

Socialization and Identification in Work Isolation

A qualitative study of how newcomers' organizational identities are affected by completely digital work.

Abstract: This study investigates how completely digital work affects new members in an organization in terms of *organizational identity (OI)* and how they become a part of the organization's culture. With the spike of completely digital work practices induced by the Covid-19 pandemic, there is an increasing need to better understand this phenomenon in light of the surge of new empirical data constellations. The study is conducted in the interpretivist paradigm and uses qualitative data in the form of 22 deep interviews (excluding one pilot-interview) conducted in a semi-structured format. The data is analysed through a theoretical framework focused on identity, identification and socialization of newcomers in a digital context. The main findings highlight that interactions in relationships form a crucial aspect of socialization. Due to the limited interactions in the completely digital work context, relationship development is inhibited. This results in less clear and frequent feedback, which contributes to the identification process not converging to an organizational identity to the same extent. It can also be concluded that the organization can induce socialization aspects for newcomers such as through assigning mentors in order to enable the identification process to align with a greater degree of organizational identity.

Keywords:

Organizational Identity, Socialization, Digital Work, Identification, Sensemaking

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Problematization

During 2020, the world was forced to adapt due to the covid-19 crisis. Almost every company was forced to adapt the way they conducted their business due to the restrictions imposed by governments (Lv et al., 2020). Although digital work previously has been implemented in various extents by some companies (Martins et al., 2004; Cohen, 2010; Vartiainen and Hyrkkänen, 2010) one strikingly clear impact was that companies had to unexpectedly transition their activities to conducting them completely digitally in a short time frame (Wang et al., 2021). Due to the vast variation regarding how digital work is employed there is a large difference in how organizations socialize employees and the effects it has on them.

During changing circumstances in an organization or in society there is an increasing need among employees for forming *organizational identity (OI)* (van Dick, 2004). There is also an interest from organizations to influence the identity of workers in order to align them with the organization's goals and purpose (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Fiol and O'Connor (2005) argue that digital communication is inferior for developing OI, whereas Rhoads (2010) argues that it could vary. The need for understanding how OIs are formed are especially apparent in digital contexts (Pratt, 2001; Fiol and O'Connor, 2005) and for newcomers (Lapointe et al., 2014). Newcomers are regarded to be in the stage where they both require socialization the most and also are the most perceptible for influence in their identification process (Ashforth et al., 2008; Lapointe et al., 2014). Gilson et al. (2015) has particularly highlighted the increasing need for understanding how newcomers can be onboarded and socialized into an organization as this is considered to be a challenge and yet to be completely understood.

Theories regarding OI and identification have been developed in depth by Ashforth et al., (2008) however, the theory is requested to be tested in specific contexts and has not yet taken special consideration to completely digital work settings. The recent rapid increase of this phenomenon intensifies the need for understanding this better. In terms of newcomer adjustment, Lapointe et al. (2014) have regarded affect-based trust relationships as a facilitator for socialization and Fay and Kline (2012) further highlights the importance of relationships as an enabling factor for developing OI in a digital context. Whereas theories as the aforementioned contribute with an edge of understanding to their respective area, they provide a great possibility for understanding the area of intersection when combined.

Communication and collaboration are regarded to be inhibited when work is conducted digitally (Andres, 2012; Penarroja et al., 2013). These aspects are pillars for relationship development (Lapointe et al., 2014; Fay and Kline, 2012). Meanwhile, relationships are regarded as a crucial aspect for identity and identification and enables socialization (Holmes 2013). The transfer of important OI aspects such as values, behaviours and norms (Alvesson, 2000) are also inhibited by the digital context (Taskin and Bridoux, 2010). Newcomers seem to be both particularly inhibited to socialize and develop relationships in the digital work context (Ahuja and Gavin, 2013). This study will seek to further contribute to this important intersection of research regarding newcomers' socialization and organizational identities in a completely digital context.

1.2 Research Opportunity

During Covid-19 it has become common practice to conduct work completely digitally, including the introduction phase for newcomers. This change of practice has impacted this normally crucial step of newcomers' socialization (Lapointe et al., 2014; Fay and Kline, 2012) and likely affected how individuals have internalized and enacted their OI and how this has affected the organization's culture and how the members perceive they have become a part of the culture (Ashforth et al., 2008). The difficulty to socialize in the digital context (Andres, 2012; Penarroja et al., 2013) increases the need for understanding how identification is impacted by this way of working (Holmes, 2013; Alvesson 2000; Taskin and Bridoux, 2010; Ahuja and Gavin, 2013). In terms of identity and socialization, Ashforth et al. (2008) inquire more research testing their theory in specific settings. In addition to this Ashforth et al. (2008) and Ullrich et al. (2007) inquire more research regarding identification on several ongoing levels, including within overall OI, subcultures, teams and idiosyncratic identification. In light of the increased relevance of work in a completely digital context there is a need to understand the phenomenon and its impacts better and add to the conversation among research in this area (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013). Due to the increased application of completely digital work there is an opportunity for understanding this widespread phenomenon better, which we aim to shed light on.

1.3 Purpose, Research Question and Expected Contribution

The purpose of this study is to further contribute to the understanding of newcomer socialization and how it is impacted by completely digital work. Organizational identity is regarded as the extent to which an individual attaches their identity with the organization, for example through values, norms and behaviours (Ashforth et al., 2008). It is necessary to see how socialization occurs and how it impacts the identification process. The main regard of the purpose is to how the newcomers perceive themselves to be affected by completely digital work in terms of their experiences, thoughts, reflections and actions. Thereby their perspective on their adjustment are taken into particular consideration.

Based on the purpose of this study, the following research question will be investigated:

- *How does completely digital work impact newcomers' organizational identity?*

Through answering the research question this study will contribute to the understanding of the area of intersection between digital work, newcomer adjustment and identification. This study will focus on the highlighted aspects of newcomer socialization in the digital environment and bridge the discussion raised by Gilson et al. (2015) regarding how this occurs. The study will also operate in the organizational identification area as highlighted by Ashforth et al. (2008) to bring forward the research into specific contexts.

1.4 Delimitations

The sample will be limited to newcomers and onboarders. The participants were chosen based on the criteria of being newcomers, or persons responsible for recruiting and onboarding these newcomers. Employees that have worked for a maximum of 1.5 years

have been considered to be newcomers. Section 2.4.1 elaborates on the implications of this.

The study is delimited to one firm within the fast-moving consumer goods industry. The organization produces, markets and distributes fast-moving consumer brands worldwide. The organization's divisions contain various roles such as brand management, key account management, digital operations management, etc. For several roles the main tasks can be exemplified to consist of creating brand strategies, conducting marketing research, data deployment, producing organizational strategies and implementations, etc. All roles rely heavily on knowledge and extensive team working, due to the complex nature of the tasks. As companies' ways of working can differ vastly within the same industry, especially when related to teleworking (Belzunegui-Eraso and Erro-Garcés, 2020), the study is delimited to one company. The Company (anonymized due to confidentiality and GDPR) was chosen due to the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding on how people experience their identity and the culture in the same context, which would meet the criteria of meaningful coherence which is valued in qualitative studies (Tracy, 2010).

The two largest divisions in The Company have been studied. The two largest divisions were chosen as study subjects as it increased the chances of gaining a large count of interviews, and subsequently reached data saturation (Saunders, 2018). Furthermore, choosing two divisions would allow a comparability of the differences and similarities in the environments, while maintaining the possibility to go into depth in each division and reach meaningful insights.

As transferability is an important evaluative criterion for qualitative research and requires an identical context (Lincoln and Gubba, 1985), choosing a firm that shares many commonalities with other firms was decisive for its selection. Few examples of such variables could be, that being a Swedish firm, as our study was delimited to the Swedish market. Reasoning behind it is that all Swedish organizations are obliged to obey the Covid-19 restrictions imposed by the government. Such impositions allow teleworking to be a common factor among all firms.

2. Methodology

2.1 Choice of Method

2.1.1 Scientific Research Approach

The purpose of this study is to investigate how individuals' identities and perception of belonging in an organizational culture are affected by completely digital work. This requires an understanding for the subjective perception of individuals actions, thoughts and experiences. This study takes an interpretivist perspective with the purpose to understand and capture the subjective meaning attributed by individuals and take differences between individuals into consideration (Bryman and Bell, 2017). Thereby, the study originates from the interviewees' interpretations, actions and experiences to conclude the subjective wholeness which the empirics constitutes. An interpretivist approach is adequate for the purpose of this research, whereas a positivistic approach would rather capture the objective change in actions and disregard the individual's subjective perceptions. Alvesson and Robertson (2016) and Ravasi and Canato (2013) argue that research regarding organizational identification primarily focuses on identity claims made by an individual. Research within the area of organizational identity has often taken an interpretive approach (Alvesson and Robertson, 2016). The interpretivist approach enables analysis of the thoughts and actions which the interviewees express (Cohen and Manion, 1994), which is in line with the research question and its purpose.

A qualitative interview study was chosen due to the research's emphasis on the individual's own perceptions and understanding of their own reality (Bryman and Bell, 2017; Backman, 2016; Fejes and Thornberg, 2019). According to Levitan et al., (2018) an individual's identity is the sense of oneself in relation to its social circle, and such experiences are understood through their life-story narratives, which are socially constructed. Kroger's (2007) study of identity and life-story argues that narratives are subjective and of a complex nature and are best understood through qualitative methods. This was imperative to understand why employees have certain opinions, rather than just what these are. Creswell (2009) and Edmondson and McManus (2007) means when little research has been done on a phenomenon, and this was the case for identity establishment and cultural belongingness in a digital workplace (Stein, et al., 2013), it calls for a qualitative, exploratory approach. Researchers who have extensively studied newcomer's socialization and organizational identification, such as Ashforth (2001) and Sagberg (2016) among others, have employed a qualitative approach.

Aliseda, A. (2007) argues that when studying a complex subject, such as identity, an abductive approach can be useful, as forming a hypothesis can be difficult and using theory and empirics in an iterative fashion can assist the researcher in generating these. Furthermore, given that there prevailed extensive research on identity and identification, but much less on identity establishment in a digital context (Gajendran and Harrison, 2007), an abductive approach was employed. Previous research has formed a basis for the further gathering of empirics. At the same time, the gathered empirics guides the use of theory in an iterative process (Bryman and Bell, 2017; Dubois and Gadde, 2002). Through the iterative process, the research approach has been developed through continuous processing and revision.

2.1.2 Research Design

The research has been conducted as a case study (Stake, 1995; Merriam, 2009) in order to focus on a similar environment in a certain frame of time. The focus has been on investigating individuals experiencing the same phenomenon in similar environmental circumstances. This is why the interviewees at The Company were regarded as purposeful to conduct a case study on, which is in line with the research question. This has been deemed more purposeful in order to gain an understanding of varying perceptions in the same environment. It has also been decided to be more purposeful than a comparative study, since different organizations consist of different cultures and have conducted their operations and newcomer introduction processes differently (Gustafsson, 2017). A longitudinal case study was dismissed due to time limitations (Winiarska, 2019). Although such a study could have given a clearer picture of how the individuals socialized, the conducted study has been aimed for investigating the individual perception of their socialization, in which their retrospective view is in focus instead of a longitudinal comparison (Henderson et al., 2006). Despite a narrative research being applicable to an extent to this study, due to it capturing the individual's experiences, it would delimit the study scope. That is because, it is not the individual's life narrative per se that is being explored, rather the issue of their identity, through that specific individual. (Creswell, 2009).

As per Stake (1995; 2006), a case study provides both insight about the storytellers, employees of The Company, but at the same time, through their narrative, generates insights about a particular issue, which in this context is identity and cultural establishment. Hence, when studying one company, and focusing on a specific issue, a case study seems the most appropriate compared to multiple case studies (Gustafsson, 2017). When investigating identity establishment and belongingness to a specific organization, Cousin (2005) considers case studies to be the most appropriate. In addition, a qualitative case study, unlike an inductive, phenomenological study with a quantitative methodology, serves a better purpose to understand the workers narratives and experiences in great depth (Bryman and Bell, 2013). Similar to research on this area such as identity and identification (Humphreys and Brown, 2002) and OI (Kuhn and Nelson, 2002; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003) we have conducted a case study.

2.2 Selection

2.2.1 Selection of Company

In order to gain a better understanding on how the individuals perceived their environment, only one firm was chosen for this study. This would limit the range of impressions and direct the focus towards the employees' thoughts and perceptions, while minimizing the focus of external impacts (Gustafsson, 2017). It is a well-established firm which is world-leading within consumer goods. Selection of The Company was based on the parameters that they embodied digital working entirely into their way of working soon after the outbreak of the pandemic. This was essential from a research design point of view and for the study's research question.

Besides that, The Company had multiple divisions, which consisted of a vast number of workers in each, and this was crucial to make meaningful comparisons between each division (Goodrick, 2014). Of these divisions, two were chosen as the subjects of the

study. Having more than two divisions would have led to less transferable findings (Korstejns and Moser, 2018) The divisions differed in size of total employees, and therefore, the division with more employees had a greater number of interviewees. This has implications for the transferability of the findings to all the other divisions within the firm. A commonality among the division was the imposition of same rules related to teleworking, Covid-19 and onboarding of new employees. Lastly, there was a high recruitment of new staff, which allowed many recent newcomers to be interviewed and studied, something that was pivotal for examining the socialization aspect of onboarding, while ensuring data saturation.

2.2.2 Selection of Interviewees

Initially, interviewees were chosen on the basis of systematic sampling as only the interviewees who were either onboarded during the particular circumstances of the complete distance work during the Covid-19 pandemic, or responsible for onboarding newcomers, were selected. As per Salkind (2010), there exists risk of volunteer bias, in conjunction with strategic sampling. That is, there is a risk that only employees who wanted to promote a narrative in favour of the firm, or only those who felt as if they were part of the firm's culture would participate. Due to such factors, the reliability of sampling can be questioned, as there is a risk that the self-volunteered employees who participated in the interviews do not represent the population of The Company.

