Career Reinvention for Executives

Lessons from Madonna

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ABSTRACT

Many executives wrestle with the conundrum of remaining relevant and successful over an extended career. A growing number of executives from the 'baby-boomer'[1] generation are facing retirement, yet need or wish to work longer. Some remain trapped in the corporate prison, lacking the courage to fulfil their career aspirations. In today's turbulent[2] world executives can no longer afford to be complacent and need to adapt to changing workplace demands – often requiring reinvention.

Madonna has reinvented herself multiple times over an extraordinarily successful (yet highly controversial and provocative) career spanning 36 years and shows no sign of slowing down. What can executives looking to extend or reinvent their careers learn from Madonna?

This paper uses a case study to explore Madonna's psychodynamics and describe her strategies to continually adapt herself to be successful across three decades. These findings are incorporated into a practical model to help executives to better understand their careers and periodically reinvent themselves helping them to meaningfully enhance and prolong their careers.

Keywords: self-awareness, career transition, career reinvention, career dissatisfaction, self-belief, focus, retirement, relevancy, working identity, career extension, reinvention strategies, career longevity, liminality

[1] Definition – people born from 1944 to 1964 ("Baby boomers", n.d.)
[2] Turbulent often refers to VUCA: volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous (Horney, & O'Shea 2015)

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1. INTRODUCTION

Choosing a career path, and being able to succeed over a working life is central to our lives in the 21st century. Career choice is one of the key strategic decisions we make. My experience in leadership programmes at business schools, and mentoring and coaching activities, has emphasized to me how many people seem to be at a crossroads in their career. This seems to stem from a variety of reasons, among them career disillusionment, working culture, changing work dynamics, insufficient opportunity for self-expression, fear of redundancy due to age, obsolete skills, changing values, loss of sense of purpose, feelings of imposture…and many others.

This raises questions about how strategically we view our career choices. Do we explore what it takes to sustain a successful career over our working life, or do we feel that everything will work out okay along the way? How many people continue in their job just to afford to live? Or lack the courage or motivation to seek change? Once we have chosen our desired career, do we know how to position ourselves to succeed, and achieve our dreams?

We live in a time of increasing healthy longevity. This leads to both opportunities and challenges. On the positive side, this might allow us to work for longer if we choose. On the negative side, longer lives are leading to financial pressure on pension funds to fund a long retirement (among others: Gratton & Scott, 2016; Quinn, 2016a). The net result is many will need to extend their careers to afford to live.

These dual challenges of being at a crossroads, and needing to extend our careers, led me to ask the question: What do we need to do to adapt to a changing world and how do we remain relevant over an extended career? My thoughts turned to reinvention as a way of achieving this.

Only recently, some authors have started researching career reinvention, but have mostly limited this to career transition, and the role identity plays as we transition (Ibarra, 2004a; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010; Petriglieri, 2012). Ibarra (2004a) proposes unconventional strategies for career reinvention, but focuses mostly on mid-career executives facing career dissatisfaction. In studies on retirees, Freedman (2007), Alboher (2013) and

D'Andrea (2016) envisage encore or second-act careers directed towards part-time projects, exploiting existing skills and experience. Their proposals align with the portfolio concept described by Handy (1980). Gratton and Scott (2016. p.52) argue that people may need to work into their 80s, and propose "gig economy" work – providing a series of "tasks"/services to "sequential buyers". None of these studies however, considers a **holistic approach** to how executives can **reinvent** themselves to **remain relevant** over an extended career.[3] [4] [5]

Developing a holistic approach to career reinvention requires multiple frameworks. I looked at the key influences affecting the world of work, and the challenges these present to our careers. I then considered how executives address these challenges by both gaining a better understanding of these influences, and simultaneously deepening their understanding of their personal attributes needed to position themselves for success in their careers. This I assert requires learning agility[6] to help them increase awareness of the threats and opportunities affecting their careers. Understanding these factors, they will be able to recognise what I term a **career shift imperative,** which they can use to develop strategies to either advance, extend their career along its current path or reinvent themselves on a new career pathway.

Once they implement their strategy, they need to manage their career transition through focused identity work, including experimentation, construction, and reconstruction (Ibarra, 2004a; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010; Beech, 2011; Petriglieri, 2012). The success of the reinvention depends on how authentic they feel about their new identity and the acceptance by others of their new identity. If unsuccessful, they will need to re-examine the external environment, their antecedents, or the reinvention strategy they have employed, reworking these to affect career success. I then combined these factors into a proposed career reinvention model.

[3] Hall (2002, p228) proposes an integrated model of adaptability which focuses on behavioural adaptation; it does not however per se propose a holistic career reinvention as part of this adaptation
[4] Schein (1995) proposes a strategic approach to defining job descriptions, and job planning, which incorporates some elements of the outside-in view and attributes of the individual, but not holistically and does not consider reinvention.
[5] Luthans, Youssef, and Avolio, (2006, p4) assess "psychological capital" through the lens of career success in organisations, focused on the "war-for-talent-perspective" in a turbulent corporate landscape.
[6] Learning agility is defined as the ability and willingness to learn from experience and subsequently apply those lessons to perform successfully in new or first-time situations in Lombardo & Eichinger (2000) and Dai, DeMeuse & Tang (2013)

Madonna's periodic reinvention and courage to take on enormous new challenges and succeed impresses me. One outstanding example of her ability to reinvent herself was her transformation from pop singer to opera singer in the movie *Evita*. Reading the moving story of how she met with President Carlos Menem, put everything at stake to convince him that she could be Eva Peron, and succeeded, made me appreciate the power of her reinventions.

This aroused my curiosity to gain a deeper understanding of how Madonna reinvents herself. It seemed to me that executives could learn valuable insights from her career reinventions. Could this help them to think about how they can remain relevant and achieve sustained success over an extended career?[7] Delving deeper:

- What reinvention strategies can they employ to facilitate this?
- How do they make an effective emotional and identity transition?

I can understand that choosing Madonna as a role model might come as surprise, but I hope this paper convinces you otherwise.

"But I love the idea - whether it's in my work or where I live – exploring new frontiers ..." Madonna, (Ciccone, 2017a)

[7] Career extension in this paper refers to extending one's career from around 35-40 years to around 55-65 years (Gratton & Scott, 2016)

To address these questions, I developed the theoretical frameworks for the model and a **case study** narrative (Piekkari & Welch, 2012; Yin, 2013) of Madonna's career reinventions, created from biographical publications, interviews[8], and documentary films.

I used an **explanation building** approach (Yin, 2013) to analyse the case to examine her career and identity transitions and reinventions, and the role played by charisma and psychological capital. I used psychodynamic lenses (Kets de Vries & Cheak, 2014), and applied Erik Erikson's (1974, 1994)[9] psychosocial life stages to assess how these influenced her, and how she effectively enhanced her relevance and extended her career.

From the lessons learned from Madonna's career junctures, I refined the holistic career reinvention model. My hope is that this is valuable for teaching and coaching executives on career reinvention strategies.

[8] Interviews included written, audio and video formats

[9] Alternatively, the stages of life described by (Levinson, Klein & Darrow 1991; Levinson & Levinson, 1997) could also have been employed as a framework. Erickson was chosen as he considered the entire life cycle.

2. RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This study explores Madonna's career through psychodynamic lenses and describes the strategies she employed to periodically reinvent her career, using the proposed holistic career reinvention model. It will focus on junctures and transitions in her career where reinvention occurred. The insights from Madonna's career will be used to help executives identify when and how to periodically reinvent themselves to remain relevant. The 'how' will focus both on strategies they can employ, and on effective emotional and identity transitions.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Today's turbulent world is characterised by increasing volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (Horney & O'Shea 2015). This **turbulence** affects both the long- and short-term, making our life and career decisions difficult. Since careers provide many with a sense of meaning and purpose in life and become a way to "express the self" (Hall, 2002, p52), it is important to examine how this turbulence affects the sustainability of a long-term career.

3.1 The Changing World of Work

Changing Demographics, the **Changing World of Work,** and the **Changing Nature of Organisations** also influence careers:

Changing Demographics implies that people have increasing healthy life expectancies which either create opportunities for them beyond retirement, or force them to work longer due to financial pressures (Gratton, 2011; Gratton & Scott, 2016; Gratton, 2017; Ellis, Munnell & Eschtruth, 2014; Shultz & Wang, 2011; Toossi, 2004; Vough, Bataille, Sargent & Lee, 2016; Quinn, 2016a; Quinn, 2016b). Demographic forces also affect the supply side. Many countries' populations are declining[10] resulting in a growing "replacement demand" (Gratton & Scott, 2016, p. 63). Further reinforcing this trend, the large demographic cohort of baby-boomers are retiring. This implies that, to meet the replacement demand, our working lives can be expected to extend from around 35-40 years to around 55-65 years (Gratton & Scott, 2016).

The **Changing World of Work** is being influenced by rapidly changing and advancing technologies, particularly artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics, which can perform increasingly sophisticated tasks, substituting low-skilled jobs (Handy, 1980; Handy, 2015; McKendrick, 2017). On the other hand, advancing technologies are creating new opportunities where they complement skilled workers (Gratton & Scott, 2016). Some competencies cannot be replicated or substituted by technology, as the capabilities needed either require complex problem-solving relying on expertise, or interpersonal

[10] Japan is a notable example: Japan's population is "predicted to decline to 87 million by 2060 from a high of 127 million, of which around 40% will be aged over 65" (Gratton & Scott, 2016, p.61)

interactions and adaptability (Autor, 2016). This means that, to remain relevant, we must ensure that our capabilities cannot be easily substituted by technology.

The **Changing Nature of Organisations** denotes the evolution of the way organisations contract psychologically with their employees. The notion of psychological contract has been extensively explored by many authors (notably Argyris, 1957; Levinson, 1962; and Schein, 1978) and describes the employer-employee relationship and the extent to which mutual expectations are met, in a mutually satisfying way. In my view, this is critical to our work experience, as quite often conditions employers view as good enough might change rapidly, lowering our feelings of attachment to our role and employer. Being able to pre-empt these changes becomes important to ensure our employability[11] (Ilmarinen, 2009), again raising the question of how we adapt to keep pace.

In the 21st century we are also seeing new career models emerging – essentially the way employers and employees approach the psychological contract is changing. As executives navigate their career paths, they need to consider how they best fit into their existing employer's career model, or whether they are better suited to pursuing a role in companies with more flexible approaches. Yates (2014) provides an overview of these including: Boundaryless (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996)[12], Protean[13] (Hall, 1996)[14], Kaleidoscope (Maneiro & Sullivan, 2005)[15] [16] and Life-span, Life-space (Super 1996)[17]. Understanding how these varying approaches to careers can benefit or hinder our ability to progress in our careers is crucial to how we adapt to better realise our career aspirations.

[11] In this context employability from the employee perspective implies the ability of workers to constantly adapt themselves to the changing requirements of their work over time, and therefore remain employable. From the employer's perspective, it implies creating the work-place conditions for a stronger psychological contract.
[12] In a Boundaryless career model an employee is no longer constrained by the career ladder and can move sideways, upwards, diagonally, or into a different field.
[13] The term is taken from the name of the Greek god Proteus, who could change shape at will, from fire to a wild boar to a tree, and so forth (Hall 1976).
[14] In the Protean career model the individual manages their career; they are free to move, thereby enlarging their "career space" to encompass their work, home, hobbies, volunteering and studies.
[15] Specifically relevant to women whose careers are compared with a kaleidoscope where they shift the pattern of their careers by rotating the various aspects of their lives to accommodate their relationships, with authenticity, balance, and the need for challenge in their career are seen as key
[16] Although the study was done on women, it could apply equally to men.
[17] The Life-span Life-space model stresses the influences of individual factors and circumstances, and the experiences and opportunities that present themselves including self-concept (notion of identity). Our working lives are most fulfilling when our work allows us to implement our self-concept.

3.2 Remaining Relevant

We have seen the impact of the external influences on employability. What factors can executives control to remain relevant and extend their careers?

Many authors have examined the role of **strategic thinking** and **strategic leadership**[18] and concluded they are key determinants of executive success. Maccoby (2015) further shows that **strategic intelligence** is required because leaders cannot rely only on forecasts – being able to interpret patterns and trends is more critical to business success. He highlights four abilities and conceptual tools needed for strategic intelligence: **foresight, visioning, partnering** and **engaging**[19]. Singh & Useem (2016, p.13) assert that **strategic leadership** enables one to "apply[ ] an active ear to the market and an ability to translate disparate sources, weak signals, and nascent trends into a vision." My contention is that combining strategic thinking, intelligence, and leadership is likely to help executives evaluate and discern what is relevant for their own future.

Equally important, executives can enhance their relevancy through developing their **personal attributes**. Among the authors who have studied the drivers and constituents of career success, Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, and Barrick (1999) explored the role of personality using the FFM Big Five[20]: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness. They showed that general mental or cognitive ability, demographic influences[21], organisational[22], human capital,[23] work/family variables such as family demands, and motivational factors all **influence and predict career success**. Therefore, executives may need to acquire and/or strengthen these attributes.

Strategic intelligence and personal attributes are not standalone factors which ensure relevance; it's important to look at how they function together. Gratton (2011, Societal…,

[18] Harper (1991); Kermally (1994); Hendry, Johnson & Newton (1994); Leadership in action Journal (1998); Ferling (2000); Hambrick (2001); Goldman (2006); Martin (2007); Reece (2008); Goldman, Cahill & Filho (2009); Finkelstein, Cannella, & Hambrick (2009); Martin (2009); Adair (2010); Clayton (2011). Markides (2012); Krupp. & Howland (2013); Mattone (2013); Groysberg (2014); Rylatt (2014); Bernakova, Shen & Krupp (2014); Dragoni,Tesluk, Van Katwyk, In-Sue, Moore, & Hazucha (2014); Kobacoff (2014); Executive Leadership Journal (2015); Maccoby (2015); Singh & Useem (2016); Melnyk (2016); Sloan (2017)
[19] Definitions of Maccoby's tools
[20] FFM Big Five – Five-Factor Model of personality from the Five Factor Theory of Personality (McCrae, & Costa, 2003)
[21] Including: gender, marital status, socio-economic status
[22] Including: socialization, mentoring, type of position, early career challenge and career systems – talent management
[23] Including: education, experience, career interruptions

para.4) argues that it requires individuals to exercise "reflexivity"[24], for which many authors (Spreitzer, McCall & Mahoney 1997; Tannenbaum 1997; Dries et al., 2008; Silzer & Church 2009; Dragoni, Tesluk & Oh, 2009; Yukl & Mahsud, 2010; McCall Jr., 2010; and Dai, DeMeuse & Tang, 2013) suggest **learning agility** is important. By applying learning agility, executives increase their awareness of the threats and opportunities affecting their careers.

