

Unpacking the Managerial Blues: How Expectations Formed in the Past Carry into New Jobs

Nishani Bourmault,^a Michel Anteby^b

^aNEOMA Business School, 76130 Mont Saint Aignan, France; ^bBoston University, Boston, Massachusetts 02215

Contact: nishani.bourmault@neoma-bs.fr (NB); manteby@bu.edu,  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2629-2529> (MA)

Received: June 6, 2018

Revised: May 28, 2019; November 20, 2019;
January 27, 2020

Accepted: March 14, 2020

Published Online in Articles in Advance:
September 23, 2020

<https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2020.1361>

Copyright: © 2020 INFORMS

Abstract. Becoming a manager is generally seen as a highly coveted step up the career ladder that corresponds to a gain in responsibility. There is evidence, however, that some individuals experience “managerial blues,” or disenchantment with their managerial jobs after being promoted. Although past scholarship points to individual differences (such as skills inadequacy) or the promotion circumstances (such as involuntary) as possible explanations for such blues, less is known as to how the expectations that people carry with them from past jobs—such as expectations about what responsibility entails—may shape their first managerial experience. To answer this question, we compare the experiences of supervisors coming from different jobs—that is, former Paris subway drivers (working independently and impacting the lives of others) and station agents (working interdependently with limited impact on others’ lives)—that left them with distinct sets of expectations around responsibility. Drawing on interviews and observations, we find that former drivers developed a deep sense of “personal” responsibility. After promotion, their perceived managerial responsibility paled in comparison with their expectations of what it felt like to have personal responsibility, leading the majority to experience managerial blues. In contrast, former agents had few expectations of what responsibility entailed and reported no disenchantment once they joined the managerial ranks. Overall, we show how imprinted expectations shape people’s future managerial experiences, including their managerial blues, and discuss the implications of our findings for literatures on job mobility and job design.

Keywords: managers • careers • job design • responsibility • imprinting • managerial blues • Paris subway • subway drivers

Becoming a manager is a key moment in people’s careers when individuals discover new roles (Hall 1976, Louis 1980), adapt to new norms and expectations (Brett 1984, Bailyn 1991, Hill 2003, Cardador 2017), and develop new identities (Ibarra 1999, Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003). Joining the managerial ranks is typically portrayed positively—a highly coveted step up the career ladder, a sign that individuals are trusted to lead others, and an opportunity to have a fulfilling job (Barnard 1968, Mintzberg 1973, Schein 1978, Kotter 1982, Cohen et al. 1998, Watson and Harris 1999). However, in some cases, people experience disenchantment with their managerial jobs, viewing their new jobs as less meaningful than their previous ones.

The “managerial blues” is evident in medical professionals, such as doctors and nurses, who saw “their management tasks as marginal” compared with their past work (Llewellyn 2001, p. 603). Similarly, some engineers and scientists experienced “mixed emotions” about managerial roles (Bailyn 1991, p. 3), struggling to see “the real importance of the management functions” (Bayton and Chapman 1972, p. 105); thus, they find it difficult to thrive in

these new positions. This disenchantment often leads to a desire to exit the managerial ranks shortly after joining them.

Despite growing evidence that some people experience managerial blues, we have a limited understanding of what could lead to such conflicting feelings of disenchantment or fulfillment in a new managerial role. Past research assumes that promotion to manager is typically associated with an increased sense of responsibility in one’s new role and points to individual differences in skills or the promotion circumstances as possible explanations for such disenchantment (e.g., Barnard 1968, Mintzberg 1973, Schein 1978, Kotter 1982, Watson and Harris 1999, Alvesson and Willmott 2002, Hill 2003, and Bidwell and Mollick 2015). However, research has paid less attention to how experiences from past jobs get carried over into new managerial positions and shape people’s sense of their managerial responsibility—ultimately also influencing their fulfillment as managers.

In this article, we build on the individual-level imprinting literature to better understand what people carry with them from their past jobs when transitioning

into managerial roles (Higgins 2005, Phillips 2005, Dokko et al. 2009, McEvily et al. 2011, Marquis and Tilcsik 2013, Almandoz 2014, Tilcsik 2014, Battilana et al. 2015, Dokko and Jiang 2017, Lee and Battilana 2020). More specifically, we analyze how expectations formed in a previous job—in this case, expectations about one’s impact on others’ lives as well as one’s inability to depend on coworkers to perform the work—leave an imprint about what deep personal responsibility feels like that people carry into their managerial jobs. We show that their perceived new managerial responsibility pales in comparison with their imprinted expectations from a previous job, leading to feelings of loss, and ultimately disenchantment.

Our study’s context is the Paris subway system, where we interviewed and observed supervisors, who were recently promoted, from two backgrounds—one in which impact on others’ lives was quite pronounced and the work was done alone (subway drivers) versus one in which this was not the case (station agents)—that left them with very different expectations around responsibility. We examine these supervisors’ contrasted (past) expectations of responsibility and how this led them to experience nearly identical (current) jobs in a very different manner. In particular, we unpack two dimensions of people’s sense of managerial responsibility: “administrative” responsibility and “personal” responsibility. By administrative responsibility, we mean a feeling of responsibility stemming from being in charge of formal aspects of the organization. And by personal responsibility, we mean a sense of highly impacting people’s lives without depending on coworkers to do so. Equipped with this more nuanced understanding of responsibility, we show that for all supervisors, becoming a manager was associated with a sense of increased *administrative* responsibility. Crucially, however, for former subway drivers only, this transition was also accompanied by unfulfilled expectations—a noticeable sense of loss of *personal* responsibility. We argue that for managers from jobs where feelings of personal responsibility are strong (such as nurses, surgeons, police officers, and subway drivers), becoming a manager can lead to unfulfilled expectations, which can explain their managerial blues. Hence, we suggest that for some new managers, stepping up also entails stepping down.

Our findings contribute to past literature in two main ways. First, our study offers a novel explanation for why seemingly similar managerial transitions can be experienced very differently. Although past literature hints at some factors that could be driving this difference, such as various individual differences or circumstances for the transition, we show how the expectations that people carry from their

prior occupations can shape their managerial experience. Namely, we demonstrate how past roles can influence the way people experience a managerial job transition through met and unmet expectations related to responsibility. Second, our study adds to the job-design literature by highlighting how people’s experience of a given job is not only dependent on the characteristics per se of a job, but is also shaped by their imprinted expectations of these characteristics (here, responsibility). Although this literature predicts that former drivers and former agents should experience managerial responsibility in similar ways because they have similar job characteristics and there are limited individual differences between the two groups, they do not. We highlight how the two groups came into the job with different sets of expectations about personal responsibility and challenge the assumption that becoming a manager always entails feeling a universal gain in responsibility. In summary, our study adds to literatures on job mobility and job design by spotlighting how occupational trajectories shape the meaning of responsibility at work and why such shaping matters for people’s managerial jobs.

Becoming a Manager: A Step Up for Some, A Step Down for Others

Becoming a manager, someone who is “formally in charge of [an] organization or one of its subunits” and has “formal authority over others,” is often a pivotal moment in people’s careers (Hill 2003, p. 3). As with all types of work-role transitions, when people transition into managerial roles, they must learn new role expectations and adjust their daily activities and behavior (Hall 1976, Nicholson and West 1988, Ashforth 2001, Tharenou 2001, Hill 2003, Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003, McCall 2004). For example, sales specialists who become managers have to make many changes, such as developing authority through building relationships instead of automatically gaining it from their new title (Hill 2003). Similarly, new managers often have to learn how to communicate technical knowledge to nonspecialists (Nicholson and West 1988).

Despite the challenges associated with becoming a manager, this promotion is typically portrayed as a highly coveted step up the career ladder (e.g., Barnard 1968, Mintzberg 1973, Schein 1978, Kotter 1982, Cohen et al. 1998, and Watson and Harris 1999). For instance, when moving up the hierarchy and transitioning to managers, people are viewed as entering the “big leagues” (Hill 2003, p. 2), increasing their “status,” and taking a “step forward in [their] working life” (Watson and Harris 1999, p. 36) to a job that is considered “fulfilling” and “rewarding” (Hill 2003, p. 160). It is often the sign of an “accomplishment” (Bailyn 1991, p. 4) for performing well in their past

jobs (Boyatzis 1982) and an indication that their bosses and organizations trust them to handle “more responsibility” (Bailyn 1991, p. 5).

However, despite the prestige and benefits of promotion, there is also evidence that some individuals experience managerial blues. For instance, certain engineers and scientists’ “transition to management has been troublesome” (Badawy 1983, p. 26), as some experience “a sense of loss” (Beauvais 1992, p. 334) or “frustration” (Cardador 2017, p. 607), suggesting disenchantment. Other work has shown that some healthcare workers that had taken on managerial roles felt “demotivated,” “concluded it was not for them” (Boucher 2005, pp. 221–223), and subsequently left their positions. Similarly, some nurses and doctors “struggled” as managers, as they didn’t see management as a “gratifying job” and didn’t “really enjoy being in this [managerial] role” (Spehar et al. 2012, p. 6). Likewise, studies of police officers have noted that some officers viewed supervisory positions as “unattractive” and did not see management as “real” work despite the career advancement they provide (Whetstone and Wilson 1999, p. 136). Other accounts spotlight an outstanding salesman that was promoted to a managerial position but after many years on the job, “requested that he become a salesman again,” a position where he was actually “excited by his work” (Boyatzis 1982, p. 3); and a doctor who became a manager that was “seriously looking at early retirement” from his management job, as he saw a nonmanagerial role as “great” (Llewellyn 2001, p. 613).

So how can we make sense of these conflicting experiences of new managerial roles? Past scholarship points to two main types of explanations for this managerial blues: individual differences and circumstances of the promotion to manager. First, individuals may differ in their desire and interest to move up the hierarchy, which could partly explain the managerial blues that some experience (Schein 1978, Boyatzis 1982, Bailyn 1991, Watson and Harris 1999, Llewellyn 2001). In the job-design literature, managerial jobs are generally considered “well designed” and high in motivating potential (Humphrey et al. 2007, Lup 2018). However, the literature acknowledges that not everybody may equally appreciate such well-designed jobs because of differences in an individual’s desire for challenging work and satisfaction (i.e., differences in growth needs strength) (Pierce et al. 1979, Hackman and Oldham 1980, Shalley et al. 2009, Oldham and Hackman 2010). Also, people’s skills, such as technical skills for engineers or sales skills for salespeople, may be mismatched with the skills needed in a managerial job, such as planning and delegating (Boyatzis 1982, Bailyn 1991). Second, the nature of the transition itself, such as a forced transition where people are not trained for their

managerial roles, could also result in feelings of disappointment and wanting to leave their new role (Bayton and Chapman 1972). Doctors and nurses that are somewhat involuntarily put in managerial positions have relayed this feeling (Spehar et al. 2012).

Although the above explanations tend to focus on individual differences and the nature of the transition, there is some evidence that people’s past jobs can also play a role in shaping their experience of managerial roles. For example, some nurses and doctors have difficulties reconciling key past professional norms (such as caring and patients first) with “values” of management (such as entrepreneurial activity and budgeting) (Llewellyn 2001). Moreover, in some professional cultures such as medicine, engineering, and police work, managerial roles are sometimes looked down upon as people who are distanced from their core profession (e.g., Whetstone and Wilson 1999 and Cardador 2017). But precisely what people carry into managerial roles from their past jobs—particularly, more subjective dimensions such as expectations or taken-for-granted norms—and how these expectations differentially shape experiences of the same managerial position remains unclear.¹ Building on the individual imprinting literature, we argue that such expectations might offer keys to better understanding people’s initial managerial experience.

An Imprinting Lens on the Managerial Experience

The individual imprinting literature highlights that certain work experiences can have a lasting influence on individuals and imprint such tangible elements as the skills, knowledge, and social capital that people carry with them from job to job (Marquis and Tilcsik 2013, Tilcsik 2014). These past experiences—mostly thought to be early career experiences when individuals are a “blank slate” (Hall 1976, p. 122) and relatively open to learning and being influenced by their environment (Van Maanen and Schein 1979)—influence how people experience their future work (e.g., Hambrick and Mason 1984, Dokko and Rosenkopf 2010, Dokko and Jiang 2017, Lee and Battilana 2020). For instance, many structural aspects of people’s early experiences (such as the broader economic situation) (Tilcsik 2014, Schoar and Zuo 2017), the organizations for which they first work (Higgins 2005, Phillips 2005), and early career mentors they have (Hall 1976, McEvily et al. 2011) can shape the skills and knowledge that people develop and carry with them throughout their careers. These experiences can also imprint more subjective elements like expectations, preferences, or taken-for-granted norms that people internalize and carry with them (e.g., Beyer and Hannah 2002, Burton and Beckman 2007, Bercovitz

and Feldman 2008, Dokko et al. 2009, Bianchi 2013, Azoulay et al. 2017, and Marquis and Qiao 2018).

