DOING INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITY WORK
SOCIAL CATEGORIES, INEQUALITIES, AND SILENCES
ANNAMARI TUORI
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Social Categories, Inequalities, and Silences

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Key words: Identity work, job-related identity, intersectionality, social categories, inequalities, silence

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1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about identities and social categories in organisations, but also about inequalities and silences. It began as a study of identities, but as it progressed I became more and more intrigued by inequalities. From being at the centre of the work, identities instead increasingly became a way to approach people’s experiences of inequalities in organisations. Rather than people’s identities as such, I became interested in how identities and identity work in organisations are connected to different and intersecting inequalities.

Moreover, and no less importantly, it is a thesis about silence in identity work. I look at silence(s) as a part of people’s identity work in organisations and how it becomes constitutive of who they are. Silence as a topic arose during the research process when I tried to make sense of how people talked and did not talk about social categories, with inequalities becoming an important topic on which people were silent. Thus, the thesis is not only about silence in identity work as such, but more specifically about how inequalities and silences are or can be connected to each other in identity work in organisations.

This thesis also examines identity work in organisations through the lens of intersectionality. People’s identities in organisations have been long acknowledged to be constructed in relation to a variety of social categories relevant for people as a specific kind of individuals in a specific context (e.g. Ailon-Souday and Kunda 2003, Alvesson 1998, Barry et al 2006, Katila and Meriläinen 2002, Rumens and Kerfoot 2009, Thomas and Davies 2002). People are, for example, of different genders, ages, and ethnicities, and work in different kinds of occupations such that each may bear on who they are or can be at work.

Given the great variety of relevant social categories, identities can be seen to come into being by working with different and often contradictory categories related to oneself (Adib and Guerrier 2003, Essers and Benschop 2007, 2009). Drawing on a notion of identity work as ‘people’s activities of forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness’ (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003: 1165), I examine how people relate to different and relevant social categories when constructing a sense of self. As such, the thesis participates in the discussion around identity work in organisations in relation to the variety of discursive resources and/or multiple identities (Alvesson and Willmott 2002, Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003, Watson 2008).

More specifically, I look at identity work in the context of interview talk, examining how people talk and do not talk about themselves in relation to different social
categories and in this way construct themselves a self-identity at work. As illustrated in the following quote, Helena¹, one of the interviewees in the study, talks about herself in relation to organisation, job, gender, age, and education, positioning herself differently depending on the category and the context in which the categories are spoken of.

I can’t see it [gender] as a problem, at least not in our company, but it can have a lot of influence. I can’t give any examples ... I haven’t experienced it myself, but I neither have been in a situation where I would have had to have fought for a position a man against a woman ... Instead I’ve had to fight against age. That’s already a while ago. I was a bit under 40 and re-entering working life when there were two people in the recruitment process. They choose the person with a bachelor degree, and I had vocational training, but when I went to school there was no such a thing as a bachelor degree in my field. I thought it [the issue] was the age. (Helena)

The study can be seen as being located in what I call intersectional identity work in organisations. This refers to a relatively small body of literature combining identity work with intersectionality for studying people’s identities and identity construction in organisations (e.g. Adib and Guerrier 2003, Atewologun 2014, Boogaard and Roggeband 2010, Buitelaar 2006, Corlett and Mavin 2014, Essers and Benschop 2007, 2009, Essers et al. 2013, Ludvig 2006, Prins 2006, Soni-Sinha 2013). By drawing on a notion of intersectionality as referring to ‘the relationship among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations’ (McCall 2005:1771), I look at identity work as being done in relation to different and mutually constitutive social categories.

Taking intersectionality as a key perspective on identity work has various consequences for understanding the identity work done in organisations. Firstly, intersectionality locates identity work as taking place in the relations between the different categories (cf. Essers and Benschop 2009). As in the quote above, Helena does not only talk about herself in relation to multiple social categories, but importantly she does so at the intersections of the different categories. In other words, what is central is how the different categories are given their meaning in relation to each other, for example, how she describes her experiences at work as having been influenced by a combination of her age and education.

Secondly, intersectionality locates the often rather local notion of identity work in organisations in the wider context of social relations in society. Helena explains how her position and experiences at work have and have not been influenced by wider societal social categories such as gender and age. I focus on identity work done

¹ The names of the interviewees have been anonymized.
involving the relationship between two kinds of categories: a job and wider societal social categories such gender and ethnicity.

Thirdly, intersectionality means having a specific focus on inequalities in identity work in the sense of looking at how people relate themselves towards the privilege and/or disadvantage connected to categories relevant for themselves in the specific context (Adib and Guerrier 2003, Essers and Benschop 2007, 2009, Zanoni and Janssen 2007). When Helena talks about herself at work in relation to the different social categories, she discusses them in terms of experiences of disadvantage, of having or not having been subjected to discrimination based upon who she is. I will discuss these consequences in more detail in section 1.2.

The study focuses specifically on two aspects related to intersectional identity work: inequalities and silence. Inequalities can be considered central for intersectional identity work in organisations both in the sense of relating to how people position themselves with regard to the inequalities of their different social categories when doing intersectional identity work (Adib and Guerrier 2003, Zanoni and Janssen 2007), and how intersectional identity work itself can reproduce inequalities in organisations (Boogaard and Roggeband 2010). I am primarily interested in inequalities in intersectional identity work in the first sense, as relating to how people do intersectional identity work.

The second aspect is silence in and around intersectional identity work. Silence, in terms of what is being excluded or omitted in people’s accounts of themselves, can be seen as central to how they are being constructed and how they construct themselves. At the same time, silence has been surprisingly under-examined in research related to identity work in organisations generally (see, for exceptions, Moaşa 2012, 2013, Ward and Winstanley 2003) and in intersectional identity work specifically. Silence can mean different things, from more literal understandings of not talking, to more discursive ones of constructing specific knowledge on a topic and, in doing that, excluding others (Harlow et al. 1995). In this study, silence is seen as a discursive phenomenon related to different ways of excluding potentially relevant understandings on a specific topic and, by so doing, constructing knowledge of the topic (Foucault 1981).

In the context of intersectional job-related identity work, silence can be seen as referring to the different ways of excluding or omitting issues related to social categories in the organisation, potentially central for oneself as a specific kind of individual in the specific context. Thus, silence can be considered to relate to a variety of different phenomena around unequal social relations in organisations becoming more directly or indirectly relevant for who and how one constructs him- or herself to be. For example, if and how social categories are talked about in the organisational
context is influenced by different discourses around the topic (e.g. Prasad et al. 2006) and/or by ambiguities around unequal social categories in organisations, meaning that inequalities become simultaneously acknowledged and ignored (Korvajärvi 2011).

Furthermore, silence in intersectional identity work can also be seen to relate to who is talking, meaning people’s positions of privilege and/or disadvantage, since disadvantage tends to render the category more visible, while privilege tends to have the opposite effect (Kimmel 2003, McIntosh 1988, Pease 2010). Helena talks about the disadvantages she has experienced at work in terms of her age and education. However, at the same time, she locates inequalities in the past, in another organisational context, and maybe to someone else. As such, she manages to acknowledge inequalities without them becoming a part of her current job-related identity.

In this thesis, I attempt to provide some answers to three research questions, all of which are related to ways in which intersectional identity work can be done. The first research question is rather general, also encompassing the two other questions, whereas the two subsequent questions focus on the specific issues of inequalities and silence in intersectional identity work respectively. While focusing on the concrete activities of doing intersectional identity work, the research questions can be also seen to have theoretical relevance in terms of how inequalities and silence can operate in and around intersectional identity work.

1. How do people do the relations between different social categories when constructing themselves a job-related identity?
   1.a. How do people relate themselves to inequalities connected to wider societal social categories when constructing themselves a job-related identity?
   1.b. How are people silent about wider societal social categories when constructing themselves a job-related identity?

1.1. A snapshot of identities in organisations

When I used to tell people that a central theme in my thesis was identities, I often got, in addition to, ‘Oh, that is interesting’, sceptical reactions such as, ‘But it is so vast’ or, ‘It must be so difficult (read impossible)’. The reactions presumably depended partly on the fact that at that time I was not always able to explain what I was doing, but also on the fact that studying identities is indeed difficult, and the field of study is indeed vast. The term ‘identity’ originates from the Latin ‘idem’ meaning ‘the same’ (Gleason 1983,

^2 By ‘doing the relations’, I mean the activities that people undertake at the intersections between different social categories (Staunæs 2003). Since the study is based on interview material, ‘doing the relations’ means here in practice talking or not talking about the social categories in relation to each other.
Wetherell 2010:5). In everyday language, identity has been often used to refer to ‘an object or distinctive fixed essence which a person, a place or a group could possess’ (Wetherell 2010:5). As a term, identity began to gain a stronger foothold in academic discussion as late as in the 1950s (Gleason 1983, Wetherell 2010), even though issues related to identities have intrigued Western thinkers ever since the Enlightenment (Taylor 1989, Benwell and Stokoe 2006).

Over the years, identities have been studied in various disciplines, using slightly different or, sometimes even more confusingly, the very same terms, meaning somewhat or even very different things. My thesis takes part in the discussion in the context of organisation studies with its specific histories and research interests. Whereas research related to identity also has a rather long history in organisation studies, the concept of ‘identity’ began to be more widely used only somewhat later (see Brown 2001). During the recent decades, a large quantity of research has been generated on identity, both organisational identity and identities in organisations, with identity having become one of the leading metaphors in understanding people’s experiences and behaviour in organisations. This study can be located in the literature on identities in organisations, meaning issues related to the identities of individual organisational members.

Notwithstanding the popularity that identity has gained in organisation studies, the field remains scattered. Organisation scholars study identities from rather different kinds of research traditions with different research interests that themselves have different and also often contradictory assumptions on how identities should be understood. Over the years, there have been various endeavours to clarify the field, from defining a research agenda (Brown 2001) to discussing central themes in identities in organisations studies (Ybema et. al 2009, Coupland and Brown 2012), or mapping different research traditions and interests (Alvesson et al. 2008), the different kinds of selves that are constructed in organisations (Collinson 2003) or the images used by organisation scholars regarding people’s identities (Alvesson 2010). For example, Ybema et al. (2009) have discussed the discursive aspects of identity construction, and Coupland and Brown (2012) have argued for the importance of studying identity construction as an interactional process. By drawing on insecurity as a driving force for identities, Collinson (2003) has identified three kinds of selves: ‘conformist’, ‘dramaturgical’, and ‘resistant’ selves. Alvesson (2010) takes a step further by exploring the different self-identities that are constructed by researchers to conceptualize people’s identities in organisations. Working with two axes of central identity dimensions, which are coherence/fragmentation and structure/agency, he identifies the different images frequently used by identity scholars in organisation studies.
Given the size of the field and the variety of ways in which identity has been conceptualized, positioning one’s work can, at times, become challenging. I draw on Alvesson et al.’s (2008) framework to position my approach to identities. Based on a distinction by Habermas (1972), Alvesson et al. (2008) have identified three different approaches to identities in organisations literature: functional, interpretive, and critical approaches, each of which draws on rather different metatheoretical orientations with different objectives. The functional notion of identities draws on technical interests, meaning that the focus of the studies is on the cause-effect relations that can be used for controlling social conditions. Organisational scholars working in this tradition have been interested in how identities and identification can be used to achieve desired managerial outcomes. The interpretive tradition, instead, looks at identities through practical-hermeneutic interests, aiming to understand human cultural experiences or how meaning is generated or transformed. The focus is on the ways in which people construct their identities, by using the diverse cultural resources at hand, for example. Identity is seen as an important concept for understanding the relations between self, work, and organisation. In contrast to the functional tradition, there is no real interest in the utility of identities for the organisation. The critical tradition, focusing on power relations, draws, in turn, on emancipatory interests. Critical scholars have been interested in identities as a way to study relations of control and resistance. In the critical tradition, identities can be, for example, seen as internalized manifestations of discourses or managerial regimes.

My study can be located in between the interpretive and critical research orientations. Being interested in identity work from a discursive perspective, I seek to combine the ways in which the discursive and material context influences people’s identities with how they construct their identities, a question that I will return to in the theory chapter. In line with the interpretive approach, I am interested in how people construct their identities by drawing on the discursive resources available to them but also in how they are at the same time regulated by (both intra- and extra-organisational) discursive regimes as emphasized by the more critical understandings. Taking an in-between position between the interpretive and critical approaches, my study focuses on the processes in and through which people construct their identities within organisations, enabled and constrained by the organisational and extra-organisational contexts. By drawing on the concept of identity work, my emphasis is on the activities through which organisational members endeavour to construct an understanding of who they are (cf. Alvesson et al. 2008).

In my thesis, identities become conceptualized as processual, relational, contextual, and intersectional. Over the recent years, more processual understandings of identities have become increasingly important in organisation studies, highlighting the question of ‘how’ in relation to identities. Whereas identities have often been seen as answering
the question ‘who am I?’ or ‘who are we?’ the focus of current identity research is increasingly on ‘how do I or we become constructed?’. Instead of looking at identity as a thing, as something that is already fixed, more constructionist understandings on identities emphasize the becoming part, the ongoing processes in and through which our identities are constantly being constructed and reconstructed. By focusing on identity work as the activities through which individuals endeavour to construct a sense of self (Alvesson and Willmott 2002, Alvesson et al. 2008, Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003), I take a processual view on identities, in particular focusing on identity work as a discursive process.

In addition, my approach to identities is relational, in the sense that I see identities as always constructed in relation to others (e.g. Jenkins 2004, Wetherell 2008). The term ‘relational’ has been used to mean different things, from ‘interpersonal’ (meaning the personalized bonds with others) to collective (meaning the impersonal bonds one has to a larger social category) (Brewer and Gardner 1996). Being interested in the relational in the form of the collective, the thesis looks specifically at how identities become constructed within a set of different and intersecting social relations: that is, how one constructs a sense of self in relation to oneself and others as members of different social categories. In this meaning, identity work becomes a process of managing or coming to terms with different social categories related to oneself.

I also see identities as contextual. Identity work always takes place at a specific time and place. It becomes contextual in various ways and at various levels. Identities that are constructed are contextual both regarding the salience of social categories that are being used (e.g. Ashfort and Mael 1989) and the content of these categories; in other words, the various meanings they can take in the specific contexts (cf. Zanoni and Janssen 2007). In addition, identity work can be seen as contextual at various levels simultaneously. In the case of this thesis, depending on my interpretation and interests, identity work could be seen as taking place within the concrete discussion of the interview situation, a specific organisation or parts of it, the occupation the people are a part of, the ICT sector in Finland and in general, Finnish society or the globalizing world.

Finally, in my thesis identities become conceptualized as intersectional. I study identity work as embedded in the discursively and materially constructed social relations providing people with different positions and meanings to construct their job-related identities. Having chosen intersectionality as my lens through which to view identity work, the focus is on the relations between different categories constituting job-related identities and, first and foremost, the work done by the individuals to manage the oftentimes ambiguous and complicated relations between their various social categories.
1.2. An intersectional perspective on identity work

While there has been long-term interest in how people are or can be divided into different social categories influencing their positions, experiences and identities, social categories have in the past often been analysed separately, based on their different logics (Bradley 1996). At the same time, understanding people’s lives based on one category has, however, long been criticized as unsatisfactory for, for example, being unable to capture the social realities of people suffering from inequalities on multiple dimensions. In recent years, there has been increasing interest in intersectionality as a way of studying the multiple, intersecting social categories (Davis 2008).

As an idea of studying the interplay of several social categories, intersectionality has its roots in feminist, Marxist, and anti-racist thinking. As an implicit way of theorizing on social categories, intersectionality has a history going back to the nineteenth century tensions between feminism and the anti-slave movement in the USA (Brah and Phoenix 2004) as well as in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century European debates between feminist and socialist movements on gender and class (Lykke 2010). In the US context, as early as 1851, the black feminist Sojourner Truth challenged the conceptualization of women as only white in her famous talk ‘Ain’t I a woman’ (Brah and Phoenix 2004).

Implicit theorizings of intersectionality have been carried out from various perspectives, such as from a Marxist feminist point of view being interested in intersections between gender and class, or feminist cultural studies providing cultural analysis on various intersecting social categories from gender to age and nationality (Lykke 2010). Intersectionality has been approached under many different names, such as interferences, differences among women, multiple oppressions, multiple social divisions, multiple differences and mutual constitution (Hearn and Louvrier 2015, Lykke 2011). Notably, a black feminist lesbian collective, the Combahee River Collective, made a famous statement about ‘interlocking oppressions’ referring to analysis on race, sex, heterosexuality, and class (Combahee River Collective 1983).

Over the recent years in organisation studies, there has emerged a body of literature studying intersectionality combined with identity work, or what I call ‘intersectional identity work’, looking at the ways in which identity work is intertwined with different and intersecting social categories (e.g. Adib and Guerrier 2003, Buitelaar 2006, Benschop and Essers 2007, 2009, Corlett and Mavin 2014). As briefly discussed before, taking intersectionality as the perspective for identity work create several consequences for understanding identity work in organisations.

Firstly, drawing on the literature on intersectionality, identity work is then located between different and mutually constitutive social categories. Thus, what becomes
important is what happens at the intersections between the categories (cf. Staunæs 2003): how people are being positioned as specific type of individuals in a specific context and how they position themselves. As such, intersectionality can be seen to conceptually contribute to the understanding of identity work as done in relation to multiple categories.

Secondly, intersectionality can be seen as connecting identity work in organisations to the wider societal context, and thereby being a way of responding to critique of identity work as often being examined too locally (Alvesson et al. 2008). Through its interest in wider societal social categories such gender and ethnicity, intersectionality opens up possibilities for the study of and theorizing on people’s identity work as a process embedded in and influenced by various intersecting intra- and extra-organisational social categories (cf. Hearn and Louvrier 2011). In practice, taking intersectionality as the perspective for identity work in organisations means examining how identity work is done at the intersections of different types of social categories. The question becomes what is being done at the relations between the more organisational and/or occupational social categories and wider societal social categories.

I look at intersectional identity work at the intersection between a job and wider societal social categories. I have chosen to examine the construction of job-related identities, since the term ‘job’ can be seen to encompass both occupational and organisational aspects of one’s work, translating abstract occupations into specific tasks in a specific organisational context. Furthermore, how a job in practice becomes ‘enacted’ is frequently related to who is doing the job in terms of, for example, gender or ethnicity (Acker 1990, 2006). Here, ‘job’ is used as an umbrella term encompassing the occupation, the position in the organisation, and the concrete work tasks. Furthermore, ‘job’ as a category is examined in relation to wider societal social categories. Not all the categories are the same, but some categories are more structural or systematic (Prasad et al. 2006) and/or tend to have greater importance for organising people’s lives (Yuval-Davis 2006). I focus on wider societal social categories since they involve systematic inequalities between different categories of people, often having considerable importance for organising people’s lives both within and outside organisations.

While the relationship between a job and wider societal social categories can be seen to lead in both directions, both of them informing and being informed by each other, I am interested in how the job as a category is given its meaning in relation to wider societal social categories. My thesis looks both at identity work done at the intersections between a job and a wider societal social category, but also at how different wider societal social categories are used in relation to each other to construct a job-related identity.
Thirdly, an intersectional approach to identity work highlights questions around inequalities in identity work. In line with other research on intersectionality, inequalities around social categories also become a central theme in studies on intersectional identity work looking at how people’s identities are being formed in relation to privilege and/or disadvantage. Whereas some studies combining identity work and intersectionality focus on people that have been disadvantaged on multiple dimensions (Benschop and Essers 2007, 2009, Buitelaar 2006), others examine intersectional identity work done by people regarding different combinations of disadvantages and/or privileges (Adib and Guerrier 2003, Boogaard and Roggeband, Zanoni and Janssen 2007). The positions of individuals in terms of privilege and disadvantage are far from unambiguous and straightforward. Instead, people can be (and often are) in rather complex positions in terms of power, their intersecting identities being at the same time privileged and disadvantaged (Boogaard and Roggeband 2010).

Thus, whereas intersectionality as a phenomenon has been, and often is, used for studying people’s identities at the intersections of multiple disadvantages, it can be also applied as a more generalized theory of identity related to both disadvantage and privilege (Nash 2008). In this study, I take a rather inclusive approach to intersectionality, seeing everybody’s identities as intersectional in the sense of their being formed in relation to inequalities around relevant social categories, whether in terms of privilege, disadvantage, or both.

1.3. Contextualizing intersectional identity work: Intersectional organisations

Organisations become important for understanding people’s job-related identity work as the immediate context in which identity work can be seen to take place, being themselves intersectional. The idea of organisations as being gendered, ethnicized or racialized and as such producing and maintaining inequalities between different categories of people is not new (e.g. Acker 1990, Gherardi 1994, Grimes 2002, Mills 1988), but lately organisations have also been analysed as being intersectional in the meaning of being organised around inequalities related to a variety of intersecting social categories simultaneously (Acker 2006, Holvino 2003, 2010).

According to Holvino (2010) intersectionality can be considered to be relevant in and around organisations in three different but interlinked ‘levels’ consisting of practices related to the society in general, the organisation itself, and to the identities of its members. I look at intersectionality in people’s identities and identity work in organisations. However, the two other levels are also central in the sense of individual level identity work being embedded in and intertwined with societal and organisational
level practices. The intersectionality of organisations can be thought of as being important for intersectional identity work in two different and, between themselves, contradictory ways: as a discursive and material context participating in producing different kinds of identities for different categories of people and, at the same time, providing a context for identity work in which inequalities around social categories are often obscured or made invisible.

Acker (2006) approaches intersectionality in organisations by talking about inequality regimes as ‘interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meaning that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organisations.’ (Acker 2006: 443). Organisations can be seen as unequal in a variety of aspects, with inequalities in organisations referring to:

- systematic disparities between participants in power and control over goals, resources, and outcomes; workplace decisions such as how to organize work; opportunities for promotion and interesting work; security in employment and benefits; pay and other monetary rewards; respect; and pleasures in work and work relations (Acker 2006: 443).

Moreover, the disparities can be more informal, related to unspoken understandings around, for example, the ways in which different people should behave in specific situations (Gherardi 1994, Mills 1988), or more formal in the sense of being embedded in the seemingly neutral organisational structure and design (Acker 1990, 2006). For example, a job as an empty and abstract slot in an organisational charter in practice often contains preferences concerning the kind of individual that is seen as ideal for each kind of a job. The degree of inequalities and the exact categories around which inequalities are formed varies according to the organisations, as well as the wider societal contexts in which the organisations are embedded (Acker 1990, 2006). What is central in this thesis is how intersectional organisations participate in creating rather different kinds of realities for people depending on their social categories, and, further, how these realities are or are not translated into people’s job-related identities through identity work.

At the same time, despite the importance of inequalities in organisations, social categories can often remain invisible or obscured. There are different discourses around social categories in organisations, influencing whether wider societal social categories are acknowledged as influencing organisations and people’s identities in organisations and, if so, in what ways. For example, diversity in organisations can be understood in terms of everyone being different, which can be seen as obscuring inequalities between different groups of people (Prasad et al. 2006). Furthermore, ambiguities have been identified around how unequal social relations in organisations
are seen. Whereas inequalities can be acknowledged as a phenomenon existing in organisations more generally, they are simultaneously often ignored in the context of one’s own work organisation (Korvajärvi 2011).

1.4. Contextualizing intersectional identity work: Describing the ICT industry in Finland

The geographical context for the study is Finland. Finland as a societal context can be characterized as being a fairly equal country in terms of gender and income, even though differences in income were growing in the late 1990s (Official Statistics Finland 2011). Finland has a long tradition of gender equality, for example being in 1906 the first country in the world granting all women the right to vote. According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2013 by the World Economic Forum, Finland was ranked as the second most equal country, after Iceland. Whereas Finland performed very well in educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment, it did worse on economic participation and opportunity, being ranked as 19th of 136 countries (World Economic Forum 2013). The labour market continues to be both hierarchically and vertically segregated, the number of women in top management remains relatively low, for example (Finland Chamber of Commerce 2011). In addition, there remains a large gender pay gap, women earning around 83% of that earned by men in 2011 (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2014).

Finland is officially bilingual and has several national minorities including Swedish-speaking Finns, Sami, Roma, Jews, and Tatars, even if it has been, and often still is, depicted as a culturally and ethnically homogenous country, homogeneity being constructed an important part of the national identity (Louvier 2013). For a long period of time there was relatively low international immigration to Finland. However, beginning in the 1990s, with EU membership and the fall of the ‘Iron Curtain’, the number of immigrants has increased. In 2011, 4.8% of the population of Finland had foreign origins, the largest group of immigrants being Russians (Official Statistics Finland 2012).

In line with many other industrial countries, there is currently considerable political discussion on the question of the ageing population, as baby boomers born after the Second World War reach retirement age (Järvinen and Leveälahti 2010). Moreover, Finland has undergone large structural changes after the depression of the early 1990s, which had deep impacts on Finnish society.

More specifically, the study is located in the ICT industry in Finland. The ICT industry has been defined as consisting of the segments of software, telecommunications, equipment engineering, and data system services (Koivumäki et al. 2013). According to a report published in 2008, two-thirds of people working in the ICT industry in Finland
were employed by software companies, mostly small or middle-sized companies (Ali-Yrkkö and Martikainen 2008). The empirical context of this study is two small software companies and one medium-sized game company.

The industry has undergone great changes over the last couple of decades. In the mid- and late 1990s there was an ICT bubble that reached its peak in 2000. After this peak, there were many organisational restructurings and bankruptcies, and the business expectations for the industry became more cautious (Segercrantz 2011). However, even after the ICT bubble, the ICT industry in Finland has grown. In particular, on average, more software companies have been founded (and closed down) than companies in any other industry in Finland (Ali-Yrkkö and Martikainen 2008). Currently, there are relatively high expectations, particularly in the game industry, which has some recent success stories.

The ICT industry in Finland can also be seen as relatively international. While many of the small and medium-sized ICT companies still operate rather locally or nationally, at the same time there are important developments in terms of, for example, offshoring parts of the operations to other countries, such as India (Ali-Yrkkö and Jain 2005, Ali-Yrkkö and Martikainen 2008, Koivumäki et al. 2013). Moreover, the industry can be seen, at least partly, as rather international in terms of the number of non-Finns it employs. In the context of the game industry, it has been estimated that around a fifth of the employees are non-Finns. The game industry suffers from a labour shortage, and professionals are recruited actively from abroad to compensate for the lack of Finnish professionals in the industry3.

People working in the ICT industry in Finland are generally highly educated; in 2013, 45% of the employees had a university degree and 27% a higher vocational diploma (i.e. 72% in total), whereas only 16% of the employees had vocational training (Tietotekniikan liitto ry 2013). Moreover, the industry is rather male-oriented, with almost 80% of the employees being men. The number of women has been slightly decreasing over the last 30 years from 30% in 1980 to 23% in 2013, women being particularly underrepresented in top management and demanding expert positions (Tietotekniikan liitto ry 2013). Lately, there have been efforts to increase the interest of girls in ICT in order to attract more women (Teknologiateollisuus 2011). In terms of salaries, the industry can be seen to be relatively equal between the sexes, the wages of women reaching a little over 90% of those of men (Tietotekniikan liitto ry 2013).

1.5. Structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured in the following way. In chapters 2, 3, and 4, I present the theoretical foundations of the thesis. The theory part is structured in a cumulative way, moving from discussing the main concepts of identity work, job-related identity, and intersectionality to develop a notion of what I call ‘intersectional job-related identity work’. Chapter 2 focuses on job-related identities and identity work, defining job-related identity work as a discursive process that people engage in when constructing themselves a self-identity at work. Chapter 3 looks at intersectionality as a way of examining how different categories co-constitute each other and, in particular, how people’s identities are constructed at the intersections of various different and mutually constitutive social categories. In Chapter 4, job-related identity work is combined with intersectionality, defining intersectional job-related identity work as referring to people’s activities related to ‘doing the relations’ between the different available social categories when constructing themselves a relatively coherent self-identity at work.

Chapter 5 discusses the methodology of the study, describing how the research process has led to the thesis. As is often the case with qualitative studies, the research process has been rather complex, and the final design for the study has constantly evolved throughout the process. The study is based on two sets of interview data gathered and analysed at different points of the process. Thus, what is particularly important in the case of this study is the issue of time. The first set of data (21 interviews in one company) was gathered in the early stages of the research process, between August 2007 and February 2008. The second set of data was gathered during the later stages of the process, after having analysed the first set of data. The second set of data (12 interviews in total, in two companies), which was gathered in September and October 2012, can be seen as a continuation of the first set of data as the purpose of the new data was to go further into detail in relation to some of the issues identified in the first set.

Another central issue discussed in the methodology chapter is that of who was being interviewed. Whereas intersectionality has often had a specific interest in people being disadvantaged on multiple dimensions (e.g. Crenshaw 1989, 1991, Collins 1990), this thesis looks at the identity work of people that could be seen as being fairly privileged in many aspects, as being mostly relatively young, able-bodied and working as knowledge workers in Finnish society. Moreover, the group of people whose identity work I studied was not predefined, except in the regard that they were all working in the ICT industry in Finland. Thus, rather than being interested in identity work around one or more specific kinds of intersectionalities, I am interested in intersectionality as a more general process in identity work, being done at the intersections of many possible social categories and from many different kinds of positions in terms of privilege and/or disadvantage.
I have examined the identity work of a group of people that could, amongst themselves, be described as homogeneously heterogeneous or heterogeneously homogeneous. The interviewees in the study can be seen as possessing similarities in terms of the context, all working in ICT industry in Finland over more or less same period of time, as well as some of the categories, most of them being young and relatively well-educated. At the same time, the interviewees can be also seen as having a number differences, for example, being of different ethnicities, genders, speaking different languages and working in different jobs in different organisations. Thus, despite the similarities, each interviewee can be seen as having unique positions at intersections of different social categories.

In chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9, intersectional job-related identity work is analysed from different angles. Chapters 6 and 7 look at intersectional identity work as done in relation to positive identities, both at the more collective level of a unit identity and the individual level of job-related identity. The two chapters are based on the first set of data and were analysed rather early on in the research process. Chapter 8 focuses on intersectional strategies in identity work and the ways in which they can be seen to be related to inequalities around social categories. The chapter can be seen as a transitional chapter, partly drawing on findings from Chapter 7 and partly introducing new data to further examine the strategies identified in the first set of data. In Chapter 9, intersectional identity work is examined through the notion of silence, focusing on the ways in which people are silent about social categories in identity work. In line with Chapter 8, too, Chapter 9 draws on both sets of data. It can also partly be seen as a reinterpretation of some of the ways of doing intersectional identity work identified in Chapter 8.

Finally, in Chapter 10 I discuss the findings of the thesis, in particular focusing on the relations between intersectional identity work, unequal social categories and silence versus non-silence. In the last section of Chapter 10, I discuss the contributions that the study seeks to make, and ideas for future research.
2 JOB-RELATED IDENTITY WORK

In this chapter, I discuss identity construction through the notions of identity work and job-related identity. Identity work becomes conceptualized as a discursive process related to managing different and available social categories when constructing a relatively coherent self-identity, whereas a job-related identity refers to a self-identity at work being constructed in relation to the organisation, occupation, and wider societal social categories and is relevant for people when answering the question of 'Who am I?' at work. While a job-related identity is treated as an outcome of identity construction, identity work refers to the process in and through which a job-related identity becomes constructed.

2.1. Identity work

In this thesis, I look at identity construction in organisations through identity work. Whereas the term identity work has at times been used interchangeably with identity construction, it has been also seen as a specific type of identity construction referring to people 'being engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness' (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003:1165). Identity work has often been looked at as an individual level concept, examining how people construct a self-conception (Snow and Anderson 1987), self-identity (Alvesson and Willmott 2002, Watson 2008, 2009), or sense of self (Alvesson et al. 2008) in relation to different social realities, for example, to a specific social identity or a variety of available and often contradictory discourses and/or social-identities (e.g. Alvesson and Willmott 2002, Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003, Kreiner 2006, Watson 2008, 2009).

In organisation studies, identity work has been approached from different perspectives: from psychological and social psychological approaches (e.g. Kreiner 2006, Ludvic-Sandviken 2008, Petriglieri and Stein 2012) to more discursive or narrative ones (e.g. Alvesson and Willmott 2002, Beech 2008, Brown and Toyoki 2013, Ibarra and Barbulescu 2010, Kornberger and Brown 2007, Mallet and Wapschott 2012, McInnes and Corlett 2012, Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003, Sveningsson and Larsson 2006, Thornborrow and Brown 2009, Watson 2008, 2009, Watson and Watson 2012). I take a discursive view on identity work, being primarily interested in two aspects related to it: 1) how discursively (and materially) constructed social categories become or do not become part of the self-identity through identity work, and interrelated with this; 2) how people work with different and often contradictory social categories to accomplish coherence in self-identity. Coherence and fragmentation in identity work are discussed in section 2.1.3.
In this chapter, I describe my approach to identity work by discussing three central topics in and around the concept. I begin by discussing identity work at the interface between the ‘personal’ (i.e. self-identity) and the ‘social’ as well as ponder on the possible different aspects of the ‘social’ that are relevant for my understanding of identities/identity work. From the ‘social’, I move on to discussing the discursive and the material in identity work, seeing discursively and materially produced social categories working as a structure enabling and constraining people’s identities and identity work, but at the same time subject to individual agency in the form of identity work. Finally, I talk about identity work in relation to the dynamics of fragmentation and coherence that are connected to an understanding of identity work as related to activities concerned with managing the multiple categories available for one’s self-identity.

2.1.1. Constructing a sense of self – between the ‘personal’ and the ‘social’

Whereas identity has been said to be a ‘fundamental bridging concept between the individual and society’ (Ybema et al. 2009:300), identity work can be interpreted as dealing with individual people’s activities connected to managing the relations between the ‘personal’ and ‘social’. In my thesis, the ‘social’ in particular can be seen to become important in various ways, taking various and somewhat different meanings. Firstly, it becomes important in the meaning of a collective identity, or identities, analysed as subject to people’s identity work. Secondly, and more importantly, the ‘social’ (still in the meaning of the collective) becomes central in its relation to the ‘personal’ as something that is worked on in the construction of a self-identity. Finally, the ‘social’ is important as related to a more philosophical observation that all identities are (or are not) inherently social which can be also traced back to questions of how identity as a term is conceptualized.

Identities can be seen to be ‘social’ in various ways. In identity studies, the ‘social’ has been often separated from the ‘personal’. Thus, maybe in its most direct form the ‘social’ in identities refers to a collective identity that a group of people shares in contrast to that of a more personal or individual identity. The division into social and personal identities dates back to early identity research. In the early phases, there were two main research orientations: one studying personal projects of the self (i.e. personal identities), and the other the members of a group or a social category (i.e. social identities). The personal identity line of research was interested in questions such as how one’s personal identity evolved in an ongoing process through different phases in one’s lifetime, how one slowly came to be the person one is (Erikson 1950, 1968, Gleason 1983, Wetherell 2010). Research focusing on social identities studied, instead, identities as provided by social locations, social groups and social categories.
Membership in a group was understood to define a person; thus, the members could be seen to share essential characteristics that were central for who they were (Gleason 1983, Wetherell 2010). During the last three decades, the interest has shifted from looking at the essential characteristics that an individual or a social group can be thought to have towards the processes of identity construction (Wetherell 2010).

Organisations, and parts of them, can be, and have been, understood as a form of collective identities. According to a highly influential article by Albert and Whetten (1985), organisational identity refers to the central, distinctive and enduring characteristics of an organisation. In organisation studies, social identities have been often studied through Social Identity Theory, focusing on identities as based on intergroup relations. According to Social Identity Theory, social identity consists ‘of those aspects of an individual’s self-image that derive from the social categories to which he perceives himself as belonging’ (Tajfel and Turner 2004:59). Thus, social categorizations are seen as cognitive tools through which individuals can systemize the social world as well as obtain direction for defining themselves. Social Identity Theory has been applied both at the organisational level as well as at the individual level, discussing both organisational identification and behaviour. The term ‘social identification’ has been used to bridge between the individual and the organisation and to look at intergroup relations within the organisation through the lens of social identities (Ashforth and Mael 1989). More processual or discursive understandings of organisational identity have questioned the notion of organisations as having a relatively coherent and unitary identities and have instead looked at the (often discursive) construction of organisational identities (Alvesson and Empson 2008, Motion and Leitch 2002, Vilén 2010).

