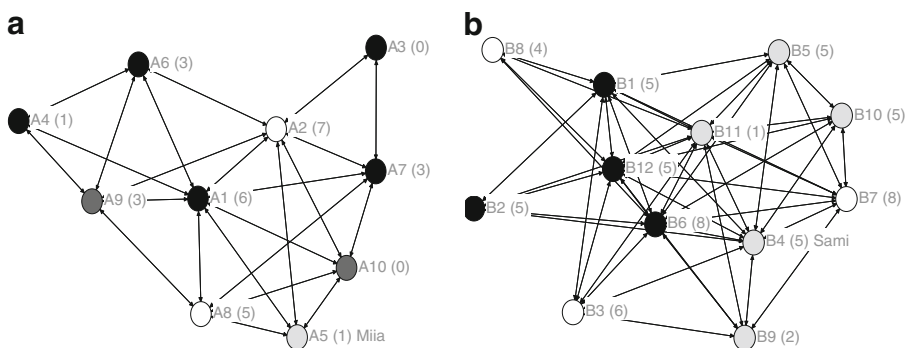


Fig. 1 Knowledge-acquisition networks of the workplace communities A and B (A5=Miia; B4=Sami). The network graphs based on multi-dimensional scaling (MDS) and visualized by using Net Draw program reveal how employees of the departments utilized each other as information sources in professional issues. In the context of each actor, we have provided a participation code (e.g., A1) and a bragged centrality measure (workplace community A: $M=2.9$, $SD=1.8$; workplace community B: $M=4.9$, $SD=3.9$). With color code, the graphs represent the time that the persons have worked in the MFAF: light grey, under 6 years; dark grey, 6–15 years; black, more than 15 years; white, did not respond to the questionnaire. For analysis, the networks have been symmetrized

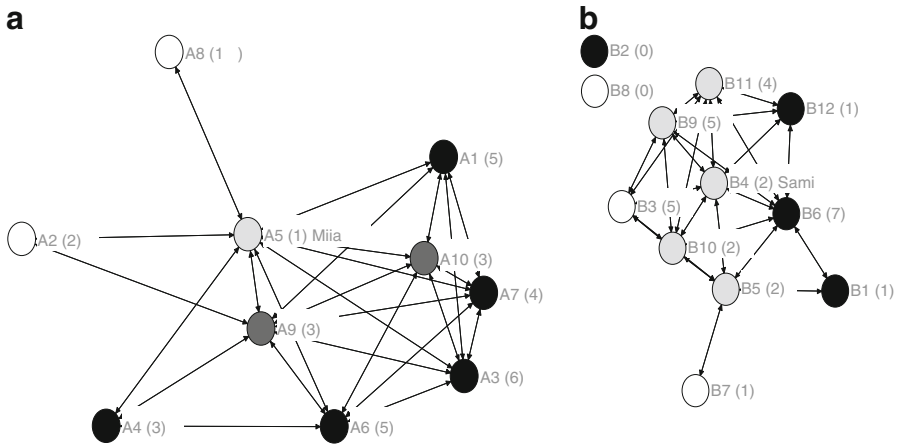


Fig. 2 Practical know-how networks of the workplace communities A and B (A5=Miaa; B4=Sami). The network graphs based on multi-dimensional scaling (MDS) and visualized by using Net Draw program reveal how employees of the departments utilized each other as information sources in practical issues. In the context of each actor, we have provided a participation code (e.g., A1) and a bragged centrality measure (workplace community A: $M=3.3$, $SD=2.8$; workplace community B: $M=2.5$, $SD=2.3$). With color code, the graphs represent the time that the persons have worked in the MFAF: light grey, under 6 years; dark gray, 6–15 years; black, more than 15 years; white, did not respond to the questionnaire. For analysis, the networks have been symmetrized

networking relations to all of her workmates, but only one of them asked her practical advice. Sami was in the most central place of the network's structure, being in interaction with seven actors; however, only two workmates asked Sami advice in practical issues.

In the networks of professional collaboration represented in Fig. 3, one can see as isolation of those persons who did not respond to the network questionnaire. Figure 3 revealed that compared to community B, professional collaboration was fairly thin in community A. Community A's professional collaboration was polarized to two groups of three and four actors with which the three actors (A4, A7 and A10) connected. Miaa's networking position was somewhat similar to that of the community's other actors; she collaborated professionally with three of her workmates. In community B, the most important partners of professional collaboration were B5, B6, and B12. Sami's role in reciprocal professional collaboration was relatively average; he was engaged in professional collaboration with four workmates.

