IN TEAMS WE TRUST

A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXPLORING INDUSTRIAL DIFFERENCES IN VIRTUAL TEAM TRUST

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Abstract:

Through a qualitative study, this thesis investigates the individual perception of team trust in pandemic-caused local virtual teams (PLVT) – teams that prior to the Covid-19 pandemic were office-based. Through an industry comparison between management consulting, which is service-based, and manufacturing, which is product-based, team trust differences is explored in different organizational settings. The thesis is based on interviews conducted with 20 professionals in Sweden, 10 from each industry. The theoretical frameworks used in this abductive study are Breuer's Taxonomy for Team Trust and Social Identity Theory. The main theoretical contribution from this cross-sectional and social constructivist study is an integration of the two models, which provides a new perspective in understanding team trust. Understanding team trust in PLVT is essential as there are indications that the pandemic will have long-lasting implications for the future workplace. Further, it is of relevance to research whether these effects differ in industries, as team trust has often been studied without including environmental aspects. The study concludes that team trust can be understood in terms of perceived trustworthiness factors and risk-taking behaviors in teams, as well as through social identity and group norms. A slight difference was found for team trust levels across industries, mainly stemming from differences in group norms.

Keywords:

Local virtual teams, team trust, social identity, group norms, Covid-19 pandemic

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Definitions and Abbreviations

Table 1: Definitions

Management consulting firm (MC)	A company that offers other companies advice about the best way of managing and improving their business (Cambridge Dictionary 2021).
Manufacturing firm (MF)	The business of producing goods in large numbers (Cambridge Dictionary 2021). In this thesis, the definition is further limited to referring large firms whose core activity is to produce machinery, heavy equipment or vehicles.
Pandemic-Caused Local Virtual Teams (PLVT)	Employees that used to work physically in an office but have worked virtually with their team(s) since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.
Social norms and group norms	Social norms are defined as "(…) the informal rules that govern behavior in groups and societies (…)" (Stanford Encyclopedia 2018). Furthermore, social norms are defined according to the symbolic interactionist view which "regards actors as being motivated by meanings and identities – norms provide actors with guidance for how to think and act" (Feld 2002). The term "group norms" is in this thesis used to refer to the social norms within the team, profession, or organization.
Trust	"The willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectations that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party" (Mayer et al. 1995).
Team trust	"The shared willingness of the team members to be vulnerable to the actions of the other team members based on the shared expectation that the other team members will perform particular actions that are important to the team, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control the other team members" (Breuer et al. 2019).
Virtual teams	"An interdependent group working on a project across time and space relying on information and communication technologies" (Lin et al. 2008).

Table 2: Abbreviations

FTF	Face-to-face
MC(s)	Management consulting firm(s)
MF(s)	Manufacturing firm(s)
MCE(s)	Management consulting firm employee(s)
MFE(s)	Manufacturing firm employee(s)
PLVT	Pandemic-caused local virtual teams

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Organizations increasingly rely on teams to overcome challenges in the highly dynamic business environments of today, where emphasis on softer values has grown following the restructuring of many organizations into becoming flatter and team-centered (Costa 2003). Individuals are increasingly specialized, which leads to an interdependence among employees in organizations to enable problem solving on a complex level. A fundamental objective of teams is therefore to integrate knowledge from all team members in order to execute efficient work of high-quality, a process called knowledge integration (Runsten & Werr 2016). With increased emphasis on cooperation, sharing responsibilities, and participative decision-making, trust has grown in importance (Costa 2003). When team members trust each other, they are more likely to produce outcomes of high quality (Sarker & Valacich 2000).

Parallel to the evolution of team importance, progression in technology has increased the opportunities in how to operate them. With the technology of the 21st century, it is now easy and common to create teams that are dispersed in different parts of a country, a continent or even the world (HBR 2014). Virtual teams overcome geographical obstacles and take advantage of specialized knowledge and expertise (Fang et al. 2014), as well as avoiding travelling and relocation and thereby reduce costs (Schmidke & Cummings 2017). While the usage of virtual teams was already prominent prior to the outbreak of Covid-19, the pandemic has forced many workplaces to move work online and has spurred a mass implementation of the usage of local virtual teams and digital tools. The pandemic increased the share of the Swedish work force that work remotely from 4 to 30 percent during 2020. Furthermore, Swedish HR managers believe that more than 1 in 6 people who can work remotely will do so, at least part-time, after the pandemic ceases (Kantar Sifo 2020). Studying team trust in the context of the pandemic is important short-term in order to capture the effects as of now, and long-term, since employees have indicated a desire for flexible working opportunities in the future (Sveriges Television 2020).

This thesis aims to better understand how team trust in pandemic-caused local virtual teams (PLVT) is perceived individually, given the role it plays in the creation of effective teams. "Pandemic-caused" was added to account for the unprepared and hasty way companies had or chose to implement virtual teamwork in response to the pandemic. "Local" distinguishes between PLVT employees, who were based in the same office(s) before the pandemic and interacted with people physically in their everyday work, and global virtual teams, which can be geographically dispersed all over the world.

Furthermore, team trust in PLVT will be studied by comparing two industries: management consulting (MC), which is service-based and sells intangible knowledge, and manufacturing firms (MF), which is product-based and sells tangible products. The industry comparison will provide indications as to whether organizational aspects stemming from different core competencies lead to different perceived team trust levels for the individual. The authors believe that this can provide insight into how to manage team trust in different contexts.

1.2 Research gap

With continuous technological development, the virtual team environment changes, creating a consistent need for new research. Consequently, there are several studies on trust in virtual teams. In fact, trust was one of the first phenomena studied in the virtual team environment. Even so, these studies tend to focus on obstacles in creating trust, such as geographical and time differences, that global virtual teams encounter (Sarker & Valacich 2000) – factors that are irrelevant for PLVT. In addition, prior research focuses on what has been described as the "out of sight, out of mind" phenomenon (Chidambaram & Tung, 2005; Clayden 2007), where a minority of employees work remotely and thereby receive less respect and identify less with the company (Bartel et al. 2012). This aspect of virtual teamwork is non-applicable for PLVT, as virtual work has been the norm in many Swedish workplaces following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Since PLVT only have existed for about a year, this unique type of virtual team has not yet been studied extensively, whereby this study contributes to fulfilling a research gap. It is of relevance to study this following the expected long-lasting implications of the pandemic (European Central Bank 2020), with the future work environment being more virtual (Mangla 2021). In addition, this paper aims to relate team trust to social identity through an industry comparison, which to the authors knowledge has not been done previously.

1.3 Purpose and research question

The purpose of this study is to understand how team trust is perceived in PLVT by the individual team member. The study explores whether team trust differs in industries where the core activity is service-based, such as for management consulting, compared to where the core activity is product-based, and the culture derives from manufacturing. In addition, the study aims to contribute to the theoretical understanding of team trust in virtual teams, rather than to generalize about the subject in question. This leads to the following research questions:

(1) How is team trust perceived in pandemic-caused local virtual teams (PLVT)?
(2) How does it differ between industries, and why?

1.4 Delimitation

This study is delimited to the specific individuals and PLVT examined in the MC and MF industries in the Swedish context. The MC and MF industries were chosen to study in order to gain an understanding of how team trust can differ between different industries. Other industries are excluded from this study, largely due to time constraints.

The study looks at employees who work in teams that before the Covid-19 pandemic worked primarily in physical proximity to their team(s) and does not apply to teams that worked primarily virtually before the pandemic. This study was conducted in the Swedish context, the home country of the authors, partly out of convenience, and partly since the study does not aim to take cross-cultural aspects into consideration. This study is delimited to only focus on team trust in PLVT as of February and March of 2021, not aiming to explain or discuss team trust levels at any other point in time, such as prior to the outbreak of the pandemic.

2. Literature review

The literature review presents the contextual understanding needed from three separate research fields, despite the research question only covering the intersection of team trust and virtual teams. Trust is examined as it provides the foundation for later research on team trust.

2.1 Trust

Trust has been studied for several decades, with one of the first studies published in 1958 by Deutsch. Despite this, there is still not a unanimous definition of trust, with some studies defining it as an outcome and others as a process (Mitchell & Zigurs 2009; Costa 2003). There are predominantly two approaches to defining trust, where on the one hand it has been seen as an outcome, such as Mayer et al. (1995) and Rousseau et al. (1998), and on the other hand from a process perspective (Mitchell & Zigurs 2009). Using Mayer et al's (1995) view, the authors see trust as multifaceted including both formative indicators, referring to the perceptions regarding the underlying construct such as the propensity to trust and perceived trustworthiness factors, and reflective indicators, meaning the behavioral result of the action to trust (Costa & Anderson 2011).