Combining strategic intelligence, awareness of personal attributes and learning agility would enable executives to recognise what I term the **career shift imperative** – having the foresight to know either when their career direction is under threat through external influences, or when their personal attributes no longer support career progress. This helps them to assess the adjustments needed in their personal attributes to position themselves for success. In my view, a career shift imperative implies either diversifying one's portfolio of capabilities/skills/attributes to adjust to changing career demands or completely **reinventing** one's personal attributes and aligning with a new career direction.

3.3 Sustaining Career Success through Deliberate Reinvention Strategies

Having identified the need for career shift, the executive could consider either career **advancement** (progression on current path) or **extension through reinvention** (new career pathway). They then need to formulate a **strategy** to **transition** to the **new career**.

Strategy is about making choices (Lafley & Martin, 2013, What Strategy is, para.2) to answer the following questions:

- What is your winning aspiration (job/role choice)?
- Where will you play (target region/company)?
- How will you win (what is your value proposition vs. competition)?
- What capabilities do you need (personal attributes)?
- How will you manage the transition (emotions, identity)?

[24] The capacity to both reflect on and make decisions about what it is they want to become

Answering these questions helps guide the **reinvention options** that executives can choose.

So far, career development researchers seem reluctant to consider the strategic context for career development. This is surprising, as executives are generally highly engaged in strategy and strategy execution as part of their essential competencies (Krupp & Howland, 2013; Ferling, 2000; Reece, 2008; Executive Leadership, 2015; Groysberg, 2014). I view this as a critical gap in holistic career reinvention[25].

As we live longer, healthier lives, many reinventions might be required in our extended careers. Developing strategies to ensure that our career direction evolves to adapt to a changing environment is crucial.

3.4 Managing Transition

Following the formulation of a career transition strategy, how do we manage the **transition** itself? Ibarra (2004b, p3) describes career change "as any major change in work-role requirements and work context ... and as a process that may result in a change of job, profession, or in one's orientation to work". Career transition is a difficult process, especially to a different career path. Gratton and Scott, (2016) recognise that multiple transitions bring new stresses and complexities, greater uncertainty, and relevancy difficulties.

These dynamics might lead people to become accustomed to multiple transitions, but does not consider what happens on an emotional level to individuals in transition. Bridges (2009, Chapter 3, Expect and Accept…, para.1) describes the psychological effects of career transition. He notes that you must let go of your old identity to take on a new identity and suggests a "grieving zone"[26], and a "neutral zone"[27] of emotional healing before we

[25] Some alternative potential solutions to career extension have been proposed. These include the notion of "portfolio worker" – having several part-time jobs simultaneously (Handy 194, 2015), "gig" economy workers: providing a series of tasks/services to sequential buyers (Gratton & Scott, 2016), and encore" careers: taking on new jobs after retirement (Freedman, 2007; D'Andrea, 2016).
[26] Grieving zone- anger, bargaining, anxiety, sadness, disorientation, depression
[27] Neutral zone – "everything is in flux. Things are up in the air. Nothing is a given any more, and anything could happen" (Bridges, 2009, Chapter 4)

can enter what he calls “new beginnings”[28]. Only once we have passed through all three phases can we consider the transition to be complete.

Ibarra (2004a, p.xi) describes a notion of working identity “made up of many possibilities, some tangible and concrete, defined by what we do”, who we associate with, and our work and life narratives, and some only “existing in the realm of our future potential” or dreams. She argues that when we change careers we “change[ing] our selves”. Since we are many selves, we don’t only change our identity, but need to consider the full “range of possibilities”. and how these could be combined to form our new identity. This identity transition is crucial to reinvention.

Kets de Vries (2005) suggests that career transitions often are accompanied by imposter feelings, including low self-esteem, anxiety, and neurotic imposture. Success becomes meaningless and a burden, leading to a constant fear of exposure. This poses a potential risk to reinvention. Transitions, however, are not always negative. In a study on adults’ life transitions, Bauer & McAdams (2004) found a clear link between people whose stories emphasized personal growth, and higher levels of satisfaction with the transition. The implications are that reinvention might be a tool for greater career success and satisfaction.

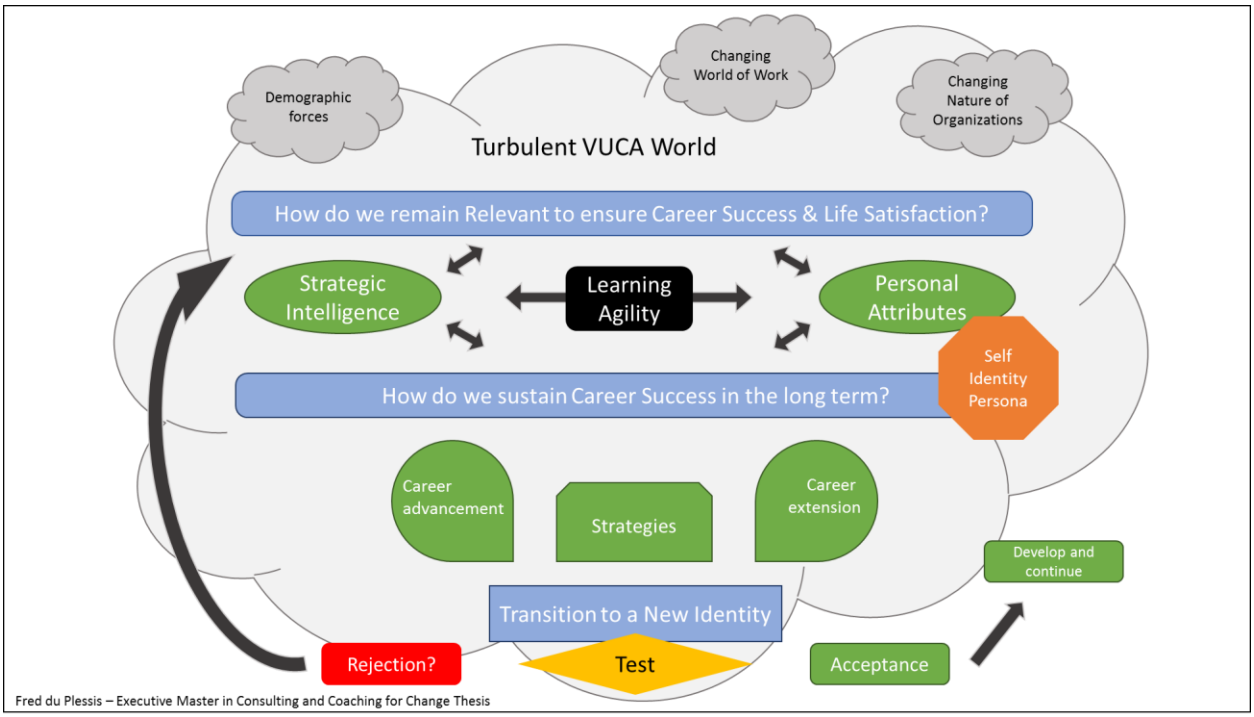
Once an individual has worked through these factors of transition, the test lies in the acceptance of their new identity by others and them being comfortable with the new identity. Only then can the reinvention realistically help them remain relevant and ultimately improve their chances of career success.

3.5 Towards a Model for Career Reinvention

In Figure 1, I have attempted to integrate all these factors into a preliminary model considering reinvention as a regular career phenomenon. This model could provide a framework for guiding executives in their career reinvention. It will be applied in the Madonna case study analysis.

[28] New beginnings – “Beginnings are a psychological phenomena. They are marked by a release of new energy and new direction – they are the expression of a new identity.” (Bridges, 2009, Chapter 5)

Figure 1. Conceptual Career Reinvention Model

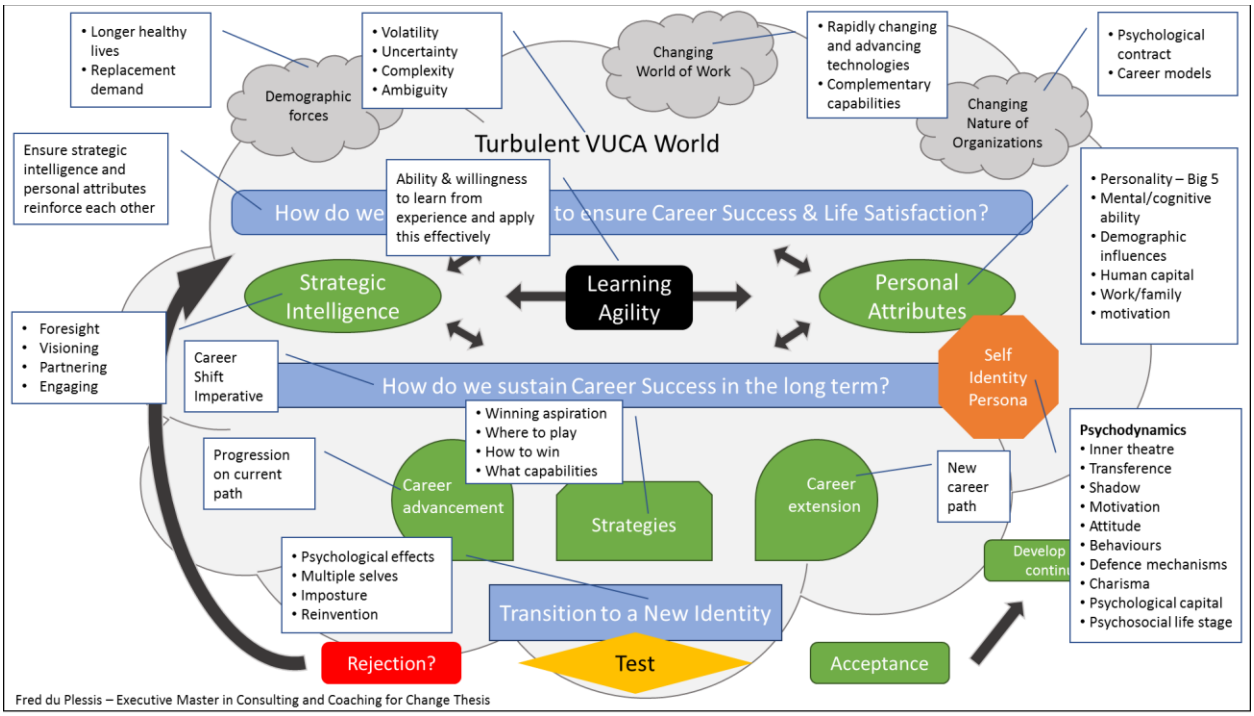


3.6 How would this Model be used in Practice?

The model follows the logic (starting at the top of the diagram) that to continuously adapt our career and remain relevant in this changing world requires us to gain an in-depth understanding of the external forces (**strategic intelligence**). We then carefully examine our own antecedents that are required to remain relevant in this changing external world (**personal attributes**). We apply **learning agility** to assess how changes in the work environment could present opportunities or threats to our career. Learning agility also helps us determine any specific personal attributes needing development to meet the career challenge. This helps us to recognise the **career shift imperative** required and to identify adjustments needed in our personal attributes to position us for success in a new career. Questions in terms of new career direction could look either at **career advancement** or **career extension** – both requiring **reinvention**. In looking at new **career options** we need to think about our **winning aspiration**, **where we will play**, **how we will win**, and what **capabilities** are needed to succeed.

Formulating and implementing a **strategy** to **transition** to a new career requires focused identity work, with its experimentation, construction, and reconstruction. It also entails dealing with the emotions of transition. The **test** whether the reinvention has worked or not, depends simultaneously on others **accepting our new identity,** and on us being **comfortable** in this **new working identity**. If unsuccessful, the model allows us to loop back to re-examine the external environment, our antecedents (personal attributes), and the reinvention strategy, reworking these to affect career success.

Figure 2. Conceptual Model with Explanations[29]



3.7 Psychodynamics of Career Reinvention

Closely allied with personal attributes are the factors that drive the individual's attitudes and behaviours. To understand what has driven Madonna's success (and contributed to her failures); I will apply a clinical perspective using psychodynamic lenses (Kets de Vries

[29] To assist the user of the model, these call-outs are provided expanding on the elements requiring consideration in each step of the career reinvention.

& Cheak, 2014, p6)[30]. I will focus on her "inner theatre"[31] to discover the motivation behind her behaviour, and on her inter-personal relationships to discover what defence mechanisms and transferential[32] (Kets de Vries, 2008, p11) processes she applies.

I will also explore the "shadow side" (Kets de Vries, 2008, p9)[33] of her personality. Madonna is often portrayed as a narcissist, examining how this plays a role in her relationships and career will serve as an important clinical lens. The work of Kets de Vries (1995) will be used to explore this. Some authors[34] have described Madonna's personal magnetism and charisma. These aspects and her psychological capital will be examined using Avolio and Luthans (2005) and Luthans, Youssef, and Avolio (2006), focusing on her authenticity and positivity. Her charismatic leadership will be considered through the lenses of Avolio and Yammarino (2013)[35].These aspects could provide insights into how her personal attributes play a role in her relevancy and career success. Finally, the stages of psychosocial development proposed by Erikson (1974, 1994) will be used to explore Madonna's development stages and how these influenced her career reinventions.

[30] There is a "rationale behind every human act"; that a "great deal of mental life – feelings, fears, motives – lies outside the conscious awareness"; that nothing is more central to who a person is than "the way he or she regulates and expresses emotions"; and that human development is an inter- and intrapersonal process where we all "are products of our past experiences" (Kets de Vries & Cheak, 2014, p3).

[31] Inner theatre – "the stage filled with people who have influenced, of better or worse, our experiences in life" (Kets de Vries & Cheak, 2014, p6)

[32] Transference "the psychological imprints of primary early care givers – particularly our parents – are so strong that they cause a confusion in time and place, making us act towards others in the present as if they were significant people from the past" (Kets de Vries, 2008, p11)

[33]"People aren't always aware of what they are doing – much less why they are doing it. People have blind spots, referred to as their shadow side (Kets de Vries, 2008, p9)

[34] Essany, (2012); "You Don't Know Madonna - Jennifer Egan", (n.d.)