Personal Social Support Networks

For personal level analysis using the interview data and event sampling data, we describe the DTC trainees' social support networks; i.e., persons and stakeholders from whom they sought various kinds of support and answers to professional questions and concerns. Miaa's support network included five actors and Sami's, six actors both from the department, outside of it at the MFAF and elsewhere. In addition, they acquired information and asked assistance from many unnamed persons and sources.

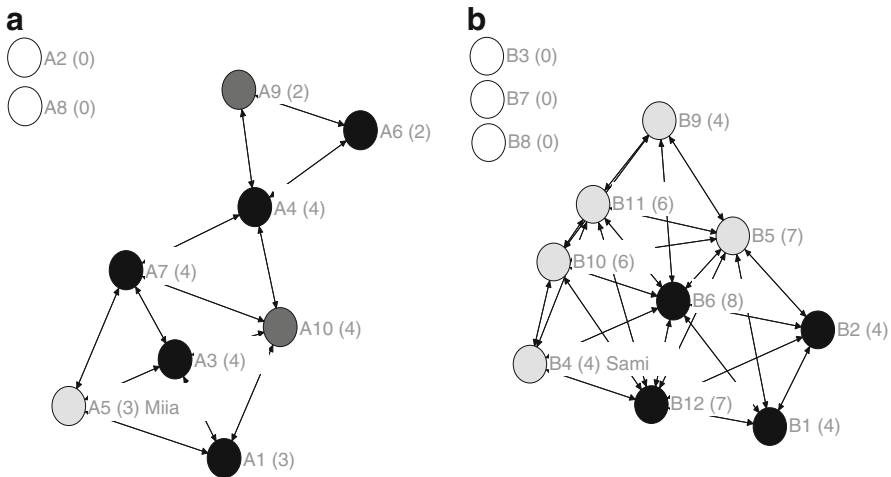


Fig. 3 Professional collaboration networks of the workplace communities A and B (A5=Miia; B4=Sami). The network graphs based on multi-dimensional scaling (MDS) and visualized by using Net Draw program reveal how employees of the departments collaborate professionally. In the context of each actor, we have provided a participation code (e.g., A1) and a bragged centrality measure (workplace community A: $M=2.6$, $SD=1.5$; workplace community B: $M=4.2$, $SD=2.7$). With color code, the graphs represent the time that the persons have worked in the MFAF: light grey, under 6 years; dark gray, 6–15 years; black, more than 15 years; white, did not respond to the questionnaire. For analysis, the networks have been symmetrized by taking into account relations that both parties have confirmed.

According to Miia's and Sami's combined experiences, the role of four community members, i.e., own tutor, departmental secretary and director as well as close workmate was especially important for providing support and functioning as information sources. It was significant for Miia and Sami that their own workplace community involved an experienced professional, a tutor, with whom they could discuss various general issues related to a diplomatic career. Both Miia and Sami had a tutor who was a part of the department's leadership, and the tutor relation thereby made the experienced thresholds of MFAF hierarchy lower. For Miia the significance of the tutor relation decreased across the training. Sami emphasized the tutor relation as sharing of experiences and, thereby, transferring tacit knowledge from an older generation to younger one. In addition, the tutor controlled the nature and meaningfulness of tasks that Sami was given, and provided hints how he would be able to familiarize himself with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs as an organization and work environment.

This is a hierarchical organization so it's like the assistant chief, the unit chief can feel very distant, very high-level, so if you've got a tutor like that, then you can have a conversation with him right away, so I think it's good, like in the sense that it makes it easier. (Miia)

He asked on a regular basis, that how is it going, what is the feeling, and so forth. We discussed occasionally about other subjects, or so, and of course we discussed about other issues that what was currently being done by me which was quite therapeutic, indeed. It was more like transfer of tacit knowledge type of thing. (Sami)

The departmental secretary was Sami's and Miia's support and knowledge source regarding practical issues and helped both in completing of many practical tasks. Sami, especially, exploited her expertise when searching persons or stakeholders responsible for certain issues. It should be noticed that in Miia's department, there was a period without a secretary, and overall she appeared not to know how to utilize the secretary's knowledge properly.