Whereas the term ‘identity work’ has become an established way of analysing the process of constructing individual people’s identities in organisations, it has been less commonly used at the organisational level (for exceptions, see Kornberger and Brown 2007, Ybema et al. 2012). However, Kornberger and Brown (2007) apply identity work both at individual as well as organisational level, defining individuals’ identities as ‘reflexively organized and temporally informed narratives which are ‘productive of a degree of existential continuity and security (Alvesson and Willmott 2002:625-626)’ (Kornberger and Brown 2007:499-500 parentheses in original). According to them ‘Organizations’ identities are ‘constituted by the identity-relevant narratives that their participants author about them’, that is, the stories that actors’ author in their efforts to understand the social entities with which they identify (Brown 2006:734)’ (Kornberger and Brown 2007:500 parentheses in original). Thus, the ‘personal’ (self-identity) side and the organisational identity side can be seen as interrelated, with the organisational level identities and identity work being informed by more individual level processes, such as people’s identification with the organisation.
In line with Kornberger and Brown (2007), the first use of the ‘social’ in the form of the collective deals, in my thesis, with the construction of an organisational or more precisely a unit identity, or identities, that people engage in when talking about themselves at work. Thus, I use the term identity work to encompass both the individual as well as the organisational or unit level of identity construction, seeing the two as often intertwined. In my understanding of the collective, I find it useful to draw on Jenkins’ (2004) conceptualization of identities (both individual as well as collective) as taking place between the ‘external’ and ‘internal’ definitions of an individual or a group of people (cf. Watson 2008). Based on Mead’s (1934) notion of self at the interface of ‘me’ as referring to the internalized attitudes by others and ‘I’ as presenting the personal side of the individual, Jenkins (2004) argues that identity should be understood somewhere between the ‘external’ and ‘internal’ aspects of oneself, negotiated between definitions by others and oneself. People (and groups of people) do not only identify themselves as being of a certain kind but are also identified as such, or not, by others.

For Jenkins, the division into internal and external is not only a matter of individual level identities but is also applicable to the collective level. According to Jenkins (2004), ‘group identity is the product of collective internal definition’ (Jenkins 2004:82), and categorization refers to ‘collective external definition’ (Jenkins 2004:82). Whereas a group often requires mutual recognition by its members, a category could in theory be based on any criteria that its members share or are seen to share. In contrast to a group, a category does not require recognition or even consciousness of the category. A collective identity, in turn, can be located in the dynamics between group identification by the members themselves and categorization by others (Jenkins 2004).

Jenkins’ thoughts can be seen as relevant in terms of the process of identity work, seeing identities as being always negotiated between oneself and others and thus highlighting the similarities in the process of identity construction, whether related to an individual or a collective. Furthermore, it becomes useful to look at the different, central forms of the collective in the thesis (organisation, occupation, and wider societal social categories) through the notions of internal/external or group/category that can be seen to have consequences both in terms of collective as well as individual level identity work. In the construction of an organisational or unit identity, the ‘internal’, ‘group side’ of the collective can be considered to be of particular importance, as the members are engaged in constructing an identity they define themselves as part of. However, an organisational and/or unit identity can be also seen as related to the

4 My understanding of the ‘internal’ does not refer to identities as being located within individual but rather to people’s agency in constructing their identities.
‘external’, ‘category side’ of the collective, being formed by negotiating between definitions by oneself and the others (meaning, for example, people outside one’s unit).

However, perhaps more importantly I am interested in the ‘social’ in the form of the collective when looking at how the collective in terms of social categories becomes (or does not become) constructed as a part of one’s self-identity through identity work. Drawing on the dialectic between the ‘external’ and ‘internal’, the relation between the wider societal social categories and one’s self-identity can be thought to be more complex; people can be classified as being members of a social category by others without necessarily identifying themselves with the category. Moreover, people are likely to be influenced by the categorizations even without subscribing to them. Thus, people’s relation to social categories and the different identities suggested by them can be seen to be as much a matter of identification than of dis-identification.

Drawing on the idea of identities at the interface of the ‘external’ and ‘internal’, Watson (2008) talks about identity work as a mediating concept between social-identities⁵ (in my case, social categories) and self-identity.

The identity work that people do is not most usefully understood as primarily an ‘internal’ self-focused process. Instead it is understood as a coming together of inward/internal self-reflection and outward/external engagement – through talk and action – with various discursively available social-identities (Watson 2008:130, italics in the original).

The ‘social’ in the form of the different available discursively produced social-identities is understood to become (or not become) part of self-identity through the process of identity work. Thus, identity work can be seen as taking place between the ‘external’ and ‘internal’ of identities, in the negotiation between the ‘externally’ provided notions on oneself and the ‘internal’ as people’s ways of relating to the notions of themselves as a specific kind of people in a specific kind of context.

The last and maybe more philosophical aspect of the ‘social’ in understanding identities is ‘the social’ in all identities. The division of identities into personal and social has been criticized as out-dated and unable to capture the complex dynamics of identities as they are studied in newer research (e.g. Wetherell 2008). But, first and foremost, the ‘social’ in all identities can be seen as relating to identity as a phenomenon intertwined with meaning and meaning-making, and, as such, always involving interaction. As Jenkins (2004) puts it, ‘all human identities are by definition social identities. Identifying ourselves or others is a matter of meaning, and meaning always involves interaction: agreement and disagreement, convention and innovation, communication

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⁵ Watson uses the term ‘social-identity’ to distinguish it from the concept ‘social identity’ often used in Social Identity Theory.
and negotiation’ (Jenkins 2004:4). The following section focuses on meaning and meaning-making in identity work by discussing the ‘discursive’ in identity work.

2.1.2. Constructing a sense of self – discourse in identity work

According to Benwell and Stokoe (2006), a discursive view of identity can mean two different things: ‘a discursive performance or construction of identity in interaction, or ... a historical set of structures with regulatory power upon identity’ (Benwell and Stokoe 2006:29). In this study, identity work becomes conceptualized as a discursive process in these two interrelated but different ways, that is, in the ways in which discourses construct identities, and the ways in which people discursively construct their identities. First of all, my understanding of identity work is discursive in the sense that the knowledge or the meanings related to social categories that are made use of and that enable and constrain people’s identities and identity work are discursively produced. This first sense of discursive is entangled with the material, since social categories can be also seen to have their material side, for example, in terms of division of labour, in other words what kind of person typically has what kind of occupation or what kind of work tasks does the job entail for a given person in a given organisation (e.g. Acker 2006).

Secondly, identity work can be seen as discursive in the sense that it can be seen to take place through the use of discursively constructed meanings by people acting from discursively produced positions. Even though identity work in this second meaning of discursive also has material aspects to it, for example, related to managing one's physical appearance (Goffman 1959, Pratt and Rafaeli 1997, Snow and Anderson 1987) or organising the physical setting of the work organisation (e.g. Elsbach 2003, Elsbach 2004), in this study I focus on identity talk (Snow and Anderson 1987) as verbal construction and use of meaning.

The former of these two conceptions of discursive is based on the idea of discourses constituting social realities and, within that, identities (e.g. Phillips and Hardy 2002). In a more collective sense, identities can be seen as historically produced knowledge of categories of people and their relations with each other in a specific time and place (Foucault 1979, 1981, Hall 1992b, 1996). According to Hall (1992b, 1996, 1997), discourses become a matter of how something is represented, which, in turn, becomes defined through its relationship to other things. Thus, discursively produced identities also become relational, meaning that knowledge of a category of people is produced in relation to other categories. Furthermore, discursively produced identities can be seen as ‘hierarchical’, meaning that they are being constructed in and through power relations defining what (and who) is considered to be valuable.
While discourses constitute collective identities by providing knowledge on different categories of people they, at the same time, create (subject) positions for individuals belonging to them (e.g. Foucault 1979, 1981, Hall 1996), that is, plausible ways of being and acting as a member of the category. In other words, discourses produce meanings concerning social categories that influence the ways in which individuals as members of the categories define themselves. Whereas people never truly correspond to the abstract positions suggested by the discourses (Butler 2004), the knowledge that discourses provide can be still seen as the lens through which people form their individual identities, since ‘the world cannot be known separately from discourse’ (Phillips and Hardy 2002:6). At the same time, in addition to being positioned by the different social categories and discursively produced meanings around the categories, the meanings also become used by people as resources in identity work (cf. Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003, Watson 2008).

My interest lies particularly in discursively and materially produced social categories and the positions these categories provide for individual organisational members to construct their identities from. In my thesis, social categories are seen as a form of discursive and material structure in their role of enabling and constraining people’s identity work (see e.g. Zanoni and Janssens 2007). While discursively formed social categories play an important role in influencing identities, they can be also seen as resources that are used by an individual in his or her identity work. I strive to take into account the power that social categories have on the lives of individuals but at the same time acknowledge individuals as important agents in the processes through which their identities are constructed. According to Giddens, agency refers to the ability ‘to act otherwise’, to do or not to do something and, through that, influence a process or a state of affairs (Giddens 1984, Zanoni and Janssens 2007:1376). People are able to be reflexive about their situations, even though not necessarily being aware of the conditions they are acting from or the consequences of their acts (Giddens 1982:222, Zanoni and Janssens 2007). Thus, identity work can be seen as an active and reflexive process that is, however, constrained and enabled by social categories and the specific positions related to the categories that people act from. Figure 1 presents the double role of discursively and materially constructed social categories in the process of identity work.
2.1.3. Constructing a sense of self – managing multiple social categories

I examine identity work particularly in the meaning of managing multiple social categories, which, in turn, can be seen as closely related to issues around coherence and fragmentation of identities. Coherence and fragmentation can be seen as a more general theoretical issue relevant for how identities are conceptualized. Moreover, it can be seen to be particularly relevant in the context of identity work, since a sense of coherence in self-identity can be seen as an outcome of identity work (Alvesson and Willmott 2002).

During the recent decades, poststructuralist and postmodern theorizing on identities have emphasized identities as not only discursively constructed but at the same time fragmented, questioning the coherence of identities, whether at the level of an individual subject or a social category (see Alvesson and Deetz 1996, Alvesson and Deetz 2006, Wetherell 2010). For example, Hall (1992a) discusses how different nationalities as coherent, unitary social categories have been discursively constructed from a heterogeneous group of people by disregarding the differences between the people and the struggles through which the identities have been produced. Also, identities are deconstructed at the level of the individual subject, which is seen to be lacking an essence or a unitary core and instead torn between various often also antagonistic discourses and identities (e.g. Alvesson and Deetz 1996, 2006).

Furthermore, the issue of coherence and fragmentation can be thought of as being at the core of identities and identity work. According to Alvesson and Willmott (2002), coherence 'describes a sense of continuity and recognisability over time and situation. A sense of identity is understood to connect different experiences and to reduce fragmentation in feelings and thinking' (Alvesson and Willmott 2002:625).

However, since people’s self-identities are connected to a variety of experiences, discourses, and social identities, coherence or a sense of coherence is not given or automatic but something that has to be worked on. For example, no discourse has total
power over an individual, but rather different discourses become something an individual has to work on. As Sveningsson and Alvesson put it,

Different available discourses may be difficult to ‘choose’ between, or – formulated from another (poststructuralist) angle – no discourse is sufficiently strongly backed up by material and social support to offer a powerful grip over the subject. This makes identity constructions precarious and calls for ongoing identity work (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003:1167).

To put it somewhat differently, people could be seen as managing different and often contradictory discourses and/or social categories to create a sense of coherence. By drawing on Giddens’ definition of self-identity as ‘continuity (across time and space) as interpreted reflexively by the person’ (Giddens 1991:53), Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) analyse people’s identity work as taking place between a variety of organisational discourses and self-identity as representing continuity across different contexts. In other words, ‘individuals constantly strive to shape their personal identities in organisations and are being shaped by discursive forces’ (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003:1165).

Taking a step further, Watson (2008, 2009) argues that rather than focusing on the interface between a self-identity and various discourses, it becomes valuable to conceptualize identity work as taking place between a self-identity and a range of discursively constructed social-identities. Drawing on Watson, I look at the activities that people undertake in managing the different available social categories and different discourses related to them. My specific focus is on the ways in which people work (or do not work) at the intersections of the different categories.

2.2. Job-related identity: between organisation, occupation, and social categories

People’s work-related identities are formed in relation to a variety of aspects, from where they work to what they do. In organisational contexts, the question ‘Who am I?’ can be answered, for example, in terms of one’s profession or occupation, organisational position or, more informally, by referring to personal characteristics (Alvesson and Willmott 2002). In addition, wider societal social categories, such as ethnicity and gender, can be seen as pivotal for understanding who people are or can be in an organisational context (e.g. Ailon-Souday and Kunda 2003, Alvesson 1998, Barry et al 2006, Katila and Meriläinen 2002, Rumens and Kerfoot 2009, Thomas and Davies 2002). This study looks at the construction of one particular type of work-related identity, a job-related identity, seeing it, first of all, as being formed somewhere between an organisation and an occupation and, second, as embedded in and informed by a variety of wider societal social categories. I first briefly talk about work-related
identities as related both to organisations and occupations and discuss ‘job-related identity’ as a possible term connecting the two. After that, I move on to discuss wider societal social categories and job-related identities.

Where people work, the organisation, has been identified as being important for their identities in a variety of ways. Organisations have, for example, been seen to function as important sources of identification (Ashforth and Mael 1989) or been analysed as a central site for identity construction in which cultural resources such as discursively constructed meanings can be used for identity work (e.g. Alvesson and Willmott 2002, Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003, Sveningsson and Larsson 2006, Watson 2008, 2009). Furthermore, people’s work-related identities have been interpreted as subject to organisational control in the form of identity regulation, striving, but not fully succeeding, to shape the identities to fit with managerial objectives (Alvesson and Willmott 2002) or as subject to wider societal discourses also influencing the kind of identities that are aspired to in organisational contexts (Thomas and Davies 2002).

In addition to where people work, identities are also formed in relation to what they do, their occupation. Ashcraft (2007) makes a distinction between an image (or discursive) side and what she calls the role-based side of occupational identities, defining them as encompassing ‘a wide range of phenomena entailed in the dynamic relation between the abstract image and actual role performance of a job’ (Ashcraft 2007:12). Whereas image refers to ‘larger, public discourses of occupational identity, manifest in popular, trade, and even mundane conversational representations of the essence of a job and those who perform it’ (Ashcraft 2007:12), she defines ‘role’ as the ‘micro-practices of enacting a job and making sense of the work we do.’ (Ashcraft 2007:12). In other words, Ashcraft makes a distinction between the more discursive and material sides of occupational identity, seeing it as much as a discursive phenomenon also having central material elements of how work is in practice done.

The two sides do not necessarily meet, and the requirements of everyday work can be at odds with the discursive aspects of the occupation (e.g. Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003, Sveningsson and Larsson 2006, Ashcraft 2005). Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) and Sveningsson and Larsson (2006) have argued that discourses on leadership and the actual work of managers do not necessarily meet, and the managers have to deal with contradictions in their identity work. On similar lines, but taking a step further, Ashcraft (2005), has studied the gendered images of the occupational identity of aircraft pilots and the work they are doing, pointing out a difference between the masculine and glorified image and the less heroic everyday work tasks which threaten the status of the profession.
Organisations and occupations, in turn, intertwine in influencing people’s work-related identities rather than being two separate realms. Whereas organisations are surely influenced by occupations, for example, in terms of organisational structures being influenced by occupational requirements, what is important here is how occupations and occupational identities are formed in an organisational context. For example, Fine (1996) has shown how the work-tasks of cooks have varied considerably depending on the organisation, and furthermore how the cooks constructed different kinds of occupational identities themselves.

I have chosen to use the term ‘job-related identity’ to encompass both the organisational and occupational aspects of people’s identities at work and, at the same time, to have analytical specificity maybe lacking in the more general terms ‘work-identity’ or ‘work-related identity’. According to Acker, (2006) ‘an occupation is a type of work; a job is a particular cluster of tasks in a particular work organisation. For example, emergency room nurse is an occupation; an emergency room nurse in at San Francisco General Hospital is a job’ (Acker 2006:446). Furthermore, the term ‘job-related identity’ can be argued to take into account the two sides of occupational identities: the more abstract image side consisting of discursively constructed representations of an occupation and people having the occupation as well as the material side of doing the actual work. The material side of occupations can, in turn, be thought of as intimately connected to the organisations in which the work actually takes place, since occupations can be argued to take their concrete forms in the context of the organisation in which they are practiced.

The kind of work that a job actually entails is not only related to the organisation but also to who is doing the work. For example, in terms of the work tasks, being a manager can be rather different things for a woman and a man (Acker 2006). The ‘who’ of a job is, of course, not only material in terms of how the work is in practice, but also discursive in the sense of being connected to the image and/or identity of the occupation (Ashcraft 2005, 2013) and the kind of work that is seen as suitable for what kind of person, that is, who should be doing what. At the level of identities, looking at the question of ‘who’ also helps to address organisational and occupational identity dynamics embedded in the wider societal context, in the sense of their being influenced by (power) relations between different categories of people and thus avoiding an overly local or organisation-focused approach in understanding identities and identity construction. Figure 2 illustrates my conception of a job-related identity as being constructed at the interface of organisation, occupation, and wider societal social categories.
Figure 2  Job-related identity
3 INTERSECTING SOCIAL CATEGORIES IN IDENTITY WORK

In the previous chapter, I discussed people’s job-related identities as being formed through a process of identity work relating to managing multiple social categories relevant to one’s identity. In this chapter, I go further in exploring social categories in people’s identities by drawing on the concept of intersectionality. In line with intersectionality, studying ‘the relationship among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations’ (McCall 2005:1771), my emphasis is on the relationships between the different categories and the processes around people’s identity construction at their intersections. I discuss the way intersectionality is approached in this thesis, first, in relation to social categories as primary units organising people’s relations with each other and producing identities (Anthias 2013) and, second, in relation to inequalities in and around the intersecting social relations that identity construction is embedded in.

3.1 A matter of social categories

According to Anthias (2013), ‘Categories are part of the social landscape as forms of discourse and practice and enter into the social field as primary units of social presentation and social organisation’ (Anthias 2013:8). Being at the centre of how the social world is organised it, becomes hard to address intersectionality without talking about social categories or other closely related concepts, such as social relations or divisions. The question of social categories becomes relevant in this thesis in different ways: in the more straightforward, practical way in terms of the role(s) that intersecting social categories play in constructing people’s job-related identities and, no less importantly, in the more ontological and epistemological sense of how social categories are understood in this thesis.

However, before discussing these questions, it is relevant to consider what is or can be meant by social categories and how they, in different ways, relate to intersectionality. Anthias (2013) addresses the question of social categories through distinguishing between the different levels of abstraction relevant for studying intersectionality. The first level of abstraction refers to social ontologies, meaning the conceptions of how different realms of the world are organised. This level is important since social categories are based on social ontologies, each operating on different kinds of logic (for example, ethnicity being based on ideas of a form of collectivity and gender on ideas on sex and biological reproduction). Social categories, providing the criteria based on which people can be categorized, are the second level of abstraction. Whereas social categories differ in their ontological bases, they all share involvement in boundary-making and hierarchy-making processes that construct differences between and
similarities within the categories. From social categories, Anthias moves on to the third level of abstraction, that is, to that of concrete relations. The link between the two levels is not straightforward.

Moreover, categorisations, however salient, cannot be immediately translatable in terms of the concrete relations that people find themselves in. These are not outcomes only of the salience of these categorisations, but of their intersections and of their embeddedness within a complex array of social relations, located within different arenas of social life and within temporal and spatial contexts. (Anthias 2013:8).

Anthias makes an important distinction between social categories and what she calls concrete relations, each having a somewhat different role in intersectional analysis. She describes social categories as being analytically distinct from one another. However, at the same time ‘concrete social divisions are constitutive in relation to each other and broader social processes but not in an a priori fashion or in the same way’ (Anthias 2013:10). In other words, she locates intersectionality as taking place at the level of concrete relations, which, in turn, are seen as embedded in both intersecting categorizations distinct from one another as well as wider societal processes.

This division by Anthias into the three levels of abstraction is useful when considering social categories and the role(s) of social categories in what I call intersectional identity work. I address two larger questions that can be located at different levels of abstraction. The first question relates to the similarities and differences between categories and can be located on the first and second levels of abstraction, the second, appearing on the second and third levels of abstraction, relates to the relationships between the categories and more importantly to the constitutive role(s) of intersecting social categories in producing people’s identities.

### 3.1.1. Similarities and differences between categories

The first question relates to the notion of social categories differing between themselves but, simultaneously sharing some central qualities. Intersectionality can be seen as a criticism towards overly sweeping categorizations, ignoring differences and assuming similarity within a category (e.g. Crenshaw 1989, 1991). At the same time, differences and similarities between the categories also become important, since they can be seen to be connected to how social categories are/can be approached within intersectionality. I have sought to adopt a position between emphasizing similarities between social categories in terms of the role(s) they can be seen to play in identity work and acknowledging the importance of addressing differences between social categories.
First of all, social categories can be viewed as different in the sense of being based on different ontological bases (Anthias 2013, Yuval-Davis 2006) and/or following different forms of logics, having different origins and providing different kinds of positions, for example (Verloo 2006). Consequently, it has been argued that due to the differences between social categories they cannot be treated in the same way (Verloo 2006, Yuval-Davis 2006). For example, Verloo (2006) warns against the ‘incorrect assumption of sameness or equivalence of social categories connected to inequalities and of the mechanism and processes that constitute them’ (Verloo 2006:211).

Furthermore, social categories are not only distinct from each other in terms of their different logics, but they can be also seen to play rather different roles in people’s lives. Not all the social categories are equally central, and, in practice, some tend to be more central or powerful than others. As Yuval-Davis (2006) puts it:

In specific historical situations and in relation to specific people there are some social divisions that are more important than others in constructing specific positionings. At the same time, there are some social divisions, such as gender, stage in the life cycle, ethnicity and class, that tend to shape most people’s lives in most social locations (Yuval-Davis 2006:203).

This is, however, not to say that other, generally less central, social categories could not be very important in some people’s lives within a specific context (Yuval-Davis 2006).

Nonetheless, despite the differences, there are some important similarities between social categories in terms of their central role in organising people’s identities. The similarities between social categories can be argued to be particularly important for identities due to their boundary-making and hierarchy-making qualities that the categories share and that are at the very core of identity construction (see Anthias 2013). Thus, I attempt to balance between focusing on similarities whilst at the same time acknowledging differences, arguing that the way in which differences/similarities can or should be approached is a matter of specific research interests and questions. I am interested in intersectionality in terms of an identity process rather than any specific position or location provided by intersecting categories. Thus, the emphasis is on the similarity between social categories in terms of their importance in organising people’s identities. In other words, the main questions, in this study, are what social categories do in terms of constructing identities as well as what is done to them in identity construction.

However, processes in and around intersectional identity work can be argued to be inseparable from the categories themselves, thus creating the need to consider the different logics which surround the most central categories in this study. Thus, the
question remains: What kind of and which social categories are central in this study and why? (Ludvig 2006). In the context of my thesis, this has two answers. Given my interest in intersectionality in the process of identity work rather than that of the identity or identities of any specific group of people, and being, at the same time, interested in people’s job-related identities as influenced by wider societal social categories, the first answer is that the social categories in focus could have been, in principle, any social categories having wider societal importance in organising people’s lives both in and outside the immediate organisational context. However, a second answer is more empirical, derived from what the interviewees talked about (obviously being affected by a number of things, such as whom I interviewed and the different contexts, the industrial sector, for example). In my thesis, ethnicity, gender, and age could be argued to be of particular interest, since it was these that were most discussed in the interviews. In the following paragraphs, I briefly discuss each of the categories. Moreover, in addition to ethnicity, gender, and age, class is also briefly discussed. People seldom talk about class but instead refer to their profession, job or occupation. This can be seen as relevant as one, but not the only, way of understanding class. It should be also noted that the list of categories is by no means exhaustive. Other categories, such as dis/ability, that were less explicitly named in the interviews may also have been important even if they were not directly talked about.

3.1.1.1. Ethnicity

Ethnicity can be seen as referring to various other categories, including ‘race’ and nationality (Anderson 1983, Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983, Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1993, Anthias 1998, Yuval-Davis 2006). It is, in its various forms, related to the production and reproduction of an idea of a community drawing on discourses of common origins and/or destiny (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983, Anthias 1998, Yuval-Davis 2006). For example, nationality, as a unitary social category, has been shown to be discursively constructed from very heterogeneous groups of people by playing down or ignoring attention to differences (Hall 1992a). Ethnicity is closely related to racism as a form of exclusion that ‘any group that has been located in ethnic terms can be subjected to’ (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983:67).

Due to the empirical context, ethnicity has relevance in this thesis mainly in relation to nationality, rather than other categories. In the Finnish context, nationality or national background often becomes a rather central way of categorizing people in terms of ethnicity. In this sense, the participating organisations were multi-ethnic as they employed people from different national backgrounds. That ethnicity was predominantly talked about in the sense of nationality is likely to have led to the

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6 By ‘race’ I do not mean biological differences between people but rather how people are racialized, which often has a great impact on their lives.
silencing, both by me and the interviewees, of some important intersectional dynamics, around racialization, for example.

3.1.1.2. Gender and sexuality

Gender as a category relates to the production and reproduction of sexual difference (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983, Anthias 1998:513). People are, in different ways, positioned as men and women based on discursive and material practices around sexual/biological difference (Hearn and Husu 2011). People can be subjected to sexism based on their gender, meaning the ‘numerous practices in the subordination of women’ (Hearn and Parkin 1993).

Sexuality, in turn, can be seen as a closely interlinked, but somewhat different, category to that of gender. According to Hearn and Parkin (1995) sexuality refers ‘to the social expression of or social relations or social references to physical bodily desire or desires’ (Hearn and Parkin 1995:175). People can be subjected to sexualism, for example, sexual harassment, and being harassed because of their sexuality (Hearn and Parkin 1993:153).

3.1.1.3. Age

Age refers to ‘social categories derived from the organisation of the life course and lived relationships between people socially located as being differing age-groups’ (Bradley 1996:19). Age differs from the other social categories in the sense that each individual goes through different phases in the life cycle and is subjected to their effects (Bradley 1996). However, the positions of people of same age vary in terms of the other relevant social categories, such as gender and ethnicity as well as according to the specific time and place (e.g. Bradley 1996, Hearn 2011). People at different points of their lives can be subjected to ageism as systematic stereotyping and discrimination based on characteristics related to age. In Western societies, ageism is experienced particularly, but not only, by the young and the old (Bradley 1996).

3.1.1.4. Class

Class relates to the production and reproduction of material life (Anthias 1998). Whereas class as a social category can be seen to refer ‘to the lived relationships surrounding social arrangements of production, exchange, distribution and consumption’ (Bradley 1996:19), it is highly important in various parts of people’s lives, influencing, for example, people’s lifestyle, education and residence (Bradley 1996:19). Class as a category can be seen to be at the core of organisations, both in the sense of organisations being formed around production as well as class being linked to people’s
professions and positions in organisations. In practice, class intersects with other categories, such as gender, ethnicity, and age, producing different organisational realities for different groups of people (e.g. Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983).

3.1.2. Wider societal social categories in identity construction

In the previous sections, social categories were defined as analytically distinct and irreducible to each other but sharing common qualities in organising the social world and producing identities. Here, I discuss here ‘intersectionality’ as the third quality of the social categories relevant for understanding people’s identity construction in relation to a variety of categories. I begin by considering the relationships between different categories and move on to the different ways they can be seen as constitutive of people’s identities.

When moving to the level of concrete relations, social categories are no longer separate entities but intersect in producing the lives people live (Anthias 2013). Thus, instead of treating the categories separately or in additive ways, what becomes important here are the relationships between social categories, that is, how the categories interact. In intersectionality, social categories have often been conceptualized as being mutually constitutive (e.g. Davis 2008), meaning that a social category is defined through its relationships to other categories. For example, in her classic articles, Crenshaw (1989, 1991) argues for the importance of looking at the intersections of gender and race to understand the positions and experiences of black women. What it means to be black or a woman are defined in relation to each other, hence capturing the situations black women are living in requires looking at the ways in which the two categories are formative of each other. To put it somewhat differently, such questions as ‘how race is ‘gendered’ and how gender is ‘racialized’” (Davis 2008:71) become important.

The ways in which social categories intersect should be considered in relation to the wider social processes they can be seen as intertwined with and/or constitutive of (see Anthias 2013, Collins 1993, Holvino 2010). Indeed, intersectionality can be argued to become meaningful only when analysed in relation to other social processes or dimensions encompassing, for example, institutional notions of how different parts of social life are systematically organised (Anthias 2013, Collins 1993, Holvino 2010), the symbolic (Collins 1993) or representational (Anthias 2013) aspects of social life as well as the experiences or identities of individuals (Anthias 2013, Collins 1993, Holvino 2010).

When thinking about intersecting social categories in terms of identity work, it is relevant to consider two interrelated sets of relationships: the relationship between
social categories and people’s identities as well as those between the different social
categories. Thus, in my thesis, social categories are conceptualized as being constitutive
of people’s identities in two interconnected ways. First, as discussed in Chapter 2 on
identities, social categories can be seen as constitutive of people’s identities in the
double sense of identities being enabled and constrained by categories, but at the same
time social categories being used as resources in identity work. However, as stated by
Anthias (2013), there is no direct link between a salient social category and how people
are positioned in terms of the concrete relations they live in. In line with the idea of
social categories as being mutually constitutive, it is central in my thesis to look at the
relationships between the different categories, that is, how people’s identities are
produced at their intersections. In addition to the more structural forms of
intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991), of understanding people’s identities as enabled and
constrained by mutually constitutive social categories, it is here particularly relevant to
examine how people themselves constitute the relationships between the categories as
part of their identity work.

Furthermore, what happens at the individual level of identity work should be
contextualized as being embedded in the wider intersectional dynamics taking place in
the organisation and society. Holvino (2010) discusses race, gender and class in an
organisational context, conceptualizing social categories as ‘simultaneous processes of
identity, institutional and social practice’ (Holvino 2010:262). By ‘processes of identity
practice’, she is referring to the ways in which social categories produce and reproduce
specific identities for individuals in organisations, influencing how they see themselves
and are seen by others (Holvino 2010:262). By ‘processes of institutional practice’, she,
in turn, is referring to the ways in which the different social relations and stratification
‘are built into organisational structures, processes and ways of working, which seem
normal at the same time that they produce and reproduce particular relations of
inequality and privilege’ (Holvino 2010:262). Finally, by ‘processes of social practice’,
she means ‘the ways in which societal structures, beliefs and ways of engaging at the
societal level produce and reproduce inequalities in organisations’ (Holvino 2010:262)
in terms of social categories. I find Holvino’s discussion on the different processes of
practice useful, since it enables the consideration of how intersectional processes of
identity practice are influenced by intersectional organisational and societal practices.
In other words, what happens at the individual level of identity construction has to be
seen in the context of organisational practices of unequal social relations. These
organisational practices are, in turn, built into the very structures and processes of the
organisations, being further connected to the wider societal dynamics in terms of
intersectional social relations influencing both the organisation as well as individuals
more directly.
3.1.3. **Categorical complexities**

Thus far, I have talked about intersecting social categories in terms of how they can be seen to relate to identity work. However, it is also important to consider the ontological and epistemological stance with regard to social categories taken in this thesis. In accordance with its multiple origins, it is impossible to talk about intersectionality as a single approach, but merely as a nodal point for bringing a variety of approaches and traditions under the term (Lykke 2011). McCall (2005) has distinguished three different ways of treating social categories in the studies on intersectionality: the anti-, intra-, and inter-categorical complexities. The anti-categorical approach, drawing on deconstructionist methodologies, challenges the notion of social categories itself. Social structures and subjectivities are so complex and fluid that it makes no sense to speak of social categories. Instead, using social categories is fictive and can be even dangerous in terms of fixing inequalities by producing differences. What the anti-categorical complexity shares with the second approach, the intra-categorical complexity, is the interest in ‘the boundary-making and boundary-defining process itself’ (McCall 2005:1773). However, in contrast to the first approach, the intra-categorical complexity ‘acknowledges the stable and even durable relationships that social categories represent at any given point in time’ (McCall 2005:1774). It looks at the ‘neglected points of intersection’ by focusing on the complex experiences of social groups that are normally not studied. Finally, the inter-categorical complexity uses social categories strategically to study ‘relationships of inequality among social groups and changing configurations of inequality along multiple and conflicting dimension’ (McCall 2005:1773).

I use McCall’s categorical complexities to define my position towards both social categories and the forms I see them taking on in identity construction. My approach to social categories draws primarily on the intra-categorical complexity. While I acknowledge the complexity and fluidity of social categories and identities related to them, at the same time I highlight the stability and durability of given social categories influencing people’s lives and identities. Also, I do not share the deconstructive aspirations of the anti-categorical complexity but instead focus on the various ways in which social categories appear and influence people’s identity work. Rather than deconstruct social categories as such or criticize their use in research, my aim is to study the forms they take in identity work.

3.2. **Inequalities in and around intersectional identity work**

Moreover, intersectional identity work can be seen as relating to inequalities intertwined with intersecting social categories. The notion of inequalities is conceptualized in this thesis in terms of privileges and disadvantages related to the different salient social categories in a specific context. Inequalities can be seen as both
material and discursive in the sense of being connected, for example, to unequal possibilities in advancing in one’s career as well as different understandings related to different categories of people. However, what is important here are the more discursive aspects of inequalities, meaning value-laden Understandings of specific social categories in a specific context in terms of what is seen as normal and/or what is being valued (Pease 2010). Furthermore, what happens at the level of individual identities is influenced by wider organisational and societal practices related to inequalities in and around social categories (Holvino 2010).

The question of inequalities relates to what is seen as an intersectional study and, interrelated with this, who is or can be seen as an intersectional subject. According to Nash (2008), there is an unresolved dispute regarding whether intersectionality is ‘a theory of marginalized subjectivity or a generalized theory of identity.’ (Nash 2008:10). Whereas studies on intersectionality have often focused on giving voice to or shedding light on the experiences of people being marginalized on multiple dimensions (e.g. Crenshaw 1989, 1991, Collins 1990), it can be argued that all subjectivities are being constructed in a web of intersecting social relations. This relates to the question of who is an intersectional subject. Are intersectional subjects only those of marginalized positions on multiple dimensions or can/should everyone be seen as an intersectional subject (Nash 2008)?

I treat intersectionality as a more general approach to identities, inseparable from inequalities intertwined with social categories and as such being formative of people’s lives. Consequently, everyone is seen as an intersectional subject in the sense that everybody’s identities are formed in relation to a variety of unequal and intersecting social categories. Having a more ‘inclusive’ approach to intersectionality is important in particular in the way that it enables one to address the complexity of the positions of power in relation to which people’s identities are formed (Lutz et al. 2011), as well as to examine privilege in the context of identity formation. Thus, first of all, people’s identities can be formed in relation to rather complex positions in terms privileges and disadvantages, being often both privileged and disadvantaged. Furthermore, the salience and the meanings of the categories vary, producing rather different kinds of identities for the same people in different contexts. Secondly, whereas disadvantages have been frequently researched in relation to intersectionality, privilege has been much less explored (e.g. Walby et al. 2012). Nonetheless, at the same time, privilege in accordance with disadvantage can be seen as formative of people’s identities (Nash 2008, Pease 2010).

