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XXV CICLO

SEQUENTIAL MCA APPROACH TO

AID WORKERS' TALK:

THE INTERACTIONAL NEGOTIATION OF GENDER IDENTITY

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"I had to leave that space I called home to move beyond
boundaries, yet I also needed to return there…
At times, home is nowhere. At times, one knows only extreme
estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer just one place.
It is many locations. Home is that place which eneables and
promotes varied and ever changing perspectives, a place where one
discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference"

(bell hooks, 1991, p.148)

1 Introduction

This thesis aims to contribute to the literature on international aid workers, which is still in its infancy, by highlighting an area of research which has not hitherto been studied: gendered identities among aid workers. Recent data on the undergoing feminisation of the profession led me, as a feminist social psychologist, to focus my attention on the professionals working in humanitarian and development aid. Studying this topic was both challenging and fascinating: challenging, because despite the rapid expansion of the aid industry worldwide, I rapidly discovered a lack of academic and research-based enquiry on this professional category, both in the national, as well as in the international literature; fascinating, because that of international aid appeared to me as a complex and multiform reality, that still needs to be adequately investigated from a psychosocial point of view.

In order to gain a better insight on who aid workers are, I decided to create an online survey, which provided a first general mapping on the Italian workforce and its characteristics. At the same time, the survey gathered interesting data on the main psychosocial challenges and stressors, which aid workers face in their professional and personal experiences in the field. Of all the factors identified, I decided to engage in a more in depth study of the role played by gender, which, as the analysis will uncover, resulted to be more relevant for the female aid workers who took part in my research than for their male colleagues and seemed to confirm a gender disparity in the number of stressors, in line with the literature (Curling & Simmons, 2010).

Interested in gaining a better understanding of this dynamic, I decided to dedicate two further studies on gender, with a focus on the female identity. Looking for a methodology that could bring a radical empirical potential to feminists theories (Speer, 2005), I found in the recent discursive approach introduced by Stokoe (2012) a stimulating way to examine the relationships between social psychology, gender and language. The sequential Membership Categorisation Analysis proved to be an appropriate tool to approach gender as something that "is done" through interaction, that is, to study how gender identity is performed together by the participants and the researcher in their discursive interactions. Employing a MCA I conducted a first study to understand how aid professionals account for the growing presence of women in the profession, aiming at revealing how gender common sense is constructed, challenged and maintained, how it is realised and made morally accountable. I also carried out a second

discursive study to analyse how aid workers female identity is used to account for particular troublesome situations as well as for positive ones. I will offer evidence that the analysis of the experiences of international aid workers is a rich source of data for exploring the negotiation of identity in a cross-cultural context, with a discursive psychology approach. Moreover, the findings will testify the urgency of both a psychological testing and assessment in employees' selection, as well as a psychosocial support before, ongoing and post assignment.

1.1 Overview of the thesis

In the first part of the thesis I will provide a picture of international aid work and of its professionals, starting from the history of the Italian Aid and Development cooperation and then differentiating between various types of aid. I will review the scant literature available on these professionals and on the psychosocial challenges that affect their experiences.

The second part of the thesis will focus on my research, which develops in three studies. In the third chapter I will outline the methodological approach I have employed: I will discuss the analytic framework of sequential Membership Categorisation Analysis. I will also justify why this micro-analytic approach is particularly fruitful for feminist academics interested in the discursive research on gender. I will then describe the process of data collection, presenting the pilot study, the quanti-qualitative online survey and the interviews respectively. The process of analysis will also be summarised.

I will present the main findings of the first study in the fourth chapter, which will be divided in six sections, corresponding to the each one of the survey's sections. In chapters five and six I will illustrate the two discursive studies on gender identity: the first will focus on the feminisation of the profession, and the second on the "advantages" and "disadvantages" experienced by the female participants.

Finally, I will discuss the main findings and illustrate overarching insights, I will debate the methodological issues of the study and I will identify possible directions for future research on the topic.

2 The literature on International Aid Workers

In this chapter, I will provide a picture of international aid work and of international aid workers. I will focus on the Italian Aid and Development cooperation, its history and legislation. I will then present a classification of the various types of aid, before starting talking about international aid workers and the challenges they face in their profession. These challenges are somehow similar to the various difficulties that expat people and overseas professionals can generally experience, but due to a number of potential stressors that can affect aid workers experiences, become distinctive of the professional category at issue. I will also discuss the broader expat literature and interesting findings on women managers overseas. Finally, I will identify several omissions in the literature. In general, scant attention has been paid to international aid workers, and in particular only one qualitative study has been carried out on Italian aid workers identity in a gender sensitive approach. As I will argue, my study of how international aid workers negotiate their gender identity in talk addresses this gap.

2.1 Introduction

In Italy, little is known about the professional figure of international aid worker. In the popular imagination this name seems to recall the volunteer, the missionary, the trainee or the doctor on leave: people who temporarily and voluntarily leave their home countries to help those who live in the so-called countries of the Global South. Very little is said about aid workers, as we occasionally find them in headlines when protagonists of attacks, kidnapping or worst events; or, as recently happened, they become "fiction protagonists" together with singers and showgirls in a TV program, broadcasted despite polemics and critiques arising from international aid workers (Ciavoni, 2013). It is not easy to define who the aid worker is and what he/she does: this is due first, to the absence of a shared terminology around this profession, and secondly to the fact that this is a recent profession, whose main features have evolved steadily over the past decades.

Worldwide, international aid and development has, in recent times, come to be seen as a tool through which a nation's international interests might be realised (Steans, 2006). The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and ongoing military efforts in Afghanistan both cemented growing interest in "soft" approaches to international relations, which had been developing since the end of the Cold war, and provided early learning opportunities for those planning to avail themselves of its potential benefits (Terry, 2013). Indeed in the last decade aid and development has so

occupied the space of international influence that, in some countries, budgetary expenditure that would ordinarily have been allocated for the military, has been re-directed for the purposes of conducting international aid (*ibidem*). This has been facilitated by shifts in policy for aid expenditure; previous policy targeting aid to those regions and communities most in need, has been realigned to prioritise the provision of aid to countries in which a political interest exists.

Along with government expenditure, public donations have contributed to the exponential growth of the aid industry over the last three decades. As images of the Vietnam war shocked civilians into protest in the 1960s, first-hand accounts of international disasters and internal conflicts being broadcast into people's living rooms moved the public to donate large amounts of money and resources to aid organisations in the 2000's. For the first time ever live accounts from "everyday" individuals and amateur images were made instantly available on the Internet through websites such as Twitter, Youtube and Facebook. In response to the 2004 Tsunami that devastated large areas of coastal Asia, several aid organisations were so overwhelmed by donations from individuals they were obliged to ask that people stop donating as more money had been donated than could reasonably be spent (Frean & Hoyle, 2005).

The increase in both money and interest in humanitarian aid and development has led to greater numbers of people working in the field. In 1980 there were around 40 International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) in existence, most working with Cambodian refugees on the Thai border. A decade later, there were 250 operating during the Yugoslavian war and by 2004 there were 2,500 involved in Afghanistan alone (Anthony, 2010). Today it is estimated that the humanitarian aid sector globally was worth at least $143 billion in 2010 (Coppard & Zubairi, 2010). In the same year, the sector employed almost 300,000 people (Stoddard, Harmer, & Di Domenico, 2009). The exact number of INGOs operating today is not known, and estimates vary widely from between 6,000 to 30,000 (Leverty, 2013).

2.2 Brief history of the Italian Aid and Development Cooperation

International Cooperation origins can be traced back up to the 1950s, when the decolonization process came to an end and highlighted the poverty and underdevelopment of the former colonies (Calvi-Parisetti, 2010). It was in 1945, with the institution of United Nations after World War II, that the concept of International Development Cooperation started to grow around the world, Italy included (Ianni, 2011). The United Nations, had, and still have nowadays, as its purpose the achievement of cooperation, proposing "to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations, promote social progress, better living conditions and ensure the respect for human rights" (United Nations [UN], 2013a). The

international community conceived different types of interventions, with transfer of money, goods or services in the form of grants or concessional loans to promote economic development. The Marshall Plan, officially the European Recovery Program (ERP), can be considered one of the firsts aid and development interventions (Zupi, 1997). The Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) was established in 1948 to run the US-financed Marshall Plan and "paved the way for a new era of cooperation that was to change the face of Europe" (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2013). The OECD was officially born in 1961, when the Convention entered into force. Today, we count 34 OECD member countries worldwide, with Italy being a member since 1960.

The history of charity and voluntary associations is even more dated; the first Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) was born at the end of World War I (Alberti & Giudici, 2003). In 1920 a group of volunteers went to a village in the north of France near Verdun to help the people who have been bombed, being a symbol of reconciliation between France and Germany. It was after this experience that the Swiss engineer Pierre Cérésole founded the first Organisation recognized at a formal level, which took the name of Service Civil International (SCI). With regard to Italy, the origins of the NGO movement has its roots in the Christian world, with the foundation in 1933 of the Italian Medical Missionary Union (UMMI), which is also still active nowadays. A strong religious connotation remained a feature of Italian organisations for many decades; in all these experiences we were still far from the professional figure of the aid worker: in fact, all the activities were carried out on a voluntary basis and unpaid; only after the 1960s Italian aid started to open to different cultures and inspirations (Marelli, 2011).

In 1948 the first NGOs gathered in an international body as the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service was established and based at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. In 1961 the United States Senator John F. Kennedy introduced a major change in the voluntary sector with the institution of the Peace Corps: a new form of organisation whose innovative feature was to be a quasi-autonomous NGO. Volunteerism consequently changed from being a free initiative of private citizens to associations under the management of public institutions, that could therefore decide when and what to allocate as contributions. This event, through which it was publicly recognized the importance of volunteering, had great repercussions worldwide, including in Italy. In fact, in the same years a number of NGOs developed in our country, all currently active: the Doctors with Africa (CUAMM), the International Builder Society (IBO Italy - Associazione Italiana soci costruttori) and the International Centre Crossroad (CIC). The

many organisations involved in solidarity congregated in two national federations: in 1968 the Coordinating Committee of the Organisations for Voluntary Service (COSV) that gathered Italian laic associations, and in 1972 the Federation of Christian Organisations for International Volunteer Service (FOCSIV) that grouped the Catholic ones. The two federations have always been present in our country and still affect the widespread social representation of humanitarian and aid workers (Marelli, 2011). In 2011 there were 282 NGOs in Italy (Servizi per la Cooperazione Internazionale [SISCOS], 2012); this extremely high number is distinctive of our country.

2.2.1 The Italian Legislation on International Cooperation

The proliferation of voluntary associations in Italy, led the then Senator Pedini to enact the first law that dealt with the concept of "cooperation" in 1966. With this law, international volunteering as well as the figure of the "volunteer civilian" in developing countries were recognized, by granting a dispensation from military service to Italian citizens engaged for at least two years in the so-called "Third World" (Marelli, 2011; Melgari, 2007).

The subsequent law enacted on the subject of cooperation (Law 1222 of 1971) led to a change in the relationship between NGOs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE); in fact, it specified that the Italian Government could grant money contributions to suitable organisations, associations and national agencies that were pursuing aims of cooperation with countries in the developing world (Marelli, 2011), thus admitting the funding of NGOs for the implementation of projects. Since then, the cooperation ceased to be only a public sector domain and NGOs were recognized as new actors (Alberti & Giudici, 2003; Viciani & De Fraia, 2006; Marelli, 2011).

In 1972, with Law 772, the Civil Service became mandatory for anyone who "for moral, religious and philosophical reasons did not want to serve in the military".

The 1980s represented an interesting period for the Italian aid and development sector: the Law 38 of 1979 extended to all the volunteers the recognition of the Civil Service, by assimilating it to the service within the public administration; moreover, it granted family health insurance for the volunteers, as well as pension contributions (Viciani & De Fraia, 2006; Marelli, 2011; Melgari, 2007). At the same time, it had unexpected negative consequences: far from stimulating a more effective functioning of the aid system, it paralyzed the industry, causing a total blockage of the financial allocations. Therefore, it aroused much criticism due to lengthy bureaucratic procedures. However, this stasis was opposed by a growing public attention toward the issue of "World Hunger": at that time in fact Ethiopia was experiencing a severe food crisis; the images reported by the media had a big impact on Italians (Viciani & De Fraia, 2006;

Marelli, 2011). Given the extraordinary situation of emergency, with Law 73 of 1985, a special aid fund was created (FAI), a source that within a limited time span was intended to be used to help the people in need. Unfortunately, only half of the L.1, 900 billion allocated in the FAI was actually donated to countries in crisis, causing a huge economic waste. Consequently, in February 1987, a new law called "New provisions governing Italian cooperation with developing countries" (Alberti & Giudici, 2003; Viciani & De Fraia, 2006; Marelli, 2011) was ratified. Law 49/1987 was based on the principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention of 1977 (UN, 1977) and recognized Development Cooperation as an integral part of the Italian Foreign Policy. With this law, NGOs were given the option of having "their eligibility recognized through a decree issued by the Minister of Foreign Affairs" (Italian Development Cooperation, 2013a). The MAE eligibility is still essential for NGOs in order to obtain funds and ministerial projects. Despite being considered very obsolete and inadequate (Ballarini, 2012; Link2007, 2012), since 1987 to the time of writing this thesis, Italy has not adopted a new law.

Through the years the allocation of financial resources to Official Development Assistance (ODA) has suffered a slowly but steady decline: if OCSE countries are expected to allocate a 0,30% of their GNP, Italy is particularly far from reaching this goal: it allocated a 0,20% in 2002, a 0,16% in 2009 and a 0,12% in 2011. Without considering the mandatory payments to EU, banks, international funds for development, and UN agencies, MAE funds for cooperation decreased by 88% in only four years, from 732 million euro in 2008 to 86 million in 2012 (Associazionw ONG Italiane [AOI], Coordinamento Italiano Network Internazionali [CINI] & Link2007, 2012).

In 2012 a breath of "fresh air" hit the field, but due to recent Italian Government instability, did not last long enough to bring new change. The former Minister for International Cooperation and Integration Riccardi, organized the Forum of International Cooperation, in collaboration with the General Directorate for Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During a two days-debate, politicians, representatives of Institutions and of NGOs met to discuss about the future of the sector (Ministry for International Cooperation and Integration, 2012). In that occasion NGOs' directors prompted the Government for additional resources. After the fall of the Government chaired by Monti, an unstable political panorama characterized 2013, and kept NGOs waiting to be heard. The actual Government, chaired by Letta, reshaped the composition of the Ministries: the Cooperation returned under the wing of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs [MAE], 2013), in a way bringing back aid and development under the umbrella of foreign policy. But at the beginning of December 2013 the draft of the reform to law 49/87 caused criticism within NGOs as declared

by FOCSIV President Cattai in a public interview (Redattore Sociale, 2013). In the draft[1], which is still in debate, a change in the name of the Ministry is described (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation [MAECI]), as well as the institution of a new governmental agency for cooperation.

Finally, Law 147/13 "Financial Stability Act 2014" rated on the 27Th December 2013 included information on the money allocated to International Cooperation by the Government for 2014: €231million, that is, €3 million more than in 2013. However, NGOs representatives are not satisfied with this sum (AOI, CINI & Link2007, 2013), which is still far from reaching the ODA goals. NGOs claimed that in the last years their activities are "surviving" mainly through fundraising activities (Caridi, 2011).

2.2.2 Types of International Cooperation

It is possible to identify different types of international cooperation that are peculiar of the different historical periods. Until 1960s *bilateral* cooperation was the only type existing in Italy; it is based on agreements between the governments of the partner countries and the Italian government. From the 1960s, also *multilateral* cooperation started to develop, with the leading role played by multilateral institutions (such as the World Bank, the UN and national cooperation agencies) in the implementation and coordination of development cooperation in partner countries (Calvi-Parisetti, 2010). These two types can be considered the *centralized* cooperation, with funding coming directly from central governments and multilateral institutions; to avoid bureaucratic delays caused by such kind of top-down management, there has been a shift to a type of cooperation defined *decentralized* cooperation. Besides the traditional bilateral twinning relations and cooperation agreements, decentralized cooperation also involves a multilateral section aimed at developing partnerships between international organisations and local/regional authorities. A bottom-up approach, through the activation of local networks, which aimed to guarantee a closer interaction between local authorities and international institutions, and decrease the costs of coordinating economic activity.

Another distinction that is possible to make is the one between *governmental* and *non-governmental* cooperation. In the first type, that is comparable with the centralized cooperation, donor countries control all the activities concerning a various range of cooperation projects (assistance, economic and financial cooperation) (Marelli, 2011). As previously mentioned, this kind of cooperation can take place bilaterally or multilaterally (Calvi-Parisetti, 2010). Non-

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[1] Unpublished at the moment of writing this thesis.

governmental cooperation instead is the result of the activities carried out primarily by NGOs, non-profit organisations, associations, unions, and local authorities. It is characterized by a micro approach, with particular attention to the single projects, the multi-sectorial dimension and local human resources (Ianni, 2011).

An important final distinction within the international aid industry is the one between humanitarian and development aid. *Humanitarian aid* (or humanitarian relief) broadly is the material or logistical assistance provided for humanitarian purposes, typically in response to humanitarian crises including armed conflict, natural disaster and man-made disaster (Minear, 2002). The primary objective of humanitarian aid is to save lives, alleviate suffering, maintain human dignity and promote the satisfaction of primary needs such as food and nutrition, accommodation, water and hygiene, health (Ianni, 2011). Humanitarian aid is characterized by very short timelines, requires great logistical efforts and a multidisciplinary approach (Marelli, 2011). *Development aid* (or development cooperation) instead seeks to address the underlying socioeconomic factors that may have led to a crisis or emergency. It is characterized by long-term projects and is based on four key principles: equality, sustainability, participation and productivity (Ianni, 2011; Marelli 2011; Calvi-Parisetti 2010).

2.3 Who are Italian International Aid Workers?

As I said at the beginning of this chapter, it is not easy to define who international aid workers are, and Italian legislation appears to make the task even more complicated. From a strictly administrative point of view, in fact, we can find four Italian terms used to describe the same profession (Melgari, 2007): *volontario (volunteer):* anyone who without any for-profit aims, but guided by solidarity and international cooperation values, has a two years lasting self-employment contract with the MAE, in which the cooperation programme and the remuneration are specified (Law 49/87, my own translation); *cooperante (international aid worker):* anyone who has a professional role characterized by technical, managerial and organisational duties, defined in a self-employment contract with the MAE or with an eligible NGO, lasting less than 2 years. The contract must be conformed to the provisions of the Directorate for Development Cooperation (DGCS) (Law 49/87); *collaboratore (freelance)*: anyone who works for a NGO, non-profit organisations and associations with contracts on a project basis (Law 30/2003, known as "Law Biagi"); *operatore (international cooperation operator)*: anyone who, regardless the contractual form, is employed by an Italian NGO for development or relief projects in the Global South.

Alongside these legislative definitions, there are other classifications coming from the insiders of the sector, such as Professor Marrella, Coordinator for the European Union of the European Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation. In an interview to AlmaLaurea (2011) he described aid workers as highly trained professionals who learn to intervene in situations of dire degradation after years of hard training, with master degrees and even higher specializations, including practical experience in the field. He stressed how to perform this task is not enough having a strong knowledge of the historical, cultural, political, economical and social aspects nor speaking multiple languages, but, what is needed above all is a certain psychological predisposition, a strong personality and a sincere interest towards everything that is different, and far from our reality. Interestingly, in this description the importance of a "psychological predisposition" is claimed; however, to the best of my knowledge, a serious psychological assessment is very rarely carried out by Italian NGOs.

Working in international cooperation, both in development as well as in relief, is a demanding profession (Inghilleri & Terranova Cecchini, 1999) according to SISCOS [2] researchers: "a difficult job" is in fact the title of their annual reports in which is stated that expatriate staff working in international cooperation projects for Italian NGOs amounts to nearly 6,000 people a year. These people perform technical activities (for instance, doctors, engineers, experts in the water sector, logistics, etc.) or are managers directing teams of employees of many different nationalities. Not only technical profiles but also coordinators "who can manage complex administrative procedures, and liaise with a variety of stakeholders (local partners, Global North partners, European and INGOs, UN agencies, EU, embassies and consulates)" (Melgari, 2007, p.30, my own translation).

I've spent a great amount of time looking for data on the Italian aid workers workforce, but the search was not fruitful: during the last few years only some articles published on Italian NGOs' websites (VITA.it, 2012), or on national newspapers (Landi, 2013) and magazines (Calligaro, 2013) as well as direct NGOs representatives' press releases (Cooperazione Internazionale [COOPI], 2010), reported the same growth in the number of NGOs employees; but all these articles were referring mainly to SISCOS' data. Therefore, even if these are partial data (because they register only NGOs employees) they are the most updated reference, and seem the only one available so far. Due to the vagueness of the definition of the profession, international aid workers are not even included in the Italian National Institute of Statiscs [ISTAT] professional categories: in 2013 classification of professions, only "director of a

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[2] Italian Insurance Agency for aid/development workers (website: www.siscos.org).

humanitarian organisation", "expert in evaluating development projects" and "agricultural cooperation technician" were included (Italian National Institute of Statiscs [ISTAT], 2013a).

The most recent SISCOS' dossier described an increase of the 62% in the number of expatriate Italian aid workers, from 2001 to 2011 (Link2007, 2011). Interestingly, this trend seems to depend on the rise of Italian women working in the international aid industry. If in 1976 Italian aid women were less than the 40% of the total number of aid workers, in 2001 they were the 42%, in 2007 the 48% and in 2010, year of passing, the 52% (Alberti & Giudici, 2003; Chirivì, 2007; Link2007 & Dialoghi in cammino, 2008; Melgari, 2007, 2011). In 2012, the ratio attested around 49%, and confirmed the important female presence within the workforce (Link2007, 2012). Since the Italian context is particularly unfavourable for women employment (European Commission [EU], 2013; Sabbadini, 2012) and where the rate of female employment is 47,1% vs. a 58,6% of the Ue27 average (ISTAT, 2013b) this are surprising data. The world of non-profit seems to be an exception: women managers increased significantly in this sector (Norzi, 2013); sadly, even within non-profit there is a gender pay gap (D'Isanto, 2013). Another interesting data in SISCOS' data is that a significant number of expatriated women are aged between 25 and 35 years; a range when, currently in Italy, women have to face important choices trying to reconcile personal, household and professional needs.

The interest in aid and development is also arising in education: the number of girls enrolling to one of the several courses (Degrees, Masters, PhDs, and other studies) on topics related with international cooperation increased in the last years (Argentin & Triventi, 2010), in what is a typical phenomenon that leads to the feminisation of a profession (Cacouault-Bitaud, 2008; Reyneri, 2002). A recent article about women working in the development cooperation was published by Nannicini in 2012[3]. In this article, preliminary results of a qualitative study conducted in Mozambique are discussed, and an insight on the professional lives of Italian development workers is provided.

If this is a general picture of the Italians employed in Italian NGOs, we cannot forget a number of Italian aid workers employed in International NGOs (Oxfam, Save the Children, Doctors without Borders, Action Aid, etc.), in International agencies (such as the International Committee of the Red Cross), or working for the Italian Development Cooperation (MAE), the European Union, the United Nations etc. People who not only work in the Global South, but also in Western headquarters, dealing with budget administration, human resources and liaising with the donors (private and public ones). People with *desk officer* roles, that coordinate expatriate

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[3] As I will explain in the following chapter, I took part in the first part of this study as one of the researchers.

personnel, local partners and Western actors. This workforce is still far from being registered in any sort of databases that could provide a more detailed socio-demographic picture.

2.4   The international literature on International Aid Workers

Mapping the workforce seems to be a complex task not only for Italy, but more in general: as Fechter and Hindman (2011, p.8) noted, "closer inspection reveals this category as highly complex, if not entirely fictional"; people who work in aid make up an extremely varied group, where the boundaries between "volunteers" and "professionals" are often intentionally or unintentionally ambiguous, with the result that it is difficult to differentiate between the two labels based merely on the length of stay, kinds of tasks, or compensation.

Despite, or perhaps in part because of the rapid expansion of the aid industry, academic and research-based enquiry in the field has to date been limited. Of that which has been done, most has focused on beneficiaries of aid rather than those involved in the provision of aid, and then primarily on symptoms of PTSD and other kinds of trauma (Barron, 1999; Cardozo & Salama, 2002; Davidson, & Baum, 1986; Ehrenreich, 2001; Eriksson, Vande Kemp, Gorush, Hoke & Foy, 2001; Steinglass & Gerrity, 1990) or reintegration back "home" (Vogel, Stiebel, & Vogel, 2011). Very little research has been conducted into social, political or interpersonal aspects of doing aid work (Fechter & Hindman, 2011; Heuser, 2012). Particularly, social psychology, as an academic discipline, seems not to be interested by the topic so far. The reasons for this dearth are unclear, especially when we consider that University courses on international aid and development are currently among the fastest growing courses in countries such as Australia, the USA and parts of Europe, Italy included (Italian Development Cooperation, 2013b). It is possible that perceptions of aid workers as generally from relatively wealthy countries and therefore in less "need" of academic attention and an implicit narrative of aid work as altruistic and self-sacrificing, renders a focus on the challenges of aid workers themselves inappropriate (Fechter, 2012); moreover, the exponentially greater funding available through donor organisations for research into beneficiaries has probably led to the current situation (Mosse, 2011).

In this paucity, a variety of terminologies are used to refer to the same professional category, as it is possible to find: humanitarian workers, humanitarian aid workers, development workers, aid workers, aid relief workers, relief workers, expatriate workers, aid staff and international aid workers (Burt & Carr, 2011; Cardozo et al., 2005; Curling & Simmons, 2010; Ehrenreich & Elliot, 2004; Haver, 2007; Hearns & Deeny 2007; Kaspersen, Matthiesene & Götestam, 2003; McCall & Salama, 1999; McFarlane, 2004; Mollica et al., 2004; Thomas,

2004). For the purpose of this thesis I will use the term international aid workers as an inclusive category in which I include both humanitarian and development workers, arguing that within each of the listed roles there exist the same kind of criticalities, even if they might appear with different intensities. For the same reason, I will alternatively refer to aid work and humanitarian work.

As anticipated, the literature on international aid workers focuses on biomedical models, and the psychological literature is mainly looking at clinical aspects and on reparative interventions after traumatic experiences. To the best of my knowledge there is a lack of interest from the discipline of social psychology in researching the psychosocial aspects, which could affect the experiences of these professionals. A psychosocial preventative and proactive approach, with the goals of prevention, training, support, appears not to be the mainstream one. If a recent interest on aid workers' professional identity is arising, it is not within social psychology research, but in social anthropology and ethnographic research (see Apthorpe, 2003; Apthorpe 2005; Apthorpe, 2011a; Cook, 2008; De Sardan, 2005; Fechter, 2012; Fecther, 2001; Fechter & Hindman, 2011; Heron, 2007; Mosse, 2011; Stirrat, 2008). Also, research in transcultural psychology (e.g. Sussman, 2010), organisational and occupational psychology even if did not focus specifically on international aid workers so far, reported interesting findings on overseas professionals (Adler, 1987; Linehan, 2002).

2.4.1 Stress in Humanitarian and Development Aid

The clinical perspective has focused on mental health: a number of guides covering "psychological first aid which involves humane, supportive and practical help to fellow human beings suffering serious crisis events" (World Health Organisation [WHO], War Trauma Foundation, & World Vision International, 2011) have been published, with the goal of offering "essential advice on how to facilitate an integrated approach to address the most urgent mental health and psychosocial issues in emergency situations" (Inter-Agency Standing Committee [IASC], 2007). Despite a widespread recognition of the cost to individuals and organisations of workplace stress has emerged, as well as a recent increase in research aimed at evaluating the burden of relief work on those who deliver humanitarian aid (Curling & Simmons, 2010), staff care is still not included in organisational practices. Research carried out by People in Aid and InterHealth on psychological care for aid workers found that "staff care practices appear to be inconsistent, and existing guidelines (or minimum standards) tend not to be adhered to" (Porter & Emmens, 2009, p.7). The authors concluded "an important next step for the sector is to gain a clear understanding of the impact and effectiveness of staff care initiatives" (*ivi*, p.9). Previous

research have found that obtaining information about these topics from humanitarian aid agencies is a very difficult, if not impossible, task (Elliott, Majka, & Carty, 2000; Kaster, Elliott, & Schulenburg, 2001), maybe due to the "macho" culture of denial in terms of the negative psychosocial impact of exposure to the stresses of humanitarian work (Danieli, 2002), and maybe due to organisations not wanting to admit they are not seriously taking care of their staff.

Aid work is often carried out in situations that are stressful both for the affected population and for the aid workers. Antares Foundation (2012) recently published some data on the rate of stress and medical conditions of aid workers, which I report below to emphasize the ubiquity and pervasivity of stress for this professionals: 30% of international staff surveyed after their return from their assignments reported significant symptoms of PTSD; high levels of burnout and distress among national and international staff working in Darfur and high levels of PTSD symptoms and burnout among Guatemalan aid workers were documented; about half of national and international staff working in Darfur reported a high level of physical and emotional stress. Moreover, 15% of both national and international aid workers surveyed in Kosovo in 2000 reported high levels of depression and 10-15% reported high levels of anxiety. Finally, more than 15% of expatriate workers also reported drinking alcohol at a dangerous level, as a copying strategy.

Despite these knowledge, as the same authors have described, preparation and trainings before going to the field, monitoring and ongoing psychological support, crisis support and management, end of assignment support and post assignment support are very rarely delivered (Antares Foundation, 2012; IASC, 2007) and only big organisations working in aid are providing therapeutic support after traumatic events; moreover, if a psychological testing and assessment should be required in employees selection, this very rarely happens (Ehnrenereich & Elliot, 2004; Porter & Emmens, 2009).

2.4.1.1 Humanitarian aid stressors

Blanchetière (2006) offers a review of the four main stress factors identified in the humanitarian literature: situational factors that are specific to the host country or project area (insecurity, attacks on personal well-being, surrounding poverty and violence, demanding relationships with populations and local authorities, health risks, and poor facilities); job related factors that are specific to the aid worker profession (difficult living conditions; social, cultural and spiritual dislocation; heavy workload or inactivity; tense relationships within the team); organisational and management factors (HR issues on preparation and follow up; management

issues; programme roles and objectives; "macho" culture of the sector), and finally, personal risk factors (one's particular psychological history; expectations and motivations; poor self-care behaviour; limited contact with home and pressure from home).

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) (1994) also identified three types of stress affecting international aid workers: daily stress, accumulative stress, and stress related to suffering and death. As specified in the Network on Humanitarian Assistance Stress guidelines (NOHA, 1999), stress on a daily basis is related to the pace, the amount of work, the frustrations, or personal problems of adaptation to a different and often difficult context. Besides daily stress, the living conditions, threats from the setting, difficulties in relaxing or in getting social support, restrictions on movement due to security concerns are all conditions that can give rise to accumulative stress. If facing situations of extreme poverty, pain and death is part of the meaning of humanitarian work, it also fosters a stress that can, at times, also create feelings of powerlessness or guilt.

Exploring a variety of stressors affecting aid workers, Curling & Simmons (2010) described an interesting gender disparity in their findings: in general, female respondents reported distinctly higher levels of stress than males, which they explained with the stress arising from conflicting demands coming from work and family duties. Moreover, the authors evidenced how for international female staff the security situation can be further compounded by gender discrimination and harassment, as well as social restrictions prevalent in some emergency duty stations that confine their movement if unaccompanied: "this restricted ability to socialize and to escape the confines of the work/living environment deprives these international aid workers of an important source of stress relief" (Curling & Simmons, 2010, p.98).

2.4.1.2 *Cultural transition cycle*

Sussman focused her research on the psychological consequences of cultural transitions and return migration (Sussman, 2000; 2001a; 2001b; 2010; 2011). Her research focused on the broader category of "cultural sojourners" and her findings on the *cultural transition cycle* can be useful in order to understand typical challenges of international aid workers. The cycle consists of several temporal stages: preparation for the sojourn, the sojourn itself (when a sojourner is called an "expatriate"), preparation for the return home, and the return (when the sojourner may be called a "repatriate"). Each one of these stages can represent a stressful event for the sojourner, especially when it's not accompanied by the organisation. Thomas (2009) readapted the cultural transition cycle specifically to aid work professionals. In her *9 points transition cycle* the process from pre-departure to re-entry is illustrated, with its ups and downs. For the author

role transition is intriguing as the humanitarian worker needs to shift between different social worlds and different role identities: 1) pre-departure and preparation from home country; 2) field experience; 3) honeymoon; 4) disorientation; 5) adjustment; 6) re-entry; 7) honeymoon; 8) disorientation; 9) adjustment. The more frequent the cycle is, more challenges the professional is likely to face.

Culture shock, a concept developed by Oberg (1960) is a general state of depression, frustration and disorientation amongst those living in a new culture (Smith & Bond, 1993). It usually occurs when a person loses familiar points of reference which provokes feelings of confusion and can imply a variety of phenomena: tension or fatigue caused by the effort of adapting to a new culture; a sense of loss and deprivation of one's origins, and feelings of nostalgia; the sense of rejection felt by the emigrant from the host community or vice versa; confusion concerning roles and expectation of roles; a growing awareness concerning differences between the cultures, which is often difficult to deal with; and a feeling of powerlessness in not being able to act in a competent way (Adler, 1987; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Taft, 1977). The process of *acculturation*, intended as the process of long-term adaptation of immigrants to a new culture, (Berry, 1990; Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987; Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 1992; Brown, 1986; Searle & Ward, 1990) can mean that people have to face new sources of stress and to activate certain coping mechanisms to deal with them (Anderson, 1994; Armes & Ward, 1989; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985).

The *re-entry syndrome* (Adler; 1981; Blanchetière, 2006; McCreesh, 2003) is a psychological response experienced by many aid workers returning home from fieldwork. After an initial couple of days of euphoria, many experience feelings of loss, bereavement and isolation. They feel that no one really understands what they have been through and that people are not that interested, similarly to challenges faced by returning soldiers (Wood, Scarville & Gravino, 1995).

2.4.1.3 Social ties

Various studies have suggested that social support is a decisive factor in the cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates working overseas (e.g. Black 1990; Caligiuri & Lazarova 2002). Social ties help the acculturation process by providing different types of support that can be informational, emotional or instrumental (Caligiuri & Lazarova 2002; Johnson, Kristol-Brown, Van Vianen, De Pater, & Klein, 2003). Expat professionals who have more extensive networks with host nationals are expected to better adapt to the local environment than those with smaller groups of contacts (Johnson et al., 2003). Other studies have emphasized the importance of

networking with other expatriates (Brewster & Pickard, 1994; Johnson et al., 2003; Fahr, Bartol, Shapiro, & Shin, 2010). However, where there are big expatriate communities, the level of interaction with locals tends to decrease (Brewster & Pickard 1994; Johnson et al., 2003).

Other studies highlighted how transcultural interactions are likely to represent another source of stress. Relationships between aid workers and locals always take place in contexts informed by power relations and this makes it harder for international professionals to establish cooperative work relations and significant relationships with local people outside the workplace (for an analysis of the interplay between moral and utilitarian models of friendship in development world see Heuser, 2012). Cultural differences also affect transcultural interactions: for instance, relationships between men and women are examples of the differences in values between different cultures that can be an everyday challenge for aid workers (McWha, 2011).

Aid work is characterized by three main attitudes towards the aid recipients: an attitude of *superiority*, which is based upon presumptions as to who has the knowledge (legal, technical) or the power (aid management) that places local people in a position of dependency (Harrell-Bond, 2005; Roth, 2012) and which resembles a neo-colonialist attitude; the opposite attitude is the *paternalistic* one, which often idealizes the "Other" and aid work itself (NOHA, 1999). Both are models of dependence based on the control of aid management and on an underestimation of local people's own skills. The third approach is the *cooperative approach,* which suggests recognition of both the aid workers' and the local population's capabilities and sees aid a socially negotiated arena (Hilhortst, Wejers & van Wessel, 2012). It implies possibilities of reciprocity and mutual learning, based upon respect for the population and motivated by a sense of social justice. Despite this cooperative attitude is universally endorsed, the superiority and paternalistic attitudes are not uncommon. As Stearns (1993) has noted the tendency to believe oneself to be all-powerful (Jehovah complex) or to assume an over-caring approach (Magna Mother complex), can lead to overwork and confusion as to what one's role should be. Moreover, it reinforces the victimization and passivity of the communities (which is also supported by the description of locals as passive people, with the widespread use of the words "victim", "passive", "powerless", "recipients", and "beneficiaries").

Positive *working relationships* between international aid workers are an important coping factor, as it is an opportunity to make the experience more meaningful and to find peer support (Blanchetière, 2006). But, frequently aid staff is in an isolated working context, and therefore, in a lack of social and emotional support. Some humanitarian workers reported that if group cohesion and external support is absent or withheld, adjustment is compromised (Thomas, 2009).

At the same time, team dynamics can turn in a burden when negative: conflicts with team members, housing problems and absence of privacy are other sources of stress (Antares Foundation, 2012; Gal, 1998; Thomas, 2004). The communal environment may easily become a place where small irritants magnify, especially if privacy is limited and intimacy is forced. Team members may not know each other (International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent [IFRC], 2001), and foreign languages can make communication difficult. Also, having relations only with colleagues under similar pressures may develop in a spiralling negativity when accompanied by a lack of diverse external inputs (Thomas, 2009). This might lead to many of the behavioural reactions that threaten mission achievement (social withdrawal, reluctance to take leave, irritability, and substance abuse), as described in organisation publications (IFRC, 2001; Oxfam, 2002; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2001).