However, there is generally less understanding of the imprinting of such subjective notions and the lasting impact they may have on people's managerial careers. A critical aspect that could potentially influence the imprinting of more subjective notions that people carry with them is the occupation to which individuals belong. Research has shown that being socialized in an occupation's norms, values, and traditions can deeply shape people's ways of thinking and acting (e.g., Van Maanen and Barley 1984, Bechky 2011, and Anteby et al. 2016). For example, Gusterson (1999) showed that nuclear-weapons scientists were socialized to see their work as important to preserving peace, and this worldview carried on during much of their career. In a different setting, Cahill (1999) revealed how death was normalized in the mortuary profession and permeated morticians' ways of relating to families of the deceased.

Only limited empirical work has suggested that what is internalized when belonging to an occupation is not necessarily erased or forgotten when people leave a job and take on a new role. Almandoz (2014) found that bank founders who had formerly worked in finance, where they were socialized to think in terms of profit maximization and risk-taking, carried these norms with them when constructing the mission of their new banks. By contrast, bank missions from nonfinance founders tended to be less focused on profits. Similarly, Battilana and Dorado (2010, p. 1432) suggest that microfinance professionals coming from social work versus banking backgrounds brought very different "capabilities" into their managerial roles. But, overall, past scholarship has paid limited attention to what subjective elements of one's background are carried over and how belonging to an occupation can shape one's experience of managerial work.

In this study, we argue that the increased responsibility associated with becoming a manager that typically feels like a step up is not a sentiment shared by everyone and is also shaped by the expectations that are formed and carried from one's past jobs. As we detail next, perceptions of managerial responsibility may not just be a function of current managerial job characteristics, but also depend on the expectations that people carry with them—in our case, about what responsibility feels like—that are imprinted by characteristics of their past jobs.

An Imprinted Expectation of Responsibility

A general assumption in the literature on managerial transition is that a challenging, but valued, part of becoming manager is feeling more responsibility (Barnard 1968, Mintzberg 1973, Schein 1978, Kotter

1982, Smith 1990, Bailyn 1991, Watson and Harris 1999). As Schein notes, for instance, "leadership roles" (such as general manager or senior partner) require learning "how to handle high levels of responsibility" (Schein 1978, p. 45). In addition, in Watson's (1994) study of middle managers, the most salient difference observed between managerial and nonmanagerial roles was having more responsibility. This explains why any assignments conferring "responsibility" for specific actions are considered attractive opportunities for future managers (Dragoni et al. 2009). An increased responsibility is a sign of upward mobility in peoples' careers, as their work is considered more valuable (Cohen et al. 1998, Haveman et al. 2009, Bidwell and Mollick 2015).

Although the term responsibility is extensively mentioned in the managerial literature, it tends, however, to be used loosely and to remain undefined (e.g., Dalton 1959, Stewart 1982, Jackall 1988, Luthans 1988, Nicholson and West 1988, Hannaway 1989, Watson 1994, Hill 2003, Mantere 2008, and Harding et al. 2014). Thus, instead of building on one explicit definition of responsibility, we explore how this increased sense of responsibility has been previously understood to better grasp its potential interplay with managerial blues. In both the managerial-transition and job-design literature, it is generally assumed that the responsibility that managers experience is linked to two specific job characteristics of a managerial role—having autonomy in decisions and direct reports. This makes new managers feel more responsible in at least two ways: They feel more responsible for their own work and more responsible for others.

First, past literature suggests that new managers feel a greater sense of responsibility for their own work, as they tend to have more autonomy, especially in decision making. In line with the job-design literature that identifies autonomy as a key driver of feelings of responsibility (Hackman and Oldham 1976), as managers are given greater autonomy, they feel more accountable for outcomes and less able to rely on or blame rules and procedures—leading to an increased sense of responsibility. The decisions in which they may have greater autonomy may involve daily operations or major organizational changes (Stewart 1974, Boyatzis 1982, Aldrich 2008). For instance, bank managers asked by their bosses to make decisions felt greater responsibility on their shoulders (Smith 1990). Also, the degree of decision-making flexibility has been found to be important, with managers equating greater flexibility with a stronger sense of responsibility for their work (Mantere 2008). A study of levels of responsibility in a factory hints to such a relationship, finding that the best way to measure level of responsibility was by the amount of autonomy and discretionary control allowed in the job,

something that both workers and managers agreed on (Jaques 1956). This understanding of responsibility generally captures how autonomy leads to feelings of accountability for one's work.

Second, as individuals move up the organizational hierarchy and become managers, it is often assumed that they feel increased responsibility for others, as they now have direct reports. As Hannaway (1989, p. 84) noted in her study of managers in a U.S. school district, "the number of people managers supervise often indicates how much responsibility they have." Managers are not only responsible for their own work, but also for the outcomes of their direct reports' work, as well as for the professional and even emotional well-being of these direct reports (Huy 2002). The literature also stresses that added duties come with more direct reports, such as team building and budgeting, which increase the scope of one's responsibility over others (e.g., Walker 1956; Sayles 1964; Mintzberg 1973; Dunkerley 1975; Kotter 1982; Watson 1994; Hales 2002, 2005; and Bidwell and Mollick 2015). For instance, sales specialists who had become managers felt an increased sense of responsibility, as they now led their direct reports, whose careers they felt were in their hands (Hill 2003).

Overall, past literature suggests that how managers experience and understand responsibility is largely a function of the job characteristics of their (current) new managerial roles—having autonomy in decisions and more direct reports. Building on the imprinting literature, we posit that feelings of responsibility that new managers experience are not only based on the characteristics of a managerial job, but also on imprinted expectations. Namely, these feelings may also depend on what is imprinted and carried along from people's past occupational experiences. A comparative study of recently promoted supervisors from two distinct occupational backgrounds allows us to explore this question by unpacking how expectations of responsibility formed in the past can lead to very different managerial experiences.

Setting, Data, and Methods

Setting

The setting of this study is the Paris subway, the Regie Autonome des Transports Parisiens (RATP). The RATP is a state-owned company, created in 1948 to operate the Paris subway and bus systems and serving the 12 million residents of the greater Parisian area. Key jobs in the RATP subway division include drivers; station agents, who are responsible for customer interactions; and supervisors, who manage the station agents and subway drivers.

In 2001, to improve safety in the subway system and reduce the number of accidents caused by human error, the RATP decided to automate Line 1, the oldest

and one of the busiest lines. Automation entailed transforming trains controlled by subway drivers into driverless trains and was successfully completed in 2011. Automation made the 219 subway drivers of Line 1 obsolete, as their work was now done by a computerized control system. Drivers' main duties included driving the subway and dealing with any incidents that occurred while driving. The fate of the drivers was decided in extensive union negotiations. Most became drivers on another line, whereas some were given the option of becoming supervisors on the newly automated Line 1. The new supervisors were selected mainly on the basis of RATP tenure and track record, and the vast majority of those drivers selected accepted the position. To understand the challenges and changes in responsibility entailed by transitioning into a managerial role, we initially focused on these former drivers who were promoted to supervisors.

Supervisors are in charge of specific sections, or zones, of the subway line, typically four or five stations. For each zone, only one supervisor is on duty at a given time. A large part of the supervisor's role entails managing between 25 and 50 station agents in their zone. Supervisors oversee their scheduling, training, performance reviews, and any day-to-day problems that arise. In addition, supervisors are responsible for handling incidents or problems that occur with the automated trains within their zone (e.g., train malfunction, unidentified packages, or passenger illness). Another main part of their job involves working one week in five at the automated trains control center, where they control the trains remotely. Supervisors can work one of three different shifts, each lasting approximately seven hours.

Data and Methods

The idea for this study originated from conversations with RATP management on its handling of labor relations while automating Line 1. Following these conversations, we conducted pilot interviews with former drivers. We were struck by the persistence of the theme of responsibility in our data, particularly how interviewees expressed a feeling of lost responsibility when becoming a supervisor. As this phenomenon seemed counterintuitive, and most promising for novel theory development, we decided to center our analysis and coding on the broad theme of responsibility. We therefore conducted a theory-elaboration exercise in which we used past literature as a springboard for directing our data collection "in the service of discovering" new, and hopefully broader, theory (Strauss 1987, p. 306).

As we progressed in our study, we realized that former drivers often spoke about their direct impact on others' lives when discussing issues of responsibility.

To compare this case with workers transitioning into a supervisory role from another job where individuals did not directly impact others' lives, we also looked at new supervisors that transitioned from a position as a station agent on various other lines of the Paris subway.² Station agents were mainly in charge of selling tickets and providing information in subway stations and overseeing the upkeep of the stations. Like the subway drivers, many agents did not have career plans to become supervisors until their supervisors proposed to them the job, and they were also promoted based on their seniority and performance. Supervisory roles on other subway lines involve very similar duties to those on Line 1. They include managing station agents, taking charge of incidents, and working at control centers to oversee and regulate subway flow and timing. Thus, some supervisors manage subway drivers rather than station agents, but the organizational duties involved are quite similar. While controlling for our setting, these former agents provide the closest comparable case to the subway drivers promoted on Line 1, but coming from a different occupational background.

We conducted our data collection and analysis in two phases. First, to better understand what transitioning from subway driver to supervisor entailed, we interviewed 29 of the 40 Line 1 supervisors (73%) who had been promoted during the automation project and were former drivers.³ The supervisors that we were unable to interview either were on sick leave ($n = 1$), had recently moved to another position ($n = 6$), had recently retired ($n = 1$), or declined for unknown reasons ($n = 3$). Most of the interviewees were men (93%), and their average age was 48. On average, the interviewees had been with the RATP for 21 years, had been subway drivers for 12 years and had held their current supervisor positions for four years (see Table 1 for details). Former subway drivers tended to have an educational level equivalent to a high school diploma, and their main motivations for applying to work at the RATP included the job security and benefits of working for a state-owned company. Very few interviewees specifically had the goal or desire to become a subway driver or a supervisor prior to joining the RATP, and many took the jobs that were available at the time and proposed to them by the company.

One member of the research team, which included the two authors and a trained research assistant, conducted each interview, between March 2013 and June 2014. Before the interviews, the human resources (HR) coordinator sent a brief email describing the project to all supervisors and told potential interviewees that the research team would contact them. All interviews were conducted during the workday, usually in the supervisor's private (underground) office. Interviews

lasted approximately one hour and were digitally recorded and transcribed. We followed an open-ended interview protocol with general questions about the interviewee's career path before and after working at the RATP, what a typical workday entailed as a driver and as a supervisor, and the most memorable moments in both positions. In general, we let the interviewee guide us to the subjects that were important to them, specifying only that we wanted to understand their job (see Appendix for details). All quotes used in this article have been translated from French into English by the coauthors.

In parallel with this process, and to gain a richer contextual understanding of the supervisors' daily work, we shadowed several supervisors during their shifts for approximately 30 observation hours in all, between October 2014 and June 2015. The observations were spread across morning, afternoon, and night shifts. During these observations, we accompanied supervisors as they performed their various duties. We drafted field notes within 24 hours of each observation, usually at the end of the site visit.

As the interviews progressed, each author separately read selected transcribed interviews, highlighting reoccurring and salient topics (such as train malfunctioning and suicides). We then met to discuss and compare the topics and subsequently honed in on broader themes. As our focus was on theory elaboration, after we had identified the main topics, we discussed which of them related to the notion of responsibility. Each of us then separately reanalyzed the transcriptions to identify concepts within the general theme of responsibility (such as impact on others' lives or autonomy in decisions), writing memos to document the concepts that emerged, and meeting to discuss and compare. We then went back to our data and used these concepts as coding categories. When new concepts around responsibility emerged, we added new categories. The data-analysis process was iterative, and we constantly went back and forth between our individual transcription analyses, memos, and discussions (Charmaz 2006, Golden-Biddle and Locke 2007). We continued this process until we had identified clear and consistent themes around responsibility both across and within interviews, keeping in mind how these themes could contribute to existing theory. After we had identified the main concepts within the realm of responsibility, and once we had reached a saturation point at which no new themes pertaining to responsibility emerged in our data, we each coded all the interviews to deepen our understanding of these concepts. We then compared our coding and discussed discrepancies in how we coded certain passages until we reached agreement.