[35] They reflect that charisma holds a central place in leadership, and explore the bonding between leaders and followers, suggesting that charismatic leaders create an emotional attachment, respect, and trust in followers.

4. METHODOLOGY: DEVELOPMENT AND ANALYSIS OF THE CASE STUDY

To understand what drives Madonna to adapt and continue achieving success, we must understand her on a psychological level, and her antecedents behind her success. Therefore, a qualitative research approach was preferred.

In this paper, I have chosen to use a **historical longitudinal case study**[36] research approach (Yin, 2013), and a **phenomenological explanation building**[37] (Yin, 2013) approach to analyse the case.

I developed the case study as a narrative, analysing biographical publications, interviews[38], and documentary films on Madonna. The narrative does not attempt to describe her entire life story in detail, but provides sufficient biographic context to facilitate readability, emphasizing the critical junctures in her career where she reinvented herself, both successfully and unsuccessfully. I paid specific attention to confirmation, exception, and other cognitive biases in the sources used to develop the narrative (*Outsmart your own biases,* 2015). Where practical, I have used more than one source to develop contentious topics. A supplementary **biographical chronology of Madonna's life** and achievements appears in **Appendix 1**.

In the analysis, I attempted to explain how she approached her career transitions, reinventions, enhanced career relevance, adaptation of style and persona in changing identities at critical junctures, charismatic leadership, key personality attributes, and how she effectively extended her career.

[36] A historical longitudinal case study is preferred because of the single unit of analysis – Madonna, exploring her career history over many points in time – hence longitudinal. A case study is the appropriate research approach due to its suitability for studying the who, what, where, why or how questions about a person, based on a full range of evidence-documents, artefacts, interviews, and observations (Gerring, 2006; Ellet 2007; Thomas 2011; Cresswell, 2012; Piekkari, et al*.,* 2012; Thomas, 2013; Yin, 2013)

[37] Explanation building approach to analysing the case: "To explain a phenomenon is to stipulate a presumed set of causal links about it, or how or why something happened. In most case studies, explanation building occurs in narrative form. Because such narratives cannot be precise, the better case studies are the ones in which the explanations reflect some theoretically significant propositions, whose magnitudes might start to offset the lack of precision." (Yin, 2013 Explanation Building). In addition, Yin (2013), Pressing for a… also suggests that four principles underlie the research: "First, your analysis should show that you attended to all the evidence. Your analytic strategies, including the development of rival hypotheses, must exhaustively cover your key research questions."; "Second, your analysis should address, if possible, all plausible rival interpretations."; "Third, your analysis should address the most significant aspect of your case study." And," fourth, you should use your own prior, expert knowledge in your case study."

[38] Including written, audio and video formats.

Stand-alone themes and clustered recurring key themes were used to develop **analytic generalisations**[39] (Yin, 2013), allowing inference of evidence of deliberate strategies and other insights that led directly to Madonna's career reinvention. The effectiveness of these strategies is explored here.

The lessons from Madonna's career are used to validate a proposed model to help executives identify when and how, to periodically reinvent themselves to remain relevant over an extended career.

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[39] Analytic generalisation is defined as a way of making inferences from the analysis of a case, through making generalisations about the findings. Specifically, they "may be based either on a) corroborating, modifying, rejecting, or otherwise advancing theoretical concepts you referenced in designing your case study, or b) new concepts which arose upon the completion of your case study." (Yin, 2013, Chapter 2, Use of Theory … , para 6)

5. CASE STUDY, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The case study presented here refers to Madonna's major career reinventions. The analysis of each of these reinventions follows immediately, so that this will be more convenient for the reader.

5.1 Introduction[40]

Everyone knows Madonna: She has sold over 300 million records worldwide, grossed more than US$1.31B on live tours, ranks as the world's top-selling female recording artist and top solo artist, earned several Grammy awards and two Golden Globe awards. *Time* magazine included her in their list of the "25 Most Powerful Women of the Past Century" (Whacker, 2010). Besides her success in the music industry, she has acted in more than 20 movies, is an accomplished movie producer, a highly successful songwriter, author of children's books, a role-model businesswoman, and more recently a philanthropist. She has also had a significant impact on social culture – a cultural icon "who remade American culture" (Marcus, 2012). She has made controversy around sexuality and religion synonymous with her brand, which has led to criticism and condemnation from some, but is acknowledged by others to have benefited her career. Within this paradox, she has relentlessly pursued the dream she held since she was a young woman to "rule the world" (Taraborrelli, 2008, Restless Child, para.3).

She has achieved and sustained success by constantly reinventing herself ("Get a head for business, tune into Madonna", 2004), continuously "push[ing] the boundaries" in her music and her image (Lecaro, 2015). She has inspired young people from the start – her rebelliousness, confrontational style, iconic fashion styling, feminism, provocative self-publicity, and enormous self-belief and energy create an icon (O'Brian, 2007) that people of all generations identify with.[41] She is a leading figure in encouraging sex-positivity.[42] [43] She "started a revolution amongst women in music ... her attitudes and opinions on sex,

[40] A biographic timeline of Madonna's life and career can be found in Appendix 1 for reference
[41] "The sense of empowerment that Madonna offers is inextricably connected with the pleasure of exerting some control over the meanings of self, of sexuality, and of one's social relations." (Fiske, 2011, p102)
[42] Like many terms within feminism, **sex positivity** means different things to different people. As a broad ideology and worldview, **sex positivity** is simply the idea that all **sex**, as long as it is healthy and explicitly consensual, is a **positive** thing. www.wgac.colostate.edu/sex-positivity
[43] "Her music and videos have shown women to be fully female and completely sexual, all the while maintaining complete control of their lives" (Paglia, 1990).

nudity, style and sexuality forced the public to sit up and take notice" (Fouz-Hernández & Jarman-Ivens, 2004).

5.2 Childhood and Adolescence

Madonna Louise Ciccone was born in Michigan on 16 August 1958. She was the eldest daughter and third child of eight[44]. Her father Tony, a first-generation Italian American worked as an engineer for Chrysler and General Motors in Detroit. Her mother (also Madonna) was of French-Canadian descent.

When Madonna was five years old, her mother died of breast cancer. She assumed the mother-role to her three younger siblings and helped take care of the household. Her mother's death affected her deeply, and the situation was further compounded when her father married the family housekeeper, Joan Gustafson[45] in 1966. Madonna said: "I'm going to be really strong if I can't have my mother. I'm going to take care of myself" (Taraborrelli, 2008, Restless Child, para.27). She felt betrayed and angry and that she had lost some of her father's affection. This made her rebellious, gaining her the attention she craved, especially during her teenage years. It was a strategy which would serve her well in her future career (Whitaker, 2014).

The family was raised with strict Catholic values.[46] Madonna attended Catholic schools and had difficult relations with the nuns. Despite this, being gifted, she excelled at school, and enjoyed drama classes, acting and showing off. Her father believed in hard work, and enforced strict regimens of homework and chores in the evenings. He controlled their free time strictly, limiting access to television (Bego, 2000). Her relationships with both her father and step-mother were strained.

Her father wanted her to take piano lessons but she preferred listening to music and pictured herself as a star like Nancy Sinatra or Diana Ross. She just didn't know how she could make this happen.

[44] Tony had six children with Madonna's mother, and two children with Joan after Madonna's mother's death.
[45] The impact on Madonna was perhaps compounded by the fact that Gustafson had only joined the family six months earlier.
[46] Madonna described her mother as a "religious zealot" (O'Brian, 2007, p36).

At 15, she took up ballet at the Rochester School of Ballet, where the owner and teacher Christopher Flynn recognized her talent and acted as her mentor, challenger, and guide.[47] She fantasized that dancing could provide the opportunity for stardom … "when I started having a dream, working toward that goal, having a sense of discipline, I started to really like myself for the first time" (Bego, 2000, Ch3, para 61). Flynn managed to convince the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor to grant her a scholarship to the dance department. There she met Steve Bray, a musician who became her boyfriend and long-time supporter of her career.

She was an excellent dance student and was invited to audition for a workshop at world-renowned Alvin Ailey's Dance Studio in New York City, where she studied with Pearl Lang, a former leading dancer in the Martha Graham Dance Company ("History", 2017). This prompted her to leave university (encouraged by Christopher Flynn) to take on a dance career, much to the disappointment of her father[48].

5.2.1 Analysis

The early loss of her mother is likely to have left her with a sense of deprivation, and frustration, leaving her feeling that she could not depend on anyone's love or loyalty (Kets de Vries, 1995). This, combined with her relationship with a strict, controlling father, and her struggle to accept her stepmother, deeply influenced her. Madonna felt that her mother could not and should not be replaced. This translated into anger towards her father – the rage she felt because of her mother's death was directed at him because of how he had handled it. Although Madonna grew up in a "connected", "balanced" family, it mostly had "inflexible" characteristics (Olson & Gorall, 2003). She is likely to have experienced the middle-born syndrome, being the 3rd of eight children born close together further accentuating her need to stand-out, perhaps harbouring a least-favoured status and competing for parental attention (Carlock, 2014). Perhaps she felt that she lost her individuality (Taraborrelli, 2008).

[47] "She was always trying to be better, always positive, always filled with urgency, always making the most of it, and she had this tremendous thirst for everything, insatiable," says Flynn of Madonna (Bego, 2000, Express Yourself).
[48] Her father was an engineering graduate

These circumstances meant that she constantly yearned for her father's approval and acceptance, which he did not readily give. One could argue that it was not that her father was unwilling to approve of, or accept her but that most of this might be resentment in Madonna's mind towards Joan – a form of projection[49]. She seemed to feel a strong sense of abandonment, confirmed in her own statements. She described her mother as "beautiful, and very loving and devoted to her children". The anguish of losing her "left me with a certain kind of loneliness and an incredible longing for something" ... "If I hadn't had that emptiness, I wouldn't have been so driven" ... "I see a very lonely girl who was searching for something"[50] (Taraborrelli, 2008, Restless Child, para.29).

Madonna's rebelliousness was aimed at gaining her father's attention through her aberrant behaviour. This could have elevated her sense of self-worth, and is often observed in people seeking acceptance, approval or appreciation by others for their achievements. They often become driven to achieve success or fame, and it is not uncommon that they do misbehave to gain notoriety and a reaction. The more people react to their behaviour the more this behaviour is reinforced (Kets de Vries, 2010). This, I believe has laid the foundation for behavioural patterns we see throughout Madonna's life.

Madonna's upbringing might have exacerbated her rebelliousness, because she felt restricted and unable to express herself. Her later provocations towards Catholicism seem to confirm this. In my view, Madonna was also making a statement to her father – hoping to shock him and finally gain his attention or alternatively trying to exact revenge on him for raising her in this way.

Christopher Flynn helped her recognize her passion.[51] Her observation that she "started to really like myself for the first time" (Bego, 2000, Ch3, para 61), seems to be a key breakthrough which strengthened her sense of self-worth from positive behaviours. Her efforts were reinforced by the recognition she achieved at the time. She built on these, never spurning an opportunity to progress remaining undaunted in her quest to succeed.

[49] Projection "scapegoat others when things go wrong" (Kets de Vries, 2008, p105)
[50] in an interview with *Vanity Fair* magazine on her childhood
[51] She thanked him 35 years later for "encouraging her to follow her dream" ("Madonna Has Her Say At Rock Hall Ceremony", 2008)

Her need for acceptance and approval might also explain her drive for perfection, and her controlling disposition seen later in her business leadership and the management of her live performances. Dismissing her early managers and producers when she felt they did not meet her standards might also show this (Kets de Vries & Cheak, 2014).

On the shadow side, her desire for recognition or fame at its extreme might appear as narcissism (Kets de Vries & Cheak, 2014). Madonna has been described as a narcissist (Essany, 2012; "You Don't Know Madonna - Jennifer Egan", n.d.), perhaps deduced from her statement that she wants to “rule the world”, her stage persona, her charisma, and outward self-confidence, ambition, and competitiveness. How much of this is the real Madonna, and how much of this is the self she wants her audience to see? As Kets de Vries (1995, Ch.18) asserts “A healthy dose of narcissism is essential for human functioning”, it is the dangers of excess that are problematic. Although Madonna shows clear narcissistic tendencies at times, I would argue in a similar way to Kets de Vries (1995, Ch.18), that she exhibits what he terms “constructive narcissism” – having “the capacity for introspection”, “radiat[ing] positive vitality” and is “capable of empathetic feelings”. This I see in her intelligence, projection of brand value, connectedness with fans, frank reflections from close associates, honesty about her childhood feelings, willingness to learn from others, adapting her behaviour in the face of criticism, and empathy towards people less well-off. My conclusion is that she has enough self-awareness to be a constructive narcissist[52].

5.2.2 Implications for Executives

Madonna is not the average executive we know. Undoubtedly, she possesses extraordinary drive and determination, with a controlling disposition, and an almost overpowering need for recognition. This has set the tone for her life and career, and I believe her success. It is likely that, as she became more successful she became addicted to the feelings of power this gave her. That drove her onwards and upwards.

[52] (Kets de Vries, 1995, Ch.18) describes the drivers behind narcissism, pointing out that children who are trying to cope with the shortcomings of parental care, while trying to ward of feelings of frustration, they attempt to retain the original impression of perfection of their early years, creating a “grandiose, exhibitionistic” image of themselves, and “idealized” image of their parents. If good-enough care is absent, the child may experience this critical period with a sense of deprivation. This is highly likely in Madonna’s case with the death of her mother when she was 5 years old.

Hertconstructive narcissism played a role in her positive focus to succeed, and this insight might be key to executive success, because it motivates people to make things happen (Kets de Vries, 1995).

We could infer that if executives become more self-aware, they may unlock their understanding of their identity, selves, what drives them. It could also help them develop the courage to make the changes in personal attributes required to succeed in their careers. While many executives may not readily develop all the psychodynamic lenses required, a trained coach may help them with these aspects.

5.3 Madonna the Determined Rebel – 1978-1981

In July 1978, at the age of 19, Madonna arrived in New York City wearing her winter coat, with $35 in her pocket (Whitaker, 2014). All she had to kick-start her career was her training in dance; she had little musical background and no network.