Lengthy absences from home weaken and undermine the pre-existing *social networks* (family of origin, family and friendships), which usually cushion individuals from mental health difficulties and protect them from other adverse effects of stressful events (Eriksson et al., 2001; McFarlane, 2004). Despite modern telecommunications, mobility to non-family postings weakens family bonds isolating humanitarian workers from community ties, thus, maintaining and re-establishing contacts with friends or family can be another relevant stressor (Thomas, 2009). In the absence of traditional sources of support individuals with needs for companionship, social support, economic stability and love, adapt by drawing on others (Bee & Bjorkland, 2000). Relationships may form around a shared reality in *Aidland* (Apthorpe, 2011b; Eyben 2007; Denskus 2007; Fechter, 2011) to fulfil tasks traditionally undertaken by family members. Some needs may be met in roles taken on through short-term, interpersonal relationships in the field, such as among colleagues who make up newly constructed, fictive families or live an "Erasmus lifestyle" (characterized by frequent after-work parties with a lot of alcohol, and by promiscuous sexual activities), as described in a number of aid workers' autobiographies (Cain et al., 2004; Griffiths, 2003; Vaux, 2001; Morris, 1991) and blogs (aidworkersnetwork.com; forum.expatclic.com; shotgunshackblog.com; stuffexpataidworkerslike.com; talesfromethehood.com). After many years as an international aid worker, a consequence of a nomadic lifestyle is that there is little else in life but work. Rotation from mission to mission leaves no space for personal life: long stays away from home undermine the opportunity to forge and maintain the core elements of trust and intimacy of social networks. This leads to an uncertain future (Thomas, 2009).

2.4.1.4 *Moral dilemmas*

Due to the ambiguities that characterize humanitarian aid situations, there are more and more challenges and moral dilemmas to contend with. Currently, aid organisations are having to cope with more difficult ethical problems than ever before, such as: the use of aid by opposing factions in a war; the possibility of becoming accomplices to the atrocities by remaining in a particular place, or by abandoning the most needy communities; whether or not to provide a testimony of atrocities witnessed when it leads to the danger of having to renounce humanitarian work; or to intensify humanitarian aid when it allows the State to shirk its political responsibilities (Hermet, 1993). International aid workers are faced with ethical dilemmas which are rarely openly discussed, and that centers on the significance of one's role in humanitarian aid (Lischer, 2006; NOHA, 1999). Situations of injustice can arouse moral sensibility and feelings of guilt. At the same time, having unclear reasons for working in the aid industry or using aid to satisfy other kinds of personal needs (as for instance, improving a cv, looking for "adventure" or "escaping"), involves significant risks for the development initiatives. Furthermore, an idealistic and unrealistic view of aid may cause disappointment when faced by real experiences (Stearns, 1993). Even if the importance of having the "right" motivations and realistic expectations is broader recognized in aid organisation's manuals, research on these topics is so far scarce. However, in the aid narratives one emerging "right" reason seems to be altruism, which is commonly associated with the work of NGOs and with popular-views of aid workers as selfless heroes, who rescue others while potentially endangering their own lives. Thus, aid worker identities are constructed around romanticized notions of "heroism" and "saving others", together with notions of equity, justice, concern for others and a belief in a cause (Cook, 2008; Cook, 2009; Heron, 2007; McCormack, Joseph & Hagger, 2009; Thomas, 2009). On the other hand, recently, public criticism of international aid workers who appear to be "doing well out of poverty" increased (Fechter, 2012). A few studies are addressing the ethic dimension of altruistic and professionals' motivations in aid work, considering altruism sometimes in positive terms, others in negative terms, as in development critique (G. Hancock, 1989). As documented by social psychology literature on prosocial behaviour, altruism is a general human tendency to help others in distress that has properties analogous to egoistic motivation and yet comes into play independently of egoistic motivation (Batson, 1991; Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce, & Neuberg, 1997; Hoffman, 1981). It is not conceptualized in a binary way and diametrically opposed to selfishness as intended by Vaux (2004); actually, aid professionals' motivations are more accurately described as mixed, including both motives (de Jong, 2011; De Sardan, 2005). As Fecther (2012, p.1489) noted "the intertwining of altruistic and professional motives is not only

significant in what it tells us about aid workers, but reveals a lacuna in development ethics and can be considered as the failure – or refusal – to consider the 'care for the self' as well as the 'care for the other'".

2.4.2 Gender and Aid and Development

Although exact numbers aren't available, most aid and development organisations include some aspect of gender sensitivity in the work they do. Indeed Goal Three of the Millennium Development Goals set out in 2000, and to which most aid agencies subscribe, specifically addresses women's empowerment: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women (UN, 2013b). A brief survey of aid organisations' websites shows the way gender is expressed as a central concern within many aid organisations: "We put women's rights at the heart of everything we do" (Oxfam, 2013), "We know that long-term, sustainable development will only be possible when women and men enjoy equal opportunity to rise to their potential" (United States Agency for International Development [USAID], 2012), "Yet gender inequalities remain deeply entrenched in every society" (United Nations Women [UN Women], 2013). These quotes are only an example of the commitment to working to facilitate gender equality of some of the most important humanitarian agencies.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2013) provides guidelines for minimum standards, drawn from the UN Division for the Advancement of Women. These guidelines require organisations to proactively investigate, identify and diagnose gender disparities within their organisation, and prioritise the allocation of resources to address these disparities (Hannan, 2013). More specifically, the guidelines demand: an initial identification of issues and problems across all areas of activity to diagnose gender differences and disparities; assumptions that issues or problems are neutral from a gender-equality perspective should never be made; gender analysis should always be carried out; clear political will and allocation of adequate resources for mainstreaming, including additional financial and human resources if necessary, are important for translation of the concept into practice; and finally, gender mainstreaming requires that efforts be made to broaden women's equitable participation at all levels of decision-making. Interestingly, in my literature research I found that there exists very few data on aid workers gathered on the basis of their gender; in fact, only a couple of studies on security are including gender analysis; findings from these studies suggest that security policies and procedures are perceived to be gender neutral, and that there is no gendered trend analysis of incidents. Moreover, most security training does not include a gendered component, even if there are risks unique to men and women (Gaul, Keegan, Lawrence, & Ramos, 2006; United Nations

Department of Safety and Security [UNDSS], 2006; Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition [WHRD IC], 2012; Wille & Fast, 2011). These studies suggest that only systematically collecting more complete information about gender it will be possible to answer questions on the differential risks that men and women face in the field.

2.4.2.1 *Women in International Management*

Even if not specific on women international aid workers, interesting findings on the broader category of women expatriate professionals can be useful to study the specific professional category at issue. In addition to articles published in the 2002 special issue of International Journal of Human Resource Management on female expatriates, some of the more recent studies on women as expatriate managers include Caligiuri and Cascio (1998), Caligiuri, Joshi, & Lazarova 3(1999), Caligiuri and Tung (1999), Chusmir and Frontczak (1990), Davidson and Punnett (1995), Elron and Kark (2000), Forster (1999), Harris (1993a, 1993b, 1995a, 1995b, 1999, 2004), Harris and Harris (1988), Hill and Tillery (1992), Izraeli, Banai and Zeira (1980), Linehan (2000, 2002), Linehan and Scullion (2002), Linehan, Scullion and Walsh (2000, 2001), Linehan and Walsh (1999a, 1999b, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c), Moran and Boyer Inc. (1998), Napier and Taylor (1995, 2002), Osland, Snyder and Hunter (1998), Punnett (1997), Punnett, Crocker and Von Glinow (1992), Stroh, Varma and Valy-Durbin (2000), Taylor and Napier (1996a, 1996b), Vance, Paik and Semos (1999) and Westwood and Leung (1994).

The 2-3% of expatriates represented by women in the early 1980s has increased to 12-15% (Caligiuri et al., 1999). Despite women's participation as expatriates has greatly improved in recent years, they still remain underrepresented at around 20% of international assignees (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2009) and this seems to be linked with organisational resistances as well as women's. There are no clear statistics available on women's employment in newer forms of global work.

Landmark research by Nancy J. Adler (1984a, 1984b, 1984c; 1987; 1993; 1994a; 1994b) provided the foundation for studies of women in international management and attributed the underrepresentation of women to three principal forces: (1) complexities of prejudice in the foreign location, (2) long-standing corporate resistance, and (3) misperceptions about disinterest among female managers. Since then, several studies have examined the experiences of women working outside their home country (Adler, 2002; Adler & Israeli 1987; Forster 1999; Altman & Shortland, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Varma, Toh & Budhwar, 2006) pointing out different results. Of the three issues listed by Adler, the first one seems particularly interesting for female international aid workers. It has been argued that foreigner *prejudice* in host country locations

makes for unsuccessful international management (Adler, 1994). Hutchings, Lirio and Metcalfe (2012) also found that, consistent with the different roles expected of men and women and with stereotypes about women and their capabilities, women were often perceived as being "weak" and not able to handle sophisticated tasks and needing to be taken care of by men, while research by Sinangil and Ones (2001) concluded that men and women expatriates were rated quite similarly in terms of job performance, and that employing more women in the global workforce would enhance workforce diversity and build inclusiveness into expatriate assignments. Yet, Adler (1994) found women citing benefits of visibility from being female and reporting foreigners reacting to them first as representatives of a company, next as a citizen from where they originate and only then as women (Caligiuri et al., 1999; Stroh et al., 2000). Though, Lowe, Downes and Kroeck (1999) found that women were more resistant than men to work in particular international locations fearing that they would experience prejudice.

Female expatriates have been studied predominantly in the context of developed nations in the 'Triad' – Japan, the USA and Europe (Adler, 1993; Westwood & Leung, 1994; Taylor & Napier, 1996a; Tung, 1998), and only Harrison and Michailova (2012) shifted the focus on different countries, offering insight into the work and life of Western female professionals in the United Arab Emirates. In their study they found that Western female expatriates were able to successfully work and enjoy working in a Muslim Arab society, despite widespread (Western) perceptions and stereotypes of Arab societies being inhospitable places for them to work. Other evidence today shows that women can and do succeed at working abroad even in presumably unwelcoming environments (e.g. Caligiuri & Cascio, 1998; Napier & Taylor, 1995; Stroh et al., 2000; Taylor, Napier & Mayrhofer, 2002).

More recent research has also suggested that a lack of support (organisational, network or social/family) and work–family conflicts are also barriers to women's international work (Linehan, 2000; Linehan, Scullion & Walsh 2001). Despite the high relevance of the topic, there has only been very little attention to role interference and work-life balance issues among expatriates and especially among female expatriates (Fischlmayr & Kollinger, 2010; Takeuchi, Yun, & Tesluk, 2002). There are few empirical studies on this subject (Shortland & Cummins, 2007) which stress the impact of family pressures on work, and these rarely consider bi-directional influences (Shaffer, Harrison & Joplin, 2001). Other than that, there is a tendency to focus on very specific issues such as the burnout tendency of expatriates (e.g., Bhanugopan & Fish, 2006) or ethnic matters in acceptance (e.g., Tzeng, 2006). If work can interfere with family (WFC) it is also true that family can interfere with work (FWC) (Harris, 2004). According to this

bi-directional approach, WFC suggests that pressures from the work domain (such as the number of working weekly hours, flexibility of working hours and work-role conflict) overflows into family life. At the same time, FWC implies that family conflicts arising from stressors like low level of spousal support, and the number and age of children, have an impact on the work life area (Bernas & Major, 2000; Cinamon, 2006). In general, negative interference may have a negative impact on the well-being of a working individual (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Van der Zee, Ali & Salome, 2005), may decrease organisational commitment and job satisfaction, and increase burnout (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2001; Bhanugopan & Fish, 2006; Hill et al., 2008). For female expatriates, this situation is even harder: in fact, not only female managers generally invest more time in home activities than men (Cinamon, 2006), but they are also confronted with different challenges abroad in contrast to their male colleagues, for a number of reasons: first, within the work sphere, female expatriates may not be accepted in their managerial role, and their authority and credibility may be questioned, especially if they are moving to a country which shows prejudices against women in general or female managers in particular (Adler 1979; Kirk & Maddox, 1988). Literature on this specific topic suggests that whether female expatriates are accepted in the host country depends mainly on the respective culture or religion of a country, since these are the core factors, which have a strong impact on social structure and roles, values and norms (Tzeng, 2006). Second, FWC is more likely in an international context rather than in a domestic setting particularly for dual career couples (Pierce & Delahaye, 1996). Moreover, male spouses appear to find it harder to follow their wives abroad, also due to greater difficulty in gaining acceptance within foreign cultures in which the male role of a "secondary breadwinner", "homemaker" or "trailing spouse" is not socially acceptable (Mendenhall, Punett & Ricks 1995; Adler, 1997; Punnett, 1997).

Grant-Vallone and Ensher's (2001) pointed out that the impact of work on private life also applies to singles: the single female expatriates in their study reported similar stressing issues to families; in fact, they described a lack of social interaction in their leisure time and the difficulty of making local friends. Such conflict is then not only concerning "work-family" but rather "work-personal life", and should be further investigated.

2.5   Conclusions, lacunae in the literature and research questions

2.5.1 Conclusions

In this chapter I presented the literature on international aid workers. After a brief introduction I first described the Italian Development Cooperation from its origins, portraying its two "souls", the Catholic and the laic, and I distinguished between different types of cooperation: bilateral and multilateral, centralized and decentralized, governmental and non-governmental. I then illustrated the peculiarities of humanitarian and development aid, which are the two main sectors in which aid workers are employed. I also elucidated the Italian legislation on International Cooperation, which emerged to be obsolete and unable to represent and offer legal protection Italian aid workers. The Italian aid sector appeared to be plodding and distant from reaching ODA goals, also due to a dramatic cut of funding; in this scenario Italian NGOs' representatives are unsatisfied and advocates for their sector needs. I subsequently showed the only statistics available on the Italians employed in the Italian cooperation aid; those data indicated that despite the static Italian cooperation context, its workforce is growing. Such increase is due to the number of young Italian women entering the profession. Other data also revealed that the majority of students enrolled in the recently rising University courses on development issues are females, in what seems to be a feminisation of the profession. After a focus on the Italian context, I then moved to consider international literature on aid work, which I found to be limited and mostly directed on beneficiaries of aid rather than on humanitarian workers. The studies that consider international aid professionals centred principally on biomedical aspects of mental health, from PTSD to daily stress and related stressors; interestingly, in those studies, a gender disparity was found, as women aid workers reported higher levels of stress. I continued the review presenting findings on other challenges that international aid workers face in the field; many authors reported the effects of the impact with different cultures: cultural transition, culture shock, acculturation and re-entry syndrome. Researchers also demonstrated that social ties could represent both a protective factor as well as a stress source: if social support is a resource, troubled relationships within expat communities and local communities can easily turn into stressors. Anthropology literature proved that difference in resources and standards of living between aid workers and the communities with whom they work, facilitate tiring existential questions and moral dilemmas. Relationships with other aid workers can lead to live in "Aidland", a virtual reality described by Apthorpe (2011b, p.201) as "not a nowhere exactly but inexactly a somewhere, with the characteristics of a nowhere" that might develop into alienation. Moreover, difficulties in maintaining pre-existing

social networks (with the family, family of origin and friends) due to frequent mobility and absence from "home" are another important source of stress.

Since the presence of more and more women in the profession is a new emerging data, I also searched for gender studies within the international aid literature. I found that, despite UN agencies require for investigation on gender disparities within aid organisations, and despite most organisations claim to be gender sensitive, there are no gendered data on international aid workers (with the exception of a few security guidelines). Literature about female professionals in international management can be used to partially fill this gap, even if most of the studies focused on professionals working in developed countries. Nonetheless the findings presented revealed how even if the numbers are growing, women expatriates are still underrepresented. Some authors also observed that, in contrast to their male colleagues, women professionals are confronted with a major number of challenges in their experiences abroad, related to foreigner prejudice in host country locations and to work-life conflicts.

2.5.2 Lacunae in the literature

The review of the international aid workers literature showed a number of gaps, which my doctoral study addresses. First of all, there is an absence of statistics on the Italian workforce, as well as an international lack of socio-demographic on the professional category. Since a background picture is an essential basis in order to carry out any other further research, my study will address this gap by a close examination of Italians international aid workers.

I will provide a mapping of the workforce not only for an academic interest, but also for the professionals themselves, which so far are not professionally recognized (neither by the law, nor by the classification of professions). A general mapping is essential in order to help professionals in creating a shared professional identity. Furthermore, this is necessary to make comparisons with other countries.

Second, I found a lack of interest in the topic within my discipline, social psychology. In fact, the only studies available in psychology refer to clinical psychology, occupational psychology and transcultural psychology. I did not find any study stemming from a discursive social psychological background. I instead argue that, in this topic there are many suggestions that can appeal psychosocial researchers (Mazzara & Montali, 2010); the international aid work arena is all the more interesting because of the nature of the work being done: stressful, in poor conditions, dealing with issues of poverty, disease, malnutrition, violence and genocide - perhaps the worst of humankind. I will therefore address this lack with my study, analysing the

experiences of international aid workers as a rich source of data for exploring the negotiation of identity in a cross-cultural context, with a discursive psychology approach.

Third, in both academic literature, as well as the in the publications within the international aid industry, an important dimension of aid workers identity was so far neglected: gender. Acknowledging the omni-relevance of gender (Weatherall, 2012), I will study how gender impacts on aid workers professionals' experiences and what level of reflexivity these professionals have about it, comparing the experiences of "Aidwomen" and "Aidmen".

2.5.3 Research questions

A number of research questions will guide my gender sensitive approach to the exploration of Italian aid workers' experiences:

1. Who are Italian international aid workers?
2. Is the international aid sector undergoing a process of feminisation?
3. How the experiences of women and men aid workers might differ?
4. If any, what are the professional benefits/disadvantages related to one's gender identity?
5. If any, what are the peculiarities of Italian aid workers compared to European aid workers?

More specifically, using a feminist discursive approach, I will answer the following questions:

1. How aid workers account for the feminisation of their profession?
2. How do aid workers negotiate their gender identity?
3. How gender as an identity category is brought into the discursive interaction?
4. How gender intersects with other identity categories?

In the next chapter I will describe the methodology used to answer these questions.

3 Methodology

In this chapter I will outline the methodological approach I have taken in order to examine how aid workers in the research co-construct their experiences in the field. Specifically, I will provide background for my discursive approach *Sequential Membership Categorisation Analysis*, briefly summarizing its roots in Discursive Psychology and in Conversation Analysis. I will justify why this micro-analytic approach is particularly fruitful for the discursive research on gender. In the second part of the chapter I will discuss the process of data collection, describing first the pilot study and then the two main sources of data: a quanti-qualitative online survey and the interviews. I will end the chapter with the description of the process of analysis.

3.1 Analytic framework: Sequential MCA

Gender can be considered a, if not the, crucial point for interdisciplinary research on identities; as Dave Glover and Cora Kaplan note: "Gender is now one of the most restless terms in the English language, a word that crops up everywhere, yet whose uses seem to be forever changing, always on the move, producing new and often surprising inflections of meaning" (2000, p. ix). *Gender* is not only an ever-present topic for discussion in Humanities and Social Sciences disciplines, but it has even become an interdisciplinary field in its own right; this marks the highly diverse and contested nature of the issues it addresses, as well as the impact of feminist thought and research across differing scholarly domains (Segal, 2010). From the beginning gender was used in at least four overlapping ways: to refer to distinctive personal attributes, especially those associated with women and femininity; to cultural processes operating in the acquisition of such attributes; to language and the differential symbolic value of gender-related terms and discourses; to the hierarchical power relations maintaining men overall as the dominant sex. *Gender* today remains as controversial as it is inevitable, despite all the differing attempts to displace or diversify it as a core site of identity. As a PhD student looking for a feminist intellectual engagement, in this articulated panorama characterized by epistemological and methodological diversity, I've finally found a thought-provoking approach that examined the relationships between psychology, language, and gender. Such an interdisciplinary approach has its roots in different backgrounds ad disciplines, which share important commonalities. Even if it is not simple to establish precisely what the theoretical boundaries of the various approaches are, in the next sections I will try to summarize these perspectives separately and I will then focus on a recent discursive approach introduced by Stokoe, which I used for my data analysis.

3.1.1 Discursive Psychology

Discursive psychology (DP) was developed in social psychology in the United Kingdom in the 1980s (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), becoming most strongly established in the 1990s (cf. Antaki, 1988, 1994; Billig, 1987, 1991; Billig et al., 1988; Burman & Parker, 1993; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Harre & Gillett, 1994; Parker, 1992; Potter, 1996; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). It can be seen as an additional manifestation of the general turn to language, turn to culture or turn to discourse found across the social sciences and humanities (Wetherell, 2007). Discursive psychology (DP) sits in the same family as Conversation Analysis (CA). Its roots lie in a variety of theoretical-philosophical and empirical traditions: ethnomethodology (EM) and CA, the language philosophy of Wittgenstein (1958), constructivist approaches to human development (Vygotsky, 1978), and social studies of science (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984).

DP's original goal was to unpack critique and "respecify" (Button, 1991) the topics of social, developmental and cognitive psychology, and their methods of investigation (Edwards & Potter, 2001). It therefore aimed to challenge mainstream psychology in much the same way that EM and CA challenged mainstream sociology. DP comprises a fundamental shift from treating psychological states (for example, anger, intention, identity) as operating behind talk, causing people to say the things they do. In this way, DP challenged the traditional psychological treatment of language as a channel to underlying mental processes, and the experimental study of those processes. Instead, it studied how commonsense psychological concepts are deployed in, oriented to and handled in the talk and texts that comprise social life. Thus language was not treated as an externalisation of underlying thoughts, motivations, memories or attitudes, but as constitutive and performative of them. DP understands discourse as action oriented whereby actions are to be analysed in their situated context rather than as discrete units of activity (Potter, 2003). From this perspective discourse is both *constructed*: people talk by deploying the resources (words, categories, common-sense ideas) available to them; and *constructive*: people build social worlds through descriptions of persons, categories, events and objects.

In terms of identity DP has followed one of two main trajectories. First, in its original EM/CA-based formulation, several writers have combined Sacks's (1992) work on MCD with sequential CA to examine the way social identities are claimed, resisted and otherwise put to use in interaction (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Edwards, 1998; Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995). A second strand of identity-relevant work is more closely aligned to the poststructuralist and sociology-of-science approach in Potter and Wetherell' (1987) discourse analysis, developed

more recently as critical discourse analysis (Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003; Seymour-Smith, Wetherell & Phoenix, 2002; Wetherell & Edley, 1999). Both strands shared the idea that identity categories such as gender could be understood as social constructions.

As (Segal, 2010) argued discursive approaches may reconcile some of the most entrenched dualism characterising identity and gender research: they are able to explicate the processes by which people orient to consistency in their accounts of themselves and other people, whilst simultaneously showing that identity is contingent on the local conditions of the interactional context. Similarly identity may be a matter of being "subject" to or taking positions within discourse, but also an active process of discursive "work" in relation to other speakers. One consequence of these approaches is that identities instead of being accepted as unproblematic descriptions of categories of individuals become viewed as questions of discursive negotiation in everyday contexts (Antaki &Widdicombe, 1998).

3.1.1.1 *DP and Gender and Language Research*

One of the early contributions of DP was to offer a different perspective on the relationship between gender, language, and power than previous work had taken. Instead of asking questions about sex differences in language use or interactional style, studies using DP were asking about the ways people use gender in talk and how sexism is accounted for and focused on the subtle rhetorical management of talk about inequality (Speer, 2005; Weatherall, 2012). Instead of considering gender as an individual's identification that is expressed in language, it became viewed as an accomplishment or performance. So, from a DP perspective it is possible to approach gender as something that "is done" through interaction.

While feminists in psychology have had a long history of contributing to research on gender and language (see Stokoe, 1998; Weatherall, 2002), it is the widespread practice of CA that has stimulated new debates and further research innovation. Over the past 15 years, CA has become the established method for investigating gender and social life in DP and elsewhere (see, for example, Speer & Stokoe, 2011; Stokoe & Weatherall, 2002).

3.1.2 Ethnomethodology and Feminist Conversation Analysis

Until a special issue on Discourse and Society (2002), feminist CA, as a coherent body of research was located in the margins of both the language and gender and CA fields; Stokoe and Weatherall, editors of the issue, demonstrated the complexity and diversity of feminist CA and

provided visibility for such work. Debate and interesting investigation still continue nowadays in what is a fruitful approach to the study of gender and interaction.

3.1.2.1 Ethnomethodology

In 1967, what is considered a groundbreaking work on the social production of gender was published by the ethnomethodologist Harold Garfinkel. According to him (1967, p.118), gender is one of the "invariant but unnoticed" backgrounds in everyday life. It is omnirelevant and yet its organisation is something that, for the majority of people remains hidden, as they take their "sex status" for granted. Aiming to study forms of commonsense reasoning that people use to produce their selves as gendered beings, he became interested in the study of intersexed people (Speer, 2005); through the case study of Agnes, a 19-year-old male to female transsexual, Garfinkel analysed "how membership in a sex category is sustained across a variety of practical circumstances and contingencies, at the same time preserving the sense that such membership is a natural, normal, moral fact of life" (Zimmerman, 1992, p.195). Based on similar situations, Garfinkel (1967, p.180) produced the foundations for a theory of gender that makes observable "that and how normal sexuality is accomplished through witnessable displays of talk and conduct". This publication raised the interest of some feminists that accepted Garfinkel work as the basis for an understanding of everyday life in agreement with the aims of feminism: "a concern with the everyday and the personal" (Stanley & Wise, 1993, p.138). Others, like Smith (2002), highlighted the significance of ethnomethodology (EM) for the feminist problematic of gender due to its focus on "how people themselves accomplish and recognize gender in their everyday practices"; that is, how the routine gendering of social life gets "done" (Stokoe, 2006). Psychologists Kessler and McKenna (1978) and sociologists West and Zimmerman (1987) developed the perspective exemplified by Garfinkel: the first two authors showed that the "irreducible fact" that there are two sexes "is a product of social interaction in everyday life" (1978, p.7); for them gender is not an individual attribute or role, but is an "emergent feature" of social interactions. People "do" gender in the presence of others who may orient to its making; and by orienting to gender in talk, people produce and reproduce the social order at the micro-level (Stokoe, 2000). The second two authors, West and Zimmerman, developed the "doing gender" theory, in which gender is considered "a situated accomplishment: the local management of conduct in relation to normative conceptions of appropriate attitudes and activities for particular sex categories" (West & Fenstermaker, 1993, p.156). This means that "doing gender consists of managing such occasions so that, whatever the particulars, the outcome is seen and seeable in context as gender appropriate or, as the case may be, gender

inappropriate – that is, accountable" (West & Zimmerman, 2002, p.12). Due to the "ever-present possibility of having one's actions, circumstances and even, one's descriptions characterised in relation to one's presumed membership in a particular category" (West & Fenstermaker, 2002, p.541), the actions of women and men can be considered ever-accountable activities (Stokoe, 2006). So, if somebody wants to be accepted as a member of the category men/women he/she has to live accordingly to the normativity around masculinity and femininity respectively, otherwise he/she will risk "gender assessment".

3.1.2.2 Feminist Conversation Analysis

Conversation analysis was developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s by the sociologist Sacks and his colleagues Schegloff and Jefferson (1974), inspired by Garfinkel's EM (1967) and Goffman's conception of interaction order (1983).

As Kitzinger noted (2000), from the earliest development of CA there has always been some feminist interest in CA, and this interest has grown since the publication of Sacks's (1992) *Lectures on Conversation,* and the wider availability of resources on doing CA (Psathas, 1995; Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998; ten Have, 1999). A first strand of feminist CA researched sex differences in language, focusing on how males dominate micro-level interaction as a proof of the feminist claim that males dominate in society (Zimmerman & West, 1975). Interest was on defining speech styles and attributing them to men or women. Many other conversation analytical studies linked different interactional patterns to gender, such as turn number (e.g. women take less turns than men), turn length (e.g. women take shorter turns than men), topic shift (e.g. women make collaborative shifts, men unilateral shifts) and so on (e.g. Ainsworth-Vaughn, 1992; De Francisco, 1991; West & Garcia, 1988).

As described by Stokoe (2000) in the 1990s a critical shift occurred and new questions arose about the links between gender and language. This change echoed a wider dissatisfaction among some psychologists to sex difference research in general and its essentialist understanding of gender (for example, Bohan, 1993; Hollway, 1994) that assumed gender as a "fixed trait" or property that resides within individuals. Social constructionist feminists denied this idea and instead located gender in interactions (Bohan, 1993; Crawford, 1995). From this standpoint there is no ontological difference between sex and gender, indeed both are theorized as dynamic, socially constituted phenomena (Butler, 1990). Similarly, masculinity and femininity are not binary opposites but flexible and 'mutually dependent constructs in a dialectical relationship' (Johnson & Meinhof, 1997, p.2). Also feminist CA researchers suggested a number of criticalities within the first strand works (Stokoe, 2000, 2004) that "undoubtedly" violated "some

of the most fundamental ethnomethodological assumptions on which CA is based" (Kitzinger, 2000, p.170): a first issue is that certain features are assumed as *a priori* indexes of power; a second is that in these works gender accounts for any differences, without considering other aspects of identity (such as ethnicity, class, age, etc.); but the major issue with these works is that in CA categories (e.g. 'gender') are understood within the context that is built up by interactants as they display their understandings of emergent social actions (Schegloff, 1991; 1992). On the contrary, in these studies analysts imposed the relevance of gender in the design of their research, while speakers did not treat it as significant to their ongoing interaction. Within the CA/EM approach instead, gender is relevant to talk only when participants in an interactional episode are demonstrably oriented to it (Schegloff, 1997). Therefore, as Stokoe and Weatherall (2002, p.708) argued that the challenge for feminist researchers who want to use this approach "is to show *that* and *how* gender is procedurally relevant for speakers". Moreover, the CA position forces researchers to treat gender as something speakers "do", rather than something they "have". Focusing on the close analysis of everyday, mundane, naturally occurring "talk-in-interaction", on speakers' commonsense knowledge and on how they orient to and make sense of each other's conversational actions (Sacks, 1992), "may be more politically acute than the kind which elevates the researcher's politics and uses this to guide interpretation of what people have to say" (Widdicombe, 1995, p.111).

This position was subjected to a set of critical responses, in what is known as the Schegloff-Wetherell-Billig debate. The debate arose from Schegloff's (1997) contrasting a critical discourse analytical approach, arguing that every claim on the relevance of gender must be evidenced by "participants' orientations", and thus the analysis must attend to what is important for participants and not to what is important for the analyst before approaching the data. Wetherell (1998) first and Kitzinger (2000) later challenged Schegloff's opinion, considering it restrictive. From her post-structuralist perspective, Wetherell suggested that a productive data analysis demands "the import of extra-textual systems of meaning-making which members of a culture have available to them" (1998, p.388); from her feminist CA perspective, Kitzinger complained that any approach which requires the explicit mention of a gender category for it to be deemed relevant to interaction is "unbearably limiting", not least because "few features of language directly and exclusively index gender" (Ochs, 1992, p.340). It has been also criticized that the Schegloffian perspective prevents researchers to characterize interactions as prejudiced or sexist unless such concerns are attended to by participants (Beach, 2000). The third author to take a stand against CA's claims to neutrality and alleged disinterested observations of data was Billig (1999). He argued that although conversation analysts may claim not to let the

wider context inform their analyses "they may be taking such background for granted" (1999, p.554). For all these criticalities, feminist psychologists didn't have a propensity to use CA in their research, until a renew interest in the 2000s.

3.1.3 MCA and CA: a "troublesome" relationship

Like CA, Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA) originated from Sacks' work (1972a); despite having shared roots they followed different tracks and studies of membership categorisation have occupied a minor position with regard both to EM and CA. As a result, there are hundreds of CA articles and books, far fewer MCA publications (Stokoe, 2006).

A basic difference between CA and MCA is that CA is concerned with the sequential organisation of conversation, whilst MCA is concerned with the methods of categorisation and the display of categories and their associated predicates in both naturally occurring talk and textual formations (Housley & Fitzgerald, 2002). CA, focusing on aspects of the sequential organisation of utterances, excludes any focal concern with membership categorisation. It "specifies the normative structuring and logics of particular courses of social action and their organisation into systems through which participants manage turn-taking, repair, and other systemic dimensions of interaction" (Heritage, 2005, p.104). Whereas, MCA focuses on "members' methodical practices in describing the world and displaying their understanding of it, and of the commonsense routine workings of society" (Fitzgerald, Housley, & Butler, 2009, p.4). This "difference" resulted in an oppositional dualism between CA and MCA: "if one has a sequential-analytic 'take' on conversation, then the membership categorisation aspects recede from view; vice versa, if one adopts the membership categorisation 'take', it makes the sequential aspects of talk recede into the background" (Watson, 1997, p.50).

However, some authors suggested that the two approaches of CA and MCA are not necessarily distinct, as categorical work informs our reading of what an utterance does and how it is formed (Watson, 1997), that "both the sequential and categorisational aspects of social interaction inform each other" (Hester & Eglin, 1997, p.2) and that both category and sequence can be understood "to be two sides of the same coin" (Silverman, 1998, p.152). Thus, a number of studies have sought to explore the process of categories and categorisation as a member's recognizable production alongside the sequential organisation of talk-in-interaction (Hester & Eglin, 1997; Watson, 1997; Hester & Francis, 2001; Watson, 2001), as well as a number of studies examined the construction of gender as a category in discourse, and how it is used and oriented to by members (Baker, 2000; Berard, 2005; Edwards, 1998; Eglin, 2002; Eglin &

Hester, 1999; Evaldsson, 2004; Nilan, 1995; Nilan, 1994; Stokoe, 2003; Stokoe & Smithson, 2001; Wowk, 1984).

3.1.4 Sequential Membership Categorisation Analysis

Stokoe (e.g. Stokoe, 1998; 2003; 2004; 2005) argued that the study of categories must be integrated into an analysis of the sequence-organisational structures of conversational action. She also suggested that Sacks's work on membership categories and on MCA provides a useful complement to sequential CA and a fruitful starting place for language and gender researchers. Sequential MCA therefore represents an innovative methodological development within the field of discursive and interactional analysis.

This approach allows studying, at the micro level, "how the building blocks of fundamental cultural divisions are formulated and exploited as part of the local construction of social meanings" (Stokoe & Smithson, 2001, p.153). In fact, the analysis of members' categories in their sequential environment permits language and gender researchers to see how everyday notions of gender are taken up, reformulated, or resisted, in turns of talk that accomplish conversational action; that is, how categories "might be relevant for the doing of some activity" (Sacks, 1992, vol. 1, p.597).

Members' practical categorisations are thus part of the ongoing construction and maintenance of "facts" about social life, including our knowledge about gender. It is the interactional ongoing construction of social categories (such as 'woman', 'man') and the activities and characteristics people link to them (like 'looking after children', 'providing for the family') that is central to the perpetuation of gendered assumptions and practices. Moreover, "the more natural, taken-for-granted and therefore invisible the categorisation work, the more powerful it is" (Baker, 2000, p.111). Allowing analysts to see the ways in which participants construct and manage their conduct in relation to conventional expectations for women and men's activities and characters, MCA can be legitimately considered a helpful method for feminist researchers (Stokoe, 2004).

In a recent publication Stokoe (2012) provides a summary of the analytic steps and procedures for conducting MCA, which are grounded in basic categorical and sequential concerns. She offers a glossary of ten key concepts derived from Sacks's and Schegloff (2007) tutorial:

1. *Membership categorisation device:* it's the device that groups together membership categories. Through this apparatus categories are understood to "belong" to a collective

category (e.g. the categories 'male' and 'female' are heard to belong to the MCD 'gender'). Categories may belong to myriad MCDs (e.g. 'baby' can belong to the MCDs 'stage of life', or 'terms of endearment'), via various rules of application.

2. *Category-bound activities:* activities that are, *in situ*, linked to categories, such as "Why are men (category) so reluctant to go to the doctor (activity)?".

3. *Category-tied predicates*: a category's characteristics, such as "this mother (category) cares (predicate) tremendously for her baby".

4. *Standardized relational pairs*: pairs of categories that carry duties and moral obligations in relation to the other, such as 'parent–child'; 'perpetrator–victim'; 'boyfriend-girlfriend'.

5. *Duplicative organisation*: categories that work in a unit or as a 'team', with specific obligations to each other, such as 'mother', 'father', 'aunt', 'sister' and 'son' in the same 'family'.

6. *Positioned categories*: some collections of categories are hierarchically organised (e.g. 'baby', 'teenager', 'adult'), such that an 'adult' can be accused of behaving like a 'teenager', and so on.

7. *Category-activity 'puzzles':* people can do particular actions by putting together (un)expected combinations of categories and activities; jokes are often built this way (e.g. on 'women drivers'); gendering is often marked this way (e.g. 'female engineer'); social change becomes visible as such associations diminish, are replaced or deleted (Sacks, 1979).

8. *The economy rule:* a membership in a single category may be sufficient to describe a person, such as in Silverman's (2001) example of a newspaper headline: 'Father and Daughter in Snow Ordeal'.

9. *The consistency rule*: if two or more categories are used next to each other, like 'baby' and 'mother' in 'The baby cried. The mommy picked ', and both belong to a standard collection or MCD (e.g. family), then hear the people referred to as members of the same family: as each other's mommy and baby (Sacks, 1972b).

10. *Categorisation 'maxims'*: as a consequence of these rules of application, Sacks (1992, p.221, p.259) derived the hearer's maxim for duplicatively organized categories ("if two or more categories are used to categorize two or more members of some population, and those categories can be heard as categories from the same collection, then: hear them that way") and the viewer's maxim for category-bound activities ("if a member sees a

category-bound activity being done, then, if one sees it being done by a member of a category to which the activity is bound, see it that way").

Furthermore, she provides five guiding principles for a systematic analysis:

1. *Collect* data across different sorts of domestic and institutional settings; depending on the focus of the study, collect both interactional and textual materials. Data collection may be purposive or unmotivated.

2. *Build* collections of explicit mentions of categories, membership categorisation devices and category-resonant descriptions.

3. *Locate* the sequential position of each categorical instance with the ongoing interaction, or within the text.

4. *Analyse* the design and action orientation of the turn or text in which the category, device or resonant description appears.

5. *Look* for evidence that, and of how, recipients orient to the category, device or resonant description; for the interactional consequences of a category's use; for co-occurring component features of categorical formulations; and for the way speakers within and between turns build and resist categorisations.

Having a key interest in the study of categorical or "topical" issues (e.g. gender, ethnicity, identity etc.) that inform the experiences of international aid workers, I've found in sequential MCA a practical method for studying those issues as members' rather than only analysts' categories (Speer and Stokoe, 2011).

In the next section I will describe what kind of data I obtained in order to examine how international aid workers account for particular issues they had to deal with during the everyday lives in the field, as well as the process of data collection.

3.2 Data collection

The data collection consisted of three stages: a pilot study followed by two parallel studies (a psychosocial survey and an interviews based study), which will be described in the following sections.