In a second phase, to compare our initial cases with that of supervisors coming from a different occupational

Table 1. Details of Interview Sample, Former Subway Drivers

Interview number	Gender	Age	Job before working at RATP	Tenure at RATP		Tenure as subway drivers (years)	Other jobs at RATP (tenure in years)	Job just before promotion to supervisor	Tenure as supervisor (years)
				(years)	First job at RATP				
FD-1	Male	50	NA	19	Maintenance	11	Maintenance (4)	Subway driver	4
FD-2	Male	47	Telecommunications	26	Station agent	12	Station agent (4) Head of movement (5)	Subway driver	5
FD-3	Male	46	Service—food industry	19	Bus driver	10	Bus driver (6)	Subway driver	3
FD-4	Male	48	NA	25	Bus driver	14	Bus driver (8)	Subway driver	3
FD-5	Male	50	NA	NA	NA		None	Subway driver	4
FD-6	Female	54	Secretary	28	Station agent	20	Station agent (4)	Subway driver	4
FD-7	Male	42	Service technician	15	Subway driver	10	None	Subway driver	5
FD-8	Male	46	Mechanic	23	Station agent	10	Station agent (4) Head of movement (5)	Subway driver	4
FD-9	Male	47	Service—entertainment industry	24	Bus driver	11	Bus driver (9)	Subway driver	4
FD-10	Male	44	Electronics manufacturer	15	Subway driver	11	None	Subway driver	4
FD-11	Male	48	Service—food industry	19	Subway driver	14	None	Subway driver	5
FD-12	Male	53	Commercial bus driver	28	Bus driver	10	Bus driver (14)	Subway driver	4
FD-13	Male	54	College student	32	Head of movement	15	Head of movement (4) Supervisor (13)	Subway driver	13
FD-14	Male	50	Information technology	18	Bus driver	10	Bus driver (5)	Subway driver	3
FD-15	Male	51	Entrepreneur	20	Subway driver	15	None	Subway driver	5
FD-16	Male	51	Electrician	18	Subway driver	13	None	Subway driver	5
FD-17	Male	51	Service—entertainment industry	29	Bus driver	13	Bus driver (13)	Subway driver	3
FD-18	Male	48	Military	20	Station agent	13	Station agent (2)	Subway driver	5
FD-19	Male	51	Self-employed	20	Station agent	9	Station agent (8)	Subway driver	3
FD-20	Male	42	Factory worker	18	Subway driver	14	None	Subway driver	4
FD-21	Male	43	Electrician	18	Subway driver	13	None	Subway driver	5
FD-22	Female	44	Warehouse keeper	15	Subway driver	10	None	Subway driver	5
FD-23	Male	43	Service—food industry	13	Subway driver	10	None	Subway driver	3
FD-24	Male	50	Military	28	Repaired buses	14	Repaired buses (6) Bus driver (4)	Subway driver	4
FD-25	Female	46	Salesperson	19	Subway driver	15	None	Subway driver	4
FD-26	Male	50	Engineering firm	26	Bus driver	10	Bus driver (11)	Subway driver	5
FD-27	Male	46	Construction	14	Subway driver	10	None	Subway driver	4
FD-28	Male	48	Construction	14	Subway driver	10	None	Subway driver	4
FD-29	Male	50	Salesperson	22	Subway driver	17	None	Subway driver	5

Note. NA, not available.

background, we conducted additional interviews with former station agents who had been promoted to supervisor. We conducted this theoretical sampling because we assumed that some of the themes around responsibility that we had identified might be unique to supervisors coming from jobs where people directly impacted others' lives. We constructed our additional sample of 25 interviews from the list of all 30 current supervisors on all subway lines that had formerly been station agents. (For unknown reasons, five supervisors did not respond to our request or declined

to be interviewed.) As with the former drivers, we conducted all interviews in the supervisor's office, this time from August to September 2016. We used a similar interview guide to that used for the former drivers.

Our former station agent (FA) sample was relatively similar to our former driver (FD) sample in terms of age (average of 43 versus 48 years), education level (high school diploma), tenure at the RATP (17 versus 21 years), tenure in their former occupation (14 versus 12 years), and tenure as a manager (four versus three years). The jobs that former agents held

before working at the RATP were also quite similar to those of former drivers (for example, salesperson, service, or secretary) (see Table 2 for details). They, too, joined the RATP mainly for job security, with no specific objective to work as agents. Their managerial promotion process was relatively similar to those of former subway drivers. Based on tenure and performance, management often asked them if they were interested in the new job. We coded our additional data using the themes we had already identified, but when new themes around responsibility emerged, we added new categories. As for our initial analysis, we constantly went back and forth between our individual analyses, memos, and discussions until we reached a saturation point and no new concepts emerged around the theme of responsibility.

Findings

Becoming a Manager: A Puzzling Managerial Blues for Some

Although the job tasks and duties for their new managerial roles were nearly identical, former drivers and former station agents experienced these roles very differently. After becoming managers, the majority of former drivers experienced disenchantment

with their managerial jobs, or what we call managerial blues. They viewed their managerial jobs as comparatively less meaningful than their previous jobs and wanted to exit the managerial ranks soon after having joined them. By contrast, most former station agents were quite fulfilled in their jobs and, therefore, wanted to stay in management.

Even though many former agents “never planned on [becoming a manager] before” they were offered the job, they generally felt “very comfortable and very happy” in their new position. They typically described their jobs as “really interesting” and “enriching,” and expressed that being a manager was “an excellent challenge.” Overall, they viewed their jobs as “very rewarding.” For example, a former station agent stated: “I feel very fulfilled in what I do and I enjoy myself” (FA 10). Only a minority of former station agents (eight out of 24) indicated that they wished to “see other things” and move to positions in HR or training, often hoping for better hours (not having to work late nights or early mornings) or for further career development. However, most former station agents wanted to stay in their current managerial role. As some typically explained, “It’s an occupation that is very good” (FA 13), and “I feel good where I am now” (FA 16).

Table 2. Details of Interview Sample, Former Station Agents

Interview number	Gender	Age	Job before working at RATP	Tenure at RATP (years)	First job at RATP	Tenure as station agent (years)	Other jobs at RATP (tenure in years)	Job just before promotion to supervisor	Tenure as supervisor (years)
FA-1	Male	45	Salesperson	17	Station agent	14	None	Station agent	3
FA-2	Female	46	Information technology	12	Station agent	11	None	Station agent	1
FA-3	Male	30	Waste management	9	Station agent	5	None	Station agent	4
FA-4	Female	45	Secretary, salesperson	22	Station agent	20	Software training (1)	Station agent	1
FA-5	Male	38	Sports instructor	12	Station agent	11	None	Station agent	1
FA-6	Male	43	Music instructor	16	Station agent	14	None	Station agent	2
FA-7	Female	46	Secretary	22	Station agent	18	None	Station agent	4
FA-8	Female	45	Secretary	16	Station agent	13	None	Station agent	3
FA-9	Female	43	Salesperson	21	Station agent	18	None	Station agent	3
FA-10	Female	39	NA	21	Station agent	19	None	Station agent	2
FA-11	Female	46	Mail delivery	18	Station agent	17	None	Station agent	1
FA-12	Male	41	Service	17	Station agent	12	None	Station agent	5
FA-13	Female	45	Cashier	22	Station agent	18	None	Station agent	4
FA-14	Female	48	Salesperson	25	Station agent	20	None	Station agent	5
FA-15	Male	46	Salesperson	14	Station agent	12	None	Station agent	2
FA-16	Male	36	Service—food industry	6	Station agent	3	None	Station agent	3
FA-17	Male	46	Service—food industry	22	Station agent	19	None	Station agent	3
FA-18	Female	48	School monitor	15	Station agent	9	None	Station agent	6
FA-19	Male	47	Service – food industry	26	Station agent	22	None	Station agent	4
FA-20	Male	44	Food industry	16	Station agent	12	None	Station agent	4
FA-21	Female	37	Mail delivery	17	Station agent	14	None	Station agent	3
FA-22	Male	49	Laboratory researcher	16	Station agent	15	None	Station agent	1
FA-23	Female	41	Accountant	16	Station agent	13	None	Station agent	3
FA-24	Male	39	Mail delivery	15	Station agent	12	None	Station agent	3
FA-25	Male	48	Service—food industry	25	Station agent	19	Bus driver (1)	Station agent	5

Note. NA, not available.

When former subway drivers were offered a managerial job, they also initially mainly viewed the offer as a potentially interesting experience, which led them to voluntarily and gladly accept. One interviewee described these sentiments: “For me, it was a challenge. . . . I saw it as very interesting. . . . I accepted [the managerial job] thinking . . . maybe it could be enriching” (FD 1). Accepting the job was a chance to “evolve professionally,” “make more money,” and “learn something new.” After becoming managers, former subway drivers saw some positive aspects in their promotion, such as having contact and communication with people as compared with their previously “lonely situation” in their subway cabin. However, they expressed disenchantment as managers—they felt that their managerial jobs were not as meaningful as their past jobs. As one interviewee expressed: “We do everything [in terms of administrative tasks], but really we do nothing that matters” (FD 17). In light of this assessment, several felt “quite disappointed” with the current managerial position, and most “wanted to change” and “get out of” it. In fact, the vast majority of former subway drivers indicated that they had either already applied to or were hoping to change positions in the future (20 out of 29). Although they “did not miss driving” subways and did not want to go back to it, many wanted to find something more meaningful in terms of responsibility: For example, one wanted to go back to a job where “safety matters.” Some wanted to train new subway drivers, where “you need to be vigilant” because “if a new driver makes a security error, the person teaching them is held responsible” (FD 12). It was a job where they could “feel like they were making a difference” (FD 9) and could potentially be “fulfilling.” Others wanted to have a bigger role at the control center, where they had “the impression that we are actually doing something important” (FD 24) because passenger wellbeing was at stake. For instance, one interviewee explained this feeling:

What I would like to do is work at the control center. That’s really my thing . . . it’s a real job . . . you need to be rigorous . . . you are working with electricity . . . you can’t mess up. Here [as a manager] you are dealing with people issues. Do you see what I am trying to say? (FD 8)

As we show next, these contrasted groups of managers also had very different expectations of what personal responsibility felt like—something they carried with them from their past jobs. A common theme that arose throughout our analysis was the different type of responsibility that supervisors felt when embracing their managerial role. We found, in particular, that former subway drivers often felt a *greater* sense of responsibility as a driver than in their current managerial roles. To explain this unexpected finding, we

identified two distinct facets of responsibility that emerged in our analysis, which we label “administrative” and “personal” responsibility. Although both former subway drivers and station agents felt more administrative responsibility in their new roles as supervisors (in line with how responsibility has been understood in past managerial literature), former drivers experienced a sense of *loss* of personal responsibility. These unfulfilled expectations of responsibility in their managerial jobs form the background for former drivers’ managerial blues.

Feeling More Administrative Responsibility as a Manager

Similar to the assumption in past literature that embracing a managerial role comes with increased feelings of responsibility, both former subway drivers and station agents reported feeling more administrative responsibility in their new supervisor role. This increase mainly stemmed from the wider scope of duties and greater autonomy that their managerial roles now entailed.⁴

Wider Scope of Duties as a Supervisor. One key aspect of the managerial job that led to feelings of increased administrative responsibility for both former drivers and former agents was the range and breadth of work duties, which we label scope of duties. In their past occupation, former subway drivers expressed that they had been in charge of a narrow range of duties within the subway system—their train and its passengers. Their daily job was to “transport people and take them where they want” (FD 7) and “be responsible for the train from A to Z” (FD 1). Although they undeniably felt a “giant responsibility” for performing these duties, it was still limited to just a part of the extensive subway structure.

By contrast, when they became supervisors, former drivers felt that they were now involved in almost all aspects of the subway line, and it was their responsibility to “do everything in their power” to make the subway run smoothly. They did “a bit of everything”: managing station agents, resolving any problems that occurred on the automated or regular trains, and controlling trains at the control center, and this meant feeling more responsibility. As one interviewee summarized: “We intervene in all domains, so we have a *lot* of responsibility” (FD 3). It was a much-appreciated part of the job, as it gave them a sense of importance within the company. As some interviewees typically explained: “They [the RATP] gave me tons of different duties . . . and that is something that I tremendously appreciate because it’s also a sign of trust from them” (FD 6); “it’s diversified [work] . . . we really have an important role” (FD 14). The added

responsibility associated with doing many different duties was something that former drivers noticed: “I am responsible for ... the automatic train, the passengers, the station agents, the stations ... when we climb the hierarchy, automatically we take on more responsibility” (FD 11).