Where do I find these or those [things], who do I call when I have this or that problem. Completely ordinary little things which you tend to get stuck on. (Sami)

An important advisor of Sami's social support network was the director of the department, who, in addition, functioned as his closest superior. Sami could turn to him or her in the context of many issues, although he mainly asked the director for guidance regarding substantial professional matters and when a decision was needed by someone who was in a supervisory position. For Miia, a workmate who was close by was an important source of practical advice because he or she was easy to reach; it was effortless to ask information on the side.

Well the person on the other side of the wall is the one that I always ask first because they are the one that is closest. (Miia)

The other DTC trainees were the most important support group and source of valuable information in Miia's and Sami's personal social support networks; with them, all issues of Miia and Sami could be discussed. Besides them, Sami, when encountering new and unfamiliar professional tasks, relied on professionals who had pursued corresponding tasks before; they had the best relevant knowledge and competence. In addition, Miia and Sami relied on MFAF's external professionals; Miia collaborated with workmates at her earlier workplace, and the other ministries functioned as information sources when Sami's own workmates were unavailable because of holidays.

When there were a lot of operational requests, that I had to do then for the first time by relying on former ones, and then I referred to peer who had done these things before and who knew well where all the materials I needed were, I also contacted a former coworker who had just switched a department, so that I in a sense relied on help outside of the department there. (Sami)

Resources Obtained from the Social Networks

In describing the resources that the DTC trainees obtained from the social networks of their workplace communities and actors involved, we refer to assets that were valuable for them from the standpoints of the development of their professional competence, expertise, and diplomatic career. Analysis relied on the interview and event sampling data. Miia and Sami mentioned four central resources, such as accumulating experience of various diplomatic tasks, listening to stories and experiences of senior colleagues, discussing with other colleagues, and building community with the other DTC trainees.

Participation in various events and carrying out meaningful professional tasks allowed Miia and Sami to accumulate multi-faceted experiences regarding working at the MFAF. Sami was given a large amount of responsibility by answering for two desk officers' remits regarding issues of a particular country. Miia, for one, participated in various kinds of working groups and assisted in all responsibilities of the department. Overall, additional professional resources offered by the DTC trainees were well received by the busy communities; for example Miia's knowledge of French was utilized frequently by the colleagues.

I said that I'm happy to be involved in all kinds of things. Somehow, well of course these kinds of assisting tasks where you can learn, so you're involved with others and you see.—Basically I'm involved in as much as possible. (Miia)

We were presented an idea that we would be assisting desks, that's how I understood it and during this time I've had the full time responsibility for one person, which is pretty surprising. Yeah, so basically it's been like, I can't complain at all that I haven't had desk assignments, that I would have been some assistant that runs from one place to another and does this and that. (Sami)

Miia and Sami considered listening to stories, sharing experiences and discussing with colleagues to be essential sources and instruments of learning, professional development, and advancement of their expertise, in conjunction with the training and associated learning by doing. These activities allowed mirroring one's own experiences with those of the workmates and assisted one's obtaining a comprehensive picture of a diplomatic career. Only in Sami's community, however, was there an effective culture of sharing stories and experiences. According to Miia's experience, in her community there was no tradition of common informal gatherings that would have been natural opportunity for informal discussions. Overall, Miia wished to hear more experiences of seasoned colleagues.

It's just that because we don't have such a way of doing things, we don't meet over there for coffee in the morning so we don't have an opportunity to tell about these kinds of things. (Miia)

Yes, hearing those experiences has a big impact as it kind of gives you, it allows a little bit setting one's own expectations and ideas about the whole overall career at the administration of foreign affairs, and in the context of human life, so that it gives some "meat around your bones" [i.e., provide a broad sense of how to do your work]. It's advantageous from the perspective of one's own thoughts. (Sami)

The most important asset regarding the diplomatic-training-related social networks was the collaborative experience of learning together with the other DTC trainees, who were the main source of social support. All participants of DTC were in a similar situation and shared their experiences of being a new professional and departmental trainee. This allowed Miia and Sami to reciprocally mirror their experiences and assisted in developing a comprehensive view of the experience of

working at the MFAF. The importance of the DTC was partially due to its stability; it was the only context that the DTC trainees knew that remained throughout the course of diplomatic training.

We are that immediate point of comparison, an immediate support group to one another. When you hear the perspectives of other people around the house regarding the things we're working on, it's incredibly important for creating this kind of personal views of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (Sami)

Socialization to the Workplace Community

At personal and process levels of analysis, we examined the DTC trainees' socialization process by describing its progress as well as the issues promoting and hindering it on which Miia and Sami had reflected during the training. These issues were examined using data from four-and-half-months'-long event sampling; the analysis was complemented with certain contents of the interview, as well.