3.2.1 Pilot study

In November 2010 I had the opportunity to take part as a researcher in the starting phase of the research project 'Women aid workers in the development cooperation in Maputo', carried out by

dr. Adriana Nannicini, an organisational psychologist who worked in Maputo as project manager for the Italian Cooperation (MAE) from 2008-2011. In a week pilot study, I conducted and recorded ten semi-structured interviews with Italian women aid workers in the field in Maputo, capital city of Mozambique. Mozambique and Italy have a strong historical development cooperation relation; in fact, even nowadays Mozambique is one of the countries that receive considerable support from the Italian development cooperation (www.cooperazioneallosviluppo.esteri.it).

Table 3.1 Pilot study's participants

ID	AGE	EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND	ORGANISATION
1	28	Economics, Development Economics	Italian Development Cooperation
2	28	Economics for International Cooperation, Social Policy and Development	NGO (Italian)
3	32	Literature, Psychiatry	UNICEF
4	32	Political Science, Peace Keeping	Italian Development Cooperation
5	35	Political Science, Cooperation and Development, History and Social Policies	Italian Development Cooperation
6	36	Environmental Science	NGO (Italian)
7	37	Law, Cooperation and Development	Italian Development Cooperation
8	37	Natural Science, Sustainable Development and Territory Management	Freelance
9	54	High School degree	Trade-Union for development (Italian)
10	55	Philosophy/psychology	Italian Development Cooperation

I also had informal conversations with various informants (Italian men aid workers, European and local aid workers both women and men); these conversations were not recorded, but I took detailed notes in a diary in which I also wrote my personal impressions during and

after the interviews that I recorded. The interviewees, aged from 28 to 55, had different educational backgrounds. All of them were working in Maputo at least from one year for different organisations (from Governmental agencies for international development, to Italian Development Cooperation, to Italian NGO's or associations) in different roles and fields.

The pilot study showed different issues[4] women aid workers face in the field: loneliness, feeling foreigners, difficult relationships, feeling of not belonging to a community (expats community; local community; organisation they work for; Italian community; aid workers community).

After the transcription of the interviews and of the preliminary thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) it became clear to me that the complexity of aid workers' experiences had so many interesting aspects so far scantly addressed by academic researchers. I therefore decided to independently continue to work on this subject and to make it my main doctoral research project. However, I choose to broaden the scope of the study including men and by focusing my attention not only on a specific country of mission or on a specific aid sector (development or humanitarian), hypothesizing that the challenges and the needs aid workers experience, cross these boundaries.

3.2.2 The survey: "Being an international aid worker"

In this section I will describe the survey I designed, sample and recruitment strategies and ethics. A detailed report with the information on the survey's participants and on the findings of this study will be presented in chapter 4.

In order to start collecting data on aid workers as professionals and on their experiences in the field, I've implemented the quanti-qualitative survey "Being an international aid worker". I designed the survey with the software surveymonkey (www.surveymonkey.com) a reliable tool that is in use in the psychology department.

The survey, directed to European aid workers, was entirely developed in English and was administered in English. It was online from October 2011 to December 2012 and gathered 188 contacts; of these, 123 completed the survey answering all questions (completion rate of 65%). In total participants were asked to answer 80 questions (not all were mandatory questions, some sensitive questions gave the possibility to skip without answering) in what was likely to take one hour. Despite the commitment required to complete such a long survey, and despite the Internet

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[4] For an in-depth description of the findings see Nannicini, 2013.

conditions not always excellent, I consider a completion rate of 65% (with higher response rates for the initial questions) a satisfying result for this step of the research.

The survey consists of 6 sections[5], with a number of multiple-choice and open-ended questions. The first section, YOU, collected socio-demographic information such as age, gender, birthplace, nationality, current place of residence, educational background, language proficiency, marital status and experiences of associative/voluntary/political participation. The second section, YOUR JOB, focused deeply on the job experience and asked both general questions on the experience in the aid work industry (years of experience, countries of mission) and specific questions on the current/most recent job position (contract type, field, role, project length, organisation). The third section, shifted to EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE MISSION COUNTRY and asked the respondent to concentrate on his/her personal health, security, safety and relationships' experiences as an aid worker. With the fourth section, BEING AN INTERNATIONAL AID WORKER, we reach the heart of the survey; at this point the participant was asked to engage in a more reflexive level of reasoning, thinking about personal motivations, expectations, and about gender at work. In the two final sections, the participant was respectively asked to make an ASSESSMENT on his/her broad experience and to think about possible near future scenarios (YOUR FUTURE).

3.2.2.1 Sampling and recruitment strategies

The sampling strategy, which I used in this study as well as in the interviews study, can be best described as a snowball sampling (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). Snowball sampling is a type of purposive sampling which uses a small pool of initial informants to nominate, through their social networks, other participants who meet the eligibility criteria and could potentially contribute to a specific study (Morgan, 2008); this technique is particularly useful to study hidden and not easy to reach populations (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997), as aid workers, for a wealth of reasons, can be considered (because they make up an extremely varied group and a highly complex professional category; for being overseas in various locations around the globe). My 'snowball' started from different 'paths': first I advertised the study through social media groups where aid workers usually meet (on Facebook and LinkedIn); second, I sent e-mail participation requests to various national NGOs and INGOs; third, through word of mouth, I asked to colleagues, friends and acquaintances if they were in contact with people working in the international aid industry; fourth, at the end of the online survey I asked the survey participants to leave their contacts or to e-mail me if they were interested in being interviewed. Having

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[5] The reader can find the complete summary of the survey's questions in the Appendix A.

decided to broaden the scope of the study I used only three main eligibility criteria: first, participants needed to be Europeans; second, they needed to have a paid work experience in the field, therefore, people with only voluntary unpaid experience were excluded from the present study; third, they needed to have at least one working experience in the field in the 'Global South'. In fact, I was interested in gaining information about European aid professionals (people who considered the cooperation industry as a career context) and not about people who had a short or one time unpaid experience (people in their time off work or retired). Moreover, I wasn't interested in people who worked only in the offices of the 'Global North'. This is because in both cases I assumed that the experiences between these subgroups (paid/unpaid aid workers; based in the Global South/Global North) could differ.

3.2.2.2 Ethics

The first page of the survey [6] informed the participants on the research project, on its goals and on what they should expect as voluntary participants. It included details on the researchers affiliation, and privacy and anonymity were guaranteed, as well as their right to withdraw at any time. Details on the use of the data were also provided: participants were told that their data would be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it would not be identifiable as theirs. They were also told that, if interested, they could have had a brief explanation of the findings. Contacts of the researchers were provided too.

3.2.3 The interviews

Interviews were conducted from May 2011 to January 2013. In this section I will present the rationale behind the interview choice, sample and recruitment strategies, information on the participants, on ethics, on the interview process, on transcription and on translation.

3.2.3.1 Why interviews?

MCA and CA studies usually analyse normally occurring speech and they have a "dispreference" (Speer, 2002; ten Have, 2002) for interviews data. However, I consider my preference for interview data understandable and useful for both pragmatic and fundamental reasons. First of all, this study is one of the situations in which the use of interviews is necessary for the objective difficulties in obtaining naturalistic recordings (Potter, 2004) like a large, comparative body of aid workers' everyday talk about their experiences in the field. However,

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[6] Please see Appendix A.

this is not the only reason. I also choose interviews because they allow to explore a relatively standard range of topics with each of the participants; in fact, although the interviews were conversational and often ranged widely over an hour and a half or more, the interviewers worked from the same topic guide in each case (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Moreover, interviews in this study are understood in a discourse analysis way (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Potter & Hepburn, 2012) as "inter-views" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) and not as tool that produce "clear" and "consistent responses" that can allow the researcher to make inferences about "underlying beliefs". My goal was not trying to establish the "truth" of interviewees' experiences, but rather how specific experiences were produced, sustained and mobilized.

In discourse work interviews are treated as a piece of social interaction in their own right (Wooffitt & Widdicombe, 2006), where the interviewer and the interviewee are both contributing to the shaping of the topic of interest (Burgess, 1984; Mischler, 1986), and where the interviewer, far from being "neutral" or "uninvolved" has an acknowledged role of research interest. Interviews are inherently interactional events, where both speakers mutually monitor each other in a talk that is locally and collaboratively constructed (Rapley, 2010). I agree with Watson and Weinberg (1982) that "being neutral" is actually impossible, as interviewers are always active: they have overarching control, they guide the talk, they promote it through questions or silences and they decide which particular part of the answer to follow up. Thus, the interviews of this study were conducted in an active way, with the interviewer commenting and providing feedbacks such as "mhm" and "yes" responses that are characteristics of informal talk. Therefore, I embraced Widdicombe and Wooffitt's (1995) suggestion that interviews should be seen as a useful way to elicit people"s accounting practices, in which they exhibit their culturally shared, reasoning practices, as people always, inevitably do in talk (Silverman, 1985).

3.2.3.2 Sampling and recruitment

The interviews and the survey were two different studies but were carried out simultaneously. They both followed the same sampling and recruitment strategies (described in the previous section), with only one difference in the eligibility criteria: similarly to the survey I recruited participants with paid work experience in the "Global South", but, differently from the survey, for the interviews I recruited only Italian aid workers. In fact my main interest was in studying the new emerging interest in the development cooperation and relief industry as a professional space for young women and men, that appeared to me as an "Italian case" and I wanted to focus my attention on it. So interviewees could be either people who took part in the survey study and decided to take also part in the interviews study, or people who decided only to participate in the interviews study.

Participants were recruited on the basis that they would be acting as non-paid volunteers and they were told that the researcher was interested in their experience of working as aid and development workers in the field, their views and identities including with regard to gender. They were also told that the study was driven by the paucity of research and published literature in this field, and would aim to contribute to redressing this imbalance by providing aid workers the opportunity to voice their thoughts and experiences. Even though the participation in the interview study involved a voluntary effort from the aid workers (and the need to schedule a one hour and a half interview between their job duties, having different times zones and not always excellent internet connections), the response rate I got was unexpected: so unexpected that, having reached a consistent amount of data, I had to decline a number of participation offers. This response, as well as many participants' comments, confirmed the idea that there is a lack of attention towards this professional category and "a need to speak" which should be taken in further consideration: a number of them stated this was the first time they had the chance to voice their experience and to reflect on it.

3.2.3.3 Participants

Recruitment resulted in interviews with 59 participants: 34 Italian women, 23 Italian men, 1 British woman, and 1 Cypriot woman. Furthermore, I had many conversations with various Italian informants: three directors of different Master Programs in Cooperation and Development (2 men, 1 woman); the director of a NGO (woman); the co-founder of an important humanitarian association (man). I recorded most of these conversations and transcribed some parts of it, but I didn't analyse these five interviews, which were employed to start gaining a picture of the international aid work's world. As the interviews obtained in the pilot study were sufficiently similar to the interviews of my main study, I included them in the analysis. Therefore in total I used a number of 69 interviews.

Participants were working in development cooperation and emergency relief with smaller and larger NGOs and various UN agencies. These organisations differ with respect of their programs, salaries and benefits, training and career opportunities. Respondents came from a middle-class background and most had attended University and had previous charity/voluntary experiences. A small number had been politically active before. Some had parents who lived/worked abroad and a few others had an immigrant background. They differed with respect to marital status and work area (e.g., agriculture, communication, logistics, medical support, human rights).

The interviewees have been assigned identification codes to maintain confidentiality; the codes also contain information on the gender of the participant (aid worker n° 1/woman or man,

shorten in AW1/W). Details on the respondents with the identification code assigned, age, educational background, job, residence, sector, organisation, years of experience in the aid industry and family status are presented in the Appendix C.

3.2.3.4 Ethics

I designed my study according to the Code of Ethics for Research and Teaching of the Italian Psychological Association (A.I.P. - Associazione Italiana di Psicologia) approved by the Department of Psychology of the University of Milano-Bicocca, and in conformity with the protocol n° 0027260/13 approved by the Psychology ethics committee of the same University on the 30th September 2013.

When participants agreed to take part in the study I sent them two documents which I asked them to read before the scheduled interview: an *information sheet* with explanation of the research project and on what they should expect as participants, on their rights, as well as on confidentiality and anonymity; an *informed consent form* which I asked them to sign and send back to me (copies of the two documents are presented in the Appendix E). At the start of the interviews participants were told what the aim of the study was, that their anonymity was guaranteed and that they should feel free not to answer questions if they didn't feel comfortable. Permission to record the interviews was also verbally asked, as well as if they had any questions after having read the two aforementioned documents.

3.2.3.5 Interview process

The interviews were semi-structured in that a number of pre-defined open-ended questions were asked (see Appendix B), designed on the basis of the literature on aid workers and the interviews conducted in the pilot study. Interviews were conducted following a collaborative approach, where aid workers were acknowledged as the experts, and an inductive approach, with open questions and a biographical progression from past experience, to present and future prefiguration. They included questions related to several identities, challenges of working in the field and gender diversity. Since some of the questions touched sensitive points in relation with gender, I decided to preserve gender symmetry between the interviewer and the interviewee; therefore I was helped by two male social psychology postgraduates that conducted the majority of the interviews with men aid workers. Being semi-structured the interviews allowed for the possibility to change the order of topics and gave participants the opportunity to speak spontaneously about their experience, therefore not all respondents were asked the same questions.

Sixteen interviews were conducted in person in various locations in order to facilitate the participation (in the social psychology laboratory of the Psychology Department, in public spaces such as cafés, in the participants' offices, in the participants' own homes); these were the interviews conducted in Mozambique and in Italy to Italian aid workers during their breaks between one mission and another. The remainder were conducted by Skype (www.skype.com), a brand of internet-based calling software through which users can make either voice-only or voice and video calls. These interviews were conducted most of the times using voice only because of limited Internet capacity in some locations. Other times video calls were requested by the interviewees, thus, in few cases the video option was also used in order to establish a more cooperative environment. In these interviews video was employed only as a medium to reach more closely the participants and video data were not analysed.

Audio was digitally recorded from the interviews using the voice recording software Call Recorder (www.ecamm.com/mac/callrecorder/). Interviews generally took between 60 and 120 minutes, with the longest and shortest interviews being 120 minutes and 45 minutes respectively.

3.2.3.6 *Transcription and Translation*

Interviews were conducted in Italian and fully transcribed in Italian; some by myself, other by the aforementioned male interviewers and psychology students in order to speed up the process of transcription. I checked all transcripts and refined them according to a simplified version of the standard CA form of transcription as developed by Jefferson [7] (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998).

This included speech errors, pauses, overlapping talk, laughter, gross changes of volume and emphasis, speed and breathing. Transcripts were then translated into English for analytical purposes. I analysed English and Italian transcripts simultaneously to maximize the efficiency and sensitivity of analysis. Back translation was not used: the purpose of back translation is to assess the accuracy of the translated words, whereas my concern was with the general meaning of a participant's talk. However, to ensure its validity, the analysis attended to participants' orientation to action and meaning as displayed in the turn-by-turn structure of the interaction; conclusions were based on several features and not the translation of a single word (Widdicombe, 2011).

In my year as a visiting PhD student at the department of psychology of the University of Edinburgh, I had the chance to work with Ms. KaisaWilson, a social psychology PhD student who was carrying out a similar research project on international aid workers. Together we

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[7] Please see Appendix D for the transcription system.

compared our qualitative data from interviews with a various range of professionals with different nationalities (Ms. Wilson's interviewees were European, North American and Australian). We worked on a preliminary thematic data analysis and presented our findings at the international conference "Identity & Gender politics within International Relations" (Paris, April 2013); we also subsequently worked on a paper that is in submission at the present moment. For a methodological rigour, the data I've analysed and that I will discuss in my dissertation are only my original data, and don't include Ms. Wilson's data. Nonetheless, the similarities and commonalities we have found in our materials opens to interesting reasoning on the pervasiveness of some challenges international aid workers face in the field, no matter what nationality background they have.

3.3 Process of data analysis

It is possible to discern several steps in the process of the analysis (Potter & Weherell, 1987; Potter, 2004; Willig, 2001). Analysis started with the listening to the recordings during the transcription; as transcription requires repeated, close listening and detailed attention to the data (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998) and is therefore an integral part of the analysis. In order to make the body of transcripts more manageable, as a second step I searched through the material for a number of themes and created a series of coding (third step). The themes arose from the concerns that had stimulated the study and other new themes emerged from reading and re-reading the individual transcripts. The codings are distinct from the analysis itself, and were used only as a way to facilitate the analysis being able to focus on significant issues. Stretches of talk were copied into files if they were in relation to the theme of interest in a cyclical process (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). In the fourth stage I conducted a more detailed analysis on these sets. Selection of extracts for further analysis was informed by my theoretical interests and by my impression that some particularly interesting or remarkable interactional business was being performed. The more detailed analysis involved a gradual change away from a focus on content to an explication of the design and sequences of utterances and the actions performed; nonetheless the content of responses remained important.

In the analysis I adhered to several CA principles (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998) and MCA principles. I used several tools: the five MCA guiding principles indicated by Stokoe (2012), continuously ask questions of the data (Madill, Widdicombe & Barkham, 2001), such as "what is this participant doing in this turn?"(Pomerantz & Fehr, 1997), "why this utterance/phrase/action now?"(Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998). Another tool was the MCA and CA literature; I made use of findings regarding discursive devices and their function in previous studies. I also found very useful to discuss my analysis with my colleagues and my supervisors to 'test' the credibility of

my claims and modify where necessary.

Since during the first interviews a number of aid workers called up identity categories as relevant in their professional experience, during the next interviews, if the topic did not come out spontaneously, the interviewer would then ask explicitly if the respondent found it to play a relevant role. Gender, together with other identity categories, played a relevant role for women aid workers, while men aid workers would typically refer to their female colleagues' issues and only few of them considered their gender to represent an obstacle at times. Since one of the goals of the present study is to analyse critical aspects characterising the aid worker's experience, and because for men participants gender and other identity categories did not appear to be problematic, the following analysis will focus on women aid workers'extracts.

The extracts selected for the analytical chapters 5 and 6 are clear or representative examples of a certain utterance design pattern or action, which I identified in a collection of instances. In both the analytical studies I will analyse the textual data of the survey together with the interview interaction data related to the same question or to the same topic.

In chapter 5 I will focus on the analysis of a collection of extracts on a specific question where gender is introduced as a category by the researcher and not by participants themselves; whereas, in chapter 6 extracts where participants refer to gender spontaneously will be analysed, and confronted with extracts in which gender and other identity categories were prompted by the researcher.

Each one of the extracts presented contains abbreviations which identify if the interactant is the interviewer (I) or an aid worker (AW), the number assigned to the participants, and the indication of their gender (W=woman; M=man).

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have made a case for the use of sequential MCA for the analysis of how aid workers talk about their experiences in the field. Issues of gender, inequality and ideology that are central to many feminist projects can be rescued and analysed in what is "one of the most vibrant areas in contemporary CA" (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2008, p. 565).

In the next chapters, I will first report the survey findings, and I will then reach the core of my research analysis, focusing on two different topics. In chapter 5 I will examine aid workers accounts for the growing presence of women in the humanitarian and aid industry, while in chapter 6 I will analyse how gender is brought into the discursive interaction as something relevant for aid workers experiences in the field and how it intersects with other identity categories.

4 Being an international aid worker: a quanti-qualitative survey

4.1 Introduction

The review of the literature presented in the first chapter shows that there is a lack of studies on aid workers as a professional category. In order to start collecting data on aid workers and on their experiences in the field, I've implemented the quanti-qualitative survey "Being an international aid worker". The survey, directed to European aid workers, gathered 188 contacts and registered a completion rate of 65%. In the next pages I will present a reasoned synthesis of the most interesting data collected in each one of the six survey sections: 1. You; 2. Your job; 3. Everyday life in the mission country; 4. Being an international aid worker; 5. An assessment; 6. Your future. I will show the findings specifying the percentages of women and men respondents when noteworthy; in order to make the description of the findings more interesting I will also report quotes and extracts taken from the open-ended answers.

4.2 You

The first section of the survey was aimed at collecting respondents' socio-demographic details. This was useful to start creating a picture of the workforce.

Gender[8]*:* 66% of respondents were female (N=124), 34% were male (N=64).

Age: the majority of respondents were between the ages of 26 and 30, followed by almost a third between 31 and 35, and a minor number between 36 and 40. The remainder were distributed in the other age groups. Regarding gender distribution, I want to note that nearly 80% of women participants were distributed between the ages of 26-35, while men were between 26-40. It would be interesting to study further if this is a representative trend in the age distribution of the aid workers workforce. I argue that a decrease in the number of women after the age of 35 could be related to maternity and/or family reasons, but a more extended number of participants needs to be collected to confirm this.

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[8] I chose not to balance the number of participants according to their gender.

Tab.4.1 Age (Q. 1)

Age	Percentage[9]		
	Women (N=124)	Men (N=64)	Tot (N=188)
20-25	5%	6%	5%
26-30	**48%**	**36%**	**44%**
31-35	30%	19%	26%
36-40	7%	23%	12%
41-45	2%	8%	4%
46-50	2%	3%	3%
51-55	3%	3%	3%
56-60	2%	2%	2%
61-65	1%	0%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Nationality: Nearly all respondents were Italian citizens (88%), while only a small number of respondents were British, French and the remainder were Dutch, German, Spanish, Swiss, Austrian, Cypriot and Romanian. I consider this as the first step of the survey study, which has so far reached mostly Italian aid workers. I argue that this result could have been determined by a number of different reasons: the first one, is in relation with the recruitment strategies I used; being Italian myself and living in Italy, I started the 'word of mouth' snowball from the Italian aid workers I knew. As specified in the methodology, I also advertised my survey through other channels (Internet, NGOs and INGOs); nonetheless the majority of respondents were Italian. I argue that in this specific case, word of mouth was a more fruitful channel than other institutional channels and I also think that sharing the same nationality of the researchers could have lead Italian aid workers to be more willing to take part in the study. Moreover, I believe that, because the interest towards the aid work industry is something new and currently arising in Italy, due to the peculiarities of the Italian aid and development cooperation sector (that I've described in the first chapter, as well as some of the participants described) Italian aid workers might have a more urgent need to voice their experiences than other European colleagues who are more accustomed to this world. Finally, to the best of my knowledge this is the first Italian psychosocial survey on aid workers' experiences, thus this could also represent another explanation for the Italian higher rate of response. Therefore this result, despite making so far impossible to compare the experiences of European aid workers, provides a rich and interesting picture of the Italian aid workers workforce; for the next step of the study extra recruitment strategies must be employed to reach a wider target of participants.

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[9] All percentages presented in this chapter are rounded up to the nearest integer.

Tab 4.2 Location (Q.7)

Location**	Percentage		
	Women (N=124)	Men (N=64)	Tot (N=188)
Northern Africa	6%	3%	5%
Eastern Africa	13%	19%	15%
Central Africa	3%	6%	4%
Western Africa	8%	6%	7%
Southern Africa	0%	2%	1%
Central Asia	1%	0%	1%
Western Asia	6%	6%	6%
South Asia	3%	2%	3%
South-Eastern Asia	2%	5%	3%
Northern America	2%	2%	2%
Central America	3%	0%	2%
South America	3%	5%	4%
Caribbean	1%	0%	1%
Northern Europe	4%	3%	4%
Western Europe	6%	3%	5%
Southern Europe	**40%**	**37%**	**39%**
Total	100%	100%	100%

** The countries are organized according to the United Nations geoscheme.

Location: At the moment of the survey the majority of participants were based in Southern Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Italy and Spain), followed by Eastern Africa countries (Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia). The other participants were located in: Western Africa (Burkina Faso, Ghana, Senegal, Mali and Niger), Western Asia (Cyprus, Georgia, Israel, Iraq, Lebanon, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Syria and Turkey), Northern Africa (Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia), Western Europe (Belgium, France, Germany and Switzerland), Central Africa (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo), South America (Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, Chile), Northern Europe (Ireland, United Kingdom), South Asia (Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka), South-Eastern Asia (Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia), Central America (Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua), Northern America (United States of America), Caribbean (Haiti), Southern Africa (Swaziland), Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan).

They were located both in countries of the global South as well as in countries of the global North; this is because respondents were both expatriated personnel and desk officers

(employees that work on planning and monitoring of projects at organisation headquarters, and that usually also do short term monitoring missions in the field). Moreover, they could have also been in vacation or in between a job contract and another.

Residence: 70% of respondents did not possess a house in their homeland and only a 20% of the Italian participants (30% of men respondents and 15% of women respondents) were registered in the A.I.R.E. (Registry of Italians Resident Abroad).

Family status: in the literature and in the data gathered in the pilot study, relationships are portrayed as a challenging aspect in an aid worker's life, thus I was interested in collecting data on this aspect; due to the sensitivity of the topic I decided to make these questions not mandatory. More than half respondents[10] (54% of women respondents; 72% of men respondents) were in a relationship. Of these, more than a half (50% of women and nearly 70% of men participants) had a relationship with a partner of the same nationality, the remainder with a partner of a different nationality (16% global North, 23% global South)[11]. Nearly half of them lived together with their partners[12] (60% of women respondents; 45% of men respondents). The majority of respondents did not have children[13] (83% of women; 77% of men), while a 20% had children (1 child: 65%; 2 children: 30%; 3 children: 5%); in most of the cases the aid workers lived with their children (70% of women respondents and 90% of men respondents).

Educational background: Participants were highly educated: nearly all had a Bachelor's degree, a Master's degree (77% of women respondents, 65% of men), a PhD (12% of women respondents, 5% of men) and had attended other studies (40% of women respondents, 35% of men). They come from different educational backgrounds: some of them studied topics directly linked with aid and development (International Development, International Affairs, International Law, International Studies, International Relations, Human Rights, Humanitarian Studies). Typically these respondents were the younger ones, people who had the possibility to choose University degrees in development related topics, due to the recent widespread study offer in this field, which until some years ago was not available. Others come from humanities studies (Philosophy, Educational Sciences, Sociology, Anthropology, Public Health, Politics, Political Sciences), scientific studies (Engineering, Medicine and Surgery) or have other backgrounds

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[10] Q. 8, N=180 (120 women, 60 men).
[11] Q.10, N=109 (65 women, 44 men).
[12] Q. 9, N=108 (65 women, 43 men).
[13] Q. 55, N=138 (91 women, 47 men).

(Economics, Business Administration, Communication, Agriculture) and make use of the competencies acquired during their studies in the international aid industry. It is interesting to note that the respondents attended further studies while they were already working in the aid sector: they explained this as a need to learn specific 'tools' to use in their job, 'tools' which the organisations they were working for did not provide.

Participants also reported high *languages proficiency* in more than three languages[14]: English (nearly all respondents), Italian (native language of nearly all respondents), French (70%), Spanish (50%), Portuguese (15%), German (10%); furthermore, more than a third had basic or intermediate levels of proficiency in one or more dialects or official languages of the countries they were working in/they worked in the past. This is a proof of how it is also important for aid workers to be able to directly communicate with the local communities.

Experiences of participation: The majority of the participants (78% of women respondents and 64% of men respondents) had experiences in charity and in voluntary associations (16% ongoing); these included local participation in cultural, educational, environmental, social and health associations and organisations (both Catholic and not), unpaid collaboration with NGOs and international participation in INGOs, International Civil Service, and European Voluntary Service. For most participants, voluntary experiences represented a first contact and a way to gain access in the aid world. For others the interest in the profession grew out of these first experiences. An additional number of participants (30% of men respondents vs. a 17% of women respondents) had political participation experiences in political parties and trade unions, mostly locally and in the past (only a total of 4% still ongoing).

4.3 Your Job

After the presentation of some general demographics about the participants, here are the details on their job experience.

Years of experience: at the moment of the survey nearly half of the respondents had been working in the aid industry from 2 to 5 years, one third from 5 to 10 years, a 15% for less than 2 years, and the rest for more than 10 years.

Tab 4.3 Years of professional experience in the aid industry (Q. 26)

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[14] Please note that this was a multiple-choice question, therefore the sum of the percentages reported is not 100%; the percentages are an evidence of the highly ranked answer's options.

Years of experience	Percentage		
	Women (N=113)	Men (N=55)	Tot (N=168)
<2	17%	13%	15%
2-5	**48%**	**38%**	**45%**
5-10	25%	36%	29%
10-20	6%	11%	8%
>20	4%	2%	3%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Countries: During their professional experience participants[15] have been working in a variety of countries around the globe.

Tab 4.4 Countries in which respondents have been working (Q. 27)

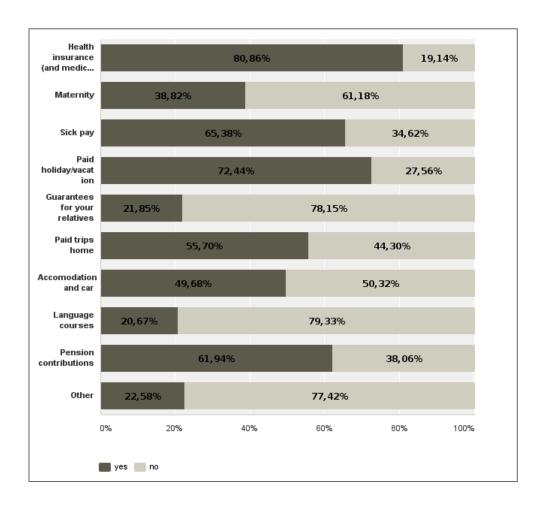| Countries	Percentage*
Eastern Africa	**97%**
Western Africa	52%
Southern Europe	36%
South America	34%
Northern Africa	33%
Southern Asia	32%
Western Asia	29%
Central Africa	28%
South-Eastern Asia	21%
Central America	14%
Southern Africa	7%
Eastern Europe	7%
Caribbean	6%
Central Asia	5%
Northern Europe	4%
Western Europe	4%
Eastern Asia	3%
North America	2%
Australasia	1%

* This was a multiple-choice question, therefore the sum of the percentages reported is not 100%; the percentages are an evidence of the highly ranked answer's options.

Respondents worked mostly in countries classified by the DAC[16] (2013) as 'least developed countries' (Ethiopia, Sudan, Senegal, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania,

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[15] N=165 (111 women, 54 men).

Zambia, Uganda, Mozambique, Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Peru, Rwanda); a number also worked in 'low-income countries' (Kenya, South Sudan), in 'lower middle-income countries and territories' (India) and 'upper middle-income countries and territories' (Albania). Respondents also reported working in countries ranking as the most violent aid contexts (Harmer, Stoddard & Toth, 2013): Afghanistan, Pakistan, South Sudan, and Somalia.

Geographically speaking, almost all participants had worked in Eastern African countries (with Kenya and Ethiopia being the most common, followed by Somalia, South Sudan); half of them had also worked in Western African countries (Senegal and Burkina Faso on top). Southern Europe with Albania and Kosovo, and South America with Peru and Brazil follow. Other common countries of mission are Northern Africa countries (Sudan and Darfur), Southern Asia countries (India, Afghanistan, Pakistan), Western Asia (Occupied Palestinian Territories, Lebanon and Syria), and Central Africa countries (Democratic Republic of the Congo and Cameroon). The length of time spent in the same country of mission varies considerably from 2 months (short missions) to 8 years.

Tab 4.5 Job contract type (Q.30)

| Job contract | Percentage | | |
	Women (N=109)	Men (N=54)	Tot (N=163)
Permanent contract	14%	6%	11%
Fixed-term contract	**55%**	**65%**	**58%**
New contract	18%	22%	11%
Just ended a contract	13%	7%	20%
Total	100%	100%	100%

The majority of respondents had a fixed-term **contract**, while only a small number had a permanent contract: today aid agencies are reducing their full-time staff in favour of technical subcontracting, of hiring short-term experts and of outsourcing jobs to private companies (Fechter & Hindman, 2011). At the time of the survey a 20% of respondents were temporarily unemployed and a small number were about to start a new contract.

Asked to specify their current or most recent **employer,** participants[17] indicated different organisations: from small to big ones, from local to international ones, from governative to non

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[16] Development Assistance Committee of the OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
[17] N=160 (107 women, 53 men).

governative ones, from no profit to private organisations to which aid is outsourced. Nearly half of participants were working for NGOs (of their homeland or foreign) and another 20% were working for International NGOs (such as Save the Children, Doctors Without Borders, International Committee of the Red Cross). Other participants were working for the United Nations, Governamental Agencies for the International Development, the European Union, the Italian Development Cooperation MAE. A small number were distributed in research centres and Universities, International Organisations such as the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe - OSCE, the World Bank and the International Organisation for Migration – IOM, and finally, in catholic organisations. A small percentage were freelancers, and a minor number reported working for private companies.

Tab 4.6 Employers (Q. 32)

Employer	Percentage*
NGO	**43%**
International NGO	22%
United Nations	10%
Governmental Agency	6%
European Union	4%
Italian development cooperation MAE	4%
Research centre - University	4%
International Organisation	3%
Catholic organisation	1%
Private/profit organisation	4%
Freelance	1%

* This was a multiple-choice question, therefore the sum of the percentages reported is not 100%; the percentages are an evidence of the highly ranked answer's options.

Depending on the organisation they were working for and on the kind of contract they had, participants had different *facilities and benefits* [18] that are detailed in Graph 4.1. There are three aspects I want to stress from this Graph. First, not even half of women respondents had maternity included in their job contracts. As described in chapter 2, the Italian law 49/1987 does not cover maternity; it would be also interesting to investigate if other European aid organisations include it, to understand if this is an "Italian case" or if it is a situation common and widespread in the international aid work industry in general.

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[18] Q.31, N=162 (108 women, 54 men).

Graph 4.1 Facilities and Benefits (Q. 31)

I argue that this is one key point, which should be further addressed, as it was reported as highly problematic, both in this study as well as in the interviews study. As one of the hypothesis of my study was to explore the experiences of women professionals it will be interesting to further examine how they are dealing with this aspect and if/how this could affect their lives. Second, nearly a 40% did not receive pension contributions and thus, as in other precarious non-standard employment, retirement income is insecure; and third, despite languages proficiency is expected, only a minor number of the employers provided or paid for language courses to their employees; this seems to be then a prerequisite aid workers need to have before entering the organisations and it is likely that they also have to independently learn dialects and particular uncommon languages 'on the job'. This appears to be true also for other trainings, as further in the survey the majority of respondents[19] declared their organisations did not provide them skills course training, whereas an 85% said they would have liked to have an internal course-training

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[19] N=98 (72 women, 26 men)

schedule. In order to cope with this unsatisfied need a number of respondents declared to have come to the decision of independently enrolling in classes (or masters), which they judged useful and necessary.

Tab 4.7 Job role (Q. 34)

Role	Percentage		
	Women (N=107)	Men (N=53)	Tot (N=160)
Professional/Technician	**61%**	42%	**54%**
Directive	23%	**51%**	32%
Administrative/Accounting	16%	7%	13%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Job Role: More than half respondents performed a professional and technical role; in fact, aid organisations are more and more looking for specialized professionals to employ in the field, depending on the project specific needs. *Technician* aid workers bring their job expertise in the countries where it is needed the most. Here are some examples taken from answers to Question 40, where participants were asked to briefly describe what they were dealing with at that moment:

> "I am clinical director of a hospital of 200 beds and I have to coordinate the clinical activities of the hospital and all health projects that allow the sustainability of the hospital" n.26/W20

> "Primary Health Care program with special focus on mother and child care at district and community level in rural areas" n.27/M

> "I am dealing with Logistics in Tanzania. In particular I am responsible for overland transport and contracting of services" n.103/M

> "I was the environmental program manager for an NGO in fuel efficient stove program" n.111/M

The other half of participants had directive roles or administrative and accounting roles: they represent other two important profiles, that of *Directors* and *Coordinators*. The firsts are aid

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[20] The ID contains information on the number attributed to the respondent and indication on their gender (W=woman, M=man).

workers with high managerial skills who usually direct local people working on the projects implemented by the aid organisations:

"I manage the organisations budgets in Asia and the everyday operations" n.3/W

"I am head of sector and I am in charge of planning and coordination of the cooperation programme carried out by the European Commission" n.4/W

The second group do monitoring, planning, fund raising, capacity building; usually they are not specialized on a specific topic, but have transversal skills they can employ for different kinds of projects:

"Coordination of the project of our organisation in South East Europe. Capacity building of our local staff" n.8/M

"Management and coordination of activities related to the educational sector" n.15/W

"I am dealing with financial reporting and management, monitoring budget planning and expenditures of most projects of my actual organisation" n.18/W

At times boundaries between technician, directive and coordination roles are blurred and aid workers have to deal with all three roles requirements.

Tab 4.8 Job field (Q. 33)

Field	Percentage		
	Women (N=107)	Men (N=53)	Tot (N=160)
Education	**24%**	13%	**16%**
Health	11%	**36%**	12%
Governance-budget support	15%	21%	8%
Gender	11%	11%	8%
Agriculture	11%	11%	7%
Post-conflict	9%	15%	5%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Job Field: participants reported having an expertise in a variety of fields; the most common were education, health, governance and budget support, gender, agriculture, post-conflict. Others were: environment (water, sanitation and hygiene - WASH), human rights, child protection, food security, nutrition, migration and security, logistics, communication. Education

was the most common field for women respondents while health was the most common for men respondents. More data are needed to better identify the gender distribution within different fields.

Tab 4.9 Reasons to work on the actual project (Q.36)

Why did you choose this project?	Percentage*		
	Women (N=102)	Men (N=53)	Tot(N=155)
My specific assignment	53%	37%	55%
Historical and socio-cultural aspects	11%	23%	15%
This is a "key country"	12%	19%	14%
The cooperation program of the country	10%	15%	12%
Affective relationships	13%	11%	12%
I love this country	8%	15%	10%
Good network	6%	9%	10%
No conflicts	4%	9%	6%
High quality of life	7%	9%	8%
Good climate and environment	8%	7%	8%
Good pay	3%	7%	5%

*This was a multiple-choice question, therefore the sum of the percentages reported is not 100%; the percentages are an evidence of the highly ranked answer's options.

Table 4.9 presents the *reasons* participants had in choosing to work on the specific project/programme they were working on during the survey. This question wanted to explore what drives these professionals in deciding to engage in a particular project/to apply for a particular job position; the goal was to start collecting information on how they build a career path within the profession. Reasons varied from specific characteristics of the project, to aspects linked to the specific country (and its historical and socio-cultural peculiarities, or the good climate and the good environmental conditions, or the security level), to affective reasons, and to other aspects linked to salary and quality of life. As expected, a number of factors were at play simultaneously, but it seems that the specific assignment was the most important one, as more than half respondents chose it. On the contrary, a small amount of respondents highlighted that they did not have any particular interest in the project and that they were working on it mainly because it was the only job they were able to find in that moment.