New York was still recovering from a financial crisis. It was a difficult start for Madonna and to make ends meet she had to find part-time work.[53] She soon found that dancing did not bring her much work and was badly paid. Her dream of becoming a world-famous dancer was not materialising, and she started thinking about a new direction. **Her first reinvention?** In 1979, Madonna met struggling musician, Dan Gilroy and moved with him and his brother into an abandoned synagogue in Queens, which they also used as a recording studio. Together with bassist Angie Smit they formed “Breakfast Club”, with Madonna sharing vocals and drums with Dan. Dan also introduced her to the guitar, further stimulating her interest in music.

Madonna continued to look for opportunities and found an ad in the newspaper to join the French singer, Patrick Hernandez[54] in Paris as a backup vocalist and dancer for his upcoming world tour. She auditioned for the role and was told that instead of her working with Patrick Hernandez, they would turn her into a star. She saw this as a potential “Big Break” and travelled to Paris. There she trained with a vocal coach and dance teacher,

[53] “I worked at Dunkin’ Donuts, I worked at Burger King, I worked at Amy’s (a Greek fast-food restaurant). I was a coat-check girl at the Russian Tea Room. I worked at a health club once a week.” (Bego, 2000, Chapter 4, para.30; Whitaker, 2014). She also did nude modelling for an art school and some photographers to earn enough to live on.
[54] Famous for the single ‘*Born to be Alive’*.

but soon the dream started to go wrong. Although well-paid and living a life of luxury, Madonna was bored and found that she was not centre-stage, but only there to boost Hernandez (Taraborrelli, 2008).

After six months, she left and returned to Dan Gilroy. She learned to play several instruments. She actively took the lead in promoting the band.[55] It was at this stage that she started fantasizing about becoming a singer and an actress and looked for casting opportunities. She landed the lead role in underground movie director Stephen Lewicki's *A Certain Sacrifice*. A precocious, yet vulnerable two-page handwritten letter and a picture of herself had grabbed Lewicki's attention.

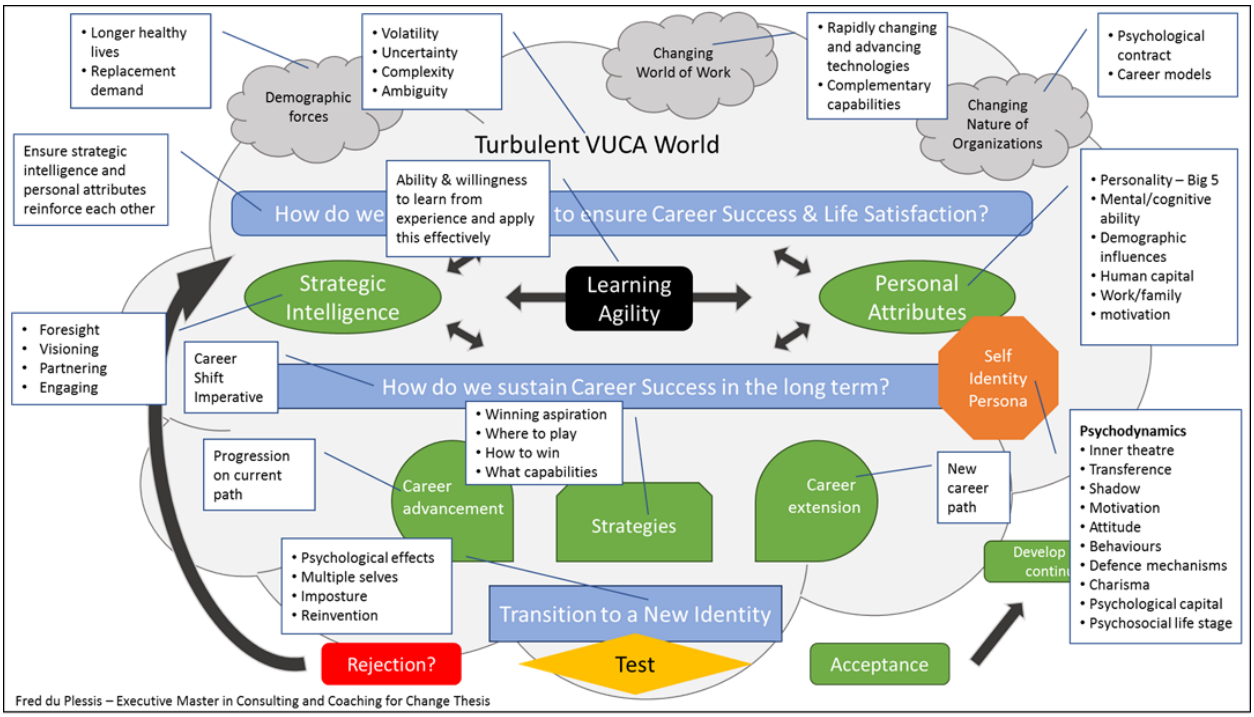
In early 1980, Madonna split with the band because her growing ambition caused conflicts. Determined to follow a career in music, she focused on how she could gain greater control of her own destiny. She partnered up with her Michigan friend Steve Bray in New York and formed a small band[56]. As the band improved she became more creative in her song-writing. They moved into the Music Building on Eighth Avenue, a place where many young hopeful musicians met to learn their craft. Together they worked on writing songs and developing their sound. Madonna continued promoting the band to managers, agents, record companies, and club owners, although not successfully (Cross, 2007).

5.3.1 Analysis

I analyse her career reinvention junctures using the proposed career reinvention model in Figure 3. From the analysis, I translate the lessons from Madonna into insights (based on analytic generalisations, my own experience, and inferences) that are relevant to executives at each stage of their career development.

[55] Key strategies were phoning record stores, potential managers, and recording companies.
[56] There were a few arguments about the band's name, but they eventually agreed on "Emmy" She wanted to call it "Madonna"

Figure 3:



Leaving university to seek her fortune in New York seems to confirm Madonna's continued anger for her father – almost in a spiteful way. Being a college graduate himself, he had similar expectations for her. It also emphasizes her strong need to stand out and be recognised for something that she felt passionate about.

The difficult start in New York could easily have discouraged Madonna and led her to give up and return to the security and comfort of home. Instead, her determination and drive led her to look at alternatives, even if they were outside of her experience and comfort zone. Dancing was no longer attractive as an entertainment genre. She recognised a **career shift imperative**, by noticing that the **working environment was changing**, and that she needed to adapt to this. Having reasoned that music was more popular, she expected that this might bring new opportunities. She also recognized that she needed **new skills** and was willing to learn them.

Madonna shows her determination not to fail. She could see that the band that she had joined was unlikely to bring her the success she craved. She therefore looked for bigger opportunities, and landed the role in Paris. To me, this showed that she could also be

opportunistic in the strategic options she followed. Remaining within her chosen reinvention – music, she was willing to take a risk to find her Big Break. Being only part of the support show, and not centre-stage might have reminded her unconsciously of her middle-born syndrome. Her preferred self is the show-person, in control. Again, the rebel comes out, and she escapes back to New York, determined to start over. She **loops back** to recalibrate her **strategic options**.

Many people refer to her relentless pursuit of her vision[57]. Madonna was reluctant to leave her progress to others, and her need for control is a strong driver. She felt that she needed to own the stage, and therefore recognized that she had to be multi-skilled. This reinforced her understanding of the **career shift imperative.** I feel her **learning agility** allowed her to triangulate the changing **external influences** with the adjustments needed to her **personal attributes** – key here are the skills and motivation elements.

She noticed that her fan base consumed music, lyrics, singing, and dancing, often simultaneously. To be relevant she needed to master all four. She developed her **personal attributes** to match the needs of the fans, learning to play several instruments and refining her lyric writing skills. She was still however missing the breakthrough to attract the record companies.

Applying Erickson's (1994, p129) shows that Madonna might still be in the late adolescence, early young adulthood psychosocial stage of her life. The crises she was likely dealing with were: identity vs. identity diffusion (Stage V) and intimacy vs. isolation (Stage VI). The attainment of a stable self-identity in this early stage of her career seems to have been a struggle. My perspective is that only once she transitioned her identity to lead singer, and others accepted her identity, did she trigger her young adult phase, characterised by her beginning to build sustained relationships both personally and professionally.

[57] Some examples include: Arrington (1985); Rolling Stone (1991); Metz, & Benson (1999); Bego (2000); Taraborrelli (2008); Cross (2007)

5.3.2 Lessons from this first reinvention for executives in the early phase of their career:

- It is critical to take stock of your offering and takes immense **self-awareness** to realise it is not good enough.
- Matching your offering with what the **market requires** is key.
- It takes self-belief, **courage** and willingness **to learn** and to take risks.
- **Build** and **leverage networks** that can help promote your career
- Reinventions do not happen by chance, they are a result of **thinking on a strategic level** and understanding **the external environment**
- Develop the **capabilities**, **attributes**, and **enablers** needed to make this happen.
- Take action on your reinventions

5.4 Madonna Breaking Through - 1981-1983

In 1981 Madonna met Camille Barbone, a music talent agent, and was offered a modest management contract[58], which allowed her access to accompanying musicians that she could front in gigs in clubs in the city. New York was overcrowded with talent all vying to get noticed. Madonna realised she needed a support base – people in her corner, able to guide her, fight for her and put her in contact with the right people.

Barbone tried to interest Bill Lomuscio, a top manager and promotor, in Madonna. Eventually, Lomuscio agreed to let Madonna do an opening act for a band he was promoting, a key breakthrough. The audience called her back for encores. Regular club performances followed. She wasn't, however, successful with record companies, because it seemed her voice alone was not as impressive as her live performances. The "whole package" was required (Taraborrelli, 2008, Drama Queen, para.7). Importantly, her live performances and self-styled image[59] began attracting regular cult audiences.

The music scene in New York was moving progressively from Pretenders/Pat Benatar rock to dance music. Madonna was acutely aware of this and wanted to move in this direction and create a distinctive image. She worked with Steve Bray to develop songs

[58] The contract was only for Madonna and excluded the other members of the band
[59] She created an image built on multi-layered, multi-coloured second-hand street clothes and junk jewellery

and mix demo tapes for her fans, and adopted 'Boy Toy' as her tag-name and displayed it on her belt buckle. She teamed up with designer Maripole, and together they further developed her trademark look that would soon be loved by teenage girls.

Her popularity spread quickly and the record company talent scouts started attending her gigs. Barbone was cautious, steering her towards Columbia records, but Madonna felt she was too slow, and not in tune with the sound and image she was trying to create, so she decided to move on. She recognized the commercial implications of the new musical direction and that the dance club DJs were the key gatekeepers who chose to play the songs that could make an artist. At a trendy club, Dancetaria, she attracted the attention of DJ Mark Kamins, who played her demo song *Everybody* (*Madonna-The Interview,* 2010) and then introduced her to Mike Rosenblatt and Seymour Stein of Sire Records.[60] Both were impressed by her drive, determination, aggressive nature, and star quality, and she quickly negotiated a recording contract.[61]

Her first single release was popular in dance-clubs. Madonna started work on her first album[62] with Warner Records' leading producer, Reggie Lucas. Sire Records recognised that they had potentially struck gold and worked with Madonna to shape up her act. She deepened her knowledge of the music business because she quickly realised that no manager, producer, agent, or record company would have her best interests at heart (Taraborrelli, 2008). She felt that it was important to build strong friendships with leading music promotors and convinced Sire's top dance music promotor, Bobby Shaw, to allow her to attend meetings with DJs. Here, she learned about the latest trends from industry experts. At one such meeting, she met New York's top DJ, John "Jellybean" Benitez, who helped her expand her network considerably.

5.4.1 Analysis

She builds on elements of her first reinvention: awareness of her surroundings, taking in the trends, and linking up with people who could help her with her new career direction.

[60] A subsidiary of Warner Bros. Records.
[61] This consisted of $5,000 as an advance, plus royalties and publishing fees of $1,000 for each song she wrote.
[62] She had promised both Steve Bray and DJ Mark Kamins to produce her single, but rather chose Warner's highly experienced Reggie Lucas.

Applying the model, she analyses her working environment from a **strategic** point of view, demonstrating a strong outward mindset (Day, & Moorman, 2010; The Arbinger Institute, 2016). She spotted what the fans were demanding and simultaneously what the competition was delivering and identified her development needs. Key to this reinvention was that she did not abandon her dancing, but combined it with singing. She had used this to some effect in Paris in 1979.

She uses **strategic intelligence** fully in this phase. To breakthrough to a recording contract needed her outside-in view of the music scene, understanding that it was changing rapidly. Her current promotors did not detect that. Her **learning agility** recognised another **shift imperative**. This time she moved on, building on her success to access the key gatekeepers, the DJs, leading to her contract with Warner Records (Sire), and the start of her mega-stardom. Involving herself in producing her album meant that she strengthened her **personal attributes**, learning from the best music producers. One could argue that this was her need for control re-surfacing, but I feel there was more to this - she had found a **winning aspiration**, knew **where she needed to play** and had figured out how she was going to **win**. By learning from the producers, she understood the **capabilities** she needed. In other words, she had a clear **strategy**. She could use these attributes again in the future. She also developed her network with industry experts, and became more self-reliant in managing her affairs. In my view, the combination of these insights and actions on Madonna's part represent a "defining moment" in her career (Ibarra, 2004a, p141).[63]

5.4.2 Key lessons from this reinvention for executives building their careers:

- Harness **strategic intelligence** by leveraging knowledge of the eco-system dynamics crucial to your success.
- Strive to **collaborate** with the strongest, most influential supporters who match your vision.
- Recognise when it is **time to move on** to take yourself to the next level
- Develop **clear strategies to reinvent your career**.

[63] Ibarra (2004 a p143) describes these as "dramatic moments leading to sudden shifts, or some are symbolic small events that gradually shape a whole series of life or career decisions"

5.5 Into the Big Time –1983-1986

Warner Brothers was now fully committed to promoting Madonna. She realised that it would be difficult for her to deal with her recordings, concert act shows, and focus on the business and concluded that she needed a manager. In 1983, on the recommendation of Seymour Stein, she hired Freddie DeMann, ex-manager of Michael Jackson.

She released her first studio album, *Madonna,* in July 1983. After a battle between Madonna and Reggie Lucas, Jellybean remixed the album, adding the track *Holiday*. When the record climbed the US album charts, mainly because the single release *Holiday* reached number 16 on *Billboard's* pop singles chart, her decision was vindicated. In April 1984, another single release, *Borderline*, became Madonna's first top-10 hit. Her fourth single release, *Lucky Star*, rose to number four in the charts. Madonna debuted on national TV on *American Bandstand* where presenter Dick Clark asked her, "What do you really want to do when you grow up?" "Rule the world," she replied (Madonna & St. Michael, 1990, p19).