Projections about the rising importance of trust has been around for a long time, starting in the 1980s where there were concerns that diversity would impact trust development when less reliance could be placed on interpersonal characteristics (Mayer et al. 1995). Trust has been studied in various research fields, including psychology (Breuer et al. 2019), communication, leadership, management, and negotiation, which indicates the importance of it in various areas (Mayer et al. 1995).

The trust research field has often been conceptualized into three components: the antecedents of trust, trust itself, and the outcomes of trust. Furthermore, crucial to the understanding of trust is the interrelatedness between trust and risk, which distinguishes trust from several other terms such as cooperation and predictability. Definitions of trust often include "a willingness to be vulnerable", which differentiates between *actually* taking risk from *willingness* to take risk. A presence of trust leads to risk-taking behavior in a relationship. Variance in trust has been explained by differing propensities to trust for the trustor, indicating differences in the general willingness to trust on an individual level (Mayer et al. 1995).

2.2 Team trust

Team trust is more multi-faceted and socially complex compared to the dyadic nature of trust, as it involves the interpretation of more complex social cues. Team trust can be understood as a construct based on the individual's propensity to trust and on the perceived trustworthiness of the other team members. Reciprocity is a key component for team trust. If one individual in a team decides to engage in a risk-taking behavior, this may lead others to reciprocate that behavior and act trustworthily (Costa & Anderson 2011). In addition to the antecedents for trust pointed out as important for dyadic relations, namely ability, benevolence, and integrity, studies have investigated additional factors that may shape team trust (Breuer et al. 2019; Webber 2008; Dayan & Di Benedetto 2010; Jarvenpaa et al. 1998).

Team trust has been pointed out as being even more important in a virtual team setting compared to FTF following additional uncertainties and risks when working with electronic communication.

While studies show that trust can be initially lower in virtual teams compared to FTF teams, trust levels increase over time to comparable levels (Breuer et al. 2019). Team trust is an especially important cornerstone to ensure well-functioning social relations and is positively associated with team performance (Breuer et al. 2019), and with positive attitudes towards the organization, commitment, and team satisfaction (Costa 2003). Furthermore, the level of trust in virtual teams has a direct effect on knowledge sharing (Fang et al. 2014). Team trust has also been shown to be important in creating psychological safety, directly in encouraging team members to share knowledge, and indirectly through its mediating role in creating a psychologically safe environment (Zhang et al. 2010). On the other hand, lack of trust wastes time and energy as it requires constant monitoring of the other team members' performance and behavior (Runsten & Werr 2016).

2.3 Virtual teams and team trust

Virtual teams come with several advantages, such as employees avoiding commuting time and increased flexibility, resulting in greater productivity. Employers have experienced benefits from the working-from-home set-up during the pandemic, as they are able to save costs on office rent and travel (Mangla 2021). Furthermore, virtual teams with clearly established goals develop cohesion and improve performance (Brahm & Kunze 2012). On the other hand, virtual teams are more likely to face communication issues, coordination challenges (Rico et al. 2008), and being more sensitive to lack of team cohesion (DeRosa et al. 2004).

Building trust has been named the single greatest challenge for virtual teams. Early studies on virtual teams focused on team structure, which then developed into focusing on effectiveness (Clayden 2007). Difficulties in creating trust stem from the lack of non-verbal gestures such as body language (Sridhar et al. 2008; Szewc 2014). Furthermore, there are concerns that employees enjoy social loafing when working remotely, creating an uncertain environment characterized by unreliability (Mangla 2021).

There is unanimity regarding trust being necessary for effective functioning of virtual teams (Bell & Kozlowski 2002; Clayden 2007), since trust strengthens cooperation and reduces the fear of self-serving actions (Rosseau et al. 1998). Virtual teams are often temporary, and findings indicate that building trust can be more difficult and suffers more than in traditional teams (Furumo et al. 2009; Zaharie 2021). At the same time, some argue that it might be especially important to build trust in virtual teams following being geographically dispersed and an increased prevalence of misunderstandings (Jarvenpaa et al. 1998).

3. Theoretical framework

In order to answer the research question, a combined framework consisting of Breuer's Taxonomy for Team Trust and Social Identity Theory will be used. Breuer's Taxonomy gives a theoretical understanding of team trust in virtual teams and is primarily used as a tool to understand *how* team trust is perceived in PLVT. Social Identity Theory is used to better understand *why* team trust is perceived in a certain way. In 3.1 and 3.2, both theories will be presented separately. Section 3.3 then explains the abductively emerged theoretical framework used in this thesis.

3.1 Breuer's Taxonomy for Team Trust

Breuer's (et al. 2019) taxonomy of perceived trustworthiness factors in virtual teams builds upon Costa's (2003) model of trust, which sees trust as an emergent state in teams consisting of the propensity to trust, perceived trustworthiness, cooperative behaviors, and monitoring behaviors, and links these to team effectiveness factors. Costa's findings support the perceived trustworthiness factors found by Mayer et al. (1995), adding credibility in distinguishing trust factors in this way. Breuer's study extends the trust concept into virtual teams using interviews with German professionals. See Appendix 6 for the original Breuer model.

Breuer's taxonomy integrates antecedents with behavioral outcomes in the context of virtual teams. In doing so, the taxonomy integrates perceived trustworthiness factors, team trust, and resulting risk-taking behaviors in virtual teams. For the purposes of this thesis, only the aspects relevant to the analysis will be described in this section.

3.1.1 Perceived trustworthiness factors in teams

A trustee's trustworthiness is dependent on their (1) ability, (2) benevolence, (3) predictability, and (4) transparency, where Breuer's contribution consists of factors 3 and 4. The assessment of ability rests on the reassurance that the trustee will be able to perform the task successfully. This involves the evaluation of the trustee's competence, which can be gained either through experience or possessing an expert role, showing conscientiousness in putting in enough effort, and media literacy in being able to use technological tools effectively. Ability also refers to contributing towards the work environment through positive humor and a well-functioning feedback culture. Benevolence is composed of task support, characterized by a general support toward colleagues, autonomy, referring to having control over one's own working conditions and, showing emotional care, which refers to listening to others' concerns. The assessment of predictability includes availability in responding quickly in work communication. Transparency refers to having an open knowledge management within the team, which can be created through information transparency in that all information is shared with everyone, and responsibility management in establishing clear roles. Satisfactory fulfillment of antecedents leads to the development of team trust, with consequential risk-taking behaviors.

3.1.2 Risk-taking behavior in teams

Risk-taking in teams is mainly comprised by (1) disclosure and (2) reliance. Disclosure involves making oneself vulnerable in the team through sharing confidential information such as sharing something private and discussing mistakes and conflicts openly. Reliance consists of the subcategories asking for help and forbearance from control and involves making oneself vulnerable by giving up autonomy and responsibility for tasks that are important for the trustor.

3.2 Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory was originally proposed by Tajfel and Turner in 1979 and entails that an individual's self-concept is based on their membership in a particular group. Social categories become part of the psychological self through a process of self-categorization when members define themselves in that category (Lin et al. 2017; Hogg & Reid 2016), which implies that the self is reflexive and can categorize itself in relation to others (Stets & Burke 2000). Through a

process of social comparison, individuals create social categories by accentuating the similarities within the in-group and emphasizing the perceived differences between the self and the out-group, creating a contrast (Hogg & Reid 2016). Social comparison serves to highlight dimensions that are self-enhancing. Social categories exist in relation to other categories, and come with different power, prestige, and status (Stets & Burke 2000).

Depersonalization of self-perception occurs as individuals are viewed as personifying attributes of their group. In doing so, social categorization promotes stereotypical-consistent behavior of group thought on an individual level (Hogg & Reid 2016). The identification process contributes to team members distinguishing themselves from society at large. When a strong team identification is in place, team members have the motivation to adapt to group norms in thought as well as in feeling and behavior (Janssen & Huang 2008; Lin et al. 2017). Team identification leads to increased motivation to engage in cooperative behavior and acts as a social glue (Lin et al. 2017). It grows stronger when the individual is (a) aware of their membership in the team, (b) attach positive value to the team membership, and (c) feel emotionally involved with the team (Janssen & Huang 2008). Group norms form a stable representation of appropriate behavior as a group-member (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2018) and are defined by the collective as opposed to personal beliefs (Homans 1961). These group norms induce a sense of being one with the team, which helps the individual adopt the same norms, goals and interests as their team for themselves (Janssen & Huang 2008).