Considering that finding a job is a remarkable part of an aid worker professional experience (due to the prevalence of fixed-term contracts and to the need of continuously job searching) a few questions of the survey explored the resources these professionals have for their job-hunting. First of all, a question asked to specify how they did find the job position they had

at the moment of the survey participation. Half respondents stated they had actively searched for a job like that, while more than one third said that it was an opportunity that happened to them. Another third found the job on the Internet or through word of mouth. Moreover, nearly a 70% of respondents[21] had a ***professional network***, which referred to their job's field, to the field of expertise, to organisations similar to the one they were employed at the moment of the survey, and for a small number of respondents, also to the specific continent they were working in.

Tab 4.10 How did you find this job (Q. 37)

	Percentage*		
Job Hunting	**Women (N=102)**	**Men (N=53)**	**Tot (N=155)**
Searching actively	**42%**	**57%**	**47%**
It happened to me	39%	26%	35%
Internet	16%	23%	18%
Word of mouth	12%	13%	12%

*This was a multiple-choice question, therefore the sum of the percentages reported is not 100%; the percentages are an evidence of the highly ranked answer's options.

Tab 4.11 Kind of network (Q. 39)

	Percentage*		
Kind of network	**Women (N=69)**	**Men (N=36)**	**Tot (N=105)**
Job's field related	**55%**	**61%**	**57%**
Field of expertise	44%	47%	45%
Similar organisations	45%	58%	50%
Continent related	6%	14%	8%

*This was a multiple-choice question, therefore the sum of the percentages reported is not 100%; the percentages are an evidence of the highly ranked answer's options.

In the final part of this section of the survey, questions about ***problems at work*** were asked. The majority of respondents[22] (61% of women respondents, 53% of men) declared to have experienced problems at work; they attributed these problems mostly to the organisation they were working for (41%), then to the country (26%), to the specific job (19%), to the colleagues (17%), to themselves (11%) or to other job related aspects, such as the excessive amount of workload (6%). Interestingly the majority of women respondents ascribed those

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[21] Q. 38, N=105 (69 women, 36 men).
[22] Q. 45, N=139 (92 women, 47 men).

problems to the Country and to the employers, while the majority of men respondents mentioned the specific job assignments as problematic.

Most respondents (75% of women respondents and 68% of men respondents) said they have carried out their job duties despite the difficulties, while a 16% said they did not find a solution. As a consequence an additional 7% changed the initial aims while a 4% quitted and changed the organisation.

4.4 Everyday life in the field

The third section of the survey shifted the focus from the professional life to the personal life of the aid workers and addressed what can be described as the potentially critical aspects these professionals are likely to face while living in the Countries of mission.

Health: One third of respondents[23] (nearly a 40% of women respondents and a 20% of men respondents) have had health problems that they were able to cure. The most common one was, predictably, malaria (45%), which they have had several times; 25% had intestinal infections; a 13% of female respondents had urinal infections, cystitis, amenorrhea, vaginitis; 10% had injuries of various entities (from small injuries to broken knee) and 7% had dengue fever. They found medical care mainly in private hospitals and private clinics; some other in local hospitals, or first in loco and then back in their home countries; others referred to Western doctors living in the country, and finally, others got email or phone advices from Western doctors. An 80% had health insurance and medical evacuation covered by their organisation, while remarkably a 20% had none of these.

Danger: questions on danger addressed how respondents perceived and dealt with danger and insecurity in their daily lives in the field. Half respondents[24] experienced dangerous situations; these were commonly associated with assaults ("assaulted with a deadly weapon, theft, walking alone in hazardous areas without protection", n.7/W), sexual harassment ("harassed several times by local authority and local staff", n.42/W), theft, banditry, ambushes, compound raids ("office compound attacked during a riot in Afghanistan", n.22/W), riots ("compound attack, riots in villages, evacuation due to kidnapping threats", n.20/W; "urban riots with throwing of stones on the cars, petty thievery, hearing shooting on the street etc.", n.51/W), revolutions ("Revolutions in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2005, 2007 and 2010", n.17/M), corruption

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[23] Q.48, N=46 (34 women, 12 men).
[24] Q.51, N=66 (44 women, 22 men)

("the favela is a slum in the middle of a cruel war between traffic dealers and police; I found myself in the middle of a gunfire between them", n.56/W). Other respondents had to deal with the risks of working in war contexts ("rockets, Improvised Explosive Device-IED", n.57/M; "attacks, suicide bombs", n.36/W; "shooting and bombing near me; attempted car hijacking by armed men", n.61/W; "in Libya: gunfights, bombings", n.15/W; "mine fields, shelling, shootings, kidnapping, diseases, explosions, flooding", n.59/M). Others reported dangerous environmental conditions such as earthquakes, disasters, flooding and sand storms.

Relationships: as emerged from the pilot study and from the literature review, a "sore point" in aid workers lives seems to be the difficulty in establishing and maintaining significant relationships. To examine this aspect I asked direct closed-questions about friendships and relationships. Almost all respondents[25] reported having built friendships with other expatriates, with local people and with men and women of their homeland; they also reported having experienced relationships, mostly with women and men of their homeland (80%), as well as with international men and women (78%); an additional half of respondents also reported having had relationships with local men and local women. From these answers we could be tempted to conclude that aid workers make friends easily and have satisfactory relationships, but a wider analysis of the open-ended questions will give the reader other interesting elements about this topic. I will talk about it in the following sections.

4.5 Being an international aid worker

With section four we reach the core of the survey. At the beginning of the section participants were asked to think about the *motivations* they had when they had decided to start their career in the aid sector. Nearly all respondents reported "a deep interest towards people, cultures and different countries", more than half said they had the "desire to find an ethical job" and a half stated they wanted "to make the difference for the less fortunate". The most common motivations our participants had are therefore connected with "altruistic" values and interests that we can also identify in popular discourses, which idealize and imagine aid workers as people who work for a sense of duty to create social justice. Nearly a 40% was also lead by the desire to engage in challenging experiences, considering this an "adventurous" profession. The desires to leave their home countries and to change their lives are together another interesting data: a 40%

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[25] Q.53, N=138 (91 women, 47 men)

of respondents (60% of men respondents and 35% of women) admitted being guided by a more "individualistic" desire[26] to escape from personal problems or from a boring routine.

Tab 4.12 Motivations to become an aid worker (Q.60)

Motivations	Percentage*		
	W(N=91)	M(N=46)	Tot(N=137)
A deep interest towards people, cultures, different countries	**90%**	**83%**	**88%**
Desire to find an ethical job	56%	61%	58%
Desire to 'make the difference' for the less fortunate	44%	56%	48%
Desire to prove yourself in challenging experiences	35%	43%	38%
Desire to leave your homeland	24%	37%	29%
A job with career opportunities	7%	13%	14%
Desire to change your life	10%	22%	9%
A real chance to find a job	5%	9%	7%

* This was a multiple-choice question, therefore the sum of the percentages reported is not 100%; the percentages are an evidence of the highly ranked answer's options.

An additional number considered this as a real chance to find a job, with career progression opportunities. Thus, it seems that even in a time of a broad economical crisis and of the crisis within the Italian development sector, the aid industry is still looked at as an active employment sector.

After an initial question on the motivations, a couple of open-ended questions focused on the *expectations* participants had before becoming aid workers ("What did you expect?") and the reality they experienced once within the aid industry ("...and what did you find?"). Depending on their answers participants can be grouped in three main profiles[27]: the enthusiast, the disenchanted, and the rational. The *enthusiast* is the aid worker whose expectations around the international aid world became reality. Typically this aid worker described her/his job as "interesting", "dynamic", "exciting" and with "professional growth" opportunities. The job was described as one that guarantees "challenging experiences, both from a human and professional point of view" and that makes possible to gain a "better understanding of the world", satisfying the desire to be "useful" by "helping people". Other reasons were related to the satisfaction of the desire of discovering: by "knowing new cultures", meeting "enlightened people", and seeing

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[26] Please note that the distinction between altruistic and individualistic desires is here used only for reasons of clarity; I am not arguing that some motivations are better than others, I recognize that there is an ambivalence between the two aspects, as I explained in the first chapter.

[27] The three following profiles are here used only for reasons of clarity and as an attempt to simplify the complexity that characterizes the answers.

"wonderful places". The *enthusiast* also described his/her experience as even more rewarding than expected.

Box 4.1 The *Enthusiastic* aid worker

THE ENTHUSIASTIC AID WORKER
n.76/W: I expected to have what I'm currently having: an interesting job with plenty of opportunities of knowing new cultures and people.
n.67/W: I expected a challenging environment, both personally and professionally and I found what I expected but 1000 times more intense.
n.57/W: I expected a challenging experience, both from a human and a professional point of view, and to get in touch with different cultures. I found that my job is never the same, it is very dynamic and exciting; a complex working network; the precious possibility to get in touch with many children, who are always joyful and smiling despite their needy condition, and the luck to meet enlightened people, who made the better future of children their reason to live.
n.96/W: I expected to meet different people and cultures, to know better and understand a little more the world and to give my work, my talents, my aid to the less fortunate interesting, enriching different people and cultures. I found that I understand humans and myself a little more, the real richness and important things in life. A lot of good things, I probably received more aid and more joy than I gave.
n.117/M: I expected and I found challenging environment, new experiences, professional growth, encountering new cultures.
n.115/W: I just wanted to make myself useful by providing my resources for the common good of children and young people. I always thought to develop a job for providing opportunities for those who are denied for distinction of race, gender and social background... I did it! Over seven years I've been improving my self and my skills to offer social projects and to rise up the civic and social consciousness.
n.122/M: I expected to meet different cultures, to help people, to grow professionally, to see wonderful places, to have fun, to suffer. I found all of the above and my wife!

Disenchanted are aid workers that had the same expectations of their enthusiastic colleagues, but differently from them, they did not find in their professional experiences what they were looking for. They expected the job to be "ethical and challenging", but they found that international cooperation world was not the "idyllic world" they thought. They wanted to "work in the field with local beneficiaries" instead they described having discovered a world full of "bureaucracy", "diplomacy", "administrative blockages" and "paper work". They portrayed their

colleagues as "lacking in professionalism", as having a "weak knowledge of international development issues" and as not interested in "high ideas and values", but "in money, career and in escape" and "driven by high salaries and good opportunities". Moreover, some were disappointed by the relationships with the beneficiaries that they described as "not always positive and easy as expected", and sometimes characterised by an "unwelcome" feeling. They also pointed out to the "usefulness" of the aid industry itself, recognizing some of the limits within it, as the non-immediateness of the achievable "impact". Some of these disillusioned aid workers also criticized having to move "here and there all life long" relating this aspect with the difficulties in "building anything that can last". Finally, they highlighted "inadequate working and contract conditions".

Box 4.2 The *Disenchanted* aid worker

<table>
<tr><td colspan="1" align="center">THE DISENCHANTED AID WORKER</td></tr>
<tr><td>n.2/W: I expected being able to assist vulnerable people and try to address injustices. I found myself being trapped into bureaucracy, being trapped by diplomacy and being unable to speak up.</td></tr>
<tr><td>n.6/M: I expected a fascinating job where I could help people and at the same time enjoy my unusual life. I found many difficulties with local administrations and blockages.</td></tr>
<tr><td>n.24/M: I expected to discover the world, meet people and act as a 'cultural mediator'. I found a less idyllic than expected international cooperation world.</td></tr>
<tr><td>n.25/W: I expected field work, challenging tasks, international environment. I found paper work, little opening to new ideas and directions, few challenging assignments.</td></tr>
<tr><td>n.33/W: I expected to find people interested in their activities and results...I found people interested in money, career and ...in escape.</td></tr>
<tr><td>n.42/W: I expected extending my knowledge of people, cultures and places; being motivated by high ideas and values; improving lives of people in difficulties. I found a lot of compromises; difficulties in adhering to ethical ideas and values and challenging environments.</td></tr>
<tr><td>n.51/W: I expected to be working in an environment where people were highly motivated in order to bring a change in the economies and lives of disadvantaged population through meaningful and effective projects/programmes. I expected to work with open-minded people and to find professionalism. I expected to work most of the time closely to local beneficiaries. I found myself questioning the usefulness and the ethical approach of many projects implemented by international development partners, including my organisation and NGO. I found myself working and exchanging with people with cynical view and little interest in what they are doing. I found myself working mainly with civil servants from the government.</td></tr>
<tr><td>n.59/W: I expected to find high values in colleagues and very well prepared colleagues. I found not always such high values, often colleagues are driven by high salaries and good opportunities. Often colleagues have weak knowledge of international development issues.</td></tr>
</table>

n.69/W: I expected seeing the impact of my work, helping to improve people's lives, learning about different cultures and learning from them, applying knowledge and lessons learned from our countries but without imposing. I found that the impact is, of course, not immediate if any at all. Bureaucracy in international organisations can sometimes jeopardize our work and that at the end of the day is up to the government to make the project succeed no matter how strong the civil society is etc.

n.12/W: I expected to explore different cultures, to travel and to improve problematic situation. I explored different cultures but understood relationships are not always positive and easy as expected (you are not always welcome).

n.21/W: I expected to find a country where I could make my life while working within a development project for more than one year. I found that you'd end moving here and there all life long with no chance to build anything that can last.

n.114/W: I expected more professionalism, less rhetoric, more consideration for our professionalism. I found lack of professionalism, inadequate working and contract conditions.

The *rationals* are the aid workers that sit in between the enthusiasts and the disenchanted, as in their answers they recognized the good and the bad sides of aid world. Their descriptions are balanced, and show both positive matching between their initial expectations and the reality, as well as some negative "surprises" they had. Even though this grey area, they nonetheless claimed to "love" their job. As regarding the job they portrayed it as "challenging and interesting", but at the same time they recognised the influence of higher dynamics on their job results ("politics is affecting the humanitarian aid world", "aid agencies" are resisting "major changes"). As regarding work relationships, they noted "low professionalism" and evidenced the difficulties in "understanding other cultures point of views" even when collaborating; nonetheless they did not give in, and claimed to get "a bit closer every day". Some of them defined the colleagues as "smart and bright" on their job, but "dysfunctional" when it comes to private life; about friendships some regretted having "no exchanges with local people", but on the contrary they appreciated the relationships within "the expat community".

Questions 61 and 62 therefore were very useful in starting collecting a more varied assortment of information about the aid world, which at this point of the survey started to be unveiled not only as a 'wonderful' world. For the respondents it was also possible to voice some of the critical aspects that characterise their professional context that are often left unsaid even by the insiders.

Box 4.3 The *Rational* aid worker

THE RATIONAL AID WORKER

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n.47/M: My expectations were met as I found: a challenging and interesting job in a dynamic environment, though this was also an eye-opener on the pros & cons of how NGOs and large development organisations work; contact with smart and bright professionals: though this was also a great opportunity to realize that most of the 'international cooperation professionals' are fundamentally dysfunctional from a social/private life point of view; good pay (but lower than pure private sector); but it was a fantastic and unique personal experience.

n.70/M: I expected to live in my skin the reality of people who live in 'poor' country or in countries at war, and to discover the real reasons of the underdevelopment and tell them to the people I was living with in my homeland. I found that many people are international development workers only to earn a lot of money. I started to think that the best way to work for a fair development is to work for changing the system we are living in, and to do so the best strategy is to work in your own country.

n.84/M: I thought I would: dive into local cultures, make a real difference and be on the field a lot. Nearly no exchange with local people, but instead great pleasure of being part of the international expat community. I am finding having real and sustained results nearly impossible...but I am trying as hard as I can and I think getting a bit closer every day. I spend most of my time in front of my pc or in meeting with close colleagues.

n.87/W: I expected to collaborate with locals in order to improve life condition and create awareness on specific topics, putting different ideas, culture and attitude together. I found that collaboration is there but it is difficult to always understand other culture point of view.

n.88/M: I expected personal growth, professional growth in humanitarian environment, humanity in the working environment. I found personal change (and growth); significant resistance of the humanitarian aid agencies to major changes; politics affecting the humanitarian aid world.

n.127/M: I just expected to be able to have a job that I love and that will allow me to transfer my competences. I found a job that I love and a really low professionalism.

n.116/M: I was expecting to live in a challenge environments, and try to live my life, my job and my lifestyle in a context different from mine homeland, and do an ethical job in order to help other people less lucky then me. Since I was a child my dream was to live and work in Africa. I found a difficult environment where I live, and an everyday challenge, working and living with my colleagues is not simple, and the job (and traffic in town) bring so much stress. I found wonderful friends from all over the world and also wonderful local people to work and enjoy my free time with.

n.73/W: I expected a challenging job but highly satisfactory, human and professional experience, action (job in contact with people and implementing activities, instead of desk job), learn different cultures, languages, people. I found a satisfactory job but highly stressful, level of responsibility often exceeding the experience and also met great individuals, but expat community is living outside reality, time-consuming bureaucracy (visa, permits, reports, etc.)

In this section a set of questions about **gender at work** [28] were asked. Those moved from the general to the personal, from the abstractness of the general Categorisation to the concreteness of practical examples taken from participants' personal experiences. The goal was to collect evidence for the presence of differences and similarities in men's and women's experiences of gender in the workplace. Questions 63-66 focused on gender differences/similarities and asked about the presence of gendered ways of working as aid workers. 49% of respondents[29] answered specifying differences between being a woman or a man professional in this sector, while another 40% denied gender only played a role and referred instead to individual differences or to similarities between the two gender categories. The remainder provided mixed answers, in which the relevance of gender was both denied and identified at the same time.

Some respondents highlighted specific characteristics women have, which they describe as suitable for the profession ("multitasking", "sensitive", "collaborative", "problem solving") while some others pointed out unsuitable attributes ("stressed", "naïve"). Moreover, respondents mentioned some difficulties that women aid workers might incur into ("more difficult for them working alone" n.15/M, "they suffer the same discrimination reserved for women in the countries of intervention" n.17/M). Suitable ("pragmatic", "focused and result driven", "handling better emergencies", "capacity of managing complexity", "deductive thinking") and unsuitable attributes ("not flexible", "less organized", "macho attitude", "often think of themselves as saviours of the world" n.37/W) were also revealed regarding men professionals. Interestingly, men and women respondents did not only stress how particular gender-ascribed qualities are suitable or unsuitable for the profession, but they also treated those questions as a chance to draw attention to some problems that women aid workers can experience. This was done by both women and men respondents, but if women used the questions to describe the challenges they were likely to experience, men seemed to regard gender as a female issue, as they did not mention particular problems which could arise from their gender identity and instead talked about women colleagues.

Another pair of questions assessed participants' gender identities as potential obstacles and potential helps in carrying out their job assignments. Both questions were intended to explore if in any situations the female and male identities could be directly affecting (both positively and negatively) the working experience of the participants. An interesting number of women and

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[28] Questions and answers about gender will be analysed in depth in the second and in third studies, therefore I will briefly summarize only the main findings here.

[29] Qs. 63, 64, N=131 (84 women, 47 men).

men respondents[30] recognized that gender played a role in their professional experience, and also provided evidence for their claims. The situations they described underline how being a woman or a man could represent an obstacle in certain circumstances, and an advantage in others. Respondents, independently from their gender, agreed in evaluating the role played by female identity and male identity: in fact, situations in which female identity was assessed as causing challenges, were the same in which the male identity was considered as helping, and vice versa. Moreover, the female identity was judged as problematic by more than half women respondents, while male identity was considered as challenging by a far less consistent number of men respondents[31]. Overall, the female identity was associated with the words "sacrifice", "difficult", "obstacle" and constructed as problematic in a number of different occasions (in the workplace and in out in public in the local communities) and in a number of contexts ("developing countries", "Muslim countries", "male-dominated society", "Islamic environment", "Arab world") and specific countries ("Libya", "Afghanistan", "Congo", "Kosovo"); on the contrary, the male identity was described as an advantage in the same situations and as a disadvantage only in few specific situations related to specific job assignments. Going more into details, being a woman was built as making it more difficult to *establish professional credibility*: women have to demonstrate their skills "more", in order to obtain trust.

On the other hand, men described their experiences with "local authorities", "local partners" and "local stakeholders" as easy, because they were "just more respected and trusted", "taken more seriously than women". Women professionals were also subjected to *sexual harassment* and *gender discrimination* both in the workplace as well as in their daily lives in the field. Sexual harassment was reported as rife and constant ("several times", "all my female colleagues", "more than once"; "I experienced unprofessional comments on my body" n,14/W, "jokes on women"; "very sexist country", "strong male chauvinism"), as it was experienced directly by women respondents and indirectly by men respondents. One respondent also described occurring gender-based discrimination in hiring practices ("I lost the opportunity to work") within the organisations she worked for ("the proposer was FAO"), resulting in women sometimes being passed over for employment in favour of a man ("they wanted a man"), due to the need of respecting local sensitivities ("the Government rejected the fact that I was a woman"; n.22/W).

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[30] N=126 (81 women, 45 men).
[31] 65% of men and 51% of women respondents recognized that their gender identity could be considered a facilitator; 54% of women and 13% of men that it could represent an obstacle.

Eventually, some respondents also related female identity with security threats and claimed that in the worst cases, women can become "a favourite target of violence", while male identity was associated with a reduced probability of being attacked and with the absence of rape risk.

Women respondents also connected to their female identity "greater difficulties" in the reconciliation of work and family life and in building significant relationships. In some answers they referred to the classic "family vs. career dilemma", constructing it as a female issue and not as a potential challenge for both parents. For a woman aid worker the dilemma seems to be amplified by the peculiarities of the profession: the necessity of frequently moving was related to the difficulty in finding a male trailing spouse ("difficult to find men who are interested in following a women for her work" n.34/W), whereas "most wives will not have a problem to follow their husbands".

Considering now male identity, men respondents described their gender identity as an "obstacle" only in situations in which they were involved in projects dealing with "women's issues" (children education, women empowerment, motherhood, sexual health education); they recognized that the "dialogue woman – woman" around these topics facilitates the work, and that "getting in touch with women" beneficiaries, was not easy for them. Instead, the female identity was described as facilitating working relationships with women beneficiaries "for a process of identification" that "makes it easier to get in touch". Being a woman was explained as granting "access" to a range of private contexts ("households", "rural and remote areas", "rural communities") and specific knowledge ("problems with children", "easier to get feedback") that were "off-limits" for men aid workers. Remarkably, if previously the female identity was portrayed as adding complexities in the working relationships with local men, now respondents revealed it in a different light: in fact, men beneficiaries and local authorities, were also depicted as "much more tolerant" with women, in particular contexts ("South Sudan", "local traditions", "Muslim men"), due to local cultures and to different perceptions of women and men. The local perceptions of women as "less threatening" and not intimidating, was described as easing the job achievements. This was described as happening when women aid workers adhered to local conventions of femininity, and changed their dress ("as far as they dress up in the way THEY want" n.3/M), and behaviour ("smiling and being kind and sweet as women are expected to be in Muslim countries" n.47/W):

In the final part of section 4, participants were asked to "**giving advice**" to a young European that is studying to become an international aid worker" (q.72). This further question

made possible to point at important aspects related with the professional and personal experience in the international aid world. Some were reassuring claims, while others were warnings; some pointed out positive aspects, while others challenging aspects. See in details how participants rated the close-options provided and which specific additional aspects they highlighted.

Tab 4.13 Advice for a future international aid worker

Advice to a future aid worker	Percentage
To do this job you must have a strong adaptability, tolerance and flexibility	**84%**
After the 'honeymoon there will be 'the crisis of your ideals'	40%
This job is like no other job, you must have the desire to make the world better	29%
This a job you can't do for your whole life	17%
This is the best job in the world	13%
If you want to do this job you would have to say goodbye to your loved ones	13%
Be ready to become a top spinning in the world	6%
Other	12%

* This was a multiple-choice question, therefore the sum of the percentages reported is not 100%; the percentages are an evidence of the highly ranked answer's options.

The options varied from answers related to individual attitudes and qualities, to job related positive and negative aspects. 84% of respondents agreed with the option that underlines the need to have a strong adaptability, tolerance and flexibility. A 40% recognized that a first positive period (the "honeymoon"), is usually followed by a period of crisis in which particular initials ideals and values are called into question. This is a typical awareness aid workers gain after some time spent in the sector and that they must take in consideration and re-elaborate; the "crisis of ideals" is in relation with realizing personal limits, organisational limits, and more in general aid and humanitarian industry limits (for instance, the impossibility of realizing big changes for the beneficiaries, the presence of neo-colonialist attitudes and of a diverse range of colleagues with more or less ethics and morality). Ethical and moral values are considered important requisites a future international aid worker must have: the "desire to make the world better" is indicated by one third of respondents.

Interestingly, even though this profession is considered a lifetime career (see Table 4.3), a 17% of respondents warn about the fact that this is not a lifelong job ("This a job you can't do for your whole life"), probably due to the aforementioned challenging aspects being too tiring in the long term. This is a point that I argue needs to be further investigated.

A 5% of participants who also choose to add other suggestions, specified that when starting a career in the international aid work "consequences on private relationships" must be

taken into account, because in this job "relationships are really rare", which is something that in the previous closed-questions on relationships they could not express ("Do not loose yourself and be conscious of who you are because you will find a lot of instable international people broken by the fact that this is a job where stable relationships are really rare", n. 6/M; "Consider that this is not only a career choice, but a life choice that will have consequences on your private relationships - love, family and friendship. It is good to experience it, but see if you are ready to do this "sacrifice" in the long run and if there aren't other ways you could contribute to common good and experience other countries and cultures", n.19/W). I therefore suggest that sensitive questions on relationships might be better addressed with open-ended questions or with other qualitative methods, as interviews or personal blogs, for instance.

Another 5% highlighted that the sector needs more and more "technicality", that is, one needs to be "highly qualified" and skilled to do this job ("You need to be highly qualified to fit in this sector", n.13/W; "You must speak and write perfectly at least three languages", n.29/W; "This sector is becoming very professional and competitive so it is important to acquire a good level of competencies and experiences", n.22/W).

4.6 Assessment

We now move towards the final sections of the survey. In section 5 participants were asked to make an **assessment** and to list three positive and three negative aspects of the overall experience in the international aid world. In their answers, respondents[32] identified different dimensions of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, which were simultaneously involved and that can be summarised in *affective* and *cognitive dimensions* of job satisfaction (Moorman, 1993). Interestingly most of the times, the same respondents assessed identical aspects both positively and negatively (for instance, job responsibility and workload, travelling, meeting other cultures etc.): pros & cons of aid workers professional and personal experiences seem to be often developing from the same characteristics and peculiarities of the job. Some of the features that I will report below can be normally found as relevant in the general category of expats' and overseas professionals' experiences; other aspects are specifically relevant for aid workers and I argue that these aspects add a complexity to their overall experience, which is not comparable to that of any other professional category.

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[32] N=123 (79 women, 44 men)

Pleasurable emotional feelings that respondents have about their jobs as a whole, were related to *ethical values* ("Understand well how I contribute to the global community", n.121/W; "Learn how to keep in touch with different cultures in order to improve human tolerance and understanding = peace, n.104/W; "Improve the socio-economic conditions of the communities", n.75/M), *altruism* ("Helping people helping themselves", n.97/M; "Knowing you have a job that aims to help others", n.72/W), *loving-kindness* ("The idea, or at least the impression, that you are really doing something to make this world a better place", n.101/W; "The chance to make some kind of impact", n.55/M), as well as aspects associated with *curiosity* and *novelty seeking*. The satisfaction arising from a *cultural richness*, from *knowing people* with different cultural backgrounds ("Discovering and exploring different cultures and countries", n.46/W; "I know people and places with different cultural and social aspects", n.107/M) goes together with the pleasure of *travelling* and seeing new places ("In 5 years I saw lots of places that the majority of people do not see in their entire life", n.11/W; "Travelling in places few people can go", n.13/M) and of living in an international setting ("Chance to live in an international setting, reside abroad, make friends from all over the world, speak many languages and get to know many cultures", n.54/W; "Travelling and international exposure", n.26/W; "I feel citizen of the world and have a different perception of the physical distance", n.111/W). The satisfaction deriving from meeting "other", "new", "different", "wonderful", "interesting" people was indicated by the majority of respondents ("I met many interesting people that changed my way of thinking" n.14/W; "Meeting tons of people and sharing experiences with them", n.16/M; "I am surrounded by people who share my same values", n.74/M); some also pointed out the *richness of the relations* with the beneficiaries ("Human relations with locals", n.109/W; "Amazing lessons learned from locals", n.60/W). Another important aspect that was listed as a positive one is definable as a *personal growth*: a "continuous learning" ("I keep on learning", n.91/W; "Lifelong learning process", n.19/W), not only job related ("I've learned a huge number of things even not directly connected to my job", n.111/W; "Spiritual growth", n.36/W; "I became an adult", n. 20/M) which was specified by some respondents as the opportunity to acquire new skills, such as "adaptability" ("I learned to be more flexible in facing situations, problems, etc.", n.96/M; "Learnt how to adapt yourself in different situation", n.77/W), "open-mindedness" ("Open mind and horizon", n. 104/W; "I opened up my mind", n.20/M) and "pragmatism" ("It made me pragmatic", n.117/W) necessary to face everyday "challenges" ("I daily face new challenges and I have to overcome unexpected situations", n.91/W; "Coping with many different situations, n. 83/W). A "new knowledge" about oneself and the others ("Understanding others and myself", n.30/W; "Personal development", n.18/W; "Rediscover the world and myself", n. 75/M; "Living

strong personal experiences that help you to grow and know you better", n.61/M) was portrayed as achievable more rapidly in the international aid setting than in other contexts ("I have the feeling that I widen my knowledge and understanding faster rather than living in my homeland", n.91/W).

In the same affective dimension, three main challenging areas can also be identified: intrapersonal, relationships and the country of mission. Talking about the *intrapersonal challenges*, these are connected with the necessity of coping "ethical dilemmas" ("Clash of values clash between ideals and reality of cooperation, n. 22/W; "Risk to become "Lord of poverty"", n.21/M; "Frustration due to the fact that changes are slow or not visible", n.14/M; "Ideals often shipwrecked into scepticism", n.10/M; "Sometimes, your ideals break down in front of the reality", n.11/W) and with the "frustration" arising from the daily exposure to poverty and death, which one is not able to eliminate ("Frustration for not being able to help effectively", n. 1/W; "To see children living in very bad situations is always very tough" n.48/W; "I am not saving children's lives...not many, not enough anyway", n.72/M; "Sometimes I felt I could have done more to help people but it was not possible", n.58/M); both features were assessed by a number of respondents as "psychologically demanding", "tough", "hard".

"*Loneliness*", "solitude", "isolation" were reported frequently ("Being alone", n.119/W; "To live in a very secluded environment with no access to social life", n.81/M), as well as *homesickness*, ("Sometimes you feel homesick", n.91/W, "Home is always distant", n.49/M, "Being very far from your country", n.15/W). Other facets of the *expat* experience were judged as "difficult", "alienating" and causing a "detachment from reality" ("You can loose your points of referrals", n.31/W; "Sometimes you feel different because you see things with different eyes and not everybody can understand you", n.27/W; "You end up in having your soul and your mind in two or more different countries", n.94/M; "Home could be everywhere", n.47/M), and in particular, problems associated with *repatriation* and *re-adaptation* to usual life ("Not to be able to see yourself in your homeland", n.54/W; "Difficult return home", n.59/M; "Difficult to stop, go back to a developed country and have a "normal" life", n.16/M), together with a feeling of *un-rootedness* and *unsettledness* ("No roots", n.117/M; "Difficult to feel no roots and far from loved ones and from own country", n.96/W; "I don't know where it's "home" any longer", n.20/M).

Relationships with the family of origin ("I am far from the beloved ones", n.95/W; "Remoteness from the family and feelings", n.75/M; "Not as close to family as I would have wished", n.121/W; "I left my family in Italy", n.19/W), with the old friends ("Long-distance relationship with my best friends", n.96/M; "Away from friends at home", n.106/M; "Distance from the family and old friends", n.18/W), and the difficulty in having a private life, were also

highlighted as an undesirable side by many ("The availability to move without planning can change your life and impact on your relationships", n.78/M; "Lovers don't like rovers", n.17/M; "Difficulty in maintaining personal relationship", n.63/M; "I do not have children", n.108/W).

An important aspect of the respondents' dissatisfaction is directly related with the characteristics of the countries of mission. *Health* was assessed as problematic both for lack of resources ("Lack of proper medical treatment in the countries where we work", n.45/M; "I do not have access to good health services", n.17/W), and for bad health situations ("Tropical diseases", n.100/W; "I live in a very polluted and unsafe environment", n.92/W). In addition, the load of *stress* ("Always under stress", n.24/W) was described as "tiring in the long-run" (n.13/M), causing "physical fatigue" (n.36/M) and leading to premature aging ("to get older sooner", n.84/W) and in the worst cases to "burn-out" (n.77/W). *Security* constraints ("Limited freedom of movement for security reasons in some contexts", n.79/W; "Not going out sometimes", n.109/W), the threat of "living in war areas" (n.101/W), together with the exposure to "military violence" (n.36/W), characterises respondents" experiences as "often dangerous" and as "a big problem" (n.90/M) "depending on the country" (n.48/M).

If the encounter with other cultures was assessed positively, the "*cultural gap*" was also assessed as "hard and stressful", due to frequent "misunderstandings" ("You often have to face cultural differences while acting", n.87/W; "Cultural differences with the locals", n.35/W); at times this gap was described as causing a self-ascribed feeling of foreignness ("Being a "foreigner", not possible to understand all the local links and mentality, n.6/M), and un-acceptance within the local communities ("Being considered "different", n.86/W; "Sometimes I felt not accepted because not coming from local area", n.60/W; "Racism", n.4/W). Some women respondents also reported *gender discrimination* ("Male chauvinism in the working environment", n. 10/W; "Gender inequality", n.93/W, "Men are harsh with women", n.111/W).

Regarding the cognitive dimension of job satisfaction/dissatisfaction, respondents frequently assessed positively the *job content* ("Exposure to matters of strategic importance: peace, war, protection of civilians, human rights", n.54/W; "It gave me the opportunity to understand socio-economic dynamics leading to poverty not only at local scale, but also at national and global scale", n.68/W) and the chances of *professional development* ("I am growing up professionally under different points of view: management, coordination, strategy, vision, etc.", n.99/W; "Professional growth", n.42/M). Moreover, they underlined the *dynamism* of the job ("Every day is different from the one before and from the next, there is no routine", n.90/M; "Always various and ever changing", n.66/W), the opportunities of having a *career progression*

and high *job responsibilities* ("Career opportunity", n. 113/W; "The enormous exposure and responsibility that you are given", n.55/M; "You often have more responsibilities than in any other job", n.100/M) as satisfactory. *Salary* and *facilities* ("Excellent salary and conditions, n.66/W; "Saving money", n. 110/M) and the possibility of being part of an *international professional network* ("International network", n.79/M; "Being connected to an international community", n.123/M) were also listed as important features of respondents' fulfilment. At the same time, a number of job related aspects were negatively assessed: from the *lack of financial resources* necessary to sustain aid projects ("Permanent difficulty in obtaining financial resources required for social development projects", n.104/W; "Limited fund make implementing bodies tied to fund raising more than to project implementation", n.108/W), to what was labelled as the *inefficiency* of the sector ("Lack of efficiency in the countries", n.121/W) that due to administrative "blockages" ("The nonsense of the necessary evil of bureaucracy", n.42/M; "Bureaucracy of donors" regulation and funds, n.84/W) was described as ending up in wasting resources ("Waste of money", n.28/M; "The waste of money and the too hierarchical approach of some big international organisation", n.5/M); to the "corruption" of individuals, organisations and institutions ("Dealing with corrupt people", n.122/M; "NGOs can be corrupted", n.7/W; "Corruption of Governments", n.111/). Contractual and geographical *precariousness* ("I still find it hard to get a good job, and being confident about my future", n.107/M; "It's difficult to have a continuing job", n.12/W; "Few certainties in contract, in contributions, etc.", n.9/W; "Geographical instability", n.71/W), together with an *insufficient wage level* ("Poor pay", n.79/W; "Not enough paid", n.73/W; "It requires a lot of voluntary work, extra-unpaid hours, in order to reach all the targets", n.90/W; "In Italy, it does not have a good balance between efforts/responsibilities and salary/social recognition", n.99/W) and an excessive *workload* ("Long working hours", n.2/W; "It's often a 24/7 job", n.25/W) were also assessed as problematic aspects.

4.7 Your Future

In the last section of the survey participants were asked to think about the near future. Nearly all respondents[33] (92%) said they would continue to work in the aid world. The majority imagined a *career progression*. One fourth specified they would like to work as *consultants* and *experts* ("Working mainly as consultant for local institutions or NGOs always in the field of migration", n.11/M; "Continuing with my career as gender and child protection expert", n.4/W);

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[33] N=123 (79 women, 44 men)

another 20% stated they would like to work at the *headquarters* of various organisations as desk officers, stressing their desire of a stability that does not imply having to give up through and through the experiences in the field ("I hope to be based in a headquarter, with the possibility of travelling frequently to the field", n.15/W; "I will be still working in the international cooperation, but I am hoping that I will be able to be based and stay in the same place for a while", n.54/W). A number of respondents also stated they "hoped" to find a job position in one of the most important *governmental agencies* ("Project coordinator, I hope to be country coordinator, or work for big agencies, UN, UNHCR, FAO, EU", n.105/M; "Contract agent at the European commission", n.108/W). In headquarters or in UN agencies, respondents underlined the need to balance professional lives and private lives ("I hope to find a job in the field for some years together with my husband, and probably after that we will look for something at HQ level. Long-term objective will be able to work with EU or UN", n.84/M; "Research, assessment and evaluation as a consultant for different NGOs, or either in another HQ, in order to be able to have a private life", n.83/W).

Some respondents also specified they imagined themselves working in *Europe* or in their *home countries* ("I want to return to live in Europe, not necessarily in Italy, despite the crisis. At work, I will try to keep the framework of cooperation, or I will try a profile related to my degree in education or sociology. Possibly, in an international environment", n.9/W; "Working in international cooperation projects dealing with organic agriculture, but from the headquarter in Italy", n.47/W), claiming also that they would work in the Global South only as a second choice ("I would like to work for an NGO in Europe and to try to find a stability closer to Italy. If I won't find a job in Europe I will continue to work overseas", n.68/W). For these respondents then, working in the field could represent an initial step in the career progression path within the profession. Other respondents instead said they would like to be living in development countries, with the majority choosing African Countries (North Africa, Niger, Ethiopia, Ghana). A small number instead declared to have no idea of what they would do and where they would be in five years time, arguing that within this profession it is not possible to make long-term plans ("I have no idea where I will be and what I will do, since this field is really unstable and you never know what will happen to you after one year", n.14/W).