This was astounding progress – within a year Madonna had achieved part of her ambition. Her success sometimes seemed to get the better of her; she was accused of being ruthless in her relationships with people, and was not a particularly nice person. In her 1984 interview with Randy Taraborrelli (2008), he observed that although she was objective about herself and her shortcomings, she admitted that she was tough and that she didn't always treat people well.[64]

In November 1984, Madonna returned to one of her earlier ambitions – becoming a movie star. She started filming in *Desperately Seeking Susan*. Initially hired in a support role for the movie's lead, Rosanna Arquette, it became a movie about Madonna playing herself[65], wearing her distinctive style of clothes, and featuring her own music (*Into the Groove*). The movie release started Madonna-mania and became a top-five grossing movie in 1985.

[64] "Madonna manipulates in her own way but I don't think there is a mean bone in her body … maybe a knuckle or two," an example of her way with people - Mark Kamins (Madonna, & St. Michael, 1990, p84).
[65] Madonna eventually replace Rosanna Arquette in the leading role

Her second album, *Like a Virgin*,[66] released November 1984, went triple-platinum in February 1985, and the charts featured a succession of singles from the album. Madonna chose to produce the album with Sire's Nile Rodgers.[67] Together, they brought the album to life with her seductive double-entendre female image in the title track *Like a Virgin.* She promoted the album with a video on cable TV, a key marketing tool Madonna subsequently used. She understood the power of the media in all forms, making sure that she had all areas covered for total media saturation (Taraborrelli, 2008, Bego, 2000; Cross, 2007). Madonna's first concert tour *Like a Virgin* was a sell-out. Madonna married actor Sean Penn on August 16, 1985 further reinforcing her celebrity status.

5.5.1 Analysis

In *Desperately Seeking Susan*, her compelling ability to promote herself convinced the producer that she was the better fit for the lead role. Madonna's reflection on her performance was that she was playing herself. Despite her success, I feel this is contradictory to the essence of acting. Actors need to be able rid themselves of themselves so that they can act as someone else. This says to me that Madonna was not comfortable transforming her identity to that of someone else she does not relate to.

She uses **multiple offerings** combining releases of singles from her albums with video releases and live concert tours, reinforcing her promotion. She later used this **reinforcement strategy** in remixed albums to great effect, often refreshing the sound with new instrumentation through a remix with a different musical genre.

I feel that Madonna really understood that **diversification** was key to success in a constantly changing environment. She leverages a key strategic approach – "strategic adjacencies"[68] – in the entertainment business. Zook and Allen (Harvard Business

[66] This album has been described as portraying Madonna as "a street-smart dance queen with the sexy allure of Marilyn Monroe, the coy iciness of Marlene Dietrich and cutting glibness of a modern Mae West." (Taraborrelli, 2008, Like a Virgin, para.2).
[67] Nile Rodgers made the 1970's band Chic famous, and produced David Bowie's 1983 smash-hit *Let's Dance*.
[68] Through **adjacency** diversification, your organization moves into related segments or businesses that utilize and, usually, reinforce the strength of your profitable core. This approach requires that you: Identify adjacent business opportunities and recognize patterns.

Review, 2003) describe **horizontal and vertical adjacencies**[69] [70]. These adjacencies might have their own, at times overlapping, value chains[71]. Madonna leverages horizontal and vertical adjacencies, and the interdependencies and synergies between these.

To implement adjacencies needs what I call **lean-outs** and **step-outs**. In lean-outs, you maintain your core position and lean out into another strategic area where you are still able to remain in your comfort zone (vertical adjacencies). The psychological barriers to success are smaller and there is less chance of experiencing **impostor feelings**. In step-outs, you step into a space beyond your core (horizontal adjacencies); this is less secure, so the feelings of being an **impostor** would be **higher**.

Madonna realised that to remain relevant she needed to master the lean-outs – in her case, the vertical adjacencies of a live music production. She also learned, and was willing to experiment with, step-out strategies, e.g. venturing into acting. Each movie she acted in included her music, enabling her to connect her audience back to what she was good at (an **established working identity**), while working on creating a **new working identity**. This helped ensure greater acceptance for her new working identity.

I feel her statement "...I want to rule the world", uncovers some deep unconscious indicators of her own **psychological capital**. She clearly believes in herself, and knows she has what it takes to be successful. I feel she believes she has the positive psychological capacities needed (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2006).

5.5.2 Key lessons for executives further building their careers:

- **Diversification** of your skill base drives greater relevancy, enabling you to consider new roles.
- Understand what **lean-outs** are available and develop the capabilities to master these.

[69] In horizontal adjacencies, the strategy aims at moving into similar businesses that can leverage capabilities and enablers that already exist in the current portfolio. In vertical adjacencies, the strategy aims at adding more steps in the same value chain to improve efficiency, control, and cycle time.
[70] Seen from the entertainment business context, typical vertical adjacencies required in the production of a music show include singing, backing vocals, dancing, instrumentation, lighting, stage/set design, and choreography of the performance. Typical horizontal adjacencies include studio recording, filming, live production, music publishing, musician promotion, movie making, music distribution (physical and digital), fashion accessories, photobooks, etc.
[71] Value chain - the steps needed to get to the product, service or performance

- Start careful experiments with **step-out** strategies that incorporate what you are already doing.
- Stay **connected** with decision-makers, with whom you have an established working identity, while working on your new identity.
- Understand and build your **psychological capital** (self-belief and motivation to succeed).

5.6 Inventive Madonna - 1986-1989[72]

Behind Madonna's meteoric rise is a story of drive, determination, self-belief, attitude, and unfailing hard work, combined with a clear strategic approach. This was particularly evident when she released six albums between 1986 and 1990. Her first strategy was to reinforce marketing these albums by releasing 16 singles, ensuring a near-continuous presence in the charts.[73] Her second strategy was to record videos (sometimes provocative) of these single releases and her tours with MTV.[74] The third strategy she pioneered was to promote her studio album releases with live tours, choosing the tour locations carefully to maximise her audiences[75]. A fourth strategy she initiated, and employed to great effect, was to release remixed versions of her successful singles as greatest-hits compilation albums.[76] These four strategies allowed full exploitation of all forms of media in a sophisticated way.

Madonna also continuously experimented with new musical ideas, striving for innovations in sound (*Madonna-The Interview*, 2010). She moved from new wave rock to disco, to dance music, to pop.[77] Later in her *Ray of Light* (1997) album, she was instrumental in bringing electronic music into the mainstream.[78] Her lyrics contained autobiographical detail (Rolling Stone, 2015), innuendo and double-entendre, allowing for multiple

[72] Her Billboard number ones during 1986–90 were: Live to Tell (1986), Papa Don't Preach (1986), Open Your Heart (1986), Who's that Girl (1987), Like a Prayer (1988), Vogue (1990), Justify my Love (1990).
[73] She achieved seven number one hits.
[74] She released a total of 20 videos from 1986-1990.
[75] She started this in 1985 with *Like a Virgin*.
[76] The remixes were sufficiently different and used different instrumentation and sound effects to refresh the sound. Her first big success with this approach was the 1987 *You can Dance* album.
[77] These were interspersed with Latin, Funk, Gospel, and some Classical music (e.g. *True Blue)*.
[78] In *I'm Breathless* (1990), she introduced Broadway show tunes, adding jazz, swing, and big-band themes. She experimented further in albums *Erotica* (1992) and *Bedtime Stories* (1994) with ballads, "uptempo" dance, and "new jack swing", and *Something to Remember* (1995) included R&B in the style of Marvin Gaye. In *Music* (2000) and *American Life* (2003) she experimented with folk and acoustic music – predominantly love songs. She returned to electronic dance songs in *Confessions on a Dance Floor* (2005).

interpretations by her audience (Taraborrelli, 2008). This willingness to experiment and reinvent her offerings allowed her to retain her fan-base, and add new older and younger fans.

5.6.1 Analysis

During this period Madonna continued her diversification strategy aimed, I believe at keeping herself relevant in a constantly evolving music scene. Her marketing strategy showed how well she understood the need for diverse approaches brand promotion. She also used a step-out approach through sound innovations.

5.6.2 Key Lessons for executives positioning for success in their careers:

- Diversification of skills and abilities increases relevancy
- Understand your personal brand, and utilise diverse approaches to promote yourself
- Innovate to stay ahead of the competition

5.7 A Turning Point – 1986-1994

This period of her career also saw her first failures. In 1986, she acted with Sean Penn in George Harrison's *Shanghai Surprise* produced at a cost of $17M, but only grossed only $2.2M. A few years later, Madonna reflected that she had allowed too many other people to make decisions on her behalf during the filming. To exacerbate matters, Sean Penn engaged in a massive war with the media, including physical altercations, leading to more embarrassment for Madonna.

In 1987 she experienced another failure in the movie *Who's that Girl?.* She unsuccessfully tried to blend Marylin Monroe's image, Judy Holliday's voice, and Carole Lombard's acting. This was a big contrast with her earlier movie *Desperately Seeking Susan*, where she successfully played herself.

From the outset, Madonna had pushed the boundaries and courted controversy. She became more cynical, perhaps due to her emotionally difficult relationships. Her sometimes direct, sometimes implied sexuality first appeared in her Boy Toy moniker.

Later, she added sexually outspoken talk to her performances. She attracted criticism from conservative and religious circles when she added crucifixes as jewellery. Madonna refused to back-off, pushing harder against the boundaries of acceptable language, behaviour, and imagery.

Her *Like a Prayer* album[79] was particularly provocative. The *Blonde Ambition Tour* which promoted this album generated strong negative reactions from religious groups for her sexually explicit performance of *Like a Virgin*.[80] *Rolling Stone Magazine* declared it the best tour of 1990. In 1989, Pepsi agreed with Madonna to make an advertising video based on the album's title track *Like a Prayer* for which she would receive $5M. In parallel, Madonna was making her own video of *Like a Prayer* to accompany the launch of the record. The day after the Pepsi commercial's first broadcast, her own *Like a Prayer* video, containing a mixture of sexual and religious imagery featuring Madonna, appeared on MTV. The video drew criticism from Christian groups and the American Family Association threatened to boycott Pepsi products. Pepsi pulled its Madonna commercial, but honoured the $5M commitment to Madonna.

The *Justify My Love* video[81] set a new first for Madonna – it was deemed too sexually explicit for MTV and was banned from the network. Madonna turned controversy into profit: as soon as MTV refused to air *Justify My Love*, she rush-released the video for retail sale. The publicity generated drove the single to the top of the charts.

In 1990, Madonna released a studio album *I'm Breathless*, featuring dance song *Vogue*, aimed at the dance trend in gay clubs where people posed as models or celebrities. *Vogue* went straight to number one in the charts and became her all-time best selling single at that time. This was an important move by Madonna to broaden her audience – which now increasingly included the LGBT scene.[82]

[79] Released March 1989
[80] In response, Madonna said, "The tour in no way hurts anybody's sentiments. It's for open minds and gets them to see sexuality in a different way. Their own and others'," (Fisher, 1991).
[81] Released November 1990.
[82] In the 1990 MTV annual music awards, Madonna starred with what was to become a cult version of her *Vogue* single in which she portrayed Marie Antoinette.

In 1992, Madonna broke new ground in sexual explicitness by publishing a photographic art book *Sex* featuring her in mostly explicit poses. Again, she understood the value of controversy, and ensured that the book featured marketing and design innovations – a coffee table book with stainless steel covers and spiral binding, sold in sealed wrapping, and including her latest CD, *Erotica*. Despite being expensive at the time,[83] the book sold 500,000 copies in its first week. *Erotica* was required to carry a warning 'Parental Advisory: Explicit Lyrics', surpassing Madonna's previous albums and videos in terms of sexually explicit content.

In 1993, ignoring her critics, she acted in the erotic thriller, *Body of Evidence*, featuring sadomasochism and bondage, which was poorly received by critics. Later that year she launched *The Girlie Show World Tour*, dressing up as a whip-cracking dominatrix surrounded by topless dancers. Pushing the boundaries even further, she appeared on the *Late Show with David Letterman* in 1994 and had to be censored. The reaction of her critics and fans to this trend was that "she had gone too far" and that her career was over (Taraborrelli, 2008, Bedtime Stories, para.1).

5.7.1 Analysis

Here we note a few deviations from her **successful reinventions**. Previously, she applied **strategic thinking** to understanding the **external environment** and in the interests of her audience. She usually ensured her antecedents of successful performance were always in place. Although, generally she was more successful making her own decisions, her excuse to me seemed a rationalisation on her part. My view is that her **strategic intelligence** and **learning agility**, allied with a strong support base previously stood her in good stead. Instead, she became distracted, losing focus. In these failures, she neglected some successful behaviours.

She neglected her fans' expectations of her **working identity**, attracting negative criticism for her **step-out** to highly controversial performances. Her fans **rejected this**

[83] Retailed at US$49.95 for 120 pages.

identity. Ironically, some **step-outs** worked in her favour (MTV and Pepsi). I feel although this was the case, it was unlikely to prove sustainable.

Using the Erikson (1994, p129) lens, Madonna is at Stage VI, where her likely crisis involves intimacy vs. isolation. Although during this period she had multiple relationships, here we see her rejecting intimacy. Perhaps the use of sexuality was her showing anger towards her father and her former partners.

5.7.2 Key negative lessons for executives to avoid:

- **Misreading the antecedents** for relevancy, leading to creating a working identity that did not gain acceptance.
- **Failure to develop strategic intelligence** fully and therefore misreading the expectations of employers.
- **Not managing** the requirements of the **transition** fully or correctly.
- Stepping-out without fully **assessing the implications** of **moving away** from a core **working identity**.
- Not showing sufficient **patience** with career progress, leading o rash decisions
- Not considering the **consequences of decisions** (e.g. impact on family)

5.8 Madonna the Businesswoman

The negative publicity surrounding her image, did not deter her success. She was a self-acclaimed control-freak (Madonna & St. Michael, 1990), actively seeking perfection from the best producers for her studio recordings, music videos, and live performances. She combined their expertise with her intense attention to detail, and a vivid conceptual, artistic grasp of the imagery she was trying to create (Metz & Benson, 1999).

