

THESIS DEFENSE PRESENTATION

**An Exploration of Knowledge Practices
Among User Experience (UX) Professionals**

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I conducted a qualitative, exploratory research to investigate the knowledge practices of User Experience (UX) designers, an emerging, knowledge-intensive profession that has not been well studied.

This presentation is a summary of each chapter of the thesis.

- CHAPTER ONE Introduction, Research Questions, Definitions
- CHAPTER TWO Literature Review
- CHAPTER THREE Research Design
- CHAPTER FOUR Results and Analysis
- CHAPTER FIVE Conceptual Frameworks
- CHAPTER SIX Discussion

Why study UX designers?

Competencies of UX professionals need to encompass not only their knowledge of UX methods and skills, but also their ability to seek, use, and communicate their knowledge. UX work is knowledge intensive, both in the application of expertise to solve novel problems, and the need to hone design processes.

Research Questions

How do UX designers **share knowledge** in their practice?

How does **work context** influence the way UX designers **manage knowledge**?

Can knowledge sharing in UX design be explained through **communities of practice**?

Literature Review Topics

UX Design as a Profession

Communities of Practice (CoPs)

Online, Criticisms, UX CoPs

UX Design and Knowledge Sharing

Grounded Theory

The results of all these studies signal that certain UX knowledge sharing behaviours exist, but an empirical study which deliberately explores them has yet to be conducted. By approaching this study with Grounded Theory Methodology, patterns and themes in knowledge sharing behaviour among UX designers can be captured and analyzed.

Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM) was the foundation of the research design

Research Setting and Participants

UX Professionals in Toronto

Agencies + In-house Studios

+1 Years of Experience

Semi-structured Virtual Interview

Applying GTM for Analysis

I used Strauss and Corbin's concept of **coding paradigm**.

This involves using axial coding as a pragmatic way to find relations between categories. This is an instructive method which involves using a framework to identify causal relations, phenomena, context, learning conditions, action and interactional strategies, and consequences.

21 UX professionals were interviewed for data collection

Table 1. Participant demographics

ID	Title	Years of UX Work	Industry-sector	UX Department Type	Country
P01	UI/UX Designer	2	Tourism and Hospitality	In-house	Toronto, Canada
P02	Vice President, UX	14	Healthcare	Agency	Toronto, Canada
P03	User Research	3	Consulting Agency	Agency	Toronto, Canada
P04	Vice President, Experience Design	25	Healthcare	Agency	Toronto, Canada
P05	Sr UX Architect	6	Consulting Agency	Agency	Chicago, USA
P06	Design Researcher	9	Finance	In-house	Toronto, Canada
P07	UX Manager	7	Home Appliance	In-house	Toronto, Canada
P08	Lead UX Manager	13	Process Industry	In-house	Heidelberg, Germany
P10	UX Manager	10	Technology	Agency	Toronto, Canada
P11	Lead Product Design	8	Finance	In-house	Toronto, Canada
P12	Art Director, Digital Brand Lead	8	Finance	In-house	Toronto, Canada
P13	UI/UX Designer	1.5	Publishing	In-house	Toronto, Canada
P14	UX Manager	8	Consulting Agency	Agency	Mumbai, India
P15	UX Designer	3	Government	In-house	Toronto, Canada
P16	UX Architect	4.5	Insurance	In-house	Toronto, Canada
P17	UX Lead	2	Retail and Marketing	In-house	Toronto, Canada
P18	Product Design Lead	5	Government	In-house	Toronto, Canada
P19	Product Manager	3.5	Finance	In-house	Toronto, Canada
P20	Product Designer	3	Retail and Marketing	In-house	Toronto, Canada
P21	UI/UX Designer	3	Software	In-house	Toronto, Canada

CHAPTER FOUR | RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Sample of GTM Process | Coding for Participant 3