Our selection includes all of the onboarded employees in the two chosen divisions. It also includes three persons who were onboarded at that time, but who have since left the organization. This selection was made in order to gain a broad and deep perspective of the spectrum of identification and culture perception in these divisions. In addition to this, a number of employees who have been in charge of the onboarding were selected in order to complement the understanding of the onboarding process. It was also intended to study their perspective of the culture.

Blåka and Filstad (2007) means that a person is considered to be a newcomer as long as she/he acquires skills and knowledge to socialize. However, as the time required to acquire such skills and knowledge differs vastly among individuals, it is difficult to specify a timeframe. Rollag, (2004) highlights that the newness of a newcomer before it is considered an established member depends on the situation, and the perception of its colleagues. Hence, it is difficult to provide a timeframe for what constitutes a newcomer, and 1.5 years is what seemed the most suitable for our study.

2.3 Data Collection and Processing

2.3.1 Data Collection

A person within The Company was contacted and provided a list of all newcomers who started their employment within 1.5 years. This meant that they worked completely digital when they were new. This list also included all the persons responsible for onboarding the newcomers. Once a list was gathered, an invitation template was constructed, which was sent out to around 35 persons. From these, 24 replied, and 23 agreed to an interview. As mentioned in section 2.2.2, here prevails a great risk for volunteer bias.

Initially, given the unexplored territory of the topic, one pilot interview was conducted to evaluate the knowledge gathered in a pre-study, prior to commencing the extensive data-collection. As per Kvale (1996) the aim of this was to validate the usability of the interview guide, and find potential flaws, such as the questions lacking depth and quality. Kim (2010), Patton (2002) and Malmqvist et al. (2019) argues that the pilot interviews are a neglected part of qualitative research and utilizing them prepares the researchers for the challenges that arise in the qualitative, semi-structured research.

As the study was concerned with the behaviour and understanding the thoughts of the employees at The Company, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted, in which the opening questions were of more open character. The construction of the semi-structured questions was inspired by the questions Michel (2014) used to investigate how employees perceive their transformation in relationship to work. The semi-structured format was chosen to enable the respondents to discuss the same type of subjects and increase the comparability between their answers. Through raising the same topics, it enhanced the possibility to identify common and divergent themes between the respondents' answers. At the same time, the semi-structured format enabled both follow up questions for clarification purposes and for deeper examination of interesting answers, as well as answers deflecting the purpose of the question.

According to Bryman and Bell (2017), in-depth interviews allow for great adjustability, which ensures that the respondent is not bound to share their experiences in a chosen, predetermined fashion, as they would in e.g., a survey. As their experiences and perceptions are highly subjective (Roger et al., 2018), it creates an opportunity to gather differing and conflicting views on the topic (Antin et al., 2014), which is paramount to infer usable insights. As per Adams (2015) these in-depth interviews, when relating to identity establishment, allows the interviewee to prompt the interviewees on why, rather than just what. This ensures greater depth in the responses and their sense-making. In addition, data collected from each interview allowed for the authors to ask better supplementary questions for the upcoming interviews, which consequently allowed for gaining even more depth in the responses.

The more open questions were introduced in the beginning of each interview in order to avoid framing the respondents' future answers and also to get a more exhausting view of their perspective and acknowledging potential topics which could have been unforeseen.

After extensively browsing the literature, an interview guide, consisting of 10 main questions was constructed, as that was deemed adequate for covering central topics of the study (Kallio et al., 2016). To test the depth and relevancy of the interview guide, a pilot interview was conducted. Through it, the interview guide was slightly adjusted to better capture the individuals' experiences with greater depth. Once the interview guide was deemed acceptable, 22 in-depth interviews were conducted with the employees of the company. The qualitative data was deemed sufficient for the empirics once the recurring trends became identifiable (Ahrne and Svensson, 2015). The interviews were conducted between February and April 2020. Because of Covid-19, all of the interviews took place online on Microsoft Teams. With the consent of the interviewee, all of the interviews were recorded with Microsoft Team. This allowed the authors to revisit them if needed, and ensure every important detail was captured for data analysis.

2.3.2 Data Processing

Directly after an interview was completed, the online video recordings were used to transcribe the whole interview. This ensured that the authors expanded their knowledge on this topic. The authors inquired if the existing interview guide captured the depth of participants' experiences, which was deemed to be the case. The transcription of the interview improved the preparation for upcoming interviews and allowed for asking more supplementary and clarifying questions. This is crucial for complex topics such as identity. Some interviews were conducted in Swedish and translated to English in conjunction with their transcription. Khan and Manderson (1992) claim when capturing people's view and experiences, and translating these, there is a risk of missing out important information. To avoid such mistakes to the greatest extent, Khan and Menderson (1992) suggests that both researchers should be translating the same transcript, which was the case for this study.

Once transcription was conducted, a thematic analysis as proposed by Nowell et al., (2017) was employed. Once sufficient interviews were conducted, and there was prolonged engagement with data (Braun and Clarke, 2006) the raw data was deemed as prepared to be categorized into different themes. It was based on the patterns of the interviewees' answers. The interviews were primarily divided into themes guided by the empirics, and in addition relevant themes proposed by the literature formed a complementary division of themes emerging from the interviews. These themes allowed the author to discover findings and conduct deep analysis work by systematically identifying and classifying common patterns among them.

Lastly, in order to mitigate any risks of misunderstandings or misconceptions in the study, the empirics have been discussed between the two authors. Using the two authors' perceptions enhanced the quality of the subjective interpretations of the data, while simultaneously reducing the risk for biased perceptions. According to Eisenhardt (1989) this enables a more unbiased subjectivity.

2.4 Research Evaluation Criteria

According to Daher (2017), when studying human experiences, which are highly subjective, the knowledge is idiographic and constructed in the research phase, unlike objective knowledge, which is always there. Flick (2007) means that in a qualitative study, an assessment of the data's quality is imperative, as relying on the standard criterions is non-viable and restricting. The study takes on an interpretivist standpoint to explain the participants' views, which are deemed subjective (Bryman and Bell, 2017; Alvesson and Robertson, (2016). Therefore, the evaluative criterions proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) will be used. Thus, an evaluation criterion that strives to assess the objectivity of these experiences will be dismissed.

2.4.1 Credibility

All of the interviewees were informed of their anonymity in this study, which decreases the potential for incentives for the interviewees to adjust their answers in any particular way deviating from their experiences (Bryman and Bell, 2013). Credibility as per Lincoln and Guba (1985) is concerned with whether the researchers' findings truly reflects the candidates' worldview and the inferred information. This study's author constantly strived to ensure a high credibility through prolonged engagement, in which rapport was

established to the participants, and the topic of identity was inquired through multiple questions. The prolonged engagement, which is in addition, through such questions, the same issue of identity is explored through multiple perspectives, which minimizes the risk of wrongly interpreting the perceptions and experiences of the interviewees. Multiple interview candidates were contacted in The Company, however, of these, very few were interviewed as they had to strictly fulfil the criteria of the strategic sampling. Appropriate sampling is imperative for credibility (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004). It should be noted that the study's credibility could have been further enhanced through method triangulation, as it would allow the data-validation to be verified through two different research approaches, namely qualitative and quantitative (Carter et al., 2014).

2.4.2 Transferability

Transferability addresses if the study's findings can be applied to another context and situation (Shenton, 2004). An attempt to improve the study's transferability was made by providing a thick description on the participants and context (Dawson, 2010). As per Merriam (2009), the authors aimed to provide sufficient detail on the context of the study, for others. It can be argued that the findings of the study might be applicable to other divisions of The Company, as the ways of working are identical in virtually all divisions. That is, factors which are potentially crucial for organizational identification, such as the extent of team meetings, informal social interactions, and organizational socialization tactics were identical in different divisions. However, it should be noted that the possibility for finding similar contexts constituted by both companies and individuals with the same parameter would be very low and therefore limit the transferability. Lastly, in a qualitative study, when investigating a complex phenomenon, Cariminati (2018) means the aim is to provide an in-depth explanation of the participants' meaning, rather than generalization, which has been the case.

2.4.3 Dependability

Dependability questions the study's consistency over time, and to what extent the research process is to be repeatable if inferred from the findings of the study (Streubert, 2007). Throughout the research process, a significant attempt has been made to provide an audit trail (Korstejns and Moser, 2018), in which a rigorous and transparent attempt has been made to describe the research process from beginning to end. Besides that, throughout the writing process, the study has been scrutinized by supervisor and research peers, ensuring a traceability in the methodology employed. Thus, the use of an external audit strengthens the transferability (Creswell and Miller, 2000).

2.4.4 Confirmability and Reflexivity

Confirmability examines the neutrality, and if identical findings would be reachable by an external researcher. It sheds light on the limitation that comes in conjunction with the researcher's biases and interests (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). To acknowledge this and prevent this study's authors' opinions from diluting the neutrality of the process, reflexivity can be helpful. Reflexivity guides the authors, through which they can scrutinize their own conceptual and personal lens in relation to that of the participants (Dodgson, 2019). The fact that both authors had spent multiple years being schooled physically, then in conjunction with Covid-19 outbreak, being schooled digitally may constitute a certain bias where an expectation of a change was anticipated. However,

despite there being a great risk for such bias, the aforementioned by external audits can reduce the author's bias.

2.4.5 Ethical Considerations

Certain ethical considerations have been made to secure an ethical approach and to increase the validity of the respondents' answers. The interviewees and their respective companies have been kept confidential in order to avoid any risks of affecting the employees' work situations and the companies reputations (Burles, 2018). The anonymity remains in the empirics section, which is the reason for why answers specifying any individual or company have been excluded or rephrased. Their anonymity has contributed to honest answers among the interviewees as well as reducing any risks of withholding their opinions (Burles, 2018).

Recordings and transcriptions of the interviews have been made with the interviewees' approval under the condition that these only will be contained to the study's authors and that they will not be used in any other contexts. The data has been handled in accordance with GDPR, each interviewee has been informed of the purpose of the study, approved of being recorded and informed that they on any point can withdraw their participation in the study.

2.5 Methodology discussion

Beside the evaluative criterions proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), an essential criterion for qualitative research is believability (Lewis, 2009). This criterion might have suffered due to limited research methods. Harper (2011) claims when studying identity, having a mixed method consisting of quantitative and qualitative approach can provide insights through multiple aspects. For instance, mixed methods can give voice to participants and confirm that the findings are entrenched in their experiences (ibid.). Mixed method also has implications for the generalization, as triangulation improves the reliability. The reason for not employing mixed methods was due to the study's scope.

Moreover, a quantitative study could have been employed, in which positivistic variables could have been measured. Potential change in them with time would have been examined closely. However, as the experiences are subjective it is uncertain to what extent these positivistic variables would have contributed to interpreting and explaining the experiences of the employees. Hence, the interpretivist approach proves to be the most usable.

Case study was chosen as it is among the most-used research approaches (Creswell, 2009). However, other research design could have provided entirely different perspectives. An instance of this would be narrative research, in which the work-related stories provided by the participants would lead to entirely different data-collection and analysis (Creswell, 1998). However, the main reason for not utilizing this was as a narrative research would be problematic as delimiting the stories scope, such as distinguishing between the employee's whole life and a specific work-episode (Ellis and Bochner, 2000).

3. Literature

3.1 Literature Review

Organizational identity (OI) is highly impacted by the environment in which the individual operates within, as described by Ashforth et al. (2008). New members of an organization, in particular, need to socialize in order to develop their OI in relation to their new workplace (Lapointe et al., 2014; Ashforth, 2001; Ashforth and Saks, 1996). Completely digital work is very impactful on the work environment and thus also highly impactful on the OI (Fay and Kline, 2012). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic there has been a large-scale forced shift toward completely digital work. This has magnified the need, already highlighted by Ashforth et al. (2001) and Gilson et al. (2015), to understand how completely digital work impacts new members, in terms of OI and the process of becoming a part of the organization's culture. The following sections will focus on how these research areas have been interlinked and which understandings have been developed as well as which areas are contested or undiscovered.

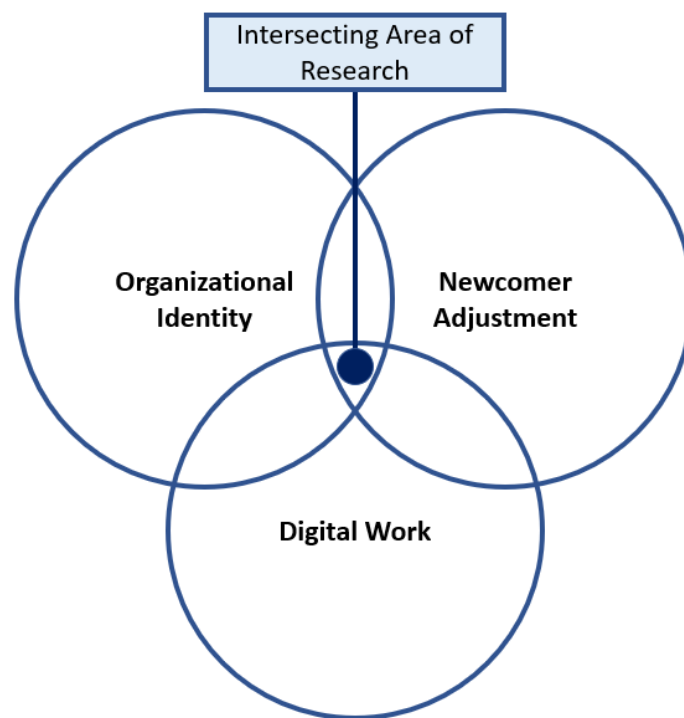


Figure 1: Venn diagram illustrating the areas of previous literature tying this study together

3.1.1 Organizational Identity

Firstly, as highlighted by Alvesson and Robertson (2016) and Ravasi and Canato (2013) it is worth noting that research on organizational identification mainly revolves around identity claims made by individuals. A common approach to investigating this phenomenon has been through an interpretivist perspective or social constructivism perspective (Alvesson and Robertson, 2016). One of the most well renowned theories regarding identification is social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) and the related self-categorization theory, summarized by Haslam and Ellemers (2005). Tajfel's (1978) definition of social identity includes the part of an individual's identity attached to a social membership through for example knowledge and emotional values and is shared by members and distinguished among groups. Ashforth et al. (2008) supported by Whetten

(2006) view identification within a role and collective as what determines an individual's *organizational identity (OI)*. OI is also by this definition achieved in a matter of degrees.