In the beginning of the training period, in July, both Miia and Sami reflected on issues related to practical professional matters, such as managing email overflow, and mastering right protocols (the latter, e.g. when receiving visitors). They also were concerned about colleagues' summer holidays because some of the colleagues were not present to respond their questions when it would have been critically important. The reflections of Miia and Sami differed in amount of experienced collectivity and interaction between the members of the department. Miia felt that the department's practices favored working by oneself; she did not experience the collectivity of the workplace community, and she needed to be active to be socialized to the community as well as finding out the correct procedures. Overall, Miia wished to have more contacts with her colleagues. In Sami's workplace community, there were formal as well as informal meetings where he could discuss and share experiences with his colleagues and receive advice about working in MFAF. Sami felt that he got feedback regarding his work even more than expected, though he occasionally wished to get more specific instruction for the long-term assignments. He also experienced that he was legitimated as a member of a community in spite of some individual workmates initially being somewhat reserved in relation to him.

During the first month and a half I haven't experienced a sense of community in this unit. Based on the beginning at least, the practices in the community don't include morning coffee and other unofficial meetings, like I was used to in my previous work place and that helps you to get to know your colleagues. It requires you to be active in integrating yourself with the work community. (Miia)

But it was a rather such a ... certainly very motivating factor in the beginning that right off the bat, I was able to start working, and you immediately realized that this is it, that you are allowed to do [professionally demanding] work. You sure did not have to just take photocopies or make coffee, which I didn't actually do at all. (Sami)

In the middle part of the training period, in August and September, both Miia and Sami considered the practices of communications and email delivery inside the MFAF as well as commuting. Sami for example reported having the first, longer, independent commute. The new assignments Miia faced were collaboration with the embassy as well as preparation of a public speech. During the collective activities organized by the units, they had an opportunity to become acquainted with the employees beyond their own department and get to know colleagues off-duty. Miia's department did not have a director until September when a new director of a department took the assignment. According to Miia's experience, that improved the flow of information and clarified the distribution of work. Her colleagues, however, were so hurried that if Miia had some questions, she did not want to disturb them by asking. Sami, for his part, felt that he was coming closer to his fellow workers and had rewarding discussions about the diplomatic career. Experienced colleagues helped him in career planning by offering advice and tips. In the middle part of the training, Sami also oriented himself to the new branch; he received new professional tasks and created personal connections to the officials high up. He also started collaborating with an older colleague having tangential assignments. Because of a continuous hurry, Sami was concerned about division of labor, work scheduling and staying on task. In addition, missing his own steady work space, he was impeded in developing a sense of belonging.

You could notice that people are really very busy so there's none of this "by the hand" (instructing), somebody would come see you everyday and ask hey how are you doing. It's like I'm just here amongst other things. (Miia)

In my mind has been the management of my own work palette [i.e., control of the amount of work] as there are several small and large projects going on at once. (Sami)

At the end of the training period, in October and November, Miia considered the procedures regarding arranging the meetings and press conference as well as correct form of acting at luncheon. She experienced the atmosphere and community spirit of the department to be good despite the continuous hurry. She was happy to notice that even the most silent fellow workers had turned to more talkative. Sami was concerned about tight schedules as well as his loosely defined job description when tasks and priorities were changing quickly. In his perception, his colleagues sometimes forgot that he did not have wide experience of assignments at hand; he wished that they would have oriented him more deeply to the new tasks. He felt, however, that he could independently contribute to several complicated issues. In addition, keeping control of affairs even in a hurry provided him experiences of success. When the six-month training period was up Sami delegated his assignments and responsibilities to the successor. During the last weeks, he internalized the temporary nature of his position in the department.

It was my first time presenting and I could have used more support on my side than what I got. I made it through but maybe in all of this rushing about some of my colleagues may have forgotten that I haven't been responsible for all that many tasks yet. (Sami)

Discussion

In the present investigation, the young diplomats were considered to be in the first stage of their development to becoming experts in international affairs. We examined the DTC trainees' socialization to the networked expert culture of their workplace community in the MFAF by analyzing their structural position in the departmental social networks, their personal social support networks, resources obtained from social networks and the progress of socialization process. The results, which reflect the DTC trainees' own experiences as well as estimates of their workmates, indicated that compared to each other, Miia and Sami achieved different kinds of networking positions, even though they both became involved in their workplace communities' networked expertise. By young diplomats' "structural position", we refer to their role, status and significance in their respective workplace community's internal interaction, as depicted by the network analysis. The methods of event sampling and interview provided data that were used to explain the differences that occurred.