Although she attracted some of the best minds and strongest companies in the entertainment business, she retained control. Loyalty is important to her. After 14 years as her manager, she promoted Freddy DeMann to president of her company Maverick Records (see below). She hired top lawyer Paul Schindler to represent her in business deals.

A controlled, hands-on management style was prominent in the video production of her 1990 *Blonde Ambition* tour, *Truth or Dare*. The tour incorporated all the elements of a multimedia pop concert featuring music, dance, and theatre. Madonna, as creative director and producer, supervised every aspect of the show's conception and planning, auditioning dancers and musicians, costume design,[84] and selecting the themes. She played a key leadership role, building team spirit across the dancers, musicians, choreographers, and technicians, keeping them motivated; resolving disputes; and ensuring quality by establishing the highest standards of performance. Business leadership was a new direction for Madonna.

Madonna reached new heights of fame in 1990, and the *Blonde Ambition* tour was a great success in North America, Europe, and Japan. Madonna however still dreamed of critical respect as a film actress (Taraborrelli, 2008). Her chance came in *Dick Tracy*, the Disney movie featuring her and Warren Beatty, indulging in her seductiveness in the character Breathless Mahoney. It became her biggest box-office success to date.

Whenever she wanted to pursue a new direction, or develop a new acquaintance, Madonna would launch a charm offensive that ensured that she gained the attention of the person or people who could help her attain the goal. She would find out as much as she could about them before meeting, and then engage them in a question and answer session to build her understanding. This she did with Warren Beatty,[85] who she saw as a key guide, mentor, and decision-maker in her quest to land a top role in a movie.

Similarly, she ensured that she networked with and surrounded herself with people who kept her informed. "She has a lot of people feeding her with the information she needs, and she looks at it more creatively than other artists do. She absorbs everything, and she asks a lot of questions" (Jellybean Benitz in Taraborrelli, 2008, In Bed …, para.18). She combined this information with strong instincts, and had her fingers on the pulse of society, understanding the latest trends.

[84] Madonna collaborated with Jean-Paul Gaultier on the metallic, cone-breasted costumes – the iconic image of the tour.
[85] Soon after her failed relationship with Sean Penn.

In the *Truth or Dare* documentary movie[86], she banned producer Alek Keshishian from filming her business meetings. In interviews, she refused to discuss profits, revenues, or business strategies, and forbade her staff from talking about these (Taraborrelli, 2008). This obsession with control over her business interests reflected her own need for control.

In April 1992, she signed a $60M joint venture with Time Warner Inc., securing a cut in distribution, in addition to her 20% royalties as an artist. The company, Maverick Records[87], provided a vehicle for Madonna's creative and promotional talent through the production of music, video, TV, publishing of music and record royalties. Madonna remained contracted to Warner[88] for her own recordings, but Maverick positioned her to develop and promote other singers and musicians (Bego, 2000; Taraborrelli, 2008; Cross, 2007). Her biggest success was Alanis Morissette, whose album *Jagged Little Pill* sold 30M copies by 2000.

Madonna is one of the few female record producers in the music business, comparable to male legends, including George Martin[89], and Quincy Jones. Forbes called her "America's Smartest Businesswoman" (Schifrin & Newcomb, 1990).

5.8.1 Analysis

Establishing Maverick Records demonstrated remarkable **strategic thinking** and business acumen, as controlling her value chain was key to her success. It also emphasized how well she understood and captured the value she brought to a relationship – both through her products and her brand.

S**trategic intelligence** again helped her establish the need for a **shift imperative**. Her need for control plays a role in her decision to form a strategic alliance, which helped her capture value. She uses her **vision** to influence the direction of the industry by promoting young artists with new styles. She honed her own skills in music production – strengthening her **capabilities** with skills transferable to her own company. **Engaging**

[86] Called *In Bed with Madonna* outside North America.
[87] She also owned Siren Films for film and video production; Webo Girl for music publishing; and Music Tours Inc. for live performances.
[88] Warner Records continued to provide distribution for her music, videos and publications
[89] producer of *the Beatles* albums

the best music producers in Warner ensured her execution was the best. Her loyalty to her employees and associates, and her willingness to share the rewards of her success with them,[90] indicates effective use of **psychological capital** in her leadership, derived from her **strong will**, **confidence to succeed** and **resilience** in the face of adversity (Avolio & Luthans, 2005)

Madonna's business **strategy** in the JV with Warner has a clear **winning aspiration,** to secure a greater share of royalties, enabling her to expand her creativity, and **winning** through greater control. This helped her to remain ahead of her competition.

5.8.2 Key lessons from this diversification for executives positioning for success:

- Understand **strategic areas of focus** in your role and ensure that you **retain control**.
- Understand the **value** you bring to a business relationship – your capabilities, reputation, and **personal brand**.
- Position yourself ahead of the competition through **guarding your intellectual property** and driving outstanding execution.
- Use every opportunity to **learn** so that you can **master your skills**.
- Develop the **highest quality** complementary mutually supportive **network** possible.
- Invest and develop **psychological capital** to enhance relationships.

5.9 The Need for Reinvention – High-Fashion Evita-Madonna - 1994-1996

The end of 1994 was a watershed for Madonna. *Erotica*, the *Sex* book, *Body of Evidence*, and *Dangerous Game* became her nemeses. She realised that she had to do some damage limitation if she was to emerge from this and gain the forgiveness of her fans. Years later she would admit, "that was a time in my life when I was extremely angry. Angry with the way I was brought up. Angry about how sexist this society that we live in

[90] E.g. appointing Freddy DeMann as CEO of Maverick

is. Angry with people who assumed that because I had sexuality that I couldn't also be talented…" (Taraborrelli, 2008, Trash…, para.13).

A toned-down Madonna re-emerged seen first in her ballad *I'll Remember,* recorded for Alek Keshishian's film *With Honors*. Subdued appearances on *The Tonight Show* with Jay Leno and David Letterman followed. Her next two studio albums, *Bedtime Stories*, and *Something to Remember*, showed further appeasement in a clear attempt to reach out to her fans.

As part of this reinvention, and intention to be taken more seriously, Madonna started showing an interest in high fashion. She already had a strong working relationship with Jean Paul Gaultier from the *Blond Ambition* tour. Her next step was to walk the runways in Paris Fashion Week in 1995, to strong acclaim from Chanel's Karl Lagerfeld and Andre Leon Talley of *Vogue* magazine. Later, she posed for a series of advertisements for Versace.

Madonna's reinvention was complete when she successfully played Eva Peron in *Evita*. When she heard that Alan Parker was chosen to film Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Evita,* the story about the famous Argentinian First Lady, she wrote Parker a 4-page letter, telling him why she was perfect for the part of Eva Peron.[91] She promised that she would sing, act, and dance her heart out if she got the role (Bego, 2000; Taraborrelli, 2008; Cross, 2007). After much deliberation, Parker decided to give Madonna the role.

Madonna did not have the vocal range for the role, which demanded operatic capabilities. She immediately took voice-training lessons with vocal coach Joan Layder.[92]

More troubling for Madonna was that she felt tremendous conflict between the persona she wished to project and the one demanded by the role – it contradicted her reinvented new softer, less controversial self. Parker felt that the old Madonna would fit the role of Eva perfectly – her craving for fame, money, power, and glamour. The physical similarities

[91] "[O]nly I can understand her passion and her pain" (Bego, 2000, Chapter 14)
[92] "It was as if she had gone to bed and, magically, awaken a real singer" (Taraborrelli, 2008, Perfect Casting?).

between her and Eva were uncanny.[93] In the end, Madonna won her battle and convinced Parker to do an Eva-lite based on the new Madonna-lite (Taraborrelli, 2008).

Not satisfied with the London replica of the balcony at Casa Rosada, Madonna wanted the climax of the movie shot at the actual location at the presidential residence in Argentina. She wanted to experience the emotions Eva would have felt standing there facing the public. She travelled to Argentina and was disappointed to see an orchestrated political campaign in opposition to her acting in the movie. Their insinuation was that Madonna would be an insult to the memory of Eva. Carlos Menem, the President of Argentina, called the movie an outrage. Undaunted, she persisted until she got a meeting with him. In preparation, she extensively researched his life and political career, and tried to understand his vulnerabilities. In the five-hour meeting, dressed in a 1930s outfit, as Eva would have, she was able to persuade him, by skilfully demonstrating her authenticity, appealing to his emotions, and reminding him of Eva (Taraborrelli, 2008; Bego, 2000; Cross, 2007).

Madonna tried to fuse herself into the role of Eva. To ensure that she became the part, she did everything she could to absorb her character, lifestyle, and environment, asking people who had known Eva well-thought out questions about every aspect of her life. The film, released in December 1996, was a huge commercial and critical success, and one of the top 10 movies of 1996. *Q* magazine's Paul Du Noyer commented, "If ever there was an ideal vehicle for Madonna's dream of transcendent stardom, this must be it." (Du Noyer, 1996)

5.9.1 Analysis

This was the most emphatic and remarkable reinvention of her career, following the criticism and rejection from her fans, critics, and religious groups. Much like her first career reinvention, this **change imperative** was essential for her career survival. She approached this reinvention with tremendous drive and determination. It seemed that strong vocal opposition, criticism and adversity acted as a stimulus to her. I view this as

[93] Both Madonna and Eva were revered and vilified but for different reasons. Like Madonna, Eva, was "accused of every sin under the sun and called a whore" (Guilbert 2002, The Fundamental Contradiction, para.10).

another “defining moment” in Madonna’s career (Ibarra, 2004a, p143). It required innovative use of both **lean-outs** (dancing and acting) and **step-outs** (opera singing, and a new identity) for her to be successful.

I describe this as ‘shrewd seductiveness’, projecting this new self, emphasized in her charm offensive on Alan Parker, Andrew Lloyd Webber, and later Carlos Menem in winning the role, and access to the balcony at Casa Rosada. She had to utilise all her antecedents to succeed – her **personal attributes** – negotiation, charm, and personal brand, strategically out-manoeuvring her competitors, but most of all her **emotional intelligence** being in strong empathy with the persona of Eva Peron. Madonna also made sure she learned everything she needed, and developed her voice, for the role she was to play . This demonstrated enormous **learning agility**.

Madonna’s success in persuading Menem I see as **charismatic power**, through creating a strong emotional and intellectual connection with him. His public disrespect for her became respect and admiration for her in person. He trusted that she would do Eva justice. She skilfully combined the characteristics of **idealized influence**, **inspiration**, **intellectual stimulation** and **individualized consideration** to influence him (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013).

The emotions required to fully transition appear in this reinvention, perhaps because these have received more attention from her biographers. Madonna recognised that she must end the rejected behaviour of her old-self even after Parker tried hard to persuade her to return to the old-self. Applying Bridges (2009) thinking, she had to go through a grieving, neutral and new beginnings phase to complete her transition. I feel she had already come through the grieving and neutral phases when he tried unsuccessfully to convince her.

Applying Erickson’s (1994, p129) lenses, Madonna is in Stage VII – generativity vs. stagnation. Her desire at this stage was to have a child[94], and her realisation that her

[94] She was pregnant towards the end of the filming of *Evita*

professional competitors were much younger than her, all played a role in strengthening her determination to achieve both personal and professional goals.

5.9.2 Key lessons for executives needing to recover from failed reinvention:

- **Admit failure**, reflect on what hasn't been successful and why.
- Utilise adversity/criticism/opposition as stimulus for voluntary reinvention – **bouncing back**, but in a different and sometimes unexpected way,
- Assess whether a lean-out or step-out reinvention is required. Develop the options and execution plan.
- Work on changing personal attributes and focus on those that have come under criticism to **create a new self** which fits the aspirational role.
- Develop knowledge and **master skills** needed to succeed in the new role.
- Resolve to **maintain the new self** even when enticed to return to an old self, recognising the psychological and emotional phases of transition.
- When challenged, **demonstrate** with **authenticity** that the new role can be filled.

5.10 Madonna – Motherhood – 1996-2002

On October 14, 1996, she gave birth to her daughter Lourdes.[95] For Madonna, this meant a major change to her life, image, and career. She switched her intensive workouts to yoga, studied the Kabbalah, and focused on writing music, avoiding the media as much as possible. Her interviews were tame, lacking talk of sex and shock value.

These changes were evident in Madonna's new album, *Ray of Light*, which departed radically from her previous work. The album included many new directions: electronic dance music; traditional Indian music, her views on world issues, and the emotional price of fame. She explored her own emotional development, reflecting on her childhood. The accompanying video showed some ambitious style reinventions, not based on her sexuality.[96] Significantly, this transformation caused no loss of popularity or worldwide

[95] The baby's father was Carlos Leon, Madonna's personal trainer.
[96] These included Madonna as Goth-Girl, as Shiva, and as a geisha.

acclaim. *Ray of Light* hit number two on the album charts and went triple platinum in the US.[97]

In 2000, Madonna moved to London to live with her new partner, actor and director Guy Ritchie. In August, her second child, Rocco was born. One month later, she released her new album, *Music*, which rose to number one within two weeks. A month later, the *Music* single became her 12th number one single in the US. Madonna and Ritchie were married on 22 December 2000 at Dornoch Castle in Scotland.

In 2001, she returned to concert touring. The *Drowned World* tour was a sophisticated and carefully planned multimedia extravaganza featuring music, lighting, video projection, dancing, and theatre. Significantly, the concert audiences were not the same people who had attended her earlier tours. She had attracted a much younger audience. Unlike her contemporaries, who attracted much older fans, her reinventions had not only renewed her appeal to existing fans, but attracted new audiences from different generations. Many of these fans had not been born when she recorded her debut album.

5.10.1 Analysis

Motherhood led her to re-balance her life, rotating her responsibilities and activities as suggested by a 'kaleidoscope' career model (Maneiro & Sullivan, 2005). We see a mellowing Madonna, reflecting on her childhood and embracing her emotional and spiritual side, **diversifying** her music style[98]. Evidence of her working to **remain relevant** is seen in the evolution of her fan-base: attracting a younger audience, and retaining her long-time fans.