3.3 Framework for the study

The abductively combined framework, called Richnau & Sjölander's Taxonomy for Team Trust, consists of three components: Perceived Trustworthiness Factors and Risk-Taking Behavior in Teams from the Breuer framework, and Social Identity Theory. Adjustments from the original Breuer framework have been made in order to better account for the empirical material. Unlike the one-way antecedent-behavior-consequence nature of the Breuer framework, team trust is conceptualized as an interconnected process, illustrated by double-arrows. This change is motivated following the reciprocate nature of team interaction, as discussed in section 2.3 by Costa & Anderson (2011), where the decision to engage in a risk-taking behavior leads others to reciprocate the action and behave dependably as well. The distinction between task-related and team-related aspects has been removed following the empirics not drawing a clear distinction between the two.

Social identity is added into the model to account for social comparison processes and self-categorization. Social identification leads to increased motivation to follow group norms and to engage in cooperative behavior, as stated by Lin et al. (2017) in section 3.2. This connection has in conjunction with the empirics indicated a positive relationship between following group norms and team trust. Furthermore, the degree of social identification with one or several out of the profession, organization, and team impacts the extent to which clear group norms exist, and hence team trust. The greater the identification within each factor, the greater the team trust. If one category in the original Breuer framework indicates impeding team trust, this category could be determined to support team trust in the combined framework if group norms support it, and the other way around.

Figure 1: Richnau & Sjölander's Taxonomy for Team Trust
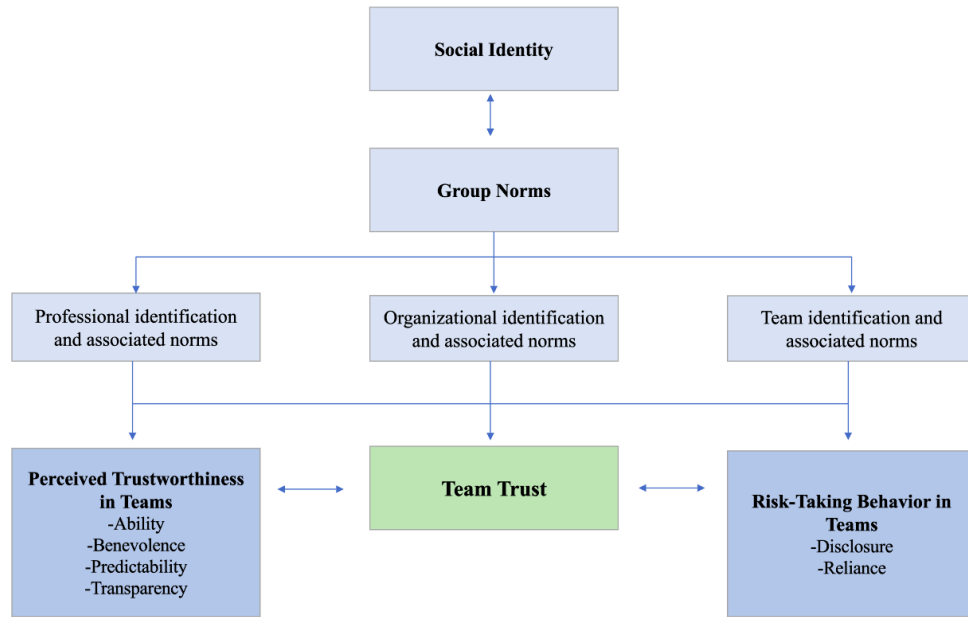
3.4 Literature and theory discussion

While existing theories differentiate between team trust emergence in virtual and FTF teams, a thorough understanding of other surrounding factors could not be found. Specifically, the authors could not find any studies on teams in relation to their environments. This thesis explores the intersection between team trust, virtual teams, and social identity using a combined framework based on the Breuer et al. (2019) taxonomy and social identity theory. Following the recent date of the Breuer framework, it has not been applied extensively, further emphasizing the research gap.

The Richnau & Sjölander Taxonomy for Team Trust framework is as an analytical tool used to better understand the empirics in this thesis but should not be considered a new general model. In the combined framework, several categories from the Breuer framework have been excluded following not finding support for them in the empirical material, namely Reputation, Proactivity, Friendliness, Participation, Loyalty, Keeping Commitments, Consistency, Integrity, and Openness from Perceived Trustworthiness in Teams, and Contact-seeking from Risk-Taking in Teams. When applying the Breuer framework, consideration should be given to the fact that it has been developed in a German setting in other industries, primarily enterprising and conventional administration, than in this study. Therefore, findings may differ stemming from cultural differences between Sweden and Germany, as well as industrial differences. This thesis explores whether team trust is configured in the same way in all industries, whereby differences when applying the model in a different context are expected.

4. Methodology

4.1 Method style and design

The purpose of this thesis is to better understand team trust in PLVT. During the course of the work, an empirical phenomenon emerged whereby the realities of the subjects differed depending on industrial belonging. In trying to explain the origins of this difference, an abductive approach has been adopted in order to enable going back and forth between theory and empirics, whereby this has been gathered in parallel (Bell et al. 2019).

This study is conducted from the constructionist ontological position which regards categories as socially constructed entities, meaning that entities are made real by the actions and understandings of humans. This implies that categories are continuously revised through social interaction. Furthermore, an implication of the ontological position is that the phenomena studied in this thesis is made real by the research process and, thus, the views and interpretations of the authors affect the findings and hence present one version of social reality (Bell et al. 2019). The constructionist approach has been chosen since the purpose of this study is to explore team trust as it is perceived rather than regarding it as an objective reality, and therefore the study concerns the interpretations of team trust that are made between the individual and the group.

A cross-sectional research design was adopted with data being collected on more than one subject at a single point in time. Furthermore, no variable was manipulated (Bell et al. 2019). A cross-sectional research design was suitable in order to fulfill the purpose of the study, which is to better understand team trust in PLVT comparing two different industries. In order to answer the research question, a thorough understanding of the subject was necessary, whereby techniques such as using surveys were deemed unfit for the purpose. Conducting a case study, which would have given deep insight into the subject, was considered infeasible as the purpose of the study required an industry comparison, whereby several subjects were necessary. Given the short time frame of the thesis, a longitudinal study was neither realistic to conduct, nor would have answered the research question.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted based on the interview guide (see Appendix 2). The interview guide was used as a guidance to make sure that the most important themes were covered in each interview, but it was not followed meticulously. This created a relaxed environment for the interviewee which was needed in order to share sensitive information. In addition, semi-structured interview technique avoids leading questions. However, a disadvantage with it is that it reduces comparability between interviews (Bell et al. 2019).

4.2 Sampling and Interviewed Individuals

The empirical foundation for this study consists of individual interviews conducted with 20 individuals from 10 different firms. In total, around 50 companies were contacted, which led to a total of 22 interviews. However, two interviews were excluded for not meeting the criteria and conflicting interests, respectively. All prospective participants were contacted through email or phone using the template in Appendix 1. The 10 people representing the MC industry came from 5 different firms with a range of 15 to around 300,000 employees, while the ten representatives of the MF industries came from 5 different companies with a range of around 500 to 50,000 employees.

The sampling method used in this study has been purposive, following the maximum variation sampling type, which is a sampling technique used to ensure a wide variation in the dimensions of interest (Bell et al. 2019). In applying this technique, participants had to meet the following criteria:

1. They were working in the MC or MF industry
2. They were working virtually at the time but were mainly office-based prior to the pandemic
3. They were working in one or several teams based in the same office
4. They were situated in Sweden

Maximum variation enabled comparison between the two industries. Within each industry, both men and women, different ages, and experience levels were included in order to gain a holistic understanding of the views within an industry.

In deciding the sample size, a balance had to be struck between attaining new information and data by adding additional participants and creating in-depth understanding for each interviewee. In deciding sample size, the scope of the study, the nature of the topic, and the quality of data should be considered (Vasileiou et al. 2018). The authors do not believe that theoretical saturation was reached, however, for the purposes of the bachelor thesis, given the time frame of the research period, and the length of each interview, sampling 10 people from each industry was adequate. The sample size provided a variety in responses for each industry, while still maintaining a manageable volume of data.

4.3 Interview process

All interviews were conducted and recorded between February 15th and March 22nd, 2021, through video conferencing. Since the purpose of the study is to investigate how unprepared virtual teamwork affects team trust, the subjects were asked to only consider the questions in light of the time period that they have been working remotely. The interviews ranged between 25.26 minutes and 62.03 minutes, with a mean length of 44.52 minutes. The variance in interview length occurred mainly for two reasons: the personalities of the interviewee and time availability.