Former station agents shared the sentiment that, as agents, their responsibilities were confined to “[their] station and everything that happens in [their] station” (FA 4). Everyday duties mostly involved selling tickets, checking that the station was clean and safe, and helping with any incidents that occurred; in addition, agents could take part in a range of outside missions (e.g., going to outside companies to sell tickets). This set-up led some interviewees to feel that as station agents, their jobs had been somewhat “polyvalent,” but still narrowly defined.

In becoming supervisors, former agents also felt that in their new job “there is a lot more [task] diversity, a lot more responsibility (FA 1),” something they found enriching. For example, interviewees explained: “It’s a job that is quite rich with a large panel of activities” (FA 16), and “the diversity ... I like it ... and in a certain way it enriches my universe” (FA 20). Others explained that, as they were involved in almost all aspects of the subway line, as a supervisor, they even felt a “responsibility for the [entire] company.” In summary, for both former agents and former drivers, juggling many different duties as a manager felt like

a step up in terms of administrative responsibility and was something they enjoyed. (See Table 3 for additional quotes illustrating the shifting scope of duties experienced by drivers and agents, as well as other aspects of administrative responsibility.)

Greater Autonomy as a Supervisor. Another key aspect of the managerial job that resulted in feelings of greater administrative responsibility came from how much autonomy supervisors felt they had in their work. Greater autonomy in decisions was often associated with a greater sense of administrative responsibility. Although the jobs of subway drivers and station agents are quite different, both former drivers and station agents shared the sentiment that, in their past roles, they had very little autonomy in their jobs. As subway drivers, informants shared the feeling that they were constantly following procedures: “Drivers are asked to ... of course strictly respect rules, procedures” (FD 2). As one interviewee described, “The subway is only procedures. We never have to dream about what might happen ... everything has already been imagined, prepared, and thought of at least once” (FD 26). In fact, memorizing procedures was integral to the drivers’ job, and much of their training revolved around “learning the rules” by heart for every expected or unexpected occurrence.

By contrast, supervisors’ managerial role now involved making decisions. Supervisors had to exercise

Table 3. Feelings of Gaining Administrative Responsibility as Supervisors (Subway Drivers and Station Agents)

Dimensions of administrative responsibility	Interviewee perception	Example quotation(s)
Scope of duties	Narrow as driver or agent	“We are responsible for all the passengers, safety, and everything that happens on the train.” (FD 1) “In the station we had very little responsibility. We were responsible for the cash register and the money we collected.” (FA 17)
	Wide as supervisor	“So yes I have a lot more responsibility compared to when I was a driver. As a driver I was responsible for my train, to watch the tracks, the signals, to safely drive passengers from point A to point B. Now I am responsible for the driver, so here on the Line 1, I don’t worry about drivers, but I am responsible for the automated train and that it safely goes from point A to point B with all the passengers, all the station agents and all the facilities ... for the sector that I am responsible to be safe for the passengers. So it’s true that I have a lot more responsibility.” (FD 11) “A supervisor job is even more vast [compared to station agent job].” (FA 22)
Work autonomy	Low as driver or agent	“The job of a driver, in quotes, ... we don’t have a choice, it’s ... there it’s marked 50 ... we drive at 50, when it’s green it’s green, when it’s red it’s red ... rules, it’s, it’s ... it’s strict, it’s ... When there is this, we do this, this, this, this ... It’s also what is a bit difficult at the beginning. To say why it’s like this. It’s ... when there’s a breakdown on the train, we follow the procedures, and you can’t skip a page, it’s really this, this, this you must not skip a line ... <i>it’s like a recipe.</i> ” (FD 3) “We were there, we did what they told us to do [as a station agent]. But now [as a supervisor], it’s me that tells others what they need to do.” (FA 22)
	High as supervisor	“When we are drivers, we drive, so you have to concentrate on your driving. You don’t have ... decisions to make. You have rules to apply, so ... as a supervisor you must make decisions. You must make decisions.” (FD 13) “What I like is that, there’s action ... we make decisions.” (FA 23)

autonomy, particularly in the daily management of their direct reports, as well as during incidents. This meant feeling more in charge and being held responsible for outcomes. One interviewee described how making decisions during incidents was a core part of the job: “It’s the responsibility of the supervisor who is sent to the place of the incident and then labeled the ‘incident manager’ ... It’s him who is there, and it’s him who makes decisions. It’s really him that is held accountable” (FD 7). For former drivers, being able to make decisions and the associated responsibility was a coveted aspect of their managerial role: “The most pleasant thing [as a supervisor] is I would say making decisions” (FD 10)—even occasionally deciding to go against company policy (e.g., smoking in tunnels), while noting, “In any case, I am the boss!” (field note). In describing what happened when he made bad decisions as a supervisor, an interviewee explained this sentiment: “If my decisions were bad, I would have someone in the hierarchy tell me: ‘You shouldn’t have done this, you should have done that.’ It’s a good way to learn and also it’s good to be held responsible” (FD 13).

Similar to their driver counterparts, former station agents noted that, in their past jobs, they not only had procedures to follow for certain incidents, but they were mostly told what to do by their supervisors. One interviewee expressed this sentiment: “As a station agent, we literally follow orders: 10 p.m. you need to do the ticket machines; at this time you do this ... literally we just follow” (FA 2). As supervisors, interviewees also felt that their station agents tended to rely on them when decisions had to be made. Another interviewee noted about her station agents: “Everyone knows what to do, and when they call ... it’s because of something that’s not in the procedure ... That’s why a station agent calls us” (FA 22). She would tell them precisely what to do, underlying agents’ limited autonomy.

In becoming managers, former agents also felt they had more freedom in their choices. For example, one interviewee compared her time as an agent with her present job: “As supervisors, we are more autonomous ... I mean. Now I am a lot freer ... we are autonomous, we must make decisions” (FA 18). This meant feeling more in charge and more responsibility. Another interviewee explained, “For me responsibility is ... when I make a decision ... it’s a huge responsibility” (FA 21). For agents, the added autonomy was “stressful,” but at the same time “appealing and quite interesting.”

A Contrasted Experience of Personal Responsibility

Although both former subway drivers and station agents felt more administrative responsibility in their new roles as supervisors, former subway drivers also

reported feeling a loss of personal responsibility in their managerial roles. In their prior work, a deep sense of personal responsibility was a key part of their job, as their actions had critical consequences on the lives of others, and they could not depend on others in their work or share the blame for any mistakes. As former station agents did not experience the same deep sense of personal responsibility in their past job, their understanding and expectations of personal responsibility as a manager were quite different.

The Imprinting of a Deep Sense of Personal Responsibility (Former Subway Drivers). The impression that former drivers’ jobs substantially impacted people’s lives—what Hackman and Oldham (1976, p. 257) label high “task significance”—and the fact that they could not depend on others to perform their work—what has been labeled high “task independence” (Kiggundu, 1981, 1983)⁵—ingrained in them a deep and distinct sense of personal responsibility.

Subway Drivers’ High Task Significance. As subway drivers, informants spent most of their day driving a train filled with hundreds of passengers, and they constantly felt a great responsibility for the *lives* of others. As interviewees typically stated: “In driving, we have an enormous responsibility for others ... transporting the passengers ... on one subway train there are approximately between 600 to 800 passengers, so we are responsible for all the passengers, for the safety, for everything that happens on the train” (FD 1); “your driving will impact the lives of others ... for me it’s a giant responsibility” (FD 6). They saw their jobs as assuring “passenger safety to a maximum,” and they were quite conscious that people’s lives were directly in their hands: “You can’t *not* do things properly with people that are ... in your train. You are very aware ... you don’t want anything to happen when we drive” (FD 13). This feeling was amplified by the fact that the passengers were quite visible to them. For example, talking about the responsibility she felt during her time as a driver, another interviewee noted:

We feel it [responsibility] because we see them [the passengers], we see them constantly get on, get off, we know that all the time we have an incredible number of passengers ... The moment that you have one person that gets on your train ... he or she trusts you, and that is ... important. (FD 6)

Many interviewees noted that “knowing the responsibility” they had “for the people behind” them, it was very important to “leave any personal problems at the door” of their subway cabin, because even a “moment of inattention” could “result in dire consequences” (FD 10). Some cited major subway

accidents that had happened throughout the world and were caused by careless drivers “not realizing the responsibility they had in driving” (FD 6). A common feeling was that, as drivers, there was strictly “no room for mistakes” because “passengers’ lives were at risk.” As another interviewee reiterated: “We transport people; we are not allowed to make any mistakes” (FD 12). This responsibility was at times a “pressure” and a “stress.” Another interviewee clarified: “Passenger safety is of utmost importance. The stress, I felt it because they tell you: ‘careful a safety error, a missed signal . . . can be very serious issue.’ And it is a very serious issue” (FD 9). However, interviewees also expressed that “transporting passengers safely” was “the principal mission that we had” (FD 10), and it gave them “the feeling to really be useful” (FD 1). As one noted, “The job of a driver is super important . . . many things could happen . . . with people behind us” (FD 15).

Although many former drivers stated that they felt responsibility, even with only one passenger, they also expressed that the sheer *number* of lives they impacted on a daily basis shaped and intensified this sentiment of responsibility. For example, in comparing the responsibility an interviewee experienced as a subway driver versus the responsibility she felt when simply driving a car, she stated: “I was much more aware of the responsibility that I had [in driving a subway] . . . I was responsible for on average 800 people in my train . . . it became more real” (FD 6). Similarly, some former subway drivers that worked as bus drivers prior to their subway jobs noted that the responsibility they experienced was much stronger on the subway because of the number of lives they could potentially impact: “I really felt a responsibility when I became a subway driver . . . you don’t have the same [feeling] on the bus. We are not as conscious about it because it’s not the same size . . . there are more people inside [the subway]” (FD 9).

The everyday responsibility that former drivers felt for passenger lives was one that they internalized over an extended period of time. Every day, they were in “a job that you must be very safe, very attentive, be careful” (FD 27) to not make mistakes and one where “you are *constantly* putting [passenger] lives at risks” (FD 6); thus, this responsibility “weighed” on them over many years as a driver (on average 12 years for our interviewees) and imprinted in them a deep sense of personal responsibility. As one interviewee clarified: “For the many years I was a driver, I had dreams . . . well more nightmares than dreams, of running through a red light. We are so infused with the importance of [passenger] safety that you dream about it” (FD 22); this sentiment of responsibility was something that

was “never fully erased” during the rest of one’s career and “continues, in fact, to haunt you.”

In addition to the responsibility they felt for passengers’ lives on standard or “typical” days, as subway drivers, interviewees were also directly involved in various critical incidents that occurred while driving their train. In these moments, the responsibility they felt for others’ lives instantly left “a mark” on them. When incidents occurred, such as a passenger becoming ill or a woman going into labor, an important part of drivers’ jobs was to react instantly to shorten the duration of the incident and to ensure passenger safety. As one interviewee explained, “The instant [an incident occurs], you need to react and ensure all safety measures . . . you need to know exactly what to do . . . to react instantly . . . even if we aren’t timed . . . it’s a matter of safety” (FD 15). They expressed feelings of personal responsibility and ownership for the situation, often speaking of something happening on “*my* train” to “*my* passengers” and shared memorable narratives of how passenger lives were impacted. A former driver explained: “Well they are the situations when you are a driver, whether it be a fainting spell, a fit of epilepsy, or a woman who gives birth . . . we totally experience the situation” (FD 29). For example, he witnessed a baby being born on his train and reported his crucial and direct involvement in the situation:

It was complicated, the passengers had blocked the train, the lady was really in distress because her water had broken and calling the firemen, seeing and managing everything and all, it was really a memory that was beautiful . . . so I had alerted central command, I explained to them that effectively my train was stopped, because I really could not move the woman at all. So we waited for the fireman, afterward we talked to the woman because she needed reassurance. We needed to make her wait because it really couldn’t happen right away. (FD 29)

Another salient moment when drivers directly impacted human life was through the experience of a passenger suicide on their train. As interviewees remarked: “It’s always very trying to have someone commit suicide underneath your train” (FD 6); “The most difficult? I think it is when you kill someone, when someone jumps [in front of your train]” (FD 26). Although suicides were not a daily occurrence, most former drivers we spoke to could vividly recall at least one suicide. In fact, it was rare for drivers to go through their career without at least one suicide, and many of those who had not directly experienced a suicide had been involved in attempted suicides. Some interviewees professed how fortunate they were to not have taken another person’s life: “I was lucky to not have

run over someone, I was lucky to not have killed someone. These are things we think about when driving” (FD 17). Even though suicide was not the driver’s fault, as often it was too late once a person had jumped onto the track, drivers felt some blame for the death. The train that had technically killed someone was in the hands of the driver, who “saw the silhouette” of the person and felt the “weight of the train behind” as he tried to brake on time. An interviewee noted: “I was looking at the tracks. I saw the person running towards the tracks but . . . it was too late, we can’t do anything. After, it’s true the moment it happens you may feel like you are OK . . . but then . . . we don’t sleep through the night” (FD 3). Interviewees insisted that what it means to feel responsible for someone else’s life after a suicide “marks you for life” and “remained ingrained in my head.” For example, an interviewee that was involved in an attempted suicide described how his role in the act made it such a haunting and lasting experience:

I didn’t sleep at all that night, even if nothing happened to the boy. He had a scratch on his head but since it was me, I knocked him down, I hit the brakes so hard that I just touched him like that . . . These are moments that leave a mark on you, it is . . . I think that we never forget them. We will never forget them . . . We remember a suicide for our whole life. Even if we aren’t . . . guilty, we are a part of it. (FD 3)

Subway Drivers’ High Task Independence. A common topic that appeared when former subway drivers described their previous job was the fact that they could not depend on others, as “it’s a solitary job.” For most of their shift, they were “not in contact with people” and “completely alone” in their cabin; one even described their cabin as “my bubble.” “The solitude that sets in over the years” (FD 21), something that many former drivers found challenging, shaped their notion of personal responsibility. Being alone meant rarely being able to rely on colleagues for help in their day-to-day jobs or share the blame with anybody if something went wrong. One interviewee noted how constantly being alone heightened her feeling of responsibility: “During the day when you are all alone, it is . . . you are there for your passengers, for the train” (FD 25). “When all alone, you really can’t mess up” (FD 20) because there was no one else to repair your mistakes. As another former driver noted: “So if there are criticisms to be made there is only one person [to blame] . . . I’m responsible for what I do” (FD 23).