OI has been rigorously researched by Ashforth et al. (2008) both in terms of what identification is, why it matters for the individual and the organization, how it functions and how multiple identifications can occur at once in combination, conflict and convergence. The study by Ashforth et al. (2008) however is not focusing on specific context such as digital work, which makes the developed theory in need of more studies contributing to empirical data ie. through case studies. Most commonly identification and OI has been investigated through case studies, which for example Humphrey and Brown (2002), Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) and Kuhn and Nelson (2002) has done.

According to Delanty (2003), identity is largely impacted by learning processes on an individual and collective level. While a person might have learned certain skills and obtained knowledge, the process of learning is something an individual brings with them and affects how one becomes a professional and adapts and evolves within their new role and profession (Dall'Alba, 2009; Barnett, 2009). Billett (2004) argues that learning in the workplace is facilitated by an implicit relational contract between the employees and the employer, in which both parties have different objectives for their learning outcomes, but learning occurs when this ongoing negotiation results in an acceptance. By influencing OI of workers an organization can align them with its purpose (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). It is common for research to focus on identity within a specific sector or type of firm, such as Kärreman et al. (2015) has done with regards to professional service firms.

Further, findings by Billett (2006; 2008; 2009; 2014) highlight that learning occurs in a relationship between the individual and the culture, in which the individual also continuously contributes to reproducing the culture (Hodkinson, 2004). The culture, as experienced by the individuals, affects how they develop in their work and how they perceive it. Identities are in addition affected by how the individuals want to identify themselves with their profession.

Reddy and Shaw (2019) concludes that practical work experience is especially important at an early stage of the career for the sense of belonging at work. For example, Dahlgren et al., (2006) have researched this further and identified the importance of specific work experience to be particularly important for certain professions, such as psychologists. Hinchliffe and Jolly (2011) suggest prior knowledge are a part of the identity, which is intervened with the identity aspects labelled becoming, which is the identity related to the capability of future acquisition and application of knowledge. They highlight the becoming-identity as a concept of four interrelated aspects "including values, intellect, social engagement and performance" (Hinchliffe and Jolly, 2011, PP. 1). This concept has been contested by Holmes (2013) as it undermines the importance of the relational aspects for identity and future employability. There is an ongoing relationship between individuals and their work, in which the relationship forms the development of how individuals perform their work and how they learn and develop from the work they are performing (Billett and Somerville, 2004).

As highlighted by Ashforth et al. (2008) identities are complex and never completely isolated to specific settings such as work. Nyström (2009) found that the professional identity is formed through an ongoing relationship with both the individual, their private

life sphere, experiences from education and the profession acting to form the identity, when conducting a longitudinal study. The importance of the relationship between personal life and work life has also been highlighted by for example Salling Olesen (2001).

3.1.2 Newcomers and Socialization

In terms of newcomer adjustment, Lapointe et al. (2014) have highlighted the importance of affect-based trust relationships and role clarity as crucial for the sensegiving process of socialization. Their quantitative approach on a longitudinal study provides findings for how the employed organizational socialization tactics can affect the outcome of a newcomer's OI (*ibid.*). Lapointe et al. (2014) further builds their study on organizational socialization tactics previously established by Van Maanen and Schenin (1979). Among socialization tactics, the formal assignment of a mentor could be highlighted as an efficient tool for socializing newcomers into the organization. Underhill (2006) suggests that informal mentoring can be more efficient as it provides socialization beyond given organizational support structures. Underhill's (2006) meta-analytical study mainly ties the mentorship to improvement of individual career outcomes.

Findings by Cable et al. (2013) shows that an online onboarding process can be made more purposeful and efficient if the focus is centred around the individuals' identities rather than focusing on how the corporate culture can be adapted. They further suggest that adapting the onboarding program to help the new employees to find ways where they can leverage their skills within their work roles gives more benefits from an onboarding program.

3.1.3 Digital Work and Socialization

Organizational identification has been found to be critical in digital contexts by research in the early 2000s (Pratt, 2000; Pratt, 2001; Fiol and O'Connor, 2005). Research by van Dick (2004) also highlights that there is an increasing need arising among individuals to form a stronger organizational identification when the organization or society is undergoing rapid changes. Especially, newcomers who execute their activities online, seek less of regulative and normative information which amplifies the need for a refined process for organizational socialization during teleworking (Ahuja and Gavin, 2003). With special regard to the digital working context, Fay and Kline (2012) have in a quantitative study researched organizational identification. The different socialization processes such as social support and co-workers relationship quality are highlighted by Fay and Kline (2012) to enable organizational identification. The credibility and clarity of the messages communicated from the organization are crucial for enabling the employees to perceive and internalize the messages (Gibbons and Henderson, 2012). Improved communication technology is found by Bloom et al. (2014) to contribute to a more centralized organization, however, the increased degree of information technology is argued to lead to a more decentralized and autonomous organization. The different adoptions of distance work lead to a vast variety of how firms socialize employees and the effects it has on them, which magnifies the need for research in specific contexts (*ibid.*).

Both the personal motivation and the support from seniors improves the learning outcomes in a digital environment (Lim et al., 2007). Learning in a digital format has according to Kimiloglu et al. (2017) been assessed to be inferior when it comes to

socializing for the participants, on the other hand it costs less and is more convenient in comparison to providing learning in a physical environment.

Knowledge sharing is regarded as a key component for socialization in a digital context according to Pinjani and Palvia (2013). According to Taskin and Briodux, (2010) digital work reduces the ability to learn organizational social knowledge such as values, norms, behaviours of a firm. Without having knowledge about organizational socialization, which consists of goals and values of the firm, specific language and jargon and traditions, customs and stories, the technical knowledge cannot be transferred. Nor can members employ an OI. Fiol and O'Connor (2005) highlighted that computer-mediated communication is inferior when building a shared social identity compared to socializing face to face, however, Rhoads (2010) argues that this is not necessarily determined. One cause for this is the lack of possibility to share, understand and adopt social cues, which all are important for forming a social identity (Alvesson, 2000). Further, the perception of not being seen and acknowledged for competence and performance is found to increase the difficulty to form a greater degree of OI (Alvesson and Empson, 2001; Empson, 2001).

The impact of digital work on employee performance and job satisfaction has been found to be negative by some (i.e. Cramton and Webber, 2005; Schweitzer and Duxbury, 2010; Pridmore and Phillips-Wren, 2011) and positive by others (i.e. Bloom et al., 2015; Felstead and Henseke, 2017; Kock and Lynn, 2012; Maynard et al., 2012), however, those studies are coherent when highlighting that the effects of digital work are highly contextual. For example, the study by Bloom et al. (2015) was focused on sales personnel who required very little interaction with their colleagues in order to perform their work.

3.1.4 Digital Work and Socialization Within Teams

Gilson et al. (2015) argues that digital works enable organizational members to connect to each other to a greater extent and that this should especially enable socialization for people who previously have not met. In addition to connecting members, Horwitz et al. (2006) argues that digital work could increase the quality of relationships among members and thus also contribute to the output of the team. However, according to Anders (2012) and Penarroja et al. (2013), collaboration could be suffering due to digital communications, where for example misunderstandings are more common, participants are less information seeking and information could suffer from delays overall. An important source for increasing collaboration has been found to be arising from when members feel like they are equal among each other in the teams (Boros et al., 2010), something which newcomers rarely perceive themselves as initially (Ashforth et al., 2008; Lapointe et al., 2014). There are several researchers who further elaborates on how the quality of relationships could be improved, such as for example through teamwork training (Rosen et al., 2007), establishment of formal (Lapointe et al., 2014) and informal (Fay and Kline, 2012) socialization settings.

Among other areas within relationships in digital work, conflict handling has gained attention. Conflicts within relationships of digital teams have more negative effects compared to conflicts in teams working face to face and conflict handling is less successful in a digital context (Stark and Bierly, 2009; Cramton and Webber, 2005). However, efficient conflict handling contributes to the satisfaction among the members of virtual teams (Pazos, 2012).

In addition to this, trust is also highlighted as an important factor in the digital context (Furumo, 2009) and has been vastly researched. Several behaviours are described by Henttonen and Blomqvist (2005) to be ways to increase trust within virtual teams, these include in particular communication behaviours, such as giving feedback, open communication and providing timely responses. Knowledge sharing has been found to increase trust (Liu and Li, 2012; Quigley et al., 2007). Trust in technology, in combination with trust for the team members contributes to the sharing of knowledge, while the lack of trust in these parameters could cause the opposite effect (Golden and Raghuram, 2010; Breu and Hemingway, 2004; Wang and Haggerty, 2011). Learning also plays an important part for achieving satisfaction for the virtual team members (Ortega et al., 2010). It is also common that the perception of the other team members' qualifications, knowledge and suitability for the task on hand helps shape trust in virtual teams (Clark et al., 2010). For newly formed virtual teams, swift trust seems to be contributing to the performance of virtual teams (Crisp and Jarvenpaa, 2013; Coppola et al., 2004). Swift trust is a term for operating with a high degree of trust despite only recently being connected to the other team members and it can be obtained through positive communication at an early stage, in order to achieve trust and confidence among the team members (Meyerson et al., 1996).

3.2 Theoretical Framework

3.2.1 Identification in Organizations

The previous section concludes that identification with regard to a common sense of belonging fosters *organizational identity (OI)*. In order to understand how the identification process works, the theory of Ashforth et al. (2008) will be used. As figure 2 depicts, their theory involves organizational input stimulus in terms of sensebreaking and sensegiving and personal identification processes in terms of interpreting, constructing identity narrative and enacting identity.

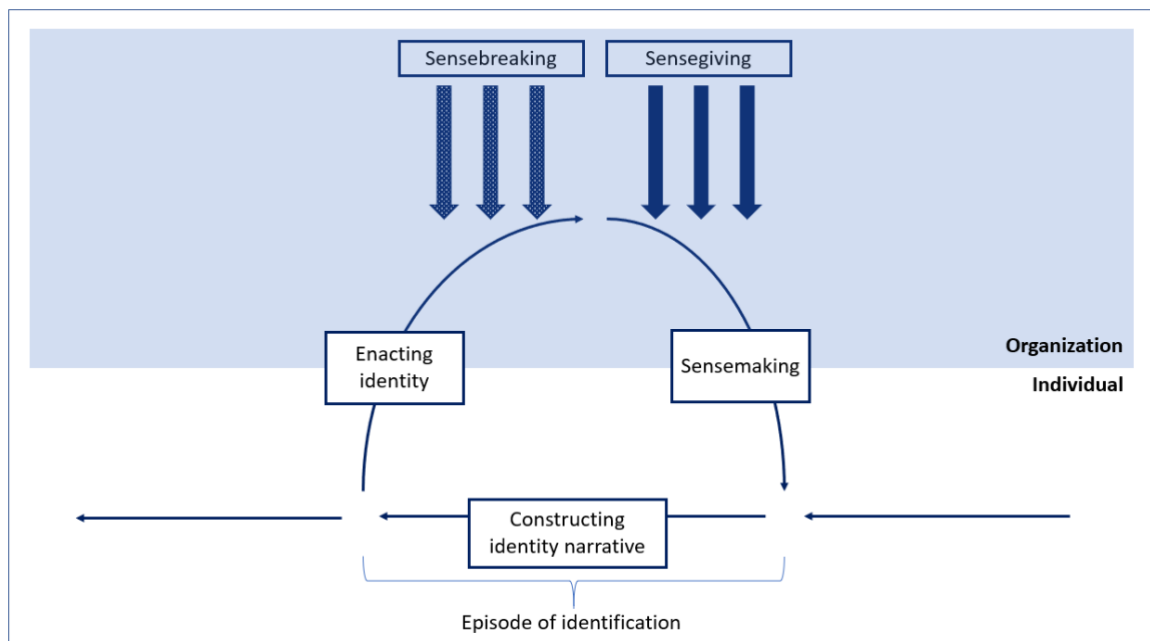


Figure 2: Model of identification by Ashforth et al. (2008)

3.2.1.1 Sensebreaking and Sensegiving

When individuals enact their identities in relationship to an organization, the OI is influencing individuals as well as being reproduced. Since the OI is enacted by the individuals and thereby is an ongoing procedure it works as in a continuously ongoing process. *Sensebreaking* and *sensegiving* are top-down mechanisms through which an organization can influence OI.

Sensebreaking refers to when an individual takes an introspective view of who they are when they are undergoing change, with the purpose to find meaning in this new situation according to Ashforth et al., (2008). Sensebreaking is aimed to increase the uncertainty in an individual's introspective view of identity, as it fosters them to become more motivated, curious and impressionable when trying to mitigate this uncertainty (ibid.). This could make the individuals more likely to be influenced in the formation of their identity as they aim to fill this gap arisen from questioning oneself, which could be especially apparent for newcomers (Ashforth, 2001). This state could be utilized by companies to shape them in their desired way, which Van Maanen and Schein (1979) describes as divestiture, especially if an organization transmits a distinguished identity toward the individual (Bourassa and Ashforth, 1998). The process of divestiture and sensebreaking could often be a source for oppositional statements, whereby the individual realises that there is a discrepancy between themselves and the organization, but this also motivates them to fill this gap (Josephs and Valsiner, 1998).