People’s complex positions in terms of privileges and disadvantages can be also seen to translate to the level of intersectional identity work, to the activities people engage in when constructing their identities in relation to the different relevant social categories
The complexity of people’s positions enables them to move between privileges and disadvantages as a part of their identity work (Boogaard and Roggeband 2010). Furthermore, privileges and disadvantages in relation to a social category have been argued to influence the ways in which people see or experience it, having a tendency to render the category an individual is privileged in invisible and, vice versa, to make a category an individual is disadvantaged in more visible (Collinson and Hearn 1994, Kimmel 2003, McIntosh 1988, Pease 2010). At the same time, identity work can be seen as an ongoing activity or, alternatively, to become intensified (or solely exist) in demanding situations (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003). It could be argued that privilege and disadvantage could influence the way in which intersectional identity work is being done, possibly intensifying the work done in relation to specific categories an individual is disadvantaged in.

Furthermore, the notion of inequalities in intersectional identity work can be seen as connected to trying to achieve a positive sense of oneself though engaging in identity work. The aspiration to present oneself in a positive light has been identified as one of the key aspects in doing identity work (Alvesson et al. 2008). In the context of intersectional identity work, inequalities can be seen as placing people in rather different positions in terms of their opportunities and means available to construct a positive sense of oneself. For example, people in positions of disadvantage have to sometimes use rather complex ways to be able to construct themselves a positive identity (e.g. Essers and Benschop 2007, 2009).
4 INTERSECTIONAL JOB-RELATED IDENTITY WORK

I conceptualize people’s identity construction in organisations through the notion of ‘intersectional job-related identity work’. By combining the three concepts, that is, identity work, intersectionality and job-related identity, in this chapter I discuss ‘intersectional job-related identity work’ as a way of approaching people’s identities in an organisational context. Firstly, I use the concept ‘identity work’ in particular as referring to activities related to managing the different social categories relevant for one’s identity. The notion of identity work is complemented by intersectionality, particularly regarding highlighting the relationships between different categories. Thus, ‘intersectional identity work’ is understood as the activities that people engage in to manage the relationships between the multiple social categories relevant for their identity. Furthermore, intersectional identity work is examined in organisations as a process of constructing a job-identity as a form of (self-)identity relevant in the context. By ‘intersectional job-related identity work’, I am referring to people’s activities related to managing the relationships between different and relevant social categories when constructing themselves a relatively coherent identity at work.

4.1. Doing intersectional identity work

In my understanding of ‘intersectional identity work’, I combine ideas from two different literatures that can, in one way or another, be seen to deal with questions of people’s identity construction as being interrelated with different social categories. The first idea that I draw on is that of conceptualizing identity work as related to managing the multiple social categories of people’s identities. In other words, identity work is seen to be done at the interface of an individual self-identity and a variety of different categories and/or discourses related to the categories relevant or available to the person in question (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003, Watson 2008). To put it somewhat differently, seeing people’s identities as fragmented, being formed in relation to different discourses and/or social categories calls for identity work in the sense of people having to make sense of or manage different aspects relevant to their identities (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003, Watson 2008, 2009).

Whereas this understanding of identity can be seen to relate to important questions around how people’s identities are formed in relation to a variety of often contradictory social categories and/or discourses (Clarke et al. 2009, Thomas and Linstead 2002), the focus can often, at least theoretically, be seen as remaining on the relationship between an individual’s self-identity and social categories. However, drawing on the literature of intersectionality, I argue for the importance of also looking at the relationships between the categories to understand how people’s identities are being formed in relation to multiple social categories. Rather than being separately or in
additive ways formative of people’s identities, the different social categories are mutually constitutive, both in the meaning of producing positions or locations enabling and constraining people’s identities, and in the sense of being used in relation to each other in identity work (e.g. Adib and Guerrier 2003, Essers and Benschop 2007, 2009, Zanoni and Janssen 2007).

Furthermore, I conceptualize intersectional identity work as something that is being done (West and Fenstermaker 1995, Lutz 2014). People are not just positioned by the mutually constitutive social categories but they also themselves engage in ‘doing the relationships’ between the categories (Staunæs 2003). As Staunæs puts it, ‘I will suggest bringing to the foreground the doing of intersectionality. This means the doing of the relation between categories’ (Staunæs 2003:105, italics in the original). Thus, intersectional identity work becomes a question of not only how the different categories are used in identity work, but how are they used in relation to each other, what is being done to one category by borrowing, enmeshing and/or keeping separate meanings from other categories (see, e.g., Benschop and Essers 2007, 2009). However, it is important to underline that people are not ‘free’ in ‘doing the relations’. Rather, intersectional identity work can be seen as a way of combining more structural notions of people’s identities with agency (Zanoni and Janssen 2007). To put it somewhat differently, intersectional identity work can be seen as a dynamic between what Jenkins (2004) would call ‘external’ and ‘internal’, between being positioned as a specific kind of person in a specific context and positioning oneself.

Finally, intersectional identity work is about inequalities in the sense that ‘doing the relationships’ between the categories also means ‘doing the relationships’ between different kinds of privileges and/or disadvantages related to the categories. For example, using positive meanings related to one category in the context of another category can be interpreted in terms of transferring the privileges related to the first one to the second. Furthermore, as noted earlier, the question of privileges and disadvantages can be seen to relate to whether or not social categories are actively ‘worked on’ in identity construction in terms of privileges often being invisible for those people enjoying them (Kimmel 2003, McIntosh 1988, Pease 2010).

4.2. **Intersectional job-related identity work**

I combine the notion of ‘intersectional identity work’ with job-related identity to study the ways in which people manage their different social categories and the relations between the categories when constructing themselves a self-identity at work. I use the concept of ‘job’ in the double meaning of being both a category intersecting with other categories and the outcome of identity work in the form of a self-identity being constructed (job-related identity). The focus is on the intersectional identity work done
at the interface between a job and wider societal social categories. Figure 3 presents what I understand as intersectional job-related identity work.

**Figure 3  Intersectional job-related identity work**

The first issue is that of the relationships between a wider societal social categories and a job being seen as mutually constitutive. Whereas jobs could be thought to influence wider societal social categories, what is important for my understanding of intersectional job-related identity work is how wider societal social categories affect jobs both in the more material sense of how tasks can vary depending on who is doing the job (Acker 2006) as well as more discursively in terms of the different meanings given to the job (Ashcraft 2005). The dynamics between a job and wider societal social categories can be seen to take place on a variety of ‘levels’ simultaneously, between the more societal practices and understandings on the intersections of social categories and occupations and the ways in which these are translated into the organisational context to concrete jobs (see Acker 2006, Holvino 2010) as well as to the experiences of individual people (cf. Collins 1993) having the jobs. These mutually constitutive categories in their different material and discursive forms can be seen as a form of context for both intersectional identity work as well as the job-related identity being constructed.

Intersectional identity work can, in turn, be seen as a mediating term between the different categories (job/wider societal social categories) and a job-related identity. First of all, as noted previously, intersectional job-related identity work can be seen as being embedded in the complex dynamics between wider societal social categories and a job that enables and constrains both the identity work and the kind of identities that can be constructed. Societal and organisational understandings and practices may
influence intersectional job-related identity work both through the experiences that people have at the individual level, being the immediate contact surface people have to social categories in organisations, as well as through wider discourses relevant in the context.

Furthermore, intersectional job-related identity work is not only embedded in the complex dynamics between the different categories but is itself constitutive of both the categories and the relations between them as well as the job-related identity. In line with Staunæs’ (2003) understanding of intersectionality as ‘doing the relations between categories’, I argue that what becomes central in intersectional job-related identity work are the activities that people engage in to give the category ‘job’ its particular meanings by using or not using understandings from wider societal social categories that are relevant and/or available to one’s identity as a certain kind of individual in a certain context. Thus, what is being done at the intersections of the categories can be seen to form the kind of job-related identity that an individual constructs for him/herself.
5 METHODOLOGY

The first time I started to think about identities and social categories was during high school when I spent a year in Germany. Being a Finn (die Finnin) was something to be proud of, something that seemed to make me interesting among my German schoolmates. This first conscious experience of being or being thought of as different made me interested in identities. Later on, I was intrigued by the same questions; however this time with remarkably different undertone. I had, in between, started my studies at a university in Sweden and found myself as a Finn in a considerably different situation. The easiness over my ethnicity had turned into worried reserve. I had learned that in Sweden being a Finn was nothing to be proud of, but more an unwanted feature that I slowly started to wish to tone down. Looking like a Swede but not talking like one made me choose to speak less and less in public in the hope of passing as a Swede. I silenced myself and/or was silenced in order to have the feeling of being accepted. Finally, I moved back to Finland and found myself in yet another position as a part of the majority. I started a family with an Italian and became part of an international workplace, so I certainly did not get rid of ethnicity! However, my position had altered from minority to majority, leaving space also for other social categories.

In much literature on research methods and methodology the process of doing research is frequently depicted as something relatively straightforward, well planned and ‘neat’, often starting from a literature review and leading via well formulated research questions, design, empirical material gathering, analysis, and writing to the end result of a research report. In practice, as acknowledged by writings on research process, that is nevertheless often not the case (see e.g. Hearn and Parkin 1995, Stanley and Wise 1993). This is an account of my research process, which is far from a well-organised linear journey with a clear end and a beginning, but more of a process consisting of different but overlapping phases finally leading to a written end result, which also leaves much open.

As seen in the extract above the journey of my thesis started long before my acceptance onto the PhD programme. As it is often the case, my personal experiences paved the way for my academic interest, and as an undergraduate student in sociology in the late 1990s I was primarily interested in broad questions related to culture and identities. Some years later, when entering a management and organisation department in a business school, the core of my research interests resurfaced, this time translating into a focus on the organisational context. Entering a new discipline and through that bringing my interests to a new context has not, however, always been that easy, straightforward or well planned. Rather, in the beginning it meant navigating through an unknown terrain, making choices that have maybe not always been so informed but
sometimes more based on the convenience of the alternatives available, and slowly, whilst growing more knowledgeable about the different possibilities, shifting my research towards the direction I found more interesting. However, the choices made at the beginning have left a mark on my research at least in the form of the empirical material which, in turn, has influenced the rest of the research process.

I entered the PhD programme in autumn 2006 planning to study intercultural interaction in the context of international mergers and acquisitions (M&As). The previous spring, before officially starting my studies, I had participated in a doctoral course in which I was inspired by intercultural dynamics in international M&As. However, during the first autumn my interests shifted relatively quickly from cultural dynamics towards cultural identities, being inspired by post-structuralist related understandings. By spring 2007, I had altered my research proposal to focus on cultural identity dynamics in companies that had recently gone through international M&As with a focus on how cultural identities were discursively formed.

Based on my new, but still rather open, aim I began to look for a suitable company for my study, and by the end of spring 2007 I started negotiations on access. The most important criterion at this point was that the company had recently gone through an international merger or acquisition. I learned to know about my future ‘case’ company through a colleague with similar research interests to me. The company was not only international in the sense of the different national units but also in terms of the ethnic heterogeneity of the organisational members working in the Finnish unit.

In accordance with some other discursively-oriented research, my initial hope was to have preferably naturally-occurring empirical material to be able to study how people in the unit constructed cultural identities in different kinds of work situations. In practice, my plan was to carry out a rather extensive ethnographic study with observation and interviews. In the event, both the scope and the form of the empirical material generated were restricted while negotiating access and conducting the study. I tried to negotiate access to carry out rather wide-scale observations but was, in the end, not given permission. Instead, I was given access to conduct interviews in the company.

The interviews took place between August 2007 and February 2008 and focused both on the acquisitions as well as the relations between the different groups of people in the Finnish unit. I ended up doing 21 interviews and would have been willing to continue but that turned out not to be possible. Instead, in autumn 2008, I began to negotiate access to another international company in the same industry with the idea of having two cases instead of one big case. In January 2009, I was given access for carrying out my research there. Then, when trying to set up dates for the actual interviews and
observations, my contact person stopped answering my phone calls and emails, rendering the gathering of empirical material impossible.

Meanwhile, my research interest had also been somewhat changed again, this time from cultural identities to identities and intersectionality with the focus on individual level identity construction. Thus, after not succeeding in gaining access to another company the criterion for the second set of empirical material had also changed somewhat. With the new focus on intersectionality, the internationality of the companies involved was no longer crucial. In addition, with the shift from more collective identity dynamics in the participating organisations to individual organisational members’ job-related identity work, the organisational context also lost some of its importance. It was no longer that important to have another bigger ‘case’ but it could also be people from several organisations.

The final decision about the new empirical material was, however, not made before later stages of the research process, the spring of 2012. I had meanwhile been away on maternity leave from summer 2010 to Christmas 2011. I had also analysed the first set of empirical material, clarified my research interests and written the first version of the analysis so far. The new empirical material was to be gathered with the idea of further developing, strengthening or clarifying the findings so far by examining them in other organisational contexts. Thus, whereas the first interviews were rather wide or general, the second set of interviews was very focused, based on the findings on the first set. In contrast to the first set of empirical material, the focus was now on the intersectionality of the process of identity work and not on any specific social category.

5.1. Research design

The final research design of this study can be seen as the end result of a long process starting from the initial plans that have changed and taken their final form during empirical material gathering, theory reading, analysis, and the process of writing. Moreover, it should be seen in relation to the research questions of the study, which themselves are products of the same process. As already stated, my research questions are:

1. How do people do the relations between different social categories when constructing themselves a job-related identity?
   1.a. How do people relate themselves to inequalities connected to wider societal social categories when constructing themselves a job-related identity?
   1.b. How are people silent about wider societal social categories when constructing themselves a job-related identity?
Whereas research question 1 can be seen as related to the process of intersectional identity work more generally, the last two sub-questions focus on specific aspects in intersectional identity work: inequalities and silence. Also, the different research questions were formed at different points of time. From rather early on, I was interested in identity work done in relation to wider societal social categories, whereas inequalities gradually became a more explicit topic. Also, the key issue of silence arose only later, when trying to make sense of my findings during the analysis stage of the research process.

In the thesis I aim to produce knowledge concerning the range of ways in and through which people do the relations between different social categories when constructing themselves a job-related identity. In particular, I seek to produce knowledge on how people relate to inequalities in their intersectional identity work, and how people are silent about wider societal social categories in their identity work. The overall focus is on individual level identity work.

The study can, somewhat artificially, be divided into two phases referring to the empirical material gathered and the different roles that the phases can be seen to have in answering the research questions. The first phase consists of the first set of empirical material (21 interviews conducted in one single company, each taking from one to one and a half hours) and the different stages of its planning, gathering, and analysing. It takes place from the beginning of the study, autumn 2006 to spring 2012. This phase is characterized by a rather open and unfocused start, and the long and often painful process of moving between different research interests to forming the ‘final’ ones. It is defined by a shift from cultural identities in international M&As to intersectional job-related identity work, with the original interest, however, being apparent in the kind of empirical material gathered. The role of the first phase in the research design is to provide some initial answers to my research questions through identifying various ways in and through which people do intersectional job-related identity work.

The second phase can be seen as a continuation of the first phase with the aim of further developing the findings of the first phase. In line with the ‘final’ research interest, the focus is no longer on cultural identities but on the intersectionality of job-related identity work more generally. Nevertheless, given the changes in the focus, the two phases differ from each other in terms of the empirical material that was gathered in somewhat different organisational contexts and by using different interview guides.

The non-linearity of the research process and the differences between the two phases raise some questions around continuity in the study, for example, whether the same research questions can be examined through different kinds of data sets gathered with different interview guides. However, I see my focus as having evolved and as becoming
more precise during the process rather than changing completely. While the two sets of data can be seen to be different in many aspects, they also can be seen to have considerable similarities, both dealing with people's experiences and identities in relation to wider societal social categories, whether ethnicity or other categories. Moreover, intersectional identity work as a topic and my research questions can be argued to be rather general in that they can be examined through different kinds of interview material. Thus, given my interest in processes around intersectional identity work more generally rather than any specific categories as such, both sets of data can be used for analysing the very same phenomena.

To have some continuity with the first set of empirical material, the second set also consists of interviews carried out in organisations in the ICT-industry. However, instead of looking at one organisation, the interviews took place in two different organisations. With the focus on the individual level job-related identities, the organisational context was no longer very central, thus at least in theory the interviewees could have all been from different organisations. However, to be able to give some organisational context to the interviews, I chose to concentrate the interviews on two companies, having several interviews in each. For reasons of access and also to be able to more easily obtain an overview of the organisational context, the interviews are done in small organisations.

In the second phase, I conducted 12 interviews, six in each company, taking approximately half an hour each. The choice of having rather short interviews should be understood in the context of the research process and the interview guide I chose to have. At the time the second set of interviews was conducted my focus had become rather specific. I chose to ask about people's experiences around differences at work directly, whilst at the same time trying not to impose any specific social categories on the interviewees and their talk. Having rather focused interests and choosing to approach them relatively directly, I found that I could get interesting and relevant interview material with shorter interviews. Also, the interview guide seemed to centre the interviewees' attention on issues that were maybe more directly relevant to the research project. Figure 4 summarizes my research design.
In following sections, I discuss two general questions of importance for my research design: the choice of participating organisations and interviewees, and interviewing as a method for studying intersectional identity work. Both questions are discussed first on a more general level and subsequently in a manner more concretely related to the respective phases. The chapter ends with a description of the process of analysing the empirical material.

5.2. **Heterogeneous homogeneity versus homogeneous heterogeneity**

In the context of this study, a central question that influenced the choice of the participating organisations and the people to interview was my approach to differences in organisations. By ‘difference’, I mean dissimilarities between people on any ground, whether based on more personal characteristics or different social categories. All organisations can be seen as heterogeneous in terms of their members; people are of different ages and genders and have different kinds of education and experience in work life, to name a few. Whereas the importance of differences is widely recognized in organisational research, there is no general agreement on how differences should be conceptualized, what kinds of aspects can be seen as important and how the different differences should be treated (see Prasad et al. 2006).

In theory, the list of differences in organisations could be seen as almost infinite, starting from different ways of working to demographic characteristics. A key question is whether or not all differences can or should be treated the same. According to some, all differences can be given the same status as is done in some consultant discourses on
organisational diversity (Prasad et al. 2006). A problem with this approach is that, in practice, not all the differences are of equal importance or relevance in organisations. Thus, others have argued that when talking about differences in organisations, one should focus on historically disadvantaged groups, meaning groups that ‘have systematically faced discrimination and oppression at work’ (Prasad et al. 2006:2) and/or in society.

Prasad et al. (2006) argue for the benefits of using terms such as ‘historically disadvantaged’ and ‘systematically excluded’, which explicitly recognizes the structural and power-related components of differences in organisations. In other words, highlighting the structural components of differences enables the realisation that not all the differences are the same but that some of them are more systematic by being embedded in the organisational and societal structures of unevenly distributed power. Emphasizing the more systematic or structural aspects of how differences appear in organisations also means distancing oneself from overly individualistic explanations that tend to locate differences with individuals.

Furthermore, differences are always given their specific meanings in a historical context, that is, in a specific time and place (e.g. Prasad et al. 2006). The question of context can be seen as relevant on various levels, from broader historical developments to more local organisational and/or other processes informing the salience and the meanings of specific differences. I have chosen to focus on wider societal social categories involving systematic disparities of power both in and outside organisations (e.g. Acker 2006) and often having considerable importance for organising people’s lives (Yuval-Davis 2006).

My approach to wider societal social categories can be seen to have changed during the research process. As described earlier, at the beginning of the process I was interested in wider societal social categories primarily in relation to cultural identities. Thus, at that stage, wider societal social categories were neither the main focus nor very actively or theoretically considered. The early interests were incorporated into my research through the decision that the company should be international and multicultural, as well as the focus of the first set of interviews. Even though my viewpoint was later on amplified to also involve other wider societal social categories, the early starting points have been and still are visible throughout the entire research process, as well as in the end result.

However, also in the first phase, other differences, in addition to ethnicity or culture, were being incorporated into the study in various ways. First of all, to obtain a general overview of the cultural identity dynamics in the Finnish unit, the interviewees were chosen based on criteria aiming at a rather heterogeneous group of people in terms of
both demographic characteristics as well as position in the company. Furthermore, in
the interviews, other, mainly organisational differences, meaning occupation and
position in the company, were asked about in order to contextualize the talk about
culture and to ‘control’ for additional aspects that could be relevant. I was also
interested in whether the interviewees would take up other differences that I had not
been thinking about.

The second phase differed from the first in its focus on intersectionality. Whereas in the
first phase there was an interest in one social category, that is, ethnicity, the focus in the
second phase was wider. What became particularly important in the second phase in
terms of choosing the participating organisations and the interviewees was my focus on
intersectionality as it appeared in the process of identity work more generally rather
than interest in any specific group of people. In practical terms, this meant that the
relevant social categories were not defined beforehand and the participating
organisations were not chosen based on any specific social categories. Rather, the form
of heterogeneity and/or homogeneity of the organisations was left open.

My research interests were also reflected in the choice of the interviewees, or rather in
not having specific criteria for whom to interview. I started with the idea that
everybody's job-related identities were formed in relation to variety of intersecting
social categories albeit in different ways (Nash 2008), thus who to interview was left
open.

At the same time, I was not interested in intersectional job-related identity work as
done in relation to any kind of differences in organisations. Instead, I chose to focus on
the intersections between the job and wider societal social categories. In other words, I
balanced between a more general approach to differences and an interest in wider
societal social categories. The two aspects were incorporated in the interview guide by
first asking more generally about experiences of differences at work and then asking
directly about a rather long list of wider societal social categories.

Thus, my approach to differences could be best described in terms of heterogeneous
homogeneity and/or homogeneous heterogeneity. The participating organisations,
group of interviewees, and the social categories and intersectionalities that were
studied were neither homogenous nor heterogeneous but both.

5.2.1. The organisation (Phase 1)

The first organisation was the Finnish unit of a medium-sized game company,
SmartGameSoft that was also located in USA, Spain, and India. It was a game
development and publishing company, meaning that it created the games it published.
The Finnish unit was founded in the early 2000s around a game development studio by a couple of young Finnish men who were excited about games. During the first years of its existence, the company was entirely Finnish; it was located in Finland and developed and managed by Finns. However, the company had international aspirations and after having managed to gain some international reputation by launching successful games it was bought by a US company. After the acquisition, the number of employees working in the unit began to grow rapidly. Many non-Finns were recruited into the unit, mostly for the post-production side, which was growing rapidly. While the studio remained predominantly Finnish, there was, however, also a change in the demographics in terms of ethnicity/nationality, when talented non-Finns were recruited directly from abroad, from Finland or from the post-production side in the unit.

At the time of the interviews, the workforce of the unit consisted of employees from around 30 different countries. Most of the people working in the unit were still Finns, in addition to whom, there were two larger minorities of 5-6 employees each and other smaller groups. The majority of the people working in the unit were men, particularly in the studio, where the number of women working was still relatively low, and with the traditional game development tasks of the studio being mostly occupied by men. Further, the management was predominantly male, with only one female in the top management. In addition, most of the employees were young, from their early 20s up to about 40, with the majority under 30. The employees had different kinds of educational backgrounds, from engineering to design, and most of them had a university degree.

The company was functionally divided into two parts: studio and networks. Studio was responsible for the game development, whereas the role of networks (post-production, marketing and sales) was to assure the technical quality of the games, to port them into different devices, and finally to deliver them to the customers. The game development process was divided into three different phases: pre-production, production, and post-production, with studio and post-production being responsible for different phases in the game production. Whereas pre-production and production took place in studio, the tasks following the actual production (that is to say quality assurance and porting) were conducted in post-production.

Within the Finnish unit, the relations between studio and post-production were described as rather hierarchical, with the studio being the core of the unit doing the actual game development and around which the unit was originally born. Post-production, on the other hand, was described as having the role of a support function in relation to studio. The hierarchical relations also translated into how the organisational members working in the respective units were typically described and/or described
themselves professionally, the studio being depicted as the place where most of the professionals work. The division between the two units was, however, not absolute; the work processes were tightly connected to each other, and some people also moved from post-production to studio when moving on in their career. Moreover, there were also positions in post-production that had a high status professionally.

The functional units were also divided into the different national units. The US headquarters and Finnish unit had both studios and post-production, whereas the Indian unit solely focused on post-production, and the Spanish unit on game development. The Finnish unit, originally mainly a studio, was the core of the game development part of the company. It had the biggest and most important studio and was also in charge of the other studios in the company. Networks, on the other hand, was led by the US unit, while the most of the post-production work was done in India.

The roles of the different geographical units had changed as the company had grown. Before the acquisition in India, the Finnish unit had a fairly strong post-production side that had grown after the first acquisition. When the unit in India was bought, most of the porting and quality assurance work was transferred there, giving the Finnish unit more of a supervising and co-ordinator role. In practice, this meant reducing work places in the Finnish post-production and recruiting new employees in India instead. Some of the employees that lost their work in the post-production side were hired by the studio, while the contracts of others were not continued. Since the supervising and co-ordinating work was mainly done by the Finnish unit and the implementing work by the Indian unit, the two co-operated closely in their daily work.

In comparison to the Indian unit, the acquisition of the Spanish unit, a sister unit of the Finnish studio, had much less impact on the Finnish unit. It did not pose a threat to the Finnish studio; in fact, the product development side in Finland was also growing. In addition, the two units worked with separate projects, thus they were not very dependent on each other in their daily work. Both of the studios developed their own games: the Finnish unit targeting the global markets and the Spanish unit being more of a local actor.

5.2.2. The interviewees (Phase 1)

The interviewees in the first set of empirical material could be described as heterogeneously homogeneous or homogenously heterogeneous in relation to each other. I interviewed 21 people, all working in the Finnish unit. While being of different genders, coming from a wide range of educational and national backgrounds, and working in different positions and functional units in the company, the interviewees also had a lot in common in terms of all of them being relatively young, well educated,
able-bodied (and in many ways relatively privileged) to name a few. Seven of the interviewees were working in a management position and 14 were other employees; seven were women and 14 men; eight were Finns and 13 non-Finns. Of the people in a management position (management and middle management), two of the interviewees were women, while five were men; four were Finns and three non-Finns. Of the employees (employees with supervision responsibilities and other employees) that were interviewed, five were women and nine men, four Finns and ten non-Finns. The age of the interviewees ranged between 22 and 40. While the interviewees had different educational backgrounds (the biggest group being engineers), almost all had a university degree or had been studying at university. Table 1 describes the interviewees according to their position in the organisation, gender, nationality and age. Nationality is only described in terms of Finn versus Non-Finn. To maintain anonymity some other details are also changed.
Table 1  SmartGameSoft interviewees (first set of data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Employee with supervision responsibilities</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Non-Finn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alexander</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>Non-Finn</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Non-Finn</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Non-Finn</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Employee with supervision responsibilities</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Non-Finn</td>
<td>27</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>Non-Finn</td>
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<td>Non-Finn</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Non-Finn</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Management</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Finn</td>
<td>40</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milan</td>
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<td>Non-Finn</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Employee</td>
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<td>Non-Finn</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
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<td>Male</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susanna</td>
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<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

5.2.3.  The organisations (Phase 2)

Apps2Trust was a small software company producing web-products. At the time of the interviews, Apps2Trust employed around ten people. The CEO of the company was a Finn. The company had been a founded couple of years earlier with a strong vision of an organisational culture that highlights the importance of a culture of trying and failing. Apps2Trust had a very flat and informal structure.

Compared to the two other companies, Apps2Trust was rather homogeneous in terms of the people working there. All of the employees were young, under 35, and most of
them were men. Only two of the employees were women, two of them working in more administrative tasks and thus not directly being engaged in the product development. The other one worked in product development, however, without being directly engaged with the more technological aspects of it. In the interview, the CEO of Apps2Trust talked about the difficulties of finding women with more technological profiles.

Moreover, all the people working in Apps2Trust except one were Finns. The formal company language was English, Apps2Trust also having many customer contacts in English. However, informally, Finnish could be used frequently. The education of the employees varied from vocational training and unfinished university studies to vocational school. Compared to Smartgamesoft, the employees had a shorter formal education, and in Apps2Trust there seemed to be an emphasis on the importance of learning by doing.

Enginiously was also a small software company, which was founded some years ago. At the time of the interviews, Enginiously employed around ten people. The company was managed by a non-Finn. In line with the other companies, the official language of Enginiously was English. Enginiously employed both Finns and non-Finns and had many customer contacts outside Finland.

The majority of the people working in Enginiously were men. Of the few women working in Enginiously, only one was working with product development. The other women in the company worked in sales, financial administration and administration, and HR.

Enginiously could be seen as the most heterogeneous in terms of the age of the employees ranging from less than 30 to over 50. Also, the education of the employees varied from vocational training to university degree.

5.2.4. The interviewees (Phase 2)

The group of interviewees in the second set of data differed from the first in other aspects except gender; the gender balance within the group of interviewees was close to the first group of interviewees, 5 of the 12 interviewees being women and 7 being men. The second group of interviewees differed from the first both in terms of the ethnicities and the age of the interviewees. Only two of the 12 interviewees were ‘non-Finns’, whereas in the first set of data more than half were ‘non-Finns’. In terms of age, the second set of data was somewhat more diffuse, ranging from people in their mid-twenties to 44. Also, in the first set of data, there was more heterogeneity in terms of the positions in the company. In the second set of data only one of the interviewees was in a management position. Thus, the group of interviewees in the second set of data
could be seen as rather homogenous in terms of the position in the company and ethnicity, while there was somewhat more heterogeneity in terms of gender and age.

Table 2  Apps2Trust and Enginiously interviewees (second set of data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anton</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>Non-Finn</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heidi</td>
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<td>25</td>
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<td>Helena</td>
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<td>Karoliina</td>
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<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katja</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Finn</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauri</td>
<td>Employee</td>
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<td>41</td>
</tr>
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<td>Roni</td>
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<td>Tero</td>
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<td>Finn</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terhi</td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Finn</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3. Interviewing

In today’s life, interviews and interviewing have become one of the main ways to produce knowledge in various social and societal contexts. Interviews are, for example, frequently used in the mass media and professional practice from job interviews to medical interviews for generating needed information (Gubrium and Holstein 2002). Interviewing and being interviewed can be seen as a part of general knowledge, the rules and roles of which people tend to be familiar with (Gubrium and Holstein 2002). In fact, interviews in their various forms have been argued to have become so central for how people make sense of their lives that modern or late modern society has been described as an interview society (Silverman 1993, Silverman 1997, Gubrium and Holstein 2002).

Research interviews can be understood against this cultural and societal context of interviews in general being an integral and a constitutive part of our lives and subjectivities alongside their purpose of generating information (Gubrium and Holstein 2002: 11). Thus, instead of seeing interviews and interviewing as merely a procedure or technique for generating knowledge, interviewing should be seen as a social practice embedded in a certain socio-cultural context, and, in the case of research interviews also in different research traditions, including epistemological and philosophical considerations.
In more practical terms, in the research context interviews are often divided into more quantitative and qualitative interviews, the qualitative often being viewed as contributing to understanding specific phenomena and developing theory (Alvesson 2003:13). Qualitative interviews are by no means one single method but vary both in the form of the interviews (e.g. how structured they are) as well as in their philosophical and epistemological underpinnings. Organisational scholars have identified different epistemological approaches to interviews informing the ways in which an interview as a method can be used. The first approach, (neo)positivism (Alvesson 2003, Coupland 2007, Silverman 1993), is based on the assumption of knowledge as being objective and somewhere ‘out there’ outside the researcher and to be transmitted in the interview situation. Using the interview as a way of generating information of social facts the (neo)positivist approach typically imitates the quantitative ideals of a neutral researcher and large amounts of empirical material (Alvesson 2003).

The romantic approach (Alvesson 2003, Gubrium and Holstein 2002, Silverman 1993) draws instead on the ideal of the research subjects’ authentic experiences, which can be approached in the interviews if the interviewer is using appropriate techniques for the purposes. The interviews drawing on the romantic approach are typically open-ended and in-depth interviews, leaving space for exploring the experiences of the interviewees (Alvesson 2003, Gubrium and Holstein 2002). The role of the researcher or interviewer is also depicted in rather different ways in the two approaches: whereas (neo)positivism highlights the importance of the neutrality of the researcher, in romanticism the interviewer is supposed to get close to the participants in order to be able to explore the inner world or experienced social reality of the interviewees (Alvesson 2003). Despite their differences what both romanticism and (neo)positivism have in common is that they see interviews as a means of obtaining knowledge of what happens ‘out there’ outside the immediate interview situation (Alvesson 2003, Segercrantz 2011).

The localist approach differs from the two previously-mentioned approaches in that it emphasizes the interview situation itself as the social context in which knowledge production actually takes place (Alvesson 2003). In other words, knowledge is not seen to be somewhere ‘out there’ to be gathered in a discussion with interviewees who are knowledgeable or experienced in the research topic. Rather the interview situation itself becomes the context in which knowledge is produced in interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. Thus, according to the localist position, the researcher/interviewer is seen as active in the process of knowledge production instead of that of a neutral instrument of the (neo)positivist position. Whereas the localist approach takes up important questions regarding how the knowledge that has been produced in interviews should be seen, the challenge with the localist position becomes precisely that link between the interview situation and social realities beyond the
interview (Alvesson 2003, Segercrantz 2011). To put it more clearly, the question then becomes whether the knowledge produced in the interview situation can be seen to reveal something about the social realities outside the interview situation.

In line with the localist understandings on interviews, I see the interviews as the immediate (but not only) context in which knowledge is produced and to which it can be seen as related. Moreover, I share the emphasis on knowledge as being produced in the interaction between me, as the researcher and interviewer and the research subjects as the interviewees. Thus, issues, such as the research topic, including their and my relations with the topic, the concrete set up for the interview, and both of our social locations and identity work, become important. The localist approach could be also seen to fit well into my research interests since an interview can be seen as a good setting for (intersectional) identity work and consequently able to provide interesting knowledge on the ways in which it can be done (see Alvesson 2003).

However, at the same time, the problem with the localist approach is its missing relation to social realities outside the immediate interview situation. Rather than seeing the interview material only as an account of how people engage in intersectional identity work in the specific interview situation, the interview material is seen to have a relation to organisational and other relevant contexts, in the form of the experiences that people talk about, for example.

To assess interviews as a method, it is not sufficient to discuss the different approaches to interviews in general, but it is also important to consider them in relation to the research topic, that is, that of identity work. There are not only different ways of understanding interviews but also, related to those different ways, ways of approaching identities in interviews. Coupland (2007) has discussed identities in relation to different approaches to interviews. By distinguishing between the neopositivist, constructionist and poststructuralist positions she examines the role given to identities and subjectivities in the respective approaches. According to her, the neopositivist approach assumes that an interview gives access to ‘facts’ about the interviewees’ identity through his/her description. Identities are not seen to be constructed in the interview situation, but there is an assumption of an internal reality that can or should be expressed in the interview. The aim with the neopositivist approach is to provide as a neutral representation of an authentic self as possible. Interestingly, Coupland does not distinguish between the neopositivist and romantic approaches.

The constructionist approach, instead, focuses on how identities are constructed, emphasizing them as a ‘local accomplishment of identity work’ (Coupland 2007:283). The speaker (the interviewee in interaction with the interviewer) is seen as acting creatively, constructing various and often contradictory identities. Instead of neutrally
representing reality, an identity researcher adopting a constructionist position assumes his/her research provides one account of the many possible. Finally according to the poststructuralist position, an interview does not become a site for expressing or constructing one’s identity but rather a site for a struggle of meaning in which powerful discourses of the specific historical and social context are expressed through the participants, making the interview situation something that in itself constitutes identity.

While I share some constructionist interests in how identities are constructed in the micro-situation of the interview, my research interests are, however, far from being only local or focused on micro-level interaction. Rather, I am fascinated by how the very local activity of identity work relates to broader societal phenomena (in my case wider societal social categories), in other words how discursively and materially constructed social categories constrain and enable people’s identity work, for example, through different kinds of meanings and (subject) positions given to specific groups of people that can be used (though not freely) as resources in identity work.