Similarly, when there were critical incidents on a train, drivers often didn’t have time to consult anyone else before reacting. Interviewees repeatedly described the feeling of having nobody to count on during these incidents, thus imprinting a deep sense of personal

responsibility. One interviewee noted about her time as a driver: “It’s true that when we have a situation, we are alone . . . the main stress entails handling . . . all the security measures” (FD 22). Another interviewee described an extreme example of losing contact with the control center while driving and having to make an instant decision when her train got stuck on a bridge:

And I was all alone in the world. Because the breakdown that I had was a contact failure, with my keys in driving mode. And so it was like, I was stopped, like I was out of service. And so I could no longer communicate with the PCC [central control]. So no one was waiting for me . . . and at that moment I saw the river, and thought what I am going to do? And during this time . . . I couldn’t get hold of anyone. Now that’s terrible. All alone in the world. (FD 25)

The Imprinting of Weak Feelings of Personal Responsibility (Former Station Agents). Unlike former drivers, former agents had a very different experience with personal responsibility before becoming supervisors. In their former jobs, they felt that they had very little impact on others’ lives (low task significance) and were able to depend on others to perform their work (low task independence).

Station Agents’ Low Task Significance. During their role as station agents, they had “very little responsibility for security” of others, and their actions rarely had consequences on others’ lives. If they made mistakes in their job, they felt they could generally “correct them without there being serious consequences” (FA 5). Their main duties included opening and closing the subway stations; checking that the equipment was clean and operating correctly (ticket machines, escalators, etc.); selling tickets and keeping track of the money; and answering clients’ enquiries. In addition, station agents often checked on homeless people who sheltered in the station.

When critical situations, such as passenger suicides or accidents, occurred in the station where they worked, the agents’ main role was to help clear the platform and support the subway driver until a supervisor arrived. Although these experiences were unpleasant for them, they did not feel a great deal of personal responsibility for the lives lost as their part in the event was fairly passive. In general, these events did not “particularly leave a mark” on them. For example, one interviewee described how incidents played an unremarkable role in his everyday work as a station agent:

What can I say? Days went on like that. If there were accidents, we dealt with them. If someone was sick, we called the firemen. If there was a problem, we helped the drivers with problems on his train . . . if we had the skills. So he handled his train and we handled travelers, that’s how our days went by. (FA 19)

Similarly, he described his indirect role as a station agent during a suicide, expressing very little responsibility for the event:

I had to clear people from the platforms. And with the firemen, I had to ‘record’ the person’s [death]. This was not a pleasant task, but unfortunately I have performed many other [unpleasant tasks] after suicides . . . It ends up just being part of the job. (FA 19)

In addition to not directly impacting the lives of passengers, as station agents, interviewees also noted that, in general, their actions did not have an impact on others, including their colleagues and other subway employees. That’s because agents were mostly responsible for managing their own daily professional challenges.

Station Agents’ Low Task Independence. For former agents, working alone had not been an important part of their previous job. As station agents, they were often in contact with their supervisors and called them if they had any questions or problems. In addition, in the large subway stations, they worked with another station agent in the same ticket booth. Interviewees often emphasized that one aspect of the job they appreciated, especially when working on specific missions (e.g., opening a station or checking passenger tickets), was that they were on a team. Thus, the job of a station agent was much less solitary than that of a driver. One supervisor even mentioned this as a reason why she would not want to be a subway driver: “All alone in a train . . . it’s not my place!” (FA 23). When critical choices needed to be made, they were made by many agents, and the responsibility for outcomes was shared. For instance, talking about a big fight that happened in the station where she was selling tickets as an agent, one interviewee noted that management was “happy with *them* [all the station agents involved]” in terms of how “*they* managed” the situation (FA 18). (See Table 4 for added quotes illustrating the differing experiences of personal responsibility for agents and drivers.)

Subway Drivers to Supervisors—Unfulfilled Expectations of Personal Responsibility. In their new managerial jobs, although it was an advancement in terms of their career, former drivers no longer felt a deep sense of personal responsibility. They did not forget, however, what it meant to them to drive, and the best parts of their managerial jobs often corresponded to the rare occasions when they could feel a strong sense of personal responsibility again.

Supervisors’ Lower Task Significance. When these former subway drivers became supervisors, the “others” that they now had a direct impact on were mostly their direct reports, but being responsible for their direct reports’ careers and wellbeing paled in comparison with what it felt like to be directly responsible for the lives of passengers when they were drivers. Although many interviewees “very much like[d] the human relations” part of “managing people” (FD 4) and felt they had a “good handle” on it, from their perspective, their jobs no longer had the same critical impact on the lives of others. Once supervisors, most of their time was spent managing their direct reports, where “there is no real danger, there are no problems concerning safety at all” (FD 10). Their job entailed spending time at a desk to complete administrative tasks, such as scheduling and annual appraisals, and also visiting station agents to motivate them, resolve conflicts, and oversee their work. Some viewed their managerial duties as less significant, comparing management to supervising children during recess: “Managing station agents . . . It’s a little like a recess courtyard. You need to know how to deal with conflicts. It’s kind of like being at school” (FD 18). Unlike the dire consequences of making a mistake as a driver, managerial mistakes were seen as much less serious: “You make mistakes and you learn from them” (FD 10).

Supervisors’ roles did occasionally entail acting in incidents that occurred on the automated trains, and they were the first that had to intervene during these emergencies. As such, supervisors did have some impact on passengers’ lives when “security becomes a priority.” These were moments “when there is an incident, it’s true that your adrenaline levels rise, stress levels rise . . . you need to reassure the station agents so that you can deal with the situation quickly” (FD 11). They had to solve train malfunctions, suspicious packages, or suicides, with “no room for error.” In these moments, former drivers did express a sense of responsibility for passengers’ lives, where they felt “a stress, you need to react . . . it is a *good stress*” (FD 14). One interviewee noted, “My own role was to keep the passengers safe. It was above all this; this priority is first and foremost in all our interventions. It is the safety of the people and ourselves” (FD 28).

However, serious incidents were not daily occurrences, and, as supervisors, their role in many such situations was more indirect than when they had been subway drivers. For instance, in passenger suicides, as supervisors, the responsibility they experienced was much less personal. As one interviewee explained, they were no longer “actors” in the suicide:

Table 4. The Shaping of Feelings of Personal Responsibility (Subway Drivers and Station Agents)

Dimensions of personal responsibility	Interviewee perception	Example quotation(s)
The imprinting of a deep sense of personal responsibility (subway drivers) Impact on lives	High task significance	<p>“And so there is, we feel a weight, you have a huge responsibility. And, and there, I felt a responsibility. In terms of security. Which is really the most important. And from that, there comes a stress. And that, that was . . . it’s true that it weighs on you also. Because you are, you know very well that behind you, you have between . . . 650–750 people if the train is full. So there is really a huge responsibility. . . .” (FD 9)</p> <p>“I had an attempted suicide once. In fact, I saw a silhouette . . . there was light from the station that was shining . . . he was between I don’t know a few 100 meters underground, and he was in the middle of the tracks . . . So I hit the emergency brakes . . . I stopped 5 meters from him. A person I think a little adrift, in a state of shock . . . So I had to take responsibility for him, to get him . . . Well it went OK. I got through the situation well . . . because I didn’t hit him . . . a fraction of a second, a glance up . . . it depends on very little in fact . . . sometimes a fraction of a second and it’s lost. So I must admit I was lucky . . . because I think it’s something that must mark you for life.” (FD 15)</p>
Independence at work	High task independence	<p>“In this job, you don’t need anybody. Responsible for yourself and that’s it, you do what you want to do. In the end, you don’t depend on anybody else. It’s, it’s, it’s easier to work . . . This means that, yeah, it’s . . . You do just what you want to do, and you don’t depend on anybody. If you do things well, it’s on you, if you do things badly, it’s also on you.” (FD 27)</p>
The imprinting of weak feelings of personal responsibility (station agents) Impact on lives	Low task significance	<p>“I would say that as a station agent, we take care of ourselves . . . meaning we take care of our own professional problems. We don’t need to take care of others’ problems because we are agents.” (FA 18)</p>
Independence at work	Low task independence	<p>“They [station agents] call us [supervisors] a lot: I have a problem, I made a mistake. . . .” (FA 20)</p>

It’s different because as a driver, it’s true that we take part, we are the actor, a person arrives we are the actor . . . As supervisors, we experience things differently . . . that’s to say we will have to see the family, perhaps the family to manage if they show up, if they come here. We sometimes do tunnel visits, interstation visits, or sometimes we end up seeing the remains that are scattered around. (FD 29)

Similarly, in other incidents, one interviewee noted his comparatively lessened involvement:

In a train, you have a . . . driver . . ., someone . . . who controls his train and his metro line, and who can react rapidly in terms of communicating with others. He is the one impacted by this incident. While . . . we [the supervisors], we are positioned in zones and it’s a bit more complicated. It’s the part where we lose a bit. (FD 16)

Having much less frequent and direct responsibility for human life in their daily duties as a supervisor resulted in promoted individuals not feeling the same form of deep personal responsibility when they used to be drivers. However, it was something former drivers searched for in their manager jobs: “We aren’t waiting for an incident to happen but . . . almost” (FD 24). Similarly, an aspect of their supervisor job they liked best was when they worked in the control center, where they felt that “there could be

consequences if [they] made mistakes” (FD 12), especially during incidents.

Supervisors’ Lower Task Independence. Unlike when they were subway drivers, as supervisors, interviewees often stressed that they never felt alone—they were “non-stop” in contact with their station agents, the control center, or their colleagues. Other than the day-to-day organization of their agents, supervisors generally described a form of teamwork in their job where they “communicate a lot to exchange information so that things run as smoothly as possible” (FD 22). During our observations, we noted many instances where there was a collaborative nature to the supervisory role. For instance, supervisors asked for their colleagues’ input and sometimes worked together to organize station-agent planning and vacation requests, even though it was officially the duty of the sole supervisor that was assigned to the end-of-line station. In addition, although it was technically the responsibility of supervisors in a particular zone (i.e., several stations) to respond to zone agents’ problems and questions, they often depended on supervisors from other zones to help out. We heard from various former station agents that when they could not reach their zone supervisor immediately, they simply consulted other supervisors.

Supervisors also depended on others when resolving incidents on the automated train. For example, although supervisors were officially appointed to become “incident lead” during problematic events, many noted that they depended on the control center for information. As one interviewee explained, “We are under the responsibility of the control center . . . We don’t really know what is happening. They tell me ‘the automated train did this and you need to drive in manually’” (FD 12). Moreover, during our observations, we noticed many occasions when supervisors worked with others on the train. For instance, when a supervisor did a routine brake check on the train, he communicated by walkie-talkie with the central control (describing everything that was happening from opening the doors to the successful outcome of the test), and also getting constant feedback from them.