Taking an **outward-in view** on the evolution of music tastes, as a maturing artist, it would be valuable to extend her range to attract new audiences. She needed to compete with existing and nascent talent, e.g. Christina Aguilera, Britney Spears, Kylie Minogue[99], and in-parallel negotiate the dramatic shifts in the industry[100], further evolving her image. This

[97] The album earned six MTV Music Video Awards and three Grammy Awards.
[98] Notably in: in *Music, American Life,* and *Confessions on a Dance Floor*; and *Drowned World Tour*, *Re-invention World Tour,* and *Confessions Tour*
[99] Many of the younger artists had begun to copy her business model, especially Beyoncé
[100] The rapid emergence of music streaming and free video on platforms including My Space, iTunes, Spotify, Tidal, YouTube and Facebook

demanded **innovative diversification** of her product offering to address a new market segment, simultaneously leveraging her brand and sophisticated live shows. She emphatically confirmed her relevancy in the face of increasing competition, featuring at the 2012 Super Bowl half-time show, attracting a TV audience of 114 million.

5.10.2 Key lessons for maturing executives working towards the height of their careers:

- Refine strategic intelligence to ensure relevancy
- Deploy **lean-out diversifications to differentiate**.
- New offering and image **innovations**.
- **Retain your core identity** (and relevance), while expanding your support base through identity innovations.
- Build **new relationships** key decision makers

5.11 Madonna - Artist, Activist, and Philanthropist - 2006- Onwards

From 2006, a new identity emerged, when she founded the non-profit charity *Raising Malawi* whose aim was to build 10 schools and provide care for more than 4,000 AIDS orphans. By 2013, it had achieved its goals (*Raising Malawi*, 2017). Later she added orphanages and paediatric hospitals to the charity's activities. Although some media were critical, it was hard to deny that Madonna was serious in her efforts to make a difference to the lives of less privileged[101]people.

An indication of her seriousness was the adoption of David Banda in October 2006, which took almost two years to obtain approval after countering opposition to her not being a resident in Malawi[102] (Taraborrelli, 2008). In 2009, Madonna adopted a second child Chifuno "Mercy" James, also from Malawi.

[101] Building on her charity in Malawi, she released *I Am Because We Are*, a documentary on the problems faced by Malawians, in 2008. It was directed by Nathan Rissman and written, narrated, and produced by Madonna through her production company Semtex Films.

[102] David's mother had died in childbirth, and he was taken care of by an orphanage while his father worked. David's father was initially happy with the decision, knowing that his son would be well taken care of. Later he did an about face. It transpired that he had been coerced by the Human Rights Consultative Committee Malawi to change his views. Once this came out into the open he approved of the adoption.

Madonna moved further into social consciousness initiatives. She believed entertainment had the power to transcend social and cultural barriers, and move the world community to action. At the *Live Earth* London concert, 2007, she performed the final acts at a packed Wembley. (*Live Earth*, 2007). She continued this trend after the devastating earthquake in Haiti in 2010[103]. She also worked with photographer Steven Klein to produce a film called *secretprojectrevolution*, launching the *Art for Freedom* initiative, promoting "art and free speech to address persecution and injustice across the globe", countering the use of torture (*Secretprojectrevolution*, 2017).

Her interest and influence in politics became apparent through her support of Hilary Clinton's campaign in the 2016 Presidential race, and later her vocal criticism of President Trump at the Women's March in Washington DC the day after his inauguration.

In February 2017, she was granted an adoption order for the four-year old Malawian twins Esther and Stella ("A Snapshot Of Madonna's Life Right Now", 2017). At the time of writing, news has broken about a movie on her early career – speculation is that Madonna will be played by Paris Jackson.[104] Madonna appears not to support the movie, and stated: "Nobody knows what I know and what I have seen…only I can tell my story. Anyone else who tries is a charlatan and a fool…looking for instant gratification without doing the work. This is a disease in our society" (music, 2017).

In her 50s now, we find Madonna more comfortable in herself. She philosophically declared (at 50) "along with age comes the freedom to be authentic" (Taraborrelli, 2008, Just Watch…, para.9). When asked what she likes most about her art, she replied: "I think it depends on what I'm making. I like pushing the envelope. But I don't like to do it just for the sake of doing it. I don't like to be provocative for the sake of being provocative. I like to be provocative. I like to make people think. I like to touch people's hearts. And if I can do all three of those things in one fell swoop, then I feel like I've really accomplished something." (*Introducing Madonna As Our February Cover Star*, 2017).

[103] She performed at *Hope for Haiti Now: A Global Benefit for Earthquake Relief*.
[104] Daughter of Michael Jackson.

5.11.1 Analysis:

In terms of **reinvention**, Madonna departed from her former Material Girl, I want to rule the world-self. Perhaps she entered the stage of her life that Erikson (1994, p129) refers to as "Maturity – Ego Integrity vs. Despair, characterised by ideological commitment" (stage VIII Mature Age)[105]. This might explain Madonna's move towards giving back to society, through her charities, and by leveraging her brand to support social consciousness causes. These are key strategic diversifications.

These reinventions correspond with a mature authenticity where she dedicates herself to causes she deeply believes in: social justice and helping the less-privileged. She added new **lean-out** strategies to her portfolio – non-music focused documentary production[106] and her a **step-out** to her first two feature films[107], integrating the learnings from her video production, acting experience, and the knowledge gained from Guy Ritchie.

5.11.2 Key Lessons for executives in the twilight of their careers looking at extension:

- **Align** your career and activity focus **with the stage of your life**, increasing your credibility through **authenticity**.
- **Pursue passions** and causes emotionally important to you.
- Base lean-outs on a **previously proven formula**.
- **Integrate past experience** to build confidence to step-out into a new field.
- **Leverage your brand to make a difference**.
- Learn to deal with **liminality** that comes with career transitions at this age

[105] Erikson (1994, p129) articulates this as "the 'fruit' of the 7 stages, where one has evolved and is able to accept and acknowledge the environment, possessing integrity and is able to defend the dignity of your own lifestyle against all physical and economic threats".
[106] aligned with her charities and social consciousness agendas, much like her music videos are used to promote her albums and tours – a tried and trusted formula
[107] In 2007, she directed her first film *Filth and Wisdom*, and in 2011 her second feature film W.E.- a biographic about the affair between King Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson, for which she won a Golden Globe award for Best Original Song for Masterpiece, a ballad on the film's soundtrack ("Madonna (entertainer", n.d.)

5.12 What do Madonna's Career Reinventions Mean for Executives?

The key research question of this paper pertaining to executives is how one remains relevant and achieves sustained success over an extended career? It also asks what reinvention strategies one can employ to facilitate this. Finally, it also seeks to discover how one makes effective emotional and identity transitions. To answer these questions, I explored Madonna's career to see if we could learn valuable insights on reinvention.

Some findings have exceeded expectations: A key insight from Madonna useful to executives is that she employs **deliberate reinvention strategies**, using both **lean-out** and **step-out diversification strategies**. In most of her reinventions she uses a combination of **strategic intelligence**, understanding her **personal attributes**, and having the **learning agility** to discern the **career shift imperative** and that **reinvention** is needed. Her angry period is the major exception, and we learn that this is mainly due to **misreading** the **antecedents for success**[108], **failed strategic intelligence**, and **not paying sufficient attention to her identity transition**. These findings validate the proposed model, also showing that the model can be used to recover from a failed reinvention.

The findings on the emotional transition could only be explored for one of her reinventions (*Evita*), but this exhibits relevancy for executives, particularly if they are recovering from a previously failed career transition[109].

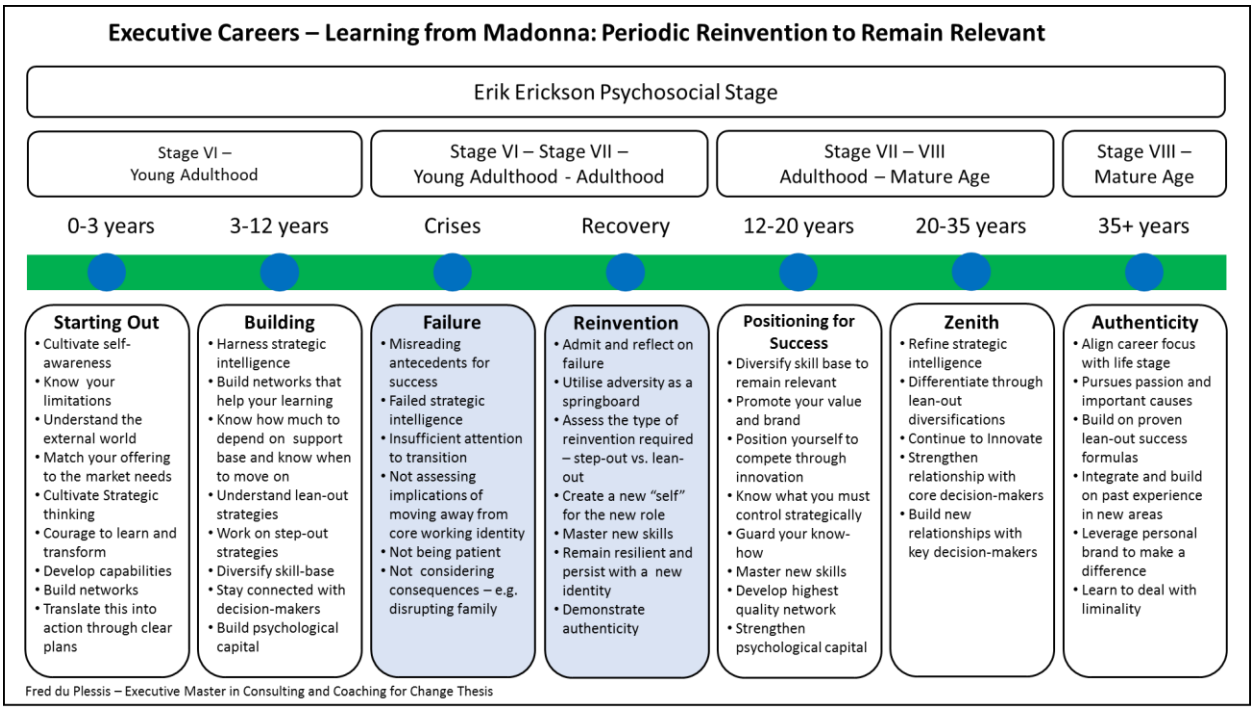
Another key learning is that the life-stage of a person (Erikson, 1974, 1994) provides further insight on reinvention. Key examples in Madonna's case are the periods when she moved to New York, and the current mature adult phase of her life, where her reinventions matched her life stage. By inference, I feel it is important for executives to understand the demands, contradictions and emotions of each stage of their lives, and how these affect their careers. The preliminary nature of these life-stage matches suggests further exploration of this aspect might enhance career reinvention strategies.

[108] Or maybe not using her emotional intelligence

[109] In most of the source material on Madonna, the emotions of her reinventions and transitions are not extensively explored.

Figure 4 summarises the lessons from the analysis of Madonna's career reinvention junctures relevant to executives. Although many of these lessons could apply across all stages of the career of a typical executive, I found it useful to cluster relevant insights around the major career phases. I considered years 0-3 as the 'Starting-out' phase – where the young leader begins to shape their career – reinvention also applies here, especially if failure of the initial career direction occurs. Years 3-12, I see as the 'building' phase, and I borrow lessons from more than one of Madonna's reinventions. Years 12-20 is the phase when executives position themselves for success – with expertise, confidence, personal-brand, networks and differentiators. Years 20-35 – I call the 'zenith' – the executive has reached their maximum potential. The final phase – 30-35 years out, the executive enters the 'authenticity' phase, where they can follow their passions and leverage their success to express themselves. Figure 4 includes Erikson's psychosocial stages, and how these might match the career stages of executives. Remaining relevant is not only about career progression, but also how we deal with failed reinvention. The two blue shaded boxes in the figure describe potential crises and recovery from these crises respectively. Crisis and Recovery are not linked to specific stages of the career as these may occur at any time.

Figure 4: Executive Careers – Periodic Reinventions to remain relevant



5.12.1 Impact of the research findings on the proposed Career Reinvention Model

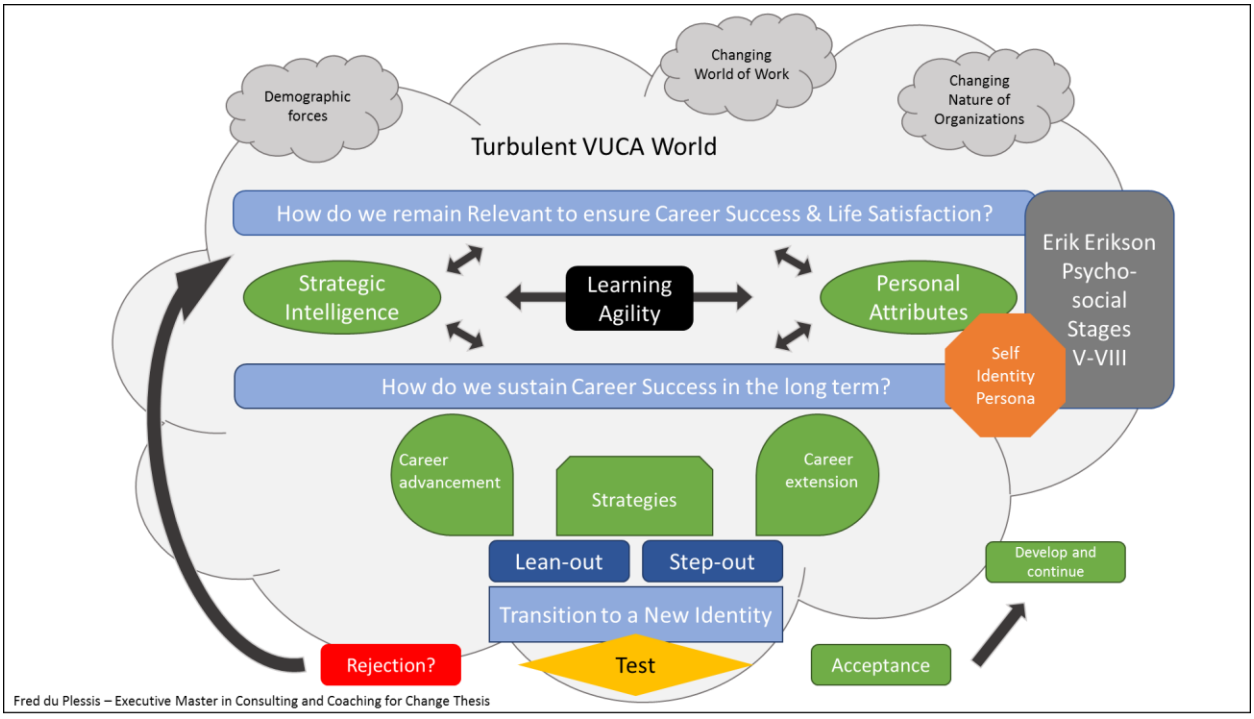
The proposed career reinvention model has been largely validated by the Madonna case study analysis. New insights gained from the analysis lead to two enhancements to the model. To the generic **strategies** step for the development of career options, **lean-out** and **step-out diversification strategies** are added as specific enhancements.