Sami's structural networking position was unexpectedly central in all examined networks and clearly more central than Miia's position in the networks of knowledge-acquisition and practical know-how. Beyond actively seeking information and knowledge from colleagues, Sami was utilized as knowledge recourse himself. That is a somewhat surprising observation because in general, young inexperienced newcomers are positioned at the periphery of the workplace community rather than in a central position (see Jablin 2001; Moreland and Levine 2002; Lave and Wenger 1991). On the other hand, this result was in line with Fuller and Unwin's (2004b) findings according to which the positions of newcomers and experts are neither pre-determined nor necessarily strictly fixed; in expansive workplace learning environments, novices may become more active and important actors than old-timers by bringing and passing new kinds of knowledge and competences into the community.

In spite of both Miia and Sami being regarded to be relevant collaborators by many of their workmates, the results of network analysis revealed that, overall, professional collaboration was denser in Sami's than Miia's workplace community, the latter being fairly scattered. In addition, the process-level analysis based on event sampling and theme interviews, revealed that over the whole six-month training period, interaction and cooperation among colleagues were more intensive in Sami's than Miia's department. Sami participated actively in formal and informal collective activities, but in Miia's workplace community there was no such collective professional culture. It appeared that Sami's workplace community enabled meaningful participation in and access to professional affairs and provided opportunities for collaboration with experienced professionals. We suppose that this could partly be a reason for the fact that, as the interview and event sampling data indicated, Sami considered social relations to be a more important source of support and resources than Miia did even though they both had important connections in their personal social support networks. It should be taken into account, however, that in Miia's department there were periods with no departmental director and secretary; these persons were important and close colleagues for Sami. The two most important

actors in both Miia's and Sami's social support networks were the tutor and the other DTC trainees. The tutor assisted in lowering or fading the experienced thresholds of MFAF hierarchy. His or her role was also significant in initiating Sami to the organizational culture (see Nota 1988). The other DTC trainees were the most significant sources of social support and information. It also appeared that, when necessary, both Miia and Sami intentionally expanded the network connections beyond the departmental workplace community as well as the whole ministry (see Shah 1998).

Overall, the departmental training provided Sami and Miia an opportunity to perceive, experience, and explore what working at the MFAF is like in practice (compare Zucchermaglio and Alby, *in press*); it promoted DTC trainees' professional socialization and development of diplomatic identity and agency rather more than their routine socialization to be the members of the certain workplace community. Full participation in the activities and assignments of the department promoted their socialization process as well as professional development by enabling intensive participation in genuine operational environments of experts (see e.g., Nyström 2009). However, it appeared that two workplace communities investigated offered somewhat different learning opportunities for the young diplomats (see Fuller and Unwin 2004a). Results indicated that Miia's departmental assignments involved assisting work that was less demanding in nature than Sami's hurried responsibilities as a desk officer. Moreover, Sami assumed responsibilities for new challenging assignments by expanding his job design. It appeared that in Sami's workplace community, the institutional memory was transferred from an older to younger generation through joint discussions and sharing of experiences (compare Brown et al. 2005; Orr 1996).

In conclusion, we propose that reasons for young diplomats' diverging structural networking positions were related to the differences in the culture of the respective workplace communities as learning environments; that is, to the amount of interaction between participants and collective operational practices in these communities as well as the nature of assignments for which the young diplomats were responsible. Sami's workplace community appeared to be more expansive in nature and provide more challenges and opportunities to integrate in collaborative practices that he would actively appropriate (see e.g., Fuller and Unwin 2010). In Miia's case, the environment was more restrictive in nature and did not support growth of the personal agency as strongly as Sami's workplace community. It should be taken into account, however, that young diplomats' gender as well as social style might have affected the professional role they achieved. Overall, it is difficult to separate personal style from network characteristics. Moreover, individual characteristics, such personal history and dispositions, make individuals respond differently even to the same kinds of workplace learning environments (Hodkinson and Hodkinson 2004). In Finland, the diplomatic profession has traditionally been strongly male-dominated; until 1950, only men performed the duties of a diplomat. Recently the gender distribution of the participants chosen to the DTC has changed; women have been in a majority for several years since the beginning of the millennium. Males, though, still occupy the majority of leadership positions. It should be taken into consideration that