Sensegiving refers to the process of constructing meaning for the individual and the individual's relationship and identification to the organization. Sensegiving can be constructed by the organization by creating and communicating forms of unity through for example shared experiences, attributes and goals (DiSanza and Bullis, 1999). Sensegiving is a social process, in which certain aspects of identity are validated or dismissed in the social context (Ashforth et al., 2008). Sensegiving can have a normative purpose, where a desired identity is intended to be adopted by the individual. It can also allow for the individual to incorporate their identity into the organization when things are more open for the individual to make choices or exercise influence (Ashforth et al., 2008).

Sensebreaking and sensegiving are two processes which could be in motion separately and influence an individual. When both processes are in motion simultaneously, they are interlinked with each other. In addition, when those two processes are in motion at the same time, the individual is likely to experience more influencing mechanisms and thereby their identity and the OI could be affected even more (Ashforth et al., 2008).

3.2.1.2 Enacting Identity and Sensemaking

Identity formation is an ongoing process, in which workers enact their identity and observe and reflect on the consequences, known as *sensemaking* (Ashforth et al., 2008). Through sensemaking the individual interprets stimulus both consciously and subconsciously in order to fit it in coherently with how they interpret the world. Evident signs of identity enactment consist of employing certain behaviour towards the tasks, compliance to the identity norms and being in line with what colleagues deem desirable organizational behaviour. Additional examples on identity markers are those that convey a stereotype about the worker or the organization, such as clothing and performance which entails task-completion.

Beside enacting identity and sensemaking, workers can also, through a mindset that consists of assurance and sense of pride which evokes positive emotions exhibit a specific behaviour (Harquail, 1998). Such behaviour is one indicator for identity enactment.

3.2.1.3 Constructing Identity Narratives

Ashforth et al. (2008) argues with the support of Boje (1995) that most organizations have storytelling systems because humans tend to interact with the help of narratives. McAdams (2001) defines narrative identity theory as a way for humans to internalize and uses the created stories about oneself to achieve a sense of purpose and continuity. When individuals are not able to enact their identity to make sense of it from the environment's feedback, they utilize the identity narratives to reduce the ambiguity. It is done by recalling previous experience.

The creation of identity narratives are retrospective, and are deeply embodied in the social structures, which consists of the plot, actions, characters (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2007). Therefore, these narratives can also be used for the future. The retrospect aspect of the narrative allows flexibility and makes them changeable, if needed. When in a new environment, humans change the previously mentioned factors to better grasp the ongoing circumstances. To ensure it is being done correctly humans compare it to their past and alter it, accordingly, making identity a dynamic process.

3.2.2 Organizational Socialization Tactics and Newcomer Adjustment

In order to better understand the socialization process for newcomers the theory of Lapointe et al. (2014) will be used. According to Lapointe et al. (2014) newcomers adjust into socialization in a distinguished way. In particular affect-and-trust based relationships with both supervisors and co-workers, as well as role clarity, making them both crucial factors in the sensegiving process.

3.2.2.1 Organizational Socialization Tactics

Organizational socialization tactics (OST) constitute a process whereby the individual participates in the sensegiving process performed at the organization (Lapointe et al. 2014; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979). These forms of socialization are described by Jones (1986) as content, context, and social related tactics. Successful use of organizational socialization tactics leads to a stronger bond to the OI, through the formation of relationships with supervisors and co-workers and through role clarity. In the successful formation of relationships trust plays a crucial role (Lapointe et al., 2014). As further described by Lapointe et al. (2014), there are six ranges of organizational social tactics, which will be elaborated on below (see also Van Maanen and Schein, 1979).

For the socialization of newcomers there are two groups of OST. First, collective and individual tactics provide a range of how common learning is enabled, through collaboration or on one's own. Second, formal and informal tactics provide a range for the extent to which knowledge is acquired through formal processes or through trial and error. Regarding how information is transmitted through socialization there are two groups of OST. First, sequential and random tactics provide a range for how information is communicated regularly to irregularly. Second, fixed and variable tactics provide a range for how evaluation is communicated from specified to variable. Regarding the social aspects of socialization there are two groups of OST. First, serial and disjunctive

tactics refers to the range of the extent mentors and role models are provided. Second, investiture and divestiture tactics refers to the degree of which social support is given.

3.2.2.2 Affect-based Trust: Supervisor and co-workers

To facilitate socialization of newcomers, social relationships, particularly, affect-based trust relationships with other organizational members are pivotal (Lapointe et al., 2014). Trust relationships can be cognition-based trust. Affect-based trust is relational and accentuates the emotional bonding between co-workers, rapport and empathy (Schaubroeck et al., 2011). Unlike cognition-based trust, affect-based trust has been a cornerstone for the newcomer's exchange relationship with the co-workers and supervisor (Yang and Mossholder, 2010; Zhu et al., 2013).

It is important that the newcomer feels cared about for them to be able to show trust. OST can impact the newcomer's ability to show trust (Lapointe et al., 2014). These processes can consist of, inter alia, step-by-step programs, which constitutes the worker's onboarding. Beside onboarding, they also incorporate rotational programs and mentoring programs, indicating that socialization occurs beyond onboarding. As the organization provides the aforementioned processes and structures, the newcomer feels indebted, and it creates possibilities to interact and develop relationships with the supervisors and co-workers. In addition, besides being a mechanism for newcomers to socialize, OST can influence how they make sense out of the organization and learn from the supervisors and co-workers who fulfil the tasks of a role model (ibid.).

3.2.2.3 Role Clarity

For the newcomers, there prevails great ambiguity and uncertainty about their roles, as there is sensemaking required to be able to acquire knowledge about for example tasks, environment and competencies. OST can help reduce the ambiguity by boosting the newcomer's confidence, and more importantly, by reducing uncertainty. Thus, the newcomer can feel as if they have met the expectations of the organization, which constructs a higher degree of OI (Lapointe et al., 2014; Wanous, 1992).

Jones (1986) accentuates that for reducing the uncertainty through OST, there exists three socialization domains: social, content and context. Social practices with high investiture lead to high socialization. In terms of context, having the organization provide guidelines about the newcomer's responsibilities and their task duties ensures the environment feels predictable for them. Content has clear practices that facilitates newcomers in learning the new tasks.

3.2.3 Organizational Identification in The Digital Context

In order to develop an understanding of how OI is affected by digital work the theory of Fay and Kline (2012) will be applied. According to Fay and Kline (2012) the foremost challenge for workers in high-intensity teleworking is developing OI.

OI is the aspect that has the highest risk of being affected during teleworking, which according to Morgan and Symon (2002) might make teleworkers' feel excluded and their sense of belonging might be affected. Mainly due to lack of interaction and not being able to partake in the organization routines. Thatcher and Zhu (2006) write that the loss of face-to-face communication and visibility may pose a threat for the worker's OI.

3.2.3.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Messages

Fay and Kline (2012) argue that the way a message is perceived by the teleworking employee affects their OI. Inclusion messages relate to the extent the employee develops a sense of belonging in the organization, whereas exclusion messages contribute to a sense of rejection from the organization. These messages enable the employee to evaluate and construct their own perception of their membership in the organization (O'Keefe and Delia, 1982).

Inclusion messages could express and legitimate the employees' identity, attributes and behaviour in relationship to the organization. Exclusion messages, on the contrary, contribute to the separation between the identity of the employee and the organization. This could take form through messages which are perceived as dismissing, rejecting, or excluding for the employee in relationship to OI.

Messages could range between inclusion and exclusion in terms of how much they attribute the individual and their identity. Faye and Kline (2012) further explains that a higher quality of co-worker relationships could mitigate the effect of exclusion messages.

3.2.3.2 Collegial Talk

Collegial talk centres around the relationships between co-workers. The informal collegial talk contributes to forming a friendly culture, which later also enables more collaboration with work tasks. Collegial talk includes for example the expressing of shared knowledge and values together and contributes to OI (Fay and Kline, 2012).

Collegial talk could for example be conducted through the processes of getting to know each other, collaborating, or learning from each other. This type of conversation between employees often requires informal settings, where social cues are more likely to be understood and internalized in face to face interactions (Fiol and O'Connor 2005).

3.2.3.3 Social Support

Co-worker social support (CSS) revolves around relational support and the one related to work tasks. According to Chiaburu and Harrison (2008), the aforementioned instrumental and affective support is quintessential for the workers to devote commitment and OI towards the firm. This is further verified by Hobfoll (1990) who deems CSS to be imperative for fostering worker confidence, creating a sense of belonging and attachment to others. Given that CSS steers the levels of the workers' rapport and togetherness it is linked to OI (Fay and Kline, 2012).

3.2.3.4 Co-worker Relationship Quality

Co-worker relationship quality consists of broader and subtle perspectives of relationship aspects, of which trust and appreciation are highlighted as important (Muchinsky, 1977). Fay and Kline (2012) shows that the quality of co-worker relationships is important in contributing to OI, since it might construct a sense of belonging. Co-worker relationships with higher quality helps to mitigate the effect of exclusion messages for teleworkers (Fay and Kline, 2012).

3.3 Synthesis of Framework

As conclusion to the literature, a theoretical framework built upon the theoretical essence from the literature will be established. It will constitute the analytical tool for analysing the research question.

The framework is built on three pillars, and it strives to show the interplay that occurs within the variables. Firstly, the identification process constructed by Ashforth et al. (2008), which attempts to explain the process in which a newcomer establishes an identity to an organization and a belongingness to its culture. Secondly, Fay and Kline (2012) improves the understanding for how socialization in a digital context can influence OI. Lastly, Lapointe et al. (2014), by accentuating the role of OST and affect-based relationships, complements the theories by Ashforth et al. (2008) and Fay and Kline (2012) by increasing the understanding for newcomer socialization in particular.

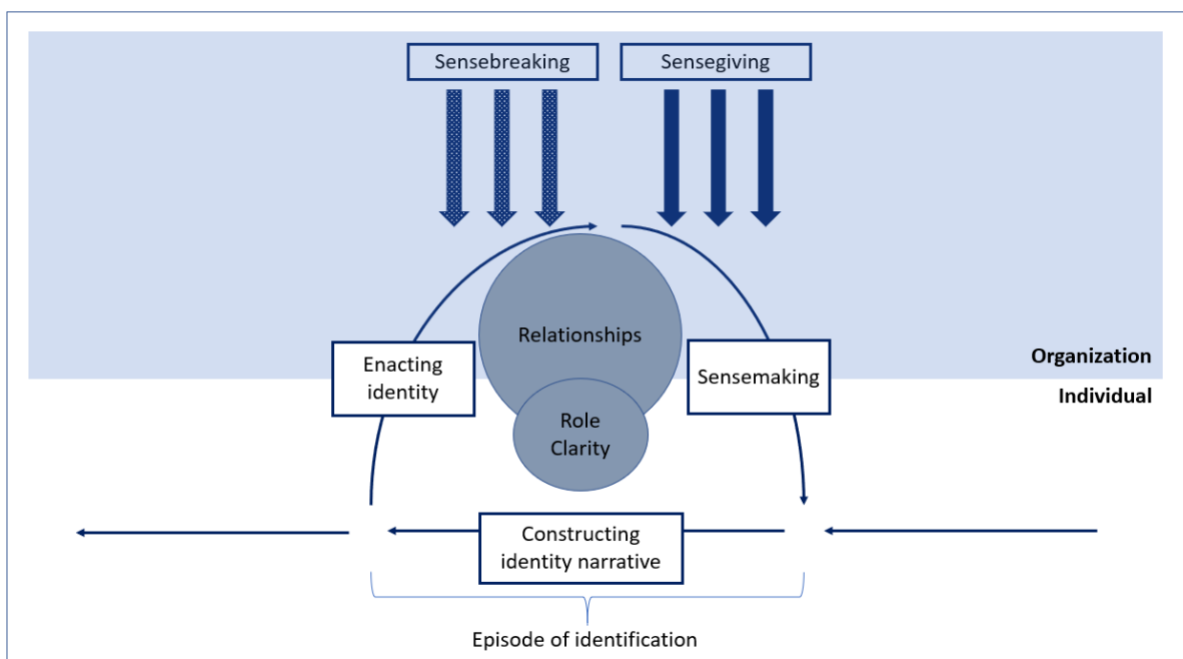


Figure 3: Synthesis of model of identification based on Ashforth et al. (2008)

As depicted in the framework, figure 2, the process does not occur in a gradual and piecewise fashion. Instead, the newcomer constantly shifts between the different stages simultaneously, hence making the process in the framework iterative and constantly ongoing. In the sensebreaking phase, there prevails extensive uncertainty, in which the newcomer is in need of feedback to enact in accordance with what is deemed as normal behaviour by the organization or its members. The sensegiving process is constituted by how an individual interprets explicit and implicit experiences both consciously and subconsciously. Sensemaking can be impacted by more frequent and clearer feedback in more developed relationships. By embodying this feedback into their behaviour, and attempting to interpret it, the phase of sensemaking begins. Here, role clarity also plays an imperative role, because lack of it can also negatively affect relationships, which subsequently affects the rest of the components of the framework. Simultaneously, if there prevails low role clarity, there is a risk for low performance, which might affect the newcomers' self-image and their ability to perform. This might negatively affect the relationships.