Transcription	Preliminary Memo (Notes)	Code
<p>Participant: Yeah. Um, so usually, um— and it's why it's really important to familiarize myself with both the design, but also, like, the goal of whatever the- the website is or whatever it is that I'm doing. Um, so if it's— you know, I had this one project that it was, like, a new program that they were trying to introduce and they wanted to know, um, if people would be interested in paying for it and if they would want to come back, and how often. Um, I've had another one where it was, uh, people— we have this ten-step, you know, process of things. People never go past step three, why? Um, so when it's something like that, I can really, okay, I watched in one, and they all got distracted over here and that's why they didn't get to step four. Um, but then often, there's also, like, other things going on too, um, so I always make sure I put them in. So, what I would say that what ... designers are asking about isn't always necessarily— not that I know a lot better than them, but just i-, sometimes— not that I know better than them at all, I want to clarify, um, but sometimes when you're really, like, in your design, um, I mean that's why it's UX, right? Because it's about the user. Um, so I'm kind of the translator, um, between what the designer wants to get out of things than—</p>	<p>She sees her role as a "translator" between designers and users. She identifies the reasons why users do not interact with the design as intended by the designer. She identifies reasons that designer can't because they're narrowly focused on their work.</p>	<p>problemID realExample uxPercept selfPercept</p>
<p>Interviewer: Mm-hm.</p>		
<p>Participant: ...how the users are interpreting it, um, and sometimes if you're putting it in front of a different audience— I work with a lot of people, like, sixty-five and over. Um, and the way that they'll approach a website is going to be totally different than how, like—</p>	<p>Her experience in working with older audience has built her awareness of how different users would behave</p>	<p>tacKnowledge</p>
<p>Interviewer: Oh, okay.</p>		
<p>Participant: ...how a twenty-five-year-old designer would. Um. So, just kind of, like, putting out those kind of gaps, I think, um, is really helpful too.</p>	<p>So, she believes that she's able fill in the gap of understanding that designers may not have about their users. Her perception on UX is that they don't have a full understanding of their users since their work is not fully committed to understanding users.</p>	<p>selfPercept</p>

CHAPTER FOUR | RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Coding and memoing of all participants led to **10 emerging themes**. These themes are based on data and were used as the building blocks to develop conceptual frameworks.

ONE: UX process itself has considerable intrinsic value, independent of outcomes (p. 28)

TWO: UX professionals have considerable autonomy in their work, within constraints defined by the organization (p. 29)

THREE: Knowledge about process ultimately resides in people (p. 30)

FOUR: The world is saturated with UX information and knowledge (p. 31)

FIVE: Some UX professionals cope with over-saturation of information by focusing on a UX subdiscipline (p. 31)

SIX: UX is always evolving (p. 32)

SEVEN: UX professionals believe their competing organizations have the answer (p. 33)

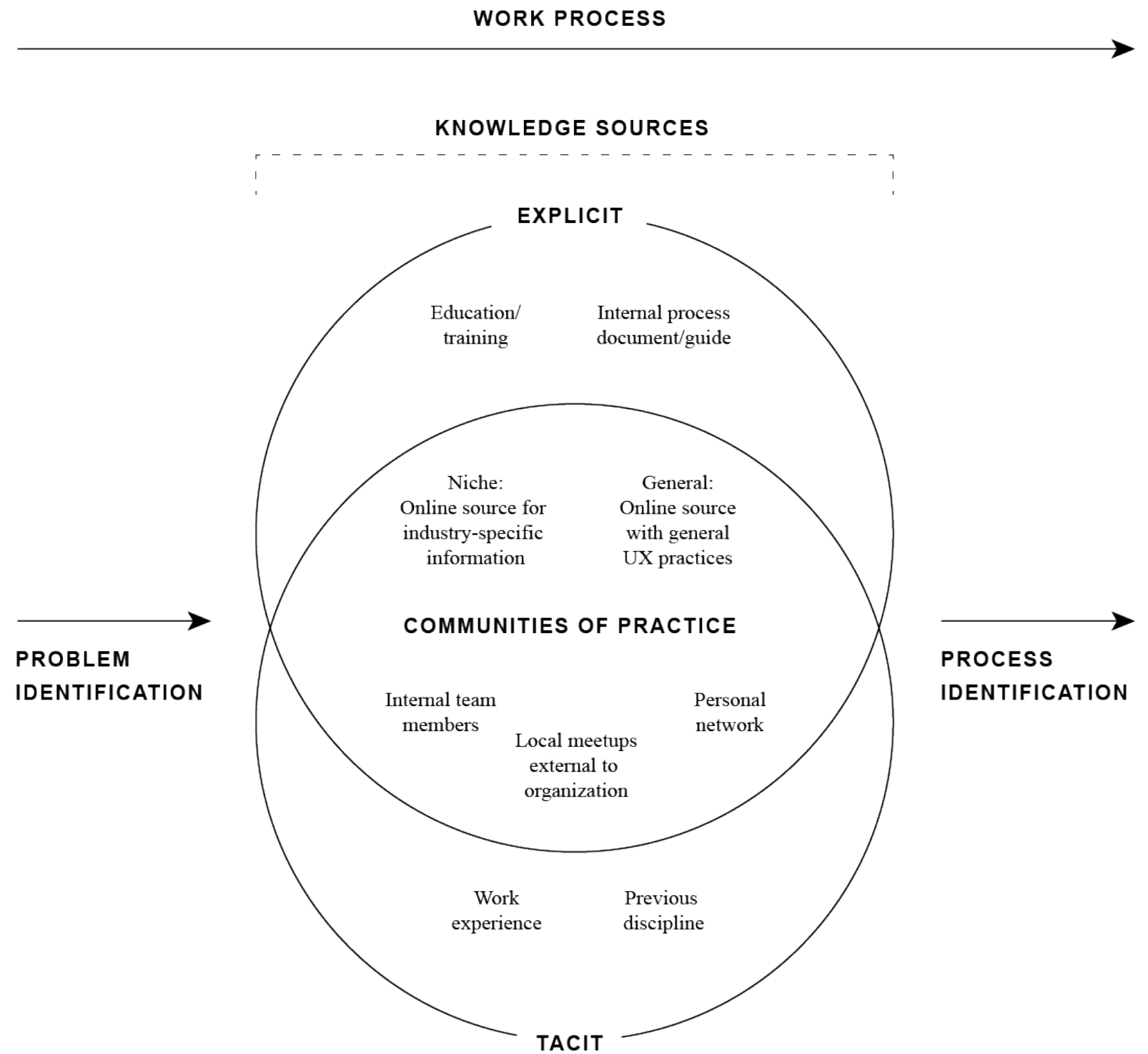
EIGHT: Mentors/managers are navigators to internal knowledge (p. 33)