All interviews have been transcribed in order to be credible and dependable. Furthermore, all interviews except the one conducted in English (interview 2) have been translated from Swedish. The translation has been done in a way to most clearly convey the meaning of the statements rather than being literally correct. In light of this study being of an abductive style, the interview guide was designed to cover the themes depicted in table 3 (see Appendix 6). Company and team information were important to cover in order to enable thick descriptions and gain the contextual understanding necessary following the constructivist ontological position. Relations covered topics concerning the general social climate. Trust constituted the main section of the interview.

A thematic analysis has been conducted in this thesis, whereby coding and subsequent themes have been identified. The coding involved attributing descriptive categories to different sections of the data. 58 codes emerged inductively, and then collated into categories in order to search for themes. Some codes did not have a corresponding category in the Breuer framework, but were considered relevant regardless, whereby this information is included in the empirical material in section 5.1. Themes have been organized into first- and second-order themes. See Appendix 6 for the structuring of the codes.

4.4 Reflexive considerations

The authors of this study recognize that their own implicit assumptions, beliefs, and values have contributed to the creation of knowledge in this study. The authors have similar educational backgrounds to several of the Stockholm-based interviewees from the MC industry, which potentially creates an implicit bias toward these respondents.

4.5 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were considered in this study to increase the dependability and authenticity of the study in several ways. All company specific information and information that could be used to identify individual employees has been made anonymous. Individual employees have been given pseudonyms. All interviewees were informed about the study, the participation, and GDPR regulations (see Appendix 2) prior to the interviews via a consent form and orally.

4.6 Discussion of methodology

In this study, the four trustworthiness criteria presented by Lincoln & Guba (1985) has been followed. Credibility has been ensured through recording and transcribing each interview. Transferability has been ensured through the thick descriptions of each of the company cultures (see Appendix 4), and generalizations about each culture has been made for each industry. Individual perceptions of team trust are greatly dependent on the social contextual factors. Dependability has been ensured by saving all material that has been used in this thesis, which allows for peer auditing. In addition, auditing has been performed to a certain extent during the supervision meetings where the supervisor and peers have had insights into the work. Finally, the sorting of the codes has been disclosed in Appendix 5, further showing transparency in the process. Confirmability is ensured if it can be shown that the authors acted in good faith. In order to ensure the quality of the analysis, the authors have discussed all interpretations and made sure to agree on the analysis.

5. Empirics

The empirics is presented according to the themes in Table 4 (see Appendix 6).

5.1 Social identity and group norms

5.1.1 Management consultant social identity factors

Most MCEs describe their organizational cultures positively, using words such as "inclusive" and "ambitious" (see Appendix 4). MCEs prefer leaders who are experts in their areas, grant freedom, who are like them, and who set clear structures. Titles and hierarchies are important in order to be a legitimate leader. MCEs are in general results-oriented and believe that they are handling virtual work better than others since they consider themselves adaptive and experienced in working in different settings.

> *"We in consulting (...) are often a few steps ahead in how to work. It was no big deal for us to work [digitally] when it [the pandemic] happened."*
>
> Margareta, Junior MCE

Kristina believes MCEs work hard and sacrifice other aspects of their lives for their jobs. Some say that working virtually has caused work-life balance to become blurred, following a lack of

routines and more work. Albert thinks promotions are important and can be navigated in different ways, which is important in the profession to climb as fast as possible. MCEs tend to talk about their job in terms of their profession rather than in relation to which firm they work at. While staff rotation can cause issues, MCEs say that it is part of the job and is expected.

MCEs highly value social relations at work. Most MCEs say that this is one of the reasons why they chose to become a consultant, along with working with like-minded people whom they see as friends.

> *"I like to work, and I can work a lot. So I like to have my friends at work."*
>
> Sofia, Senior MCE

5.1.2 Manufacturing firm social identity factors

MFEs tend to discuss the organizational cultures of their firms to a larger extent than MCEs do. Some mention the influence of old historical roots on the culture. There is a clear division where Companies 4 and 5 are described as being more traditional industrial companies, while Companies 6 and 7 want to see themselves as "transparent" and "forward-looking" (see Appendix 4). Firm representatives from Company 6 talk about the hard work in getting rid of the "heavy industry" mark.

> *"We're absolutely an industrial company, but we are trying to get rid of the label 'industrial'."*
>
> Karin, Senior MFE

Great leaders are described with soft attributes, such as being trustable, responsive, and supportive. Leaders should have close connections to the people on the ground. Working virtually is primarily discussed from a company perspective in what the firm does about the situation. This includes the ability to bring home necessary equipment and establishing well-being committees, where some voice dissatisfaction.

MFEs point out that they interact less with people they do not work directly with, which creates a sense of feeling disconnected from the organizational culture and workplace. Some MFEs say that social relations are important at work in order to create a feeling of belongingness, and thereby make colleagues feel happy at work in order to perform. Others say that it is not important for them personally, as they have social lives and interactions outside the workplace. This was mostly expressed by people who had started their own families.

MFEs tend to talk in a "we" rather than "I" format, especially those from Company 9. When asked about challenges and issues, answers discuss what the organization or team faced rather than for them personally. One respondent discusses being female in her masculine organizational culture, illustrated using the example of jokes revolving around football and beer. She says that she sometimes struggles in making her voice heard in group meeting.

> *"If I say something it just disappears, no one cares about it. But if he [a male colleague] says it, or says 'as Birgitta said', then the discussion changes and people say 'oh, there may be something to this.'"*
>
> Birgitta, Manager MFE

5.2 Perceived trustworthiness in teams and risk-taking behavior in teams

In this section, each category is explained in terms of the relevant subcategories described by Breuer et al. (2019) for both industries in parallel.

5.2.1 Ability

Delegation has been used as a proxy for competence, as feeling comfortable in delegating would imply an assessment of one's colleagues as holding adequate expertise. Overall, the representatives feel comfortable delegating depending on to whom they are delegating. MCEs' reservation tends to depend on the experience and position of the receiver.

> *"I would definitely say that there is [a hierarchical barrier in delegating]."*
>
> Kristina, Junior MCE

MFEs are concerned about the workload of the person delegated to, even though most say that they can delegate at least to some degree. In general, everyone agrees that people show similar levels of conscientiousness in terms of effort. However, the level of expected effort seems to differ between the industries, with MCEs implying that they work longer hours.

Regarding media literacy, everyone generally agrees that the technical aspects of the job function well, but that there are some issues. Margareta (MCE) says that misunderstandings occasionally arise from misinterpreting tone in the digital format, especially when there is an age gap between the sender and the receiver.

> *"Now, when everything is digital, it's so easy to misinterpret one another. You can seem rude when you're actually not (...) After a meeting, you can be really pissed (...) Now, I can find myself flipping the screen off because no one sees it."*
>
> Margareta, Junior MCE

The inability to use body language is mentioned by some as an issue in the digital format. Another generational difference concerns different perceptions in choosing communication channels for various tasks.

> *"Some colleagues used to call about everything - it could be the tiniest thing. Then I thought: 'please just email me instead.'"*
>
> Helena, Senior MFE

Overall, little emphasis is put on positive humor, with most saying that at least 90 percent of communication is solely work-related. Both MCEs and MFEs have made efforts to arrange digital social activities, such as digital coffee breaks and after works, with varying success, even though most appreciate the effort. Many MFEs tend to interpret "social activity" as socializing for a couple of minutes before or after meetings.

> *"I unfortunately feel like there is no substitute for the social gatherings around the coffee machine."*
>
> Helena, Senior MFE

The feedback culture processes differ in the two industries, where these are generally considered useful by MCEs and less so by MFEs. In the MC industry, formal and informal feedback are an integral part of the structure and way of work.

> *"Having a feedback culture is alpha and omega. It is the only way to improve."*
>
> Albert, Senior MCE

Some MFEs find the informal feedback processes useful. Formal feedback structures are used to a lesser extent, and some find it distracting.

> *"I receive the feedback that my boss has compiled for me, but then it's kind of, like, 'Patrick thinks you have done this and that'. That's a little bit silly. If Patrick thinks so, then Patrick can come and talk to me directly."*
>
> Birgitta, Manager MFE

5.2.2 Benevolence

Most agree that they have autonomy in their daily work as long as output is delivered. MCE managers use a hands-off leadership style, while MFEs have check-in meetings with their colleagues to get an overview. Regarding task support, it is more difficult to see when others need help in the digital format. Instead, emphasis is put on the individual's responsibility to let others know when they need help. There is an overall sense of emotional care through feeling appreciated in both industries.

5.2.3 Predictability

MCEs think availability has improved working digitally, and believe that they have efficient meetings, in which they do not "sit around", as expressed by Albert. MFEs, on the other hand, are more difficult to reach ad-hoc following an increase in number of meetings.