My position also relates to the localist problem of whether or not the knowledge produced in interviews can be seen to say something about the social realities outside the interview situation. Wider discourses have been seen as a way to connect the interview situation with other social realities (Phillips and Hardy 2002, Segercrantz 2011). Thus, seeing people’s identity work as embedded in wider discursively constructed social categories connects the identity work done in the interview situation to organisational and societal contexts outside the immediate interview situation. Moreover, rather than seeing the interview situation as the only or primarily context for identity work, I see the intersectional identity work that the interviewees engage in as embedded in various contexts simultaneously, the interview being one of them.

In practice, this can be seen to happen through broader societal meanings related to specific groups of people becoming salient and being used in the interview situation depending on the topic of the discussion and the interaction with the interviewer. In the case of my interviews, the interviewees (and I too) draw on discourses on different social categories when talking about themselves at work, not only existing in the interview situations but also organising our lives more broadly. The organisational context, in turn, becomes present through the different topics of discussion, by discussing the concrete work of the interviewees or different experiences that they have had in the organisation. Furthermore, the different contexts are interlinked and vary in the course of the interview depending on what is talked about. What and in what way something is talked about has to be also seen in relation to the interaction between me and the interviewees and our respective intersectional identity work taking place in the interview situation, an issue to which I will return later.
5.3.1. Interviewing as interaction (Phase 1)

Interviewing neither starts nor ends with the interview situation itself, but rather, to obtain a more general overview it is useful to look at interviews as a longer process also including the time before and after the actual interviews, from the first contact with the interviewees (or the company) to the handing over the research report. Furthermore, while an interview can be seen as a discussion between two or more concrete people (the interviewer and the interviewee) on a specific topic, it can be also seen as influenced by the broader societal context (e.g. Gubrium and Holstein 2001), as well as by other relevant relationships outside that of the interviewer and the interviewee (such as the relationships the researcher has to the organisation). I will here discuss the process of interviewing beginning from the negotiations for access up to presenting the findings in the company including also more generally my relations to the company.

Originally, a colleague recommended the company to me. The initial access was gained relatively easily. I emailed a person I was recommended to make contact with to organize a meeting in order to present my research ideas. I had written a small summary describing the research interests. The response was positive; he was interested in my research and willing to help me to get access. However, even if the initial access was gained easily, I later on learned that it was more limited than I had wished. While it was relatively easy to get permission to do interviews, I did not manage to negotiate the access for observation I had hoped for in the original research design.

My contact with the interviewees started with an email exchange with the contact person, in which he suggested to me those he considered suitable interviewees according to some characteristics that I had given him. Based on my answer he then introduced my research to the interviewees and asked if they were willing to participate. I agreed details of the interviews by email with the interviewees, except for the management, with whom the interviews were organised by the contact person. The procedure was repeated several times.

My original idea was to interview a couple of people on the first list of potential interviewees given by the contact person and then, by using snowball method, to continue with other people. However, while doing the interviews it did not seem appropriate. Having the contact person choosing the interviewees he considered as suitable could be argued to have influenced what kind of people I could interview, and through that, the interviews I made. For example, he could have chosen to recommend me people that he thought would be likely to speak positively about the company. However, given that my research interests were rather general and related to anyone in the organisation, whom I was actually interviewing, could be argued not to matter that much. Rather, his choosing of the interviewees could be seen as a benefit in terms of
giving access to people that could otherwise be hard to reach, such as those in management. Also, it made it easier to contact the kind of people I wanted to have in my research.

The interviews were done over a rather long period of time between August 2007 and February 2008, meaning that the interval between the individual interviews was generally long. Typically, I could have one or two interviews in one week, giving me plenty of time to reflect on them. In one case, two interviews were done during the same day, following each other, while others were done on separate days. Immediately after each interview, I wrote summaries of the interviews, focusing on my first impressions and thoughts about the interview as well as the topics being discussed.

All interviews themselves followed the same procedure; they were conducted at the office of the organisation and my first face-to-face contact with the interviewees was when they let me inside the office. This created a couple of minute’s time for general chat, also giving us time to form the first impression of each other. At the beginning of the interview itself, I handed the interviewees a summary of the research project and we signed an agreement on the use of the empirical material. I also told them briefly about my research and the interview, and asked if they had any questions. The contact person had also given the topic of the study to the interviewees beforehand when they had been asked if they wanted to participate in the study. Thus, at the time of interviewing the interviewees were knowledgeable about my interests in culture, which is likely to have influenced their conception of what was expected by them. This in turn may have had an impact on what was then talked about in the interviews.

The interviews followed a semi-structured interview guide, which had been tested by two pilot interviews before starting the actual interviews. The interview guide consisted of four different areas of questions. The first one related to their work and occupational identity, the second to relations to different social groups, the third to the international acquisitions and the fourth to the cultural dynamics in the organisation. The interviews ended with questions related to the personal details of the interviewees. In each of the interview, I roughly followed the interview guide, continuing with questions based on their answers. Culture was directly taken up first in the fourth area of questions. The order of the different areas of questions in the interview guide was important, also giving the interviewees a possibility of discussing other identity dynamics possibly important in the organisation or taking up culture in a context that was natural for them. However, at the end of the interview, culture was taken up by me again to guarantee that it would be discussed at some point of the interview. The interview guide was slightly modified during the process, based on the kind of questions that seemed to work well and those that did not.
The interviews took place in meeting rooms, some of which had a glass wall. In each case, the interviews were private in the sense that outsiders could not hear what was talked about, but in some cases they could see us talking. If that happened, at least I was to some extent distracted by it. However, the meeting rooms were not in places where people frequently passed by. The interviews were generally not disturbed, but in one case we had to change a meeting room during the interview, after which it was somewhat difficult to continue. In addition, one interview was interrupted by the contact person knocking on the door. All the interviews were tape-recorded. I wrote notes before, immediately after, and sometime after each interview, to document my impressions and thoughts.

Some months after the last interviews, I made two presentations in the company, summarizing some of the findings. Before the presentations, I sent them to the contact person, who wanted to see them. The initial idea was to have one presentation for everyone in the company, including people that I had not interviewed. The CEO of the company required that there should be two presentations: one for the management, and one for other employees. I was also given detailed instructions on the content of the presentation for the employees and was told to leave the part concerning the international acquisitions outside the presentation. In the presentation with the management, instead, I was allowed to freely talk about what I wanted. Being restricted in the topics I could talk about, the presentation for the employees seemed not to be very useful for the listeners or for me in terms of getting feedback, whereas the presentation with the management turned out to be fruitful in terms of generation discussion and obtaining feedback on some of my interpretations.

5.3.2. Interviewing as interaction (Phase 2)

Apps2Trust and Enginiously were approached in somewhat different ways. Whereas I made contact with Enginiously through my supervisor, Apps2Trust was suggested by a friend working in the industry who proposed to me a number of companies I could contact. I met the CEO of the Enginiously briefly face-to-face at the department where I was doing the thesis, and we agreed that I could come to do some interviews in the company. In contrast, Apps2Trust was approached by e-mail. In both of the cases, access was granted easily and without protracted negotiations.

Before doing the actual interviews, I did several pilot interviews with people working at the department. The pilots were done at two different periods of time: first, spring 2012 when I was developing the interview guide, and later on just before the interviews. Developing the interview guide for the second set of interviews had to be thought about in detail, since the interviews could be seen as a matter of balancing between
encouraging talk about differences without imposing too directly, or too early, any specific kinds of differences. The pilots were used for testing the interview guide.

The interviews for the second set of data were carried out during a short period of time in late September and early October 2012. In both of the companies the interviews were done during one day, and the days of interviewing took place within approximately one week’s interval. In both companies the interviews took place on the company premises.

Interviews were first done in Apps2Trust. My visit to Apps2Trust proceeded in an informal and relaxed manner. The atmosphere in the company seemed very open and welcoming. After having entered the office, I could move freely in the company, also leaving and returning to the office by myself. There was an overall feeling that my visit had not been too much planned in advance, but that I was welcomed without making too many preparations. I was given a room beside an open space where people worked to do my interviews in. The room had been used for storage and was quickly cleared for the interviews.

Who was going to be interviewed also seemed to be only partly planned as some people had agreed beforehand while others seemed to make the decision at that instant. I had given no preferences in terms of whom I wanted to interview beforehand. The interviews were done in two parts. I first did three interviews in a row having some time to write down my thoughts in between, and then repeated the same pattern after a longer break. Whereas I had given information on the approximate duration of the interviews, the time for each interview was not strictly scheduled; the next interview followed when I was ready after the previous one.

Before the interviews, I had sent a small overview of the study to the CEOs of the company, explaining my research interests in the rather general terms of focusing on people’s conceptions of themselves at work in relation to differences between people. I wanted to avoid giving too specific information at that stage as that could shape the expectations that the interviewees would have for the interviews, also maybe influencing what they would talk about. In addition, the interviews were started by giving the interviewees a summary of the project and signing confidentiality contracts for the use of the interview material. I briefly described the study, and the interviewees were given a possibility to ask questions before starting.

All of the interviews followed the same structure consisting of four questions. The interview was begun by asking about people’s jobs. By drawing on the critical incident technique (Chell 1998), the second question was about the experiences of differences that the interviewee had at work without specifying or explaining what was meant by differences. The idea was to let the interviewee freely talk about differences as he or she understood them without imposing any specific social categories. In the third question, the interviewee was given a list of wider societal social categories and asked to talk
about his or her experiences in relation to the categories. The list was used for encouraging the interviewee to think about wider societal social categories and to talk about them, even if only to say that they did not matter. The fourth and last question was the same as the second. My idea was to see whether or not and in what way the interviewees would describe their experiences differently after introducing the list. For example, would they talk more about their experiences related to wider societal social categories after I had introduced the topic? The interviews were all tape-recorded and took place in a calm place without any interruptions. The atmosphere in the interviews was mostly very relaxed.

The interviews done in Enginiously followed the same procedure as in the Apps2Trust in terms of the information given to the company prior the interviewees, the way of starting the interviews, and the way the interviews were structured. My visit to the company was more structured though, partly related to the premises where the company was located. I could enter and exit the company only when accompanied by someone. The interviews took place in a quiet room; located at a distance from the open space where the people worked and the interviews were not disrupted at any stage.

The interviews took place with people who had already agreed beforehand to be interviewed, with a clear time schedule. The interviews were scheduled in a similar manner to those in Apps2Trust; that is, the process consisted of two parts, meaning that the first three interviews were done in a row, after which I had a longer pause followed by another set of three interviews. As in Apps2Trust, my idea was to have a small pause between each interview in order to write down immediate thoughts on the interview being done. However, some of the interviews took more time than expected, so the last interviews were done in practice without pauses. The room where the interviews took place was scheduled for other use afterwards, so the overall time allotted for the interviews could not be prolonged. Being aware of the time constraints, I had, in some of the later interviews, a feeling of being conscious about the time that might have influenced the interviews by creating a sense of being in a hurry and in terms of whether I decided to ask further questions.

The interviews conducted in both phases were transcribed. Whereas the interviews in the first set of data were fully transcribed, in the second data set the transcription was done partly fully and partly in a more selective way. In the second set of data, I transcribed word by word the parts that I considered to be particularly relevant for the analysis. In the other parts of the interview, some words could be omitted if they were not relevant to my task and focus. Given that I was less interested in the very micro-level dynamics of language use, I considered the level of transcription to be sufficient for my purposes.
Moreover, in both sets of data the interviews were conducted in two different languages, English and Finnish. In practice, this means that I translated the quotes used from interviews conducted in Finnish, with the possible consequence of losing some of the original meaning in some cases. The two languages have quite different logic and in some interviews minor modifications had to be done to make the quotes readable. However, I tried to remain as faithful to the original text as possible.

In December 2012, I presented some of my findings in both of the companies going through some of the ways in which the interviewees in all three companies had talked about ethnicity, gender, and age at work. The presentations were open for everyone.

5.3.3. Interviewing as intersectional identity work (Phases 1 and 2)

Since knowledge is always produced from a specific social location (Fawcett and Hearn 2004), studying the intersectional identity work of others also requires reflexivity on the social categories that are available to me in the research process. The different categories can be used as resources, or they can become constraints in interview situations as well as when analysing the interview material and representing the research findings. The research process more generally, and interviewing particularly, can be seen to be influenced by the similarities and differences between the researcher and the research subjects in terms of sharing and/or not sharing the same social categories, the researcher often being both an ‘insider’ and an ‘outsider’ in relation to the research subjects (Wolf 1996).

Even though interview can be seen as a very specific kind of conversation with formal institutionalized roles for the interviewer and the interviewee and with the cultural expectations related to them (cf. Gubrium and Holstein 2002), more informal aspects in the sense of the available social categories of the interviewer and the interviewee can also be seen to influence the interaction between the two, bearing consequences for how the interview unfolds (e.g. Pini 2005, Schwalbe and Wolkomir 2002). In practice, the interviewer is often times not only an insider or an outsider in relation to the interviewee, but the dynamics between the interviewer and interviewee shift within the interview depending on what is talked about.

First of all, social categories can be seen to influence the extent to which the interviewer can understand and/or to relate to the things or experiences that the interviewee is talking about, recognizing them as something important. This can be seen to have more practical consequences, for example, in terms of whether the interviewer encourages the interviewee to continue on a topic by posing additional questions. Interviewing often requires immediate responses to what has been said, often leaving very little time to reflect over the responses. Having experiences from the same social category or
categories could be argued to enhance the understanding of what the interviewee is talking about and to facilitate continuing on the topic. Putting it somewhat differently, in interview situations the social categories of the interviewer can be seen to influence the kind of experiences that become visible for him/her. On the other hand, the differences between the interviewee and the interviewer could be also interpreted as beneficial in terms of potentially generating more questions, asking for more explanations, and thus producing more material to analyse.

Interviews can be also seen as being influenced by how people, often unconsciously, position each other in terms of social categories and in terms of what is chosen to be talked about and how. An interviewer might pose his/her questions differently not only depending on whom he/ she is interviewing but also who he/ she is in relation to the interviewee. Thus, interviewing can partly be seen as a matter of the interviewer adjusting his or her style of interviewing according to the interviewee, but also a question of both the interviewer and interviewee adjusting to the different and often shifting relations existing between them as specific types of people in the specific context (e.g. Odendahl and Shaw 2002, Schwalbe and Wolkomir 2002). For example, an interviewee having partly Russian origins did not mention her also being Russian until the very end of the interview when directly asked about her ethnicity. Due to historical reasons, there have been and still are a lot of stereotypes on Russians in Finland, who often experience discrimination, so ethnicity might have been a question that she did not want to reveal for me as a Finn. Looking like a Finn, having a Finnish name and being a native Finnish speaker, she did not have to discuss the issue if she did not want to.

My position in relation to the interviewees can be seen to have altered depending on whom I was interviewing as well as what was talked about within a given interview. Being interested in job-related identities in the context of ICT companies but lacking practical experience in the industry, my understanding of the work that people were doing varied, which might have had consequences such as missing some important aspects. Particularly in the case of the more ‘technical’ jobs, my understanding of the work processes was limited.

Furthermore, my position shifted depending on which wider societal social categories were talked about and who was being interviewed. Ethnicity was one of the central themes in the interviews, particularly in the first set of interviews. Being a Finn doing interviews in Finland and at the same being interested in people’s identities in terms of ethnicity created specific starting points, varying depending on who was being interviewed. People’s experiences in terms of their ethnicity varied from it not being an issue (often with Finns) or being an asset to being a disadvantage. In the first case, both of us being Finns in Finland, ethnicity could easily become something invisible and
difficult to grasp, while in the latter case the situation could be seen as delicate, requiring trust from the side of the interviewees telling me as a Finn about difficult experiences related to their ethnicity in Finland.

Gender was mostly a topic in the interviews with women, with them often discussing their experiences of gender. However, in comparison to interviewing Finns on ethnicity, the interviewees’ and my position in terms of gender was rather different, all of us having experienced disadvantages based on gender. Whereas I could easily relate to the experiences that the women talked about, I could also assume similarities between us that were not necessarily there. The same could have happened with people talking about disadvantages, they had experienced in terms of ethnicity. Having experienced disadvantages based on my ethnicity while living in Sweden, I could assume that I would understand what people talked about, even though it was not necessarily the case.

While gender was frequently talked about by women, it was little discussed in the interviews with men, in particular in relation to themselves. Masculinity could be argued to be the dominant norm in the ICT industry in Finland and the organisations in which I did the interviews, thus men could be likely to be less prone to pondering on their experiences in terms of their gender.

5.3.4. Language in interviewing (Phases 1 and 2)

The language being used in the interviews can be seen to be important from both a rather practical point of view and in terms of identity. The interviews were conducted in either Finnish or English, in three different kinds of combinations: in Finnish with Finns (18 interviews); in English with non-Finns that were not native English speakers (12 interviews); and in English with native English speakers (3 interviews).

When doing the interviews in Finnish, language at least seemed to be less an issue from the practical point of view, since Finnish was the mother tongue of both parties. The communication could, for example, be more fluent and/or accurate in many instances. However, there could be also an assumption that we would understand each other, since we shared the same mother tongue, which could obscure possible differences or taken-for-granted aspects. Moreover, us both being Finns could be seen to become an issue of identity construction influencing what was being talked about and how. For example, it might have been easier for the interviewees to talk about their experiences related to using English at work and for me to understand their experiences, since I also was a Finn. At the same time, it might have been difficult for the interviewees to position me in terms of my mother tongue. All the Finnish interviewees had Finnish as mother tongue, and I was doing my thesis in a Swedish language business school,
Swedish being the other official language in Finland. Since many of the Swedish-speaking Finns in the Helsinki area are equally fluent in Finnish and I did not reveal my ethnicity, the interviewees could have thought that my mother tongue was Swedish. Among the Finnish speaking Finns, there are at times some stereotypes of the Swedish-speaking Finns, which might have influenced how the interviewees positioned me, and further what they talked about and how.

The interviews with the non-Finns were all done in English. The Finnish skills of the non-Finnish interviewees varied; whereas many of the interviewees knew only some words in Finnish, others could be rather fluent. Thus, some of the interviews with non-Finns could have been also done in Finnish, but at the time of the interviews I did not think about the possibility of doing interviews with the non-Finns in Finnish. My decision was rather unconscious and could be in retrospect questioned; it was done in the context of the industry, the companies, and the people whom I interviewed. The ICT industry in Finland is rather international, not only in the sense of employing people with different nationalities and languages, but also in that the official language in the companies is often English. Furthermore, the industry is characterized by a very well-educated work-force (Tietotekniikan liitto ry 2013). I assumed that people would be used to using English and that their level of English would be fluent, which actually did prove to be the case.

Turning it the other way around, knowing that people worked in English and not knowing if they had other connections to Finland apart from their work, I did not know whether their Finnish was at the level to be able to have an interview in Finnish. However, I could also be seen to unconsciously draw on a relatively powerful conception of Finnish being a particularly difficult language and non-Finns probably not always being motivated to learn it. As such, that I did not give the non-Finns the possibility of being interviewed in Finnish could be partly interpreted as an unconscious act of making a distinction between Finns and non-Finns, excluding the non-Fins from what I in the context of language considered to be Finnishness.

The first type of interviews done in English were with non-Finns, who did not have English as their mother tongue. From the more practical point of view, that neither of us had English as the mother tongue could be thought to have influenced how the interviews unfolded in the sense of how we could express ourselves and be understood by each other. Moreover, language could be seen to be important in terms of how we positioned each other and what was talked about. Ironically, while Finnish was absent as the language of the interviews, it became present in positioning each other and oneself. As discussed previously, I positioned the non-Finns as non-Finnish by the choice of language I had made for doing the interviews, and also was probably myself positioned by the interviewees as a native Finnish (or Swedish) speaker. In addition,
the interviewees could also use Finnish for positioning themselves. Some interviewees could challenge my implicit assumptions of them as not Finnish speakers by occasionally using Finnish words and as such marking that they were actually rather fluent in Finnish.

Furthermore, with the non-Finns, Finnish seemed to be more important as a topic of discussion than English. With the exception of the international acquisitions, English seldom became a topic of discussion. In turn, some interviewees could talk about disadvantages they had faced in terms of language concerning not speaking Finnish fluently. These interviewees can be seen to be in a rather specific situation of telling me as a Finn of the disadvantages they had experienced as not being fluent Finnish speakers.

Three of the non-Finns being interviewed were native English speakers. The interviews with the native English speakers could be considered easier in the sense of the interviewees being able to express themselves easily, since they were using their mother tongue. However, interviewing a native English speaker could also be a challenge for me in the sense of my becoming conscious of my own English skills. In one interview with a native English speaker, the interviewee repeatedly defined the English skills of Finns as poor, which I noticed made me increasingly conscious about how I was talking and insecure in expressing myself in English.

Furthermore, the three organisations provided rather different contexts in terms of languages being used. Table 3 summarizes the participating companies in terms of their size, mix of nationalities, languages, and the official language of the company.

### Table 3  Languages in the participating companies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Mix of nationalities</th>
<th>Mix of languages</th>
<th>Official language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SmartGameSoft</strong></td>
<td>A middle sized company (around 150 employees in Finland)</td>
<td>30 different nationalities in the Finnish unit, majority Finns</td>
<td>English, Finnish, Russian, Portuguese, French, others</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apps2Trust</strong></td>
<td>A small company (around 10 employees)</td>
<td>Finns except one non-Finn</td>
<td>Finnish, which was frequently used informally, English</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enginiously</strong></td>
<td>A small company (around 10 employees)</td>
<td>Finns and non-Finns. CEO a native English speaker</td>
<td>English, Finnish</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Smartgamesoft was international both in terms of the company being located in four different countries and the Finnish unit being multiethnic. In Smartgamesoft there were people of approximately 30 nationalities, and the range of mother tongues was
People working in the unit seemed to be very fluent in English. The official language was English, and everyday work seemed to be done mostly in English. The teams were often multiethnic, consisting of people with different mother tongues and people were often in continuous contact with the other national units. Whereas English seemed to be important in working, several languages were used for socializing: English as well as Finnish, Russian, Portuguese, and French among others, these being the mother tongues of several employees. Language was not very often discussed as an issue influencing the work within the Finnish unit. Instead, it was frequently talked about in relation to the other national units, most notably to India, and in being defined as a problem.

The official language of Apps2Trust was also English but, in practice, the situation was rather different from Smartgamesoft. Both English and Finnish were frequently used in everyday work. The company had a lot of customer contacts in English; however, the employees were all Finns, except for one, and the informal language in the company was often Finnish. The interviewees often defined their level of English as not very high. Language was discussed as a challenge in several interviews, by both the non-Finn and many of the Finns. The non-Finn described how she was sometimes excluded because Finnish was commonly used, and the Finns described themselves as being unused to using English and the challenges they had faced while working in English.

Enginiously also had English as the official language, which appeared to be also used a lot in practice. The CEO of the company was a native English speaker, and the company had extensive customer contacts in English. English seemed to be a more natural and integral part of the everyday work than in Apps2Trust. If language was discussed it was defined as less of a problem than in Apps2Trust. Some of the Finns I interviewed talked about using English at work, however, defining themselves as generally rather capable of and used to using English at work.

Thus, in the context of my research interviews, language can be seen as an important question both more practically and in terms of intersectional identity taking place in the interviews. At the same time, it can be seen to be a rather complex issue, because of the shifting organisational contexts, the languages spoken by the interviewees and me, and the different combinations of languages between us.

5.4. Analysing intersectional identity work (Phases 1 and 2)

My approach to analysis could be described as developmental, that is abductive and evolving throughout the research process in the interplay between theory and empirical material. I first describe the process of analysis in phases one and two more generally, and then move on to discuss the analysing of silence in intersectional identity work.
Analysing people’s identities and identity work as intersectional poses some specific challenges. The first challenge relates to theoretical starting points of intersectionality, seeing people’s experiences and identities constructed within mutually constitutive categories and as such being undividable (Bilge 2009). Thus, the question becomes how to translate these starting points into analyses of identity work. Another challenge identified in the literature relates to intersectionality not always being very explicit in the accounts of interviewees, but in practice often having to be interpreted by the researcher, for example, by analysing what people are saying in the context of multiple power relations in a specific time and place (Bowleg 2008, Cuardaz and Uttal 1999).

My analysis has proceeded in two different phases, meaning that the two sets of data were analysed separately and also following somewhat different procedures. The approach to the first set data follows what Bilge (2009) calls a ‘two-step hybrid approach’ as a way to study intersectionality without prematurely imposing social categories on the empirical material. The analysis is divided into two different steps: a data-driven inductive approach and a theory-oriented deductive approach. The first step consists of identification, interpretation and coding of emergent themes in the data; thus, it does not a priori assume any social categories. The second step of analysis then explicitly focuses on social categories by trying to see the data through different social categories.

Thus, my analysis consisted first of an inductive stage, meaning that I coded the central themes in the interview material and wrote summaries of each interview. This was followed by a deductive stage, meaning a theory-oriented-approach reading of the data through the perspective of intersectional identity work. At the inductive stage, I still did not have intersectionality as the lens for identity work, but rather it was gradually discovered through a not particularly straightforward process of trial and error in trying to make sense of the empirical material.

The inductive stage can be seen to have consisted of several smaller steps. The first step took place immediately after each interview, writing down my instant impressions and the central themes discussed in the interviews. The first step was followed by coding the empirical material into different themes that were being frequently discussed in the interviews. At the same time, I also wrote summaries of all of the interviewees, the organisation, and the game production process to get an insight into the central questions in each interview and the more general dynamics taking place in the organisation. Thus, I was working in two opposite directions simultaneously, trying to obtain a more holistic understanding of the data in general and of the specific interviews, but at the same time breaking the empirical material into smaller entities in terms of the central themes being discussed.
I did the first coding using NVivo, however, I quickly ran into problems as the empirical material did not fit into neat categorizations. Being interested in wider societal social categories but also having discovered other central themes in the data, my initial codings ranged from acquisitions and functional division in the company to wider societal social categories of culture/ethnicity, gender, and age. However, rather than being separate, the different themes seemed to overlap, and I had difficulties in locating what was talked about within one theme. For example, talk about culture/ethnicity could overlap with talk about a specific acquisition. Wider societal social categories seemed to be talked about in relation to or in the context of something, becoming inseparable from other processes taking place in the organisation.

Thus, intersectionality as a perspective on identity work emerged during the process of analysis. Moving on to the deductive stage of analysis meant examining people’s accounts through the lens of intersectionality, which, in practice, also meant having to resolve the issue of social categories being indivisible in forming people’s lives (Bilge 2009). By having identified work as topic in relation to which wider societal social categories were often discussed, I chose to focus on the intersections between work and different wider societal social categories in different contexts. I divided the empirical material into two bigger entities: one related to identity work taking place within the Finnish unit, and one related to that taking place in the context of international acquisitions.

The data was recoded in separate Word documents around the two overall themes: talk about each of the acquisitions and talk about the main wider societal social categories (ethnicity/culture, gender, and age) in the context of the Finnish unit. The two contexts, international acquisitions and identity dynamics within the Finnish unit, were analysed separately. Also, within these contexts each acquisition as well as identity work in relation to each of the categories were examined separately. In each of the cases, I looked at the instances where wider societal social categories intersect with the job/unit constituting people’s identities at work. At that time, I had a focus on positive identities and looked at what kinds of positive job-related identities were being constructed in relation to the different wider societal social categories in the Finnish unit and, respectively, what kinds of positive identities were being constructed for the Finnish national unit in relation to other national units and how wider societal social categories were being used for that. The focus in both cases was on how wider societal social categories were used and not used in identity work taking place in an organisational context.

The following quote from Christian, one of the interviewees, is an example of the coding and the two stages. In the quote, he talks about the differences in the work processes between the Finnish and Indian units: ‘Well, in my work you have to be organised and
you have to understand that there is these steps and you cannot jump in between them, but they [the Indians] don’t just seem to understand this.’ In the inductive stage, I coded this text under the theme of acquisition in India, which was one of the central themes in the interviews. In the deductive stage, the same text was re-read through the notion of intersectional identity work, meaning that the focus now was on the (cultural) characteristics given to the two units and how they are used for constructing for oneself a positive unit identity.

Furthermore, the job-related identities identified in the Finnish unit were reanalysed by looking for similarities and differences between the identities in terms of the different ways of talking and not talking about wider societal social categories. The ways were mapped into what I call intersectional strategies, meaning different ways of managing the relations between available social categories.

Due to the evolving content of the research focus, the analysis of the second set of data was done somewhat differently in comparison to the first set of data. I was no longer so interested in identity work as done in relation to the central categories appearing in the data as such, but rather in the processes around intersectionality in identity work. The shifting research interests could be seen to have two kinds of consequences for the analysis. First of all, the approach was from the beginning rather deductive, focusing on different ways of doing intersectional identity work. Secondly, I adopted a more holistic approach to each interview, examining the identity work done throughout the interview rather than in relation to specific categories across the interviews.

The analysis of the second set of data also comprised two different phases: the first phase consisting of making sense of new interview material, and the second analysing it in relation to the first set of data. Given the interest in intersectional identity work as a process taking place throughout the interview, I found it difficult and not very useful to code the data under different themes. Rather, I decided to treat each interview as an entity. Thus, instead of coding what was said across the interviews, I chose to write a summary of each interview focusing on: 1) what were the central themes talked about in the interview, meaning, in particular, different social categories and issues related to them; 2) what was not talked about, for example, which potentially central social categories remained undiscussed, and in that sense silenced; 3) how the categories were talked about; and 4) what kind of identities were constructed through the talk. The interviews in the second set of data were relatively short (approximately 30 minutes each) and more focused, concentrating on people’s experiences of differences at work. The length and the form of the interviews enabled me to see the interview data in a comprehensive way, even if the interview material was not coded in a similar way to the first set of data.
The second set of data was gathered in order to both deepen and question the findings from the first set of data. Thus, after writing the summaries I used the findings from the first set of data to see whether or not the interviewees used the same kinds of intersectional strategies in their job-related identity work, what was similar, and what was different. However, the relation between the two sets can be seen as somewhat complex, not least due to the differences between the two in terms of research interest, interview guide, and organisational contexts. At the same time, important continuities between the two sets of material can be also seen, making it possible to use the second set of data for deepening and/or questioning the findings from the first set of data. For example, the interviews were done in the ICT sector in Finland and mostly with relatively young knowledge workers. But most importantly, despite the shift from cultural identities to intersectional identity work, the ‘core’ research interest in how people construct their identities in relation to wider societal social categories remained.

Moreover, the above-mentioned research focus makes it possible to examine it across different contexts and different kinds of interview materials, whilst being at the same time influenced by the differences. Thus, it could be argued that examining the same phenomenon in different (but not entirely different) contexts could shed light on some dynamics that might otherwise not surface. In practice, using two different kinds of interview material has also meant being reflexive about the differences and contextualizing the findings into two respective sets of data. My idea was not to make any direct comparisons between the two, but rather with the second set of data to gather material on ways of doing intersectional identity work that were not apparent in the first set, and through that process produce a more finely tuned, more complex account of the phenomena.

5.5. Analysing silence in intersectional identity work

In the thesis intersectional identity work was also analysed through the notion of silence. Partly silence can be seen as being part of how intersectionality in itself functions, meaning that frequently intersectionality is rather implicit. As Bowleg (2008) puts it: 'The interpretive task for the intersectionality analyst is to make explicit the often implicit experiences of intersectionality, even when the participants do not express the connections' (Bowleg 2008: 322). The ‘implicity’ of intersectionality can also be interpreted through the perspective of silence. In this thesis silence is not understood literally, in the sense of not uttering words but rather as a discursive phenomenon related to constructing a specific kind of knowledge on a topic while excluding other kinds of understandings (Foucault 1981). Silence here refers to the potentially relevant issues on a topic being omitted (Harlow et al. 1995) or downplayed in people’s accounts. Furthermore, silence is seen as being formed in relation to what I call ‘non-silence’, to what is been talked about or being included. Silence and non-
silence are not total, but rather they alternate in different combinations (Moaşa 2012, 2013). I will further discuss the concept of silence in Chapter 9.

When analysing silence, the question becomes, ‘How do I know that something is being excluded?’ Related to my understanding of silence and non-silence, this part of analysis consisted of two different, but in practice overlapping phases. In order to know what has been left out, I looked at what has been included. Thus, in the first phase focusing on non-silence, I looked at the interviews in terms of what is being said. What did the interviewees talk about, and what kinds of accounts did they tell? The first phase raised questions around the kind of talk that can be seen as relevant for intersectional job-related identity work, the big question becoming the kind talk that should be included and why.

I analysed silence both in the first and second sets of data, making two restrictions concerning the data that I decided to analyse. First of all, for practical reasons I decided to omit the empirical material concerning the international acquisitions and to focus on silence and non-silence in the Finnish context. My primary interests were about the individual level intersectional identity work and looking at acquisitions from that perspective would have required a substantial amount of analysis, which I decided lay outside the scope of this thesis. Secondly, the data was restricted to only include talk that I considered to be relevant for silence in intersectional job-related identity work. As such, the talk being analysed should both include silences around social categories in the organisation and be, at least indirectly, related to whom people constructed themselves to be at work. I included both the data related to individual level identity work in Finland analysed earlier as well as ‘new’ data on social categories related to the organisation and others working in the organisation.

In practice, the kind of data being analysed was decided in relation to the second phase, referring to ‘imagining’ what was missing from people’s accounts, what was not being said or what was being excluded. In other words, I could only know that a specific kind of talk was important in terms of silence if I could see that in the accounts there could be something relevant missing from the point of view of intersectionality. Bowleg (2008) and Cuardaz and Uttal (1999) have pointed out the importance of looking at the context as a way to approach intersectionality, which often remains implicit in people’s accounts. On similar lines, the first way of examining what was missing was by analysing people’s accounts in relation to different and relevant contexts outside and within the immediate interview situation. I looked at discrepancies between what is ‘known’ and what is being and not being said. For example, some of the interviewees depicted their work organisation as diverse; however they excluded the topic of inequalities. At the same time, social relations are known to produce inequalities between people in organisations, which could be also seen to be the case in the specific
organisation based on accounts of other people having experienced disadvantage because of their gender or ethnicity. Furthermore, some of the interviewees could talk about social categories mainly as related to the organisation or others working in the organisation and in this way avoiding talk about one’s own identity as intersectional.

The other way was to look at contradictions between what was being said within one and the same interview on a specific topic. People could talk about themselves in terms of having faced disadvantages but simultaneously be silent on them by downplaying the importance of the experiences by, for example, locating them outside one’s current job or work organisation.

5.6. Limitations of the study

A number of limitations can be recognized in the study. I have chosen to interview a heterogeneous group of people in terms of wider societal social categories, as well as their position in the companies concerned, thus not focusing on any one specific group of workers, professionals or managers. This could be argued to have led to the loss of some depth and complexity in the analysis of specific social categories, organisational positions, and their intersections. To put this somewhat differently, there could be a danger of not sufficiently taking into account differences between specific social categories, and how they might translate in relation to intersectional identity work in organisations.

Having said that, at the same time, the study looks at the intersectional identity work of a specific group of people in a specific context. The study is based on a limited number of interviews, conducted in the context of the ICT industry in Finland, and with what is in many ways a relatively homogeneous group of organisational members, most of them being relatively young, able-bodied and working as knowledge workers. As such, the findings may not be seen as directly applicable to other situations or more generally. In addition, my own intersecting positions and identities within and outside the research should be noted as influential on the study in many ways, from the framing of research interests and the conduct of the interviewing to the analysing of the data.

In this study I have been using interview talk as my primary data, my broader research interests include intersectional identity dynamics beyond the local interview situation. For practical reasons I have looked at intersectional job-related identity work based on interview talk, excluding other possible sites, contexts and ways of doing intersectional identity work, such as, examining it in more naturally occurring situations.

I could also have gone further in interrogating the discursive or linguistic aspects of intersectional identity work. However, given my research focus, examining language
use in the interviews in a more fine-grained way could have put too much emphasis on the micro-level interaction between the interviewees and myself as the interviewer.