Work-life balance was also addressed in this last section on the future. The answers provided offer information on how aid workers reconcile working and family life. Some respondents presented the situation as difficult, considering their own family ("I often think to this question and it could be one of the reason to come back in my homeland", n.14/W; "My family is in Italy, they are doing well. I miss them so much. Sometimes I stop and I think: will I

ever have my own family? Is this job compatible with a family?", n.65/W; "For my family of origin, there are no problems, as I often visit. To my family in Peru, my boyfriend and my dog, we are trying to find a solution. It's a problem", n.9/W), and their family of origin ("Until my parents will not need me I can still plan to work abroad, then I will decide according to needs", n.26/W; "I will have to go back to them at some point", n.95/W). A small number said they were not interested in building a family ("I'm not interested in having children and I'm ready to have long distance relationships", n.10/W; "I think I won't have a family", n.8/M), and that they did not have bonds with their family of origin, for various reasons: they "are doing well", they "accepted" their professional choice, they "do the same life" ("My parents, brother and sisters do the same life and we get to see each other randomly. I don't want a family on my own", n.28/M; "My parents support...they have been travellers themselves...my mother wanted to be involved in cooperation before being a journalist", n.71/M; "My brother would probably join a NGO for a while, my parents are coming to visit me regularly and already on the Board of NGOs in Italy. They accepted my choice", n.90/M; "My son will have finished University and he will probably become a development worker as well: it is an hereditary disease!!!", n.3/W). Others offered a glance on possible strategies to deal with family needs: alternate personal professional choices with those of the partners; move with the partner in case of long-term missions or alone for short-term ones; find a partner who shares the same profession ("Here I live with my husband, and we will move together if it's for long periods, depending on his availability; if it's for less than 6 months, I will go alone", n.88/W; "We will work in the same location, if necessary alternating periods of employment: my husband works, I stay at home; next, I work, he stays at home", n.113/W; "My wife is doing the same job. We will choose the best options for us and our child", n.6/M; "They will be with me. My wife will be also working in international aid, my children will be going to international schools", n.74/M; "My husband will follow me, or I will follow him, as we usually do", n.101/W).

4.8 Summary and Discussion

In this chapter I have illustrated the most interesting findings from the survey study that I have created in order to outline who international aid workers are. The survey, aimed at reaching European professionals was entirely developed in English and was administered in English. I have invested several efforts to collect responses representing other nationalities, however, at the end of my survey participants were mostly Italians. Thus, so far results provide a rich insight of the Italian workforce, and at the same time allow future comparisons with other nationalities.

The majority of participants were women between the ages of 26 and 35, followed by men between 26 and 40. More data are needed to verify if the decrease in the number of women starting at 36 years old is a trend related with the number of women leaving the profession for maternity/family reasons (husbands, children, elderly parents and extended family), or if this is only a contingency of the participants in this study.

At the moment of the survey respondents were located in various countries around the globe, only few owned a house in their homeland and were registered in the A.I.R.E. According to current Italian regulations (MAE, 1988) this registration is a right and duty of every citizen and is a prerequisite for accessing a range of services provided by consular representations abroad, as well as for the exercise of important rights (as the right to vote). But, at the same time, according to this law, one has the possibility to register only if resident abroad for more than 12 months (and aid workers have to frequently move and work on short-term missions which last less than one year) or if a member of 'special categories' (in which aid workers are not included). Such law is currently discriminating an important number of Italian citizens and therefore needs to be changed. A recent evidence of this can be found in the debate arose for the 2013 Italian general elections. Even if exact numbers are not available, it is estimated that in that occasion 10,000 people working and volunteering in the aid work industry could not exercise their right to vote (FOCSIV, 2013).

This study has provided further evidence to the literature that identified work-life conflict as a challenging aspect of mobile professionals (Linehan, 2000; Linehan, Scullion & Walsh 2001); in fact, thanks to the open-ended questions included in the survey participants had the chance to voice difficulties they had in building and maintaining significative social ties. Less than half respondents were single (nearly half of women respondents vs a third of men respondents), while half of the respondents who were in a relationship lived together with their partners; the majority had no children. Work-life balance was described as challenging for both women and men respondents, but for women it was reported as more relevant. It would be interesting to investigate further the rate of children: is this profession appealing for women and men who do not want children? Or a low rate of children is a result caused by the peculiarites of the profession? Is this a circular and dynamic process? More data are needed in order to gain a better knowledge on this aspect. In fact, if the situation described is dependent on the job itself, organisations should spend more time thinking about implementing work-life balance policies.

I have also provided a detailed picture of the participants' professional experience, starting from the years spent in the aid industry, to the countries in which they had worked, to aspect related to job contracts, job role and field, to their professional network and to problems at work. There are four findings I want to stress on these aspects. First, it is possible to identify two different groups of participants: the *newbies*, aid workers with less than 5 years of paid experience in the sector (typically the younger), and the *experts*, aid workers who built their career in this field and who, through the years, gained specific expertise. In line with the data reported by SISCOS (Melgari, 2011) this is an important demonstration of how who approaches aid work does not simply follow a "once in a life" logic, but actually, thinks about it as engaging in a real profession with opportunities of professional growth. More data are needed in order to make comparisons between senior and junior professionals, to understand if they are subjected to the same challenges. Second, the job insecurity is reinforced by the precarity of contracts and by insufficient legal protection, which does not guarantee the satisfaction of important rights. In fact, both short-term contracts and short-term projects were considered challenging aspects of the profession: the first, due to the time spent in continuously having to find new jobs, the second, for the difficulties in carrying out effective projects in a brief amount of time, due to a various range of complexities arising from the context. These aspects were both assessed as tiring and stressful in the long term. Moreover, most of the contracts did not include neither maternity leave, nor pension contributions. Neither on-the-job trainings, nor external paid trainings were provided by the employers and most of the respondents had to individually pay for the specific trainings they needed. Third, fewer women than expected stated they had a managerial role, while the majority had technical roles; this finding seems to diverge from recent data on the number of women manager (Norzi, 2013), thus more research needs to be carried out on this specific aspect.

A final point I want to make is on the high number of participants who had problems at work: one third of professionals said that those problems could not be solved and, as a consequence, they had to change goals, or organisation; moreover, an additional 40% attributed those problems to the organisations. I argue that those numbers need to be addressed by the employers. Are the organisations asking too much to their employees? Are the employees skilled enough to handle such problems? Are the contexts in which participants work too difficult to relate with? Are the cultural differences so important that they represent an obstacle? All these aspects were cited by the respondents in what is described as an interrelation of challenging factors aid workers find themselves having to deal with, most of the time without the aid organisations supporting them.

As regard health and security, I want to note that a number of participants worked in countries ranking as the most violent aid contexts, despite working in the humanitarian sector or in development. Unhealthy and unsafe conditions were both accepted by the participants as part of the "normal" challenges usually faced by humanitarian and development workers and where often described in a "wrong place, wrong time" scenario. Typically, risk perception was described as changing when respondents were in a stable relationship and especially with parenthood they referred having taken more seriously the necessary precautions and avoided unnecessary risks.

Findings on the motivations of aid workers correspond to Fechter (2012) description of an intertwining of altruistic and professional motives; interestingly the participants stressed that "good intentions" are not enough to seriously approach this profession, taking a stance against a merely volunteerism approach, which in the wider corpus of data was also described as causing troubles, most of the times due to a lack of skills and technicality. The importance of a match between expactations and reality is supported by the findings on the three different profiles I have described: the enthusiastic, the disenchanted and the rational aid worker. While there are individuals who can be recognized as approximating to each of the three profiles, in general people vary between them. A finding connected to this is that positive and negative sides of aid workers professional and personal experiences seem to arise from the same characteristics and peculiarities of the job (for instance, travelling and being far from home, meeting other cultures and facing cultural differences); it would be then interesting to understand why and when there is a change in the assessment. Is this something that characterises the experience and therefore, that cannot be avoided/prevented? How can we as social psychologists prevent the passage from enthusiastic to disenchanted? I argue that a tailored training is required in order to have more rational profiles, and therefore, more resilient professionals. But in order to do this it is necessary to collect more data to gain a better understanding of the dimensions that can be addressed before the assignments, and of the challenges for which it is only possible to provide on-the-job support; a lot can be done to address what are not "simply" individual difficulties, but typical situations experienced by the category, due to the peculiarity of the profession.

I also want to note a fascinating ambivalence: that of recognizing international aid work at the same time as "the best job in the world", and of warning future aid workers about negative sides of it, such as having to often move from country to country ("be ready to become a top

spinning in the world") and not living close to "ones loved ones". The overall job satisfaction, in both cognitive and affective dimensions, seems therefore to prevail despite the challenging characteristics participants recognize having to deal with. In fact, almost the totality of participants stated they would still be working in the international aid in the future.

Finally, in the section "gender at work" I have illustrated some of the findings on gender, as a brief anticipation on what would be the focus of the next two chapters. These findings confirm previous results on the difficulties arising for women international professionals (Hutchings et al., 2012), consistent with the different roles expected of women and men and on stereotypes about women's capabilities. At the same time they provide new insight on the relevance of gender in the experiences of women international aid workers. For an in depth study of women international aid workers' experiences I have conducted two further studies, which will be presented in the following chapters.

5 Accounting for the presence of women in the profession

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will present the findings of the second study. The goal of this study will be to gain a better insight on the undergoing process of feminisation of the Italian international aid workforce. In particular in this study I will conduct a sequential Membership Categorisation Analysis to examine how aid workers explained and made sense of the growing presence of women in the sector, both in the survey and in the interviews. I will show two competing types of accounts: accounts that explain the trend referring to women's natural internal predispositions, and accounts that deny the relevance of gender and instead refer to individual differences. I will also provide a detailed examination of a number of discursive devices that allowed the participants to answer the question without sounding prejudiced. Finally, in the discussion, I will compare the findings with the existing literature.

5.2 Accounting for the presence of women: women's natural internal predispositions

5.2.1 Doing generalisation as a categorisation practice

When asked to think about the reasons women could have, participants tried to think of possible explanations. For many respondents this represented the first occasion to reflect on the women/men ratio inside the profession and on the presence of women inside the profession.

The most prevalent type of account offered for the presence of women in the profession is organised around what can be defined 'women's natural internal predispositions'. In the following extracts participants answer the question explaining the phenomenon with reference to some attributes women are described as having.

Survey question: In your opinion, why do many women choose to work in the aid work industry?

Extract 5:1 (answer 38/W): Protective instinct.

Extract 5:2 (answer 51/M):   For their delicacy of feeling.

Extract 5:3 (answer 18/W):   Because they are more altruistic than men.

Extract 5:4 (answer 91/M):   They pay more attention to poor people and to world issues.

Extract 5:5 (answer 40/W):   Because they are more keen in 'helping others'.

Extract 5:6 (answer 93/W):   Apparently women have more self-control, are good at multi-tasking and able to face challenging environments.

Extract 5:7 (answer 55/M):   In general women are more interested in social work.

Extract 5:8 (answer 25/M):   Because I think women are more curious and have the desire to change the world.

Extract 5:9 (answer 95/M):   They find it easier to adapt to different situations.

In extracts 5:1 - 5:9, taken from the survey, attributes such as 'protective instinct', 'delicacy of feeling', 'altruism', 'curiosity', 'adaptability', 'self-control' and 'multi-tasking' are put forward as possible reasons for the presence of women in the international aid industry. These statements are constructed in generalised terms: specific traits are attributed to incumbents of the category 'women', with the use of neutral and impersonal terms such as the pronoun 'they' (as in extracts 5:2 – 5:5), referring to 'women' (extracts 5:6 – 5:8) and with very short answers where only one or two attributes are listed. Brevity and generalisation are both devices that orient to the shared knowledge recipients are supposed to have about the category; with similar claims additional inferences are left to the recipients and their cultural background. In these cases, brief accounts are treated as acceptable and comprehensible not only for the researcher who made the survey, but also for a wider audience.

As explained in the methodology section, in this study I am analysing extracts where gender is introduced by the researcher, because I'm interested in studying what happens when the category is brought to the attention of the interactants. Considering the adjacency pair and analysing how the question is addressed by the respondents, it is possible to see that, in these specific extracts, the categorical practice invoked by the question is developed; in fact, the structure of the question mentioning 'women' elicits a categorical answer in which the above listed attributes become a generalised and objectified description of the category itself: as a result of this action, women participation in the international aid industry is constructed as a consequence of their 'delicacy of feeling' or other attributes and internal dispositions they are related to, such as 'paying attention to poor people' and 'being keen in helping others'.

Note that the use of 'they' made by women aid workers in extracts 5:3 'they are more altruistic than men' and 5:5 'they are more keen in helping the others' as well as the use of 'women' in extract 5:6, create accounts that are detached from the direct experiences of the respondents and builds a distance from the category; in these particular cases the respondents display the gender category, but refuse to be included in the category they are describing, providing impersonal answers and speaking about 'women' in general.

A different pattern of response can be seen in the following set of extracts where some women respondents provide more personal accounts.

Survey question:	In your opinion, why do many women choose to work in the aid work industry?
Extract 5:10 (answer 35/W):	We are more sensitive towards problems, I guess…
Extract 5:11 (answer 79/W):	I am not sure. Maybe we are more sensitive towards certain topics?
Extract 5:12 (answer 111/W):	Because we were born to take care of other humans.

Extract 5:13 (interview 14/W):

1	I/W:	and in your opinion (.) do you have an idea of why there are so
2		many women in this sector?
3	AW14/W:	I think first of all we are more altruistic and that therefore we
4		are more willing to dedicate ourselves to helping others and
5		then we are anyway braver at the end of the day (.)
6		(2)
7		if we have to move maybe to these countries we have more
8		courage to take challenges more than our male colleagues.

Similarly to the first extracts, participants refer to attributes and internal dispositions such as 'sensitivity', 'altruism' and 'taking care'. But, differently from the previous extracts, we can see here the use of the pronoun 'we'. This pronoun, in the situated context of the research interaction is gendered and becomes 'we as women', being one of that kind of references that are *"hearably gendered, without the speaker's categorical membership being explicitly linguistically produced"* (Jackson, 2001, p.31). By using 'we' these respondents are including themselves in the category and therefore the result is a personal and at the same time a generalised response. In fact, as members of the described category it is implied that they share the same characteristics and are 'sensitive towards problems' and 'born to take care of other humans'.

Note that in extract 5:13 the woman aid worker's answer takes the form of a three-part list. Thinking about motivations women have, she says that we-women 'are more altruistic' (line 3), 'more willing to give dedicate ourselves to helping others' (line 4) and 'braver' (line 5), explaining women's presence in the profession as a consequence of some personality traits women have. After a 2 second pause at line 6, that the interviewer doesn't treat as an opportunity to decide it's her turn to speak, she adds another reason, 'we have more courage' (lines 7-8), reinforcing the list, possibly implying that there are other reasons which could also be mentioned. In fact, three-part lists can function to make relevant a general category of phenomenon of which the three parts produced are exemplars (Jefferson, 1990) and are conventionally treated as strengthening or affirming a broader, overarching position or argument (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998) that in this case could be that women possess some attributes that make them more suitable for the job.

5.2.2 Doing uncertainty

The explanation of the presence of women in the profession based on characteristics women are described as having is produced not only through the use of generalisation as a categorisation practice, but also through other features, as it is possible to note in the following extracts as well as in previous extracts 5:10 ('I guess') and 5:11 ('not sure', 'maybe').

Survey question:	In your opinion, why do many women choose to work in the aid work industry?
Extract 5:14 (answer 88/W):	A more developed sense of altruism probably.
Extract 5:15 (answer 52/W):	It could be a matter of sensitivity and emotional involvement.
Extract 5:16 (answer 29/M):	Maybe women are more sensitive towards aid jobs.

Extract 5:17 (interview 5/W)

1	I/W:	another question I am asking and that I'd like to ask you too
2		is if you've noticed a growth in the number of women in the
		profession?
3		[in the course of time?
4	AW5/W:	[no (.) I can tell you that there are <u>above</u> all women ((laugh))
		((she makes a lists counting all the women aid
		workers encountered in her professional experience))
5	I/W:	Hmhm
6	AW5/W:	and I can't tell you why! (.) I really don't know (.) >I
7		don't know if it is a sensitivity that women have that brings
8		them to love this job< (.) I <u>really</u> don't know (.) anyway
9		women were the majority (2)

Extract 5:18 (interview 44/M)

1	I/W:	hm and in your opinion why do you think a woman
2		chooses to: do this job?
3		(2)
4	AW44/M:	oh:
5		(3)
6		I don't know
7		(2)
8		I don't know but I'm not: I'm not a psychologist
9		neither:: I am a women lover ((laughing)) but for
10		everything else hah hah ((laugh))
11	I/W:	hmhm
12	AW44/M:	for everything else I don't know dunno >probably for a
13		different sensitivity< I see that even in observing the child
14		that is sick and maybe:: attentions that a woman ha::s in
15		this job:: there is always maybe a stronger sensitivity hmm
16		(3)
17		Yes
18		(3)
19		I don't have the answer.

Extract 5:19 (interview 9/W)

1	I/W:	I read some reports saying that there is a growth in the number
2		of women choosing this job (.) in your opinion why?
3		(2)
4	AW9/W:	hm good question
5		(2)
6		Dunno! °maybe a [woman is also° smarter ((laugh))
7	I/W:	[Do you see many women aid workers?
8	AW9/W:	Pardon?
9	I/W:	Do you see many of them?
10		Yes, I mean, in Swaziland for example it was hard to find
11		a man (.) really ((laughing)) an unbelievable situation!

12	I/W:	Hmhm
13	AW9/W:	Why (2) I don't know (.) I don't know if the stereotype perha::ps
14		> I don't know this is a personal interpretation but
15		I don't know if this could correspond to reality< if the stereotype
16		>because I imagine how I saw international aid before leaving,
17		really experiencing it< the international aid stereotype is
18		always linked to hmhm care job that is always linked to the
19		feminine universe
20	I/W:	Hmhm
21	AW9/W:	so I move to a country (.) I help someone to do something and
22		so on (.) this could maybe um attract women more I don't
23		know (.) or then maybe even the fact that umm (2) it is
24		considered a career job
25	I/W:	Yes
26	AW9/W:	that is more achievable for women I don't know (.) than a
27		career that a man could have in an international context (.)
28	I/W:	Hmhm
29	AW9/W:	I don't know it could be (.) that it puts you in relation to
30		European international contexts and so on um (2) in other words
31		it allows you to have a career in this context yes
32	I/W:	Hmhm
33	AW9/W:	anyway a much wider context dunno! Maybe (.) I don't
34		know I'm not a sociologist (.) I have my ideas on how the
35		world is but (3)
36		and I don't know why there is less interest for a man
37		but no (.) anyway dunno I mean the aid work at the end is
38		always a job (3) I use this word but it's not (.) it's not so
39		appropriate (.)
40	I/W:	Hm
41	AW9/W:	anyway it's a care job (.) not only as regards people but
42		I'm thinking about what we deal with (1) water (.) nutrition (.)
43		microcredit (.) environment (.) governance (.)It's in any case
44		taking care of an area an environment a reality that you

| 45 | want to help develop (2) I don't know if this as a topic is closer to |
| 46 | (.) more attuned to females I don't know if it is this that. |

By reading these extracts it is immediately possible to notice that the accounts are not as straightforward as the previous ones. This is because of the amount of uncertainty features adopted by the respondents in the survey as well as in the interviews: the use of 'it could be' (extract 5:15), 'I am not sure' (extract 5:11), 'maybe' (extracts 5:11 and 5:16; extract 5:18, lines 14, 15; extract 5:19, lines 6, 22, 23, 33), 'probably' (extract 5:14; extract 5:18, line 12) and other similar hedging expressions. These expressions of uncertainty, together with speakers' answers formulated as personal opinions ('I guess': extract 5:10; 'is a personal interpretation': extract 5:19, line 14) highlight the sensitive nature of the question and of what they interpret as a request to provide a categorical description. In fact, similar devices allow the speakers to refer to women's internal dispositions and at the same time they make it easier to rebut any contingent critiques on the categorical claims which are made.

Another recurring utterance is 'I don't know' which is widely used in the interviews extracts no. 5:17 – 5:19 (extract 5:17, lines 6, 7, 8; extract 5:18, lines 6, 8, 12; extract 5:19, lines 13, 14, 22-23, 26, 29, 33-34). This utterance together with 'dunno' (extract 5:18, line 12; extract 5:19, line 37) as Potter (1997), Wooffitt and Widdicombe (2006) have argued, signals not a lack of knowledge, but a lack of commitment to the following claims, which are somehow considered sensitive or which may be greeted by the interviewer with a negative response. In these extracts respondents deny they have an idea about the presence of women and display lack of commitment to the claim.

Secondly, in each case denials of knowledge co-occur with claims around possible reasons women have in choosing to work as aid workers. These reasons, once again, are linked to women's internal attributes such as 'sensitivity' or predispositions to 'help someone' or, following the description of aid work as a 'care job', to the typical traditional presence of women in 'care jobs'.

All these features, identified by De Kok & Widdicombe as 'doing not knowing' (2010), suggest that there is something interactionally sensitive about producing claims on the motivations women have, which 'not knowing' is designed to address. These issues could be related to their attempt not to be interpreted as biased or prejudicial when asked to address a question on women.

What is particularly interesting in these extracts is that the action of 'doing not knowing' is not only performed as an introduction to the following claim, but also to the previous

claim/claims and it is used as a 'bracket' to reinforce the speakers' lack of commitment. So we have an introductory denial ('I can't tell you why! I really don't know it', extract 5:17, line 6; 'I don't know', extract 5:18, line 6; 'Dunno!', extract 5:19, line 6) followed by an explanation based on gender categories ('a sensitivity women have' extract 5:17, line 7; 'for a different sensitivity' extract 5:18, line 13; 'a woman is also smarter' extract 5:19, line 6) followed by a conclusive denial ('I really don't know' extract 5:17, line 8; 'I don't have the answer' extract 5:18, line 19; 'I don't know if it is this' extract 5:19, line 46) .

The same action is made emphatic in several additional ways: 1) with the continuous repetition of uncertainty devices, as described above, that renders every single claim asserted by the respondents dubious. This is clearly evident in extract 5:19 where the participant 'does not knowing' for each of the four explanations she gives ('care job is linked to the feminine universe', line 18-19; 'it is considered a career job […] that is more achievable for women', lines 23-26; 'there is less interest for a man' (vedi sopra, nella trascrizione, forse sostituire con 'a man is less interested in'), line 36; 'it's a topic […] more in the style of females', lines 45-46); 2) claims are formulated as hypothesis 'I don't know *if*' (extract 5:17, lines 6-7; extract 5:19, lines 13, 15, 36, 45, 46) and not as beliefs; 3) responses are constructed as personal opinions, with the use of 'this is a personal interpretation' (extract 5:19, line 14), 'I have my ideas' (extract 5:19, line 34), 'I'm thinking' (extract 5:19, line 42) and therefore answers are constructed as contingent with a subjective claim rather than on a factual basis (Latour & Woolgar, 1986); 4) with the use of hedging disclaimers (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975): 'I'm not a psychologist but' (extract 5:18, line 8), 'I'm not a sociologist but' (extract 5:19, line 34). These disclaimers, used by the respondents to underline that they are 'lay people' and therefore that they are not supposed to know how to explain the phenomenon, enable them, again, to diminish their accountability and to minimise the effects of their claims ('for a different sensitivity', extract 5:18, line 12-13; 'is more in the style of females', extract 5:19, line 46) which could otherwise sound biased.

There is a further point I want to note before I move to the next section. In extracts 5:17 - 5:19 participants make use of laughter (extract 5:17, line 4; extract 5:18, line 9-10; extract 5:19, lines 6, 11). Conversation analysts have analysed laughter in several studies (e.g. Glenn, 1995; Haakana, 2001; Jefferson, Sacks & Schegloff, 1987) and laughter is considered a powerful tool in contributing to relationship and identity in talk (Glen, 2010). I argue that respondents in these extracts make a use of laughter which is similar to what Haakana (2002) has suggested about patients laughter when talking to doctors: such laughter can be a marker of the sensitive nature

of their talk, rather than indicating humour or joking per se; this laughter, that the recipient doesn't reciprocate, displays that the activity at hand is delicate.

5.2.3 Doing comparison

So far we have identified the use of generalisation and uncertainty devices as possible ways to answer what is perceived as a sensitive question. We now continue the analysis looking at another recurring feature.

The presence of women in the profession is explained not only by claiming particular attributes, but these attributes are inserted in a comparison. Sometimes the comparison is made implicitly as in extract 5:20 below as well as in a number of previous extracts (5:3 – 5:11), where the attributes are accompanied by the adverb 'more': 'they pay more attention' (extract 5:4), 'they are more keen' (extract 5:5), 'women have more self-control' (extract 5:6), 'more sensitive' (extracts 5:10 and 5:11), 'more altruistic' (extract 5:13), 'more developed sense of altruism' (extract 5:14).

Extract 5:20 (interview 2/W)

1	I/W:	In your opinion why are there more women choosing this job?
2	AW2/W:	well I don't know (.) maybe more::::well what I see and what
3		seems to me is that women are more guided by by motivation
4		(.) sensitivity (.) towards hm: these topics let's say (.) they
5		they have more this idea of effectively helping others and
6		of doing this also for an ethical reason.

In all these extracts category members are not simply associated with specific attributes 'women are motivated, sensitive', but are depicted as 'more guided by motivation, sensitivity' (extract 5:20, lines 3-4). More than whom? The basic rule of the majority comparison always calls for another element, as 'more' conventionally goes together with 'than X'. Even if the second term of comparison is not specified in these answers, following the rule of comparison this implicit 'X' automatically stands for another category, and in this specific case it stands for women's standardised relational pair, that is, 'men'; consequently, the final effect achieved with these short claims is to state that 'we (women) are more sensitive than men'. The avoidance of the explicit use of the gender category 'men' here could be a way to prevent any possible critique arising from describing men as lacking in sensitivity, altruism, bravery and so on.

Other times the comparison is made explicit, as in extracts 5:3 ('more altruistic than men')

and 5:13 ('more than our male colleagues', line 8) as well as in the following three extracts.

Extract 5:21 (interview 107/M)

1	Survey question:	In your opinion, why do many women choose to work
2		in the aid work industry?
3	Answer 107/M:	Because they are more sensitive about people's problems
4		and they are more empathic; I think it's the same
5		reason why there are more women in the social field in
6		Italy. Moreover, men are more linked to their mums, to
7		their homeland, to their usual friends, for them it's difficult
8		to choose a life which is different from what they are used
9		to. Men think about making money, building a family,
10		settling down somewhere.

Extract 5:22 (interview 32/W)

1	Survey question:	In your opinion, why do many women choose to work
2		in the aid work industry?
3	Answer 32/W:	Men are generally more likely to choose a job that can
4		give stability and a good salary, while international
5		development work is generally not stable and is not always
6		well paid. Women are better in the social sciences, have
7		stronger emotional intelligence skills, have more patience
8		and are more creative. These skills are essential in
9		development work.

Extract 5:23 (interview 6/W)

1	I/W:	I read a report made by SISCOS that says that in recent
2		years the number of Italian women has increased considerably
3		(.) from your experiences is this something you've noticed?
4		Have you seen a great number of women?

5	AW6/W:	yes yes yes absolutely (.) absolutely this is really a job for
6		women (.) in the sense that in my opinion as I was telling
7		you (.) exactly as I was telling you (.) there is an aspect
8		linked to the sensitivity of the job itself that leads women
9		to get close to this world and so at the beginning there is
10		this and then there is the more dramatic aspect ((laugh))
11		that is that you earn nothing much and that often you don't
12		have a contractual security:: (.) and this scares little
13		boys a lot(.) while women instead are more .hhhh (2) I
14		don't know(.) I think there is still um (.) we are still held
15		back um (2) the man unlikely does a job where he has zero
16		securities (.) where he has a short term contract (.) I mean
17		a man moves and goes to work abroad only if he has a
18		job contract with ENI >do you know what I
19		mean?< If he has a super contract where they pay
20		assignments 200 dollars a day and he would never do that
21		for 850 euros a month (.) while for a woman it's a matter of
22		sensitivity and ideology if she does it (.) and then there is
23		also _always_ the fact that >sooner or later a woman gets
24		married so there will be somebody providing for her< (.)
25		there is also this ((smiles))
26	I/W:	so in your opinion what could drive a woman to decide to
27		travel or stay away from her country without a good
28		contract low incomes what can be the motivations?
29	AW6/W:	well (.) passion (.) passion and curiosity (.) the desire to
30		knowing and the really (.) _visceral_ closeness to some
31		topics. The desire to find (.) to understand (.) is mostly of
32		women (2) this is a factual data (.) I see it (.) As I've said(.)
33		this is not only for the Italian cooperation but absolutely
34		also for European cooperation in general.

The responses in the extracts above share several features. First, each respondent in giving an explanation for the presence of women in the profession talks about the related category 'men'. So, respondents answer the question referring not only to women's internal characteristics and

predispositions, but also to men's characteristics, predispositions and job preferences. Note that the female aid worker in extract 5:18 even starts her reply mentioning 'men' (line 3) and talks about women only in her second claim (line 6). It is thus possible to infer something about women even when talking about men and vice versa and this is due to the strength of the bond between the categories and the shared knowledge of the recipients that leans on 'difference' discourses.

Second, specific characteristics of the job are described: 'international development work is generally not stable and is not always well paid' (extract 5:22, lines 5-6), 'you earn nothing much and often you don't have a contractual security' (extract 5:23, lines 11-12); and 'skills' that 'are essential in development work': once again 'sensitivity' (extract 4.21, line 7; extract 5:23, lines 8, 22), 'empathy' (extract 5:21, line 4), 'emotional intelligence' and 'patience' (extract 5:22, line 7), 'passion and curiosity' (extract 5:23, line 29). Women are described as having these attributes, therefore they are in a favourable relation with jobs requiring these skills, not only aid work, but the broader 'social field' (extract 5:21). Note that the claim 'it's the same reason why there are more women in the social field in Italy' (lines 4-6) has two effects: first it functions as a reinforcement to the first claim ('they are more sensitive and emphatic', lines 3-4) and makes it more plausible, because it underlines how the described phenomenon is not just an isolated case, but can be tracked in other similar situations; secondly, it is an account that merely appears to be describing the world, but that has a persuasive effect as several authors have pointed out (Potter & Wetherell, 1988; Edwards & Potter, 1992).

Men instead are presented with a list of attributes that are in contrast with the kind of lifestyle aid workers usually live: they are 'more attached to their mums' (extract 5:21, line 6), their 'usual friends' (extract 5:21, line 7) and are more routine-bound (extract 5:21, line 8), needs that are accounted as incompatible with the job at stake. Moreover, men are described as attracted by professions where 'stability and good salary' (extract 5:22, line 4), 'making money' (extract 5:21, lines 8-9) are warranted and aid work is described as lacking these warranties, so men are not likely to choose it, as explained in extract 5:23: 'the man moves and goes to work abroad only if he has […] a super contract where they pay assignments 200 dollars a day and he would never do that for 850 euros a month' (lines 17-21).

The two categories 'women' and 'men' are here constructed as not only having different predispositions and attributes but also as being driven by different motivations in selecting a profession, therefore women are represented as more interested in other rewarding aspects than 'making money' and as choosing this job for 'ideology' (extract 5:23, line 22). A conclusion the reader can infer is related to the classic process of feminisation of jobs: women traditionally

enter the job market when men are absent. In our specific case, the presence of women could also be a consequence of men choosing not to work in the aid industry. In other words, for women it is possible to work as aid workers also thanks to men's lack of interest in the profession due to some of its peculiarities that are described as not compatible with men's attributes.

5.2.4 Doing essentialism

The extracts analysed so far locate the reason for the presence of women in the profession within women themselves: it is because of the general and common sense characteristics disclosed by the participants that women are interested in the job. I want to focus now on two extracts (the first is an extract I've analysed before, the second is a new one) where respondents once again refer to a specific feminine characteristic.

Extract 5:12 (interview 111/W)

1	Survey question:	In your opinion, why do many women choose to work
2		in the aid work industry?
3	Answer 111/W:	Because we were born to take care of other humans.

Extract 5:24 (interview 92/M)

1	Survey question:	In your opinion, why do many women choose to work
2		in the aid work industry?
3	Answer 92/M:	I don't want to sound chauvinist, but I really think women
4		have an innate sense of taking care of others. And what
5		could be better than being an aid worker?

The two respondents' claims underline how the attribute of 'taking care' is an attribute which is 'innate' in women, being one of the 'rights and obligations' that members of a specific category are expected to perform (Watson & Weinberg, 1982). This is a well-known stereotype about traditional gender roles that is widespread across every country: 'women are caregivers', that usually goes along with 'men are breadwinners'. Moreover, not only women are here described as having 'suitable' attributes, but also these attributes are defined 'innate' and therefore characterise gender differences as something that exists 'by nature' in an essentialist and normative way.

What I want to further note here is that even though the respondents make very similar claims 'born to take care of other humans' (extract 5:12, line 3), 'have an innate sense of taking care of others' (extract 5:24, line 4), they build such claims in different ways. In Extract 5:12 the woman aid worker briefly explains the presence of women stating that 'we' as 'women', a category of which she is highlighting to be part of, 'were born' with a predefined goal or duty to reach, that is, to be caregivers. 'Take care of other humans' is not presented as an activity that women could freely decide to do, instead it's described as a prescribed destiny: if someone was born as a female then she has inevitably been assigned the caregiver role. The further implications here are that one of the descriptors of what aid work is is the aim of taking care of people in need, that aid workers are professionals whose goal is to 'take care of other humans', and therefore, once again, the presence of women in this sector is explained as a natural direct consequence of their innate disposition and prefixed role of caregivers.

The respondent of the extract 5:24 built his response in the way of the classic credentialing disclaimer 'I'm not sexist, but . . .' (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Van Dijk, 1997), a "verbal device employed to ward off and defeat in advance doubts and negative typifications which may result from intended conduct" (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975, p.4). In his instance two claims are made: the first is an identity claim that has the effect of actively and explicitly resisting the identity ascription as 'chauvinist'; the second is a substantive and factual claim, that is, a statement that certain attributes, 'innate sense of taking care of others', are true of women.

Disclaimers are used when upcoming (or preceding) stretch of talk is considered somehow problematic, and therefore requires some careful framing (Stokoe & Smithson, 2001); what is possible to conclude here is that for a man aid worker, which is not a member of the category at issue in the question, it seems to be necessary to formulate the claim in a different way than it was for the woman respondent we have just analysed, to deflect criticism or charges of sexism. Moreover, adding a final quote constructed as a rhetorical question 'and what better than being an aid worker?' (lines 4-5) he orients to the self-evidence of the trend, which he is merely describing in his answer.

Thus far I've analysed extracts where participants account for the presence of women in the international aid workforce referring to 'women's natural internal predispositions'. In the next paragraph I will bring to the attention of the reader another kind of account developed by other participants.

5.3 Accounting for the presence of women: rejecting gender differences

After having considered the accounts centred on the use of gender categorisation and related aspects, let us consider now another interesting way of accounting for the presence of women in the international aid work industry.

5.3.1 Rejecting gender differences and claiming similarity

Survey question:	In your opinion, why do many women choose to work in the aid work industry?
Extract 5:25 (answer 64/W):	I cannot think of any difference between men and women in choosing to work as international aid worker. Should there be any?
Extract 5:26 (answer 115/W):	Why is this question specifically asking about women? I would assume they choose it for a wealth of reasons, similarly to men.
Extract 5:27 (answer 3/W):	Because there is no difference at working level between men and women: they have the same expectations and career desires.
Extract 5:28 (answer 98/M):	It's a challenging, amazing, stimulating work, and women are approaching this work in the same way as anyone else.
Extract 5:29 (answer15/W):	I think that the reasons that lead to this choice are probably the same for women and men. It's not a gender issue, but it's a personal life choice..

Extract 5:30 (answer 108/M): No idea. I think gender does not play a role.

Extract 5:31 (answer 120/M):   Don't know. Women or men have their personal reasons!

Interestingly in all these extracts (5:25 – 5:31) respondents treat the question as one about gender differences, rather than a question about the job, the employees or the changing trend presented beforehand. Even though in the survey question we are not mentioning the word 'difference', difference appears to be connected with the gender category 'women', as it is sufficient to obtain similar responses.

Extracts 5:25 and 5:26 share the same structure; in both there is a preface: 'I cannot think of' (extract 5:25), 'I would assume' (extract 5:26), that is followed by a claim were gender categorisation explanations based on difference are refused ('any difference between men and women' extract 5:25) and similarity between gender categories is asserted ('similarly to men' extract 5:26). Moreover, in both answers there is a switch, that is, respondents take on the interviewer role, asking questions to the researcher: 'Should there be any?' (extract 5:25), 'Why is this question specifically asking about women?' (extract 5:26). This formulation adds more strength to the previous/following claim, with the effect of challenging the gender category invoked by the use of the word 'women' in the survey question. Furthermore, the interrogative phrase is constructed in a rhetorical way portraying how the survey question is asking something that is not considered to be obvious by the respondents.

At the same time, the use of the combination of modal verbs 'cannot', 'would' and opinion verbs 'think', 'assume' (extract 5:25; extract 5:26), instead of other possible denials such as for instance 'there is no difference at all', are pointing out in one case, to the impossibility of the respondent of knowing about the reasons of the presence of women, and in the other, to the production of a personal opinion and not of an objective description of the world. Therefore, the final effect achieved is in both cases a 'stake inoculation' (Potter, 1997), which functions in a similar fashion as in the medical sense (to prevent something threatening from occurring in the future) and in these specific extracts serves to prevent from any potential criticism arising from providing answers that avoid gender distinction, precisely because the claims are constructed as personal point of views.