> *"There are so many damn meetings now. When I look at my calendar, I sometimes think to myself: 'When am I supposed to work?'"*
>
> Hans, Manager MFE

Some MFEs claim meetings have gotten more efficient in the digital format, mainly stemming from better structure with clear agendas, as well as the ability to do other things in parallel during meetings, while others say that meetings have become inefficient, mainly stemming from the increased volume of meetings.

5.2.4 Transparency

The transparency in decision-making has been seen as a determinant for information transparency. All say the decision-making process is transparent. MCEs find it justified that managers make the decisions since they have more experience.

> *"There is a reason that those high up in the hierarchy have the decision-power. They have worked for a long time."*
>
> Mikael, Junior MCE

All MFEs perceive that they are included in the decision-making that directly influences their work, but sometimes specialists are called in to make the final call. In terms of responsibility assignment, both industries agree that it is important whom to hold accountable.

5.2.5 Disclosure

Overall, there were differences regarding whether conflicts were discussed openly in different companies. MCEs deal with conflicts through the structure of the firm, interpreting conflicts as something that can be solved using rational arguments. Several stress the benefits of this set-up as it makes it clear who has the responsibility and final say, which facilitates resolving conflicts.

> *"If we have a conflict, we are almost unnecessarily structured with it. We put different options on a slide with pros and cons, then we give it to the person above us in the hierarchy, and he or she makes the decision."*
>
> Mikael, Junior MCE

Similar to the issue with tone in section 5.2.1, Margareta (MCE) says that difficulties in interpreting reactions in the digital format leads to subgroups being formed. MFEs tend to interpret conflicts as personal intrigues in the office, but disagreements regarding work are considered healthy.

> *"The way we handle conflicts depends, where we sometimes put the head in the sand, and other times deal with the issue directly."*
>
> Nils, Manager MFE

Discussing mistakes openly is encouraged, but there are some reservations in doing so.

> *"It depends on what kind of mistake it is [if you talk about it with others]. If you can solve it by yourself, it is much easier to just solve it rather than worrying others."*
>
> Sofia, Manager MCE

There is consensus within MCEs that it is more tolerated to make mistakes the more junior you are. MFEs of all different positions tend to be more open to discussing mistakes. For them, it is rather the question of in what forum to bring it up, in order to be relevant and avoid making colleagues feel ashamed. Marie (MFE), for example, discusses mistakes one-on-one rather than in a group-setting. In both industries, the decision to share private information is said to depend on the individual. Everyone agrees that they would only tell a select few if they were feeling down. Even so, few can name an example from when they, or anyone, has done it. MCEs reason that it is difficult to talk about private topics in a video conferencing format.

5.2.6 Reliance

All companies encourage employees to ask for help and to ask questions. Junior people in both industries agree that the hurdle to ask questions or ask for help is higher in the digital format compared to an informal "knock on the shoulder" in the office.

> *"If I first have to think, write the message, press send... The formality of that process may make me think twice [before sending a question]."*
>
> Karl, Junior MFE

Junior MCEs say they feel like a burden when asking for help. Some senior MFEs, such as Helena, receive more questions in the digital format, while others such as Nils says he barely receives any questions at all digitally.

Forbearance from control has been observed by asking about the quality of work when delegated to colleagues. MCEs tend to worry about the quality of the output from delegation to a larger extent than MFEs do. Anders (MCE) states that he is responsible for the delivery and must quality-check the output. Even so, there are exceptions such as Sofia (MCE), saying that she is not concerned about the quality since she works with "very good" people. MFEs say that the task might take longer to solve if delegated, since the receiver may need some time to become acquainted with the task.

6. Analysis

6.1 Social identity and group norms

6.1.1 Social identity and group norms for management consultants

MCEs are self-categorized with their profession rather than with their organizations and their teams, illustrated by talking about themselves as "We as consultants". This implies that the in-group is constituted by other MCEs and that they are motivated to follow their professional group norms. MCEs distinguish themselves from other groups in society using self-enhancing characteristics, including being hard-working and problem-solvers. MCEs consider themselves to be more adaptive than other industries and expect themselves to deal with unexpected issues such as staff rotation. In large, characteristics used to describe themselves as individuals perfectly corresponds to highly valued traits in the profession, indicating a high degree of assimilation. Since the characteristics MCEs ascribe to themselves correspond to their work, this implies that MCEs in a way *are* their work. Consequently, only positive words are used to describe their workplace, as suggesting something else would be a personal critique.

Consultant as a social group occupies a dominant position in MCEs identities. Applying the three criteria by Janssen & Huang (2008), the MC identity is strong since they are (a) aware of their membership in the group and what is expected in the consultant role, (b) belong to an attractive and relatively prestigious in-group in terms of societal status, and (c) feel emotionally involved with the profession having their friends at work.

Although not explicitly mentioned, most MCEs infer the existence of an "ideal" consultant which one strives to become, which shapes the norms of the industry. Normative behaviors include working hard in the name of self-development and respecting hierarchical barriers such as titles in order to climb the corporate ladder, which can only be done through walking the same career path as one's predecessors. The collective group norms facilitate the competitive up-or-out culture in the industry. The leadership style revolves around structuring work, necessary in the ambiguous and dynamic work environment.

6.1.2 Social identity and group norms for manufacturing firms

MFEs are self-categorized with their organization more than their profession. Following office-based MFEs being disconnected from the core operations of their organizations, combined with

there being several professions in a single office, a common professional social identity is not sufficient. Instead, MFEs tend to identify with their team or their organization, with about half identifying primarily with their organization, and the other half predominantly with their teams. This was illustrated by talking either about "We as an organization" or "We in the team".

Overall, the in-group identification was weaker compared to MC. Again, applying the three criteria by Janssen & Huang (2008), this stemmed primarily from (a) a weaker sense of awareness of their membership in the organization and team, since their role in the organization in relation to other functions in the company was not always clear, as well as their team(s) not always being clearly defined, (b) belong to a social group that is relatively less attractive considering status and prestige, illustrated by the organizational cultural descriptions, and (c) feel less emotionally engaged with the group, exemplified by putting less emphasis on maintaining social relations at work. Other contributing factors to a weaker identification included MFEs having other competing social groups, such as being a parent or athlete, and a less desire to become an "ideal" type of employee, as this ideal type of person is unspecified or differs per profession in the industry.

The lower social identity in the MF industry leads to weaker behavioral group norms. These revolve around confirming to organizational and team norms, whereby the range of group norms in the MF sample is broad. The culture in MF firms could be described as a safety-net mentality, where the organization acts like a parent in providing security and comfort. This is exemplified by the strong opinions MFEs had regarding their company's ability to deal with the employees' well-being during the pandemic, implying that MFEs expected to be taken care of by their organizations.

The divide between Company 4 and 5, which are described as industrial and masculine, and Company 6 and 7, which insist on being modern and forward-looking, sheds light on the negative associations that are made on a societal level when something is described using the adjectives traditional or industrial. Those who used the word "industrial" usually had negative attitudes toward their companies. Leaders were expected to play a similar role as the parenting culture, by providing support and cheering people on, acting like a social glue.

Some MFEs express social categories outside work that clash with their organizational belonging. In these instances, they choose to not categorize themselves with the in-group. This was illustrated by describing the organization or the team negatively, and thereby distancing oneself from the in-group. For example, Birgitta distanced herself from the "beer and football" culture of Company 5, as she had difficulties combining the social group of being female with the social group of working for an industrial firm.

6.1.3 Summary social identity and group norms
The differences in the two industries in terms of social identity and group norms lead to three categories in which employees identify themselves in: professional, organizational, and team identification. While there are traces of each within each employee, there were differences in which ones took precedence, whereby Figure 2 shows the dominant path in respective industry.