because of these traditional gender relationships related to diplomatic profession, the socialization to diplomatic community might be more fluent for DTC trainees who are men, than for women. However, research design and the data of this investigation, based on just two newcomers, do not allow for analysis which separates gender from professional orientation or the nature of workplace community; consequently, all inferences regarding the role of these relations in young diplomats' socialization process, are only speculative. Because this investigation was a case study, the results relating to these young diplomats' socialization cannot be generalized, as such, to the other DTC trainees or organizations, or to other countries.

One of the limitations of this study was gathering the network data only once during the training period; it did not allow us to examine the development in the network structures and DTC trainees' networking positions during the departmental training. Further, some of the participants did not respond to the networking questionnaire; this might have affected the results. Nonetheless, the methods (SNA, interview, event sampling) employed in the present study appear to have provided a useful multi-level methodology for studying professional socialization. They complemented each other by making it possible to analyze young diplomats' socialization at personal, community, and process levels. It appears, however, essential to collect more data on the detailed foci of newcomers' professional activity during the training period. For that purpose, it would be important to interview tutor, departmental head and co-workers as well as collect ethnographic data of enacted professional practices. It appears to be beneficial to collect network data two or three times across the socialization process.

Traditional socio-cultural research on professional learning indicates that newcomers' initially peripheral role in a workplace community transforms, through gradual professional socialization, to a central role across relatively long periods of time. The present investigation provides, however, a more complex description of the situation. Investigation of two young diplomats' professional socialization taking place in departmental training suggested that newcomers may move very quickly to the center of a professional community within an expansive workplace community provided that he or she has a high degree of personal agency; a closer examination of such agency in future studies is warranted. It appears to us that the nature of the environment (expansive/restrictive) and participants' agency are interdependent (Billett 2006); they mutually constitute one another more than one side of the person-environment dimension being dominant. It appears essential to cultivate professional practices that provide newcomers immediate access to relevant information, assist in creating relevant reciprocal networking relations, as well as engage them in collaborative sharing of challenges and assuming personal responsibility for challenges. The present investigation indicates that young diplomats' organizational as well professional socialization can most effectively be supported in the culture of social interaction and participation.

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Appendix 1

Table 1 Density and centrality measures of workplace community A's and B's social networks

Code of participant	Knowledge-acquisition network		Practical know-how network		Professional collaboration network Degree ^b
	Out Degree ^a	In Degree ^a	Out Degree ^a	In Degree ^a	
Community A					
A1	5	6	1	5	3
A2	0 ^c	7	0 ^c	2	0 ^c
A3	2	0	2	6	4
A4	3	1	2	3	4
A5 Miia	3	1	9	1	3
A6	3	3	4	5	2
A7	3	3	5	4	4
A8	0 ^c	5	0 ^c	1	0 ^c
A9	5	3	7	3	2
A10	5	0	3	3	4
Community level measures					
<i>M</i>	2.9	2.9	3.3	3.3	2.6
<i>SD</i>	1.8	2.3	2.8	1.6	1.5
Centralization %	26	51	70	33	19
Density %	68	37	52		
Community B					
B1	5	5	1	1	4
B2	1	5	0	0	4
B3	0 ^c	6	0 ^c	5	0 ^c
B4 Sami	9	5	7	2	4
B5	4	5	4	2	7
B6	9	8	4	7	8
B7	0 ^c	8	0 ^c	1	0 ^c
B8	0 ^c	4	0 ^c	0	0 ^c
B9	5	2	2	5	4
B10	5	5	5	2	6
B11	11	1	3	4	6
B12	10	5	4	1	7
Community level measures					
<i>M</i>	4.9	4.9	2.5	2.5	4.2
<i>SD</i>	3.9	1.9	2.3	2.1	2.7
Centralization %	60	31	45	45	42
Density %	45	23	61		

^a dichotomized

^b dichotomized and symmetrized

^c Did not respond to the network questionnaire. In the analyses all community members are taken into consideration regardless of whether they responded or not to the questionnaire. In the cases of participants who did not respond, the Out-Degree number is 0 and In-Degree number determined according to links incoming from the other community members. We would like to ask readers to take into consideration when interpreting the results that these participants' actual networking position cannot be determined on the basis of the data.

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