The aforementioned aspects from Ashforth et al. (2008) are driven by socialization with others. In particular, contact through relationships constitute a main setting for socialization and are imperative for newcomer adjustment in a digital context (Lapointe et al., 2014; Fay and Kline, 2012). Role clarity also interacts with the identification process (Lapointe et al., 2014).

Relationships and in particular high-quality affect-based relationships forms a foundation for long-term socialization to occur (Fay and Kline, 2012; Lapointe et al., 2014). When the organization aims for providing information to the individual with the purpose of sensegiving, such as norms, values etc., it is more likely that this could be coherently interpreted by the individual if this is communicated through a person which one has a pre-existing relationship of good quality with (Ashforth et al., 2008; Fay and Kline, 2012; Lapointe et al., 2014). Relationships are also a common aspect for the socialization context in which the individual enact their identity (Ashforth et al., 2008). This can also achieve a more dynamic form of communication with closer feedback loops, enabling more clear communication. Since relationships allow the individual to enact and also bring feedback to interpret, the sensegiving, sensemaking and enactment process is intensified. Fay and Kline (2012), Ashforth et al. (2008) and Lapointe et al. (2014) all contribute to understanding how relationships are developed.

Role clarity is also impacted by the feedback provided socialization by relationships. Role clarity can be given from the company, through sensegiving, which the individual interprets. When the individual enacts their role, the degree of clarity they perceive relates to how well they feel adjusted and as a part of the organization. They are able to enact their understanding of the role and are given feedback regarding their performance.

4. Empirics

The empirics section will contain the gathered data from interviewees at The Company. In order to enhance the understanding of the interviewees' responses, the context and their work, a short description of The Company will follow. The Company produces a wide variety of different fast-moving consumer brands, which are sold to consumers worldwide through various retailers. It consists of multiple divisions, but only the three major divisions were part of this study. For the sake of anonymity, they cannot be disclosed. In each division, there existed a set of different teams, such as marketing, finance, legal, operations, HR, etc. In this study, only marketing and operations teams were studied. The workers tasks in the teams were, inter alia, brand management, portfolio management, marketing management, promotion management, key account management, recruiting, digital operations management, etc. A common denominator for all these tasks is the complex nature of the work, which also requires extensive teamwork, meetings, and presentations. Further, knowledge is important for their work and additional knowledge is acquired and accumulated over time, which is imperative for executing their complex tasks. Moreover, the complex nature of the tasks constitutes different types of knowledge, such as industry-specific knowledge, organization-specific knowledge and role-specific knowledge. In addition, teamwork is imperative as several roles are interlinked and dependent on each other.

4.1 Onboarding and Mentorship

4.1.1 Formal and Informal Knowledge sharing

One theme which reoccurred among all interviewees who had been onboarded digitally was that they experienced the difficulty to get in touch with people, which led to an increased difficulty in getting help. This also prevented them from being able to ask questions and learn from others in more informal ways.

As proposed by multiple employees, knowledge transfer is a fundamental part of the organizational socialization process. The Company has implemented various organizational socialization tactics to ensure that knowledge is shared. During onboarding, both internal and external material is provided to the newcomer. Almost all newcomers highlighted the need for socialization, yet they perceived it to be difficult to contact others and communicate with them in the digital environment. Participant 2 explains: *"It's also crucial to talk with people who have been here for a long time, and listen to them about how the firm works, and what they are working with."*

When searching for knowledge outside of the immediate colleagues of the team, almost all of the newcomers identified the lack of relationships within the organization as an obstacle for gaining new knowledge. The newcomers perceived that they lacked knowledge regarding who to contact and were rarely introduced to the adequate person in a way which enabled them to get help and learn. This lack of relationships was driven by the fact that they were new in the organization and that they experienced difficulties in contacting people on their own initiative. Since the work was conducted completely digitally, they attributed this as another obstacle for forming relationships. The newcomers perceived that the organization lacked both formal and informal settings for overcoming this obstacle for socialization.

"I got good onboarding but did not get the help I needed to complete my tasks. There were no informal processes for acquiring knowledge, no digital coffee, nothing. Most of the knowledge that I needed to complete the tasks, I had to learn on my own. This would not be the case in a physical office." - Participant 8

4.1.2 Expectations on Behaviour and Performance

During the onboarding, the newcomers were introduced to their tasks and informed about the expectations. From the onboarders perspective, newcomers are expected to be active and connect with people. They should be proactive, as it is a time-consuming process to get to know people. However, almost all of the newcomers perceived that they lacked appropriate settings for taking such initiatives. The expectations became more ambiguous when the extent of shared information and knowledge was highly dependent on the team.

The newcomers often interpreted the tasks they were given and when they perceived these to lack connection to the organization's purpose, they provoked negative perceptions. The initial impact made a big impression, which later formed the view of the employees' perception of the organization. Some newcomers described these types of tasks as a contributing factor for why their role felt detached from the organization.

"At my first task things went sideways, since it was presented as: 'this is an old mess which the last trainee hadn't finished, but once you are done with it, you will get more fun things to work with'. [...] It was a bunch of typical trainee tasks which they sent over. If it would have been a valuable function or important job, it would have been conducted regardless if a trainee did it." - Participant 10

The onboarding process was described by many as a trial-and error process, where people were expected to work from the very beginning. Participant 11 even described that the expectations on her required her to abort the formal onboarding process: *"I was provided a URL for the onboarding, and did a bit of it, but it took too long, so I aborted it."* Many identified this more spontaneous approach of learning while working as something demanding a greater availability of relationships in order for this to be a good means to become a part of the organization.

"At The Company there is a culture of throwing people at the deep and saying learn how to swim. People are handed tasks and are expected to handle them on their own. It doesn't work as well in a digital environment when you don't have the opportunity to ask questions to your co-workers or supervisor all the time." - Participant 14

Despite having been provided with all necessary equipment on their first day, many newcomers were under great uncertainty as they were provided insufficient details about prevailing organization norms and task-related information. Also, not being provided guidelines about who to contact amplified the uncertainty. They struggled to reflect on their appropriate behaviour as they rarely were given feedback regarding it.

"I tried finding information on my own, but it wasn't easy, and I wasn't sure if I was disturbing my supervisor when approaching her. It would require her to

arrange meetings, but she had other work beside answering my questions.” - Participant 5

While the onboarding presented a broad introduction to the company in general in most of the interviewees’ perspectives, the fact that it had to be conducted completely online complicated the forming of relationships. Among others, Participant 11 highlighted the difficulty to build deeper connections, as well as collaborating with them, when lacking the physical interactions with the colleagues. *“I think you can't compare the personal, intimate, one on one relationships and the report that you build when you're in the office and the relationship that you build and the collaboration that comes out of it.”* Relationships were perceived by almost all employees to be the most efficient way of transferring knowledge and they enabled collaboration with others. However, they perceived that they were struggling to form relationships, particularly deeper ones.

4.1.3 Mentoring

In addition, some newcomers had a mentor, who connected the team and the newcomer. Those who did not have a mentor expressed a greater degree of ambiguity regarding what was expected from them. Having a mentor not only reduced the uncertainty related to the task, but also fulfilled the role of a bridge between the already socialized team and the outsider newcomer. The mentor also provided moral support at times when it was needed. While mentorship was not assigned to all newcomers, onboarders also highlighted its importance.

“The newcomers are usually connected to different stakeholders; a line manager, their team members, but also with a mentor. This provides them the bigger picture. In my team, having close relationships with your peers is helpful, because they usually have been completing the tasks the newcomer will tackle. By being familiar with the requirements from others, you also familiarize with their expectations of you” - Participant 13

Many employees also identified the mentorship approach as a good way to become a part of the organization. In addition, newcomers who did not have a mentor emphasized how it prevented their progress and learning in the organization. This is something which the onboarder Participant 9 agreed with: *“Working physically and having someone you can reach out to [mentor] not only creates room for idea generation and problem formulation, but also shows just how important social contacts are.”*

Some of the newcomers elaborated on the high-performing culture, and how newcomers are expected to become part of it in a short period of time. They accentuated how lack of a formally assigned mentor prevents them from fully learning the team norms and acquiring task-knowledge. All these aspects combined with digital working leads some newcomers to feel disinterest and idleness, despite having high workload. Limited social interactions also inhibited the newcomers from both forming relationships and also from gaining knowledge from others in informal contexts.

“It was hard to be new at work and to get into the role and the social aspects, because you don't know how it works and you don't meet people very often. [...] It was more difficult to get to know people and get help from them. I think these

are aspects which you can pick up better in more social contexts like coffee breaks.” - Participant 23

Many perceived their tasks to be unclear. The onboarding can according to multiple newcomers be positively impacted by a good presentation of the role and the task at hand. The insights of the person presenting the tasks can determine whether everything is understood and as well be of help if additional questions arise. Multiple newcomers further elaborated that without pre-existing relationships and clarity regarding how they should perform their work, tasks could take longer time to be performed. A form of supervisor or mentor could both play the role of improving the transfer of knowledge, in which the mentor assisted with this on a more long-term basis.

“I was lucky, because the person I replaced within The Company changed to a different role and stayed in contact. He helped me with projects and called me a lot. Usually, most people leave, and take important information with them, risking information to fall between the cracks.” - Participant 14

The mentor assisted newcomers with many of the socialization processes and helped them to understand their work and provide both formal and informal feedback. Both formal and informal mentors assisted newcomers through being a person accessible for discussion in which they could engage in more dynamic conversations. On the contrary, those who were not assigned a mentor expressed increased difficulties in getting into touch with others and did not receive feedback regarding their work to the same extent.

4.2 Relationships

4.2.1 Relationship Formation and Development

Multiple newcomers who were onboarded digitally perceived acquiring task-related knowledge as a difficult and tedious process. Mainly due to lack of relationships newcomers perceived difficulties in communicating online and an inability to grasp social cues. This could complicate both their socialization and task-completion process.

Most members regarded relationships as important on a personal and work-related level. Several newcomers attributed relationships with their colleagues as something contributing to their performance as well as their commitment to the organization. Building relationships and socializing could also be something as they identified as an important part of their personality.

“I have trouble working if I feel alone. [...] Generally you also become quite detached from the organization. I perceive myself to be quite a social person who likes to talk with people. When you talk it becomes very structured online. You lose the human touch and everything fun about working disappears.” - Participant 10

There existed great uncertainty for newcomers on who to contact, as they did not know anyone beforehand. When they managed to come in contact with someone, they described the settings for socialization as mainly business- and task-oriented conversations. This was something which they considered to be an obstacle for

developing relationships with others in general, and in particular they identified this as an obstacle to build deeper and more personal relationships.

“Work is the number one priority, so it can be hard to get to know people. Even though I talk with those who are in my team, we usually don’t talk about personal stuff. It is mainly focused on work. This can make it hard to become a part of the culture and build relationships on a personal level.” - Participant 14

The extent to which people took initiatives for developing relationships within the organization was impacted to their own motivation for developing relationships. Some only wanted to form relationships to a certain extent as they regarded them as less important for their current objectives. One of the newcomers described that both his engagement to the company and his incentives to form deeper relationships were reduced due to the fact that he had started to think about a next step in his career, which involved looking towards other employers.

According to the persons onboarding newcomers, the completely digital setting requires more individual initiatives for developing relationships. The main area of socialization provided by the organization was the meeting context according to the newcomers. Although some team meetings are applied to enhance socialization, those meetings are mainly task- and business oriented. The more senior personnel who are more acquainted with other members of the organization believe that it is easier to reach out to someone online compared to when work was conducted in the office. They are also the same people designing the main parts of the onboarding process.

“We have team meetings, but they tend to be formal and have an agenda. An informal way to socialize is to reach out to colleagues through Teams, which has very low barriers. [...] You need to put yourself out there with a curious mindset. Also, you need to arrange something yourself, which requires more from the individual.” - Participant 13

4.2.2 Socialization Climate and Social Norms

Face to face contact was deemed important by the interviewees for establishing good relationships and building rapport important for the trust of co-workers. In turn, none of the employees identified themselves as completely digital workers, and they preferred to work at an office together with others in the future to at least some extent, mainly since this enhanced their possibility to build relationships.

“I definitely think that if I ever go back to the office it wouldn't be full time. I would only go to the office to have one on one conversations, to build a feeling of the team, to build rapport, have face to face conversations and build relationships.” - Participant 11

Although reaching out to people was something seen as especially important for newcomers to both get help and to socialize, the process of doing this in a digital environment brought difficulties in doing so. One issue was that it was perceived as more difficult to read the room and find a suitable time for both persons. It could be common that messages were interrupting the receiver with their current tasks. One employee

highlights this issue by exemplifying that in a physical office, judging whether a person is busy is much easier than in the digital one, as you can see what they are up to.

The formation and development of relationships was perceived by most of the employees to be inhibited by the digital context. It was a common perception that the actual identification of people to establish connections with was more difficult online. In addition, the social cues were more difficult to understand, and some social cues were not possible to take part of at all. The lack of for example body language and facial expressions online were also attributed to something making conversations more difficult to engage in.

The employees who had been onboarded digitally had difficulties with identifying the social culture and experienced that it was difficult to become a part of the social culture. One contributing factor for this was that they spent less quality time with their colleagues in the digital environment. In addition to finding the social culture and social cues difficult to identify, several newcomers found the social climate to be uncomfortable and not something which they were expecting or used to experience.

“This could also be because you don’t dare to be as direct to people as you normally would if you meet in person. I think that digital meetings need a clearer structure there. You actually need to address people when you want them to talk.” - Participant 10

Although distance work could be identified as a factor which inhibited the possibility to become a part of the culture, there were also some newcomers who became a part in recently created teams. They perceived that they could comprehend this new culture, in which they were only relatively newer members. This new digital culture was seen by some as something less desirable to become a part of. It also set a new tone for how socialization took place. One employee claim that in newly formed teams, in which employees only have met online, people did not dare to be direct towards others. This makes socialization feel awkward.