Figure 2: Richnau and Sjölander's, Taxonomy for Team Trust analysis for social identity and group norms separated per industry
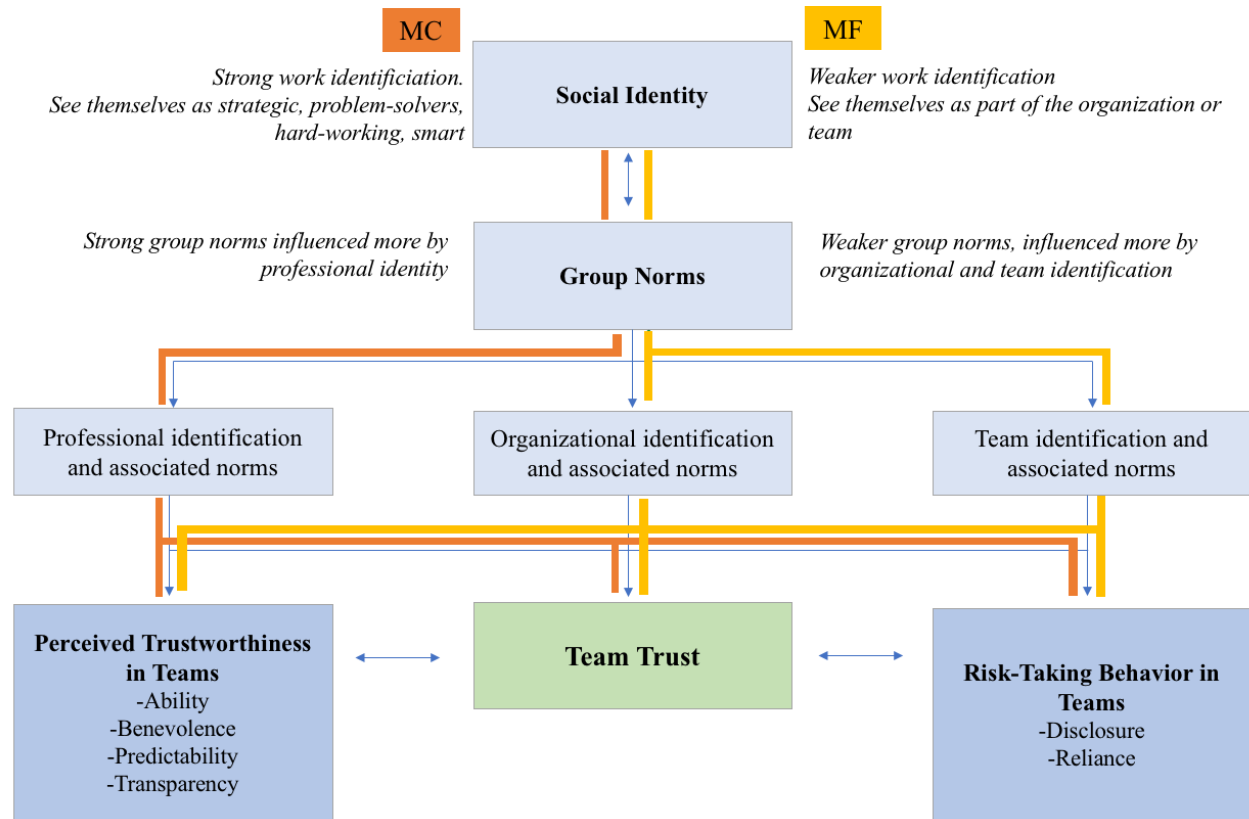
6.2 Perceived trustworthiness and risk-taking behaviors in teams

6.2.1 Ability

Competence supports team trust in the MC industry mediated by the strong group norms regarding hierarchical delegation. Competence is mixed in the MF industry as there are no strong team and organizational norms on the matter, which sometimes causes hesitation to delegate, driven by uncertainty in how the receiver will respond, as the social cost of a negative repercussion potentially would be more costly than finishing the task oneself.

Conscientiousness supports team trust for both industries in terms of effort. Even though MCEs work longer hours, this corresponds to different group norms. Thus, expected behavior is met in both industries. While technical aspects of media literacy in large support team trust in both MC and MF industries, there are issues regarding communication. In both industries, group norms regarding how to communicate tone and body languages are vague, whereby this sometimes leads to misunderstandings. As a result, media literacy gives mixed indications for team trust.

Positive humor is mixed in supporting team trust in both industries. While it is impeded by the inability to conduct adequate social activities to the employees' expectations, it is supported by the consensus in thought by believing that digital activities cannot replace physical ones.

The feedback culture supports team trust in the MC industry following it both being a structure as well as a group norm for how to improve. In the MF industry, on the other hand, the feedback culture impedes team trust as there is neither clear structures nor apparent norms for how to develop.

6.2.2 Benevolence

Autonomy supports team trust in both industries. MCEs have autonomy since their work is output-focused rather than process-focused, while MFEs derive this autonomy from being specialized in their tasks to a certain extent. Overall, task support is impeded in both industries, in that employees need to take more responsibility for asking for help since it is less visible when an employee needs support. Emotional care supports team trust in both industries. While this is not discussed as an issue much, the group norm is to think that this is not needed.

6.2.3 Predictability

Availability supports team trust in the MC industry and gives mixed indications for the MF industry. The group norm for MCEs is to see themselves as efficient, whereby they think they are handling virtual work effectively. MFEs could be seen as trying to retain the structure present during normal circumstances, leading to more bureaucracy and more meetings as they try to retain the status quo in the digital format. The range of responses regarding whether meetings are efficient or not gives further weight to the mixed perception in this area.

6.2.4 Transparency

Information transparency supports team trust in both industries. The norm and structure in the MC industry is to make decisions according to the hierarchy, while MFEs mostly care about the relevant information for them personally. Overall, responsibility assignment support team trust.

6.2.5 Disclosure

The ability to discuss conflicts openly supports team trust for MCEs, where the norm is to resolve it without being emotionally involved as this would be seen as unprofessional. Since MFEs say arguing could be good, but at the same time avoid discussing certain issues, discussing conflicts openly gives mixed indications for team trust. The tendency within MFEs to recognize more differences in opinions could infer that the MF company structure does not have as standardized solutions to handle such issues. A less structured approach in dealing with conflicts instead allows for personal opinions and politics to play a role in the workplace.

The group norms go against discussing mistakes openly in the MC industry, impeding team trust. While it is more accepted to make mistakes as a junior, it is typically preferred to solve the issue oneself in order to climb the hierarchy as fast as possible. Discussing mistakes supports team trust for MFEs as there are norms encouraging speaking about it. Sharing private information impedes team trust in both industries stemming from ambiguous norms regarding what is considered reasonable to share, primarily illustrated by the lack of examples, which shows that sensitive issues are not brought up to the surface.

6.2.6 Reliance

Asking for help and asking questions gives mixed indications for supporting team trust in both industries. While companies say that it is encouraged to ask questions, the perception of being a burden when doing so by junior people in both industries indicates difficulties in the digital format. The different perceptions regarding asking and receiving questions for junior and senior employees indicate that the balance between leader and follower has been disrupted by the digital format, with the scale shifting toward the individual employee bearing the burden for requesting help. There are no clear norms in either industry for how to do this.

Regarding forbearance from control, MCEs have mixed indications regarding team trust since the answers are very mixed. Forbearance from control gives mixed indications regarding team trust for MF since their tasks are highly specialized and difficult to delegate. While there is no concern regarding the quality, there are worries regarding the additional time it will take to complete it.

6.2.7 Summary of perceived trustworthiness and risk-taking behaviors in teams

Figure 3 illustrates whether team trust is supported, impeded, or gives mixed indications for each subcategory.

Figure 3: Zoomed in version of the lower section of the framework illustrated in Figure 1 and 2.
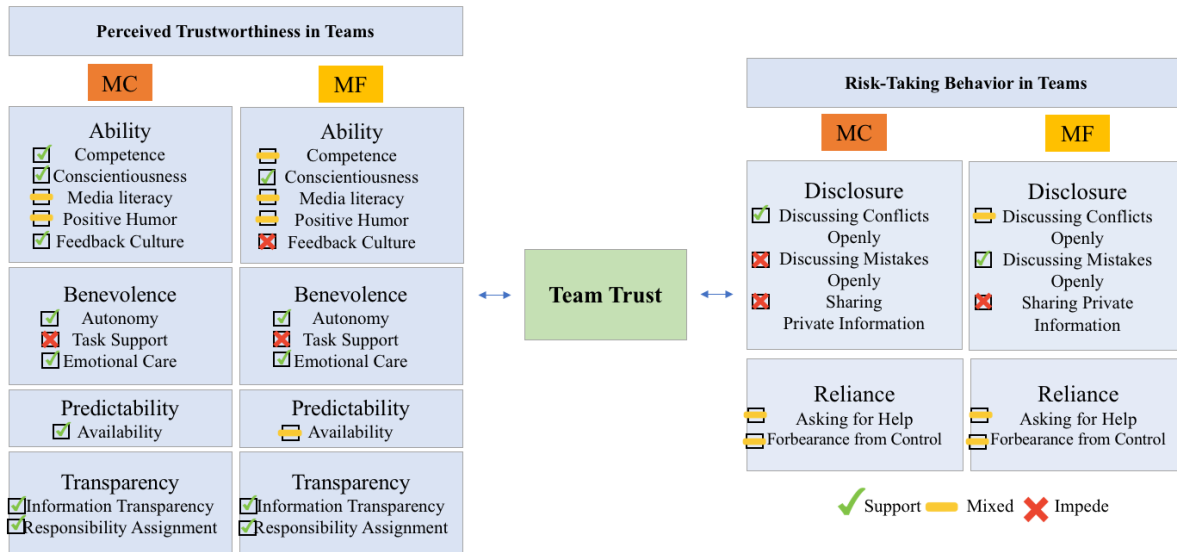
7. Conclusion and discussion

7.1 Answer to the research questions

Through a qualitative study, the purpose of this thesis has been to examine how team trust is perceived in PLVT and whether the perception differs across industries, thereby answering the following research questions:

(1) How is team trust perceived in pandemic-caused local virtual teams (PLVT)?
(2) How does it differ between industries, and why?