Furthermore, the presence of some non-linear aspects of the research process can be seen to provide some challenges. For example, my specific research focus was clarified more precisely during the research process, which could be seen as a limitation, particularly in relation to the first set of data. Being more clearly focused on intersectionality at the time of the first set of interviews may have facilitated the production of more interview material of direct relevance to my research interests. Also, the development in the focus of analysis and ways of analysing could be seen to pose some challenges to the coherence of the study. However, the key interest in employees’ identity construction in relation to social categories has remained the same all the time, enabling the examination of the phenomenon across evolving research interests and the two somewhat different sets of data.
5.7. **Structure of the analysis**

Figure 5 represents the structure of the analysis.

**Figure 5  Structure of the analysis**

Chapter 6: Intersectional identity work and unit identities. The use of social categories in constructing a (positive) unit identity in relation to the other national units of the company. Based on the first set of data.

Chapter 7: Intersectional identity work and job-related identities. The use of social categories in constructing a (positive) job-related identity. Based on the first set of data.

Chapter 8: Privilege / disadvantage in intersectional job-related identity work. The use of ‘intersectional strategies’ in identity work in relation to privilege / disadvantage. Based on the first and second sets of data: summary of findings in Chapter 7, analysis of new data complementing the findings.

Chapter 9: Silence in intersectional identity work. Based on the first and second sets of data: reinterpretation of some of the ‘intersectional strategies’ from Chapter 8, new analysis of the first and second sets of data.

The analysis is structured into four chapters. Chapters 6 and 7 are based on the first set of data and look at intersectional identity work in relation to the construction of positive identities. Whereas Chapter 6 focuses on unit level identity work, in Chapter 7 I examine job-related identity work from the perspective of intersectionality. Chapter 8 focuses on the use of intersectional strategies in identity work in relation to privilege and disadvantage. It draws partly on the findings from Chapter 7, although looking at them in terms of intersectional strategies. Moreover, the second set of data is used for complementing the findings from the first set of data. Chapter 9, in turn, examines silence in intersectional identity work. It draws partly on some of the intersectional strategies identified in Chapter 8. Chapter 9 is based on both sets of data.
Despite the different emphasis in the analysis of intersectional identity work, there are continuities between these analysis chapters. The notions of positive identity, inequalities and silence appear in several, if not in all, chapters, though their centrality varies depending on the chapter. Moreover, the structure of the analysis reflects the cumulative and chronological nature of my research process. I started with intersectional identity work as done in relation to positive identities and moved more towards inequalities and silence in intersectional identity work. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 can be seen to have similarities in the sense that they all, whether more implicitly or explicitly, deal with intersecting inequalities when constructing a positive identity at work. However, in Chapters 6 and 7, there is a more explicit focus on positive identities and inequalities are examined more implicitly. The situation for Chapter 8 can be seen as different in the sense that the emphasis has shifted to inequalities. Positive identity is, however, still central in the first part of the chapter, which reinterprets the findings from Chapter 7. In the last part of Chapter 8 and in Chapter 9 there is less emphasis on the notion of positive identities. In Chapter 9 silence in intersectional identity work is the central concern, even though it has already been touched upon to some extent in Chapters 7 and 8. Moreover, inequalities also become central in Chapter 9, although this time in the context of silence.
6 INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITY WORK AND UNIT IDENTITIES

This chapter looks at intersectional identity work at the collective level of unit identities. I examine how employees of the Finnish unit in SmartGameSoft construct themselves a positive unit identity or identities in relation to the other national units of the company. In particular, I am interested in how they make use of different and intersecting social categories in identity work when talking about themselves in relation to the other national units.

The chapter is divided into three different parts, each of them discussing the identity construction of the Finnish unit in relation to one of the other national units: that is, USA, India, and Spain. In each case, different identities for the Finnish unit (i.e. ‘hardworking and competent Finns’, ‘fun and games’, ‘reluctant babysitter’, and ‘well-meaning older sibling’) are constructed, representing the unit in a professionally positive light. This is done by drawing on age (in terms of the seniority and juniority of the units) and ethnicity/culture in different ways.

6.1. Earning recognition

Some years before the interviews, the Finnish unit was bought by a recently-founded US game company, whose founders were pioneers in the game industry. The acquisition led to some important changes in the Finnish unit, losing the independence it had previously enjoyed. Suddenly, the company was managed from the USA instead of Finland, meaning that the Finnish unit had to learn to deal with the new headquarters. The acquisition also brought some notable demographic changes to the Finnish unit, which was now rapidly increasing in size. Whereas the unit had before the acquisition been completely Finnish, a substantial amount of non-Finns were hired during the years after it. Thus, due to the acquisition, the Finnish unit was suddenly facing another unit from a distant location with in many ways more experience and formal power over it posing a challenge to the Finnish unit as an independent, ethnically fairly homogenous company.

The employees of the Finnish unit construct two identities for their unit in relation to the US headquarters. The first one represents the Finnish unit as consisting of competent and hardworking professionals with a lot of experience in the industry, whereas the second one constructs the unit as a fun and creative and at the same time productive workplace compared to that of the ‘duller’ US unit. The first identity is

7 By seniority and juniority, I mean different meanings related to age (the ‘age’ of the unit, the biological age of the employees, and the amount of experience) that the employees use when describing the unit as junior or senior in comparison to another national unit.
constructed by Finnish managers of the unit in particular when they talk about the acquisition and how the relations between the two units have developed over time. The second identity, instead, is created by mostly employees working at all the levels in the company by comparing the characteristics of the two units. In both of the cases, the employees draw on different social categories, that is that of ethnicity/culture and/or age (seniority/juniority) to present themselves in professionally positive light.

6.1.1. Hardworking and competent Finns

The first identity, that of the hardworking and competent Finnish unit, is constructed by the Finnish managers talking about the past, the acquisition and the ways in which the relations between the two units have been developing over the years. The interviewees describe how the acquisition brought some important changes to the position and the everyday work of the Finnish unit, which has lost its independence. From having being able to decide on things by itself locally, it had to suddenly learn to negotiate with its counterpart in the United States. The beginning of the new company is portrayed as having been somewhat tricky, with the US headquarters trying to take control over the Finnish unit. However, instead of accepting the situation imposed by the headquarters, the Finnish unit is described as having resisted the domination and managed to create a more agreeable balance between the two units with the quality of its own work and a hardworking attitude.

Toni, one of the founders of the Finnish unit, describes the beginning of the new company as challenging. Not only did the Finnish unit have to suddenly deal with the new headquarters, but he also talks about how the US unit proved to be fairly US-centred and not open to different ways of doing things. In his description, Toni portrays the US unit as relatively closed and dominant in comparison to the hardworking and more open Finnish unit reacting to the situation.

Well at the beginning there was probably, maybe, to some extent in a way a power game in that sense ... This is again how I think personally, but I believe that the Americans came here with the attitude that they will come and buy us and in a way rule and administer us after that. But we reached a balance quite quickly in a way with the [our] work and what we did. I think that it depends more on the fact that the culture there is actually not so international, but is still quite US-centred. That is the case even though there are individuals who are more international, but let’s say it’s like that to make a rough generalization. (Toni)

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8 The quotes were used for two purposes: for giving information on the interviewees’ organisational situation and context; and more specifically for analysing intersectional identity work.
The managers describe how the Finnish unit has gradually managed, despite the challenging starting point, to gain an ever-improving position in the company, even to the point that the management of the all studios, which can be seen as the core of the company was eventually granted to Finland. The current position of the Finnish unit was not easy to gain, however, but was instead something that had to be earned through working hard and showing the high level of professionalism within the unit. The Finnish unit is not only described as equally competent to that of the USA, but often as more competent – particularly in the core activity, that is to say, in game development. This is how Jussi, working in the studio management, describes the situation.

A: Clearly then at the beginning the Yanks tried maybe harder; they wanted to heavily influence what we do and how we do [it] and other things. And, and there was a small disagreement about it; but I don’t know, but I think that here at Helsinki, we just were patient and showed with our own work that, hey we can [do] this and we can maybe [do] some things better [than the US] and pretty soon after that they then realized that we [the US unit] are crazy if we don’t accept this thing. After that, I think the development [which has led to the fact] that now Santtu [the CEO of the Finnish unit] is in charge of the whole of this side [studios] demonstrates this. Because at the beginning, they [the US unit] tried to control the direction of the product development and other things a great deal, but then they noticed that the best knowhow seemed to be at this side [in Finland] and that was maybe the reason why this kind of organisational arrangement was made.

Q: So that through your own work [you managed to gain your current position]?

A: Yeah I don’t know if it’s a bit Finnish, you know. (Jussi)

In the account of the managers, the Finnish unit is described as having patiently and wisely showed the buyers their true potential, not by emphasizing their abilities boastfully but by working hard. In other words, the unit is described as highly competent and professional. The way in which it is represented can be interpreted as also drawing on national representations of the persistent Finn, able to conquer difficulties by a modest attitude, knowhow and a willingness to work hard.

The ability of the Finnish unit is also pondered upon in terms of its seniority/juniority (both the unit and the personnel) in relation to the US one. To construct themselves and their unit as professionals earning a central position in the company, the Finnish managers play on different sides of seniority and juniority. For example, they highlight the Finnish unit as the older part of the company, even though the people working in
USA clearly have had longer experience of the game industry in general. The seniority of the Finnish unit is especially constructed when talking about the different studios, which are represented as being of particular importance for the company. Managers in the Finnish unit emphasize the importance of their studio, which differs in the products and size from the equivalent in USA. The products that are developed in Finland are described as the main products of the company, and the Finnish unit as more experienced in that specific field within the game industry.

Jussi describes a ‘status conflict’ between the two units in terms of seniority/juniority, also tackling the question of core knowledge and/or products in the company. Even though the people working in the USA are described as senior both in terms of their biological age and their experience in the game industry, the positive consequences of the seniority are undermined by discussing the differences of the products of each studio. The specific business of the Finnish unit is described as being the core business of the company, in which the most important products are developed. By describing the Finnish studio (with in fact younger and less experienced personnel) as more experienced and knowledgeable in its own business, it is also represented as actually the more experienced one of the two in the core activity. Thus, even though the people working in the US unit people are given credit for their long experience in the game industry in general, the unit is described as a newcomer in the core business of the company.

Concerning the age structure [there are] maybe a bit older people [in the US unit]. Well about the same age as me, but many of them have maybe that kind of... Well, John being our CEO, many of them have been with him already in his earlier company. They have a pretty long relationship and they have been in the business for a much longer time than most of us. But they were more in the PC-console productions then in the 90-ies and they came a bit late to this mobile side. I think that we have [been] in a way ahead [of them]. In my view, it has maybe caused a small clash, because they have been in the game industry longer, so there is a bit between that kind of old and this kind of young. So that we have a bit of a kind of status conflict, which we haven’t completely been able to solve. It is, quite, the co-operation goes quite ok, but underneath it there is still that kind of status conflict. (Jussi)

The managers do not only highlight the longer experience of the Finnish unit in the specific genre of games but also draw on the longer history the unit has as a company compared to the one in the USA. Whereas the US company was founded only slightly before the acquisition, the Finnish unit had already existed for some years before it. It is described as having had a strong identity with a successful brand and specific culture of its own, which is still at the time of the interviews often nostalgically referred to.
the following quote, Maria, working as a manager in the Finnish unit, disagrees with definition by the US unit of the company being a start-up. Instead, she describes the Finnish unit as a unit having some history that the US headquarters was lacking at the time of the acquisition.

They [the US unit] called that a start-up even though we in Finland don’t see this as a pure start-up because there is tradition here. Maybe that has kept Finland more together because here is the old X [the name of the Finnish unit before being acquired] and some brand at the background. (Maria)

The managers of the Finnish unit construct their unit as being equal to that of the one in the USA, a position that was not clear from the beginning but had to be earned by proving their competence. Instead of describing the Finnish unit as equally competent to the US headquarters, it is, however, represented as even better in relation to the core activity of the company, that is to say game development. In this way, the Finnish unit is constructed as an alternative centre of the entire company despite the official status of the USA as the headquarters.

To construct their unit as competent and professional, the managers make use of ethnicity and age (seniority/juniority) in different ways. The unit is described as being experienced and hardworking, both facets contributing to its competence and professionalism. It is described as having overcome the difficulties following the acquisition and obtained its favourable position because of the work-related qualities (working hard and with good quality results) and attitudes (being modest but hardworking) it has. By constructing oneself as hardworking, modest and persistent, the Finnish managers of the Finnish unit draw on representations of ‘Finnishness’, used as an important reason for explaining the success it is described as having had. The managers also construct the Finnish unit as a unit with some history and its own tradition, which is also used to add to its competence and professionalism. By emphasizing favourable aspects of age (e.g. describing themselves as having more experience in a specific genre of game development) and disregarding others that question one’s seniority (being less experienced and newer to the industry in general) the managers manage to make use of age to their benefit.

6.1.2. ‘Fun and games’ – the creative and productive Finnish unit

The employees of the Finnish unit also construct another type of identity for their national unit, that of a fun and creative work place, when they talk about the US unit and their relations to it. This identity, which mainly draws on ethnicity and culture (both national and/or organisational culture), is produced by comparing the characteristics of the two units.
The Finnish unit is in general represented as being a more creative, relaxed and fun place to work at in comparison to the US counterpart. The employees draw on both the national and/or organisational cultures of the different units when describing them. Mikko, having relatively strong contacts with USA, describes his American colleagues as fun and relaxed people with whom one can have nice time outside the immediate work context. He also states, however, that when it comes to work-related issues the tone of interaction changes from relaxed to dry. In contrast, Finns are described as using and understanding humour even in work communication.

At least in X [the location of the US unit], they have couple of guys of the same age as us, and then we have had some sauna evenings here, so they were really fun guys, relaxed both of them but then in business they are really dry and like that. A Finn can maybe even in a work e-mail joke a little bit and things like that. But there [in the USA], it is like [just] bullet points. Dry. (Mikko)

The US unit is not only described as boring and dry but the working culture is also seen as isolating people from each other. Toni draws on an idea of a national or regional culture for explaining the working culture in US unit. According to Toni, people lack a third place in addition to home and work where they can spend time, arguing that this lack isolates people from each other in their daily lives. In contrast to the US unit he describes the Finnish unit as being more communal, as having traditions of organising activities for people working in the unit. Furthermore, the Finnish unit is described as a lively place compared to the US unit, which is depicted as lacking a feeling of life.

Like when I visit the office there, so the office is in some way like, it is quite quiet there. They have an open space like we do, but there the people walk almost on their toes and whisper, that they kind of lack a kind of life, a feeling of life. (Toni)

The isolating characteristics of the working culture of the US unit are also described in terms of space, in the sense that the way in which the office is physically organised is described as also having consequences for the different possible ways of working there. Jussi compares the working cultures of the two units. He talks about the use of space in both of the units and the consequences he sees that it has for the organising of work and ultimately for the creativity and productivity of the units. He describes how the US office, which reminds him of a call centre, is divided into cubes, thus forcing people to sit and work in isolation from each other. In contrast, the Finnish office is reported as being organised around open spaces in which the team members can work closely and fruitfully with each other. Thus, while the US way of organising the work space is described as dysfunctional and hindering communication between people, Jussi represents ‘the Finnish way’ as opening up opportunities for both work well-being and creativity, necessary in game development. According to Jussi, the successful way in
which the workspace is organised in the Finnish unit also contributes to the quality of the products.

A: X [the place where the US unit is located] is a kind of cube. Well, it reminds me closest of a call centre.

Q: Ok, I understand.

A: And then when I was there I think the Yanks are a bit hypocritical, that they seem to be doing an awful lot all the time but they really they drink mostly coffee and talk, always go to a friend into the cube [laughs].

Q: So that would be one [difference]?

A: It’s like, there it’s not like here where we have the space over there. I don’t know if you have gone to see how the studio looks like. It’s always a one big room where there is the whole team or a couple of teams, and it’s always like, they try to be, so that there would preferably be a kind of calm, creative chaos, where the communication between people would be possible all the time. Then the development work and creative development work happens in that way that it bubbles all the time. And I think it’s the optimal condition and when people like it then it shows there in the products. I don’t understand why they force people into their own boxes there [in the USA]; that is the first thing that already finishes all those kinds of things.

Q: Right, the co-operation.

A: But of course when they do totally different kinds of products, don’t do the same kinds of products. It can be that works there and it can be that the American office culture demands the cubes, otherwise they can’t do anything. (Jussi)

The employees of the Finnish unit draw on ethnicity/culture to construct the Finnish unit as a relaxed and fun place to work in contrast to that of the more boring and duller US unit. The relaxed and communicative culture of the Finnish unit is not only described as creating an enjoyable atmosphere at work but is also from the point of view of management constructed as ultimately leading to increased productivity within the unit. A good organisation culture is also constructed as important in relation to the type of products the company is developing and the optimal work processes needed for them, defining the organisational culture of the Finnish unit as more suitable at least for the products being developed in Finland.
6.2. Challenged by the ‘Other’

Some years after the acquisition of the Finnish unit by Americans, the company acquired two additional national units: a studio in Spain and a post-production unit in India. The acquisition in India had substantial consequences for the unit in Finland that led to important changes, in particular concerning the structure and size of the Finnish post-production and to some extent affecting the entire Finnish unit. Before the acquisition in India, the Finnish post-production was the largest and most important post-production in the entire company, being responsible for quality assurance and porting of games at all levels. In the acquisition, most of the hands-on tasks of game testing and porting were transferred to India, and Finland was left mostly with supervising and development tasks. The Finnish post-production was given a supervising role in relation to India, connecting the two units tightly together.

As a consequence of transferring a large part of work to India, the size of the post-production unit in Finland decreased to approximately half of the size before the acquisition, whereas the size of the acquired unit in India increased steadily. For the Finnish unit, the acquisition meant having to relocate the employees that lost their work because of the changes. Some of them were promoted to more challenging tasks within post-production, others moved to the studio, which was increasing in size, whereas some were forced to leave the company. Thus, the acquisition had some dramatic consequences both for the unit as well as individual employees working in it. However, it can also be seen as having had some positive consequences in terms of upgrading the tasks of the unit and advancing the personal careers of some individual employees.

Unsurprisingly, the organisational changes caused considerable turmoil, particularly among the employees at the middle management and employee level, these experiencing the most direct consequences. People in post-production in particular faced a difficult situation in which the foundations of the post-production in Finland had been challenged and the security of the continuation of one’s own work could no longer be taken for granted. At the same time, they were forced to work tightly together with India, which was posing a serious threat to the post-production as it had previously been.

The dramatic events could be also seen to be reflected in the ways in which the Indian unit was used in the construction of the Finnish unit identity. In the interviews, India tends to become the different and inferior ‘Other’ in contrast to which one’s own unit identity is constructed. The employees in the Finnish unit construct themselves the identity of a ‘reluctant babysitter’, referring to the formally complementary and hierarchical roles of the two units and the more informal ways of acting. The Finnish unit is described as the responsible adult and the Indian one as a child having to be
instructed and followed. In constructing the ‘reluctant babysitter’, the interviewees draw in different ways on meanings related to ethnicity and/or culture as well as age in terms of juniority/seniority.

6.2.1. *Reluctant babysitter*

After the acquisition, the Finnish post-production unit was expected to work closely together with the Indian one since the two groups’ roles were complementary; the Finnish post-production unit acting from a senior position provided the tools and guidelines for the Indian group, and in turn the Indian post-production unit performed the work needed for completing the games developed in Finland. The relations between the two were, thus, rather hierarchical, giving the Finnish post-production unit formal power over the Indian. For the employees in the Finnish unit, the way in which the relations between the two were organised meant being forced to work together with the Indians often against one’s own will, and at the same time having formal power over them.

The Finnish and Indian units are constructed as rather different in terms of the experience and seniority/juniority they have in relation to the company and the tools being used in the post-production processes. For example, Paul, an ex-post production worker, constructs the seniority of the Finnish unit in relation to the Indian one by talking about the long history of the Finnish unit in the field and the expertise it has brought.

\[\text{I don’t know what their background is as far as [porting] games, but we’ve been doing this for a long time, and we know our own product and we know what we need to do in order to get it out on time. (Paul)}\]

The seniority of the Finnish unit is described as having brought a solid understanding of the post-production process and how things should be done. The expertise of the Finnish unit is often contrasted with its lack in the Indian one, which is not only new to the company but also has no background in using the tools developed in Finland for the post-production processes. The Indian unit has experience in porting, but it is constructed as not only useless but also harmful for doing their work in the new company. This is how Marko, a middle manager working in post-production, talks about the differences in ways of working between the two units, acknowledging the experience India has in porting but at the same time describing its old ways of porting as unsophisticated and not fitting into the new company. Thus, the experience is not constructed as being valid in the new situation, and instead the Indian unit is described as a newcomer to something that the Finnish unit has considerable experience of. Also, the experience that the Finnish unit has is described as more sophisticated and advanced in contrast to the less advanced methods of the Indian unit.
Well they have done porting there for other companies. In a way, they have come
to the kind of situation that they are just given a code and told that we want this
code to work in these telephones. It doesn’t matter at all in what way it has to
work. So they have to, like, a little bit mangle it in a way that it works in that
phone. Whereas our approach is that we have a specific tool, where there is a
pretty big team developing it. So the difference is that we have had the technology
in the background and in between. And India hasn’t had it before. And now they
have to be taught to use our tool. So it has been pretty challenging because there
are new people coming there all the time. (Marko)

In the interviews, the ‘Finnish’ way of doing things is often constructed as the only
correct one, beneficial for the functioning of the whole company. The Indians, in turn,
are expected to follow the ‘Finnish’ way of working to the smallest details in order not
to mess up the streamlined processes of porting and game testing. In practice,
acquiring the Indian unit has meant a lot teaching done by the Finnish side to
introduce the Indians to the new way of doing things.

The co-operation between the two is described as being anything but easy and efficient.
The employees on the Finnish side complain frequently about the difficulties in co-
operating with Indians, who are described as not being able to or not wanting to follow
the standards of the Finnish unit. The responsibility for the difficulties is often placed
on the Indian unit. The unit is described as new and insecure, not very fluent in their
English skills, and lacking sufficient competent people. People in the unit are also
accused of not being willing to work in the same way than people do in the Finnish unit,
but rather preferring to follow their own ways of doing things.

In the following quote, Catherine, a post-production employee working closely with
India, describes the relations between the two, complaining about the difficulties in
getting the Indians to work in the way expected by the Finnish side. She talks about
training the Indians as a frustrating process that has not led to the desired end results.
The Indians are described as lacking both the competence and will to follow the
‘Finnish’ way, which is described as the only correct way of doing things.

And we are still short of people and they still haven’t been able to acquire that
many capable people in India. And it has been taking a lot of our time to train
them, and to train them over Skype, it’s not very easy. The people that we have
brought over, we can train them personally, but when they go back, they don’t
seem to retain all the knowledge to share. So we have been sending people over
there and still nothing has changed. Because they want to work their own way.
And we have our ways and our standards to follow and they don’t seem to have
that kind of standard over there. So that has been the biggest problem in this
acquisition, that no one wants to work our way. They want to work their own way. We understand that, but the problem is that we don’t have the luxury and the time to do it their way. (Catherine)

The difficulties are often also indirectly explained through cultural differences by defining characteristics of the Indians and oneself and comparing the differences between the two units, often constructing the two as opposites to each other. The Finnish unit becomes not only constructed as different from the Indian one but also as superior in many ways. Employees in the Finnish unit are depicted as confident, responsible and full of initiative, in contrast to Indians, who are described as passive, lacking self-esteem, and with no ability for the ‘right’ kind of independent thinking. This is how Marko describes Indians when talking about the active attitude he has to adopt when in contact with the Indian unit.

There [in India], if you don’t tell the guy that you have to test this, he only sits there telephone in hand and drinks water and just is there, if you haven’t given him clear instructions that you go forward this way. And also that he has some kind of script were he can read that ‘Oh I have to do this next’. Here people are more self-guided. (Marko)

The relationship with the Indian unit is indirectly and directly portrayed as that of a responsible adult and an irresponsible immature child. The Indians are often described as not fully understanding what they doing, as spoiling things, and being in need of baby-sitting. The unit is portrayed as something that has to be overseen because they cannot or do not act in a professional way. In contrast to the Indians, the Finnish unit and the employees working in it are constructed as competent professionals who have unwillingly ended up in a situation where they have to babysit the professionally childlike Indians. By constructing the Indians as childlike, the employees of the Finnish unit represent themselves as responsible adults.

This is how Catherine describes her relations with India, representing the Indians as curious but unreliable ‘children’, acting in a senseless manner and thus having to be babysat in contrast to the other people she works with in Finland, as well as in the other national units. By constructing the Indians in this way, she also highlights her own and the Finnish unit’s competence in her/their work and the professional and responsible attitude she/they have towards work.

For example, it has taken more of my time to just contact India. I have used maybe hundreds of Euros just calling them to tell them that ‘you shouldn’t do this, you shouldn’t touch anything’. And of course, knowing that they’re new, they’re curious, then they start to move files, delete stuff and I have to back
everything up – everything I do I have to back up, just to be safe. So that has always been, I usually trust people to do everything, that I don’t have to worry about. But when we have acquired India, I started to have to be careful that nothing gets lost. So that has been a bit worrying for me, because then I start to baby-sit people and that’s not what I want to do. I just want to trust, so that I can do my job, and I know that they’re doing their work. (Catherine)

When talking about their co-operation with India, the employees in the Finnish unit construct themselves as experienced and competent professionals in contrast to the unprofessional Indians. In the interviews, the Indian unit becomes represented as the ‘Other’ in relation to and against which an identity for the Finnish unit is being constructed. The representation of the professional and competent Finnish unit is supported by the use of age (seniority/juni ority) of the respective units and ethnicity/culture in different ways. Firstly, this is done by emphasizing the professionalism of the Finnish unit compared to that of the Indian one by drawing on the seniority and experience of the former and the juniority and inexperience of the latter. The seniority of the Finnish unit is constructed through describing the long experience that the Finnish unit has in the industry in general and of the post-production processes of the company in particular. At the same time, the prior experience of the Indian unit in porting is mentioned but downplayed by constructing it as unsophisticated and irrelevant in the context of the new company.

Secondly, the interviewees also draw frequently on meanings related to Indians and the Finnish unit that could be interpreted as being cultural. The interviewees construct the Indians as culturally different and inferior to the Finnish unit and connect the characteristics of the new unit to its (lack of) professional skills. The negative representations of the Indian unit are then used as a contrast to the Finnish unit in highlighting its in many ways superior professionalism.

Thirdly, when talking about their relations with Indians, the interviewees construct a picture of a relationship between an adult and a child. On the one hand, the description can be seen as related to the hierarchical and complementary relation between the two, the supervising role of the Finnish unit and subordinate role of the Indian unit, but on the other hand it can also be seen as heavily informed by representations of culture/ethnicity and age. The representation of professionally immature Indians who are curious and spoil things not only puts them in the position of a child (i.e. a young person) but also enables the employees of the Finnish unit to construct themselves as the responsible, knowing and competent adult (i.e. an older person). The notion of the relationship between a child and an adult could be also interpreted as based on cultural representations that can be seen as typical in the relations between Westerners and ‘non-Westerners’. It seems to be in line with post-colonial writings of ‘othering’ the
‘non-Western’ people by constructing them as culturally inferior and giving them the status of children and at the same time constructing oneself as a rational, mature adult (Said 1978, Hall 1992).

6.3. Guiding the newcomer

Shortly after the acquisition in India, the company acquired another national unit, this time a studio in Spain. Whereas the two prior acquisitions had led to important changes in the Finnish unit, the acquisition in Spain had no such consequences. The two studios (Finland and Spain) had rather different profiles, thus not making them direct competitors with each other. The newly acquired studio was also clearly smaller in size and less established compared to that of the Finnish unit. Hierarchically, the new unit was positioned under the Finnish studio, which was responsible for all the studios in the company. The Spanish unit was acquired very shortly before the interviews.

In contrast to the two other acquisitions, the acquisition of the Spanish unit posed no real threat to the Finnish unit, which is also reflected in the identity construction in relation to Spain. In the two other cases, the other national unit is in one way or another put down to highlight the excellence of the own unit, whereas in this case both the Finnish as well as the Spanish unit are constructed positively, emphasizing the similarities between the two. While the Spanish unit is in general represented as similar to the Finnish unit and the employees talk about it in a well-meaning manner, it is, however, constructed as a ‘little sibling’ in relation to the Finnish unit, not yet quite reaching its level in professional terms. The professionalism and competence of the more experienced Finnish unit is highlighted in relation to the smaller and not yet as proficient Spanish unit. As in the cases of the USA and India, the employees of the Finnish unit draw on age in terms of seniority/juniority as well as culture/ethnicity to construct themselves as competent professionals in relation to their Spanish counterparts.

6.3.1. Well-meaning older sibling

The Spanish unit, or more precisely the Spanish studio, is described as ‘a sister studio’, something that is very similar to the Finnish one. The two studios are portrayed as close to each other, having the same kind of people, doing the same thing in a very similar way in the same institutional context of the European Union. The work is described as being organised in a similar manner based on the same principles and done by people in same professions. In the following quote, Marko describes how the two units work in a similar manner to come to the same end result, that is to say, a game:
The studio is, the activity has been there more or less, when you make a game you need more or less the same people. There have to be the programmers and game artists and game designers and producers and it goes pretty much so that people have read the books about how that kind of organisation should be built. Then the small things are more or less the same, but we have not forced them into our ways of doing things. That the processes should go more or less the same way so that the end result is the same. (Marko)

The relations to the similar Spanish unit are described as being positive and successful. The employees talk about the smoothness of the co-operation between the two units and the Spaniards as easy to get along with. Some interviewees mention a few challenges, for example, describing the English skills of some of the employees in the Spanish unit as not always very good. However, if talked about they are not represented as real difficulties but as something that can be overcome. When asked about how the co-operation with colleagues working in the Spanish unit has gone, Paul describes the easiness of the relations between the two. In his description, the two are so similar and without language or cultural barriers that with the aid of the Internet the geographical distance seems to vanish.

Pretty smooth, pretty smooth. For the largest part, you can barely even tell that we’re world apart, apart from when they try to send a file instead of coming to my computer in 5 seconds it takes 20 minutes, but beyond that it’s hard to tell that they’re even so far away. The language barrier isn’t there, they all speak great English, and cultural barrier, if there is any it’s negligible. (Paul)

However, despite the descriptions of similarity, the employees, in particular the management, construct a hierarchy between the two. The Finnish studio, being formally in charge of the Spanish one, is also constructed as the one supporting and teaching the Spanish unit. The Spaniards are described as newcomers still having things to learn and being taught by the more established and competent Finnish unit. Toni, a manager in the Finnish unit who is frequently in contact with Spain, describes the Spaniards as ‘looking up’ to the Finnish unit and how things are done there. In his descriptions, the employees of the Spanish unit, apart from the CEO, are described as not quite being at the same level professionally as the employees in Finland.

Maybe in Spain it is more like... I think, this is more based on my feeling, but I think that the people there look up to us a bit, and it’s a bit like that you feel like you have to be careful about what you do and what you say or things like that, so that you don’t give any wrong signals. Maybe that is what happens. With Juan [the CEO in Spain] not so much, with him we have known each other for a longer
time, seen each other in fairs and in other places before. But maybe with the other ones it’s more like that, that they are quite not yet at the same level. (Toni)

The interviewees draw on age, that is, the seniority of the Finnish unit and the juniority of the Spanish one, to construct the Finnish unit as the more established and experienced. The question of age and experience is discussed both at the individual level, that is, constructing oneself as older, more experienced and thus more competent than the colleagues in the new unit, and at a more collective level, representing the Spanish unit as newer and less experienced by highlighting the seniority and experience of the Finnish unit.

Jussi stays mostly at the individual level when talking about his relations with his equivalent in Spain. He describes the colleague as a young man taking a humble and at the same time eager attitude towards his older and more experienced Finnish colleague, that is to say himself, expressing a willingness to learn from him. Jussi represents the colleague professionally in very positive terms, praising his correct attitude as well as the professional principles corresponding to those of the Finnish unit. Constructing his younger colleague in these terms enables Jussi to construct himself and the Finnish unit as the senior professional who knows how things really work, but at the same time also to construct the colleague as a talented younger person still learning the business and eager to learn it from Jussi and the Finnish unit. By giving credit to the Spanish colleague, Jussi indirectly highlights his own and his unit’s excellence.

Carlos, yes. Well, he is a kind of younger guy; has studied game design in London and has been in his position only since the beginning of this year. And well, he took the approach when he came here, he took right away from the beginning the kind of [attitude] – he is a smart guy, he took the kind of [attitude] that ‘Hey I’m the younger one here, I haven’t done this for a long time, so teach me everything’ A little bit of that kind of [attitude]. Well that appeals, and a person feels that ‘Hey, somebody thinks that I am good in doing this work’ so it started from there. And on the other hand when he presented about many things that he had been thinking and made a small presentation about their design principles to our designers, they were almost the same as our principles for good game design, so there have been no clashes ... so it has been very uncomplicated. And he has also been an extrovert and good in communication, speaks good English so it has been very easy. (Jussi)

On a more collective level, the Spanish unit is described as a start-up and thus a less experienced unit in comparison to that of the more senior Finnish unit. It is portrayed as a junior unit that has to or can be taught and supported. The employees in the
Spanish unit are described as eager to learn but not quite being at the professional level of the Finnish unit. In contrast to the junior Spanish unit, the Finnish unit is constructed as the older and more experienced unit, adopting a rather well-meaning approach to its eager but at the same time less-experienced sister studio.

Toni describes the Spanish unit as having an eager but at the same time an overly optimistic attitude towards their work. He points out the youthful eagerness of the new unit also leads to some unrealistic ideas on their side, leaving him and the others in the Finnish unit in the seemingly ungrateful position of sometimes having to suppress the new unit although not wanting to. Toni constructs himself and the Finnish unit as being able to judge what is realistic and what is not, something that the Spanish unit is portrayed as not yet being capable of.

The other thing is of course that we have a pretty big organisation, and the organisation in Spain is still small; they are more start-up spirited. And there is something, which sometimes feels bad on this side [the Finnish unit], but they [the people from the Spanish unit] come [to you] eagerly, but maybe a bit over optimistically, so you get this kind of feeling that you don’t want to put them down and you don’t want to suppress them in any ways, that’s the right word, you don’t want to suppress them. But still you can already see that this is not realistic. And when I see that they could feel exactly like that that I try to slow them down or try to create barriers or things like that. (Toni)

In addition to age (the seniority and juniority of the respective units) the employees of the Finnish unit also draw on questions related to culture and ethnicity to construct themselves a positive unit identity. They discuss the two units in terms of global and local, portraying the Finnish studio as more global and the Spanish studio as more local both in terms of the culture and products of the units. The ethnically less diverse Spanish unit consisting mainly of Spaniards is represented as culturally more bound to its geographical location by, for example, not always mastering the lingua franca of English very well in contrast to the people in the Finnish unit. In addition, the products developed in Spain are described as being targeted at local markets, whereas in the case of the Finnish products they are said to be very global. Thus, by drawing on the concept of global versus local, the Finnish unit is represented as a part of the big world, being a player in the global game markets not restricted to one location in comparison to that of the more local Spanish unit.

The locality of the Spanish unit is, however, not portrayed as something negative, but is instead described as adding the freshness of its ideas and the originality of its products. Not being a real threat to the global Finnish unit, which is playing another (and more demanding) game, the views provided by the Spanish unit can be praised as fresh, thus...
combining the locality of the unit with the newness of its ideas. This leaves the Finnish unit the role of being more global and experienced but at the same time also a more conventional unit.