Some of the newcomers believed that there were common traits when socialization occurred, which constituted an identifiable culture. The perceived culture was also something which impacted how relationships were developed. One employee highlighted that the culture shaped people into prioritizing work over the creation of relationships.

“People are very welcoming and open, but at the same time I don't think that there's a lot of deep connections or deep friendships forming because people are really focusing on their work first and know that they will try to progress within their career. [...] I think that creates the kind of high performing culture.” - Participant 14

4.2.3 Relationships Within and Beyond Teams

The newcomers perceived it to be challenging to get to know people in general, however, they found it relatively easier to get to know people within their own team compared to people outside their team. The persons responsible for the onboarding agreed with the newcomers on this topic and explained that it was an ongoing issue which they still

struggled to deal with. This was also perceived to make it more difficult to develop a broader perspective of the organization.

Many newcomers perceived that they had occasional contact with quite large numbers of people. However, they believed that their contacts were mostly superficial. Although deeming that relationships were more superficial, most of the newcomers explained that they developed relatively closer relationships toward the colleagues which they worked the most with.

Although a culture could be identified by the newcomers, this did not necessarily mean that they would feel like a part of the culture. The newcomers perceived that the available ways to socialize inhibited them to feel like they became a part of the organization. One employee described that he always felt like an outsider to his team's culture, and always watched it from outside, hence never managed to become part of it. According to some, this was partly due to distance work making it challenging to become a part of the culture, but another driving factor was also an unwillingness to become a part of the culture in which they did not identify themselves with.

"The fact that it was on distance makes it harder to become a more integrated part of the team. But I also think it was on a personality level, it was not my type of culture either. I don't think that I could be a part of that environment, regardless if I was there physically, and really thrived." - Participant 10

4.3 Question Solving Processes

4.3.1 Individual Work

Getting help at work was experienced as challenging especially for the new employees. They attributed this difficulty to both their lack of knowledge regarding who to turn to as well as an unwillingness to disturb their colleagues. This was particularly apparent when small questions arose, which were either disregarded or gathered until there were enough questions to reach out to someone. In the case someone reached out with questions there was an issue of uncertainty whether the other person would be available and when they would answer. In case the contact was made through a team's message i.e. there was a risk that the answer would not provide a complete answer. In comparison they believed that if they would have been working together in person, they would have received help from someone walking them through problems. Some also described this process as taking time away to discuss other important matters.

A common pattern was that many identified full schedules among their co-workers, something which was also frequently mentioned during meetings. This was something which they regarded as a standard of working. In addition, this also made the newcomers reluctant to make contact with co-workers, as they wanted to avoid disturbing them and taking their time or pushing their schedules.

4.3.2 Discussion Culture

Most of the employees felt like the digital communication focused their contact possibilities toward their closest colleagues. The newcomers also saw this as a consequence of both not knowing anyone else beforehand and lacking channels to establish such contacts. In addition, this led them to feel like they did not grasp the social

climate in other areas in the organization. However, this led them to often either agree with issues and topics being raised or disagree without mentioning their opinion. This was something they perceived to lead to a climate of agreement.

Some newcomers perceived the tone of discussion to lack contrasting views. They perceived that topics were raised and expected to be agreed upon. This was something which they considered to be the culture regarding discussions and how to solve problems. None of the newcomers who considered this as negative engaged in a way to change it, although they mentioned that it was not something which they did not find optimal. They felt like their behaviour was in line with The Company culture, which they regarded as an environment where discussion rarely took place with the purpose to change things.

When it comes to collaboration one of the persons responsible for the onboarding highlighted that it was more difficult to express opinions as a newcomer. Her perception was that this required more initiatives from the newcomers in order to handle it. The newcomers also saw this as a problem but did not perceive any correlation with their own initiatives. Rather, the newcomers perceived the existing ways of expressing their opinions as something leading them to suppress their opinions. From the onboarders perspective Participant 13 highlights that it might be something which the individual needs to take responsibility for in order to engage in discussions: *"It requires a bit more from you as a newcomer to get in there and get your voice heard and express what your needs are."*

Despite that the newcomers often perceived conversations to be more task-related they often found felt a lack of direction. As a consequence, they experienced that they had to provide themselves feedback, since this was not as clearly received from The Company, supervisors and their colleagues. The newcomers often felt that their attempts to make sense of their performances were separated from the organization's.

"When things are bad you are expected to perform better because you probably are able to do better. Then you also get clear directives of what needs to be improved. That direct culture is something I really can appreciate. At The Company it was only support and it led to an internalization of not knowing if the work was good or bad. I sort of needed to analyse myself since no one else gave me that feedback." - Participant 10

Another aspect which one newcomer identified as something which he had not expected was that he perceived the way in which people were being assessed affected how they worked and what they worked with. This led, according to him, to people working in more self-beneficial ways.

"I eventually got aware of corporate politics once I started interacting with other units. For example, if I would be giving a recommendation and say that they have big gaps, they would say 'OK, we have gaps, so I will not work on this, because this will not give me a promotion. Then I can sell my story to someone else and work on my promotion instead.' This was something which led our team to frame things differently and I realized that corporate politics is something which I have to work with as well." - Participant 17

4.4 Role Clarity and expectations on Role

4.4.1 The Digital Work Setting

When dedicating their time to individual tasks, almost all of the interviewees perceived that they were more efficient when working from home, as it gave them more time for themselves and better prerequisites for focusing on the task at hand. This, however, was based on the notion that they had tasks they found clear and were confident in completing on their own.

One newcomer experienced that he felt very comfortable with knowing what he was supposed to do when dealing with his work tasks, which made him feel more efficient working independently from home. Due to this, his identification with his tasks and the organization became stronger. However, none of the other newcomers shared this perception.

Many newcomers also said that if they would have been working at an office, they thought it would have helped them in not being seen as an outsider. In the case they would be able to overcome that, they would be able to approach their colleagues when in need of assistance and ask for help to a greater extent.

Several of the newcomers perceived the communication to be more sporadic and in the digital environment. The communication was also limited to a formal agenda to a larger extent, with less possibility for interactions within teams. They perceived this to affect both work-related and not-work related interaction. Some newcomers also described it as difficult to get a view of the bigger picture even within their own teams, which made them specialized within their own tasks. However, this made it more challenging to get to know what the goal was and to coordinate with others.

"I had some idea of what my team did, but generally, I was unfamiliar with the bigger picture of what we were doing. I only knew what my manager and I was up to, since I was directly responsible to her. For the rest, I only had somewhat of a tunnel-vision of what they were up to." - Participant 17

The newcomers attributed much of the lack of clarity regarding their roles to the digital work setting. They also believed that if they had worked at an office, they could have managed to create a role for themselves which would have made them feel like more of a part of The Company. In addition, if one is idle in an office, colleagues would reach out to help so that the focus could be redirected to meaningful tasks.

"I'm not sure whether I got the knowledge I needed and at the same time it was unclear what I was supposed to do. My role had not been completely decided, so it felt like there were many unclear tasks to handle at once. This made it hard for me to establish a position for myself." - Participant 12

4.4.2 Socializations Effects on the Clarity of Work

Almost all of the interviewees highlighted the benefits of working in stable teams and building better relationships with their colleagues for obtaining high task clarity for not

only their own tasks, but also that of their colleagues, thus ensuring a greater overview of the different processes in the team.

The designated role has impacted most of the employees in both the ways they perceive the work and their colleagues, as well as how the colleagues perceive them. The roles were further described to impact the dynamics of the relationships between colleagues. The employees' formal roles also affected how they experienced how they were perceived and included by their colleagues. Participant 11 indicates that her formal role places her more as an outsider in both the professional and social context. *"I definitely feel like a consultant but that could be because the person who hired me and is in charge of the team has specifically said that I should consider myself an outside consultant."*

Many newcomers perceived that just having an overview of their task was not sufficient. Their lack of being able to contact the supervisor, and asking about their tasks, and that of the team, greatly prevented them from completing their tasks in the most ideal fashion. Participant 15 describes this as:

"When you have coffee breaks in an office, you could ask what others are working on and you get to know more than one or two persons. Having this clarity would not only allow me to complete my tasks but give me an overview of the opportunity [to stay in the firm after my internship]." - Participant 15

Some newcomers were assigned to be divided into becoming part of two teams, which led them to perceive that they were not fully worthy members of any team. This further highlighted the importance all of the interviewees attributed to having stable teams with stable team members.

"It was hard to be in between two teams because I did not get to know anyone really well and that also made it harder to pick up things on both a work and personal level. I felt like I neither grasped nor became a part of the social dynamic." - Participant 21

4.4.3 The Nature of Tasks

Many newcomers saw shortcomings in their role. They also felt like their role lacked a sense of purpose. Some newcomers explained that they often felt a lack of direction in their work and that they were understimulated, which led them to address unproportionable work effort into the tasks they had available. Some employees felt great stress due to lack of tasks, as they would do anything work-related to feel busy. In addition, some translated this imposition of forced idleness as a signal from the team that they did not want the newcomers to work.

In addition to this, several newcomers felt like their work did not contribute to the organization's goals. They considered this discrepancy between their work and what they thought would be valuable work as something making them feel less of a part of the organization.

"I often felt like some things were done just because they felt they needed to do them, rather than there being some kind of calculations behind why this was important to do because it would give an effect on X." - Participant 10

Lastly, the newcomers found the overview of the bigger picture as something contributing to how well they got accustomed to the organization. They often expressed that when they saw a connection between their work and their performance toward the organization's goals that they constituted more important and more integrated part of the company

5. Analysis

5.1 Socialization and Sensebreaking and Sensegiving

5.1.1 Relationships as a Form of Sensebreaking and Sensegiving

For many newcomers, the inconsequential socialization tactics (Lapointe et al. 2014) led to great ambiguity and uncertainty about their role in the organization, prolonging and amplifying the phase of sensebreaking. As mentioned by Ashforth et al. (2008), the uncertainty should stimulate a curious mindset to explore oneself in relation to the organization. All the newcomers felt a sense of uncertainty to some extent throughout their time on The Company, and the lack of social interactions combined with ambiguous expectations led to a remaining feeling of uncertainty (Fay and Kline, 2012). The ongoing confusion produced a counterproductive effect and prevented them from assimilating their identity into the common identity of the team. Instead, many felt like outsiders rather than relating to the culture of The Company.

Despite the *organizational socialization tactics (OST)* preventing the formation of deeper relationships on a broader level, some of the newcomers engaged in more personal socialization (Lapointe et al., 2014) with only one or a few colleagues, with whom they formed deeper relationships with. The prerequisite for a newcomer to socialize was highly dependent on the prevailing social culture and OST in their team. As the social culture and OST differed significantly between each team, different conditions were shaped for the newcomer to socialize and establish new relationships. A Greater extent of social support, collegial talk was identified as important aspects which enabled better relationships with the closest colleagues. Relationships with the closest colleagues were highlighted to be more developed and more important. The closer working relationships gave room for deeper bonding, not only limited to work tasks (Fay and Kline 2012; Lapointe et al., 2014). More frequent interactions were perceived by many as an enabling factor for the formation of these stronger relationships. In addition, availability was also identified as an enabling factor, which could be illustrated by numerous networkers who explained that working with an open communication line in the background fostered the relationship, trust and gave a sense of belonging.

For those newcomers who were placed in teams where a mentor was assigned, they experienced the same effects of more frequent interactions, which enabled social support and improved the quality of the co-worker relationship as those mentioned above regarding their closest colleagues. Through incorporating a mentor as a part of the socialization tactic, the newcomers perceived that they were able to form at least one affect-based trust relationship through this interaction (Fay and Kline, 2012). A lack of a mentor amplifies the ambiguity of the sensegiving process and constitutes a greater uncertainty than the one that already prevails. The mentor or point of reference not only had the task of clarifying the work-related tasks for the newcomer, but also fulfilled the role of a channel between the newcomer and the organization. It helps the newcomer by providing guidelines on the social norms and accepted behaviours by the firm (Ashforth et al., 2008).

Even if knowledge-sharing is central for boosting the newcomer's confidence, and developing an *organizational identity (OI)*, it can only be achieved by getting to know each

other in an informal work-setting. Since all of the communication occurs through an online platform, the lack of possibility to read and act on other's social cues, like one would in a face-to-face setting makes it more challenging to grasp and act in accordance with the organizational behaviour. The completely digital work was one thing producing sensebreaking in relationship for how the newcomers perceived their OI. Due to this change an increasing void was created where previous ways of socializing were perceived to disappear. When the sensebreaking process was in motion, this led employees to search for different ways to fill this void. Some newcomers replaced their previous priorities of building relationships with a focus of performing their tasks and attributed a higher importance for what they deemed purely work-related tasks (Ashforth et al., 2008). Since this sensebreaking process was not counteracted by clearer socialization substitutes from The Company's side there was a broad spectrum of outcomes as the individuals enacted upon individual sensemaking processes.

5.1.2 Role Clarity

Without affect-based trust relationships with co-workers the newcomers experienced difficulties in making contact with people with help inquiries and questions. The difficulty to ask questions and have ongoing conversations due to the lack of relationships was an obstacle for becoming a part of the organization (Fay and Kline, 2012). In order to mitigate this issue, there was a need for relationships. Affect-based trust relationships were developed to a larger extent the more the employees perceived that they were able to make contact and discuss things (Lapointe et al., 2014).