Although former drivers found it “interesting to work with lots more people” (FD 4) than they saw while driving, when others were involved, it was easier to dilute responsibility. Discussing the difference between working as a subway driver and working as a supervisor, one interviewee explained:

In the end, I find that people are more responsible, more like adults as drivers. More autonomous and more responsible. But yeah it also comes from . . . the job in itself; we know that if there is an issue, if there is a problem on the train . . . there is only one person responsible: it’s us [the driver]. [As a supervisor] it’s really . . . everyone calls you ‘boss’ even though . . . in the end, the driver is more, will be more responsible. At least if he makes a mistake he will take responsibility for it. Because in any case he can’t really hide . . . In the station [as a supervisor] . . . it’s not me, it’s somebody else’s fault. (FD 23)

Station Agents to Supervisors—A Feeling of Increased Personal Responsibility. Unlike the former subway drivers, former agents reported experiencing a gain in personal responsibility as supervisors. They felt that their jobs now had more of an impact on people’s lives, namely, their direct reports. As station agents, notions of being responsible for others’ lives was quite different from subway drivers; becoming responsible for their newly found direct reports’ well-being and careers was experienced as a step up in responsibility.

Supervisors’ Higher Task Significance. When they became supervisors, former station agents felt that they had *more* of an impact on others’ lives. This increased impact did not come from feeling more responsible for the lives of passengers, but, rather, for their direct reports. Most reported that the direct effect of their actions on passengers’ lives remained limited as supervisors, and their job during critical

incidents was to help and support subway drivers who were most directly involved and were the ones that “undergo a psychological shock.” Although former agents expressed that, as supervisors, handling passenger life-and-death incidents was unpleasant and stressful, they “end up being detached from things [life-and-death passenger incidents].” However, as supervisors, they felt they now had a significant impact on the lives of their direct reports.

Comparing their time as station agents with their current role, many supervisors indicated that a large change in their new job involved being there for their direct reports. As supervisors, they felt responsible for the security, mental health, and even career paths of their reports, a job in which they felt they were “doing something important.” To “ensure the well-being of my agents” (FA 22) and to have to worry about someone else was viewed as “stepping up” in terms of responsibility. One interviewee described this feeling: “As a supervisor, we really feel that we have climbed up a step . . . the responsibility is here . . . for the agents” (FA 4). For these former agents, having their direct reports now count on them meant that they felt more personally responsible for them, which was demanding, but also “enriching.” Another interviewee viewed this responsibility as similar to how parents feel for their child:

When we are agents . . . we manage ourselves. When we become supervisors, we manage more than ourselves . . . it’s a little like . . . children and parents. When we are children we take care of ourselves and when we are parents we find ourselves with . . . responsibility that we didn’t have before . . . meaning we take care of someone other than ourselves. (FA 18)

Supervisors Unchanged Low Task Independence. As supervisors, similar to their station-agent jobs, former agents continued to feel that they could rely on colleagues in their work. Station agents who transitioned to a supervisory role noted that now they often continued working as a team, or “hand-in-hand” with their colleagues or managers. One interviewee described how he typically worked with the control center and other supervisors during an incident:

Well I wasn’t by myself . . . it was the moment we were switching shifts, I had my night shift colleagues who came to help out plus my colleague who was on the day shift. And we got to work on the train . . . and well we shared the work with the control center a bit to try to fix the situation as best as possible . . . so we had to . . . determine why the train broke down and what could have caused it and how we could best fix the situation. (FA 19)

This collective troubleshooting translated to sharing the responsibility of what happened. For example, in talking about the main goal of his supervisory job to “transport passengers in the best conditions,”

an interviewee explained: “It is a collective mission, it is not my own mission . . . It’s a team effort, and so we are not alone in accomplishing the job” (FA 17). These former station agents also acknowledged that drivers—contrary to them—often had to deal with incidents on their own. For example, discussing how part of her role as a supervisor was to prepare subway drivers for incidents, one interviewee mentioned, “I tell them [the subway drivers]: If you have a situation on the line, we aren’t there to help you. You have to figure it out by yourself at first” (FA 7). (See Table 5 for added quotes illustrating the differing perceptions of personal responsibility as supervisors for agents and drivers.)

Alternative Explanations. Although a qualitative research design does not allow us to fully rule out alternative explanations for the managerial blues experienced by former subway drivers, our data suggest that other explanations proposed in past literature seem unlikely. For example, one might imagine that the nature of the transition itself could explain the different experiences of former station agents and drivers. As the automation led to many former drivers being made managers, drivers may have felt that the transition was imposed. However, no drivers expressed

that they felt forced to accept the job. As an interviewee explained: “They [the directors] proposed [a managerial job] to different drivers and after we had an option to choose yes or no” (FD 7). Some interviewees even indicated that at the time they were proposed the promotion, they were also given the option to become a driver on express commuter trains (whose routes run both under and over ground), a highly desirable “progression” for subway drivers, as it allowed them to see outside. But still, they chose to become managers. Former drivers also noted that they could easily have continued driving on another line, which was also a relatively attractive option that some of their colleagues chose: “For those [drivers] who didn’t want to become managers . . . they had a bonus . . . to compensate for the change [of subway lines] . . . so it was a choice that some made. I made a different choice” (FD 11).

Another alternative account for the blues that former drivers experienced could be that there is a mismatch of what they are good at and the relational skills needed as a manager. Former drivers did express that their managerial job was “relational” and “different than their driver job”—admitting that it took some time to learn how to properly deal with relational issues such as reprimanding their direct reports without

Table 5. Differing Perceptions of Personal Responsibility as Supervisors

Dimensions of personal responsibility	Interviewee perception	Example quotation(s)
Subway drivers to supervisors: A feeling of losing personal responsibility		
Impact on lives	Low task significance	“We don’t control what happens [during an incident]. We [the supervisors], we run after the events, uh, it’s not us that, in the end we don’t create them.” (FD 13) In comparing incidents as a supervisor and driver: “[As a driver] there was a man that fell in between the platform and the train . . . and so I got him out and . . . I took care of him . . . well it’s always nice . . . [As a supervisor] it’s not at all the same . . . I was just at Porte Maillot [a subway station]. A man . . . who was in a panic . . . he forgot a tire [that he just bought] on the train . . . well it wasn’t obvious [to find it]. Luckily for him it was a train that had been parked, so . . . the train had to be taken out of the parking area . . . and I got his tire. Not very thrilling (laughs). I try . . . to let’s just say . . . to make . . . to have good days.” (FD 8)
Independence at work	Low task independence	“The PCC [control center] notified me that there was this type of incident because with the automated train . . . we don’t know what is going on until we are at the control desk, so afterwards, it was they who guided me, so we had different procedures that we needed to follow, that resulted in us asking for help from another train. <i>It’s teamwork, we worked as a team with the PCC.</i> ” (FD 28) “We . . . have contact with station agents, and it’s all the time. It’s non-stop . . . And I would almost say that it’s . . . tiring.” (FD 6)
Station agents to supervisors: A feeling of gaining personal responsibility		
Impact on lives	High task significance	“Today we are part of management. So there are people that count on us . . . the people that we manage . . . who can have requests, who can tell us their problems . . . so this responsibility . . . there is this aspect to take into account.” (FA 16)
Independence at work	Low task independence	“What I liked before [as a station agent] and what I also find here [as a supervisor] is it’s working in a team . . . you need to work in osmosis and there are lots of discussions . . . it’s the same [as being a station agent] and you count on . . . each other.” (FA 11)

offending them. However, now they felt managing people was no longer problematic. As they explained: “I don’t have problems managing,” and managing station agents “is not difficult.” In fact, many former drivers actually indicated that they “very much” liked “the human side” of management and found it “interesting.” In addition, both former drivers and former agents went through the same year-long training that any RATP member transitioning into such a supervisory role must attend in order to develop these “human” skills.

Finally, perhaps former drivers and former stations agents are inherently different in terms of personality or career preferences, which led them to choose different initial jobs at the RATP and also have different experiences as a manager. There are multiple reasons that lead us to believe that this is not the main explanation for their contrasted experiences. First, many people from both groups indicated that, as opposed to having specific career objectives to work as a station agent or driver, they applied to work at the Paris subway for “job security” reasons, as the state-owned company provided them with “protection” from job loss and job “guarantees.” In fact, when applying to the RATP, many from both groups had simultaneously applied for work at other state-owned organizations (such as the French railroad system) and viewed their careers at the RATP happening by chance. As a former driver explained, “I had applied to the tax department, the police department, and the RATP. In the end, the RATP was the first to contact me, so that is why I started working at the RATP. It was random” (FD 13). Second, many also did not have a strong desire for a particular job within the RATP and “took the job that was offered” (FD 17) at the time or made choices based on shift hours or geographical convenience. For example, a former agent expressed that “there wasn’t a particular attraction” to the station agent job, and a former driver explained that he ended up as a driver because “at the time they [RATP] were looking for subway drivers” (FD 11).⁶ Third, there did not seem to be a big difference in individual drive or desire between the two groups to move up the hierarchy. Both groups generally mentioned that they “didn’t have the ambition to be a manager” (FA 10), and becoming a manager happened because “they were proposed [the job].” In short, the main difference between former drivers and stations agents was their contrasted experiences in their respective lines of work prior to becoming managers.

Discussion

In summary, former subway drivers and former agents experienced similar managerial transitions very differently. In moving up the organizational

ladder, most former subway drivers felt managerial blues, viewing their managerial jobs as comparatively less meaningful than their previous ones. This was not a sentiment that former station agents shared. Part of this contrasted experience, we argue, came from what was carried from their past roles—differing expectations of what responsibility felt like. Both former drivers and former agents felt increased administrative responsibility due to having a wider scope of duties and greater autonomy. Yet, simultaneously, we found that many former subway drivers experienced unfulfilled expectations—a feeling of loss—of personal responsibility in their supervisory position.

The work of a subway driver imprinted in them expectations of what it felt like to have a deep sense of personal responsibility. In their former job, their actions could directly impact others’ lives, and there was no one else to blame or count on when something went wrong. When former subway drivers embraced their new managerial role, they carried these expectations of what personal responsibility felt like with them. Their managerial jobs no longer allowed them to feel this responsibility, but they did not forget what it meant to them; thus, although becoming a manager was a step up the career ladder, for former drivers, it also felt like a step down. Former station agents, who had been socialized in a job whose characteristics did not evoke strong feelings of personal responsibility, did not experience this sense of loss as managers.

Contribution to the Managerial Transitions Literature

Our study’s findings contribute to the managerial-transitions literature by offering a new explanation for why seemingly similar managerial transitions can be experienced very differently. In other words, why do some feel fulfilled, whereas others feel disenchantment, when moving into the managerial ranks? Although past work has suggested that individual differences and the transition circumstances per se may account for contrasted managerial experiences (e.g., Schein 1978, Boyatzis 1982, Bailyn 1991, Watson and Harris 1999, Llewellyn 2001, and Spehar et al. 2012), our findings suggest that people’s past roles can also influence the way they experience a managerial job transition through met and unmet expectations related to responsibility. The disenchanting group in our study, former drivers, came into their managerial jobs with a different set of expectations around what personal responsibility felt like, expectations that were formed in their past jobs. Particularly when engaging in high-task-significance work and performing one’s tasks independently were key characteristics of people’s past jobs, in becoming a manager, they face an additional challenge of unfulfilled expectations of feeling strong personal responsibility.

Our findings highlight that these elements that people carry with them from their past jobs can also be an important factor in shaping managerial transitions.

In general, research examining the experience of new managers tends to overlook the influence from their past jobs, and most studies hardly even mention their occupational histories (e.g., Boyatzis 1982, Kotter 1982, Black 1988, Nicholson and West 1988, Waller et al. 1995, and Hill 2003). Although there is some evidence that varying backgrounds, such as coming from financial or marketing jobs, can result in individuals doing their jobs differently in terms of the strategies or priorities on which they choose to focus (Hambrick and Mason 1984), we still have a limited understanding as to what new managers carry from their past occupational experiences. Our study provides a deeper understanding of how belonging to an occupation can be a source of imprinting and how the work people perform in their past jobs can impact how they experience future managerial transitions.

In addition, our findings further our understanding of when occupational imprinting may occur and what may influence the “strength” of the imprint. The current imprinting literature generally highlights that imprinting is more likely to happen at the early stages of careers. What people learn and experience during these moments is what is considered more likely to “stick” with them (Marquis and Tilcsik 2013). We argue that it is not only about beginnings in one’s career, but also salient and recurring characteristics of an occupation that could play a role in whether imprinting occurs or even how strong the imprint is. For the majority of former drivers, driving a subway was not their first job in their careers. However, because of the significance of the task and the independence in performing it, the repeated imprint of what personal responsibility felt like was something they were not able to forget, even after years in their new managerial job.