What else [a ten seconds break in the speech] Well if you think they also have fresh views, through that that they live a little bit in a different world, that they are quite a local player in the end. We have a more global view, but they have good ideas even though they are local, good views, fresh views on things. (Toni)

As in the other two cases (USA and India), in the case of Spain, the interviewees draw on ethnicity/culture and seniority/juniority in different ways to construct their unit as professionally experienced and competent. However, in contrast to the two other cases, the employees construct an underlying similarity between the two units whilst at the same time identifying some differences between them by, for example, describing the Spanish unit as competent and professional, even if not entirely yet up to the even higher professional standards of the Finnish unit.

The interviewees have two different ways of playing with the similarity and/or difference as related to the categories of age (seniority/juniority) and culture/ethnicity. Both of the ways can be seen as means to establish positive identities for both of the parties but at the same time as means to highlight the virtues of the Finnish unit over the Spanish one. The first way is to establish a cultural similarity between the two but simultaneously highlight a difference in the seniority/juniority between the units. In other words, the two units are constructed as essentially similar but a difference is identified in relation to seniority/juniority and experience, enabling the employees of the Finnish unit to construct themselves as ahead of the Spaniards.

The second way is to construct a difference in internationality between the two. The two units are given rather different roles in terms of being local or global. The originality and localness of the Spanish unit are emphasized, binding it to its local cultural context. At the same time, the interviewees construct their own unit as a more international player, free from a specific cultural context and able to participate in the global game market.

By drawing on seniority and the global nature of their unit and the juniority and locality of the Spanish one, the employees of the Finnish unit construct themselves as experienced, established and capable of being one of the international players in the game industry. In contrast, the Spanish unit is constructed as relatively inexperienced, still a local player, although with potential to develop.
6.4. Social categories in constructing a unit identity

In this chapter, I have examined how the employees of the Finnish unit construct different identities for their unit when talking about themselves, the other national units and the relations between themselves and the other units. By looking at identity construction in relation to each of the other national units (USA, India, and Spain), I have identified four different identities that the employees construct for the Finnish unit. ‘Hardworking and competent Finns’ and ‘fun and games’ are constructed in relation to the USA, ‘reluctant babysitter’ in relation to India, and finally ‘well-meaning older sibling’ in relation to Spain. Table 4 summarizes the different identities and the ways of using social categories for their construction.
Table 4  Unit identities and identity work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Spain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identity</strong></td>
<td>Hardworking and competent Finns</td>
<td>‘Fun and games’</td>
<td>Reluctant babysitter</td>
<td>Well-meaning older sibling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constructed by whom</strong></td>
<td>Finnish managers of the Finnish unit</td>
<td>Mostly Finnish employees working at all levels both in studio and post-production</td>
<td>Employee and middle management level people both in post-production and studio, Finns and non-Finns</td>
<td>Employees working at all levels in the Finnish studio, Finns and non-Finns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description of the identity constructed</strong></td>
<td>A hardworking and successful Finnish unit having earned its good position in the company, equal to or even better than the headquarters</td>
<td>A more fun, creative, and productive place to work at compared to that of the ‘duller’ US unit</td>
<td>A competent and professional Finnish unit forced to act like a babysitter to the unprofessional Indians</td>
<td>A competent, experienced international Finnish unit acting as a well-meaning older relative guiding the promising, but not yet as established younger relative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of social categories</strong></td>
<td>Drawing on culture/ethnicity and age (seniority/juniority)</td>
<td>Drawing on culture/ethnicity and age (both organisational and national)</td>
<td>Drawing on age (seniority/juniority) and culture/ethnicity</td>
<td>Drawing on age (seniority/juniority) and culture/ethnicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ways of constructing a unit identity</strong></td>
<td>Using ‘Finnishness’ to construct the unit as hardworking, modest and competent. Playing on seniority/juniority of the two units to construct oneself as in the end the more experienced/professional one.</td>
<td>Drawing on culture to construct the Finnish unit as a more fun, creative and productive place to work at compared to that of the duller US unit.</td>
<td>Drawing on seniority of the Finnish unit and juniority of the Indian one to construct the Finnish unit as more competent and professional. Constructing the Indian unit as the ‘Other’ to be blamed for the misfortunes of the Finnish unit.</td>
<td>Drawing on seniority of the Finnish unit and juniority of the Spanish one to construct the Finnish unit as more competent and professional as well as constructing the Finnish unit as a more global (and thus more important) unit than the local, Spanish, one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example of identity work</strong></td>
<td>Jussi explains how, despite the longer history that people in the US unit have in the industry, the Finnish unit is more experienced in the core activity of the company, downplaying the seniority of the US unit and emphasizing that of the Finnish one.</td>
<td>Jussi compares the organisational cultures of the Finnish and US units, constructing the Finnish unit more lively and creative, and thus more suitable for the type of organisation.</td>
<td>Catherine talks about difficulties of working with the Indian unit, constructing the Indians childlike in need of being babysat, and herself and the Finnish unit as responsible adults.</td>
<td>Toni talks about the Spanish unit as eager but rather inexperienced local player, at the same time constructing the Finnish unit as experienced and globally more important.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The different identities are constructed against the background of the different histories and relations between the units. In ‘hardworking and competent Finns’ and to some extent ‘fun and games’, the employees of the Finnish unit manage to question the formally subordinated position of their unit in relation to the US headquarters by constructing the Finnish unit as having in many ways superior qualities compared to the US one. In ‘reluctant babysitter’, in turn, the dramatic consequences caused by the acquisition of the Indian unit are come to terms with by ‘othering’ the Indian unit and through that constructing the Finnish unit as professionally successful, and thus not to blame for its misfortunes. Finally, in the case of the ‘well-meaning older sibling’, both the Spanish and Finnish units are constructed as competent and successful, the Finnish, however, more so than the Spanish one. Despite the different starting points, the different employees in Finland seem to construct rather similar identities in relation to all of these other units, highlighting in one way or another the professionalism and competence of the Finnish unit over the others.

The different identities are constructed by making use of social categories and by combining them in different ways. How and which categories are talked about could be interpreted as being related to international acquisitions as the context for the discussion (cf. e.g. Tienari et al. 2005, Vaara et al. 2005, 2007). The seniority/juniority of the respective units and cultural characteristics and differences unsurprisingly become important topics in relation to each of the other national units. In the interviews, I identified various ways in which the categories were used in different contexts in constructing the different identities. The identity of ‘hardworking and competent Finns’ is first of all constructed by partly drawing on the age (seniority/juniority) of the respective units, emphasising the seniority of the Finnish unit and downplaying that of the US. Meanings related to age are further combined with national representations of a hardworking, modest and competent Finn, who has managed to alter a challenging situation to his benefit. ‘Fun and games’ is, instead, constructed by drawing on both organisational and national culture to highlight a difference between the Finnish and the US units and by constructing the Finnish unit as not only more fun and relaxed but also in the end more productive in comparison to the ‘duller’ US unit.

In creating the ‘reluctant babysitter’, the interviewees emphasize the seniority of the Finnish unit over the Indian one by downplaying the experience of the Indians as not valid and even harmful in the context of the new company. The interviewees construct the relationship between two as that of a child and an adult, emphasizing the juniority of the Indian unit and the seniority of the Finnish one, which can also be thought of as having some post-colonial connotations of a culturally childlike India and the mature and developed Finnish unit (cf. Vaara et al. 2005). The seniority of the Finnish unit and the juniority of the Indian are thus combined with cultural comparisons to highlight the professional superiority of the Finnish unit over the Indian.
To put it somewhat differently, people in the Finnish unit engage in making a hierarchy between the two units in different ways, constructing the Indian unit as inferior compared to the Finnish one. Thus, people can be seen to produce inequalities between the two units, for example, by using cultural stereotypes for the Indian unit. The Finnish unit becomes a norm in relation to which the Indian unit is evaluated, the Indian unit failing to do things in the ‘correct’ way. In contrast, the ways of working in the Finnish unit are commonly not questioned, but rather taken as given. Furthermore, inequalities and the production of inequalities can be seen to play an essential part in constructing a positive identity for the Finnish unit.

Finally ‘well-meaning older sibling’ is constructed by establishing cultural similarity between the two Finnish and Spanish units, but at the same time emphasizing the seniority of the Finnish unit in comparison to that of the Spanish. Also, the interviewees see a difference in the internationality of the two units, constructing the Spanish unit as more local and the Finnish one as more global, thus making it also a more important player in the game industry.
7 INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITY WORK AND JOB-RELATED IDENTITIES

In this chapter, I look at how people make use of different social categories when constructing themselves a positive job-related identity. By looking at how people talk about themselves at work, I have identified six different identities: ‘experienced professionals’, ‘career women’, ‘romantic migrants’, ‘internationals’, ‘non-ethnic professionals’, and ‘individuals’. ‘Experienced professionals’ relates to age, ‘career women’ to gender, ‘romantic migrants’, ‘internationals’, and ‘non-ethnic professionals’ to ethnicity, and ‘individuals’ relates to rejection or disregard for other social categories except for work.

The identities appear to be organised around the construction of oneself as a competent professional, thus highlighting the importance of work over other social categories. The other categories are managed in different ways that enable one to construct oneself one or more positively valued job-related identities. In addition, the same people can participate in constructing several of these identities and relate in different ways to one and the same social category.

7.1. Experienced professionals

In the first identity, the ‘experienced professionals’, employees make use of their seniority to construct themselves a favourable job-related identity. The identity is constructed by employees who are slightly older and have more work experience than most of the others working in the Finnish unit. Whereas most of the employees of the unit are under 30 and often in their first workplace, the ‘experienced professionals’ are between 30 and 40 and have longer work experience either from the Finnish unit, outside it or both. By drawing on their personal professional history and comparing themselves to others working in the unit, the ‘experienced professionals’ construct their seniority as an asset strengthening their professionalism.

Seniority can be constructed in different ways; by drawing on biological age and attaching it to experience, by constructing it through experience and by constructing one’s seniority through one’s position in the company. When asked about his professional background, Jussi, being some years older than the employees of the unit in average, refers directly to his age. He talks about himself as a rarity in the Finnish unit, where many of the employees, being younger than him, have not had time to work somewhere else. He reacts to the question of his professional background as something surprising and difficult to explain given his long work experience.

Q: What kind of background do you have professionally?
A: Professionally? Oh dear. Well, yes, I am, I think I am the oldest in the company at the moment, which of course means that I am in that sense a rare case in that I have had time to work in other places than here. (Jussi)

Continuing his answer Jussi explains at length what he has been doing previously, both in terms of his education and his professional life, emphasizing the long work experience he has in diverse fields. In the case of Maria, who is the same age as Jussi, age is not directly referred to but is instead something that appears between the lines when she talks the about the different phases of her career before starting in her current position. Maria talks about her age indirectly, connecting it to experience and competence. In line with Jussi, she talks at length about her professional background in a variety of fields she has been working in, representing herself as experienced and competent in several different areas.

I have always thought in general that I want to do something international, something with people. And for a long time I was, or during the first years of my career, I was lucky enough to work with organising events and marketing and communication; I liked it a lot. Then at some point I realized that it was too easy for me, even though marketing as such is not easy, but then because of my organisational skills, I ended up at X [another company], to work as a project assistant. It was a big and international project. (Maria)

Jussi and Maria construct themselves as having considerable work experience both within and without the Finnish unit. Not only having long work experience before coming to the company, they also describe themselves as having spent a relatively long time in the Finnish unit, each being one of the older employees there. While Jussi and Maria talk about their work experience both inside and outside the Finnish unit, Toni constructs his seniority primarily by drawing on the experience he has gained in the unit. As one of the founders of the unit, Toni started to work there as a young student and describes how he has been growing professionally with the different phases the unit has gone through. At the time of the interview, Toni is just over 30 but constructs himself as senior in the Finnish unit, in the company and the industry in general.

A: Well I’ve been here for a long time, that is, I’m one of the founders, of the original members, so that in this company I’ve been present from the beginning. X [the studio] was founded originally in ‘01 and we then started from the beginning of 2002. And before that, I have my background in the console game side. I was in the programming of console games in one Finnish company.

Q: What have you been doing in this organisation?

9 To anonymize the interviewees I have changed some of their personal details.
A: Well, in this organisation, I’ve been doing a bit of everything, especially in the early times when we were small, when we started there were in practice five or six people at that stage, so I made games, did some game designing, less that, was involved in selling the games, and then when the company grew other different roles came, quite a bit – I’ve done them all here. (Toni)

In comparison to Jussi, Maria and Toni, Ronaldo and Robert are newer to the Finnish unit, but have had important work experience from the professions they are also currently working in. Still being very fresh to the Finnish unit, Ronaldo has an impressive history in the game industry, being an on-and-off entrepreneur in the related fields from a very early age. Currently working as a senior game producer in the company, Ronaldo makes use of his entrepreneurial background in the game industry to construct his professional identity. He frames himself as a professional in the game industry, being familiar with the content, technology and entrepreneurial side of it, and thus having the ideal combination for his current position. The professionalism he has achieved in the industry is emphasized by also describing the difficulties he has encountered on his way. Even though he had the talent and motivation, the journey is described as not always having been easy.

Around when I was 15 years old I created my first company ... And, so I always wanted to have my own company. And after I joined the university in ‘93, a computer science university in Argentina, there were several incubators around and I started to work on several companies that were start-ups, and one of those was a game company actually, a game development company. And then I was discussing with another friend about hey, what if we open our own company something like that, to create games ... In the end of ‘98 and he said let’s try to open ours, and we made a business plan and it was approved by one of the incubator; we got the first prize in a kind of a jury competition. And, so it was me and my four friends creating the new game company, game studio, and after that, lots of learning, I mean lots and lots of learning. Because I had just the computer science background, but since I created the company I’ve been so much on the business and side, but I had to study, had to lots of research. But it’s, lots of learning, and that’s how I end up in the game industry. (Ronaldo)

Robert is not only new to the company but, unlike the other ‘experienced professionals’, also to the industry in general. Instead of being a gamer or having worked with related products, Robert has come to the industry as an outsider. Further, his work currently is not directly related to game development as such but to the business processes of the company. To construct his job-related identity, he draws on his business experience gained in other fields. Robert emphasizes that to successfully do his work the product as such does not matter, but what is important is the knowledge and understanding of
managing processes and people, which is something he has gained from his previous work experience. By distinguishing himself from those people having a background in the game industry and highlighting his business experience, he manages to construct himself as an experienced professional in the position he is working in.

When they decided to hire me a year and a half ago they didn't hire me for of my video games skills or my love of video games or my passion for video games, at home I played on my mobile phone before, a little a bit on the computer. I’m not a gamer, or I’m not fond of that. But the reason why I’m here is more because there is process that can be streamlined and can be worked on, there’s people that we can work with. And in my [short] career I’ve done a lot of different products, and at the end of the day, it doesn’t matter if my production is videogames or beer cans or shrimp as I used to do, at the end of the day it’s all about processes and people and focusing your priorities. (Robert)

In addition to age and experience, seniority is also constructed through one’s position in the company. Being older and more experienced than the employees in general the ‘experienced professionals’ also occupy the more senior positions in the unit, and as such construct themselves as competent and knowledgeable, having the vision to change key processes in the company. For example, in the following quotation Robert talks about the functional division between studio and post-production and the need for a common objective for the two, something that is very central to the functioning of the company. Robert represents himself as someone who sees what is wrong with the current state of things and has the vision and power to try to change things and move them in a better direction.

Here is another guy that handles the jobs, he’s Jonas, and we both understand that there is a big wall, and we are not the only one by the way... But we understand there is a big wall and we understand that here [studio] we have objective, and here [post-production] we have objectives, and they are not the same, and the moment we manage to have common objective, and then this wall [comes down]. So we are really really trying both of us to destroy this wall. (Robert)

One’s seniority is also constructed in relation to others in more junior positions in the unit. For example, when talking about themselves as managers the ‘experienced professionals’ can use their position to represent themselves as more experienced, knowledgeable or having a greater sense of responsibility than their subordinates. Jussi, being responsible for one of the departments of the unit, reflects his job-related identity to a large extent in relation to his subordinates. He describes himself as a
helpful supervising figure in relation to his help-needling subordinates, and also as such more experienced and knowledgeable than them.

My work is to lead the department. It is very much HR. I take care of the recruitment, all the things related to education, development discussions, I lead the productions, follow the productions, talk with my subordinates every week on how the projects are moving forward, try to help. Mainly I am like a person who holds them by the hand. (Jussi)

Maria, working as an HR manager, instead, talks about herself as the one who sometimes has to deal with problems created by employees of the unit, and as such represents herself as also having at times to take responsibility for those who do not realize that they should do it themselves. Also directly drawing on age, Maria constructs herself as the responsible adult in comparison to the badly behaving youngsters.

Then there can be small questions of discipline, which can be because of the stupidity of being young or sometimes you just notice that somebody starts to buck only because his/her motivation has decreased to zero. The most difficult are the kinds of situations where the person in question does not realize that they should do something about it himself/herself. (Maria)

The ‘experienced professionals’ seem, in a relatively straightforward way, to be able to make use of different meanings related to age (being more senior in terms of the biological age, experience, and position in the company) to construct for themselves a positively-valued job-related identity. Acting from a specific position in terms of age, they manage to represent their seniority as something positive, giving them more credibility and status professionally. Still being relatively young, but at the same time already more experienced and in a better position than the majority of the people in the unit, they seem to be able to use the different aspects of their seniority to their benefit.

### 7.2. Career women

For some of the interviewees, gender is a central social category used in constructing one’s job-related identity. ‘Career women’ are fairly successful female employees who ponder on their professional life in terms of their gender. Maria and Anna work in a very male-dominated position or profession, where their gender becomes an issue to be contemplated on. Maria works as the only woman in the top management of the unit, and Anna has, despite her young age, managed to obtain a highly desirable job as a game designer in the studio, being an exception as a woman in her profession in Finland. In both of the interviews, gender becomes a central topic discussed.
Both Maria and Anna have to deal with their ‘atypical’ gender in constructing a job-related identity with sufficient credibility. Maria, working as the HR manager of the company, manages to create a very positive job-related identity for herself by moving between rather different positions related to her gender and profession. In her talk, she moves between a tough manager and a caring HR professional looking after the employees of the unit. As a manager, Maria constructs herself as different from the other women, or what is expected from a woman. She describes herself as a special case by being and normally always having been the only woman in management. Maria highlights her successfulness at work, which she explains through her personal characteristics. Instead of getting her position free, she speaks of having earned it by pushing herself forward.

Well, for me it has been quite normal that I have almost always been the only woman, I don’t know, I don’t think that I am the quota woman, I think that I just have pushed myself there in some way. Maybe it comes quite naturally that I don’t, that I’m quite dynamic. (Maria)

When talking about herself as a manager, Maria compares herself with her male colleagues. She describes herself as not being what would be expected from a woman, that is to say being softer than men, but instead as being as tough as them, or even tougher. In other words, she constructs herself as being as capable as or even more capable than her male colleagues in managing the challenges related to her work as a manager.

If you think that men are tough, let’s say that I can be at least as tough as them and even tougher. (Maria)

In turn, when constructing herself as a HR professional, Maria talks about herself in terms of ‘traditional female’ virtues of caring and looking after the employees. By drawing on her age, profession and gender Maria constructs herself as the ‘mother of the unit’ taking care of the employees, who are generally younger than herself. In her description, she becomes a motherly figure able to solve the everyday problems of the somewhat helpless employees.

Maybe when one is in this situation, you have to solve things, so people can’t think of me just as a friend. But then they, just a minute ago, we fixed one girl’s trousers that had to be fixed rapidly, that kind of stuff. I come up with tricks; I come up with tricks everywhere. So that they can ask mama what they should do. (Maria)
Thus, when balancing between the different, and sometimes contradicting sides of her job-related identity Maria draws on both ‘male’ and ‘female’ virtues, being tough and caring at the same time. In this way, she manages to construct a positive job-related identity for herself, regardless of the sometimes contradictory requirements.

Anna, in turn, has a different way of dealing with her gender in the male-dominated profession in which she works. Being an exception as a woman in her profession, Anna, like Maria, constructs her job-related identity in relation to her male colleagues. However, instead of describing herself as similar to them, she highlights the differences between herself and her colleagues. In relation to her team, Anna describes herself as softer and more communicative, someone who tries to avoid conflicts and to create a positive work atmosphere. Working as a game designer, she explains how she tends to have somewhat different visions and solutions than her colleagues because she has a different taste and background in gaming.

But the different thing is that maybe because I’m a girl, sometimes I have a bit different visions of some solutions than they might have. And I’m the most casual of them all, so most of the guys, they tend to, when they look at a game they tend to try to make it deeper or more complicated because they have this more, that just heavy baggage with them. And well, sometimes I try to make it as simple as possible. (Anna)

Anna ponders on her difference from her colleagues not only in terms of gender but also in terms of the other social categories of age and ethnicity. Constantly referring to herself as a girl, Anna describes herself as young and inexperienced, pondering on her difficulties in insisting on her right as the game designer to decide on the visions and solutions of the games and being firm with her decisions. Instead of being firm like her colleagues, she describes how she drowns in listening too much to the requirements of her team members.

In addition to her gender, Anna describes ethnicity as another aspect distinguishing her from many of her colleagues. Not only are her colleagues male, but in many cases also Finns. Anna talks about herself as a girl coming from a different cultural background and as such different from her colleagues. In her interview, Anna positions herself as a representative of gender, age, and ethnicity.

I’ve noticed when I came, especially with Finns, they tend to be more quiet and centered on what they’re doing and they don’t meddle so much. And we [her nationality], like sometimes you can meddle too much, it’s like we can come and ‘So what are you doing?’ or ‘Look what I’m doing’, and sometimes I notice that they just want to be left alone and ‘Don’t talk to me so much’ [laughs] But yeah, it
Anna talks about herself as different but not worse than her colleagues. According to her, men and women have different ways of working, and she speaks of missing female support sometimes. Instead of making a distinction between herself and the other women, she emphasizes her gender and her similarities to other women when constructing her job-related identity. She highlights that she is not just a game designer but a female game designer. For Anna, being a female game designer is a source of pride. Instead of describing herself as having different and more ‘masculine’ characteristics compared to other women, Anna describes herself as an ordinary girl happening to have a real interest in games and to be lucky to work in the profession she does. Talking about herself as a kind of female pioneer in the field, she constructs her working in the profession as not only important to herself personally but also as evidence to show that girls also can become game designers.

I think for me it’s a great job for many reasons. Not only because I like it but for instance the female situations is like I try to raise the flag, you know, and try to make propaganda to girls and try to attract them. I did studies on that too in Argentina in my university, so it’s something that I really like, because it’s a job that you don’t have many girls in, and I’m kind of trying to prove that we make the difference. (Anna)

Thus, both Maria and Anna face the situation of working as the only woman in very male-dominated positions. In these circumstances, they make use of their gender in different ways to construct for themselves a positive job-related identity despite being women. Maria constructs herself both as ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ depending on the expectations of the professional role she is talking about. She thus manages to present herself always in a positive light. Anna, in turn, emphasizes her femininity and the difference from her male colleagues, her being a female game designer. Her profession and her having made it as a girl becomes something to be proud of.

Lynn has also been able to move on with her career rather well. Her situation is, however, somewhat different to that of Maria and Anna. She works in post-production, where most of the few women in the Finnish unit are located in this more female-dominated profession. Lynn started in the company working with phones but has
moved to working more with people, which she prefers. Her work consists mainly of co-ordinating and communicating with various people, and she describes herself as well organised and efficient in her work. When talking about her relations with others working in the unit (post-production), she describes herself with what could be considered gendered meanings of being co-operative, communicative and at times also somewhat demanding. Lynn explains how she is positioned by others (mainly men) as the mother of the unit, bossing them around.

I think they see me as sort of like a motherly figure which is not how I see myself at all; they, like people have told me that they kind of consider me to be like the mum of unit but I don't really because they are mostly guys, I don't if that's really true, but I don't know - I guess because I know how things should be done, and I know how I want them they sort of see me as, like so I guess, they sort of see me as a little bit bossy but that's what is supposed happen if you are if are supposed to get things done. (Lynn)

Lynn is proud to work in the post-production, and constructs herself as similar to some of the other women working there, who she describes as co-operative and goal-oriented. In contrast to her female colleagues, she distances herself from most of the men working in the Finnish unit, whom she describes as nerdy, uncommunicative Finnish engineers, and not speaking English well enough. She, in turn, is portrayed as the opposite of them, a woman, and a native English speaker who is social and has the interest and skills in working with people. By drawing on gender, ethnicity, and profession, Lynn constructs the majority of her male colleagues (in particular the Finnish engineers) as very bad communicators, while at the same time highlighting her own communication skills.

A: I think in general I guess connect more with the girls in the organisation than the guys, and there are like a few select guys; some of the guys they really have problems communicating especially the Finnish guys, I guess Matti is the one exception.

Q: Do you think nationality is an issue as you mentioned it before?

A: Mm, I think sex is more of an issue than nationality. Definitely with the women it is easier to work with them, at least in this organisation. I mean, I know in other organisations they can be pretty caddy and difficult but at least in this organisation it is really easy to work with the women, and it’s really tough to talk with some of the Finnish guys because lot of their English is really bad, so not only are they engineers and nerdy they also have bad English, and they don’t know how to express themselves. (Lynn)
Like Maria and Anna, Lynn constructs her identity in relation to men working in the Finnish unit. However, while the first two reflect on their gender in professions where being a man is a norm, Lynn does not need to question or justify her gender when constructing her professional identity. Instead of talking about herself as the only woman among men, she talks about women and men separately, and constructs the group of women as superior to the group of men. By using men (in particular the Finnish engineers) as ‘the other’ she constructs a positive job-related identity for herself.

Thus, while all of the three women ponder on their gender when constructing themselves a job-related identity, they do it in somewhat different ways and from somewhat different positions. In contrast to Maria and Anna, Lynn does not have to question her gender at the job-level but can rather use it, or meanings related to it, as an asset to construct for herself a positive job-related identity by identifying with other women and dis-identifying with the men working in the company.

7.3. Romantic migrants

One of the identities related to ethnicity is that of ‘romantic migrants’. The ‘romantic migrants’ construct their work identity in relation to two geographical places: their country of origin and Finland. They tell a story of change, of changing one’s life through moving from one country to another. The ‘romantic migrants’ describe themselves as having been unsatisfied or unhappy in their countries of origin before leaving and/or in a need of change. Elias was generally unhappy with Portuguese society, whereas for Paul and Natalie the situation was more connected to their professional life.

I came to Finland for vacation [laughs], and it was supposed to be a three-month vacation. I was going to see Europe, and I just finished my degree, [summed up] my master’s, and I kind of ran out of steam, I guess. I was a bit demotivated, I spent six years studying computer science, and I wasn’t really even sure that I wanted to be in the computer industry anymore, so I came to Europe to clear my head. And while I was here I kind of, well, settled down. I realized that I love this place, and I met a great girl who made it all more worthwhile to stay, and yeah, I just decided to settle down. So the job came up which made it even more appropriate to be here. (Paul)

Paul describes how he had always known that he wanted to work with computer games, but after his graduation from university he felt he had lost direction in his professional life. He took a couple of month’s holiday in Europe to seek direction in his life and ended up staying in Finland. Paul, like Elias and Natalie, explains how he came to
Finland more or less by chance. However, after coming to the new country, all the pieces of life are described as having fallen into places.

Both Paul and Natalie work in creative professions and describe their work as fulfilling themselves or an important part of themselves. In Finland, they say they have had an opportunity to develop professionally in the direction they have wanted. This is how Natalie describes her old life in Belgium in comparison to her new life in Finland.

Well in Belgium I’ve been working, actually I’ve done some studies in Belgium that are not related to Belgium. I missed something, I don’t know, I studied something that I did not really like to do and eventually I was stuck in that ... And then well, things went wrong, definitely wrong there, because it seems that someone else wanted to be at my place and eventually they drove me crazy so that I leave the place, so I left the place. Because after five months I was really sad to work there. And then after that I’ve been unemployed for quite some time. I just could not find any job and, I did some small things like I was selling clothes in let’s say Vero Moda equivalent, and I managed to survive but it was still not, so that’s why when I met my boyfriend and when I knew that he was living in Northern Finland, I was like I could at least try to go there for the winter because they were looking for people to guide the tourists and I was like, that’s still much better than doing anything. And then everything went so fine there, I mean I really found a good job for several months and then I applied to university and I got in, and then I found this job here and so far I manage to improve my situation in this company. So this country is really how could I say, synonym of luck for me. (Natalie)

Natalie describes how she ended up in Finland after the difficulties she had encountered in Belgium in her work working with things she was not interested in. Through having a Finnish boyfriend, Finland emerged as an opportunity to start anew professionally. Natalie abandoned the field she had been previously studying and working in and started to study art, which had been her passion since an early age. Gradually, she also managed to get work in the field. In her story, Finland is constructed as a land of opportunities in contrast to Belgium, which is more connected to living a kind of life she did not want to have. While explaining about her unhappy professional life in Belgium, Natalie constructs Finland as a place where her professional dreams are coming true.

For the ‘romantic migrants’, settling in Finland is not always only a practical question of being able to build the kind of life one wants but is also connected to questions of ethnic identity. Elias explains his dissatisfaction with Portugal by not liking the Portuguese society and not feeling a part of the Portuguese culture. For him, moving
away from Portugal was a way of getting to live the kind of life that he personally 
appreciated more and fitted better into. Elias distances himself from the Portuguese 
identity proposed by me and instead constructs himself as closer to a Finn than a 
Portuguese. Of all the Portuguese working in the company, he defines himself as having 
the weakest connection to Portugal.

Well, personally I don’t really consider myself Portuguese. I’ve moved away. It 
was a perfectly conscious decision. I have no intention of going back. I definitely 
consider myself much more a Finn than Portuguese. But as far as what makes us 
similar with the Portuguese, well one thing is the fact that we’ve all left Portugal, 
and it was at least for me a perfectly conscious decision. And so it’s kind of the 
same dissatisfaction, not wanting to be in Portugal. What makes me different? I 
think that of all the Portuguese here I’m the one with the least, with the, weakest 
relation to Portugal and the least cultural identity taken from Portugal, I could 
say. I don’t know, like people making references to Portuguese popular culture, 
I’m always an outside party because I never really got interested at all in the 
Portuguese popular culture or anything, so it’s kind of. Apart from the language I 
could say that we don’t really have much in common. (Elias)

Elias defines Finland as better fitting to his personality and values than Portugal, 
talking about himself as ‘by nature’ more Finnish than Portuguese. For Paul, however, 
becoming a Finn has been more of a gradual thing, a part of the adjustment process to 
the new country. He describes the process of change, the way he has gradually 
transferred from an ordinary New Zealander into a Finn. For Paul, the change is 
particularly apparent in relation to another New Zealander working in the company, 
whom he defines as a fairly typical New Zealander.

Because I never, you never see yourself changing, I guess, and it’s been a gradual 
thing. I’ve been here just long enough that the country is starting to wear off of 
me, and my accent is starting to slip a little bit, and my attitudes towards certain 
things has changed a lot. You know, everything has changed for me, but I’ve 
ever really noticed it, and the contrast of seeing myself against a fellow 
countryman, to see exactly how far from it it has shifted. (Paul)

Paul constructs himself as one of the Finns, as one of the guys. He talks about a cultural 
difference between himself and the Finns that existed when he was new to Finland but 
that is now disappearing after his having spent some years in Finland, living the 
Finnish life with Finns. Now there is, according to him, no division between himself 
and the Finns.
A: Obviously all the Finns, I have well, I feel like I’m one of them, so it’s like not really, I mean they all speak different language to me, but we’re all kind of carrying the same work ethic and the same motivation in the end.

Q: Well, you mentioned a little bit already, but why do you feel that you are the same as the Finns?

A: Because I’ve been so immersed in this culture for enough time that it’s not become a ‘me and them’ kind of mentality, it’s now an ‘us’ mentality. I live with a Finn, I work with Finns, my friends are Finns among others; it’s everywhere, so the difference is rapidly disappearing. I don’t see myself as being different because of that. (Paul)

Both Elias and Paul use ethnicity to construct their identity in their new country of settlement. However, neither of them describes his ethnicity primarily in terms of his country of origin but more in terms of Finland, replacing the old ethnicity with the new one. Ethnicity thus becomes constructed not as something one is born with and grown into but something that can be also acquired at a later stage, a state of mind. While both of them reject their ‘original’ ethnicity as an adequate description of themselves, they do it somewhat differently. In Elias’s interview, ethnicities become something that are out there and which one fits or does not fit into, and for him personally Finland became a better counterpart than Portugal. Paul, in turn, describes ethnicity as something less fixed, something changeable and malleable through experiences of being immersed into a new country.

The transnational life stories of the ‘romantic migrants’ that are widely discussed in the interviews become used as an asset in constructing a positive work identity. Moving from one country to another is represented as enabling the employees to fulfil their professional dreams. Ethnicity, in turn, even though frequently pondered on in the interviews, is mostly represented as something neutral not putting the ‘romantic migrants’ in a different position from anybody else working in the Finnish unit.

7.4. Internationals

‘Internationals’ as an identity relates to ethnicity, but instead of making use of one ethnicity the interviewees construct their ‘internationality’ as a part of their positive job-related identity. ‘The internationals’ are both non-Finns and Finns who have lived in more than one country and who emphasize their experiences abroad in their identity construction. One way to construct oneself as an ‘international’ is to distance oneself from others having their background in the same country of origin. Ville, Christian, and Catherine all construct themselves as different from others from their countries of
Christian defines himself as ‘not a normal Chilean’, and Catherine, a Singaporean in origin who has throughout her life lived in various countries, describes herself as not the typical Singaporean at all. Having been born in Singapore but living most of her life outside it makes her different from the other Singaporeans.

Well, basically, I have been born in Singapore, but I haven’t been living there so long. I’ve been living in Ireland and then I have been living in China and also in Canada. So that sort of influenced the way I am, I’m more talkative and stuff. So, basically I’m from Singapore, but then again I’m not hundred percent from there. Singaporeans are more poised. They try not to be as loud as I am, I’m usually very loud, and also they are not as talkative as I am. So they’re more like ‘hush, hush, I am trying to be polite’ and stuff. But I can be kind of rude sometimes when my boss doesn’t agree with me or something [laughs]. I’m totally not the typical Singaporean type. (Catherine)

Ville, too, constructs himself as different from the others coming from his country of origin, Finland. Even though he has not moved around quite as much as Catherine, Ville has spent a long period of his childhood in South-America, which he describes as having influenced his relations with his colleagues. While he says he does not pay too much attention to people’s nationalities, in the sense of not distinguishing between the Finns and non-Finns, he still describes how his international background has made him different from the other Finns working in the company. Instead of constructing himself as one of the Finns, Ville describes himself as more as a part of the non-Finns, with whom he says he is often more at ease with.

It’s quite funny. You don’t think so much about who is a Finn here and who is not. It’s like, that there are just these people. Well, maybe I am to some extent different from the other Finns in that I have a background, that I have lived my childhood in South-America, so that I’m quite. Sometimes I feel that I get better along with the foreigners than the Finns. That there is this side of Finns, which is a bit introvert and does not so much talk to the other people, so this side is for me a bit more difficult. It’s often quicker to get to know the foreigners. (Ville)

Some of the ‘internationals’ describe culture and ethnicity as something external to themselves, as a set of ways of doing things that are different in different places and that can freely and consciously be chosen to be taken as part of oneself if one so wishes. In the talk of ‘the internationals’, having spent time in different cultures makes them free or freer from their ‘own’ culture and open to the other cultures they have encountered. Instead of understanding and doing things according to one culture, they describe themselves as having a cultural repertoire they can choose from. In other
words, culture becomes described as a ‘smorgasbord’ from which one having enough international experiences can pick the best parts.

Ronaldo, an Argentinian who has also lived in Canada, makes use of both his nationality and internationality when constructing his work identity. He describes his first experiences spent abroad and how he gradually started to see things through new cultural lenses. Instead of seeing things one way, he relates how he acquired an additional way, now able to pick the best parts of each culture.