When conducting the work digitally the employees often perceived uncertainties regarding their tasks and roles. This was mainly attempted to be resolved through gathering questions and trying to create settings for getting feedback from others. However, when a mentor was employed as part of the socialization, there was an ongoing conversation to a higher degree, which enabled problems to be solved proactively. The socialization tactic of mentorships strongly contributed to the perception of role clarity. It helped to spur more social interactions and enabled the employees to gain a better understanding of their role and how it fitted into the bigger picture. In addition, it was also purposeful with providing a setting for solving issues that arose. This feedback also contributed to the employees' feelings of belongingness. In addition, this also decreased the time they felt stuck with a task, which was something they related to feeling insufficient and distanced from the organization. (Fay and Kline, 2014; Ashforth et al., 2008)

Another sensebreaking aspect was produced by the work-related tasks expected to be performed by each newcomer. These aspects became especially apparent for those who were expected to produce work in projects from day one. Those newcomers described the feeling of not knowing how to handle tasks beforehand as something demanding better performance from them, in connection spurring an individual curiosity to learn at work and always aiming to improve. When most newcomers reflected upon their retrospective development, they assigned this initially conflicting view of their performance and their achievement as a motivational aspect which imprinted on them and still remained important for aiming for constant development. In contrast, people who were not exposed to this sensebreaking process when they were given tasks initially, which they were completely comfortable with performing, thus they experienced the organization to be less driven towards improvement. Most of the newcomers were in

addition to this mainly provided some task-related information and had very little to no introduction to their teams, which led to an isolation within the sensebreaking process. Not having the possibility to ask questions relating to organization, team or task stagnates the sensebreaking process. There needs to be a common point of reference, which occurs through interaction, with which a newcomer could compare their behaviour. (Ashforth et al., 2008)

Many newcomers experienced task confusion and also identified their tasks as meaningless in relation to the organization's goal. When the newcomers were unable to experience meaning regarding their tasks, they experienced becoming less connected to the organization, thus reducing OI (Ashforth et al., 2008). Individuals who experienced unclarity in their work role felt under-stimulated and less connected to the overall purpose of the organization. People who experienced a higher degree of role clarity identified themselves with the organization to a larger extent. They perceived the work they conducted to be important for the organization and contributing to the organization's performance (Lapointe et al., 2014).

Employees who were split between two teams described unclarity of their role to a larger extent, which prevented them from becoming a part of any of the teams. This was mainly caused by two factors. First, the divided roles led to briefer contacts with a larger number of people. Second, they partook in two environments at once, which utilized different socialization processes. Those two factors together led to an increased difficulty in forming affect-based relationships (Lapointe et al., 2014) and an increased difficulty to separate and incorporate the different sensemaking signals provided by the two teams (Ashforth et al., 2008).

5.2 Enacting Identity and Sensemaking

5.2.1 Relationships as a Form of Sensemaking

The digital work presented few opportunities for socialization from the perspectives of the newcomers, which inhibited them from engaging in a collective sensemaking process (Ashforth et al., 2008) to the same extent as they wished. When the newcomers had less possibilities for social interactions, they were exposed to less feedback which could confirm or alter their behaviour and values. Several of the newcomers perceived that their reflection upon their own OI occurred on their own. They perceived this to be a consequence of conducting work completely digitally, which left less room for social interactions. Their work experience was to a large extent something which they had to construct their own view of, since they perceived a lack of settings for collective reflections as well as a lack of relationships with persons they could compare and exchange viewpoints and opinions with. Under these circumstances the enactment of identity did not contribute to a common OI (Ashforth et al., 2008).

Newcomers assigned mentors often perceived a larger degree of connection to the organization and attributed this to their insight of at least some other members sharing parts of their experiences and thoughts (Lapointe et al., 2014). This effect of the mentor was provided through increasing the quality and frequency of socialization. The mentor could provide task related knowledge which helped to establish role clarity which was contributing to task performance and the feeling of belongingness to the organization

(ibid.). The mentor could also engage in socialization beyond task related matters, which helped in the socialization and identification with the social culture (Fay and Kline, 2012; Ashforth et al., 2008). However, many newcomers were not assigned any mentor, which showed an inconsequential exercise of organizational socialization tactics (Lapointe et al., 2014). Those who never had a mentor perceived a lack of belongingness to their team and the organization.

In line with Ashforth et al. (2008), the enacting and sensemaking process is ongoing and iterative. In the digital context workers were not able to receive explicit or implicit feedback on their behaviour and to what extent it is in line with The Company's culture to the same extent. As a consequence, they engage in the sensemaking process less frequently. The lack of confirmation creates an uncertainty (Fay and Kline, 2012) for the newcomers, which reinforces a sense of a gap between them and the company culture (Lapointe et al., 2014). In addition, this perception of differences leads them to avoid socialization which further makes it more difficult to engage in the socialization process.

5.2.2 Behaviours in Roles, teams and organizational level

All of the organization's members navigated in social context on different levels, which resulted in them enacting their identities in ways they saw the most suitable in a specific context. Generally, the extent of embodied organizations' socialization tactics differed vastly among the teams, which led to the socialization and OI varying among newcomers as well (Lapointe et al., 2014). Thereby, individuals were more likely to reach knowledge sharing thresholds within their closest social circles.

The more isolating digital work environment complicated the socialization on both a work-related level and on a personal level (Lapointe et al., 2014; Fay and Kline 2012). Due to the decreased frequency and depth in interactions, sensemaking did not occur on a common level to the same extent (Ashforth et al., 2008). This resulted in several subjects which organizational members had contrasting opinions on. For example, there were large differences in how they perceived the organization to be perceptible for different opinions.

The newcomers' role clarity was also affected by their understanding of the bigger picture. The less frequent and more formalized interactions in the digital setting made it even more difficult to cooperate and coordinate within teams and in consequence of this the output required from the role became less clear and role clarity decreased (Lapointe et al., 2014; Fay and Kline). This was often perceived as contributing to their confidence in handling tasks on their own, as well as their perception of their own performance aligning with the organizational purpose. Role clarity thus contributed to the extent of which the individual identified themselves with the organization (Ashforth et al., 2008).

5.2.3 Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Enacting identity and sensemaking in line with the OI occurred both because the individual perceived an intrinsic motivation for doing so, but they also conducted this process due to what they perceived as conforming to external pressure created by the organization (Ashforth et al., 2008). External motivation was seen for example when the need to navigate through corporate politics impacted what type of work an employee conducted and in what way they executed their work. Regarding the intrinsic motivation,

some newcomers were never interested in becoming a part of the OI beyond a work-related level and thus also did not end up identifying with the organization beyond that level.

5.3 Constructing Identity Narrative

The aspect which newcomers attributed the greatest importance for their development of their identity narratives was the feedback processes in terms of relationships and their work performance in relation to what they perceived was expected of them. Therefore, the explicit and implicit feedback they received through socialization was a trigger point for starting to fit their experiences into their own identity narrative. When the newcomers did not have any contact with the other members of the organization, they perceived themselves to be alone. Under these circumstances they regarded their identities to be unaffected by their experiences, since they did not incorporate this into their identity narratives, rather they saw it as passing events not influential enough to be coherent with their long-term identity narrative connecting them with the organization (Ashforth et al., 2008). It has to be noted that this type of experience was however regarded as a phase of their identities working independently of their work. However, once they received feedback through socialization, they put their experiences into the context of the OI and fitted those into their identity narratives (ibid.).

As proposed by Ashforth et al. (2008), the notion of constructing narrative is retrospective, and the person's experiences will determine the identity they perceive to be having in relation to the firm. For newcomers, who seldom received any feedback, through socialization, on their behaviour, there emerges a void in their new experiences, disturbing the creation of new, meaningful narratives. Since the newcomers rarely attributed the new experiences at The Company enough meaning to actively internalize them into their own identity narrative (Ashforth et al., 2008), they mainly regarded their identities as separated from a common OI. This explains why many newcomers experienced their identity to be largely independent of the organization. When the individual did not internalize the OI to the same extent, they tended to construct an identity narrative which repelled organizational attachment. An agreement with how the organization worked to create value could be identified as one driving factor behind this.

Individuals who identified themselves strongly to an established identity, which they failed to enact in The Company, experienced a stronger detachment from the organization. Several newcomers highlighted their identity narrative as being a social person who was eager to learn at work. There are several aspects which the individual takes into account when internalizing their experiences and constructing their identity narratives in relationship to the organization. The input from others seems to play a role here, where the explicit confirmation of belongingness in the company provided by others strongly enhances the experience of belonging in the OI. Since this identification was inhibited by digital work and their position as a newcomer, they developed a disappointment and a greater detachment from the organization. Several newcomers struggled to fit this in line with their identity narratives and thereby either remained in conflict with this lack of socialization taking up much attention and reflection (Ashforth et al., 2008). However, there was one who saw this conflict from the form of socialization during digital work as opposing his identity narrative to such an extent as he decided to leave the company in order to resolve this discrepancy.

The construction of identity narratives had a large impact on how perceptive the individual was for impressions given by the organization and as well how they engaged in socialization and how they determined their objectives with their own socialization. Individuals with less attachment to the organization experienced less intrinsic motivation for building deeper relationships with other members of the organization, which in turn further distanced them from identifying with the organization (Ashforth et al., 2008).

In the case for many of the newcomers, their identity narratives are pretty resilient and able to remain long-term coherent (Ashforth et al., 2008). As some described the immediate onboarding process as either bad or good followed by experiences which they perceived to be the opposite, there was still a common pattern of expecting good experiences and improvements. Thereby, experiences of setbacks were rarely immediately internalized as bad experiences in their construction of their identity narratives, rather their individual expectations were more influential for how they interpreted and internalized their experiences.

6. Discussion

6.1 Conclusions

Several conclusions should be highlighted with regards to the study's answer of the research question: *How does completely digital work impact newcomers' organizational identity?*

In order for the individual to engage in the sensemaking process and to enact their identities, they require certain instances for when this is possible (Ashforth et al., 2008). The social interactions were crucial for this to occur. When the newcomers were placed in a setting in which they socialized they were able to enact their identity and also receive feedback regarding how their behaviour complied with for example social norms and values (Fay and Kline 2012).

Relationships were perceived as more challenging to develop due to the limited interactions. When a mentor was assigned it seemed to provide a setting with preconditions for developing relationships. Relationship development played a crucial part in the identification process as it allowed the individuals to engage in more interaction. Through this they were able to receive both explicit and implicit feedback as a form of sensegiving and also to engage in sensemaking more frequently. In addition, socialization within relationships provided a setting in which they could enact their identities and in turn get the aforementioned feedback which intensified the identification process. As this enabled the transfer of for example values, norms and behaviours it played a crucial part for the extent to which an *organizational identity (OI)* was developed (Ashforth et al., 2008).

The digital context leads to a broader spectrum of individuals enactment of their OI due to their instances of reflection occurring alone rather than in a socializing context to the same extent (Ashforth et al., 2008). The main case was that the newcomers did not perceive the socialization settings to be sufficient for engaging and adopting the OI. The newcomers who instead had more social interactions and more settings for collective reflection showed a more converging enactment of their social identities.

Due to the combination of organizational socialization tactics employed there arose fewer affect-based relationships with co-workers and supervisors and the clarity of the individual's role became weaker (Lapointe et al., 2014). This in turn led to work-related problem-solving measures of a retrospective character. Proactive behaviour for solving problems, such as through knowledge sharing or tacit learning, was not perceived to be employed. The absence of proactive problem solving confirmed the perception of being a newcomer and an outsider among several individuals.

The perception of understanding and being a part of the bigger picture on both a team and organizational level is deemed important for developing role clarity and in turn this enhances the way the individual identifies with the organization (Lapointe et al., 2014). This also enables a perception of self-sufficiency, which also contributes to OI. In contrast, the lack of the larger picture decreases the perception of self-sufficiency, which lowers the level of role clarity and is in turn expressed as lower OI by the individual. Lastly, role clarity was highly dependent on the extent of the newcomers' established relationship.

The depth of the relationships with the colleagues and mentor would determine the degree of feedback the newcomer would receive. This feedback would provide guidance on par with the colleagues' expectations.

6.2 Theoretical Contribution

This study has contributed to research through analysing the intersection of identity in relation to work (Ashforth et al., 2008) and the onboarding and socialization processes (Lapointe et al., 2014) in the area of completely digital work. Thus, it adds on to the theoretical understanding for how these phenomenon work in relationship with each other. In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, the adoption of completely digital work has spiked, which has given rise to a vast area with new empirical phenomenon yet to be understood. This forced large-scale change is still in an early stage, which further highlights the importance of this study's contribution for the application and understanding of theories investigating this phenomenon.

In this study's case, by combining the three core theories that constitute the framework, it becomes apparent that relationship and mentorship are two central themes which not only explain why socialization occurs as it does, but it also paves the way for future research. More specifically, as demonstrated in the previous research, very little research contributes relationships and mentorship for facilitating socialization. But, as illustrated by the empirical data, relationships (Lapointe et al., 2014; Fay and Kline, 2012) and mentorship are central to the identification process as proposed by Ashforth et al. (2008).

The theory regarding identification by Ashforth et al. (2008) has been complemented through this study by integrating relationships at its core. Relationships have been found to highly impact the intensity and the frequency of the identification process, in particular high-quality affect-based relationships (Fay and Kline, 2012; Lapointe et al., 2014). In order to aid the sensegiving process, the organization's messages regarding values, norms etcetera could be provided in a clearer way. This also allowed for follow up questions and provided the newcomer with better prerequisites for understanding and interpreting the messages. When the individual enacts their identity, relationships could also aid in providing affirmative or rejective feedback more frequently and more clearly in both explicit and implicit ways (Fay and Kline, 2012; Lapointe et al., 2014; Ashforth et al., 2008).

High quality- and affect-based relationships also contributed to the perception of role clarity (Fay and Kline, 2012; Lapointe et al., 2014). Role clarity was perceived by newcomers as important for increasing the organizational identification both through the feeling of belonging and through the increased confidence, and, in turn, frequency of work-related interaction. It therefore contributes with another theoretical concept for the identification theory by Ashforth et al. (2008). In turn, this also bridges the understanding of newcomer socialization by Lapointe et al. (2014) and the organizational identification in the digital work context by Fay and Kline (2012).