(1) Team trust in PLVT is perceived by the individual in terms of social identity, group norms, perceived trustworthiness factors, and risk-taking behavior factors in teams. (2) Team trust can differ in industries stemming from differences in group norms, which are influenced by the individual's social identification with either the profession, organization, and/or team.

7.2 Theoretical contribution of the study

Several issues brought up in the research gap were addressed. Firstly, a theoretical implication includes the Richnau & Sjölander Taxonomy for Team Trust which integrates the team trust and social identity research fields. The framework builds on Mayer et al. (1995), Costa (2003), and Breuer et al. (2019), and presents a different perspective on team trust which accounts for industry differences through social identity and group norms. The taxonomy should be interpreted as problematizing current frameworks, as having the same group norms could mediate the effects of certain areas where the Breuer framework may have suggested otherwise. Following the qualitative nature and small sample size, the combined framework should not be considered a new model. However, this study provides indications that additional research is needed in the team trust area.

Furthermore, the area of team trust may become increasingly important in the future following the implications of the pandemic on the workplace. As argued in the literature review, however, such claims have been around for a long time. Even so, there are indications that the pandemic might be the triggering factor for virtual work to be widely accepted and implemented even after life has returned to normal (CNBC 2021).

7.3 Practical implications of the study

The study provides several implications for practitioners who seek to better understand how team trust is perceived while working remotely. While the findings may be the most directly applicable for those who wish to maintain or develop virtual team trust in the MC and MF industries, the authors believe it may give indications for other industries as well, primarily stemming from the insight that a joint view on norms is a key factor in creating team trust. Thus, by creating a strong sense of identification, an organization could increase the likelihood of creating strong norms, which in turn can contribute to a more trusting team environment. Similarly, the thesis suggests that strong norms can influence the social identity of the employees.

Understanding virtual teams now and in the future is important as the pandemic has changed one significant condition which constrained the usage of virtual teams previously, namely the notion that virtual teams used to be considered abnormal. Even when the pandemic ceases, this new accepting and tolerating environment for virtual teams is likely to be sustained, whereby studies on them moving forward will be impacted. Furthermore, this study shows that there is a greater need to be adaptable for unexpected circumstances, as it examines how team trust is affected when there is disturbance in an organization. Such disturbances are possibly not limited to worldwide pandemics, as many organizations in different fields go through different kinds of crises or challenges on a regular basis, both internal, such as mismanagement and rumors (Johansen et al. 2012), and external, such as earthquakes and man-made catastrophes (Hart et al. 2002).

7.4 Limitations with the study

There are limitations to the findings in this study. Following this being a study conducted from a constructivist ontological position, the depiction of the empirics is dependent on the authors' interpretation of the material, which may have influenced the findings. One limitation is the combined framework's general applicability in other organizations, industries, and countries, since this thesis only explains the specific companies covered by the scope.

Moreover, only one respondent per team has been heard, implying that a full view of team trust per team has been limited. It is possible that other members of the same team would interpret team trust in a different way, however, the study only aimed to explain team trust from an individual perspective. Further, there is a risk that proxies used for certain factors have not been the best possible estimates, such as asking about delegation to assess competence. Additionally, there is a risk that respondents have provided biased answers, especially facing questions regarding organizational cultures and their view of the company, as these are sensitive topics.

7.5 Suggestions for future research

The effects of social identity and group norms on team trust should be further researched. This thesis has been conducted using a cross-sectional method, whereby it would be interesting to study using a case study method. This has the potential to provide further insight, as this method takes several individuals' perception from the same team into consideration. Furthermore, this thesis has treated group norms according to the symbolic interactionist view, but there are several other definitions within the norm literature, such as rational choice theorists, who see norms as constraints and nonnormative behavior as a cost (Feld 2002). Additional research should investigate how the findings change if the norm definition is altered. Similarly, changes stemming from altering the trust definition should be further researched, such as when using Rousseau's (et al. 1998) definition, which sees trust as a psychological state.

Leadership is often considered a building block in creating trust among team members (Furumo et al. 2012), in terms of clarifying goals, roles, and responsibilities (Abudi 2012). The empirical material in this study gives indications that key factors related to group norms and social identity are organizational culture and leadership. Thus, connecting these two research fields to the study of social identity and team trust may provide additional insights into how group norms, for example, can be altered to better support team trust.

Additional studies should be conducted comparing different industries, as this paper only have examined two different ones, which has the potential to offer further insights within team trust development. Lastly, a scope that lies outside the borders of Sweden would also be relevant, since this thesis only examined team trust for PLVT in a Swedish context. It could be interesting to see if findings could differ in other countries with other cultures.

7.7 Conclusion

Virtual teamwork is becoming increasingly important in the modern world, a development which has been accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The rapid mass implementation of local virtual teams has created a necessity for further research within the team trust and virtual teams fields. This study has contributed toward the research gap by exploring virtual team trust from a new

angle by adding a social identity perspective, which revealed the importance of group norms in creating team trust. As there are indications of future long-lasting implications from the pandemic, practitioners will have to better understand these components for the workplace of tomorrow to allow local virtual teams to flourish. As trust in teams as a structure matures, trust within teams must grow accordingly.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Email to companies

The email has been translated from Swedish to English.

Dear X,

We are two students from Stockholm School of Economics who are currently writing our bachelor thesis in management.

We are studying remote work and virtual teams following the special working situation that has arisen with the current pandemic, where many companies and teams have moved work online. Our goal is to investigate how remote work affects social aspects in teams, and how teams are affected by not working in the same place. How does teamwork work when not meeting physically? That's what we would like to find out!

Therefore, we are interested in interviewing people who work in virtual teams, but who prior to the pandemic primarily worked face to face. Do you think there are any teams where one or several people could participate in our study within your company? We would really appreciate it!

We are planning to conduct interviews between the upcoming weeks, specifically between the weeks 7-10. We are aware that you have a lot to do, and we are therefore flexible regarding time and place for an interview. Since we are in a pandemic, we could conduct the interviews online through Teams, but if you would rather meet outside for a coffee or a walk that could work as well.

Your company and you yourself will of course be anonymized in the thesis and all interviews are handled according to GDPR. We would appreciate it if you and/or your colleagues could help us out. If you have any questions, we would love for you to reach out to us.

We wish you a nice day and are looking forward to hearing from you!

Best regards,

Max Richnau and Lovisa Sjölander

Appendix 2. Interview Guide

Ethical considerations (discussed before the start of every interview)

- This study is conducted as a thesis project at the Department of Management at Stockholm School of Economics. The authors of this study are Max Richnau and Lovisa Sjölander.
- The purpose of this study is to better understand the social aspects in virtual project teams.
- Your participation in this interview is voluntary and you can choose to withdraw at any time. If you choose to do so, we will not use the data gathered from you. The interview is expected to take around 45 minutes.
- With your consent, we would like to ask if we can record the interview in order to transcribe it afterwards.
- The data gathered will be anonymized and will be handled according to GDPR. The data will be deleted upon examination.
- Remember that we are interested in your experiences and opinions! If you work in several teams, please consider one team when answering team questions. In addition, we are interested in the virtual team environment so please primarily consider your experiences within the past year.
- Before we start, do you have any questions for us?

General questions

- What is your role in the team and the company?
- How long have you been with the company?
- How is your team structured? What are the roles? Who is responsible for what?
- What key actors (individuals or teams) does the team interact with?
- How are the meetings in the team structured? Who is leading the meetings? How often do you have meetings?
- What are the primary communication channels that the team uses?
- How long have you been working together? How often do people join or leave the team?
- How do you perceive team members' ability to handle the technological aspects of remote working?

Remote work

- How long has the company been encouraging employees to work from home? For how long have you worked from home now?
- What are your general thoughts about it?
- What does your average day look like?

Relation and context

- How would you describe the organizational culture at your company? What are the fundamental values?

- How would you describe the culture in the team?
- How important are social relations at work for you? In what way?
- Do you have any teambuilding exercises or similar during corona times?
- How much emphasis does the team have on having fun?
- How much of the communication that you have within the team is task-related?
- How do you handle conflicts as a team?
- Do you experience that there are subgroups in the team? If so, why do you think that is?
- How do you experience asking for help in the team when you need it?
- Do you feel that you notice when others in the team need help?
- How does the team work with feedback? Do you give it? Do you receive it?