We suspect that, in becoming managers, workers coming from jobs where they feel a deep sense of personal responsibility may share the experience of former subway drivers in this study. We would especially expect similar dynamics when individuals transition out of occupations where high task significance and high task independence are salient job characteristics. Examples include surgeons and police officers, along with subway drivers and air traffic controllers. As the lives of others is often at play, the notion of personal responsibility—distinct from what is often thought of as managerial responsibility—is often a significant feature of those occupations (Becker et al. 1961, Heimer and Staffen 1998, Vaughan 2004, Schwartz 2011). The few studies of managerial transitions from such occupations, such as nurses becoming ward and unit managers, doctors becoming

hospital managers, or police officers transitioning to chiefs, have often observed similar disenchantment dynamics to that of former subway drivers in their new roles (Whetstone and Wilson 1999, Llewellyn 2001, Bolton 2005, Spehar et al. 2012). We posit that unfulfilled expectations of feeling personal responsibility when becoming a manager can help explain part of the difficulty experienced when transitioning from such occupations into management.

Although our study focuses on the carrying of expectations of responsibility, we suspect, more broadly, that a better understanding of how salient prior job norms shape the expectations that are carried over to managerial jobs could be an important part of the managerial experience. For example, professors who are embedded in a job where they have a tremendous amount of discretion over what they choose to research or teach may carry these expectations of what discretion feels like when becoming chairs or deans. These expectations can, in turn, easily taint their transition to management. Future research could further explore the dynamics of how repeatedly experiencing salient job norms plays a role in one’s transition to management.

Contribution to the Job-Design Literature

Our study also contributes to the job-design literature by showing that the experience of a given job (with similar characteristics) can differ dramatically, depending on people’s past experiences. To understand how people experience a job (e.g., the responsibility one feels), this literature mainly focuses on the characteristics of the work and hints that individual differences (such as differences in desire for challenging work) are the main explanation as to why people may experience similar job characteristics differently (Pierce et al. 1979, Hackman and Oldham 1980, Shalley et al. 2009, Oldham and Hackman 2010). Put otherwise, the job-design literature would suggest that because former drivers and former agents exhibited limited individual differences and were in managerial jobs with similar characteristics, they should have similar experiences in the responsibility they feel.

In particular, the universal “gain” in responsibility that new managers are assumed to feel mainly stems from two key characteristics of the managerial job—having more autonomy and direct reports in managerial roles (e.g., Patten 1968; Dunkerley 1975; Child 1982; Kraut et al. 1989; Lowe 1992, 1993; and Delbridge and Lowe 1997). However, our findings challenge this assumption of generalized gain—it was a feeling that only former station agents shared in our study. Although becoming a manager does generally mean acquiring more autonomy and direct reports, it does not always translate into feeling more responsibility,

particularly for those coming from jobs where individuals internalize a deep sense of personal responsibility. Thus, our study suggests rethinking the way we understand shifting responsibility with promotion; the responsibility that new managers feel is also shaped by the expectations around responsibility that people carry from previous jobs.

In addition, by disentangling the distinct facets of responsibility (administrative and personal), our study provides a richer understanding of feelings of responsibility at work. In the job-design literature, the key driver of perceived responsibility comes from the amount of autonomy people have to plan and determine work procedures (Hackman and Oldham 1976). Our study further develops this by finding that there are different types of responsibility that people can experience (i.e., administrative and personal responsibility). By separating responsibility into types that can, in fact, move in different directions as individuals change jobs (e.g., sentiment of gaining administrative responsibility and losing personal responsibility as a manager), as was the case for former subway drivers, we provide a more complex understanding of how people experience responsibility when moving up the hierarchy. Because responsibility is an important determinant of job motivation, satisfaction, retention, and stress (House 1974; Hackman and Oldham 1976; Kiggundu 1981, 1983; House et al. 1986; Humphrey et al. 2007), our study also opens up a possibility to better predict such outcomes.

Finally, our study adds to the job-design literature by spotlighting how the relational aspects of people's past jobs can enduringly shape individuals' expectations and influence how they may have different experiences in similarly designed jobs. Research in the job-design field has recently highlighted the importance of understanding the relational aspects of jobs when thinking about employee motivation and behavior (Grant 2007, Grant and Campbell 2007, Grant et al. 2007, Grant 2008, Oldham and Hackman 2010). Although these studies focus on investigating the effects of the relational aspect of one's *current* job, our findings open up questions on the lingering effect of experiencing *past* work with high task significance and the consequences of leaving such relational configurations for *new* ones. Future research could further examine the benefits of maintaining some relational anchors into new lines of work. For instance, a nurse could be promoted to a supervisory role and be relieved of all patient care or retain a few patients: This latter set-up might prove effective at buffering a feeling of loss.

Practical Implications

Past literature posits that work transitions can be more successful for both the individual and the

organization if individuals are better prepared for what to expect in their new roles (e.g., Louis 1980, Ashforth 2001, and Hill 2003). As shifting responsibilities are a salient part of becoming a manager, a better understanding of what informs the feeling of responsibility and of how this feeling evolves can help prepare employees for transitions. By identifying how new managers coming from jobs with certain characteristics may experience unfulfilled expectations of personal responsibility, our findings can better prepare them for such a transition. In addition, our findings have implications for the actual onboarding of managers, particularly for ones coming from jobs with certain characteristics (i.e., high task significance and high task independence). Perhaps employers can find ways to enable managers from these jobs to retain the sense of personal responsibility they experienced in their previous roles and, thus, dampen the feeling of managerial blues. If stepping up translates for some managers as a feeling of stepping down because of unfulfilled expectations of responsibility, then employers need to better manage this transition to ensure that those they selected to lead fully thrive in their new managerial roles.

Acknowledgments

The authors thank Phillippe Mancone, Florence Laizier, Gerard Talhouarne, Francois-Xavier Nousbaum, and Sabine Mercier from the Paris subway for their trust and support. They also thank Emilie Billaud and Caitlin Anderson for their excellent research assistance; Senior Editor Steffanie Wilke and the three anonymous reviewers for their constructive guidance; and Mark Holdsworth, Marc Lenglet, and Sanaz Mobasseri for their valuable comments. Finally, the authors also benefited from feedback from participants at the Academy of Management, ESSEC, University of Massachusetts Boston, Harvard Business School, and Wharton.

Appendix. Sample Interview Protocol

- How long have you been working for RATP?
- What is your age/educational background/job experience before working at the RATP?
 - What was your first job at the RATP?
 - What attracted you to this job?
 - Could you describe a typical day on the job then?
 - What are the most appealing parts of your job then?
 - What are the least appealing parts of your job then?
 - If you were to sum up what you do, how might you describe it?
 - When did you become a supervisor?
 - Could you describe a typical day of your job now?
 - What are the most appealing parts of your job now?
 - What are the least appealing parts of your job now?
 - Why would you recommend this job to a friend?
 - Why might you discourage a friend from taking a similar job?
- How long do you hope to stay in your job?

- Could you describe your relations with other employees? How would you qualify them?
- Could you describe your relations with travelers? How would you qualify them?
- We talked about many subjects and covered many aspects of your jobs, but there might be other elements that would help me understand your work and experience at the RATP. If so, could you please describe them?

Endnotes

¹ Although researchers acknowledge that past experience is an important part of understanding managers, they tend to pay more attention to characteristics such as family upbringing, education, and tenure than to norms, expectations, or assumptions about work that are carried from managers' occupational histories (Kotter 1982, Hambrick and Mason 1984, Black 1988, Nicholson and West 1988, Waller et al. 1995, Kish-Gephart and Campbell 2014). Hill (2003, p. x) even points out that new managers have to "unlearn deeply held attitudes" about work from their past occupations, but does not examine whether some of these attitudes actually influence one's managerial experience.

² Because of union negotiations, 40 out of 42 supervisors on Line 1 were former drivers. Thus, the station agents we interviewed worked on one of the 13 other lines of the Paris subway. Similar to Line 1, the number of supervisors that work on the other lines is based on the size of the subway line (approximately 40 supervisors per line). Supervisors on these other lines are generally former drivers, former station agents, or external hires.

³ There were two supervisors (out of 42) that were not former subway drivers. One had worked as a station agent and the other as a "head of movement" (overseeing traffic flow).

⁴ Our understanding of autonomy is similar to Hackman and Oldham's (1976, p. 258) definition of autonomy, but also broader than theirs. Theirs rests on freedom, independence, and discretion in "scheduling the work and determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out," whereas our respondents spoke about autonomy in making a wide set of choices (e.g., who gets promoted)—not just selecting a timing of work or a procedure to follow.

⁵ The concept of task independence is distinct from autonomy. For instance, one can be highly task-independent, meaning working alone, but still have strict rules to follow (see Kiggundu 1981, Klein 1991, and Tilcsik et al. 2015).

⁶ We cannot fully rule out the possibility that the RATP saw something different about former agents and drivers that might have led to the offer of a particular job. However, we do know that, on other lines of the subway, many managers are also former drivers. This suggests that the RATP at least does not consider differences between those who they put into subway driver jobs and station agent jobs to be a major hindrance in who could be managers.

References

- Aldrich H (2008) *Organizations and Environments* (Stanford Business Books, Stanford, CA).
- Almandoz J (2014) Founding teams as carriers of competing logics: When institutional forces predict banks' risk exposure. *Admin. Sci. Quart.* 59(3):442–473.
- Alvesson M, Willmott H (2002) Identity regulation as organizational control: Producing the appropriate individual. *J. Management Stud.* 39(5):619–644.
- Anteby M, Chan CK, DiBenigno J (2016) Three lenses on occupations and professions in organizations: Becoming, doing, and relating. *Acad. Management Ann.* 10(1):183–244.
- Ashforth BE (2001) *Role Transitions in Organizational Life: An Identity-Based Perspective* (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ).
- Azoulay P, Liu CC, Stuart TE (2017) Social influence given (partially) deliberate matching: Career imprints in the creation of academic entrepreneurs. *Amer. J. Sociol.* 122(4):1223–1271.
- Badawy MK (1983) Why managers fail. *Res. Management* 26(3):26–31.
- Bailyn L (1991) The hybrid career: An exploratory study of career routes in R&D. *J. Engrg. Tech. Management* 8(1):1–14.
- Barnard CI (1968) *The Functions of the Executive* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA).
- Battilana J, Dorado S (2010) Building sustainable hybrid organizations: The case of commercial microfinance organizations. *Acad. Management J.* 53(6):1419–1440.
- Battilana J, Sengul M, Pache AC, Model J (2015) Harnessing productive tensions in hybrid organizations: The case of work integration social enterprises. *Acad. Management J.* 58(6):1658–1685.
- Bayton JA, Chapman RL (1972) Transformation of scientists and engineers into managers. NASA Technical Report SP-291, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Washington, DC.
- Beauvais LL (1992) The effects of perceived pressures on managerial and nonmanagerial scientists and engineers. *J. Bus. Psych.* 6(3):333–347.
- Bechky BA (2011) Making organizational theory work: Institutions, occupations, and negotiated orders. *Organ. Sci.* 22(5):1157–1167.
- Becker HS, Geer B, Hughes EC, Strauss AL (1961) *Boys in White: Student Culture in Medical School* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago).
- Bercovitz J, Feldman M (2008) Academic entrepreneurs: Organizational change at the individual level. *Organ. Sci.* 19(1):69–89.
- Beyer JM, Hannah DR (2002) Building on the past: Enacting established personal identities in a new work setting. *Organ. Sci.* 13(6):636–652.
- Bianchi EC (2013) The bright side of bad times: The affective advantages of entering the workforce in a recession. *Admin. Sci. Quart.* 58(4):587–623.
- Bidwell M, Mollick E (2015) Shifts and ladders: Comparing the role of internal and external mobility in managerial careers. *Organ. Sci.* 26(6):1629–1645.
- Black JS (1988) Work role transitions: A study of American expatriate managers in Japan. *J. Internat. Bus. Stud.* 19(2):277–294.
- Bolton SC (2005) 'Making up' managers the case of NHS nurses. *Work Employment Soc.* 19(1):5–23.
- Boucher CJ (2005) To be or not to be...a manager: The career choices of health professionals. *Australian Health Rev.* 29(2):218–225.
- Boyatzis RE (1982) *The Competent Manager: A Model for Effective Performance* (Wiley, New York).
- Brett JM (1984) Job transitions and personal and role development. *Res. Personality Human Resource Management* 2(2):155–185.
- Burton MD, Beckman CM (2007) Leaving a legacy: Position imprints and successor turnover in young firms. *Amer. Sociol. Rev.* 72(2):239–266.
- Cahill SE (1999) The boundaries of professionalization: The case of North American funeral direction. *Symbolic Interaction* 22(2):105–119.
- Cardador MT (2017) Promoted up but also out? The unintended consequences of increasing women's representation in managerial roles in engineering. *Organ. Sci.* 28(4):597–617.
- Charmaz K (2006) *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis* (SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA).
- Child J (1982) *Lost Managers: Supervisors in Industry and Society* (Cambridge University Press, UK).
- Cohen LE, Broschak JP, Haveman HA (1998) And then there were more? The effect of organizational sex composition on the hiring and promotion of managers. *Amer. Sociol. Rev.* 63(5):711–727.
- Dalton M (1959) *Men Who Manage: Fusions of Feeling and Theory in Administration* (Wiley, New York).

