

Topic: Identity Formation Processes in Organizational Contexts

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Motivation:

Every individual possesses a set of opinions, assumptions, interests and feelings, that results in that person's sense of self. This sense of self is often referred to as an individual's identity. A person's sense of self or identity can differ between different contexts, meaning that they can possess different identities e.g. when at work or when interacting with others online. At work, this identity influences our job selection, interest in specific tasks as well as the interaction with colleagues. Identities are not fixed but rather evolve over time in either conscious or unconscious processes.

The process of actively forming, maintaining and revising this sense of self is called identity work. Identity work is deeply dependent on and intertwined with social interaction, since we develop our sense of self through how others perceive and respond to us. Social norms and expectations also play a major role in influencing identity work. Identity work can involve significant emotional labour, as individuals may need to manage their feelings and expressions to align with their desired identity. This can be especially true in situations that involve change or disruption.

Current research emphasizes the dynamism of identity and identity formation processes. A particular focus lies on the contextual changes that lead to different identity outcomes e.g. at work or in private with friends. There is a growing recognition of the importance of intersectionality in identity work. This involves considering how multiple social identities (e.g., race, gender, class) intersect and influence individuals' experiences. With the rise of social media and online platforms, researchers are increasingly studying how individuals construct and manage their digital identities. Understanding what drives, influences and sustains identity work is an important step towards uncovering the processes that lead to individuals sustained interests and contributions at work.

The goal of this thesis is to:

- Summarize the current research on factors influencing identity work through a structured literature research
- Conduct narrative interviews with people under employment to explore concrete identity formation processes

Starting Literature:

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- Järventie-Thesleff, R., & Tienari, J. (2016). Roles as mediators in identity work. *Organization studies*, 37(2), 237-265.
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- Watson, T. J. (2008). Managing identity: Identity work, personal predicaments and structural circumstances. *Organization*, 15(1), 121-143.