The Erikson psychosocial stages are added in the analysis of personal attributes. By understanding the psychological implications of the life-stage of the individual, the development of career reinvention strategies might be enhanced.

The practical applications of this study could include:

- Using the model and the career reinvention narratives as an aid in career coaching.
- Using the Madonna case study and analysis in interactive career strategy or reinvention sessions on business school leadership programmes.

Figure 5: Revised Career Reinvention Model



6. LIMITATIONS

The development of a comprehensive case study on Madonna required the research of many secondary sources, some comprehensive, some purposely edited to convey a specific point of view, all of which might contain biases (*Outsmart your own biases*, 2015). It was not always possible to cross-check conflicting opinions behind some of Madonna's approaches, decisions, and actions during career reinvention. One obvious way of reducing the biases would be to interview Madonna in person. Given the scope of the case study, this would require multiple interviews to construct her career narrative. It is also possible due to the large volume of written, audio and visual material available on her life and career, that I may have missed some crucial insights.

The validation of her career reinvention strategies was influenced by my own ability to interpret the information gathered from multiple sources and how I assembled these into a narrative for analysis. Although I took great care to alert myself to confirmation and exclusion bias, it is possible that a certain level of bias could have influenced the findings.

Unfortunately, lack of sources of information on the emotional aspects of Madonna's career reinventions limited these learnings and insights.

A further limitation of this study is that Madonna's career obviously doesn't cover all the challenges that an executive would normally expect to face – examples include managing team collaboration, cultural diversity, and corporate culture. For executive career reinvention, it is possible that these factors may play a role.

7. FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could include the validation of the proposed model through examining the careers of executives, to attempt to confirm or refute the findings, or arrive at additional conclusions on successful career reinvention strategies.

The model could form a basis for specifically examining the career narratives of late-career executives intending to extend their careers to validate its effectiveness. Further studies could focus on cohorts at different career stages to validate and deepen insights and the factors that play a role in reinvention at each stage.

The Erikson psychosocial life stages aspect might be explored further to deepen the understanding of the role this plays in career reinvention.

It would be worthwhile to repeat the study with Madonna’s own personal narrative, if it were possible to obtain this in a series of interviews.

8. CONCLUSION

I embarked on this research because I held this fascination with Madonna's career reinvention, and because I was curious about what had influenced my own multiple career reinventions – some successful, some less so. Having reached the late-stage of my career, and having read all I could on the topic, I felt some disappointment that most authors focus on the mid-career executive ignoring the late-stage executive, simply assuming they are happy to retire, with most viewing career extension as encore careers instead of meaningful extension.

I was also curious whether I could discover insights relevant to and of practical value in my own future extended career. A better understanding of career reinvention could be part of my future portfolio of offerings in coaching, consulting and teaching.

Having a strong interest in strategy, I couldn't help wondering, since our careers are so important, why we don't think about them in a more strategic way. Reinvention is choosing a new strategic option…so by its very nature a strategic process. I felt career reinvention could therefore benefit from bringing the strategy dimension into play and fusing it with identity transition.

In this study, I aimed to contribute to the research on executive career reinvention focusing on answering the question how one remains relevant and achieves sustained success over an extended career. It also asked if periodic reinvention at critical career junctures could help one remain relevant and what strategies could be employed to facilitate this. Finally, it deals with career transition.

My final thoughts…the 5 most important insights executives can gain from Madonna in helping them remain relevant are: harness **psychological capital**, cultivate **strategic intelligence**, recognise the **career shift imperative**, develop a **workable reinvention strategy**, and finally have self-awareness along the way to **admit and reflect on their failures**.

9. APPENDIX

This biographical timeline has been produced as a reference for the convenience of the reader from numerous sources listed in the Bibliography.

Madonna's Biographical Timeline

1958: Born on August 16 in Bay City, Michigan to Sylvio Ciccone (automotive engineer at Chrysler and General Motors) and Madonna Ciccone.

1963: Madonna's mother dies of breast cancer.

1973: Starts at Rochester Adams High School.

1976: Starts dance studies at University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; majoring in drama.

1977: July: arrives in New York City. September: begins training with Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre.

1979: Flies to Paris, as back-up singer for Patrick Hernandez.

Joins Dan and Ed Gilroy to form **"**Breakfast Club."

Plays Bruna in underground movie *A Certain Sacrifice*.

1980: Forms rock band "Emmy" with Steve Bray.

1982: Establishes friendship with DJ Mark Kamins.

Signs recording contract with Sire Records (division of Warner Brothers).

First record release, *Everybody*, goes to #3 in the dance charts.

Begins dating DJ John "Jellybean" Benitez.

1983: Second single, *Burning Up/Physical Attraction*, reaches #3 in dance charts.

Release of first studio album, *Madonna*; first top ten hit, *Borderline*.

Persuades Freddie DeMann (Michael Jackson's manager) to become her manager.

Appears in the movie *Vision Quest*.

1984: TV appearance on *American Bandstand*.

Appears and performs on annual MTV Awards.

Release of 2nd album *Like A Virgin* (produced by Nile Rodgers); sells 7million copies worldwide.

Begins work on major studio movie *Desperately Seeking Susan*.

1985: "Virgin" tour opens April 10 in Seattle.

Signs merchandising deal for official Madonna Boy-Toy clothing designs sold under the Wazoo label.

Appears in *Live Aid* charity concert (London/Philadelphia, July 13).

Marries Sean Penn.

1986: Releases *True Blue* album.

Shoots *Shanghai Surprise* with Sean Penn.

Establishes her own film production company, Siren Productions, backed by Universal Studios.

1987: "Who's That Girl" tour opens in Osaka, Japan on June 14; closes in Turin, Italy.

Who's That Girl album and film also released.

You can Dance compilation of dance tracks from her studio albums remixed released

1989: Divorce from Sean Penn (January 10).

Releases *Like A Prayer* album

Contracts with Pepsi to film video commercial based upon *Like A Prayer*.

Receives $5 million payment for the video

Madonna's own video *Like A Prayer* greeted with protest by conservative groups and churches

Pepsi cancels the commercial after one screening.

Co- stars with Warren Beatty in *Dick Tracy*, playing Breathless Mahoney

Affair with Warren Beatty.

1990: Two albums released: *I'm Breathless* and *The Immaculate Collection*.

Kicks-off "Blonde Ambition" world tour in Tokyo. Both the Toronto and Italian shows are threatened with closure because of their explicit sexual content.

MTV refuses to screen Madonna's *Justify My Love* video because it is deemed too explicit

1991: "Blonde Ambition" tour *Truth Or Dare* documentary is released.

Acts in Woody Allen's movie *Shadows and Fog*.

1992: **Wins** Grammy Award for Best Music Video for *Madonna: Blonde Ambition World Tour Live*; Shares awared with Dave Mallet, Mark "Aldo" Miceli and Tony Eaton.

Releases coffee table photographic book *Sex,* which sells a half million copies in its first week and later becomes number one on the *New York Times* best-seller list.

A League of Their Own. – feature movie released

Madonna forms joint venture with Time Warner to create Maverick, her own record label, film production, music publishing, television broadcasting, book publishing and merchandising company

1993: Releases two movies**:** *Body Of Evidence* and *Dangerous Game*.

1994: Releases *Bedtime Stories* album.

1995: Releases *Something to Remember* album.

Releases movies *Blue In The Face* and *Four Rooms*.

1996: Release of the movie version of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Evita* in which Madonna stars as Eva Peron. Wins Golden Globe Award for Best Actress in a Motion Picture.

Releases movie *Girl 6*.

Appoints Manager Caress Norman, and Publicist Liz Rosenberg

Gives birth to Lourdes Maria Ciccone Leon, October 14; father is Carlos Leon.

1997: *Ray of Light* album is released, and in 1998 wins three Grammy Awards for Dance Recording, Pop Album, and Music Video, and two MTV Video Music Awards.

1999: Wins Grammy Award (shared with William Orbit) for *Beautiful Stranger* in category best song written for a motion picture, television or other visual media.

Movie - *The Next Best Thing* released

2000: Son, Rocco Ritchie born August 11, 2000; father is actor/director Guy Ritchie.

Release of new album, *Music*.

Wins WIPO arbitration to gain control of Madonna.com domain name.

Marries Guy Ritchie at Dornoch Castle, Scotland.

2001: "Drowned World" concert tour launched in London and later the US.

2002: *Swept Away* released in US as film and UK as video.

Acts in London stage comedy *Up for Grabs*.

Release of *Die Another Day* title song of the James Bond Film *Die Another Day*

2003: *American Life* album released.

Publication of children's books *The English Roses* and *Mr Peabody's Apples.*

The English Roses debuts at number 1 of the New York Times Best Seller List and becomes the fastest selling children's picture book of all time.

X-STaTIC Pro=CeSS exhibition photo shoot with fashion photographer Steven Klein

2004: Madonna and Maverick sue Warner Music Group for mismanagement. Warner files a countersuit – eventually the dispute was resolved through the purchase of Maverick's shares by Warner

Mid 2004 *Re-invention World Tour* in the US, Canada and Europe

Re-invention World Tour based on her documentary *I'm Going to Tell You a Secret*

Inducted into the UK Music Hall of Fame in November. One of five founder-members including *The Beatles, Elvis Presley, Bob Marley and U2*

2005: Releases album *Confessions on a Dance Floor*

Confessions on a Dance Floor wins a Grammy Award Best Electronic/Dance Album

2006: *Confessions* tour achieves a global audience of 1.2 million, turnover $193.7 million, the highest grossing tour for a female artist to date

International Federation of the Phonographic Industry announces that Madonna has officially sold over 200 million albums worldwide

Participates in *Raising Malawi* initiative by partially funding an orphanage in that country

Adopts David Banda in October 2006 – finalised in May 2008

Clothing line titled *M by Madonna* in collaboration with Swedish retailer H&M launched

2007: *Live Earth* series of concert launches

Exits contract with Warner Brothers Records and signs $120 million deal with Live Nation

Writes and produces *I Am Because We Are*, a documentary on the difficulties faced by Malawians

Directs her first film *Filth and Wisdom*

2008: Inducted into Rock n Roll Hall of fame on 10 March 2008 in her first year of eligibility

Releases 11th album Hard Candy in April 2008, where she collaborates with Justin Timberlake, Timbaland, Pharrell Williams and Nate "Danja" Hills

Achieves 37th top-ten hit with *4 minutes*, overtakes Elvis Presley with the most top-ten hits

The Recording Association of Japan her 5th Artist of the Year trophy

Sticky & Sweet Tour launched to promote *Hard Candy* album - becomes the top grossing tour for a solo artist at $280 million. After extension into 2009 it grossed $408 million

Dispute with her brother Christopher over his book *Life with My Sister Madonna,* due to its unsolicited publication

Files for divorce from Guy Ritchie – finalised in December 2008

2009: Granted the right by the Supreme Court of Malawi to adopt Chifundo "Mercy" James

September – releases third greatest hits album - *Celebration*

Delivers tribute to Michael Jackson at MTV Awards

Ends the 2000s decade as the best-selling single artist in the US and the most played in the UK

She is third top touring artist of the decade grossing $801 million, 6.3 million attendance, according to Billboard

2010: Performs at *Hope for Haiti Now: A Global Benefit for Earthquake Relief* in January

Releases third live album: *Sticky & Sweet Tour*

Surpasses *The Beatles* for the most top-ten albums by an international artist in Japan

Grants US television show *Glee* the rights to her entire catalogue of music

Glee: The Music, The Power of Madonna, released and debuts as number one on the *Billboard 200*

Co-designs and releases the *Material Girl* clothing line with her daughter Lourdes under the Macy's label

October 2010: opens the *Hard Candy Fitness* chain of fitness centres around the world

Together with MG Icon, releases second fashion brand called *Truth or Dare by Madonna*

2011: Directs her second feature film *W.E.* featuring the affair between King Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson. The film premiered at the 68th Venice International Film Festival in September 2011

Won a Golden Globe award for Best Original Song for *Masterpiece,* a ballad on the film's soundtrack

2012: February – performs at the Super Bowl halftime show. Became the then leading Super Bowl Halftime show with 114 million viewers

Signs a 3-album deal with Interscope Records

Releases 12th studio album *MDNA* which became her fifth consecutive album to debut at the top of *Billboard 200*

Becomes the solo artist with the most number-one albums in the UK surpassing Elvis Presley

MDNA Tour promoting the album, kicks off in Israel, grossing $305.2 million from 88 shows, the highest of 2012, and the 10th highest of all time

2013: Wins 3 trophies at the 2013 Billboard Music Awards – Top Touring Artist, Top Dance Artist and Top Dance Album

Forbes names her top-earning celebrity - with an estimated $125 million

Releases 4th live album MDNA Tour which debuted at number one on the Top Music Videos chart, making it her 10th top of the chart album – the most for any artist

Her *Raising Malawi* organisation built its 10th school, educating 4000 children in Malawi.

Working with photographer Steven Klein, Madonna produced a 17-minute film called *secretprojectrevolution*, with which she launched the Art for Freedom initiative which helped promote “art and free speech as a means to address persecution and injustice across the globe”

2014: a quiet year where she started work on her 13th studio album

Returned to her hometown of Detroit in May 2014 and donated to 3 local charities there to help eliminate poverty

Launched MDNA Skin, a range of skincare products, in Tokyo, Japan

2015: Her 13th studio album *Rebel Heart* was released in March 2015

Launched *Rebel Heart Tour* in September 2015, grossing $169.8 million from 82 shows and 1.045 million ticket sales

Legal battle with Guy Ritchie over the custody of her son Rocco

Her first album to miss number 1 on Billboard 200 since 1998, but reached number 1 in Australia, Canada, Germany and Italy

2016: *Billboard* named her Woman of the Year in October

Co-writes and directs a film adaptation of Andrew Sean Greer's novel *The Impossible Lives of Greta Wells* (planned movie title: *Love*)

2017: Speaks out negatively against President Trump at the Women's March on Washington

In February is granted and adoption order to adopt four-year old Malawian twins Esther and Stella

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