Similar to the previous extracts, extracts 5:27 – 5:31 deny the relevance of gender in aid work: the respondents state that 'there is no difference between men and women' (extract 5:27) and that 'it's not a gender issue' (extract 5:29) because 'gender does not play a role' (extract 5:30), 'women or men' doesn't make a difference (extract 5:31); moreover, they claim similarity

between the gender categories, highlighting that the motivations of choosing this kind of job are the same since 'they have the same expectations and career desires' (extract 5:27), 'women are approaching this work in the same way as anyone else' (extract 5:28), 'the reasons that lead to this choice are probably the same for women and men' (extract 5:29). Note that in extract 5:28 the participant's use of a broader and all-inclusive category such as 'anyone else' instead of 'men' is another way of avoiding employing gender categorisation to explain the trend.

'No difference' and 'the same' orient to responses that refuse the differentiation implicit in gender categorisation and point out 'equality' and 'common human nature' to counterbalance. At the same time, the motivations are linked to positive and appealing features of the work stated in the three part list (Jefferson, 1990) 'challenging, amazing, stimulating' (extract 5:28), or to 'a personal life choice' (extract 5:29) and to 'personal reasons!' (extract 5:31), once more refusing the gender category as explicative of the trend and invoking individual differences.

See now how one of the participants explicitly rejects the relevance of gender during the interview interaction. In extract 5:32 we are in the point of the interview where the participant is asked about possible motivations women have in choosing to work as international aid workers; the participant, earlier on in the interview, had stated that in the NGO she is working for the majority of the employees are women.

Extract 5:32 (interview 20/W)

1	I/W:	and in respect to gender (.) you were telling me that here
2		you are more women?
3	AW20/W:	yes mainly women (.)
4	I/W:	Hm
5		(2)
6	AW20/W:	that's why I was telling you (2) the future of aid is pink I
7		think it is ((laughs)) but even the people I know that are
8		doing my job:: (.) if I have to make an estimate the
9		majority are:: [are women
10	I/W:	[and in your opinion why?
11	AW20/W:	.hhhh
12		(3)
13		well::
14		(2)

15		I don't know! Well I mean I never thought about it um
16		I've never considered the issue
17	I/W:	hm
18	AW20/W:	I remember that the year I left for Zambia with X ((INGO))
19		they told me *it's strange* because that year unexpectedly we
20		were like 50/50 >actually maybe more boys than girls< and
21		they told me *eh:: usually* (.) *it's the opposite* (.) um
22		(2)
23		um why? why?
24		(3)
25		um I don't know well listen (.) I'm not very keen in doing
26		discours[es
27	I/W:	[yes?
28	AW20/W:	gender generalisations (.) generally men are like this and
29		women are like that (.) because to me they look like a little
30		bit (3) dunno prejud-( ) yes generalisations prejudices
31		I mean (2) I look more at the person
32	I/W:	hmhm
33	AW20/W:	than at the gender or (.) because then you know you could
34		say because women maybe have a different sensitivity
35	I/W:	hmhm
36	AW20/W:	>but I don't even think it's true< because:: I have a lot of:
37		friends ((male)) that: um (.) maybe they have another kind
38		of job but that are very sensitive towards these kind
39		of things
40	I/W:	right
41	AW20/W:	and they are very committed to providing help (.) in
42		different contexts from charity or in long-distance adoption
43		of children with me

The interviewer is introducing the question by linking it with something previously mentioned by the participant (lines 1-2); the woman aid worker claims that 'the future of aid is pink' (line 6) and through a metaphor ('pink', a colour in place of a category 'women') describes a remarkable presence of women in the aid work industry; she reinforces this claim providing

evidence: this is not simply an opinion, but is based on factual observation ('even the people I know that are doing my job', lines 7-8). At line 10 we can see an overlap with the interviewer's question on motivations, that is followed by an in-breath (line 11), two pauses (lines 12, 14) and a disclaim of knowledge 'I don't know' (line 15). The participant expands her answer and says she 'never thought about it' (line 15) and that she 'never considered the issue' (line 16). Note that the word issue (in Italian: problema) characterises the question as one asking something potentially problematic and the repetition of 'never' is an extreme case formulation - ECF (Pomerantz, 1986) and it is used to give maximum strength to the claims. Pomerantz pointed out that ECFs are used especially when faced with a sceptical audience. As Edwards (2000) has pointed out, ECFs are used to highlight a point, and in so doing, can be taken to display the speaker's investment in the point.

Following this, there is a distanced footing (Potter, 1996): the speaker is merely reporting someone else's story (lines 18-21), so she is not held accountable for claims that are only reported ('it's strange', line 19; 'usually it's the opposite', line 21).

Other pauses follow (lines 22, 24) and her attempt to close the conversation refusing gender categorisations ('listen, I'm not very keen in doing discourses, gender generalisations', lines 25-28) and claiming individual differences ('I look more at the person', line 31). Note the same turn, self-initiated repair (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks, 1977) at line 30 'prejud- (   ) yes generalisations prejudices': these specific forms of repair come into view in the same turn that contains the 'source of trouble', that is, "some systemic or interactional issue which the repair can be understood to deal with" (Schegloff, 2013, p.42). The participant cutsoff the word prejudice, inserting a neutral word 'generalisations' before she states 'prejudices', that seems to be a problematic word to say. Thus, she equals the 'trouble-source' word with a less problematic one.

Interestingly she then mentions the most cited attribute linked to women used by other respondents in the first part of the chapter, 'sensitivity' (line 34) to claim for similarity instead of difference: in fact, she makes examples of sensitive male friends ('I have a lot of friends […] very much sensitive', lines 36 -43) to evidence how answering referring to women's sensitivity is, in her opinion, biased, and she stresses her point making ECFs ('a lot of', line 36; 'very much', line 38; 'a lot', line 41).

A final observation I want to make on this extract is that the responses are delayed: there are 2 seconds and 3 seconds pauses in lines 5, 6, 12,14, 22, 24, 30, 31;'well' utterances in lines 13 and 15; and, 'um' utterances in lines 15, 21, 23, 25, 37.

Delays are known features of dispreferred responses (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) and when

a delay occurs in answers to specific questions it typically suggests that the question is in some way problematic; therefore this is another evidence for the conclusion that it is considered challenging to make use of gender categories.

5.3.2 Shifting from the category to the personal

Another interesting way of addressing the question is provided by the next three extracts.

Extract 5:33 (answer 42/M)

1	Survey question:	In your opinion, why do many women choose to work
2		in the aid work industry?
3	Answer 42/M:	I don't know. I think my own motivations. Do something
		good for the most vulnerable.

Extract 5:34 (interview 21/W)

1	I/W:	and why in your opinion are women choosing this
2		profession? What drives them?
3	AW21/W:	In my opinion the same reason men have (.) I can
4		speak for myself (.) well always for this idea of helping
5		(.) of wanting to use one's expertise (.) time (.) energies
6		for something that has a meaning (.) I don't know a
7		meaning a little bit higher than a job has right? >Because
8		then< when you are doing aid like they say the boundaries
9		between your professional and private life become very
10		blurred (.)
11	I/W:	hm
12	AW21/W:	because in the end you end up with (.) well this job
13		becomes your life right? And your private life too (.) I
14		don't know (.) for women in general I don't know (.) in
15		my opinion there is this (.) passion that drives you to
16		choose it but I don't know what to say in respect to women.

Extract 5:35 (interview 12/W)

1	I/W:	and in your opinion why:? What could draw a young
2		woman, now, to the aid sector?
3		(3)
4	AW12/W:	Well I don't know I think the same things that drew me
5		that you see (2) um I don't know apart from you feel feel
6		useful °and there is no doubt that that has a big influence°
7		but eh (5) because dunno you have have it looks like it's
8		possible to do something more with less you feel more
9		fulfilled I don't know ( ) to do the same things in Italy
10		you'd need more means and much more ( )
11		(3)
12		I don't know why a woman or a man
13		(4)
14		I don't understand the difference because the reason to
15		leave is the same for everybody I think (.)
16	I/W:	[hm
17	AW12/W:	[this mixture between adventure (.) desire of doing goo::d
18		(.) feeling self-fulfilled (.) yes the continuous unforeseen
19		that is exciting :::
20		(2)
21		I don't don't know why there could be a difference
22		between men and women.

In these extracts, respondents once again resist gender differences and claim for similarity, and construct their accounts in a way that is similar to the previous ones; in fact they interpret the question as one on gender differences and refuse to make gender categorisation; the explanations they offer are marked as uncertain and as personal opinions (see following analysis) and are characterised by delays (see pauses in extract 5:35, at lines 3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 20). What is new in these extracts is that they reject gender categorisation through personalisation, that is, they move from generalisation to particularisation (Billig, 1985) referring to their personal experience, and by making their responses personal, not abstract nor generalised. As Billig (1985, p.82) says, "particularisation is the opposite process to categorisation, that is, a process by which an

individual is distinguished from a general category, sometimes treated as a special case". In this way, even if respondents don't provide an explanation of the trend they can 'complete the task' of answering an interview question, citing their private motivations.

See in detail how they carry out all these actions. First of all, respondents 'do not knowing' (De Kok & Widdicombe, 2010), that is, they display lack of commitment to their claims using 'I don't know' (extract 5:33, line 3; extract 5:34, lines 6, 14, 16; extract 5:35, lines 4, 5, 9, 12, 21) and 'dunno' (extract 5:35, line 7). Secondly, their answers are shaped as opinions and not as descriptions of factual data. In fact they use opinion verbs such as 'I think' (extract 5:33, line 3; extract 5:35, line 4, 15) or utterances such as 'in my opinion' (extract 5:34, line 3, 15; extract 5:35, lines 4, 5, 9, 12, 21) that make their claims dependent on the speaker's cognition of facts about the world, and therefore less objectionable and uncertain (this is also evident in extract 5:35, line 14 'I don't understand'). Thirdly, they refuse gender categorisations ('for women in general I don't know', extract 5:34, line 14; 'I don't know what to say in respect to women', extract 5:34, line 16; 'I don't know why a woman or a man', extract 5:35, line 12; 'I don't know why there could be a difference between men and women', extract 5:35, lines 21-22) and claim similarity ('the same reason men have', extract 5:34, line 3; 'the reason to leave is the same for everybody', extract 5:35, lines 14-15) through individualisation ('my own motivations', extract 5:33, line 3; 'I can speak for myself', extract 5:34, lines 3-4; 'the same things that drew me', extract 5:35, line 4) and they explain their personal motivations. 'Doing something for the most vulnerable' (extract 5:33, lines 2-3), 'the idea of helping' (extract 5:34, line 4), doing 'something that has a meaning […] higher than a job has' (extract 5:34, lines 6-7), 'passion' (extract 5:34, line 15), feeling 'useful' (extract 5:35, line 6), being able 'to do something more with less' (extract 5:35, lines 8-9), being attracted by some peculiarities of the job 'mixture between adventure, desire of doing good' (extract 5:35, line 17) and by the feelings that it promotes 'self-fulfilment' and excitement for the 'continuous unforeseen' (extract 5:35, lines 18-19). All these motivations are in line with the reasons identified in the extracts of the previous paragraphs, but in these extracts they are portrayed as appealing for both genders and not as directly associated with women's predispositions, traits or desires.

Another interesting use of personalisation to avoid gender categorisations is the following one.