I went to Canada in ’91, and the first time you move to a different country, it’s like a total shock. It may be totally different from Argentina to Canada for example, and you start comparing things and say that’s right, that’s wrong, or this is really good, this sucks, or something like that then. But it’s not really like that. I mean you have to understand that that’s your culture and their culture is different. And it’s like you have blue glasses and then you put like a red one that you see things in red and not blue anymore. But when you leave the country after a while, you actually have like blue and red at the same time. So you change and you try to get the better out of the two cultures if I can say so. So I think that’s the big, the really good thing when you work with people from different cultures, so that you can learn a little bit more about other cultures or the way they see their work, the way they put their effort into their job. You should pick the best out of each one for you, like the way they behave, the way they present themselves or the way they discuss things. (Ronaldo)

Not only living abroad but also working in a multicultural environment is described by Ronaldo as an opportunity to learn different and often better ways of doing things. Ronaldo describes the multicultural work environment as an opportunity for everyone to learn from each other and to develop themselves.

According to the interviewees, working in a multicultural environment like the Finnish unit is interesting and rewarding but also at times challenging. Understanding and coping with the different ways of working is sometimes described as being challenging even for the ‘internationals’. One’s internationality can, however, be portrayed as an asset that can be made use of in coping with the challenges of a multicultural work environment, and as such contribute toward constructing a positive work identity for oneself in this particular context.

Maria constructs cultural differences, even if not very obvious in the work context, as something that can be at times seen in the ways in which people from different countries act. However, for her, having been studying abroad and always being interested in different ways of doing things, the differences become not so much a
problem but merely curiosities that can be handled. Maria, who is working as a manager, also describes how one’s own culture and stereotypes related to it can be consciously made use of in relations with people from other cultural backgrounds.

Cultural differences. Hard to say. Maybe I have a little bit, because I have got my education partly in Belgium; for example I have been to a school, I don’t how many nationalities we were, but it was a university, where you have people from all over, and I have maybe always thought that, tried to take into account and been interested in these different ways of doing things. Of course, you sometimes wonder a bit about some clichés, that he acts like a Brit and she acts like an American, and this in turn is as French as it can be, or as Russian as it can be. But I don’t stop there to chew it over. Or sometimes we joke that, well, Finland and the sauna culture is striking back. (Maria)

Christian, in turn, portrays the multicultural work environment as demanding but also as something that due to his internationality he can handle quite well. He constructs internationality as normal for him, something he has grown up with from an early age.

I mean, as I told you before there are people from different cultures so you cannot expect that everybody behaves like you. I went to international school, so it was fine for me, but I guess it’s fine inside the limits, so [thinks 5 s] I don’t know, I’ve been seven years outside my own country, so international for me is just normal, it’s everyday stuff. (Christian)

The ‘internationals’ use their internationality for constructing their work identity in different ways. While some of them construct themselves as primarily international, distancing themselves from any one ethnicity allotted to them, ‘internationals’ can also keep their ‘original’ ethnic identity and expand it with their acquired internationality. Being international is constructed as positive in several ways; firstly, the interviewees describe how having experience of several cultures makes oneself free or freer from the boundaries of one culture, replacing it with the ability to make use of different cultures according to one’s will. This ability is, in turn, portrayed as an asset in a multicultural work environment like the Finnish unit, both for one’s personal development as well as for being able to deal with some of the challenges of this particular type of environment. While reducing one’s own ethnicity, the internationals can at the same time position themselves as experts on dealing with others’ ethnicities, and as such also as the best equipped to work in the multicultural environment they do.
7.5. Non-ethnic professionals

For some of the interviewees, ethnicity becomes a central but difficult social category threatening the construction of a positive work identity. While ‘the non-ethnic professionals’ frequently draw on ethnicity in their identity construction, it is at the same time talked about as something problematic or negative influencing the position and the relations they have with others. The non-ethnic professionals adopt various ways of constructing themselves a positive work identity despite the difficulties encountered. The first way is to place the difficulties primarily outside the work context into the Finnish society in general and thus to construct the organisation as equal and fair. At the same time, the interviewees manage to protect themselves from the idea that they have experienced discrimination at work. The second way is to emphasize one’s professionalism and to use it to tone down the negative meanings attached to one’s ethnicity. In this way, ethnicity does not matter since one is first and foremost a competent professional and appreciated as such. The third way is to construct one’s ethnicity actually as beneficial for one’s work and professionalism.

Christian and Alexander distance questions or problems related to their ethnicity from the Finnish unit and instead locate them mostly outside the organisational context. They define their ethnicity (or more precisely being a foreigner) as problematic but primarily outside the organisational context in the Finnish society. They talk about being treated differently and sticking out negatively. The Finnish unit, instead, is explicitly constructed as a place where one’s ethnicity does not matter as long as you work well. Christian, who has been living in Finland for nearly ten years and speaks Finnish well, describes himself as an (unwelcomed) outsider in relation to the Finnish society. According to him, the fact that he is a foreigner can be noticed in ‘all the senses’ in the way he is being treated in Finland, for example, in how he is not given the same job opportunities and is in general treated with suspicion.

A: You’re never going to be [Finn] first of all. There are definitely much more for instance job opportunities [for Finns] and people approach you in a different way.

Q: So how are you treated then, if not as a Finn, so in what way will you be treated then?

A: As a foreigner.

Q: Yeah, what does it mean?
A: People approach you in a kind of protective way or something, defensive way. That’s defensive, I don’t know. They are kind of like reserved, so people won’t approach to you on this. (Christian)

Alexander, too, talks about being a foreigner as placing one in a somewhat difficult position. In line with Christian, he describes how foreigners can be treated with suspicion. The difficulties he talks about are not so much connected to something concrete but merely to a general feeling of uneasiness that he experiences when communicating with Finns outside the work context. While Christian seems to ponder on the difficulties as just the way things are, something that one cannot do anything about, Alexander describes how he tries to control the information others have on him. He seeks to avoid the position of a foreigner, easily given to him by Finns and instead attempts to ‘pass’ as a Finn in the eyes of Finns, to be seen and treated like anybody else.

For Alexander, who looks like a Finn, language is the key issue. He describes how his lack of knowledge of the Finnish language, for example the way he pronounces the common words, reveals him as a foreigner. He tells of his attempts to pronounce the words in the correct way so as to not reveal his ethnic identity.

Q: Can you think of situations where it would have been negative that you are from Russia?

A: Well, [silence 5 s] Not really. I can say that I still feel a bit, I can’t feel absolutely relaxed when I’m communicating with the people in the shop or like my everyday life, because I don’t know the language, I have to communicate in English and sometimes maybe I’m a bit shy, when I for example meet the people and I’m starting to talk English, I somehow feel or maybe it’s even like, maybe the person don’t give me the reason to feel it, but I feel that the moment I start talking English, the person thinks that I’m foreigner. And well, it’s natural feature of most people that you always think about foreigners with a bit of suspicion maybe. You’re not sure, they’re different for you, that’s why people prefer to be a bit careful. I can’t say that I really experience some kind of this thing, but this probably doesn’t make me feel like absolutely relaxed.

Q: Can you explain to me a little bit more how do you feel in that kind of situations?

A: Well, for example I’m really trying hard to imitate the natural way Finnish people are saying simple things like ‘moi’ [hi in Finnish] or ‘kiitos’ [thank you in Finnish], because in most of situations those are two words I really need to say, in
shop or bus. And so, I don’t know, it’s kind of important, not important but I feel more relaxed if I’m not sure that the person, when he or she hears me saying ‘moi’ or whatever, I’m not sure that he understands or not understands that I’m foreign, but I’m just trying to sound natural. I don’t really want to look like foreigner or different. So if there would be magic pill that would allow me to talk freely Finnish, that would be excellent, of course I would use it. (Alexander)

While ‘non-ethnic professionals’ often talk about the difficulties related to their ethnicity or being a foreigner as something that happens outside the company in the Finnish society, one’s ethnicity can also become problematic within the Finnish unit. Alexander talks about how he through his own personal behaviour tries to avoid creating stereotypes of Russians or confirming the existing ones. By behaving in an exemplary way he hopes to create a positive picture of Russians.

Q: What does it mean for you to be a Russian here at work? Or does it mean anything?

A: Well, I can’t say that it really means something, but of course I’m feeling a bit, I’m feeling that when people judge about Russians, they can base these judgments on communication with me or something like this, so I feel, so I just trying to act as a good Russian, like not to show any negative things, that way the people who will consider as a basic Russian features or characters, something like this.

Q: Why do you think that’s important?

A: Because, of course no one likes [it] when people say something bad about the nation or social group or whatever, so we’re trying by personal example show that those stereotypes are just stereotypes. (Alexander)

Milan, in turn, talks about difficulties related to his ethnicity primarily in the context of the Finnish unit. In his case, his ethnicity suddenly became central when the company bought a unit in India, which caused a lot of turmoil at the Finnish side. Milan, being an Indian himself, experienced a change of attitudes towards him by others working in the Finnish unit. From being a part of the work community he suddenly became excluded.

People just usually, I felt like after acquisition people used to be, before acquisition people used to be, more willing to talk to me, not acting friendly or be friends with me, just make up a conversation when we are having lunch and we are really nice [and then] you can comment, you know talk about it, they’re from same organisation, now if I go there and people are talking to themselves, I’m
sitting there and nobody tries to make up a conversation, and I’m just like a stranger to them or they are just like I’m not even there, they are ignoring me.

(Milan)

Milan describes the attitudes towards Indians in the Finnish unit as generally very negative, putting into the question the intelligence and competence of the people in the newly acquired unit. He, however, makes a distinction between himself and the other Indians in how they are being seen by his co-workers in the Finnish unit. In contrast to the Indians in India, he has proven himself professionally, thus should not be mixed with the Indians in India.

A: I think the main points are those comments I could make that it was just, they were trying to prove that, they are the most smart people and the Indian people what they have [bought off] in the company and the most dumbest people on the earth, they don’t know how to do things, that’s the main thing I can say.

Q: Do you think that you are seen in the same way or are you seen in a different way?

A: No, I would not say that I am seen the same way; it’s just the office and the country I would say. For me it’s the same, like, because I have proven myself and no one can question or doubt my performance here, but there, maybe sometimes it happens that in back of the mind they would say “He’s an Indian dude” you know the way the things they do so, but I’m not sure. (Milan)

In the organisational context, one way for the ‘non-ethnic professionals’ to deal with their at times challenging ethnicity is to highlight their professionalism and by doing that to tone down the importance of their ethnicity. The ‘non-ethnic professionals’ construct themselves as competent and hardworking professionals, who are ambitious, focused and have managed very well in their work life and who, as such, should be judged not based on their ethnicity but on their professional qualifications. By emphasizing their professionalism and simultaneously playing down their ethnicity and the negative meanings attached to them through it, the ‘non-ethnic professionals’ seek to construct a positive work identity despite the difficulties encountered. For example Alexander legitimizes his decision to come to Finland by explaining it via career reasons instead of the ‘less respectable’ aspirations of seeking a better life than at home or just searching for experience. He points out how his reason to come to Finland was purely professional; he had been making a nice career in Russia, but after having reached a certain point he had no further opportunities to develop professionally. Thus, he constructs himself as someone with good qualifications and the best intentions who took the chance to become even better.
I started to work on mobile games about, I think it’s about five years ago now. And it turned out to be very interesting and it was at that time and still [is] quite promising field. So I started creating some graphics. I think I did quite nice progress and kind of career in X [his home town]. And so last three years in X [his home town] I worked in some company where to my mind I achieved what I could achieved, I gained the experience that I could gain at that position. So I started to look for new companies. So the reason why I found job abroad wasn’t that I was searching for better life or abroad experience, I just wanted to find some company that will give me knowledge and experience I need to. And it appears so that there was no such options in Russia so I just start looking wider. (Alexander)

A challenging ethnicity can also be turned into something positive professionally. Alexander ponders on how he as a Russian may have brought a different kind of perspective useful for the creative products the game company is developing. Milan, distinguishes himself from the other Indians in the company to ensure himself a positive work identity. Coming from a different part of India, he describes himself as being different from his Indian colleagues having difficulties in adjusting to the new company. While constructing the other Indians as reserved and unconfident, he portrays himself as very confident.

I’m from the south India, they are from north India, it’s like different country for me. It’s like of course the culture is basically the same, the language is different the food is different, the clothing is different everything is different, [of course] that doesn’t affect that the business [flow], but it affect picture that there are so many other things that are different from what I am used to from my twenty two years in India, sometimes I am surprised: What, how can it be? It wasn’t like this in X [his home town] at least, and people are not like that in X [his home town], they are like a bit different I would say, people in Y [the place where the Indian unit is located] are a bit more reserved, and I would say they’re not so confident of what they, so maybe because of, language, I don’t know, some things just affects their confidence even if they know something they wouldn’t, they are not able to express it properly, so for me it’s not the problem; I am full of confidence; it’s like I’m a dissimilarity there. (Milan)

Despite the differences described by Milan, he positions himself as the expert of the Finnish unit on India. He draws on his ethnicity to emphasize the specific understanding and skills that he as an Indian has when dealing with the new unit. For Milan, who is closely working with India, this is an important way to highlight his competence not only for the work he is doing but also the potential importance that his knowledge may have for the whole company. In a way, his ethnicity puts him in a better position compared to anyone else in the Finnish unit, possessing knowledge and
understanding not available for the others. Thus, Milan manages to construct himself as simultaneously being sufficiently close to the other Indians to be an expert on them but far enough distant to qualify as a competent professional in the Finnish context.

If you do a business in some country, whose culture is unknown to you, I don’t think so you stand so much chance to do it or there will be so many difficulties, but I know the culture there and I understand the thinking of the people there. I know they will try to do something this way, they will try to do some other thing that way, and I can try to plan or predict the things they will do or they won’t do, so it just gives me an advantage over the people there, I can plan things before they can even start to think about it. (Milan)

By playing with the different sides of his ethnicity Milan manages to construct himself a rather positive work identity at least in terms of his professionalism. He succeeds in minimizing the ‘negative’ aspects of his ethnicity, of being like the other Indians, and in maximizing the positive aspects, that is, the competence and vision in his profession. He manages not only distance himself from the other Indians, who are often seen very negatively, but also to use his ethnicity to construct himself as being not only equally as good as the others in the Finnish unit but in a way even better.

7.6. Individuals

‘Individuals’ refers to an identity constructed by employees primarily drawing on their work when talking about themselves in the context of the Finnish unit. Other social categories are less drawn on, or they can be also explicitly rejected. Thus, the first way for the ‘individuals’ to construct their job-related identity is to pass over wider societal social categories when talking about themselves at work. In the case of the ‘individuals’, in addition to what is said, what is not said (i.e. what is left disregarded) becomes central.

The ways in which social categories are or are not talked about have to be considered in relation to the interview as the context for identity work. During the time of the first set of interviews, I was particularly interested in cultural identities; thus, culture and ethnicity are built into various places in the interview guide and also asked about directly. Ethnicity is the social category mainly introduced by me to the discussion, and thus also becomes the category that is mostly talked about after work. Given the questions that I pose in the interviews, it becomes difficult for the interviewees not to say anything in relation to ethnicity, even if only at the superficial level, reproducing national stereotypes or rejecting the importance of ethnicity in the work organisation.
Jouni and Mikko, two Finnish, male employees focus in their interviews primarily on describing their experiences directly related to their work. In both of the interviews, there are rather few references to other social categories than work. Jouni talks about himself mostly in terms of his work, as well as describing himself as forming a part of the smokers taking breaks together. Ethnicity as the only wider societal social category discussed in the interview is introduced in the very late part of interview when directly taken up by me. When asking about his experiences of the multicultural work environment, Jouni brings up rather general observations on working in a multilingual work environment, having difficulties in coming up with another example.

Q: Can you notice that this is a quite multicultural work environment, so can you notice it somehow here at work. What kind of experiences have you had?

A: Well, first what comes to mind is probably that, the first thing you can notice it from, that here are a lot of employees that don’t probably talk or haven’t been talking and some don’t even understand Finnish, well so that influences it and then there is also that sometimes somewhere when you [talk] about something so there are some guys that Indian or Russian between each other or another language, that there is a lot in a way different kind of people. Mm, I don’t know then, sometimes you notice that you talk English yourself even though there are only Finns around and well this is the most visible thing that comes into my mind.

Q: Yeah

A: Mm

Q: Mm

A: Well, is there something else, at least I can’t think of anything else now. (Jouni)

Jouni ponders on his own ethnicity only when directly asked about it. When asking about his nationality and the consequences that it might have for him at work, Jouni struggles, saying that it is nothing that he had thought about. Instead, he constructs his nationality as rather unimportant in the work context, having no bigger consequences.

You never think about it that in a certain situation there is something that is caused by the fact that you are a Finn. That at least nothing like that becomes conscious. I think that if it [being a Finn] has some influence, so it surely is, mm,
something like that unconsciously maybe somebody, with some people it might be easier to get along with. But that, I think, that it’s quite small. (Jouni)

Neither are other social categories easier for the ‘individuals’. When I ask about the similarities and differences that Mikko could see between himself and the other men working in the unit, Mikko seems to have difficulties in answering the question.

A: Other men

Q: Mm

A: Well it is again that, having a good sense of humour is something that is similar to all [pause 7 seconds]. One can answer that to almost everything, that the humour and interest in games, sports and things like that. And the difference is I guess, that I talk more, make the running. (Mikko)

The second way to construct oneself as an individual is to explicitly reject social categories as anything important for one’s job-related identity. This can be done by, for example, rejecting the importance of social categories in general in influencing people, or distancing oneself from a specific social category that is imposed on one by others. Since the job-related identities are constructed in the interview situation, this rejection of social categories can be seen as a part of the interaction between the interviewees and me as the interviewer.

Throughout the entire interview, Mai, a non-Finnish woman working in the unit, avoids talking about social categories, and when asked about them indirectly she explicitly distances herself from them. She seems reluctant to talk about social categories, but I keep on coming back to the topic. Seeming slightly irritated, Mai states that she does not see differences or similarities between people but for her everyone is more or less the same, a human being. Instead of thinking in terms of social groups, Mai emphasizes the personal characteristics that make people different from each other.

A: But that’s the thing with me because I see that people are the same, so I can’t really find the differences or similarities.

Q: So you think in general people are the same here more or less?

A: Yeah. I mean of course they have different personalities, but in general, but that’s what they are different, but in general they are human beings and then they are happy and [people] have their [own] problems.
Q: What makes them similar, if you think that they are similar here so?

A: I don’t know for me, I don’t, I can’t, I don’t really characterise people, so I don’t see the differences, almost not at all, I mean I could say ok, [I’m] kind of more flexible and this person is more strict so that’s like different, but there’s nothing wrong with that so, it’s difficult. (Mai)

Adam, a Swede working in the unit, also constructs his job-related identity primarily in terms of his profession, making very little use of other social categories. When asked about the possible positive consequences of his ethnicity at work, he talks about a love-hate relationship between Finland and Sweden, but also points out that it only has positive (if any important) consequences for him as Swede working in Finland. Having been a Finn living in Sweden myself, I had a strong preconception that the long and sometimes complicated relationship between the two countries would influence Adam’s identity work in one way or another and was curious how. While bringing up the love-hate relationship between the two countries, Adam, however, avoids giving it too far-going consequences for himself personally, despite my insistence.

Q: Well can you think of any situations where would have been positive that you are from Sweden, here at work?

A: I guess [we and] Finland have always had a love-hate relationships so, it’s only been positive for me - people tend to joke with me about where I come from, I don’t mind, so, yeah, it’s been all positive.

Q: How would you describe this relationship between Finland and Sweden then?

A: Like, whenever there is an ice hockey match between our countries then, people give me, what do you call, like, well, they comment about it, which is nice.

Q: Have you experienced that it wouldn’t be so nice?

A: No, it’s always been good, I’m a good loser, so if Sweden loses I don’t take it bad.

Q: Can you think any other situations than ice hockey, is there or anything else?

A: Well, any excuse to compete between Finland and Sweden, like when was it Eurovision song contest when the Sweden had the gayest band ever and Finland had Lordi, then of course there was some funny remarks, but, then I just lay low for a while.
Q: In those situations where there is that competition between Finland and Sweden, is it important for you that you are from Sweden?

A: No, it's not important, it's just fun. (Adam)

Even though the ‘individuals’ tend to disregard or reject wider societal social categories when talking about their experiences at work, they do not, because of my questions, totally manage to avoid them. The ‘individuals’, however, adopt different ways of disregarding the categories in their identity construction, such as talking about others instead of oneself or explicitly challenging the social categories offered by me. Instead of social categories, the ‘individuals’ can also make use of personal characteristics in identity construction.

By disregarding or rejecting the other social categories, the ‘individuals’ construct the identity of a neutral employee, working in a neutral organisation, in which one’s social location does not have any real importance. One’s professionalism is talked about as separate from any other social categories, which are not seen as entering into the ‘neutral’ work sphere. Instead of locating the differences between people in social categories, they are often explained by personal characteristics. Thus, representing oneself as a hardworking and competent employee can be seen as sufficient for the construction of a positive work identity.

7.7. Constructing oneself as a competent professional

In this chapter, I have looked at how employees working in SmartGameSoft construct themselves positive job-related identities by drawing or not drawing on different and intersecting social categories in their identity work. The different identities, the social categories used, and the strategies for constructing a positive job-related identity are summarized in Table 5 below.
I identified six different identities that are constructed by making use of one or more social categories: ‘Experienced professionals’ relates to the intersection between age and work, ‘career women’ between gender and work, ‘non-ethnic professionals’, ‘internationals’ and ‘romantic migrants’ to ethnicity and work, and for ‘individuals’ wider societal social categories are disregarded or rejected.

In two of the identities, ‘experienced professionals’ and ‘internationals’, the interviewees represent the social group that they are a part of as something valuable professionally, and use the social category to construct a positive job-related identity for themselves. A positive job-related identity is thus constructed by combining two social categories in a favourable way. In two other identities, ‘romantic migrants’ and
'individuals', the social category is neither represented as positive or negative, but the neutrality of the category or the lack of using any can serve to highlight one’s work and professionalism and, as such, to construct a positive job-related identity. In the remaining two identities, ‘career women ’ and ‘non-ethnic professionals’, the social category can become a problem for one reason or another. The interviewees constructing these identities face the challenge of turning a disadvantaged position into something less problematic or even desirable. Moreover, the interviewees do not necessarily neatly fit into only one identity, but can participate in constructing several identities, either by making use of several social categories or of one social category in different ways. Identities are not only constructed from one, but several positions, each calling for different ways of approaching social categories.

Even though the employees use different social categories in a variety of ways, one thing all the six identities constructed seem to have in common is the construction of a certain type of employee, a competent professional, whose work-related qualities are of primary importance. To construct oneself as a competent and successful professional, the interviewees ‘play’ on different social categories and the intersectionality between them. The categories are combined, emphasized, played down, and separated in different ways, making it possible to represent oneself in a positive light.

To put it differently, the intersectional job-related identity work analysed in this chapter can be seen to be taking place at the interface between positive identities and inequalities. Inequalities become important in the sense of providing rather different kinds of positions for different people to construct their identities from in relation to what was considered to be a positive identity. For example, the question arises of what kind of employee(s) is seen as ideal (Acker 1990) in the specific context(s), that is: who is or can be seen as successful or competent and how people’s different positions in relation to these ideals can influence their intersectional identity work? In the following chapter, I will go further into examining inequalities in intersectional identity work.
8 INTERSECTIONAL STRATEGIES IN IDENTITY WORK

In this chapter, I summarize and further discuss the ways of constructing job-related identities as explored in the previous chapter. The analysis shifts from examining identities and identity work as related to the specific social categories towards discussing what I call 'intersectional strategies' in identity work, particularly in relation to positions of privilege and/or disadvantage provided by social categories/relations. Based on the findings from the previous chapter, I identify two main types of strategies, combining and separating strategies, used by people in different positions to construct themselves a positive job-related identity. The findings suggest that in order to construct such an identity, people might need to use different kinds of intersectional strategies depending on their positions in terms of privilege and/or disadvantage.

The intersectional strategies are further discussed based on intersectional strategies identified in the second data set that suggest a less straightforward relation between people’s positions of privilege and/or disadvantage and the intersectional strategies being used. Furthermore, the focus shifts from the intersectional identity work in relation to positively valued job-related identities towards job-related identities in general.

8.1. Combining and separating strategies

In the previous chapter, I examined the different job-related identities constructed by people working in SmartGameSoft and the ways in which these identities were constructed by drawing and not drawing on the social categories available to them. Whereas the different identities seemed to share ‘positive’ notions of oneself at work, such as being competent, successful and/or eager to learn, social categories created

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10 By ‘intersectional strategies’ in identity work, I mean different ways in which people ‘do the relations’ between their different social categories when attempting to construct a desired self-identity from the starting points of what is plausible for them as specific kinds of individuals in their specific context. This is, however, not to say that intersectional identity work is always about using intersectional strategies. In other words, I do not intend to claim that intersectional identity work is necessarily intentional nor fully transparent to the people doing it. Rather, people could be seen to remain many times unaware or only partly aware of much of the identity work they engage in, only occasionally becoming conscious of it. However, at the same time, not being aware of the identity work does not necessarily mean that people do not still engage in many different ways of controlling how they represent themselves.

Furthermore, an interview situation can be seen as a rather special context in terms of the intentionality and the awareness in identity work. The very fact of being interviewed can lead to people being more aware of what they say and how they represent themselves. Moreover, people might be also more prone to control how they construct themselves, for example, aspiring to present themselves in a positive light.
rather different kinds of positions for different people in different contexts, influencing the ways in which identity work was done.

In this chapter, I will go further into how the identities are being constructed, in other words the kinds of ‘strategies’ that people use in their intersectional identity work. Based on the findings from the first set of data, the interviewees engaged in different kinds of intersectional strategies in their identity work, that is, in different ways of managing the relations between the various social categories they were related to. I have identified two main types of intersectional strategies that the interviewees used in their identity work: combining strategies and separating strategies, both of them consisting of various sub-strategies.

The interviewees engaged in several combining strategies. In all the combining strategies, the social categories used became mutually constitutive (see e.g. Brah and Phoenix 2004). Meanings related to one category, that of ‘job’, were constructed through meanings attached to other categories, those of age, gender and ethnicity, albeit in different ways. In other words, the category ‘job’ and, through that, one’s job-related identity was constituted by applying meanings from other categories.

Several kinds of combining strategies were identified. In the first combining strategy, supporting strategy, the interviewees used meanings from one social category to support the positive construction of another to be able to construct themselves in a positive light. In my data, the supporting strategy was primarily used by ‘experienced professionals’ and ‘internationals’ as a relatively straightforward way of supporting a positively valued job-related identity. The interviewees using the supporting strategy acted from a rather privileged position, at least in relation to this particular social category.

The second combining strategy is called the downplaying strategy. In this strategy, the relationship between the two (or more) social categories is more complicated than in the supporting strategy. The downplaying strategy is in fact not only one strategy but consists of various strategies that the interviewees use alternatively or combined. Downplaying strategies tend to be used by interviewees that find themselves one way or another in a disadvantaged position in terms of one or more social categories, by ‘non-ethnic professionals’ and some of the ‘career women’. Consequently the key to the downplaying strategy is to make a disadvantaged social category one is a member of harmless to one’s job-related identity. In all the downplaying strategies, the social category is talked about at least in two contradictory ways. First of all, being a member of the social category is defined as a problem, which can be done directly or more indirectly, and secondly its threat to one’s own job-related identity is made harmless in different ways.
The first downplaying strategy is to give positive meanings to the disadvantaged category and/or one’s membership of it in order not to threaten the construction of a positive job-related identity. For example, Maria in ‘career women’ used the positive meanings of her gender (e.g. that of women being care taking) to construct herself a positively-valued professional identity in the specific role she had in the company. Milan, in turn, in ‘non-ethnic professionals’ occasionally managed to change his stigmatizing ethnic identity to something positive professionally by highlighting it as contributing to the cultural competence needed by the business. However, this was done alongside describing his ethnicity as a problem in the work organisation.

The second downplaying strategy is to construct oneself as different in relation to others in the same category in order to pass as an ideal or appropriate employee for the specific job one has (cf. Acker 1990). Both Maria and Milan constructed themselves as different from others in their disadvantaged social category, Maria by describing herself as not like other women or in some aspects closer to men, and Milan by creating a difference between himself and other Indians in the company coming from a different part of India. By constructing themselves as different, they simultaneously constructed differences within the category by pointing out that not all the women or Indians are the same.

The third downplaying strategy is to alter the context, that is, to acknowledge the difficult position provided by a social category but at the same time to claim that it has no importance in the specific organisational context, nor consequently for their job-related identity in that organisation. Both Alexander and Christian talk about prejudices they have experienced in Finnish society but are quick to add that they do not have any importance in the company they are working in. In this way, they manage to construct themselves as professionals that are taken seriously in their work organisation. By altering the context, the interviewees manage to construct their work organisation as free of discrimination and themselves as not being victims of it either.

The second main type of strategies, separating strategies, differs from the combining strategies in that instead of mixing the categories these strategies focus on keeping the categories apart. Thus, what characterizes the separating strategies is talking about work separately from other social categories, or discussing no other social categories than work. However, even though in separating strategies social categories do not intersect, they can be still seen as intersectional strategies in terms of deciding to keep the categories separated. The result of using any of the separating strategies is constructing other social categories as unimportant for one’s job-related identity.

Separating strategies are typically used by ‘romantic migrants’ and ‘individuals’. In the first separating strategy, social categories are discussed but their importance for one’s
job-related identity is openly rejected. Mai makes explicit statements on other social categories than work as not being important in the work context as a reaction to my questions. In the second separating strategy, other social categories are simply not used when talking about work or the work organisation. In their interviews, Mikko and Adam talk very little about other social categories than work. The rejecting and disregarding strategies are used by ‘individuals’. In the third separating strategy used by ‘romantic migrants’ other social categories can be discussed, but they are defined as unimportant for one’s job-related identity. For example, Paul and Elias ponder on their ethnicity but define it as unimportant for their job-related identity. The different intersectional strategies are summarized in Table 6.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Type of strategy</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Description of the position of power</th>
<th>Description of the strategy</th>
<th>Example of the strategy</th>
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<td>Supporting strategy</td>
<td>'experienced professionals', 'internationals'</td>
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<td>Jussi in 'experienced professionals' uses age and experience to construct himself a positively valued job-related identity.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Making disadvantages related to a social category harmless or even positive to one's job-related identity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Downplaying strategy (a): Giving positive meanings to a social category</td>
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<td>Disadvantages in terms of a social category</td>
<td>Giving positive meanings to the category threatening the construction of a positive job-related identity. Constructing one's membership in the social category from negative to positive.</td>
<td>Milan in 'non-ethnic professionals' occasionally manages to change his 'stigmatized' ethnic identity to something positive professionally by highlighting it as contributing to the cultural competence needed by the business.</td>
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<td>Downplaying strategy (b): Constructing oneself as different from others in the category</td>
<td>'career women', 'non-ethnic professionals'</td>
<td>Disadvantages in terms of a social category</td>
<td>Constructing oneself as different from others in the category to pass as a suitable employee for the job.</td>
<td>Maria in 'career women' describes herself as not like other women or in some aspects closer to men, thus not having the weaknesses of other women that could harm her work.</td>
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### 8.2. Introducing new combining strategies

The intersectional strategies identified in the first set of data are further discussed based on the material from the second set of data. In the new material, I identified three additional combining strategies that are difficult to position either under the supporting strategy or the downplaying strategies. In the first strategy, the interviewees describe their position as disadvantaged but, instead of turning the difficult position into something harmless or positive, it is presented as a matter of fact. In the second strategy, the interviewees could be seen to act from a rather privileged position, being a part of

<table>
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<td>Mai makes explicit statements on other social categories than work as not being important in the work context as a reaction to my questions.</td>
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<td>Paul and Elias ponder on their ethnicity but define it as unimportant for their job-related identity.</td>
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majority or what is considered to be normal. However, instead of drawing on the benefits enabled by their position, they distance themselves from others in the social category, constructing themselves as different by questioning the ways of being or acting of others from the same category. In the third strategy, the interviewees describe their changing positions at the interface of several social categories.

8.2.1. Describing disadvantage

Karoliina and Katja, two young women, talk about the difficulties their gender, in combination with other social categories, has caused them at work. Karoliina, being responsible for the HR questions in the company, tells of a co-worker who has a tendency to be openly sexist and describes her difficulties in dealing with the situation by drawing on her class background, gender, and position at work. Defining herself as coming from the upper middle class and having a good upbringing and manners, Karoliina describes the discrepancy between herself and her colleague who is being openly sexist. She explains how she is offended by the comments but describes it as difficult to take action, because of her good manners. At the same time, she feels obligated to take action, since she is working with HR questions.

Well, I could come back to the question of class or gender. I feel, myself, I come from an upper middle class background, my parents are both quite successful civil servants and I feel that I have had a good upbringing and good manners. We have one person at the office, who likes to give his opinions quite openly and they can be also pretty sexist. And then I feel that I should let it be but then on the other hand I would like to say that you can’t behave like that. But it’s really difficult to take the situation, because in principle if I think about myself as the person being responsible for HR questions, I should maybe say something about it but then again personally I wouldn’t like to take action because my own manners stop me doing it; I wouldn’t like to start a conflict and I wouldn’t like to hurt the other person by saying something. But it has hurt my feelings personally.

(Karoliina)

Karoliina continues talking about herself as reacting ‘emotionally’ even though ‘rationally knowing’ that it is not such a big issue. Indirectly, she can be seen as constructing herself as being an irrational woman and through that claiming responsibility for the situation partly for herself.

Katja has a lot of customer meetings with older men, some of whom tend not to take her and her expertise in ICT seriously. In the interview, Katja talks about her position at the intersection of her age and gender as being young female in ICT and how she has to prove her professionalism to her older male customers that are deliberately testing
her and trying to show her incompetence. Katja explains how the expectations the customers have of her are higher than they would be for a man and talks about the difficulties in situations when she does not know something. She finds herself in the difficult situation of not always being able to know everything but having strong expectations to do so.

A: Sometimes it's challenging, especially because the customers are often men who have passed middle age. Of course it’s individual, but indeed, it still shows in the kind of attitude that they [customers] can't necessarily take you fully seriously.

Q: Like belittling?

A: It's not very visible. It’s a bit like you don’t reach a real level of conversation. That you [the customers] maybe try to show the possible ignorance of the person you are talking with in some things.

Q: Is it related to the industry, the products and services?

A: Clearly. When you are working as an X [her occupation] it's often the case that you don’t necessarily know the technical background of the products or services that well. But maybe a male X [her occupation] doesn’t often have this kind of experience [not being taken seriously] or the customers think that they [male X] don’t have to know everything in the same way. (Katja)

When asked about what she does in that kind of situation, Katja talks about taking a positive attitude and countering the difficulties by showing that she does know and can do these things, which she says often works but sometimes not.

When I know something about something it doesn’t scare me anyways that somebody doesn’t believe me. With a kind of positive attitude, you normally get his mind changed or his attitude a little bit changed. But then it’s of course difficult because you don’t know enough about all the things, so you have to rely on your colleague or find out ... Trying to keep a positive attitude and to maintain a pleasant rapport. It often works but certainly not always. (Katja)

Karoliina and Katja talk about difficult experiences they have had at work at the intersection of various social categories. Karoliina describes the powerlessness she has experienced when confronting sexism at work, partly taking responsibility for the situation on herself. Katja speaks of the unequal and often unrealistically high expectations that customers have of her because of who she is and describes how she
struggles to meet these expectations to solve the situation. Thus, in line with the interviewees using ‘downplaying strategies’, they describe the difficulties or challenges they have experienced, although without using different strategies to make them into something harmless or positive in terms of their job-related identities. Instead, Karoliina and Katja seem to stay at the level of defining the combination of the categories as a problem in relation to themselves at work and acknowledging one’s own disadvantaged position caused by it. Rather than being the heroes of their stories, they present their ability to influence the situation as being somewhat limited.