The identification process by Ashforth et al. (2008) is also found to be highly disturbed by the lower degree of role clarity and the lower degree of high-quality affect-based relationships. When the degree of those concepts was lower, the organizational identification was less achieved or sometimes rejected. It can also be seen that those two

concepts highly impacted the frequency of identity enactment and receiving and interpretation of sensegiving from the organization. Thereby the identification process was exposed to less new feedback and circumstances, rendering it in remaining more perceptible to impressions from outside of the organization, such as the individuals own speculation of their behaviour, values and norms.

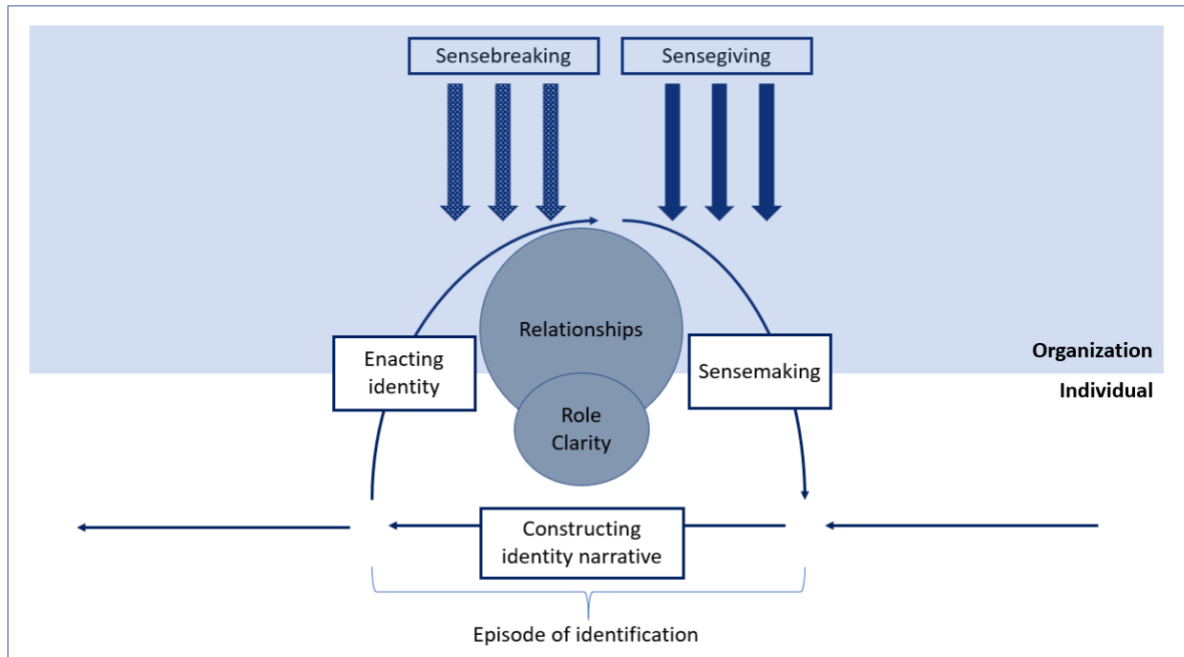


Figure 4: Synthesis of model of identification based on Ashforth et al. (2008)

As can be seen in figure 3 this study contributes to the theory developed by Ashforth et al. (2008) by incorporating the elements of relationships and role clarity in order to better understand identification for newcomers in digital work. The study provides new applications on empirical data in the digital context with a focus on newcomers, contributing to the theory developed by Ashforth et al. (2008) regarding identity and identification. The study also contributes to the testing of the theories of Lapointe et al. (2014) and Fay and Kline (2012) with an interpretivist research approach with a qualitative methodology.

6.3 Practical Implications

For practitioners, the importance of providing socialization contexts should be highlighted as a crucial part for enabling newcomers to adjust into their organization and increase their degree of organizational identification (Ashforth et al., 2008; Lapointe et al., 2014; Fay and Kline, 2012). Due to the risk of perceived isolation from the newcomers' standpoint we advise organizations who onboard members digitally to create both formal and informal settings for socialization. This is crucial for the members to build relationships and aid them in the identification process with the organization.

The large variation of socialization tactics within teams rendered different perceptions for newcomers regarding how to conduct the work, how to socialize and how they perceive the organization's goals (Lapointe et al., 2014). Therefore, organization's aiming for unity among their employees should seek to implement coherent socialization tactics among and across teams in order to decrease the spread of outcomes on the individual level.

One of the most efficient tools for providing digital workers means for both formal and informal socialization was to assign a mentor. This could be implemented by practitioners in order to provide newcomers with an initial relationship with whom they can develop their understanding and performance of their work. It also provides them with a feedback function which can ignite and aid their sensemaking process of the social culture of the organization (Ashforth et al., 2014; Lapointe et al., 2014).

Newcomers often perceived themselves as lacking an understanding of socialization and confidence in their role (Lapointe et al., 2014), which made them suppress their opinions in particular when issues were discussed in meetings. In order to mitigate this, organizations should work both to socialize their new members, but also to form discussion settings where people are directly addressed in order to invite them into the discussions. In addition, the increase of clarity regarding the newcomers' role can shift their perception of their own status to change from attributing themselves as newcomers toward perceiving themselves as holding a role expected to contribute in discussions.

6.4 Limitations

Socialization aspects in a workplace consists of more than identity and cultural belongingness, as proposed by Salling Olesen (2001). Due to the scope of this study the identity aspects outside of work have been regarded as out of scope. This clearly calls for future research with a greater scope that takes into consideration multiple socialization variables, and thus produces more in-depth and generalizable findings. Such variables could not only be those that relate to the experience of the individual, but also investigate firm-specific variables because of the different conditions and organizational structures to socialize across team constellations within an organization. It should also be noted that the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic possibly has brought implications on the participants in the study and to the broader society. Such implications have not been possible to isolate within this context.

This study has been delimited in its scope on the notion of time for which the empirics have been gathered through interviews perception at a certain frame of time. While this has been adequate to investigate the individuals introspective and retrospective view about themselves, it could include subconscious biases and influences over time, which may affect their view compared to if those snapshots had been made on another instance. The study's geographical scope has also been limited, as the study only is conducted in Sweden.

Despite having reached a theoretical saturation, building a case on a single division in The Company, out of eight divisions, and striving to infer general insights from it is limiting due to the sample bias (Galdas, 2017). As mass invites were sent out to multiple employees at The Company, there is a risk that certain types of employees agreed to an interview, and this creates room for partiality, which might make the sampling deficient. The external validity suffers as the sample profile is highly uniform and only one division and only firm has been studied without any point-of-reference to other firms within the same industry (Finfgeld-Connett, 2010). An example of this could be that not all firms have identical organizational structures when it comes to e.g. onboarding. In certain firms, onboarding might be longer with significant focus on socialization, while in others,

not at all. All this points to the fact that the findings might not be applicable across the industry.

The focus of this study was to discover new findings for newcomer socialization in a digital workplace that are transferable to other identical contexts. The intent and aim of the study were not to produce generalizable findings.

Lastly, as mentioned in the synthesis of the theoretical framework, section 3.3, Ashforth et al. (2008), Fay and Kline (2012) and Lapointe et al., (2014) theories are complementary. A common theme among these is the effect of social interactions and relationships on organization identity. As all three studies draw on these two variables to explain OI, there emerges a risk that other variables, which have as equally, or higher explanatory power, might be dismissed. Some examples on these could be organizational culture, organizational learning, organization reality (Sagberg, 2016). However, in conjunction with the research question, and with respect to the narrow scope of the study, investigating multiple variables at once poses a risk for inconsequential and scattered insights.

6.5 Suggestions for Further Research

This study has investigated how identity, identification and culture has been affected in an organization during completely digitally adopted work practices. We advise further research to study how one can achieve certain intended objectives of identity, identification or culture by imposing different courses of action.

While the notion of how OI, identification and culture, have been affected is emphasized in the context of teleworking, we request further research to investigate how these effects tie to organizational performance.

Due to the possibility of a larger employment of mixed work settings with a combination of digital work and work in the office after the Covid-19 pandemic, we also propose future research to investigate how such a mixed setting affects socialization, newcomer adjustment and OI.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 - Interviewees of the study

Participant	Period at The Company	Role at The Company	Date interviewed	Gender	Interviewee grouping
Participant 1	6 years	Manager	17/2-21	Male	Pilot interviewee
Participant 2	1 year	Director	19/2-21	Female	Newcomer
Participant 3	9 years	Senior Manager	19/2-21	Male	Onboarder
Participant 4	6 years	Senior Manager	24/2-21	Female	Onboarder
Participant 5	5 months	Trainee	4/3-21	Female	Newcomer
Participant 6	6 months	Junior Brand Manager	5/3-21	Female	Newcomer
Participant 7	2 years	Junior Brand Manager	5/3-21	Male	Onboarder
Participant 8	5 months	Trainee	5/3-21	Female	Newcomer
Participant 9	20 years	Regional director	8/3-21	Male	Onboarder
Participant 10	6 months	Trainee	10/3-21	Male	Newcomer
Participant 11	6 months	Trainee	16/3-21	Female	Newcomer
Participant 12	6 months	Trainee	17/3-21	Male	Newcomer
Participant 13	7 years	Senior manager	17/3-21	Female	Onboarder
Participant 14	1 years	Brand manager	17/3-21	Male	Newcomer
Participant 15	6 months	Trainee	18/3-21	Female	Newcomer
Participant 16	5 months	Trainee	18/3-21	Female	Newcomer
Participant 17	6 months	Trainee	18/3-21	Male	Newcomer
Participant 18	4 years	Junior brand manager	18/3-21	Female	Onboarder
Participant 19	6 months	Trainee	19/3-21	Male	Newcomer
Participant 20	1,5 years	Trainee	15/4-21	Male	Newcomer
Participant 21	9 months	Trainee	15/4-21	Male	Newcomer
Participant 22	5 years	Senior brand manager	16/4-21	Female	Onboarder
Participant 23	9 months	Trainee	16/4-21	Male	Newcomer

Appendix 2 – Interview Guide for Newcomers

- Please elaborate a bit on your professional/educational background.
 - What do you deem important for your professional development?
- What is your role within the organization?
 - What types of activities does your work entail?
- What types of decisions are you a part of? Both individual ones and group decisions.
 - What types of decisions do you make on autopilot?
- How does a normal workday look for you?
 - How does your work contribute to the value created by the organization?
 - How long do you usually work, and what determines how long you work?
- What implications does teleworking have on your work and how you perceive work?
 - Which part of your work has it/has not impacted the most?
- What did your onboarding look like? What did you think about it?
- Tell us a bit about the organization's social processes:
 - What types of processes are there for gaining knowledge important for the work?
 - How efficient do you find these processes?
 - *In case the person has experience of working both digital and offline: How do you experience the differences?*
 - What does the organization's social culture look like?
 - Do you feel like the culture contributes to the organization's performance?
 - How do one become a part of the organization's social culture?
 - Do you feel like you are part of the organizational culture, in what ways?
 - *In case the person has experience of working both digital and offline: How do you experience the differences?*
 - What would your ideal work culture look like?
- Do you feel the organization accredits different perspectives? In what ways?
- Where do you find teleworking and/or being present at the office most suitable?
 - Can you give any specific examples?

Comment: The preceding questions form the foundation for the semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured format entails that there is flexibility in terms of which order the questions have been asked depending on the interviewee's answers. In addition, follow-up questions were enabled to both provide clarification and dive deeper into a subject developed upon by the interviewee. Those types of follow-up questions are not included in the interview guide.

Appendix 3 – Interview Guide for Onboarders

- Please elaborate a bit on your professional/educational background.
 - What do you deem important for your professional development?
- What is your role within the organization?
 - What types of activities does your work entail?
- What types of decisions are you a part of? Both individual ones and group decisions.
 - What types of decisions do you make on autopilot?
- How does a normal workday look for you?
 - How does your work contribute to the value created by the organization?
 - How long do you usually work, and what determines how long you work?
- What implications does teleworking have on your work and how you perceive work?
 - Which part of your work has it/has not impacted the most?
- What does your onboarding look like? What did you think about it?
 - How do you experience the newcomers' adjustment during the completely digital onboarding?
 - Are there any differences between those who have been digitally onboarded and those who were onboarded in person?
- Tell us a bit about the organization's social processes:
 - What types of processes are there for gaining knowledge important for the work?
 - How efficient do you find these processes?
 - *In case the person has experience of working both digital and offline:* How do you experience the differences?
 - How do you experience how the newcomers' have managed this during the completely digital work?
 - What have you done differently during this period?
 - Are there any challenges which have arisen and how have you tried to solve them?
 - What does the organization's social culture look like?
 - Do you feel like the culture contributes to the organization's performance?
 - How do one become a part of the organization's social culture?
 - Do you feel like you are part of the organizational culture, in what ways?
 - *In case the person has experience of working both digital and offline:* How do you experience the differences?
 - How do you experience how the newcomers' have managed this during the completely digital work?
 - What have you done differently during this period?
 - Are there any challenges which have arisen and how have you tried to solve them?

- What would your ideal work culture look like?
- Do you feel the organization accredits different perspectives? In what ways?
- Where do you find teleworking and/or being present at the office most suitable?
 - Can you give any specific examples?

Comment: The preceding questions form the foundation for the semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured format entails that there is flexibility in terms of which order the questions have been asked depending on the interviewee's answers. In addition, follow-up questions were enabled to both provide clarification and dive deeper into a subject developed upon by the interviewee. Those types of follow-up questions are not included in the interview guide.