Extract 5:36 (answer 94/W)

```
1   Survey question:      In your opinion, why do many women choose to work
2                          in the aid work industry?
3   Answer 94/W:          Well, I'm not sure about it. Maybe just by chance? I
4                          strongly believe that what I'm doing is because of me not
5                          because of a gender issue.
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First of all, the extract starts with 'Well', the Italian 'Mah', a dubitative particle that has the effect of preparing the recipient to what will be an uncertain answer. The use of 'maybe' and the formulation of the second part of the answer as a question, result in a claim that appears a 'made-in-the-moment'one. The effect achieved is that this is a question on which the respondent doesn't have a pre-existing opinion, but it is something on which she has been asked to think about for the first time. The use of 'me' in the final part of the answer shifts from the general category to the personal experience of the respondent: the following claim is no more a dubitative one, as she 'strongly believes' that the reason why she is working as an aid worker ('I'm doing it', line 4) is related to her as an individual ('it's because of me', line 4) and not to any other possible reason related to the fact of being a woman ('not because of a gender issue', line 5). Note that the respondent is not answering the survey question, but only claiming the irrelevance of gender.

5.3.3 Avoiding answering

A number of participants refuse to answer the question producing very brief replies reported below: 'I don't know' (answers: 21/M; 24/W; 43/M; 46/M; 47/M; 58/W; 60/W; 96/W; 123/W); 'I really don't know' (answers: 22/M; 44/M); 'I have no idea' (answers: 11/M; 78/W); 'not sure' (answer: 7/W); 'why not?' (answer: 19/W).

Utterances disclaiming knowledge have been addressed in a range of ways in the discourse-analytic and conversation-analytic literature (Drew 1992; Potter 1996b). The main argument pursued in these studies is that similar utterances should not simply be treated cognitively as literal indications that the speaker doesn't know, or as a lack of knowledge or a mental state, but they should be considered in the context of talk-in-interaction. So, in the sequential places in which they are produced in our extracts, 'I don't know' is a practice for resisting the trajectory of action launched by the question (Hutchby, 2002; Weatherall, 2011),

they are used to avoid answering and to close down the topic[34], once again rejecting gender explanations.

5.4 Summary and Discussion

In this chapter I have presented the analysis of a set of accounts collected from the participants concerning the presence of women employees in the international aid and humanitarian industry. My goal in analysing these accounts was to reveal how gender common sense is constructed, challenged and maintained, how it is realised and made morally accountable by aid workers, professionals that I argue are undergoing a feminisation of their workforce. As Wetherell, Stiven and Potter noted, these patterns of accounting or sense-making are "one crucial facet of the reproduction of a labour market stratified by gender" (1987, p.59), therefore are of great interest to a social psychologist interested in gender studies.

The question, that focused on possible motivations women have in choosing their job, generated different types of account, among which the two presented were the most recurrent in the data and the most interesting from an analytical point of view.

In the first accounts analysed, the category 'women' was linked to some attributes described as internal predispositions that members of the category possess, and that in general all women have: a set of characteristics, abilities, preferences, traits, temperaments, in other words, a fixed personality that is attributed to 'women' as a monolithic category, seen as stable across situations and time. They are common sense stereotypes on women that, according to the extracts presented above but also to other survey answers, can be described as 'sensitivity', 'protective instinct', 'sense of altruism', 'ethical commitment', 'self-control', 'multi-tasking ability', 'resistance', 'flexibility', 'adaptability'. These are described as a priori requirements people of the category 'woman' have and could be therefore understood as Sacks' 'natural predicates' (1972), characteristics that members of a particular category are supposed to share.

In some cases then, they are presented as "unalterable facts, appealing to a biological inevitability or the nature of things" (Wetherell, Stiven & Potter, 1987, p.62), referring to an essentialist conception of gender categories.

These dispositional claims constructed the reasons for the presence of women in the aid work industry within women themselves and not in a complexity of reasons that include also various external factors (for instance 'lack of job possibilities in the home countries' or

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[34] I don't mean to suggest that the respondents are 'pretending' not to know; I'm not interested in whether their statements are 'true' or not, but I'm fascinated by the action carried out in the interaction.

'international organisation promoting equal opportunities', as answered by a few other participants). At the same time the attributes cited aren't merely random characteristics, but specific skills required to do the job and that put women in a positive position within the profession. They constructed women as suited to aid work and to 'care jobs' or 'the social sector' in general, and this can be considered one critical aspect of the person-organisation fit described by Dick and Nadin (2006, p.483) as a "taken-for-granted process [that] … reproduc[es] inequalities", because it reinforces the idea that women (and men) are naturally suited (or not) to certain professions and offers no space for organisational and social change. Such accounts rely on gender differences as explicative of the distribution of women and men in the profession, and construct women as having 'naturally' something more than men to be aid workers.

In the second part of the chapter I have presented competing accounts where the relevance of gender was denied and similarity and sameness were claimed. Women and men were portrayed as having the 'same expectations and career desires' and gender was explicitly addressed and refused as something that could in any case be related to the presence of women in the workforce ('it's not a gender issue', 'gender doesn't play a role'). Other accounts negated gender influence and, starting from one's own experience, concentrated on explanations based on personalisation ('my own motivations', 'I can speak for myself', 'the same things that drew me'). Social change was explained moving from generalisation and categorisation (that, as we saw, ascribed the responsibility for what is happening in the profession to women) to particularisation (that exonerated participants from having to refer to the category, but that at the same time prevented them from not to answering the question). In this way the claims produced were less objectionable, because they were not factual descriptions, but 'merely' individual 'true'[35] experiences. This allowed the participants to extend the same motivations to all aid workers, making a broader category in which members appear to be guided by 'the same' reasons.

When citing 'women', the question elicited a categorical answer and, in most of the extracts analysed above, it was treated as something to "handle with care" during the interaction. In fact respondents made use of a quantity of devices that are commonly utilised in dealing with sensitive and problematic questions. What is problematic is to sound biased, prejudiced or sexist when talking about women. As some authors have argued, there exists a 'cultural norm against

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[35] Once again I am not interested in knowing the 'true' experiences of the participants, but only in analysing how they address the question during the interaction.

prejudice' (Barker, 1981; Van Dijk, 1984; Billig, 1988); our participants were conforming to the norm and were attempting to disclaim a prejudiced identity. Remember that they were answering a survey or an interview conducted by a social psychologist, an academic, and almost certainly a feminist (from the participants' perspective) woman. Moreover, they work in an environment that claims to be committed to gender equality and that these explanations are always constructed and designed for specific occasions (Antaki, 1988). They addressed the issue with a number of devices: referring to women as a distanced category (with the use of impersonal and neutral terms and with brief claims); building uncertain answers (doing not knowing, making hypothesis, giving personal opinions, using hedging disclaimers in their claims); making comparisons (that enable to talk about one of the two categories in relation to the other and that orient to differences without mentioning the word 'difference'); moving from the category to the personal; disclaiming knowledge of causes. These means allowed them to defensively maintain a positive identity in two ways: by mitigating their claims based on gender differences or by explicitly refusing gender differences in their claims.

Furthemore it was possible to observe how, even though the extracts are derived from different sources (online surveys, face to face interviews, Skype interviews) they share similarities, both in the content of *what* is said and in *how* it is said. As the reader will have noticed, in the extracts from the interviews the interviewer interaction is minimal, consisting in only one or two initial questions, followed by 'hmhm' feedbacks. Nonetheless these feedbacks orient the participants to continue the conversation and to try to give a more articulated answer. I therefore argue that it is the structure of the question itself that, referring to women, elicits such answers irrespective of the source.

The results presented are in line with previous studies on gender and employment opportunities (Wetherell, Stiven & Potter, 1987; Marshall & Wetherell, 1989; Gill, 1993) where two coexisting ideologies of gender (Billig et al., 1988) were found: a 'differentiating' ideology where women and men are considered essentially different ('traditional' positions, identified with gender-based generalisation) and a 'non-differentiating' ideology where gender makes no difference and women and men are considered basically similar ('non-traditional' positions, identified with discourses of 'common human nature' and 'individual difference'). These notions represent a common feature of talk about men and women.

Differently from other studies on occupational segregation along gendered lines where

women are underrepresented, in the occupational sector addressed by my study women are becoming the majority of the employees. Despite women being more and more present in this workforce, it is always problematic to give explanations on the motivations they have. I argue this is because in aid workers' discourses, professionals that are working for organisations that put 'equality' as one of the organisational culture values, talking about women's motivations and qualities could be interpreted as benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick & Fiske, 2011; Glick et al., 2000), and therefore it is something that should be avoided.

It seems to me that even though organisations claim to be gender-oriented, it feels like their employees don't have the basis (theoretical background) to understand that gender equality does not mean that "we are all the same", but that even though all individuals (intergroup and intragroup) are different and unique, they have equal rights. In the extracts presented and in my wider corpus of data I have found no mentioning of the concept of 'diversity' (which encompasses the understanding that each individual is unique and recognises our individual differences) even though in the organisation this is a concept in use and often a goal to reach (UNHCR, 2013). Only 'difference' (that when used is mitigated by uncertainty and lack of commitment, or explicitly denied) and sameness (a politically correct notion) are referred to.

6 The negotiation of gender identity for women aid workers in the field: between discrimination and privilege

In this chapter I will present the third study. I will conduct a sequential Membership Categorisation Analysis of how women aid workers negotiate their gender identity in the field. I will analyse how gender as an identity category is brought into the interaction as something relevant to the aid worker's experience in the field and how gender intersects and enmeshes with other identity categories such as age, skin colour, ethnicity and professional role. Furthermore, I will examine how, during the research interaction, female participants related their gender identity both to challenges and to positive outcomes. I will first present how the female identity was linked to security and risk, and then how the same identity category was linked to job difficulties, such as gaining credibility within the workplace. I will then describe how participants talked about gender intertwining it with other relevant identity categories, and I will end the analysis showing how this intersectionality was linked with power and privilege. I will end the chapter with the discussion of how the devices and conversational features employed in the discursive interaction allowed participants to voice sensitive issues maintaining a positive professional identity.

6.1 "Doing gender" talking about security and risk

In the first three extracts below, taken from interviews between a female interviewer and female aid workers, interesting categorical formulations occur that link security issues and risk with gender.

Extract 6:1 (interview 9/W)

1	I/W:	Listen (.) I was also interested in this (.) in respect to
2		security in your experiences is this something you've
3		thought about?
4	AW9/W:	like well from a personal security point of view
5		we had some dogs (.) we have guard dogs like
6	I/W:	hm
7	AW9/W:	at the office a real guard=

8	I/W:	=yes
9	AW9/W:	a person (.) at home we had dogs (.) probably
10		I wouldn't have lived in that house without dogs
11	I/W:	hm
12	AW9/W:	well I wouldn't have made it to live without dogs (.) I
13		wouldn't have felt safe (.) because anyway we were the
14		only two whites ((female)) in town
15	I/W:	right
16	AW9/W:	so (1) you ((sing.)) always feel a little::: (2) dunno (.)
17		I'm not thinking about the Swazis I'm not scared of the
18		Swazi who comes inside, let's say, and rapes me?
19	I/W:	right
20	AW9/W:	but that anyway he wants I mean he knows that there is
21		[the computer the mobile
22	I/W:	[yes yes
23	AW9/W:	the one that gives it a go then you never know when
24		someone's in the house (.) so: it's more that (.)
25	I/W:	hm

Extract 6:2 (interview 14/W)

1	I/W:	Have you ever found yourself in a risky situation?
		((*Respondent starts describing one specific unpleasant episode that "didn't end up badly" (an immigration official asked her ID and wanted a bribe) and then she describes the following situation*))
2	AW14/W:	well in Morocco sometimes I was insulted by some taxi
3		drivers like that (3)
4	I/W:	mhm
5	AW14/W:	but because well there is a little the idea that the the
6		Western ((fem.)) is a bit easy (.) especially when she goes
7		out at night so maybe if I took taxis late it happened to me
8		a number of times tha:::t the taxi drive::rs were a bit

9		rud -(e) they had been a bit rude but then no actually
10		nothing never happened to me.
11	I/W:	well other aid workers ((fem.)) told me a bit about this
12		situation of being wome::n Western white in these
13		countries (.) did something happen to you in relation to
14		this?
15	AW14/W:	Um well in Moro-(cco) in Morocco especially also
16		because in Morocco I was there on my own (2)
17		and eh effectively in the street every ten seconds they
18		have to tell you something so at the beginning you put up
19		with it but then after two years actually °sometimes I
20		would say something back° ((laugh))
21	I/W:	mmhm
22	AW14/W:	it's a bit tough because really at every at every corner
23		if there is someone ((masc.)) he has to say something to
24		you and then I don't know small incidents like when
25		I would pay for something and they gave the change to my
26		friend ((masc.)) who was a man and actually these
27		things with taxi drivers who would call me ((laugh)) a
28		prostitute like that because (.) I didn't want to pay what I
29		thought was an unfair rate (.) um or the guys who would
30		hit on you immediately (.) like that because maybe
31		they took for granted that it was normal for us white
32		people to accept their advances immediately (.)

Extract 6:3 (interview 19/W)

1	I/W:	Listen (.) other aid workers told me a bit about the
2		problems of being a woman (.) white (.) maybe young too
3		in these countries I wanted to ask you how is the
4		situation there?
		((Respondent makes an introduction explaining the history
		of the country she is working in, talking about the "strong

		discrimination between the group of whites towards the Andean people"; then she starts answering the question in a personal way))
5	AW19/W:	in this context for me being a woman and being a foreigner
6		I must say the truth never represented a (.) a very big
7		difficulty:: in fact (.) often being a foreigner opened
8		more:: (.) more doors to me
9	I/W:	mmhm
10	AW19/W:	yes (.)eh it is surely different though in the rural areas(.) no
11		doubt (.) eh being foreigner and a woman made it difficult
12		on a security level yes (.)
13	I/W:	mhm
14	AW19/W:	yes that I mean that we:::ll (2) °one is more afraid° and is
15		more afraid eve::n um well (.) I was telling you that in
16		five years nothing ever happened to me but (.) it is also
17		one of the reasons why I don't don't don't see myself
18		living here:: in °Peru in Lima° eh forever ha ha ((laugh))
19		>I mean I don't see myself here in 10 years < .hhh nothing
20		ever happened to me but I never go out with a credit card I
21		never go out with big earri:ngs I never well I've been
22		wearing a pla(h)sti(h)c watch for five years I never go out
23		with a branded handbag I always go out with a canvas
24		handbag (.) [so
25	I/W:	[mmhm
26	AW19/W:	[I'm always <very very very careful> (.) if I wanted eh:::
27		(.) <to wear the earrings that I want to wear (.) to go around
28		like in Italy with my credit car-(d) a:::nd <the fact of being
29		a woman surely puts me in a more uncomfortable position
30		you know (.) then here when they steal usually they are in
31		small groups of three or four usually they are men eh:: or
32		when (.) you take a taxi (.) often from the car door
33		two or three others get on and they are men (.) it could be
34		that not only they would steal from you but they would

35		also do something else I mean [my fear
36	I/W:	[mmhm
37	AW19/W:	[is this (.) because I don't give
38		a damn if they steal from me (.) as long as they don't do
39		something else to me (.) so <being a woman> gives me a
40		harder time but it would be also I mean it would be the
41		same in Italy here the chance of (.) being robbed or
42		assaulted >etcetera etcetera< °is more is more° is higher
43		because you are a foreigner ((fem.)) (.) no doubt (.)

There is a first general point I want to make about the three Extracts above. They are not portraying aspects of the aid worker's job (their professional-public lives) but aspects of the respondents' everyday lives in the countries of mission (their personal-private lives). As we saw in the first chapter and from what participants reported in this research ('the boundaries between your professional and private life becomes very blurred', extract 5:35, lines 8-10), these two dimensions are extremely connected in the lives of aid workers and therefore should be both considered of academic interest. There are other several noteworthy points I want to make, that are related to the content of what is said through categorical work, to the actions carried out and to the devices used for doing these actions.

6.1.1 Linking gender and security through categorical practices

The first points I want to make are on the categorical practices carried out in the fragments presented above. The participants and the interviewer are making gender relevant and potentially problematic in talking about security and risky situations. This is done by claiming the importance of certain identity categories and of their interrelation in their experiences in the international aid industry. In particular the gender category 'woman', combined with other salient categories 'white', 'Western', 'foreigner' is constructed as a potential risk factor. I will now show in more details how this develops through the extracts.

In Extract 6:1 we join the interviewer and a woman aid worker's conversation on security. Even if the question is a personal one ('your experiences', line 2), at the start of her response the participant uses the plural pronoun 'we' (line 5) and addresses 'personal security' as a matter of security regulations the organisation she works for provides to its employees ('we have guard dogs…at home', lines 5 and 9; a security guard, 'at the office a real guard', line 7). In this case 'we' is gender neutral, because we aren't given any other information about the people she is

referring to (not even how many). She starts talking about security in personal terms only from line 10 when she switches from the plural 'we' to the singular 'I'. In her three following claims 'I wouldn't have lived without dogs' (line 10), 'I wouldn't have made it to live without dogs' (line 12) and 'I wouldn't have felt safe' (line 13) she gradually increases the amount of information revealed and the explanation offered. Her categorical account of the third claim follows: 'we were the only two whites in town' (line 13-14) where her self-categorisation as a white woman is linked to personal security threats. Note that in this specific interaction 'white' and female (the feminine is in the original Italian transcript 'bianche') is a category-based plausible reason for 'not feeling safe' and functions as a clarification, not merely as a description of the situation. Similarly, in Extract 6:2 we see how the participant spontaneously builds the identity categories 'female' (the feminine is in the original transcript 'la l'Occidentale/the Westerner') and 'Western' as explanations for a risky situation that happened to her ('Have you ever found yourself in a risky situation?', line 1). She claims that in Morocco she 'was insulted by some taxi drivers' (lines 2-3) and offers as a reason for that 'the idea that the Westerner is a bit easy'. In this account her self-categorisation as a Western woman and the local perception ('in Morocco', line 2; 'the idea', line 5) around it (that she then narrows in 'Western woman that goes out at night', lines 6-7) are constructed as potentially problematic. Moving to Extract 6:3, the participant claims that 'being a foreigner and a woman' (line 11) 'made it difficult for her on a security level' (lines 11-12). She makes relevant first of all her membership to the category 'foreigner' (which is a broader and a more neutral category than 'Western' or 'white', that respectively refer to North-South power relations and to skin colour power relations) and then she mentions her gender membership; making no reference to her age, even though this was mentioned in the question ('being a woman white maybe young too', line 2), she implicitly denies its relevance in her experience. She states that being a foreigner and a woman make her 'more afraid' (lines 14-15) and 'always very careful' (line 26). Later on in the same fragment she re-marks her gender category membership as problematic, claiming that 'the fact of being a woman surely puts me in a more uncomfortable position' (lines 28-29) and 'being a woman gives me a harder time' (lines 39-40).

Some survey respondents also linked gender and security in their answers to the question presented below.

| Survey question: | Has being a woman[36] been an obstacle in any situation? |

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[36] Note that only 13% of men recognized that their gender identity could represent an obstacle vs a 54% of women respondents.

Extract 6:4 (answer 2/W):   Being a woman has meant that I've had to be more careful about travelling in terms of sexual security and safety.

Extract 6:5 (answer 9/W):   Above all in everyday life, not within the professional environment. Unfortunately sometimes it's less safe than other times. It's nothing specific, it's just your daily life and probably the perception of physical weakness doesn't help.

Extract 6:6 (answer 51/W):   Women face a higher risk of sexual violence/harassment.

In Extracts 6:4 - 6:6 participants orient to the relevance of their gender identity and explicitly relate it with security and safety. So being a woman is constructed as a potential risk ('of sexual security and safety', extract 6:4; 'is less safe', extract 6:5) or as a 'factor' that increases the risk ('a higher risk', extract 6:6) and as a consequence, women 'have to be more careful' (6:4). Such risk is played down by making it specific; in fact it is described as happening 'sometimes' (extract 6:5) in 'your everyday life' (extract 6:5) or while travelling (6:4) and 'not within the professional environment' (extract 6:5). Note that only in a couple of extracts we are given the explicit description of the threats: sexual violence/harassment (extract 6:6), sexual security and safety (extract 6:4). Across other extracts, recipients can infer that these are the risks women aid workers could run into thanks to categorical work. I will now give an instance of what I mean by this. Going back to Extract 6:3, the participant doesn't directly mention the risk of sexual violence, but we can suppose that she is referring to it from the categorical practice and the inferences we can derive from it. In fact, in her account she makes explicit gender categorisations ('usually they are men', lines 31, 33) and an indirect nationality categorisation ('here', line 30; 'you are a foreigner', line 43) so we can understand that the men she is referring to are locals; she connects specific actions to these categories ('when they steal', 'they are in small groups of three or four', lines 30-31) and undefined activities ('they would also do something else', line 35; 'as long as they don't do something else to me', lines 38-39; 'etcetera

etcetera', line 42) that due to shared knowledge can be heard as 'this could end up in a sexual assault'.

In fact, according to Sacks' 'viewer's maxim':

> …if an activity can be seen (or heard) as being done by a member of a category to which it is bound then see it that way…seeing what can explain why. There is no need to look any further. The available explanation is the explanation. (Hester, 2000, p.204)

The same pattern can be observed in Extract 6:1 and 6:2. With the disclaimer 'I'm not scared of the Swazi that comes inside and rapes me' (extract 6:1, lines 17-18) the interviewee takes the gender category 'male' (in the original Italian transcript 'lo Swazi', 'gli Swazi', lines 17-18; 'quello/the one', line 23; 'uno/one', line 23; 'he', line 20), the nationality category 'Swazi' (lines 17, 18) and connects it to some activities ('comes inside', line 18; 'he knows that there is the computer the mobile', lines 20-21). There is a double inference the reader can make here from the occasioned categorical work: the first one is that the 'Swazi man' could be a potential robber; the second one is that this generic 'he' could also be an 'opportunistic rapist', that, as is reported in the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNSS, 2006, p.25) guidelines for women, is the rapist that 'carries out the assault during the commission of another crime, e.g., a robbery'.

Continuing with Extract 6:2, in line 22 we can see how the interviewee describes more in detail 'a bit tough' situation she experienced in Morocco. She constructs the wide and generalized category Moroccan men that includes 'taxi drivers' (lines 3, 8, 27), 'guys' (line 29), the undefined 'someone' (line 23, masculine in the original transcript 'qualcuno'), the generic 'they' (lines 17, 30), the non-specific 'he' (line 23) and bounds some attributes and activities to it: insulting (line 2), 'a bit rude' (lines 8, 9), 'have to tell you something/he has to say something to you' (lines 18, 23-24), 'call me a prostitute' (27-28), 'would hit on you' (line 30). Such activities and attributes are normatively linked to the category 'sexual harassment', in the way of the reference process described by Wowk:

> Reference can be made to a particular membership category by outlining the activities or attributes conventionally tied to it without the category itself being explicitly mentioned. This process works well in reverse too, so that we can make inferences about people and their behaviour on the basis of the membership categorisation used to identify them. (Wowk, 1985, p.76)

In all three extracts then, by employing particular category-predicate conjunctions, the participants recruit the culturally familiar notion that men perpetrate violence (physical as in rape

and psychological as in sexual harassment) towards women (as Lee described in 1984 there are gender-specific slots that map on the categories 'perpetrator' and 'victim') and build an interpretative frame in which 'women aid workers are at risk of rape/of sexual harassment' is to be heard even if it is not said (Stokoe, 2003).

Before moving to the next section there is a final point I want to make. In Extracts 6:1-6:3 different questions are asked. In extract 6:1 the question 'Listen, I was also interested in this, in respect to security, in your experiences, is this something you've thought about?' (lines 1-3) is a general question on security, formulated in a neutral way without any assessment (security is not presented as a potential threat for the interviewee, but only as 'something' she could 'have thought about'). In her answer, as we previously saw, the participant describes being a white woman as a potential risk. In Extract 6:2 the initial question ('Have you ever found yourself in a risky situation?', line 1) asks to focus on risky situations without directly mentioning any identity categories; this is done only later in the second question of the extract ('Well other aid workers told me a bit about this situation of being women, Western, white in these countries. Did something happen to you in relation to this?, lines 11-14) where three identity categories are explicitly cited ('women', 'Western', 'white'). This second question is constructed with neutral terms, such as 'situation' and 'something' (instead of 'issues' or 'problems', for instance) and has the goal of obtaining a deeper description of the situation the participant referred to in her previous 'turn constructional unit' (TCU)[37]. Linking the description of the personal experience of the aid worker with the experiences of other women aid workers in general, the interviewer asks for more details without holding the participant accountable for any contingent problem she might have encountered; in fact, the effect achieved is similar to the one obtained by saying, for instance, 'this didn't happen only to you, it's a situation women aid workers are likely to experience, I'm not judging/blaming you for that'. Finally, in Extract 6:3 the question 'Listen, other aid workers told me a bit about the problems of being a woman, white, maybe young too in these countries. I wanted to ask you, how is the situation there?' (lines 1-4), constructs being a woman, white and young as potentially problematic for an aid worker. Moreover, the use of the indefinite article 'a' produces the category as something with known-in-common meanings (Stokoe, 2009). The respondent, after an initial denial 'I must say the truth, it never represented a very big difficulty' (lines 6-7), illustrates a contrasting situation 'in the rural areas' (line 10).

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[37] "Turn constructional units" are "the building blocks out of which turns are fashioned" (Schegloff 2007:3).

Also in this case, the interviewer's formulation in the shape of a categorical generalisation works as a way to facilitate the description of problematic situations.

Therefore, it seems that regardless of the question being neutral or oriented, we can expect similar patterns in the way gender and other identity categories may occur in the same kinds of conversational turns, doing the same kinds of actions (Stokoe, 2012). In the next section I will examine these actions.

6.1.2 Juggling between minimising the claims and preserving credibility

In this section I want to highlight an interesting and at first sight contrasting way of shaping claims through the use of minimising and emphasising devices. The two actions of playing down and playing up, far from being conflicting, have actually been identified as both being present in actions such as complaining (Stokoe, 2009) and troubles telling (Edwards, 2005).

6.1.2.1 Minimising the claims

In Extracts 6:1-6:6, the action of describing develops as accounting for the situation described or as avoiding being held accountable for it. This is the main course of action, although other actions such as affiliation and complaining are often being accomplished simultaneously.

As we saw in the previous section, participants use categorisation and self-categorisation when they are involved in the description of something problematic. But there are other tools they use to deal with the request to talk about troublesome situations. First of all, they build their claims through uncertainty, using a number of devices such as 'probably' (extract 6:1, line 9; extract 6:5), 'maybe' (extract 6:2, lines 7, 31;), 'you never know' (extract 6:1, line 23) that add doubts to their statements. We also find the use of the present conditional ('I would say', extract 6:2, line 19-20; 'it could be', extract 6:3, line 33; 'they would steal', extract 6:3, line 34; 'they would also do', extract 6:3, lines 34-35; 'it would be the same', line 40) that has the effect of weakening the claims by describing something problematic as merely likely to happen, not as something that will certainly happen; the past conditional is also employed by one participant in referring to how her security perception could have been different without guard dogs ('I wouldn't have lived', extract 6:1, line 10; 'I wouldn't have made it', extract 6:1, line 12; 'I wouldn't have felt safe', extract 6:1, line 13); in this way her claim is confined to a specific hypothetical situation and is not described as a persistent feeling nor related to a real situation,

and so is less objectionable. I argue that the use of these devices could arise from the normative prescription to be flexible and unbiased which is allocated to the members of the professional category 'international aid workers'.

The dubitative particles 'well' and 'eh/um' are used a number of times ('well': extract 6:1, line s 4, 12; extract 6:2, lines 2, 5, 15; extract 6:3, lines 14, 15, 21; 'eh', 'um', extract 6:2, line 17, 29; extract 6:3, lines 10, 11, 15, 26) with the double effect of preparing the recipient for uncertain answers and of delaying the production of the claims, that thus appear 'made-at-the-moment' ones. These features of dispreferred responses (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) confirm that the interaction is touching sensitive topics.

Another interesting feature is the use of amount minimisers ('a little', extract 6:1, line 16; extract 6:2, line 5; 'a bit', extract 6:2, lines 6, 8, 9, 22; 'small episodes', extract 6:2, line 24), that reduce the degree of illocutionary force of the claims being made about local men and about the difficulties encountered by women aid workers. Other recurring hedges such as 'like' (extract 6:1, lines 4, 5), 'you know' (extract 6:3, line 30), 'so to say' (extract 6:1, line 18), 'sometimes' (extract 6:2, lines 2, 19; extract 6:5), 'something' (extract 6:2, line 20) create a vagueness and an indifference effect, achieved also through 'I don't know' (extract 6:2, line 24) and 'dunno' (extract 6:1, line 16), devices that, as we saw in chapter 5, can function to display indifference towards following/previous descriptions (Edwards, 1995). All these hedging expressions signal a lack of commitment to the full value that the utterances would have without the hedging. In the extracts presented above they allow the speakers to address sensitive topics downplaying their seriousness and at the same time making it easier to rebut any contingent critique. I argue that potential critiques could be in relation to sounding prejudiced when talking about local men and their behaviour and with being heard as victims. In fact, participants don't say, for example, 'I'm afraid/scared', but use the impersonal 'one is more afraid' (extract 6:3, lines 14-15) or deny being scared 'I'm not scared' (extract 6:1, line 17) and in this way they display a positive identity and disclaim a prejudiced one. At the same time, their behaviour is assembled as not objectionable as they are 'always very very very careful' (extract 6:3, line 26) and they are harassed because of 'the idea' (extract 6:2, line 5) 'that it was normal for us white people'(extract 6:2, lines 31-32) to be sexually available and not because they were sexually available (note that a typical critique done to alleged victims of sexual harassment/assault is: 'you asked for it' with your behaviour/clothes, so this construction rhetorically helps to deny similar potential remarks).

Other means employed by participants in describing local men's behaviour are the following: they construct local men's actions as normatively linked with their membership to the

category 'local men' ('they have to tell', extract 6:2, lines 17-18; 'he has to say', extract 6:2, line 23) and so avoid implying an individual moral condemnation. Note how this is achieved also with a repair at line 20 of the first extract, that switches from an intentional 'he wants' to the non-intentional verb 'he knows'. They categorise local men as 'guys' (extract 6:2, line 29) making relevant their young age or immaturity, and therefore linking their actions to childishness and not to internal dispositions; they make use a credentialing disclaimer ('I don't think …but…', lines 17-20) to avoid an undesired typification as a prejudiced person when talking about 'Swazis'; finally, they find similarities with Italy ('it would be the same in Italy, extract 6:3, line 41) describing the risk of sexual assault not as dependent on local culture, but as a characteristic of men-women relationships.

The participants' two goals of maintaining a positive identity and of not discrediting local men are bound together: their identity is preserved as a positive one if they are not seen as biased.

A final point I want to make before moving to the next section, is on the use of laughter, that in the fragments above appear within words (interpolated particles of aspiration IPA, Potter & Hepburn, 2010) (extract 6:3, line 22) or outside of words (extracts 6:2, 6:3). Laughter in troubles-telling can signal that a complainable item, even when serious, is not something that the complainer is disposed to moan about or indulge in (Jefferson, 1984), as in the case of a laughter preceding the word 'prostitute' (Extract 6:2, line 27); note how the recipient, by withholding laughter, exhibits 'troubles-receptiveness' (Jefferson, 1984). I argue that there is another type of laughter that comes after 'resistance' claims, that is, when participants breach the normative rules of their professional category membership: in Extract 6:2, the laughter comes after the participant's claim 'sometimes I would say something back' (line 20) that is pronounced in a low voice; even though the claim is constructed as neutral (the word 'something' is neither positive nor negative) for the presence of the laughter we can infer that it's an unspecified negative; similarly, in Extract 6:3 a laughter follows the claim 'I don't see myself living here in Peru in Lima forever', once again said in a low voice. In both cases speakers are describing something that they don't want to be received as could be seen as objectionable by the recipient: in fact, flexibility and tolerance are skills that aid workers are commonsensically thought of as having, and that instead the two participants do not seem to demonstrate in these two specific claims.

6.1.2.2 Preserving credibility

In the previous section I presented the devices used by participants to minimise their claims. Now I present devices that could apparently look like opposing ones, because they give emphasis and add credibility to the claims.

A first device speakers make use of is the extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986) to get affiliation before making indirect complaints (Drew, 1998; Edwards, 2005; Stokoe, 2009). Observe how, 'we were the only two whites in town' (extract 6:1, lines 13-14), 'I was there on my own' (extract 6:2, line 16), 'always' (extract 6:1, line 16), 'always very careful' (extract 6:3, line 26), 'every ten seconds' (extract 6:2, line 17), 'at every corner' (extract 6:2, line 22), 'never go out' (extract 6:3 lines 20, 21, 22) make the claims rhetorically strong and indicate how the situations described should be regarded as not dismissable (Pomerantz, 1986). In addition to ECFs, other strengthening devices that can be considered a means to get affiliation during a conversation are script formulations (Edwards, 1994). In Extract 6:2 the aid worker creates a three-part list (Jefferson, 1990) script formulation that reinforces and justifies her assessment of the situation ('it's a bit tough', line 22). The 'small episodes' she 'uncommittedly' describes are constructed as common, routine and predictable examples of sexual harassment and gender discrimination: in the first one 'they' (here, local men) dismissed her and gave the change to her male colleague ('who was a man', line 26); in the second one, taxi drivers would call her 'a prostitute' (line 28) in what is constructed as an irrational behaviour ('only because I didn't want to pay an unfair rate') and third, the 'guys would hit on [me] immediately' (lines 29-30). We can see another example of script formulation in Extract 6:3, when after an assessment ('uncomfortable situation', line 29) the participant adds examples of what could happen to her ('here when they steal usually they are in small groups of three or four, usually they are men. Or when you take a taxi often from the car door two or three others get on and they are men', lines 29-33).

Finally, to strengthen their arguments, participants also employ implicit if-then constructions (Edwards & Potter, 1992), in which 'then' is implied, such as in 'maybe if I took taxis late [then] it happened to me a number of times…' (extract 6:2, lines 7-8), 'if there is someone [then] he has to say something to you' (extract 6:2, line 23), 'if I wanted to wear the earrings that I want…[then] the fact of being a woman…'(extract 6:3, lines 26-29). The if-then device is used to establish logical and thus firm and inevitable connections, so as something that will certainly happen (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998).

ECFs, script formulations and three part lists are all devices used to rhetorically make the accounts credible for the recipient.

In this section we have seen how the interactants bring into play interesting categorical formulations linking security and safety with gender and other identity categories; keeping a balance between minimising and preserving the credibility of their claims, participants describe problematic situations (potential or happened) and sometimes complain about them (Extract 6:2, lines 22-32), displaying a positive identity, avoiding sounding prejudiced and avoiding playing the role of victims.

Participants also describe other interesting problematic situations encountered in their experiences in the international aid work industry, one of the most recurrent being the one presented in the section that follows.

6.2 "Doing gender" talking about gaining professional credibility

In the first section, we saw that, and how, participant membership in the gender category 'women' alone or intertwined with other identity categories is linked with security. In this section we will examine how the same categories are linked with problematic aspects characterising women international aid workers' experiences in the workplace.

6.2.1 Linking gender and working difficulties through categorical practices

Survey question:	Has being a woman been an obstacle in any situation?
Extract 6:7 (answer 14/W):	Not being taken seriously.
Extract 6:8 (answer 12/W):	Less respected by local authorities in certain countries.
Extract 6:9 (answer 23/W):	When relating with local men sometimes they find it difficult to recognize the authority of women.
Extract 6:10 (answer 27/W):	Local cultures sometimes do not accept women. Men are taken in consideration more than women.

Extract 6:11 (answer 45/W): When I had to lead a team of Islamic men, I had a hard time getting them to recognise me as a leader.

Extract 6:12 (answer 30/W): During my second work experience in Mozambique I had to deal with a sexist local project officer for the partner who really frustrated me in the implementation of activities just because I was a woman.

Extract 6:13 (answer 43/W): The most difficult situation has been managing an office of 15 people, 80% made up of local men. It took me a while to get their respect, especially in issues concerning the management of money and "male issues" (e.g. management of cars).

Extract 6:14 (answer /W): It happened once that I was with a male colleague in a meeting and when I was talking with the person we met at the meeting he was looking at my male colleague and referred to him for any answer or question this person had for me. So it was a bit difficult for me to build a professionally useful relationship with this person.

In the extracts presented above, the membership to the gender category 'woman' is described as an obstacle in establishing credibility at work. In the first four extracts respondents answer to a personal question in impersonal terms and in a generalised way. These answers are built as vague and generic: in Extract 6:7 being a woman is related to 'not being taken seriously', but 'where' or 'in what kind of situation' and 'by whom' are left unspecified; and how in Extract 6:8 it is specified that women are 'less respected' in 'certain countries' by 'local authorities', but we don't know in 'which countries'. Men and women working relations are mentioned in both Extracts 6:9 and 6:10, where 'local men' or 'local cultures' are portrayed as not acknowledging 'the authority of women' ('recognize', extract 6:9; 'accept', 'take in consideration', extract 6:10).

In the second four extracts we can see how other respondents answered in a personal way making explicit their self-ascription in the gender category (see the use of the pronoun 'I' in extracts 6:11, 6:12, 6:14; and 'me' in extract 6:13). They describe specific experiences that happened to them in the past (note the presence of the past tense 'I had' extract 6:11, 6:12; 'it took', extract 6:13; 'it happened', extract 6:14) and assess these as difficult ('a hard time', extract 6:11; 'the most difficult situation', extract 6:13; 'it was a bit difficult', extract 6:14) in obtaining professional credibility ('recognize me as a leader', extract 6:11; 'really frustrated me in the implementation of activities', extract 6:12; 'get their respect', extract 6:13; 'build a professionally useful relationship', extract 6:14). By answering in a personal way they make explicit that being a woman had been an obstacle for them in the situations detailed. In the following extracts gender as an 'obstacle' is interestingly tied to other self-categorisations and categorisations.

6.2.2 Linking intersectionality and working difficulties through categorical practices

Survey question:

Has being a woman been an obstacle in any situation?

Extract 6:15 (answer 54/W):

Not only being a woman but also because of being young it's difficult to work with local government.

Extract 6:16 (answer 1/W):

I think being a young female manager can pose difficulties in some countries where men are viewed as higher in the hierarchy than women. It can be a challenge to be seen as equal.

Extract 6:17 (answer 34/W):

Working in Muslim countries, especially if a woman is young, it is difficult to establish some leadership with your national staff.

Extract 6:18 (answer 24/W):

In the environmental sector most locals are men. Give training to men (often older than me) was quite challenging.

Extract 6:19 (answer 37/W): It has often been difficult for me, as a young woman, to make people, including colleagues, listen to me and care for what I say.

Extract 6:20 (answer 10/W): During meetings with the local counterpart (men from rural communities do not trust white women).

Extract 6:21 (answer /W): In both my job experiences overseas I experienced some problems with my male local colleagues. I presume that being a white woman working in agriculture, a quite traditional sector, was an obstacle in establishing collaborative professional relationships.

Similarly to the previous extracts, participants are doing vagueness: the membership in the gender category 'women' is tied up with difficult job relationships that are located in particular places ('some countries', extract 6:16; 'Muslim countries', extract 6:17) and in certain job sectors ('environmental sector', extract 6:18; 'agricultural' sector, extract 6:21). These answers make relevant other identity categories: age (woman and 'young', extract 6:15; 'young female manager', extract 6:16; 'as a young woman', extract 6:19), skin colour ('white women', 6:20; 'being a white woman', extract 6:21) and job role ('managing an office', extract 6:13; 'establishing a leadership', extract 6:17; 'give training', extract 6:18; 'listen to me and care', extract 6:19). Interestingly not only team leading positions, that is, job positions where women aid workers perform a hierarchically higher position, are described as difficult ('is difficult', extracts 6:15 and 6:17; 'can pose difficulties', extract 6:16; 'challenging', extract 6:18; 'often been difficult', extract 6:19; 'problems', extract 6:21) but also 'collaborative professional relations' (extract 6:21; 'work with', extract 6:15) are assessed in the same problematic way. The relevance of the intersection of the four identity categories (gender, age, skin colour, job) is in some cases described in a detached way (see extracts 6:15-6:17 and 6:20) while in others it is self-ascribed (extracts 6:18, 6:19, 6:21), consistently with our previous analysis.

Participants do categorical work also to describe the 'Other' subject of the challenging working relationship. The gender category 'men' is made relevant as well as other identity categories: ethnicity ('local men', extract 6:18; 'local government', extract 6:15; 'local men from rural communities', extract 6:20), job role ('national staff', extract 6:17; 'male local colleagues', extract 6:21) and stage of life ('older', extract 6:18). In only one case the description of the 'counterpart' is done in gender-neutral terms ('people, including colleagues', extract 6:19). Each one of these categorisations and self-categorisations carries a host of inferences, and speakers can trade heavily on the known-in-common attributes of particular categories (Wowk, 1984) without the interviewee having to be explicit and therefore possibly sound prejudiced. In this way participants can describe problematic situations without sounding prejudiced.

Similar categorical practices are employed in the interviews.

Extract 6:22 (interview 12/W)

1	I/W:	This this new contract this new location (.) how was it?
		((Respondent makes an assessment of the new job and of the location))
2	AW12/W:	and it had been very interesting because (1) they were all
3		doctors:(.) Koreans Cubans Vietnameses (.) and the
4		Koreans and the Vietnameses spoke only Korean and
5		Vietnamese not English nor Portuguese >because in
6		Mozambique they speak Portuguese<
7	I/W:	mhm
8	AW12/W:	and so it was was: really nice fu(h)n(h)n(h)y to succeed
9		they were gre -(at) beautif-(ul) really beautiful people (.)
10	I/W:	mhm
11	AW12/W:	=but it was hard to be successful in (.) coordinating at the
12		beginning then above all I was a <u>woman</u> (.) I was there as
13		the head physician °let's say° (.) and they instead were
14		foreign men (.) who to succeed in ( )
15	I/W:	hold on a moment I cannot hear you
		((communication interrupted))
		((approximately 20 lines omitted))
35	I/W:	and:: and how was this relationship? Because other
36		aid workers told me a bit about the dynamics I mean of

37		being a white woman (.) in [relationships
38	AW12/W:	[um well at the beginning they
39		are always a bit distrustful but then you win them over
40		because anyway:: they see that you like being there and
41		that you have the expertise::: (2) that you put yourself in
42		their shoes and so (.) typically in three or four months (1)
43		one gets along with the colleague::s one gets along with
44		them (.) relationships with the governing bodies are more
45		difficult like the institutional things (.) but working
46		relationships are alway:s (.) <u>excellent</u> (1) even now nice
		((she clears her throat))

Extract 6:22 begins with the interviewer's question about one of the past working experiences of the participant. We reach the conversation after the participant's positive assessment of the location (Mozambique) and of the job position (she is a surgeon with a managerial role).

She describes her job experience highlighting the aspect of interest 'it had been very interesting' (line 2) and so portraying it as a positive one. After the interviewer 'mhm' continuer (line 7) she continues her assessment, by first restating the positive side of the experience ('and so it was really nice', line 8) and secondly introducing its problematic side. The presence of IPA (Potter & Hepburn, 2010), that is, of a laughter within the word 'fu(h)n(h)n(h)y', is a marker of trouble and prepares the recipient for what could be a trouble-telling interaction (Jefferson, 1984). A same turn self-initiated repair (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks, 1977) follows, which is linked to the choice of the adjective deemed suitable to describe the colleagues: she moves from 'great' to 'beautiful' to the emphatic 'really beautiful people' (line 9). From this point onwards her assessment of the situation changes from being described as 'interesting' to 'hard' and we are explained that the difficulty was 'to be successful in coordinating' (line 11). Until this point of the conversation the description is made without mentioning gender categories (there is a masculine generic in the reference to job and nationality categories and the gender neutral word 'people') so the recipient could argue that being successful could depend on the different nationalities and language proficiencies of the team that the interviewee makes relevant in lines 3-6; it is only with the self-categorisation as 'woman' (line 12) and 'head physician' (line 13) that she marks the difficulty as related to her gender and job position. By saying 'above all' and by stressing it with her voice, she makes clear that the difficulties were related with being a

woman in a managerial position. Note how the reference to her job role is underplayed with a lower voice utterance '°let's say°' (line 13); the colleagues, ('they') are described as 'foreign men' orienting to gender and nationality categories as, in this situation, problematic. Interestingly she uses the word 'foreign' in referring to them, when she herself was also a foreigner in that country. The claim on the colleagues is interrupted by communication problems and when they are restored an affiliation process made of laughter and smiling voices is carried out by the interactants. The atmosphere is relaxed when the interviewer goes back to the point and asks for a clarification (lines 35-37). This second question is specifically oriented on the dynamic of being a white woman with a managerial role and once again it is placed in categorical terms portraying a situation that is not peculiar, but common to other women aid workers interviewees. There is an overlap at lines 37-38 when the participant starts to answer relativising the difficulty and identifying it as temporary 'at the beginning' (line 38) 'but then', 'in three or four months' (line 42) and as positively solvable ('one gets along with the colleagues', line 43). The switch from the personal to the impersonal ('one', line 43) makes the claim effective not only for her specific situation, but valid for all category members.

The colleagues are characterised as not trusting ('distrustful', line 39), but conquerable ('you win them over', line 39) by showing interest ('they see that you like being there', line 40), skills ('that you have the expertise', line 41) and empathy ('that you put yourself in their shoes', lines 41-42). Formal relationships with the Institutions are described as 'more difficult' (line 44) but, ultimately, 'working relationships' are assessed positively as confirmed by the ECF 'always excellent even now' (line 46). Other participants answered to direct questions about their working experiences with local people.

Extract 6:23 (interview 8/W)

1	I/W:	how about relationships with the beneficiaries? (.) before
2		you were telling me (.) it's a bi::t a bit complicated
3	AW8/W:	um it depends (.) you need to know how to make them
4		accept you (.) when you are a woman I mean (.) um
5		(2) they have to understand that you are not just a:: that
6		I am a little girl (.) because usually (.) the beneficiaries
7		with whom I have worked with are the same age as my
8		father °more or less°(.) so they have to accept you (.) not as
9		(.) young woman and so quote <u>daughter</u> (.) so to whom
10		one has to give instructions and they have to accept you as

11		a colleague
12	I/W:	mmhm
13	AW8/W:	and have them accept you it's difficult because clearly *((communication interrupted))*
14	AW8/W:	this would be against their culture ( ) and you must
15		have them accept you and have them understand that ( )
16	I/W:	I'm sorry I cannot hear you (.) you must have them accept
17		you? and understand?
18	AW8/W:	and show that we have some expertise (.) even though we
19		are young
20	I/W:	ok
21	AW8/W:	and every time you approach them try to make them
22		understand why we want something done (.) for a man it's
23		a lot more easier (.) because if the man says something it's
24		enough if he gives an explanation ((while)) the woman has
25		to also demonstrate that the assumptions behind the
26		explanations are ((reasonable))

Extract 6:24 (interview 2/W)

1	I/W:	and your relationship with the local people? for your
2		experiences (.) did you struggle to be acknowledged in
3		your role?
4	AW2/W:	well during my first experience when I was in Chad at the
5		beginning a bit yes mainly with my staff they were (.)
6		were::: hm they were Arabs they were Muslims so
7		sometimes the fact of having a woman as a boss to refer to
8		it was quite difficult so it took a bit of initial work to have
9		their like trust to show them that anyway you were an
10		expert and all that then there is also the the fact of being a
11		white woman in an African country that also play:s quite a
12		role
13	I/W:	mmhm

14	AW2/W:	but at the beginning it was a bit difficult but then I have to
15		say even later when I moved to other countrie::s um no it
16		wasn't difficult perhaps at the beginning maybe even even
17		I had to get used to it a bit I mean to understand what kind
18		of approach I should have.

Extract 6:25 (interview 21/W)

1	I/W:	Mmhm mhm (.) so these these like conflicts did
2		happen with your colleagu[e:::s?
3	AW21/W:	[Yes with my colleagues but local
4	I/W:	[locals
5	AW21/W:	[°with the Guatemalan colleagues°
6	I/W:	ah ok
7	AW21/W:	but not even conflicts look it never went head to head that
8		would probably have been (1) like b:etter (.) >because
9		then we would have all put our cards on the table do you
10		know what I mean?
11	I/W:	mhm yes yes
12	AW21/W:	Instead these were always:: very subtle things (.) like
13		real obstructionism for me it was a nightmare (1) °really°
14	I/W:	mmhm
15	AW21/W:	especially being a woman that had to give (.) in quote
16		orders to a group of men (2) and who were even much
17		older than me
18	I/W:	mmhm
19		(2)
20	AW21/W:	um um sometimes it's not easy (.) and you are even
21		less taken into account you need to b-(be) you need to play
22		a role like (.) you have to slightly put aside you::r um (2)
23		not your femininity bu:t um you nearly have to take a role
24		(1) um a slightly tougher attitude that you would have
25		normally [right?
26	I/W:	[mmhm.

Differently from Extract 6:22, the questions of this set of extracts are already focused on the topic of working relationships ('how about relationships with the beneficiaries?', extract 6:23, line 1; 'and your relationships with the local people?', extract 6:24, line 1) and orient to it as something complicated ('before you were telling me it's a bit complicated', extract 6:23, line 2; 'did you struggle to be acknowledged in your role?', extract 6:24, lines 2-3) or, as in Extract 6:25, ask for a clarification of the kind of relationship previously mentioned by one participant ('so these these like conflicts did happen with your colleagues?', lines 1-2). Respondents answer assessing the topic as difficult ('have them accept you is difficult', extract 6:23, line 13; 'it was quite difficult', extract 6:24, line 8; 'for me it was a nightmare', extract 6:25, line 13; 'sometimes it's not easy', extract 6:25, line 20) and link it with their membership in the gender category 'women' ('when you are a woman', extract 6:23, line 4) and in the professional category of 'managers' ('the fact of being a woman as a boss', extract 6:24, line 7; 'especially being a woman that had to give orders', extract 6:25, lines 15-16). They also make relevant other identity categories such as age (extract 6:23: 'little girl', line 6; 'young woman', 'daughter', line 9) and skin colour ('white woman', extract 6:24, line 11) with a categorical work that, relying on the shared knowledge, lets the recipient draw the conclusion. This is done, for instance, with the claim 'there is also the fact of being a white woman in an African country' (extract 6:24, lines 10-11), where the self-categorisation as 'white woman' is described as something unusual in an 'African country' (no matter which country, this is portrayed as true for all Africa). With this claim the aid worker is describing the peculiarity of the context as another relevant factor, making clear that the situation is not comparable to being a woman and a manager in Western countries. Her categorisation makes us infer that the challenge is connected with 'African culture' and not only with traditional gender ideology, neither with specific individuals.

As well as in the previous extracts, in this section we can see that interactants refer to their counterpart with various categorisations, orienting respectively to their job role ('staff', extract 6:24, line 5; 'colleagues', extract 6:25, lines 2-3), their stage of life ('same age as my father', extract 6:23, lines 7-8; 'older than me', extract 6:25, line 17), their nationality ('local people', extract 6:24, line 1; 'Arabs', extract 6:24, line 6; 'Guatemalan colleagues', extract 6:25, line 5), their religion ('Muslims', extract 6:24, line 6) and their North-South status ('beneficiaries', extract 6:23, lines 1, 6). Once again, by relying on what is conventionally known about a category, participants make available a stock of commonsense knowledge about the categories (Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995). For example, the categories 'little girl' and 'young woman' carry 'potentially useful conventional associations with age, marital status, and potential sexual

availability' (Edwards, 1998, p.25); in our case, the categorisation as 'little girl', then specified in 'daughter' does not only make available knowledge on the age difference, but also accounts for the problematic working relationship by equating it to the classic father and daughter relationship where it is the father who teaches his unskilled/inexperienced daughter how to do things, and so she should respect him.

6.2.3 Minimising the claims to preserve a positive identity