- Delbridge R, Lowe J (1997) Manufacturing control: Supervisory surveillance on the 'new' shopfloor. *Sociology* 31(3):409–426.
- Dokko G, Jiang W (2017) Managing talent across organizations: The portability of individual performance. Collings DG, Mellahi K, Cascio WF, eds. *Oxford Handbook of Talent Management* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK).
- Dokko G, Rosenkopf L (2010) Social capital for hire? Mobility of technical professionals and firm influence in wireless standards committees. *Organ. Sci.* 21(3):677–695.
- Dokko G, Wilk SL, Rothbard NP (2009) Unpacking prior experience: How career history affects job performance. *Organ. Sci.* 20(1): 51–68.
- Dragoni L, Tesluk PE, Russell JEA, Oh IS (2009) Understanding managerial development: Integrating developmental assignments, learning orientation, and access to developmental opportunities in predicting managerial competencies. *Acad. Management J.* 52(4):731–743.
- Dunkerley D (1975) *The Foreman: Aspects of Task and Structure* (Routledge, London).
- Golden-Biddle K, Locke K (2007) *Composing Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed. (Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA).
- Grant AM (2007) Relational job design and the motivation to make a prosocial difference. *Acad. Management Rev.* 32(2):393–417.
- Grant AM (2008) The significance of task significance: Job performance effects, relational mechanisms, and boundary conditions. *J. Appl. Psych.* 93(1):108–124.
- Grant AM, Campbell EM (2007) Doing good, doing harm, being well and burning out: The interactions of perceived prosocial and antisocial impact in service work. *J. Occupational Organ. Psych.* 80(4):665–691.
- Grant AM, Campbell EM, Chen G, Cottone K, Lapedis D, Lee K (2007) Impact and the art of motivation maintenance: The effects of contact with beneficiaries on persistence behavior. *Organ. Behav. Human Decision Processes* 103(1):53–67.
- Gusterson H (1999) Nuclear weapons and the other in the Western imagination. *Cultural Anthropol.* 14(1):111–143.
- Hackman JR, Oldham GR (1976) Motivation through the design of work: Test of a theory. *Organ. Behav. Human Performance* 16(2): 250–279.
- Hackman JR, Oldham GR (1980) *Work Redesign* (Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA).
- Hales C (2002) 'Bureaucracy-lite' and continuities in managerial work. *British J. Management* 13(1):51–66.
- Hales C (2005) Rooted in supervision, branching into management: Continuity and change in the role of first-line manager. *J. Management Stud.* 42(3):471–506.
- Hall DT (1976) *Careers in Organizations* (Goodyear PubCo, Santa Monica, CA).
- Hambrick DC, Mason PA (1984) Upper echelons: The organization as a reflection of its top managers. *Acad. Management Rev.* 9(2): 193–206.
- Hannaway J (1989) *Managers Managing: The Workings of an Administrative System* (Oxford University Press, New York).
- Harding N, Lee H, Ford J (2014) Who is 'the middle manager'? *Human Relations* 67:1213–1237.
- Haveman HA, Cohen LE, Broschak JP (2009) Good times, bad times: The effects of organizational dynamics on the careers of male and female managers. Bandelj N, ed. *Economic Sociology of Work, Research in the Sociology of Work*, vol. 18 (Emerald Group Publishing Limited, Bingley, UK), 119–148.
- Heimer CA, Staffen LR (1998) *For the Sake of the Children: The Social Organization of Responsibility in the Hospital and the Home* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago).
- Higgins MC (2005) *Career Imprints: Creating Leaders Across an Industry*, 1st ed. (Jossey-Bass, San Francisco).
- Hill LA (2003) *Becoming a Manager: How New Managers Master the Challenges of Leadership*, 2nd ed. (Harvard Business Review Press, Boston).
- House JS (1974) Occupational stress and coronary heart disease: A review and theoretical integration. *J. Health Soc. Behav.* 15(1):12–27.
- House JS, Strecher V, Metzner HL, Robbins CA (1986) Occupational stress and health among men and women in the Tecumseh community health study. *J. Health Soc. Behav.* 27(1):62–77.
- Humphrey SE, Nahrgang JD, Morgeson FP (2007) Integrating motivational, social, and contextual work design features: A meta-analytic summary and theoretical extension of the work design literature. *J. Appl. Psych.* 92(5):1332–1356.
- Huy QN (2002) Emotional balancing of organizational continuity and radical change: The contribution of middle managers. *Admin. Sci. Quart.* 47(1):31–69.
- Ibarra H (1999) Provisional selves: Experimenting with image and identity in professional adaptation. *Admin. Sci. Quart.* 44(4):764–791.
- Jackall R (1988) *Moral Mazes: The World of Corporate Managers* (Oxford University Press, New York).
- Jaques E (1956) *Measurement of Responsibility: A Study of Work, Payment, and Individual Capacity* (Tavistock Publications, London).
- Kiggundu MN (1981) Task interdependence and the theory of job design. *Acad. Management Rev.* 6(3):499–508.
- Kiggundu MN (1983) Task interdependence and job design: Test of a theory. *Organ. Behav. Human Performance* 31(2):145–172.
- Kish-Gephart JJ, Campbell JT (2014) You don't forget your roots: The influence of CEO social class background on strategic risk taking. *Acad. Management J.* 58(6):1614–1636.
- Klein JA (1991) A reexamination of autonomy in light of new manufacturing practices. *Human Relations* 44(1):21–38.
- Kotter JP (1982) *The General Managers* (Free Press, New York).
- Kraut AI, Pedigo PR, McKenna DD, Dunnette MD (1989) The role of the manager: What's really important in different management jobs. *Acad. Management Executive* 3(4):286–293.
- Lee M, Battilana J (2020) How the zebra got its stripes: Imprinting of individuals and hybrid social ventures. *Res. Sociol. Organ.* Forthcoming.
- Llewellyn S (2001) 'Two-way windows': Clinicians as medical managers. *Organ. Stud.* 22(4):593–623.
- Louis MR (1980) Career transitions: Varieties and commonalities. *Acad. Management Rev.* 5(3):329–340.
- Lowe J (1992) Locating the line: The front-line supervisor and human resource management. *Reassessing Human Resource Management* (Sage Publications, London), 148–169.
- Lowe J (1993) Manufacturing reform and the changing role of the production supervisor: The case of the automobile industry. *J. Management Stud.* 30(5):739–758.
- Lup D (2018) Something to celebrate (or not): The differing impact of promotion to manager on the job satisfaction of women and men. *Work Employment Soc.* 32(2):407–425.
- Luthans F (1988) *Real Managers* (Ballinger, Cambridge, MA).
- Mantere S (2008) Role expectations and middle manager strategic agency. *J. Management Stud.* 45(2):294–316.
- Marquis C, Qiao K (2018) Waking from Mao's dream: Communist ideological imprinting and the internationalization of entrepreneurial ventures in China. *Admin. Sci. Quart.*, ePub ahead of print September 14, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0001839218792837>.
- Marquis C, Tilcsik A (2013) Imprinting: Toward a multilevel theory. *Acad. Management Ann.* 7(1):195–245.
- McCall MW (2004) Leadership development through experience. *Acad. Management Executive* 18(3):127–130.
- McEvily B, Jaffee J, Tortoriello M (2011) Not all bridging ties are equal: Network imprinting and firm growth in the Nashville legal industry, 1933–1978. *Organ. Sci.* 23(2):547–563.
- Mintzberg H (1973) *The Nature of Managerial Work* (Harper & Row, New York).

- Nicholson N, West M (1988) *Managerial Job Change: Men and Women in Transition* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK).
- Oldham GR, Hackman JR (2010) Not what it was and not what it will be: The future of job design research. *J. Organ. Behav.* 31(2-3): 463–479.
- Patten TH (1968) The authority and responsibilities of supervisors in a multi-plant firm. *J. Management Stud.* 5(1):61–82.
- Phillips DJ (2005) Organizational genealogies and the persistence of gender inequality: The case of Silicon Valley law firms. *Admin. Sci. Quart.* 50(3):440–472.
- Pierce JL, Dunham RB, Blackburn RS (1979) Social systems structure, job design, and growth need strength: A test of a congruency model. *Acad. Management J.* 22(2):223–240.
- Sayles LR (1964) *Managerial Behavior: Administration in Complex Organizations* (McGraw-Hill, New York).
- Schein EH (1978) *Career Dynamics: Matching Individual and Organizational Needs* (Addison-Wesley PubCo, Reading, MA).
- Schoar A, Zuo L (2017) Shaped by booms and busts: How the economy impacts CEO careers and management styles. *Rev. Financial Stud.* 30(5):1425–1456.
- Schwartz O (2011) La pénétration de la « culture psychologique de masse » dans un groupe populaire: Paroles de conducteurs de bus. *Sociologie* 2(4):345–361.
- Shalley CE, Gilson LL, Blum TC (2009) Interactive effects of growth need strength, work context, and job complexity on self-reported creative performance. *Acad. Management J.* 52(3):489–505.
- Smith V (1990) *Managing in the Corporate Interest: Control and Resistance in an American Bank* (University of California Press, Berkeley, CA).
- Spehar I, Frich JC, Kjekshus LE (2012) Clinicians' experiences of becoming a clinical manager: A qualitative study. *BMC Health Services Res.* 12(1):421.
- Stewart R (1974) The manager's job: Discretion vs. demand. *Organ. Dynam.* 2(3):67–80.
- Stewart R (1982) *Choices for the Manager* (Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ).
- Strauss AL (1987) *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK).
- Sveningsson S, Alvesson M (2003) Managing managerial identities: Organizational fragmentation, discourse and identity struggle. *Human Relations* 56(10):1163–1193.
- Tharenou P (2001) Going up? Do traits and informal social processes predict advancing in management? *Acad. Management J.* 44(5): 1005–1017.
- Tilcsik A (2014) Imprint–environment fit and performance: How organizational munificence at the time of hire affects subsequent job performance. *Admin. Sci. Quart.* 59(4):639–668.
- Tilcsik A, Anteby M, Knight CR (2015) Concealable stigma and occupational segregation toward a theory of gay and lesbian occupations. *Admin. Sci. Quart.* 60(3):446–481.
- Van Maanen J, Barley S (1984) Occupational communities: Culture and control in organizations. *Res. Organ. Behav.* 6:287–365.
- Van Maanen J, Schein EH (1979) Toward a theory of organizational socialization. Staw B, Cummings L, eds. *Research in Organizational Behavior* (JAI Press, Greenwich, CT), 209–264.
- Vaughan D (2004) Organizational rituals of risk and error. Hutter B, Power M, eds. *Organizational Encounters with Risk* (Cambridge University Press, New York), 33–66.
- Walker CR (1956) *The Foreman on the Assembly Line* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA).
- Waller MJ, Huber GP, Glick WH (1995) Functional background as a determinant of executives' selective perception. *Acad. Management J.* 38(4):943–974.
- Watson TJ (1994) *In Search of Management: Culture, Chaos and Control in Managerial Work* (Routledge, New York).
- Watson TJ, Harris P (1999) *The Emergent Manager* (Sage, London).
- Whetstone TS, Wilson DG (1999) Dilemmas confronting female police officer promotional candidates: Glass ceiling, disenfranchisement or satisfaction? *Internat. J. Police Sci. Management* 2(2): 128–143.

Nishani Bourmault is an assistant professor at NEOMA Business School in the People and Organizations Department. She received her doctorate from Harvard Business School. Her research interests include understanding how people experience changes in careers, occupations, and organizations, with particular emphasis on how deeply embedded norms shape these experiences.

Michel Anteby is an associate professor of organizational behavior and (by courtesy) sociology at Boston University. His research looks at how people relate to their work, their occupations, and the organizations to which they belong. Professions or occupations he has studied include airport security officers, business school professors, clinical anatomists, factory craftsmen, and ghostwriters.