Team Trust

- Are you comfortable in delegating your own work to others in the team? How often do you do it?
- In a scenario where you have too much to do, are you comfortable in sharing the work with others in the team? Are you comfortable in knowing that the result will be as good?
- Do you feel that you can tell your colleagues if you are down about something outside of work?
- Do you experience that everyone contributes equally to the team overall?
- How do you feel about the need to know what your colleagues are working on?
- In what ways are you monitored?
- How open is the culture in updating each other about what one is working on during a given time period?
- Do you feel comfortable standing behind group decisions, even if you disagree with them?
- How available do you believe that your colleagues and your supervisor/team leaders are?
- How do you experience the leadership within the team?
- How is taking initiative encouraged in the team?
- Do you feel safe to voice your opinion in the team?
- How do you handle mistakes? Do you feel like you can discuss them openly in the team?
- How transparent do you find the decision-making process in the team?
- Do you worry about your team members' opinion about you?
- When life goes back to normal, how would you like the future workplace to look like?

Appendix 3. Information about interviews

Number	Code name	Role	Industry	Company	Time (min)	Date	Place
1	Albert	Senior	MC	1	49.09	2021-02-15	Video conference
2	Maria	Senior	MC	1	45.12	2021-02-17	Video conference
3	Margareta	Junior	MC	1	52.18	2021-02-17	Video conference
4	Eva	Junior	MC	2	37.54	2021-02-19	Video conference
5	Kristina	Junior	MC	3	62.03	2021-02-21	Video conference
6	Lars	Senior	MF	4	61.01	2021-02-22	Video conference
7	Birgitta	Manager	MF	5	54.53	2021-02-25	Video conference
8	Karin	Senior	MF	6	39.50	2021-02-26	Video conference
9	Karl	Junior	MF	7	50.15	2021-03-01	Video conference
10	Ingrid	Manager	MF	7	31.49	2021-03-02	Video conference
11	Anders	Junior	MC	8	43.36	2021-03-03	Video conference
12	Johan	Manager	MF	10	45.14	2021-03-04	Video conference
13	Per	Junior	MC	9	49.07	2021-03-05	Video conference
14	Nils	Manager	MF	10	44.06	2021-03-05	Video conference
15	Mikael	Junior	MC	8	44.46	2021-03-08	Video conference
16	Sofia	Manager	MC	9	25.26	2021-03-08	Video conference
17	Peter	Manager	MC	9	40.46	2021-03-08	Video conference
18	Hans	Manager	MF	10	46.23	2021-03-08	Video conference
19	Helena	Senior	MF	6	27.17	2021-03-09	Video conference
20	Marie	Manager	MF	5	46.15	2021-03-22	Video conference

Appendix 4. Company Culture Table

Company	Industry	Company Representatives	Company Size*	Words used to describe culture
1	MC	Albert, Margareta, Maria	Big	"Inclusive, flat hierarchy", "helpful"
2	MC	Eva	Small	"Kind, nerdy, ambitious"
3	MC	Kristina	Small	"Small, familiar, friendly"
4	MF	Lars	Big	"Traditional, non-digitalized, conservative"
5	MF	Birgitta, Marie	Big	"Masculine, going in the wrong direction", uncaring
6	MF	Karin, Helena	Big	"Transparent, low hierarchies, modern", "friendly, helpful, open-mindedness"
7	MF	Karl, Ingrid	Big	"Humble, forward-looking, kind", "non-bureaucratic, non-prestigious"
8	MC	Anders, Mikael	Big	"Ambitious, hardworking, down-to-earth", "familiar"
9	MF	Johan, Nils, Hans	Medium	"Familiar, cozy", "flexible, flat organization", "open-mindedness"
10	MC	Sofia, Per, Peter	Medium	"Warm, welcoming", "entrepreneurial", "inclusive, ambitious"

* *An arbitrary indication of relative company size when it comes to the number of employees. The exact number of employees is not disclosed due to anonymity concerns.*

Appendix 5. Coding of the empirics

First Order Themes	Second Order Themes	Third Order Themes	Codes
Team trust	Ability	Competence	Delegation
			Being new
		Conscientiousness	Contributing
		Media Literacy	Technical aspects
			Age
			Video conference
			Camera on/off
			Communication tools
		Positive humor	Having fun
			Social activities
			Work/social communication
		Feedback culture	Feedback culture
	Benevolence	Task support	Seeing when others need help
		Autonomy	Autonomy
			Overview-monitoring
			Flexibility aspects
		Emotional care	Appreciation
	Predictability	Availability	Availability
	Transparency	Information transparency	Transparency in decision making
		Responsibility assignment	Responsibility assignment
	Disclosure	Sharing confidential information	Sharing private information

		Discussing conflicts openly	Discussing conflicts openly
			Sub groups
		Discussing mistakes openly	Discussing mistakes openly
	Reliance	Asking for help	Asking for help
			Asking questions
		Forbearance from control	Delegation-quality

Social identity and group norms	Management consultant firm social identity factors		Culture
			We in MC
		Leadership	Leadership
			Good leadership
			Titles and hierarchies
			Handling of virtual work
			Well-being
			Work-life balance
			Staff rotation
			Importance of social relations
			Social aspects
			Meeting culture
	Manufacturing firm social identity factors		Culture
			We in MF
			Female in the workplace

			Company's ability to deal with the pandemic + company support
		Leadership	Leadership
			Good leadership
			Titles and hierarchies
			Handling of virtual work
			Well-being
			Work-life balance
			Staff rotation
			Importance of social relations
			Social aspects
			Phase in life
			Meeting culture

Additional codes, that were not used: Team size, characteristics of good and bad teams, initiatives, creativity, Swedish work environment, proportions, worrying about others' opinions, transportation, benefits of working in an office, general thoughts of working remotely, the future workplace, team members abroad, opinions from an individual perspective, being a good person, how to create trust.

Appendix 6. Tables and models

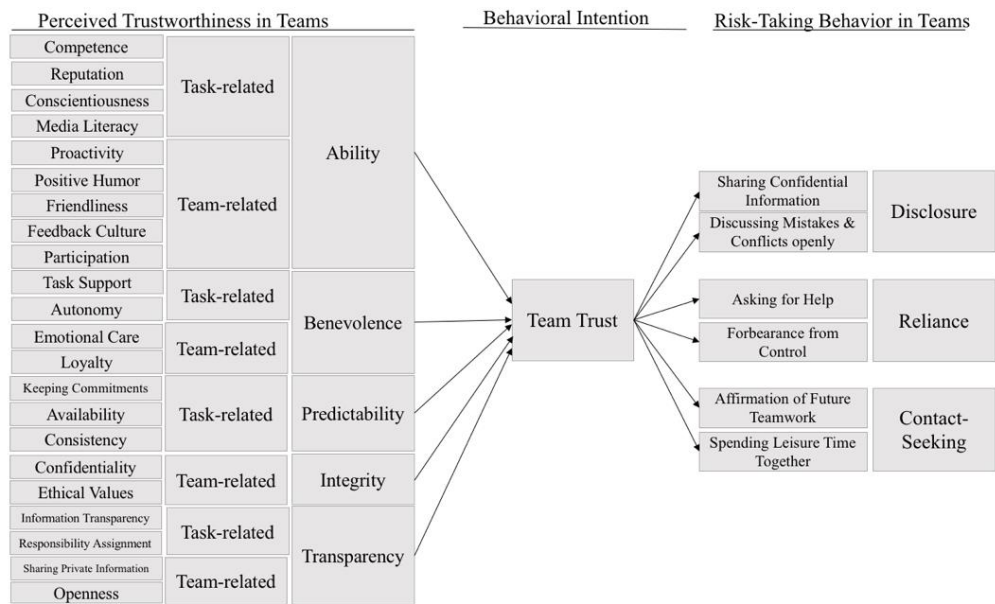*Figure 4: Breuer et al's (2019) Taxonomy for Team Trust*

Table 3: Interview themes

General category	Components
Company and team information	Team structure Meeting culture Communication channels
Relations	Organizational Culture Help and Feedback Culture Conflicts
Team Trust	Delegation Monitoring and Control Sharing Private Information Voicing one's opinion Mistakes

Table 4: Overview of the empirical data

First order themes	Second order themes
Social Identity and Group Norms	Management consultant firm social identity factors
	Manufacturing firm social identity factors
Team Trust	Ability
	Benevolence
	Predictability
	Transparency
	Disclosure
	Reliance