There are three final points I want to note before moving to the next section. Firstly, in a similar way to what we saw in section 5.1, participants fashion their answers in uncertain tones and downplay the seriousness of the situations described: the use of the opinion verbs 'I think' (extract 6:16) and 'I presume' (extract 6:21) make the claims dependent on the speaker's cognition of facts about the world, and therefore, unsure, as well as the use of the modal verb 'can' that make the claim appear dubious and therefore less objectionable from potential critiques ('it can be a challenge to be seen as equal' is different than say, for instance 'it is surely a challenge' or 'it is impossible'); moreover, the addition of 'probably' (extract 6:25, line 8), 'maybe' (extract 6:24, line 16), 'perhaps' (extract 6:24, line 16), 'depends' (extract 6:23, line 3), 'let's say' (extract 6:22, line 13), 'like' (extract 6:24, line 9; extract 6:25, line 8), 'it can' (extract 6:16) addsvagueness to their utterances. Secondly, the placement of minimisers such as 'some' and 'quite' before problematic words ('some countries', extracts 6:16; 'some leadership', extract 6:17; 'some problems', extract 6:21) or before assessments ('quite challenging', extract 6:18; 'quite traditional', extract 6:21; 'quite difficult', extract 6:24, lines 8), as well as 'certain' (extract 6:8), 'sometimes' (extract 6:9; extract 6:10; extract 6:24, line 7; extract 6:25, line 20), 'nearly' (extract 6:25, line 23), 'a bit' and 'a little' (extract 6:22, line 39; extract 6:24, lines 5, 8, 14, 17; extract 5;25, line 22; extract 6:25, line 24), has the function of mitigating the gravity of the claims. Thirdly, participants relativise the problematic working relationship referring to it as something momentary and surmountable. Note how the use of the past tense ('it was', extract 6:18; 'it has been', extract 6:19; 'experienced', 'was', extract 6:21) has us infer that the respondents overcame the problematic situation. Interestingly, this is done when participants build their answer in a personal and inclusive way. In fact they insert the problem in a restraint time frame ('during my first experience', 'at the beginning', extract 6:24, line 4-5, 14, 16; 'it took a bit', extract 6:24, line 8; 'but then', extract 6:24, line 14) and highlight the possibility of overcoming it with some effort ('an initial work', extract 6:24, line 8) carried out by the women aid workers, that 'have to' show their skills ('show that we have some expertise', extract 6:23, line 18; 'show them you were expert', extract 6:24, line 9-10) and adapt to the context ('you

need to know how to havethem accept you', extract 6:23, lines 3-4; 'understand what kind of approach I should have', extract 6:24, line 17-18; 'you need to play a role', extract 6:25, line 22). Through the active modulation of their 'attitude' (extract 6:25, line 24) women aid workers describe themselves as successful in establishing credibility. Note how, with the use of modal verbs such as 'must' ('you must have them accept you', extract 6:23, line 16), 'have to' ('you have to put aside', extract 6:25, line 22; 'have to take a role', extract 6:25, line 23; 'the woman has also to demonstrate', extract 6:23, lines 24-25), 'need' (extract 6:25, line 21) this adaptability is built as normatively attached to the category 'women aid workers'.

6.3 "Doing intersectionality": the opposite side of women aid workers experiences

In the previous sections we saw how gender and other specific identity characteristics are built as challenging (both within the workplace and in everyday life) and as risk factors (linked with security and safety). We also saw how women aid workers described difficulties in establishing credibility at work as negotiable through constant and extended individual work; other research participants described elsewhere in the data the need to employ strategies to avoid problematic situations, such as, for instance, gender-mixing the teams and asking men colleagues to take their side during work meetings; adapting to the local idea of femininity and, for instance, pretending to be married by wearing a ring, to avoid sexual harassment in the streets.

There is also another side of the experiences of women aid workers that is referred to by some participants as 'the opposite side'; it is on this side that I will focus in this final section of the chapter.

6.3.1 Linking intersectionality with power

Through the three following three interview extracts I will show how some participants refer to their gender identity, intertwining it with other identity categories. In the same way as I did in the previous sections, I will start with the analysis of an extract where gender is spontaneously introduced by the interviewee and I will then continue with other extracts in which the interviewer oriented to it and to other categorisations.

In the extract below we join the interactants in the middle of a conversation about the skills required to complete the interviewee's job duties. Previously, the interviewee had described one of these skills as challenging for her: being able to 'effectively train people'. See why she portrays this as a challenge.

Extract 6:26 (interview 13/W)

1	AW13/W:	here I have educated people that attended the University eh
2		um well they attended the University here so there is a
3		very low level (.) and you have to teach some stuff and
4		there is also the gender issue (.) so sometime::s if I am the
5		tutor being a woma::n I'm not saying that it means less
6		(.) bu:::t (2)
7		well (.) it has a different importance
8	I/W:	mhm
9	AW13/W:	hm (2)
10		there is always this thing that (.) we were talking about this
11		last night with some friends who lived in Afghanistan
12		about the third gender (.) the white woman in this part of
13		the world is (1)
14		the third gender (.) °as though she is something different°
15		neither a male nor a female but she is the whit-(e) Western
16		woman (.) and here this happens (.) it didn't happen to me
17		in Africa it did to other friends in other contexts.

Extract 6:26 can be divided in two parts. In the first part we see the participant making her gender relevant, with the use of the personal pronoun 'I' (line 4). She struggles in claiming that from this self-ascription difficulties can arise, as we can see in the hedging disclaimer (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975): 'I don't say that it means less', interrupted by a 2 seconds pause (line 6) and closed with 'but well it has a different importance'. The interviewer aligns with the claim and pronounces a continuer ('mhm', line 8); after that, there is another 2 seconds pause, that is taken by the interviewee as an invitation to continue, so she adds another claim. In this second part of the extract, after having described being a woman as something that could represent a challenge in fulfilling her job duties, she counterbalances the problematic description with the introduction of some positive aspects derived from her gender membership, making also relevant her membership to the category 'white'. This new claim is presented not 'merely' as a personal opinion, but as a topic of conversation between friends ('we were talking about this last night with some friends', lines 10-11) in reference to a specific context ('who lived in Afghanistan',

line 11). She introduces 'the third gender' (line 12) as a new categorisation, but she doesn't explain what could derive from this membership; inferences are possible due to the categorical work she displays in the claim 'as though she is something different neither a male nor female but is the whit-(e) Western woman' (lines 14-16). It is then possible to conclude that in some contexts ('in this part of the world', lines 12-13; she is based in Kyrgyzstan, so we can infer she is referring to Central and South Asian countries) the power ascribed to being white, repaired with being Western, gives the female aid worker a new status: she is 'not only' a woman, and so assimilated to the broader category that includes all world women, but a white/Western woman, thus, a new category ('neither a male nor a female', line 15), with a different status. Neither a male, even though she can do things that males usually do, neither a female, because she can do things local women are not allowed to do, thanks to the power associated with being white and Western.

Other participants describe 'the other side' of their experiences in relation to their membership to the categories 'woman', 'white' and 'young'.

Extract 6:27 (interview18/W)

1	I/W:	and how is it (.) to be a young white ((fem.))[there?
2	AW18/W:	[((laugh))
3		We::ll ((laugh)) you know actually I can only see part of
4		it °because I am am in the [capital city
5	I/W:	[yes
6	AW18/W:	and so in the capital everything is very simila:::r if you
7		went to Europe so there ai::n't (.) there ain't a very big
8		difference° (.) before I came here my supervisor told me
9		>be ready because when you will work in the field<
10		especially in the animal breeding sector
11	I/W:	mhm
12	AW18/W:	um well they are all <u>Malian farmers</u> ((masc.))
13		<u>of a certain age</u> (.) Muslims she told me get ready because
14		maybe when you have to meet them and maybe you try
15		to speak nobody [gives a shit
16	I/W:	[yes

17	AW18/W:	[because you are young (.) you are white etceter-(a) (.) you
18		*are:: well* (.) *a woman and white* so:: ((in a smiling voice))
19	I/W:	mhm
20	AW18/W:	like poorly considered um::: (1)
21		for the short experience I had then with local people <u>in the</u>
22		<u>field</u> I didn't didn't have this problem
23	I/W:	mmhm
24	AW18/W:	um but the thing is (.) I've been there for a week so I
25		can't give informat-(ion) I mean I still need to go and
26		work in the field there
27	I/W:	right
28	AW18/W:	there is also to say that well in these countries very often
29		one can be considered a kind of man (.) a honorary male
30		even if you are a woman because you are white and so
31	I/W:	mhm
32	AW18/W:	like you are more:: (.) respected by the man
33		I mean that there is more respect from the man towards a
34		white woman than ((in a smiling voice)) tha:::n towards a a
35		local woman that'swhy (.)

Extract 6:28 (interview 10/W)

1	I/W:	when you were telling me that in Darfur you were the Head
2		of that big project (.) very young (.) [white
3	AW10/W:	[um it depends (.)
4		I think that the gender issue (2)
5		is that is the fact of having less pow-(er) to be perceived
6		as somehow less because you are a woman is
7		absolutely counterbalanced by being white
8	I/W:	mhm
9	AW10/W:	white in a broad sense
10	I/W:	mmhm
11	AW10/W:	even if there are ((inaudible)) not black anyway being
12		Western

13	I/W:	mmhm
14	AW10/W:	so your power as an expatriate (2)
15		even as a woman it seems to me it's very clear
16	I/W:	mmhm
17	AW10/W:	that you have power then I think that it depends a little
18		on the personal style I mean I have friends ((fem.)) that
19		tell me I have this very tiny, very petite friend ((fem.)) (2)
20		a little bit shy and she tells me *ha nobody listens to me*
21		*because I am a girl* but I think that (1)
22		has an influence
23	I/W:	yes
24	AW10/W:	not only being a girl but the whole package I never had
25		problems to make people listen to me because I was
26		a woman
27	I/W:	mmhm
28	AW10/W:	um with the expatriates it's different because this
29		difference you get from (2) in quote the colour >that then is
30		not only colour< um disappears a little so (2)
31		and all that remains only age and sex remain maybe
32		I had but I don't know if it's just by chance but I had
33		problems with a logistic man older than me (3)
34		um to havehim listen to me and to impose myself
35		but I don't know if I'd say that even the age as a variable
36		counts
37	I/W:	mhm
38	AW10/W:	so really it is an interrelation of factors.

There are two points I want to make on the fragments above. Firstly, similarly to Extract 6:26, respondents shift from the use of the first person pronoun to the use of second and third person pronouns and categorisations; but interestingly here they use 'I' in denying the relevance of gender in their experiences (extract 6:27, line 3, 4, 21, 22; extract 6:28, line 4, 32, 35) and use the second person 'you' (extract 6:27, line 30, 32; extract 6:28, line 6, 17, 29), the third person 'one' (extract 6:27, line 29) and various categorisations ('a woman', extract 6:27, line 30; extract

6:28, lines 6, 15; 'a white woman', extract 6:27, line 34; 'a girl', extract 6:28, line 24; 'an expatriate', extract 6:28, line 14) in recognising that the intersection between being woman, white and young can represent a problem for aid workers, but not for them. In this way they can display a positive identity, without disclaiming the topic as relevant 'in general'.

Secondly, similarly to Extract 6:26, both fragments can be divided into two parts depending on the actions carried out with the categories: one part in which gender together with other identity characteristics is disavowed as a problem and described as a 'facilitator' (extract 6:27, lines 28-35; extract 6:28, lines 1-24) and another part in which it is recognised as problematic (extract 6:27, lines 8-20; extract 6:28, lines 28-38). See more in detail how this is achieved.

Both participants answer the question that focused on their membership in the categories 'woman', 'young' and 'white' denying having had problems ('for the short experience I had then with local people in the field I didn't have this problem', extract 6:27, lines 21-22; 'I never had problems I think to make people listen to me because I was a woman', extract 6:28, lines 24-25). Moreover, they both use distanced footings (Wilkinson, 2000) to point out to problems that could arise (in the shape of advice-giving in extract 6:27, lines 9-20 and in the shape of a complaint in extract 6:28, lines 20-21) attributing statements to somebody else (a female supervisor in extract 6:27, a female friend in extract 6:28, arguably an aid worker). By making it another person's voice, they remove their accountability and minimise their stake and interest.

Furthermore, in a similar way to the interviewee in Extract 6:26, they both point out positive outcomes arising from the same categorical membership: 'one can be considered a honorary male' (extract 6:27, line 29), 'it seems to me it's very clear you have power' (extract 6:28, lines 15, 17), are both claims pronounced after delays (note the pauses of 1 and 2 seconds, respectively) and repairs (from 'young' to 'white' to 'woman and white', extract 6:27, lines 17-18; from 'white' to 'white in a broad sense' to 'not black' to 'Western' to 'expatriate', extract 6:28, lines 7-14), and therefore, problematic. It is arguably difficult for aid workers to recognise and position themselves in a power hierarchy in which men 'in general' are constructed as having more power than expatriate/Western/white women, that, in turn, are described as having more power than local women. I claim this is because the reality experienced in the field contrasts with the ideology of equality (culture of sameness) that characterises aid work industry's discourses. Finally, note how the idea of 'honorary male' is a sign of how the concept of hegemonic masculinity (Speer, 2001) is used by aid workers when making sense of their experiences.

6.4 Summary and Discussion

In this chapter I've presented and analysed extracts taken from the interviews and survey data in which interesting categorical work is accomplished in trouble-telling.

In section 6.1 being a member of the gender category 'woman' was interrelated with other self-categorisations and categorisations as 'white', 'Western' and 'foreigner' and resulted in a 'mix' described as positioning women aid workers in a troublesome situation in relation to security and safety.

In section 6.2 another identity category was made significant for the participants' experiences, their working position as managers. The intersection between the gender category 'women' and other categorisations was held accountable for some problematic situations women aid workers run into within the workplace. In talking about their gender identity women aid workers put it in relation with women's standardised relational pair 'men' (SRPs) (Sacks, 1992) and the difficult situations described always include a relationship with 'men' (local men outside the workplace, men colleagues in the workplace). Through categorical work the membership in the SRPs was held accountable for the problematic situations (men/women; non white/white; local/foreigner; old/young; staff/boss).

In section 6.3 three participants, as well as other interviewees (both women and men), highlighted the 'privileges' women aid workers benefit from in some contexts, making clear that their categorical membership is, at the same time, an advantage and a disadvantage. The same categories intersection put women international aid workers in a double privileged position: compared to local women, because being white and Western they benefit from the power of asymmetry between the North and the South of the world; compared to Western women in their home countries, from the power deriving from the status of international aid worker. In fact, consistently with previous literature on women who are professionals and expatriates (Napier & Taylor, 2002), participants reported having more responsibilities than they would have had in an equivalent position in their home countries, and also stated having advantages in their everyday lives in the country of mission (domestic help: maids, nannies) that, as they recognise, they couldn't have afforded in their home countries. At the same time, they are in a disadvantaged position because of the power attributed to the membership in the gender category in different countries. Categories, being culturally and historically specific, can differ from one context to another, therefore activities that in the home countries are commonsensically category-bound, in other countries become breaches of the moral order and so become excluded from heteronormative practices around femininity (Stokoe, 2003). In many cultures the traditional female role supports attitudes and behaviours contradictory to those of a manager. In these

contexts the normative requirements of the job role conflict with the normative requirements of the gender category membership. Participants displayed their awareness of this conflict through the categorical practices they used, for example, when they played down their job role ('I was there as the head physician °let's say°', extract 6:22, lines 12-13; 'being a woman that had to in quote give orders', extract 6:25, lines 15-16). This conflict between different expectations for women's roles exists even outside the workplace, thus, certain types of activities, like women that go out at night (extract 6:2), in some countries break traditional norms around gender categories; in such cases, the woman aid worker becomes an outsider and therefore would likely experience being sanctioned for it (being harassed, not being acknowledged as a boss).

In the encounter-clash with the 'Other', women aid workers become aware of some Self-identity characteristics; their membership of the category Western becomes significant only when they are 'elsewhere' in the field. This is something new with which they are forced to deal with both in a pragmatic and in a reflexive way: they need to find strategies to complete their job duties and to maintain their psychological integrity.

From a practical point of view, the diffidence and resistance showed by the colleagues requires an individual extra 'work' women aid workers described to do around their identity (extract 6:25, lines 21-25) in order to gain credibility within the workplace and therefore reach the goals of the project they are working on. Interestingly this is something described as 'learnt by doing', not as something they would expect to incur in, nor are they trained for by their organisations. The strategies they found to succeed are described in the extracts presented and in other research data as individual solutions or advices aid workers exchange informally and not as formal guidelines. This requires personal efforts and time that are not taken in consideration in the evaluation criteria of the organisations they work for; therefore we can conclude that women are penalized in respect to their male colleagues. In fact, a situation described as resolvable in three or four months (see again Extract 6:22, line 42, where this is described as a short amount of time) could impact not only on the aid worker's wellbeing in terms of stress, but also on the project she is working on (short term projects usually last only months) and therefore could have broader consequences.

Other times they describe the situation as endemic in particular contexts where a multitude of factors such as culture and religion, asymmetry of power and conflicting gender ideologies are mixed together, which make it impossible for women aid workers to succeed:

> "for example the one ((fem.)) that was my substitute in Tanzania, even though that
> was an untroubled context, but she was 25 years old (.) my Tanzanian engineer

colleague ((mas.)) (.) my two colleagues they were 50 years old and they didn't have the same respectful attitude they had towards me with her (.) and she didn't last that long." (AW39/M-I/M)

Participants, in addressing troublesome situations, rhetorically avoid sounding prejudiced towards local men, and avoid being heard as victims. I argue that this grows out of the normative dimension of the 'aid workers' category-bound attributes. Since being an aid worker requires an ability to adapt to intensely challenging situations and withstand emotional strain, if a member of the category does not display a relevant category attribute, this becomes 'noticeably absent' and 'specially accountable' (Watson, 1978). Thus aid workers usually display the relevant category predicates and ought to do so; otherwise some sort of interactional or interpersonal trouble is expected. They might be held accountable and this may have implications for their status as proper aid workers.

The categorical practise allows to describe problematic situations (potential and dreaded, or really experienced) without blaming specific individuals, but referring to the membership to various categories as problematic, and therefore to preserve their positive identity.

7 Discussion and conclusions

In this final chapter of the thesis, I will summarize the main analytic findings, and discuss theoretical and practical contributions of this thesis. I will then discuss the methodological issues that this study raises and suggest possible further development of the study.

7.1 Summary of the main analytic findings

This study is the first feminist social psychology study of international aid workers and the first Italian study, which uses the discursive approach of sequential MCA to approach the topic. It had several aims; the broader was to gain insight into the professional category of international aid workers; others were to understand whether the international aid sector is undergoing a process of feminisation, to study how the professional and personal experiences of women and men aid workers might differ, and to analyse the professional benefits and/or disadvantages that could arise from one's gender identity. The study had a focus on the Italian workforce and was aimed at comparing the experiences of the Italians with European aid workers.

More precisely, using a feminist discursive approach I had investigated how international aid workers accounted for the feminisation of their profession, and how gender as an identity category was brought into the discursive interaction. Moreover, I studied how participants explained the intersection of gender with other identity relevant categories (such as age, skin colour, occupational role) affecting their experiences. The analytic framework I chose enabled me to examine the discursive devices, which participants employed in their constructions and the interactional and interpersonal functions, which such constructions fulfilled. I also paid attention to what kind of normative issues respondents attended to and managed in the discursive interaction with the researcher.

The first study, which I carried out to address the lack of literature on international aid workers as a professional category, offered a background picture of who Italian aid workers are. With the findings reported I have outlined an interesting first collection of data on this workforce, with a focus on the psychosocially challenging aspects that influence aid workers professional and personal experiences. A number of challenges were identified: intrapersonal challenges, of which some are exclusive to aid workers professionals (ethical dilemmas, frustration and sense of guilt arising from the daily exposure to poverty and death) while other can be extended to the broader expat category (loneliness and isolation, repatriation and re-adaptation, unrootedness and unsettledness). Relational challenges (relationships with the family

of origin, old friends, and the difficulty in building a private life), already documented in the expat literature, but more pervasive and ubiquitous for aid workers, due to a higher rate of occupational mobility. Challenges related with the country of mission due to unhealthy conditions and security constraints, to cultural gap and to gender discrimination. Stressors arising from the peculiarities of the international aid industry (lack of financial resources to sustain aid projects, inefficiency, contractual and geographical precariousness, insufficient wage level vs. excessive workload). Finally, I identified a number of challenges that are peculiar of the Italian aid and development sector such as, the inappropriate legislation that is currently neglecting important rights of the employees (maternity leave, pension contributions and the right to vote) and the absence of an external acknowledgment of the professional category (which is still in need of a unambiguous definition, and which, therefore, is even not included in the national statistics so far). For all these reasons the broader experience was assessed by the participants as psychologically demanding due to the load of stress that leads in the worst cases to burn-out.

In the same study I focused my attention on the gender-related aspects that influenced participants' experiences. The data revealed the presence of gender differences, which should be further investigated, as the decrease in the number of women professionals after 35, which could be related with familial concerns (partner, children and elderly parents). Some of these results on gender have provided further evidence for the literature on women mobile professionals: at a personal level, women have reported higher rates of work-personal life conflict and at a professional level they had voiced difficulties related to different roles expectations of women and stereotypes about women's skills.

In the second study I have examined aid workers accounts for the growing presence of women in the humanitarian and aid industry, and I have showed how this emerging trend was understood and made sense of by the insiders. Documenting the discursive and rhetorical properties of contemporary gender relations is an important and on-going feminist project (Weatherall, 2012). Interestingly, the direct question on the feminisation represented for many participants the first occasion to reflect on the gender proportion inside the profession and generated competing types of accounts. The first type were dispositional claims that relied on gender differences as explicative. These located the reasons for presence of women in the profession within women themselves, and portrayed women as naturally suited to aid work. On the contrary, the role played by gender was denied in the second type of accounts. Similarity and sameness were claimed and individual differences were used to explain the same trend. The sequential MCA allowed me to show how participants conformed to shared cultural norms

against prejudice (Barker, 1981; Van Dijk, 1984; Billig, 1988) and answered to what they received as a "sensitive" question on gender differences, without sounding biased and prejudiced. In fact, as I demonstrated, they could preserve a positive identity through a number of devices (referring to women as a distanced category; doing uncertainty; making comparisons; shifting from the category to the personal; disclaiming knowledge of causes).

In the third study I have shown how female identity was brought into the discursive interaction as something critical in relation to personal security and in the achievement of professional credibility. Gender identity was interrelated with other self-categorisations and categorisations such as white, Western, foreigner, professional role and age. At the same time, the intersection of identity categories was constructed as positioning women aid workers in a double privileged position: being white and Western they reported having more power than the women in the countries of mission, moreover, being international aid workers they had more opportunities than Italian women (job responsibilities and domestic help). Using the sequential MCA approach it was possible to demonstrate how during the discursive interaction with the researcher, both interviews and survey participants managed "doing trouble telling", preserving their positive identity as "good" international aid workers. In fact, the normative cultural category-resonant description of international aid workers requires these professionals to be able to adapt and cope with a number of challenges. In my analysis I revealed how through the use of many devices (such as, mitigating the claims; preserving credibility; doing categorisation) participants could describe dreaded or experienced situations, in which their female identity positioned them in challenging situations, without blaming specific individuals (and therefore avoiding sounding prejudiced). At the same time, the use of the same discursive devices avoided respondents from being heard as "victims" or as not skilled enough for the profession.

7.2 Overarching insights

Literature on overseas managers (Adler & Israeli, 1987; Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2009; Elron, & Kark, 2000; Forster, 1999; Harris, & Harris, 1998) showed that women expatriate professionals are still underrepresented; this thesis has demonstrated that in the aid sector the number of expatriate women is actually growing. At the conclusion of this research a number of hypotheses can be put forward to explain this phenomenon: 1) women are described and self-describe themselves as having attributes and skills that are considered essential in development work (such as sensitivity, empathy, emotional intelligence, patience, passion, curiosity) and they are therefore in a favourable sitaution with jobs requiring these skills; 2) job

positions available in Italian NGOs are "bad paid", and as a number of participants reported "women are more willing to do low paid jobs", a feature in relation with the gender horizontal segregation in occupation (Mebane, 2008; Prestinger, 2010) at the same time, there is a female majority of students enrolling and graduating in courses on development, and this is another typical feature that leads to the feminisation of the profession; 3) despite lack of public funding, the aid sector is currently growing, and represents an opportunity for well educated women to find an exciting job, which also involves greater responsibilities and career path progression (from an NGO to UN agencies, for instance); 4) aid organisations foster (at least formally) gender equality, and are committed to equal opportunities policies.

At the same time, I have shown that there are still major challenges for women seeking international careers. Participants reported that gender discrimination occurs in the aid industry: it included unequal access to employment on the basis of gender, and sexual harassment in the workplace and in the daily lives. I have illustrated that, compared to their male colleagues, women aid workers do extra work around their identity, including dress and behaviour, in order to conform to local perceptions of acceptable femininity; if they do not adapt themselves to local conventions of femininity they are seen as culturally insensitive, not a good professional, and as putting their safety and the safety of the whole organisation at risk. I argue that the international aid industry therefore represents a complex world in which aid women have to adapt and re-adapt their identities and have to negotiate their gender identity everyday in the communities in which they live and work. Furthermore, they have to cope with the ambiguity of having more power than women usually have, and less power than their male colleagues have. The socially shared and hegemonic understandings of femininity and masculinity, but also of ethnicity, skin colour, and age of the country of mission differ from those of one's home community. Such unfamiliar cultural understandings require reflexivity and conscious effort to discuss the assumptions with which a person has been raised, providing additional challenges in the achievement of a desired identity.

Interestingly, I have found that none of the organisations for which the participants worked, prepared their employees for these kinds of issues before being deployed on assignment. The data gathered in this study reveal that aid organisations are not meeting the minimum standards for agencies published by the International Labour Organisation (2013). I have found no evidence that monitoring of gender differences and disparities occurred; instead, I found that most organisations approached the issue of employee's experiences as gender neutral. Moreover,

I have found no evidence of gender analysis having been carried out at the level of aid workers in the field and there was no evidence of political will or the allocation of meaningful resources to address gender issues within organisations.

Despite the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC, 2007) guidelines which specify that the "provision of support to mitigate the possible psychosocial consequences of work in crisis situations is a moral obligation and a responsibility of organisations exposing staff to extremes" (p.87), I have observed that in general, psychological support was provided only by few organisations, and that Italian NGOs very rarely provide such care.

I argue that the loneliness that a number of participants reported as a negative aspect of their experience arises also from the critical conditions in which aid workers find themselves supporting beneficiaries, when their needs and necessities are undervalued by their organisation (Barron, 1999). The importance of "helping the helper", even if it is acknowledged in other professions (Friedman, 2002; Gal, 1998), is still neglected for international aid workers. Also, it is well recognized that the challenges of adapting to a new culture can be mitigated by cross-cultural training - CCT (Mendenhall & Oddou 1985; Black & Mendenhall 1990; Selmer, Torbiorn, & de Leon, 1998). This is achieved by providing the opportunity to engage with the host country culture in a controlled environment where "models of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour in general or specific, hypothetical or simulated" (Black & Mendenhall, 1990, p. 124) can be discussed or role-played. Harrison and Nichailova (2012) also demonstrated that female expatriates who are aware of how to adapt to new environments appear to be the most likely to have positive experiences.

So, why have international aid workers left alone so far? As the literature described, the context of aid work is characterised by the rhetoric of self-sacrifice, heroism and altruism (Fechter, 2012); these, together with the "macho" culture of specific aid sectors (such as emergency and logistics) result in a denial of the negative psychosocial impact of exposure to the stresses of humanitarian work (Danieli, 2002). Moreover, the exponentially greater funding available through donor organisations for research into beneficiaries influences the activities carried out by aid organisations (Mosse, 2011). In addition to these causes, the findings of my thesis had showed another possible reason is related to the need for preserving a positive identity: in fact, as a number of psychosocial challenges arise from cultural differences, and international aid workers build their professional identity around open-mindedness to other cultures, it is not easy for them to voice such challenges. They do not want to sound prejudiced and biased, and so as a possible consequence they are not keen on asking for support.

7.3 Contributions and implications of the thesis

My study makes several contributions. First of all it contributed to the literature on international aid workers, which is still in its infancy; moreover it has provided further evidence in the research on women mobile professionals. Also, it provided further evidence for the recent research on the use of sequential MCA: I argue that this method could be a possible answer to the still occurring debate within feminists scholars on the impossibility to study intersectionality (Baca Zinn & Thornton Mill, 1996; Davis, 2008; Ferree, 2009; A., Hancock, 2007; McCall, 2005; Purkayastha, 2012; Shields, 2008; Valentine, 2007; Yuval-Davis, 2006). In fact, I have proven that membership categorisation allows the in depth study of the intertwining of identity categories.

The study also has practical implications for international aid workers, stressing psychosocial challenges which should be addressed, regardless of the operational difficulties of working in contexts which may not facilitate the provision of equal rights for all. The findings are important in highlighting, to managers of aid organisations, the need to invest more in offering a psychosocial preventative and proactive approach, with the goals of prevention, training, support and mentoring.

7.4 Methodological issues

The survey, aimed at reaching European professionals was entirely developed in English and was administered in English. I have invested several efforts to collect responses representing other nationalities, however, at the end of my survey participants were mostly Italians. Thus, so far results provide a rich insight into the Italian workforce, and at the same time allow future comparisons with other nationalities. Nonetheless, in my visiting period at the University of Edinburgh, I had the chance to compare my qualitative data with other interviews data to aid workers with different nationalities (European, North American and Australian). The similarities and commonalities I have found in the materials (which, as explained in the methodology section, for a methodological rigour I did not discuss in this thesis) opens to interesting reasoning on the pervasiveness of some challenges international aid workers face in the field, no matter what nationality background they have.

In the methodology chapter I pointed out that conversation analysts have a "dispreference" for interviews (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998; Speer, 2002). However, I consider my preference for interview data necessary and fruitful: necessary for the objective difficulties in obtaining naturalistic recordings (Potter, 2004) like a large, comparative body of aid workers' everyday

talk about their experiences in the field; fruitful, because in the interviews interaction a number of culturally shared accounting and reasoning practices were displayed, which are potentially generalizable to situations outside the interview context.

7.5 Further development

For the next steps of the study extra recruitment strategies must be employed to reach a wider target of participants. Future research undertaken with a larger number of participants would be further insightful: in particular, it would be interesting to compare between Italian aid workers and aid workers of other nationalities. In fact occupational migration is a new emerging trend in Italy, and it would be interesting to compare the experiences of Italians with the ones of other countries more used to professional migration.

Future research would also benefit from examining the comparison between junior and senior international aid workers, to investigate if the views on challenges and opportunities change with the years.

The field would benefit from further research on the effects of gender based discrimination and gender identity work on employees, and the impact this has on the aid delivered. The work aid agencies do would benefit from the development of policies and procedures that best empower both women and men to carry out their jobs effectively.

The purpose of this thesis was primarily to highlight an issue, which is not currently widely acknowledged or researched among aid and development organisations: the relevance of gender. My hope is that this will lead to further discussion, research and eventually change in the field, which will in turn have a positive impact on the lived experiences of women aid workers around the globe.

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Appendix A: Survey schedule

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Department of Psychology of the University of Milano-Bicocca (Italy) is carrying out the research project "Being an international aid worker". The main objective of this research is to compile profiles of European women and men that work in this field and to collect information about such a complex job experience. To reach this goal we kindly ask you to fill out the following questionnaire. It will take approximately less than an hour to complete the questionnaire and it is better to answer it in a single session. It is possible answer in different time sessions, but it is possible only if you use the same computer. Your participation in the research is entirely voluntary and you may decide to withdraw your consent at any time and for any reason. We will guarantee privacy and confidentiality during all the phases of the project to the extent provided by the Italian law (d.lg. 30 giugno 2003, n.196, "Codice in materia di protezione dei dati personali"). The information obtained will be used only for the aims of the research. All data will be analyzed together, and therefore your personal contribution will not be traceable. If you are interested, we will be happy to inform you about the results. If you need more information please feel free to contact Alice Gritti, PhD Candidate in Social Psychology, Department of Psychology, University of Milano-Bicocca, (e-mail: a.gritti4@campus.unimib.it) or Elisabetta Camussi, Associate Professor of Social Psychology at the same Department and full member of the Italian Registry of Psychologists n.6676 (e-mail: elisabetta.camussi@unimib.it).
We thank you for your valued collaboration.

BEING AN INTERNATIONAL AID WORKER

SECTION 1: YOU
1. Age
2. Gender
3. Birthplace
4. Nationality
5. Are you registered at A.I.R.E.?
6. Do you own a house in your homeland?
7. Where do you live today?

SECTION 1: YOU - Marital Status
8. Do you have a partner?
9. Do you live together?
10. What is your partner's nationality?

SECTION 1: YOU - Educational Background
11. Bachelor degree?
12. In? Year? Where? (Country)
13. Master degree?
14. In? Year? Where? (Country)
15. PhD?

16. In? Year? Where? (Country)

17. Other studies?

18. In? Year? Where? (Country)

19. What languages do you speak?

SECTION 1: YOU - Your experiences of participation

20. Do you have any associative experiences?

21. Specify if national or international

22. Charity and voluntary participation?

23. Specify if national or international

24. Political participation?

25. Specify if national or international

SECTION 2: YOUR JOB

26. How long have you been working as an international aid worker?
    o Less than 2 years
    o From 2 to 5
    o From 5 to 10
    o From 10 to 20
    o More than 20 years

27. In which countries have you been working?

28. In which country have you worked longest?

29. How long?

30. Which of the following best describes your job status?
    o I have a permanent contract
    o I have a fixed-term contract
    o I just ended a contract
    o I have a new contract

31. Please now consider your current or your most recent contract. Does your contract provide for?
    o Health insurance and medical evacuation
    o Maternity leave
    o Sick pay
    o Paid holidays/vacation
    o Guarantees for your relatives
    o Paid trips home
    o Accommodation and car
    o Language trainings
    o Pension contributions
    o Other-please specify

32. At present you are working for…
    o United Nations
    o European Union
    o Governmental agency for international development
    o Italian Development Cooperation MAE
    o NGO of your homeland
    o International NGO
    o International Committee of the Red Cross
    o Other-please specify

33. Your field is
    o Health
    o Education
    o Gender
    o Agriculture
    o Post-conflict
    o Governance – budget support
    o Other-please specify

34. Your role is
    o Administrative/Accounting
    o Professional/Technician
    o Directive
    Please specify what you are dealing with at present

35. Your project length?

36. Why did you choose to work on this project?
    o The cooperation program of this country
    o My specific assignment here
    o I love this country
    o The historical and socio-cultural aspects of this country
    o This is a key country if you are interested in cooperation
    o Good pay
    o Affective relationships
    o Good network
    o No conflicts
    o High quality of life
    o Good climate and environment
    o Other-please specify

37. How did you find this job?
    o It's an opportunity that happened to me
    o I was actively searching for a job like this
    o Word of mouth
    o Internet

38. Do you have a professional network?

39. What kind of network do you have?
    o Referred to my job's field
    o Referred to my field of expertise
    o Referred to similar organizations
    o Referred to the continent

SECTION 2: YOUR JOB - Working within the Organization
40. Describe briefly what you are dealing with at present (write max 3 lines)
41. Indicate three skills required for your job
42. Which of these skills did you develop thanks to your organization?
43. Does your organization provide course training in these skills?
44. Would you like to have a course-training schedule?
45. Have you had any difficulties carrying out your job?
46. If you have had difficulties, in your opinion what did they derive from?
    o The specific job

- o The colleagues
- o The organization
- o The country
- o Yourself

47. Which solutions did you take?
- o I finished my job despite the difficulties
- o I changed field
- o I changed organization
- o I changed the initial aim
- o I still haven't found a solution

SECTION 3: EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE FIELD - Health
48. Have you had any health problems?
49. Please specify which problems
50. Where did you find medical care?

SECTION 3: EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE FIELD - Security and Safety
51. Have you found yourself in dangerous situations?
52. Please specify one of these situations (write max 3 lines)

SECTION 3: EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE FIELD - Relationships
53. Friendships with…?
- o International women
- o International men
- o Women of your homeland
- o With men of your homeland
- o With local women
- o With local men

54. Intimate relationships with…?
- o International women
- o International men
- o Women of your homeland
- o With men of your homeland
- o With local women
- o With local men

55. Do you have children?
- o Yes, biological child/children
- o Yes, adopted child/children
- o Yes, foster child/children
- o Yes, stepchild/children
- o No

56. From a relationship with?
- o An international partner
- o A partner of your homeland
- o A local partner

57. How many children do you have?
58. How old are they?
59. Do they live with you?

SECTION 4: BEING AN INTERNATIONAL AID WORKER

60. Try to think back to the time you chose to become an international aid worker. What were your motivations?
    o A deep interest towards people, cultures, different countries
    o Desire to find an ethical job
    o Desire to "make the difference" for the less fortunate
    o Desire to prove yourself in challenging experiences from the human point of view
    o A real chance to find a job
    o A job with career opportunities
    o Desire to leave your homeland
    o Desire to change your life
    o Other – specify

61. What did you expect? (Please write max 3 main aspects)
62. …and what did you find? (Please write max 3 main aspects)

63. In your opinion is there a women's way of working in international cooperation? (Please write max 4 lines)
64. ...and is there a men's way of working in international cooperation? (Please write max 4 lines)

65. What does a woman bring as an added value in the aid work industry? (Please write max 4 lines)
66. ...and what does a man bring? (Please write max 4 lines)

67. Think about your professional experience as an aid worker: has being a woman/man helped you in any situations?
68. Please describe one of these situations (max 4 lines)
69. Has being a woman/men been an obstacle in any situation?
70. Please describe one of these situations (max 4 lines)

71. Recent data say that there is a growth in the number of women that work as international aid workers. In your opinion why do many women choose to work in the aid work industry? (Max 4 lines)

72. Give advice to a young European that is studying to become an international aid worker
    o This is the best job in the world
    o This job is like no other job, you must have the desire to make the world better
    o If you want to do this job you must have a strong adaptability, tolerance and flexibility
    o Be ready to become a top spinning in the world
    o After the "honeymoon" there will be "the crisis of your ideals"
    o If you want to do this job you would have to say goodbye to your loved ones
    o This a job you can't do for your whole life
    o Other – please specify

SECTION 5: MAKE AN ASSESSMENT
Now try to make a brief assessment of your professional experience as an aid worker
73. Write three main positive aspects of your experience
74. ...and three main negative aspects

SECTION 6: YOUR FUTURE

Try to imagine yourself in five years' time

75. Will you still be working as an aid worker?

76. What will you be doing? (Please write max 4 lines)

77. Where will you live?

78. ...and what about your family? (Please write max 4 lines)

79. If you want you can use this space to add other considerations or important aspects about your experience

80. Would you also like to grant us a Skype interview about your experience as an aid worker?

We thank you for your valued collaboration!

Appendix B: Interview schedule

Ethics	Re-ask permission to record and re-explain issues of confidentiality and anonymity. Ask if they want me to retell the story behind the research project.
Introduction and focus on the past	Age, current location, years of experience as an aid worker What was the path that led you to choose to become an aid worker? Possible questions on: • Educational background • Charity, associative, political experiences
Focus on the current/most recent working experience	What are you dealing with at present? Organization, aid sector, role?
Aid workers' identity	How would you explain what an international aid worker is to a layperson? What are the skills an aid worker should have? Would you describe yourself as an aid worker?
Critical aspects linked with the job and with the everyday life in the country of mission	What are the challenges you face in your job, if there are any? (prompt: Do you know any aid workers who decided to quit this job? Why?) • Working relations • Health • Security & safety • Relationships (family, children, parents, siblings, friends) • Home and roots, national identity Does your organization provide psychological support if needed?
Feminization of the profession	Recent data report a growing number of women entering the profession; do you see many women? In your opinion, why do many women choose to work in the aid work industry? Do you think women and men have the same opportunities in the aid industry?
Professional (and personal) future	In 5 years time will you still be working as an aid worker? Doing what? Where?
Acknowledgments	Ask if they want to add anything else. Ask if they are interested in a feedback on the findings at the end of the research.

Appendix C: Interviewees details

ID: Aid Worker n° 1/Woman or Man, shorten in AW1/W.
Location: country where the interviewees were based at the moment of the interview.
Job role and organization: current or most recent job role and organization.

ID	AGE	EDUCATION	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	LOCATION	JOB ROLE	ORGANIZATION	AID SECTOR	FAMILY STATUS
AW1/W	28	International development cooperation	11	Italy	Trainer, Project Coordinator	No profit organization (Italian)	Development	In couple without children
AW2/W	29	Political Sciences	3	Central African Republic	Administrative	NGO (Italian)	Humanitarian	In couple without children
AW3/W	35	Social anthropology of development	10	Senegal	Project Coordinator	International NGO	Development (with previous humanitarian experience)	Single without children
AW4/W	55	Agriculture and environment	25	Afghanistan	Evaluation and Monitoring	International NGO	Development	Single with children
AW5/W	28	Peace keeping and security studies	2	Democratic Republic of Congo	Logistics	NGO (Italian)	Humanitarian	Single without children
AW6/W	32	Oriental and African studies	6	Italy	Planning and evaluation	No profit organization (Italian)	Development	In couple without children
AW7/W	36	Political Sciences, humanitarian aid	11	Italy	Desk officer	NGO (Italian)	Humanitarian	In couple without children
AW8/W	29	International development cooperation	4	Burkina Faso	Health and Nutrition planning	NGO (German)	Development	Single without children
AW9/W	30	Human Rights and humanitarian aid	4	Italy	Desk officer	NGO (Italian)	Development	Single without children

ID	AGE	EDUCATION	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	LOCATION	JOB ROLE	ORGANIZATION	AID SECTOR	FAMILY STATUS
AW10/W	29	International development and Peace studies	7	Massachusetts	Researcher, consultant	UNHCR	Development (with previous humanitarian experience)	In couple without children
AW11/W	35	Educational Sciences	8	Mali	Country Representative	NGO (Italian)	Development	In couple without children
AW12/W	42	Medicine and Surgery	11	Ethiopia	Head Physician	NGO (Italian)	Development	Single without children
AW13/W	31	Economics	4	Kyrgyzstan	Senior analyst	No profit organization (Italian)	Development	In couple without children
AW14/W	29	International Relations, Public Health studies	5	Congo	Evaluation and Monitoring	NGO (American)	Humanitarian (with previous development experience)	In couple without children
AW15/W	32	Political Sciences	4	Kosovo	Country Representative	NGO (Italian)	Development	Single without children
AW16/W	29	Engineering	2	Sudan	Project Coordinator	NGO (Italian)	Development	In couple without children
AW17/W	30	Economics and Finance	5	Spain	Financial manager	NGO (Spanish)	Humanitarian (with previous development experience)	In couple without children
AW18/W	27	Political Sciences and International Relations	2	Mali	Administrative	NGO (Italian)	Development	Single without children
AW19/W	31	International development cooperation	5	Peru	Researcher	NGO (Italian)	Development (with previous humanitarian experience)	In couple without children
AW20/W	31	Public Relations	5	Italy	PR	NGO (Italian)	Development	Single without children
AW21/W	32	Agriculture Sciences in the Tropics and Subtropics	5	Ghana	Project Coordinator	Governative Organization	Development	In couple without children

ID	AGE	EDUCATION	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	LOCATION	JOB ROLE	ORGANIZATION	AID SECTOR	FAMILY STATUS
AW22/W	28	Political Sciences	4	Kosovo	Human rights officer	International NGO	Development	In couple with children
AW23/W	33	Political Sciences	9	Italy	Project planning and analysis	NGO (Italian)	Development (with previous humanitarian experience)	In couple with children
AW24/W	65	Oriental Studies, Graphic design	27	Italy	Communication consultant	Governative Organization	Development (with previous humanitarian experience)	In couple without children
AW25/W	34	Law and Human rights	6	Uganda	Program Manager	NGO (Italian)	Development	Single without children
AW26/W	30	Peace Studies	7	Sudan	Senior manager	NGO (Dutch)	Humanitarian (with previous development experience)	In couple with children
AW27/W	34	Political Sciences	8	Congo	Project Coordinator	NGO (Italian)	Development	Single without children
AW28/W	53	Sociology	30	Angola	Program Manager	Governative Organization	Development (with previous humanitarian experience)	Single without children
AW29/W	39	International development cooperation	12	Morocco	Project Coordinator	International NGO	Development (with previous humanitarian experience)	In couple with children
AW30/W	35	Philosophy	5	Italy	Monitoring, PR and communication	NGO (Italian)	Development	Single without children
AW31/W	54	Veterinary	20	Niger	Head of section	European Union	Development	In couple with children
AW32/W	43	Archaeology	5	Niger	Project Coordinator	International NGO	Development	In couple with children
AW33/W	32	Engineering	6	Italy	Consultant, Trainer	NGO (Italian)	Development	Single without children

ID	AGE	EDUCATION	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	LOCATION	JOB ROLE	ORGANIZATION	AID SECTOR	FAMILY STATUS
AW34/W	29	International development cooperation	5	Senegal	HR	United Nations	Development	In couple without children
AW35/M	32	Social Psychology	4	Italy	Project Coordinator	NGO (Italian)	Development	Single without children
AW36/M	35	Political Sciences	9	Haiti	Project Coordinator	Catholic Organization (Italian)	Development (with previous humanitarian experience)	In couple without children
AW37/M	32	International development cooperation	10	Bolivia	Project Coordinator	NGO (Spanish)	Development (with previous humanitarian experience)	In couple with children
AW38/M	36	Engineering	9	Sudan	Project Coordinator	NGO (Swiss)	Development (with previous humanitarian experience)	In couple without children
AW39/M	26	International development cooperation	5	Greece	Projects planning and monitoring	NGO (Italian)	Development	Single without children
AW40/M	41	Oriental language studies	10	Yemen	Country Representative	NGO (Italian)	Development	Single without children
AW41/M	26	International Relations	5	Italy	Administrative	Catholic Organization (Italian)	Development	In couple without children
AW42/M	29	Engineering	3	Italy	Consultant, Trainer	NGO (Italian)	Development	Single without children
AW43/M	28	International development cooperation	6	Ethiopia	Administrative	NGO (Italian)	Development	In couple without children
AW44/M	39	International Relations	15	Italy	Administrative	NGO (Italian)	Development (with previous humanitarian experience)	Single without children
AW45/M	38	Law	6	Iraq	Assistant Deputy Head of Mission	European Union	Humanitarian	Single without children

ID	AGE	EDUCATION	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	LOCATION	JOB ROLE	ORGANIZATION	AID SECTOR	FAMILY STATUS
AW46/M	32	Political Sciences	7	Zambia	Project Coordinator	NGO (Italian)	Development	In couple without children
AW47/M	36	International development cooperation	8	Italy	Administrative	NGO (Italian)	Development (with previous humanitarian experience)	Single without children
AW48/M	38	International Relations	5	Kenya	Administrative and communication	NGO (Danish)	Development	In couple without children
AW49/M	43	Architecture	10	Italy	Project Coordinator	NGO (Italian)	Development (with previous humanitarian experience)	In couple with children
AW50/M	41	Engineering	10	Palestinian Occupied Territories	Country Representative	International NGO	Development	In couple without children
AW51/M	33	International Economics	9	France	Desk officer	NGO (French)	Development	In couple without children
AW52/M	40	Informatics	8	Italy	Project Coordinator	NGO (Italian)	Development	In couple with children
AW53/M	27	Political Sciences	9	Bolivia	Project Coordinator	NGO (Italian)	Development	In couple without children
AW54/M	31	Sociology	5	Italy	Vice-president of a national NGO	NGO (Italian)	Development	In couple without children
AW55/M	33	Engineering	7	Italy	Consultant, Trainer	NGO (Italian)	Development	Single without children
AW56/M	34	International development cooperation	8	Algeria	Project Coordinator	NGO (Italian)	Development	Single without children
AW57/M	41	Political Sciences	13	Italy	Project Coordinator	NGO (Italian)	Development	In couple without children

Appendix D: Transcription notation

I used a simplified version of Gail Jefferson's transcription notation (2004). The system uses three columns: the left hand column contains line numbers, the middle column is the speaker's identifier and the third column is the talk.

(.)	Shortest hearable pause
(3)	Exactly timed pause
Cu-	A dash denotes a sharp cut-off of a prior word or sound
Lo:ng	Colons show that the speaker has stretched the preceding letter or sound. The more colons, the more stretching sound
(word)	Material between brackets represents the transcriber's guess at an unclear utterance
( )	Empty parentheses indicate untranscribable talk. The longer the space between the brackets, the longer the untranscribable talk
Run= =on	A pair of equals signs indicates immediate latching of successive talk
?	Indicates a rising tone
.	Indicates a 'natural' ending
!	Exclamation marks are used to indicate an animated or emphatic tone
Under	Underlining indicates emphasis
°soft°	Degree signs indicate speech spoken noticeably more quietly than the surrounding talk
Over[lap [Overlap	Square brackets between adjacent lines of concurrent speech denote the start of overlapping talk
> < < >	'Greater than' and 'less than' symbols indicate that the talk they encompass was noticeably speeded up, or slowed down, than the surrounding talk
((laugh))	Material in double round brackets indicates transcriber's commentary
fu(h)n(h)ny	A h in brackets in a word indicates a laughter within the word
.hhhh	A dot before an h or series of h's indicates an inbreath

*Informal beat count was used, as recommended by ten Have (1999).

Appendix E: Ethics

Participant Information Sheet: "Being an International aid worker: a psychosocial research project"

About the Project

I would like to invite you to take part in a study on international aid and development workers' everyday experiences of working in the field. The objective is to better understand who are the Europeans that choose this field, their motivations and their experiences. This research is being conducted independently and will be used as the basis of a PhD thesis at The University of Milano-Bicocca, supervised by Prof. Elisabetta Camussi.

What it Involves

To participate in this study you'll need to be available for an interview with me or one of my assistants, which typically takes between 60-90 minutes. The discussion may take place either in person or by Skype, depending on your location and what is most convenient for you. I'm interested in your experiences of living and working in the field, doing aid and development work. I'd like to audio-record the interview so that I have an accurate record of what you say. Extracts from your interview (and others') will be used in the course of writing up my PhD. I'll look for common themes and patterns from all the interviews I conduct; these will then be used as the basis for my claims in the analysis.

Your Rights

During the interview you don't have to answer any questions you don't want to. If you change your mind about me using the information from your interview, you can let me know any time in the two weeks following and I'll delete your interview from my records.

If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, please contact me through one of the channels below.

Confidentiality/Anonymity

Please be aware the data you provide will not be linked to any identifying information, and will only be used for analytic purposes. The data will be used in writing up my PhD and may be used at conferences, in academic journal articles or in reports. If an excerpt of your interview is used, no identifying information will be linked to it, and any information contained in the excerpt that could identify you or anyone else will be edited or omitted. The data will be stored securely and only my supervisor and I will have access to it.

For Further Information

I will be glad to answer your questions about this study at any time. You may contact me at the following channels:

Email: a.gritti4@campus.unimib.it

Phone: 0039 026448 3864

Address: Psychology Department
                Building U6, Floor 3, Room 3170/a
                Piazza dell'Ateneo Nuovo 1 - 20126 Milano – Italy

Psychology Department
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Tel. +39 02 64483700
Fax + 39 02 64483699

Informed Consent Form – "Being an International aid worker: a psychosocial research project".

You are invited to take part in a study on international aid and development workers' everyday experiences of working in the field.

By signing below, you are agreeing that (1) you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet; (2) you are willing to take part in this study; (4) you agree to your interview being recorded and used as data.

_____

Participant's Name (Printed)*

_____   _____

Participant's signature*   Date

Participants wishing to preserve some degree of anonymity may use their initials