NINE: UX professionals spend more time advocating for their role in organizations that are less established in UX processes (p. 34)

TEN: Gaining leadership causes a shift in mindset from crafting a professional identity to taking responsibility of the organization's internal knowledge (p. 35)

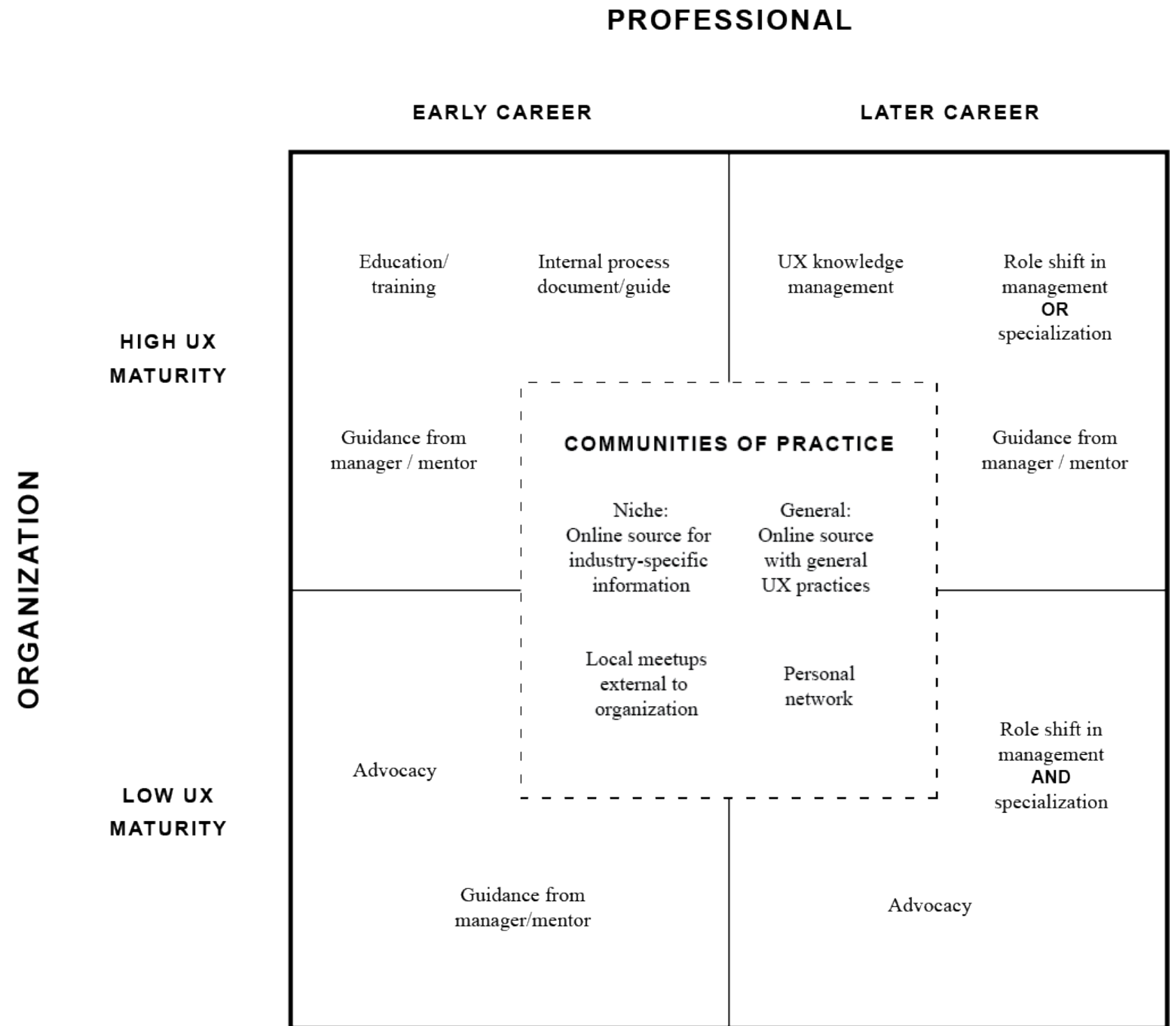
FRAMEWORK I:

Knowledge Sources in Work Process

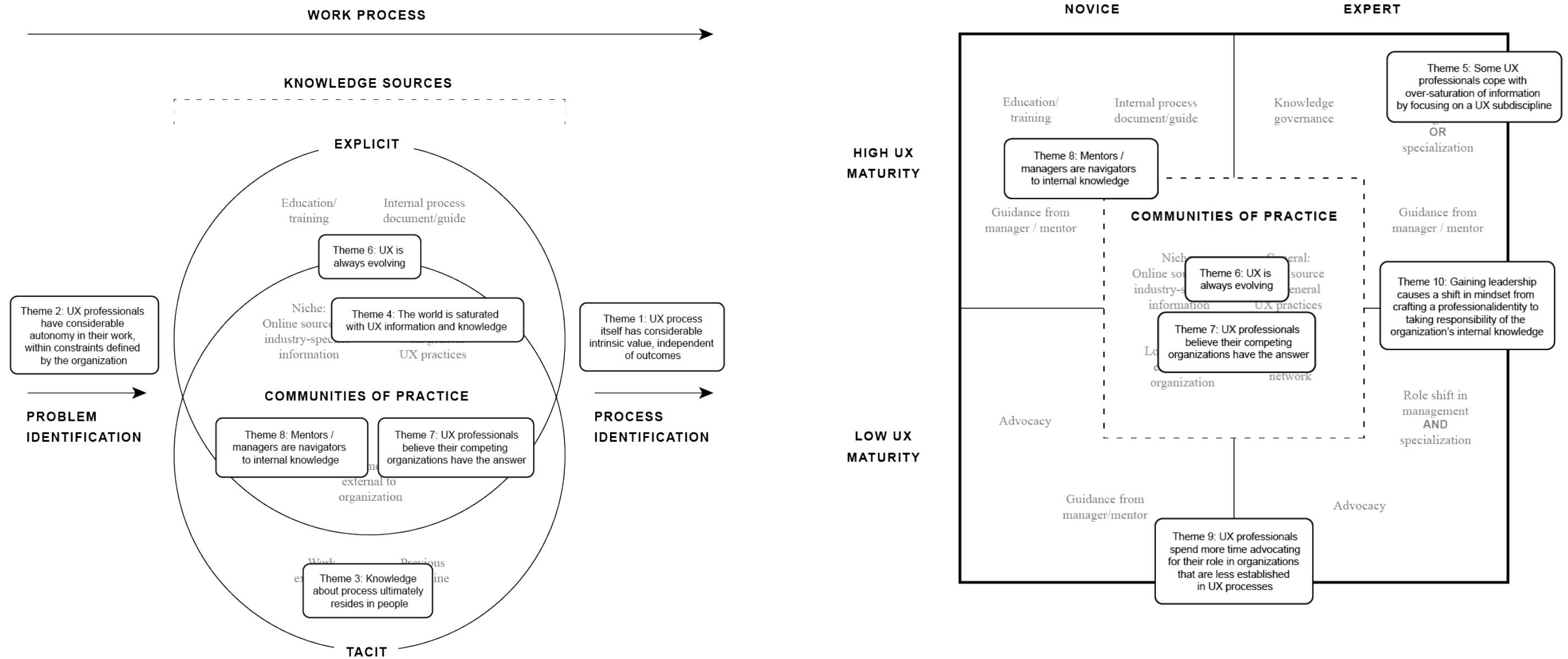


FRAMEWORK 2:

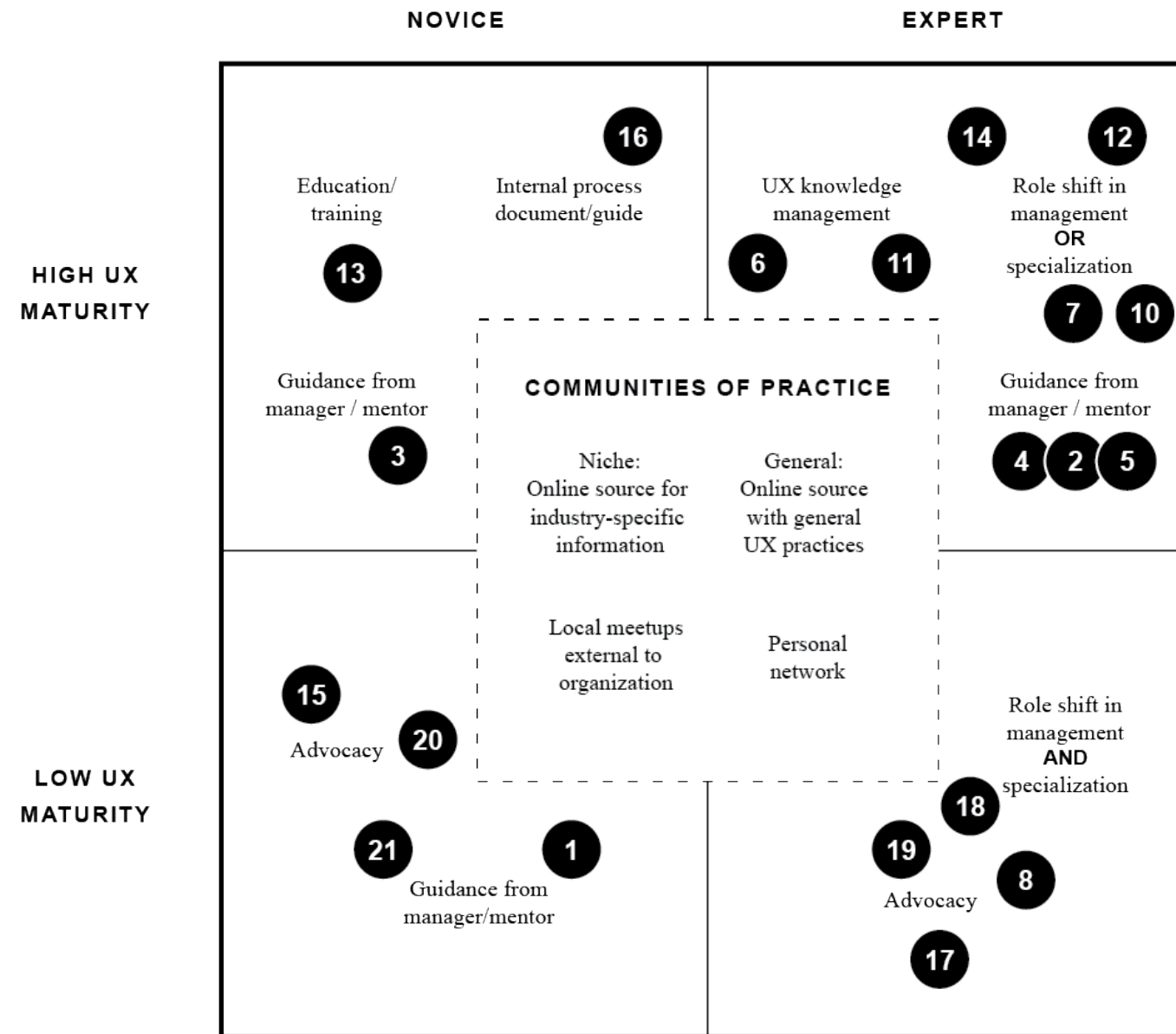
Knowledge Sources in Career Development



Mapping of Themes Within Frameworks



Mapping of Participants Within *Knowledge Sources in Career Development*



The frameworks and themes work together to answer the three research questions:

How do UX designers **share knowledge** in their practice?

How does **work context** influence the way UX designers **manage knowledge**?

Can knowledge sharing in UX design be explained through **communities of practice**?

The frameworks have implications for both UX professionals and organizations.

Implications for



Limitations and Future Research

The limitations of this research centre around:

- Data collection and generalizability
- Subjectivity in qualitative research.

Future research can involve:

- Studying the UX profession using different theories in management
- Extending into a longitudinal study to examine the way knowledge sharing practices change in the industry
- Testing the conceptual models in another emerging occupation or industry sector
- Using a variety of methods, including the development of survey instruments to evaluate specific hypotheses

Thank you

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