8.2.2. Rejecting privilege

The second new intersectional strategy is used by people who could be seen to be privileged in relation to a social category as a part of the majority, but who instead of drawing on the category distance themselves from it as a part of their identity work. Heidi talks in length about the ethnic discrimination she has witnessed in her former work organisations against ethnic minorities and the uncomfortable position she has been in in disapproving but not being able to influence the situation. In line with some of the people using downplaying strategies, she talks about discrimination. However, instead of talking about herself, Heidi talks about discrimination as experienced by others. Being herself part of the majority, she distances herself from the behaviour of others from the same category. By talking about discrimination and by distancing herself from it Heidi constructs herself as a fair, empathetic and tolerant person.

A: It has never bothered me if I had to or got to work with different kinds of people who come from different countries. But then again, it has bothered me extremely that it [working with non-Finns] has bothered some of my other colleagues a great deal. That ‘I can’t use the same rubber glove as that nigger’. Excuse me; you can’t say that kind of thing! ... In that kind of cleaning company, there was a foreign woman. They looked at her work a bit more closely, that this and that has been cleaned a bit badly, then again even though I hadn’t cleaned at all they didn’t say anything.

Q: How did you experience that or what did you do?

A: I thought it was really nasty. But on the other hand there in the kitchen, it was a really nasty place in the sense that you had to try to keep on good terms with those other people. It really sucked that I didn’t really say anything, but if they treated badly those temporary workers, I tried to be really nice to them to compensate a bit. I never made a scene because I knew that I had to stay myself when the temporary worker leaves. (Heidi)
Sakari constructs his identity in relation to gender, drawing on different images on femininity and masculinity of the industry and himself. He talks about the masculine industry as being too competitive, lacking a more human perspective, which he constructs as being a typically female characteristic. In his interview, what is seen as feminine is constructed as more desirable than what is seen to be as masculine.

A: It’s a bit funny. If you think about how it influences this industry and work. There is a lack of the kind of point of view that normally only women have, more humane, there is a lack of that kind of point of view in this kind of really male dominated companies.

Q: Is it more technical? What would be the opposite?

A: Maybe when it’s this male dominated you try to advance an awful lot, to move forward, to get more, to win instead of just trying to, for example, to make things better for people instead of all the time moving forward to get more money. That you would like to look at things from people’s point of view. (Sakari)

Sakari also draws on the feminine versus masculine in his own identity construction by distancing himself from the undesired aspects of masculinity and constituting himself as closer to the aspects of femininity he has defined as positive.

The intersectional strategy used by Heidi and Sakari differs both from the supporting strategy as well as the downplaying strategies. In contrast to the supporting strategy, Heidi and Sakari distance themselves from their privileged social category, constructing themselves as different from others in the category. Thus, by distancing oneself from a social category, they use a strategy corresponding one of the downplaying strategies although acting from a rather different kind of position. Given the differences in positions of power, the strategy used by Heidi and Sakari can be thought of having a rather different undertone compared to that created using ‘downplaying strategies’. While in the latter case distancing oneself from one’s ‘own’ social category could be seen to be related to compensating for the potential harm caused by the membership in the category, in the case of Heidi and Sakari the social category they distance themselves from can be thought of as not posing a similar kind of threat to one’s identity. However, distancing oneself from a privileged category could be also seen as a way of constructing oneself a positive job-related identity by pinpointing what is wrong with the category and constructing oneself as different.

8.2.3. Growing with challenge

The last new intersectional strategy is about people describing a challenge they have faced in terms of social categories and how they have grown professionally in the face of
the new situation. Tero, a young Finnish man, ponders on the internationality of the ICT industry by taking up culture and language as important questions influencing his experiences at work. Tero describes himself by drawing on meanings often attached to Finns as being shy and introverted. When asked about his experiences of differences at work, he describes a situation when he had to call abroad to a big company, describing his nervousness before the situation.

I have an example from last week. As a taciturn Finn, quiet and not so social. I have started a testing laboratory, there are mobile devices so that people can come and test, if they book a time. And I’ve been in contact with device producers so that we would get devices as a donation. A device producer contacted with me and wanted to call and talk. I kind of, I don’t know why, for me it was a huge thing; I just felt that ‘Help I should call abroad, how is it going to be?’ It should be normal and it probably is also for many here but for me it was kind of a weird situation, and I got nervous. (Tero)

Tero describes himself as having a complex relationship with English, being fluent in the written language, but at the same time having been and still being nervous about speaking it when contacting other companies. He explains how the internationality of the industry has made him grow professionally and personally in terms of becoming more social and able to function in situations in which he has to communicate with new and often foreign people. In other words, Tero describes his transformation from a shy Finn being afraid of speaking English to someone who is able to use the language in a work context.

I feel it is a good thing that the fact that people are different has influenced me. Indeed, this is quite international industry; you have to be quite a bit in contact with different kinds of people. Maybe it has influenced me in that I have started to be more social and to do things. I would have never thought earlier, a couple of years ago that I would start a test laboratory to which anyone can come, because I receive all the people I don’t know and talk to them. They are often foreigners, not Finns and they don’t speak Finnish. A couple of years ago I would have never thought that I would dare to do it. It has influenced me in that way this culture; it has changed me. (Tero)

Communication in English is described as a challenge that he has been able to overcome by putting himself into uncomfortable situations, thus also enabling him to do things that he would have never imagined himself to be capable of doing. However, despite the changes, Tero reveals that he still feels uncomfortable in these situations. Thus, Tero describes the challenges related to language as temporal and changing but at the same time continuing to exist. In other words, Tero can be seen to describe a
change in his position in terms of having learned how to cope with the situation and also being proud of himself for having been able to do that, but at the same time the challenges are described as remaining, although more manageable than before.

Tero’s story also underlines the importance of the specific context for understanding people’s varying positions in terms of the social categories. Whereas Tero can be seen to form part of the majority in his work organisation and in the industry in terms of his gender, age, and ethnicity, his position can be seen to alter in relation to the language used in the company and in the industry, putting him sometimes in situations he is not entirely comfortable with. The challenges experienced can be seen reflected in the identity work Tero engages in when discussing his experiences at work.

How Helena talks about herself at work can be also interpreted as a growth story in terms of describing challenges related to a new situation she has encountered at work and the learning process she has undergone and is still undergoing, to come to terms with the situation. Helena can be seen as finding herself in a rather complex situation in terms of her age and experience, being somewhat older and having considerable work experience, but having relatively recently started in a new profession and in a new company. When describing her situation, Helena moves between different positions related to experience and inexperience, describing herself as having a long work history but being new to her current profession, thus having to learn the new craft.

Also, having started in a new company, Helena describes adjusting to the organisation, understanding the organisational culture and realizing what is accepted and what is not. She has started anew, but at the same time has a considerable amount of experience from before, which, however, is not necessarily valid in the new situation. Helena describes her learning process in finding her place in the company.

Finding your own position in the company takes time and then you learn to know how people think and see the world. I have a concrete example, but I’m not sure that I can or want to tell it. If you question an activity and then suddenly you notice that you have almost hurt somebody’s feelings by questioning the activity ... I’m in no ways an expert in X [her field], but I find out before I say anything.

(Helena)

Helena connects experience and inexperience to the question of language. She has made her career in international companies and explains that she is used to working in English. However, she says that language can be at times a challenge, since she thinks about her work in two languages, her native language (Finnish) and English. Moreover, having entered the new profession, Helena describes having to learn the new terminology in English as challenging. Thus, she also connects her position in terms of
experience and inexperience to questions of language, describing the additional difficulties she has experienced when having to learn the terminology of the new profession in English, even though otherwise being experienced and comfortable with using English.

In the ICT industry, language is challenging and it can make the task sometimes heavy when you think about things both in English and in Finnish and so on. And it’s not only the ICT industry but also X [the specific field that Helena is working in]. I have made a change in career and started in X [the field] some years ago. I learned X [the field] in Finnish and at the same time in English, the vocabulary and all that kind of stuff and processes related to it. The terminology is difficult when you go really deep. Whether it’s easier in Finnish or in English, I can’t say. (Helena)

Tero and Helena can be seen to be telling a growth story in the sense of describing how they have faced a new situation at work and having had to learn from it. Tero as a Finnish-speaking Finn was put into a new situation when he started to work in an international work environment, and Helena, with considerable work experience, has suddenly become a newcomer after changing her career and work organisation. The undertone of the two stories can be seen, however, as somewhat different; whereas Tero describes a process leading to positive, albeit not perfect, personal changes, Helena focuses more on the struggles of the learning process still currently taking place.

Both Tero and Helena move between different social categories and different meanings related to the respective categories to make sense of their situations. Tero connects language with meaning from the Finnish culture and constructs himself as a shy and a not very social Finn (Finnish man), experiencing difficulties in communicating in particular in the foreign language. Helena, in turn, alters between complex notions of experience and inexperience connected in different ways to age, long work experience, and being new both to her profession and to the company. Experience and inexperience are further connected to language, being used to working in English but yet not knowing all the terminology of the new profession. The positions that Tero and Helena construct their job-related identities from are not black and white but multifaceted and changing, which is reflected in the complexity in using social categories in identity work.

8.3. Rethinking intersectional strategies

In this chapter, I have made a summary of the intersectional strategies used in the first set of data as well as revised the strategies based on the new material gathered for the
purpose. In the first set of data, I identified two types of intersectional strategies: combining strategies and separating strategies. In combining strategies, the category ‘job’ was combined with wider societal social categories (age, gender, and ethnicity) in order to construct a (positive) job-related identity, while in separating strategies, the category ‘job’ was kept separate from the other social categories in the construction of a job-related identity.

The combining strategies were further divided into ‘supporting strategy’, in which a privileged social category was used to strengthen the construction of a positive job-related identity, and ‘downplaying strategies’ in which a disadvantaged social category was worked on to make it harmless or even beneficial for one’s identity. Thus, the findings from the first set of data propose a relatively straightforward relation between social categories, positions of power related to them in specific contexts and the type of intersectional strategies being used. Having said that, the entire picture is of course far from being that simple.

The first central question to be considered becomes that of the relation that intersectional identity work can be seen to have to the specific social categories. It is important to ask to what extent and in what way intersectional strategies can be seen to be connected to the specific social categories in relation to which they are being used, in particular, what kinds of positions of power are produced for the members of specific social categories in the specific contexts in which intersectional identity work takes place, and what can be seen to be their consequences for how intersectional identity work is/can be done in practice.

Talking about privilege and disadvantage can be always seen to be complex and difficult and maybe even more so at the individual level. People’s identities are being constructed in relation to a variety of intersecting social categories, taking on different kinds of meanings in different contexts, thus privilege and disadvantage have to be thought of in relation to the very specific social categories in the very specific context in relation to which people’s identities are being constructed. My idea is not to map individuals as being privileged and/or disadvantaged in general or based on a specific social category but rather to look at their accounts of experiences as a certain kind of people in a specific context often directly or indirectly intertwined with privilege and/or disadvantage.

My findings suggest that to understand how intersectional identity work is done, that is, the kind of strategies that are being used, social categories should be considered in terms of the privileges and/or disadvantages that are provided for the members of the categories in the specific context. Differences in positions of power can be seen to become important as they provide rather different kinds of starting points for doing intersectional identity work, consequently influencing the kinds of strategies that are or
can be chosen. For example, what is considered to be normal, and through that also often valued (see Pease 2010), can be seen to have influenced the kinds of intersectional strategies that people are prone to take. Being a younger Finnish man could be considered as a norm in the ICT industry in Finland in relation to which other characteristics are also being evaluated. However, it should be noted that being privileged does not necessarily mean being 'normal' in the sense of being majority but rather being privileged means having the power to set the criteria for what is considered to be normal in the sense of what is desired and/or valued.

In my data, the kinds of positions of privilege or disadvantage the interviewees had in terms of social category could be seen to matter in terms of the intersectional strategies they chose to use in their identity work. Putting it in a very (perhaps too) straightforward manner, people acting from more privileged positions seemed to have a greater tendency to adopt a supporting strategy, whereas people acting from positions of disadvantage seemed to be more inclined to use downplaying strategies. The actual category seemed, instead, not to matter for the kind of intersectional strategy being used, in the sense that people used the same strategies in relation to different categories.

It is, however, important to note that the very same people acted from rather different kinds of positions in terms of privilege and/or disadvantage, and also the intersectional strategies they used varied. Whereas all of the people I interviewed can be seen in many aspects as privileged, many of the interviewees also find themselves in positions of relative disadvantage in terms of some of their social categories, although privileged in others. In fact, many of the people can be seen to move between positions of privilege and disadvantage and often also adjust the intersectional strategies they are using according to their shifting positions. Further, the very same social category can be seen to provide rather different kinds of positions depending on the context in which it is talked about. For example, whereas being a woman could cause disadvantage at the level of the industry and the work organisations, in some specific jobs that are considered to be particularly feminine one’s position as a woman can be seen as a benefit.

However, intersectional identity work is not only about positions but also about positioning oneself. People position themselves in relation to social categories as a central part of their intersectional identity work. While in the downplaying strategies people use various ways of positioning themselves towards a disadvantaged social category, the findings from the first set of data suggested a fairly straightforward relationship between a privileged social category and the construction of a positive job-related identity. However, in line with the previous literature (e.g. Wetherell and Edley 1999), my findings from the second set of data suggest that people also have different ways of positioning themselves towards privileged social categories. Heidi and Sakari
from the second set of data both distance themselves from what could be seen as a privileged social category and construct themselves as different from others in the category.

Moreover, the very notion of positive identities (e.g. Alvesson et al. 2008) identified in my first set of data should be discussed. Identity work can also be seen to be done for other reasons, such as avoiding insecurity (Giddens 2001, Collinson 2003). In addition, the findings of my second set of data suggest that positive (job-related) identities are not constructed in all (intersectional) identity work. In my data, Katja and Karoliina spoke of their difficult experiences without necessarily trying to present themselves in a positive light. In addition, what is meant by positive seems to vary between the different organisational contexts and the people interviewed. Whereas in SmartGameSoft, what is seen to be positive seems to be closely connected to performing well in the particular job one has, in the two other companies ‘positive’ can take on different meanings. For example, Lauri, Sakari and Heidi seem all to construct themselves a positive identity in terms of being tolerant and nice people instead of performing well at work.

Finally, the findings from the two sets of data should be contextualized in the evolving research focus also visible in the outcome. Maybe most importantly, the first set of data was analysed through the notion of positive identities, which could also be seen to be reflected in the findings. Being interested in how people accomplish a positive job-related identity and examining identity work from a variety of positions could be argued to have produced certain kinds of findings on intersectional strategies, maybe implicitly assuming a certain degree of intentionality. In the second data set, the outcome of identity work was left open, also making it possible to have greater variety in how intersectional identity work was done, for example, not necessarily always aiming to producing a positive identity.
9 SILENCE IN INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITY WORK

In this chapter, I look at intersectional identity work through lenses of silence. By drawing on a discursive understanding on silence, I examine what is said and not said in the sense of what kind of knowledge is being avoided when people talk about themselves and social categories at work. In particular, I am interested in the ‘how’ of silence in intersectional job-related identity work, that is, ways of being silent about social categories and/or oneself as a member of social categories at work. The chapter is divided into four different parts. In the first part, I discuss the concepts of silence and what I call non-silence, defining what I mean by silence. The second part focuses on how social categories are talked and not talked about at the organisational level. In the third part, silence is examined at the interpersonal level, and in the fourth part I look at silence in intersectional identity work at the individual level. Rather than being totally silent about social categories, the interviewees combine silence with non-silence in different ways. The analysis focuses on what happens in the organisations in Finland, thus excluding the international acquisitions taking place in SmartGameSoft.

Talking about social categories at organisational level was done by constructing a neutral and equal organisation, in which social categories do not or should not matter and/or by talking positively about diversity in organisations. The two ways of talking (and not talking) about social categories at the organisational level could also entail silence about social categories in relation to oneself. On the interpersonal level, social categories were talked about as primarily related to others, meaning that people were silent on themselves as a member of categories. At the individual level, silence could be seen as related to different ways of controlling what is said and not said about oneself as a member of social categories at work. These ways included contextualizing disadvantage and moving between identification and disidentification. What the different ways seemed to have in common was the tendency to avoid or downplay inequalities, whether at the organisational level in terms of not talking about inequalities at work, or at the individual level in terms of disadvantage and/or privilege and their impact on oneself at work.

9.1. Silence (and non-silence)

Silence has been approached from a variety of perspectives. Amongst others, it has been examined from a more positivist perspective, for example, organisational members’ silence and voice have been analysed as different ways of relating to dissatisfaction in terms of voicing or not voicing one’s concerns (e.g. Hirshman 1970, Morrison 2011). It has been also examined in poststructuralist writings. For Foucault (1981), discourses consist of various complex and changing elements, including both
things that are said and unsaid, silence being an integral part of discourse (Foucault

Silence has been also looked at from feminist starting points (e.g. Smith 1987, Stanley
and Wise 1983, Stanley and Wise 1993). Seeing silence through standpoint theory,
Smith (1987) has discussed how women's experiences and knowledge of the world have
been silenced. Also, men have been looked at in terms of silence (e.g. Collinson and
Hearn 1994, Collinson and Hearn 1996, Kimmel 1994, Rutherford 1992), for example,
by questioning the invisibility of men as a gendered category (Collinson and Hearn
1994). Moreover, silence can be seen to have been central in some postcolonial
writings, revolving around issues of trying to give voice to the subaltern and by doing
that silencing him or her (Morton 2003, Spivak 1988).

What is meant by silence varies from a literal understanding with the meaning of lack
of words to a more metaphorical sense, that is, talking about something without
addressing some key issues related to it (Harlow et al. 1995, Hearn 2004). Another way
to approach silence is to treat it as a part of discourse (Harlow et al. 1995). This means
that what is talked about and how it is talked about can be seen to be related to both
how and what kind of knowledge is and has been constructed on a topic in a specific
time and place. In the metaphorical and/or discursive senses, silence can be also seen
as sometimes even very verbal, since talking about something means being silent about
something else. I look at silence in particular through the lens of discourse, discourse
becoming relevant at least in two senses; first of all by providing a context for what is
said, not said and how, and secondly by seeing the micro level 'acts' of being silent or
non-silent as discursive activities themselves contributing to constructing a specific
kind of knowledge on a topic.

Whether understanding silence through discourse or in other ways, silence in its
different forms can be seen to be defined in relation to its opposite, to not being silent,
in relation to the possibility of uttering words that have not been uttered, discussing
issues that have not been discussed, or discussing them in a different way. To put it the
other way around, in not being silent there can be seen to be traces of silence, issues
that remain undiscussed or unaddressed. Hence, silence and what I call non-silence
become inseparable, different sides of the same coin. Non-silence becomes central also
in the more technical or practical sense of it being a way through which silence in
intersectional identity work can be approached. In other words, by looking at what is
being said, one can approach what is being not said or what is being excluded.

Silence is also about something somewhere, about a topic in a context. I look at silence
in relation to the specific topic of social categories in organisations. Being silent and/or
non-silent are partly interpreted in relation to discourses on social categories and
differences in organisations, providing a context for what and how job-related identities
are and are not talked about. One important discussion can be seen to be that of diversity in organisations. During recent years, diversity has become an increasingly important topic in organisations both internationally as well as in Finland. For example, since 2004 in several European countries, including Finland, a diversity charter has been launched in which companies commit to enhance diversity in their work organisations. In Finland, however, the concept of diversity can be seen to be still relatively new (Louvrier and Tuori 2014). The ICT industry in Finland, in turn, could be argued to be one of the forerunners of multiculturalism and diversity due to the internationality of the industry.

It is not only important that diversity is talked about, but also how it is talked about. At the same time that diversity can be seen to have become increasingly central in and for organisations, there could be argued to be tendencies that undermine its importance. There can be seen to be different ways of talking about diversity, one of which being ‘consultant talk’, treating all the differences from personal characteristics to more historical and structural differences as the same, thus obscuring power relations inherent to social relations (Prasad et al. 2006). Furthermore, within a business discourse of diversity, diversity is often given positive meanings, from increasing innovativeness to understanding of customers just to name a couple, leading to increased performance for the company (Louvrier 2013). If not discussing inequalities, the business discourse(s) on diversity could be, however, also argued to contribute to being silent on the power effects of social categories.

Silence and/or non-silence on social categories can be also seen as related to an ideal of a neutral and equal organisation with equal opportunities for everyone. The ideal of an equal and just organisation can be seen to relate to such ideas as seeing organisations through meritocratic ideals emphasizing the competence and skills of an individual over other characteristics and affiliations, constructing social categories as irrelevant (cf. Zanoni and Janssen 2007). Having no doubt great accomplishments in terms of enhancing equality, ironically, if taken as something that is already achieved, it could be also argued as contributing to its opposite, that is, producing or hiding inequality between different groups of people.

In addition to the more general discourses on the topic, silence on social categories in organisations becomes a matter of individual categories and the relations between them. The different categories are not treated as the same, but people are more prone to be silent about certain categories than others. Silence on individual social categories can be seen to relate to, but not being the same as, a variety of other phenomena such as marking and unmarking or naming social categories (Brekhus 1998, Collinson and Hearn 1994). The concept of being ‘marked’ refers to a social category as having been highlighted in terms of being clearly articulated, exaggerating its importance and distinctiveness, generalizing characteristics to apply to all the members and thus
homogenising the category. In contrast to ‘marked’, the idea of being ‘unmarked’ refers to a social category remaining more unarticulated, receiving less attention, and the characteristics of members in an unmarked category tending to be seen as being idiosyncratic to the individual or universal, applying to everyone (Brekhus 1998:36). Whether a social category becomes marked or unmarked can be seen as having importance for silence and/or non-silence about it. Whereas people could be seen to be more silent about the unmarked categories, the marked category could be seen to be more frequently and thoroughly addressed, albeit often in generalizing and exaggerating ways.

To put this another way, the unmarked categories tend to be more invisible and the marked more visible. The invisibility does not however mean that the category is not of importance, often quite the opposite. The unmarked categories can be very frequent or large in size, and important in the sense of the power their members can exercise (Brekhus 1998, Collinson and Hearn 1994). For example, men as a category often having considerable amount of power in organisations remain notably unaddressed in terms of their gender, both in organisations and in research on organisations. Thus, making the gender of men visible by ‘naming’ them as men becomes an important exercise for exploring the gendered dynamics of organisations (Collinson and Hearn 1994).

To summarise, drawing on a discursive understanding of silence, I see silence as part and parcel of how knowledge on a specific topic is constructed, both in the sense of being silent on a phenomenon and/or leaving out some central aspects related to it. Moreover, I understand people's experiences and the creation of knowledge as located at the intersections of different social categories. In this, I am particularly interested in two different but interrelated ways in which silence relates to people's positions as members of different and intersecting social categories: first, the presenting of experiences of privileged positions as 'neutral' and 'universal' (Collinson and Hearn 1994, Smith 1987), and, second, the silencing of experiences of disadvantaged categories (Smith 1987).

9.2. Silence as co-construction

Moreover, silence can be seen to take place in the specific context of the interview situation, in the interaction between the interviewee and me as the interviewer. As such, silence can be also seen as a co-construction between us both, related to issues such as how we position ourselves towards each other. Moreover, what is and is not talked about in the interviews should be interpreted in relation to the specific characteristics of the two sets of interviews. Not only do the organisations and the
interviewees differ from each other, but there also have been changes in my research interests between the first organisation and the latter two.

The shift in my research interests is reflected in the interview guide and ultimately what is talked about and not talked about. In the first set of interviews, my research interests were on cultural identities, generating also a lot of talk around culture and ethnicity. In the second set, I was interested in social categories more generally, also meaning that the number of categories being discussed was generally wider.

Being silent could be also interpreted as resistance towards discourses and/or identities that are (mostly) indirectly proposed by me as the interviewer through the questions I pose. In other words, silence could be also interpreted as a form of resistance towards me, proposing between the lines an understanding that social categories are relevant for work organisations and people’s job-related identities. However, it should be noted that I do not see silence as necessarily intentional or deliberate in the sense that people actively choose not to talk about something. Rather, what people do and do not talk about can be seen as a complex issue related to people’s specific positions in terms of social categories, discursive positioning and how different discourses around the topic influence how they understand things.

9.3. Silence and intersectional strategies

The ways of being silent identified in this chapter have a somewhat complex relation to the ‘intersectional strategies’ discussed in the previous chapter. Partly, the analysis can be seen as cumulative. Analytically, there can be seen a direct linkage between separating strategies as ways of keeping wider societal social categories apart from one’s job-related identity and silence in intersectional identity work. However, when looking closer at silence in relation to social categories and oneself at work, it appears to be much wider and more complex. Thus, in part this chapter builds on and is a reinterpretation of the some of the intersectional strategies (separating but also combining strategies) examined in the previous chapter. However, in part the chapter should be interpreted as an entity of its own, examining silence both at the organisational and individual level in its different combinations with non-silence, being wider in scope than the intersectional strategies and not relating to them in all cases. How the different ways of being silent are related to the intersectional strategies are summarized at the end of the chapter in Table 7.

9.4. Talking about the organisation

I first look at silence on social categories at the organisational level. I identified in the data two main ways of talking (and not talking) about the organisation in terms of
wider societal social categories: ‘constructing a neutral and equal organisation’ and ‘embracing diversity’. The two ways of talking about wider societal social categories seem, at first glance, as opposite; whereas in ‘constructing a neutral and equal organisation’ the interviewees use different ways to exclude social categories in their accounts of the organisation, in ‘embracing diversity’ the importance of social categories is emphasized as contributing to success of the organisation. However, both of the ways share a tendency to avoid talking about possible inequalities as related to social categories in their organisation. The two ways of talking could be also traced back to the more general discourses on social categories in organisations: consultant and/or business discourses on diversity and discourses around organisations as not influenced by social categories, but instead being neutral and equal.

Talking and not talking about the organisation in terms of social categories can be seen to intertwine with people’s individual job-related identities and identity work in different ways. The organisational talk could exist alongside more individual level talk or the interviewees could focus mostly on the organisation. In ‘constructing a neutral and equal organisation’ people not only avoided social categories in relation to the organisation, but could avoid them also on a more individual level in terms of their job-related identities. In ‘embracing diversity’, the talk about diverse organisation could be done by focusing on the organisation or alongside discussion of oneself in terms of social categories. In the former case, people constructed their job-related identities as detached from social categories.

9.4.1. Constructing a neutral and equal organisation

The first way to talk about social categories at organisational level is to construct a neutral and equal organisation. The interviewees question the importance of wider societal social categories at work by directly or indirectly suggesting that social categories do not or should not matter in organisational context. Constructing a neutral and equal organisation is closely related to the disregarding and rejecting strategies identified in the previous chapter. In line with these strategies, a neutral and equal organisation was constructed, firstly, by not talking about wider societal social categories and instead talking about other possible differences such as personal or work-related differences and/or, secondly, by explicitly challenging the importance of wider societal social categories in an organisational context. Constructing a neutral and equal organisation should be interpreted also in the context of the immediate interview situation and, as such, could be also seen as a form of resistance towards a kind of reality indirectly proposed by me by asking about social categories at work.

The first way, ‘constructing the neutral and equal organisation’, is closely related to the disregarding strategy identified in the previous chapter. Whereas in the disregarding
strategy the interviewees avoided talking about wider societal social categories as related themselves at work, in ‘constructing a neutral and equal organisation’ not talking about social categories at work is examined primarily as an organisational level phenomenon not only related to individual people’s job-related identities but also more broadly to how wider societal social categories in the organisation are and are not discussed. It also includes the kinds of consequences these silences can be seen to entail for the construction of the organisation and the relations between people working in it.

In ‘constructing the neutral and equal organisation’, silence can be seen to exist in the rather literal sense of not talking about wider social categories in the organisation. However, rather than being something absolute, it should also be understood as a matter of degree due to the interview context in which the talk was produced. While the two sets of interviews vary considerable between each other, they also had important similarities in terms of consisting both of open questions related to work and differences in organisations more generally, and direct questions related to wider societal social categories following the open questions. Thus, in both sets of interviews my questions can be seen to have both enabled the interviewees to choose the kinds of differences they wanted to talk about, but at the same time also induced at least some talk about wider societal social categories, even if only to say that the categories did not matter.

Being silent about wider societal social categories did not mean being silent about other possible types of differences. In the interviews, other differences, mainly personal differences, work-related differences, and differences in interests and hobbies were frequently talked about. The ‘other differences’ could be talked about in combination with wider social categories or there could be an emphasis on them, providing a specific way of thinking about differences and the relations between people in the organisation.

Differences related to work-tasks were widely discussed. Working in different kinds of occupations was seen as providing different kinds of views on, for example, priorities in the work processes. In addition to work-related differences, the interviewees often referred to personal differences when talking about themselves and others at work. People were said to have different kinds of personalities, and one’s own experiences at work were often pondered on through the use of different kinds of characteristics such as being talkative or introverted, and the kinds of consequences they were thought to have for doing one’s job. Work-related differences were also often connected to personal differences at a more general level, meaning that different kinds of people could be seen to work in different occupations. This is how Toni, a manager from SmartGameSoft, ponders on the connection between people’s different personalities

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11 Ethnicity in the first set of data and various social categories in the second set of data
and the work they were doing describing people working in sales as more extrovert and designers as introvert.

If you think about sales, so there are a certain type of people; if you work in sales it’s more about the character. These [people working in sales] are maybe to some extent more aggressive, not necessarily in a negative way, but more extroverted and aggressive ... If you think about for example designers ... they are a bit introverted. (Toni)

In addition to work-related and personal differences, the interviewees talked about people’s interests and hobbies as separating and uniting the employees. For example, in SmartGameSoft, which was a game company, people working in the company were often (but not always) described as being passionate gamers, which became an important difference uniting and separating people in the company. However, other kinds interests less connected to the industry were also talked about. This is how Jouni, working in SmartGameSoft, talks about different social groups in his work organisation. Seeming to have difficulties in talking about informal groups in the company, Jouni takes up smokers and gamers as specific groups instead of discussing any wider societal social categories that could have been relevant in the context. In contrast to Jouni, many of the other interviewees from SmartGameSoft discuss ethnicity as a category when asked the same question about different social groups in the company.

A: I guess here we have that kind of official ones. Mm, I don’t know, I myself belong to smoking ring.

Q: Yeah, maybe you could also draw them?

A: Mm

Q: Who do you have in the smoking ring?

A: You have people from everywhere.

Q: Are you a big group?

A: There are about, I guess there are more people who smoke, but in what I think of as the smoking ring, I guess we are about ten. Mm

Q: What does this mean, you go smoking together?

A: Yeah, well, during the day we chat.
Q: Mm. Mm. Well what about others [groups]?

A: Mm, well, I don’t play that much myself, of course, there are two game consoles, so there are people who go there regularly to play during the day. (Jouni)

The ‘other differences’ could be talked about in addition to wider societal social categories or as the primary way of approaching differences in the organisation. Focusing on the ‘other differences’ can be interpreted as making differences for an individual and/or organisational level phenomenon, concealing more structural aspects of differences, including discussion on more systematic inequalities embedded in the relations between different groups of people in organisations. For example, pondering on people’s jobs in terms of their personalities can be seen to make the positions of people justifiable and natural based on people’s inclinations. At the same time, the organisation (and organising) is being constructed as equal and free from discrimination.

The importance of social categories in the context of one’s work organisation can be also explicitly rejected. Explicitly rejecting wider societal social categories can be seen as closely related to the rejecting strategy identified in the previous chapter. While in the rejecting strategy I focused on how people kept wider societal social categories apart from their job-related identities by claiming them as unimportant, here the scope is wider in the sense that I am interested in the consequences of rejecting wider societal social categories not only in terms of people’s individual identities/identity work but also the organisation.

Mai, a young non-Finnish woman working in SmartGameSoft, can be seen as rejecting the importance of wider societal social categories both at the organisational and individual level. She gets visible annoyed when I repeatedly ask about the importance of differences at work, arguing that there are no differences between people that would matter except maybe those of personal differences. By rejecting the importance of social categories at work she simultaneously constructs the organisation as equal and neutral, which could be also seen as having consequences for her individual identity construction. Constructing the organisation as equal and neutral could be also interpreted as being a way for Mai to avoid pondering on herself in terms of possible disadvantages, as she talks from a minority position on multiple dimensions (gender, ethnicity) and works in the lowest level in the organisation without having been able to advance. Also, by rejecting wider societal social categories, she can be seen as defining her job-related identity on her own terms, rejecting any possible suggestions regarding her identity indirectly proposed by me.
Lauri, a Finnish man, talking from a position rather opposite that of Mai, takes a somewhat different approach by claiming that people should not emphasize at least some social categories too much in the organisational context. Lauri constructs himself as a tolerant person, who is not interested in people’s social categories, being ready to work with any kind of people, as long as they have the basic manners to not emphasize their social categories too much. In his talk, Lauri equates wider societal social categories with hobbies. This is how he talks about different sexual orientations at work, claiming it to be a personal issue that should not be too much emphasized at work.

If there were somebody who blatantly underlined his sexual orientation, it would cause pique anywhere, whether to show that I’m very straight or complete gay, it doesn’t matter ... It’s a thing that is not anybody else’s business, and if you [talk about] it all the time. I wouldn’t be interested in hearing that you are crazy about horses. ‘The horse was so wonderful when it ate carrots!’ It would start to annoy at some point. It’s totally same with sexual orientation. (Lauri)

The interviewees can be seen to have different ways of being silent about wider societal social categories at work. The first way was to ignore social categories, meaning simply not talking about them or predominantly talking about something else. Instead, other differences; personal differences, work-related differences, and/or differences related to hobbies were talked about. The second way was to explicitly reject the importance of wider societal social categories at work by claiming that they do not or should not have any impact on work or relations between people at work. By focusing on the more personal and/or work-related differences instead of the wider societal social categories and/or by explicitly rejecting the importance of wider societal social categories at work, the interviewees construct their work organisations as equal and not influenced by structural inequalities related to the categories. Constructing the organisation as neutral and equal can be also seen to enable the interviewees to be silent about their own positions of privilege and disadvantage.

9.4.2. Embracing diversity

The second way to talk about social categories at the organisational level is to embrace diversity. In contrast to constructing the neutral and equal organisation, social categories are talked about, but they are framed in a specific way. In line with the business or consultant discourses on diversity, differences between people are talked about in positive terms, for example, as increasing creativity, adding different points of view and enhancing work wellbeing. For some of the interviewees talking about diversity could be the main way of speaking about social categories at work, at times also replacing the talk about oneself as a member of a category or categories.
Diversity was primarily talked about by managers in two of the companies. In SmartGameSoft, diversity was mostly discussed as related to ethnicity and gender, or both combined. Not long before the interviews, the organisation had been highlighted in the media as a positive example of a multicultural work organisation. The interviewees seemed to be proud of the internationality of the company, and the management in particular had a very positive conception of the idea of a diverse work place and its benefits for the organisation. This is how Ronaldo, working as a manager in SmartGameSoft talks about the benefits of being diverse, which is something that he feels is also reflected in the quality of the products.

I'm working with, there's a Turk, there's a Greek, there's Finns and Brazilians, Russians and Italians and it's, French, it's great. I think it's great. You can see that sometimes you forget about so much stuff that is important, so many different points of view. And I think that's, it shows in the end, it shows. That's actually something that we, one thing that we need to change in X [the place where the Spanish studio is located] right now, because they are basically a Spanish studio, basically just Spanish guys, just guys, no girls by the way. And it shows in the game. I mean when it comes here it's like hey, you're missing this and that and with this and that. (Ronaldo)

On similar lines, Jussi, also working in management in the company, talks about gender-related diversity as contributing to the product development for various groups of customers. Rather than only producing products for one segment of customers, having different kinds of people in the team enables them to have different points of view and also question some stereotypes related to video games.

And then what is nice is that we have, for example, my subordinates: there are people with different kinds of backgrounds and luckily we also have one female designer at the moment. You get different points of view, and then you can question a little bit – not only putting those stereotypes of tits. Although I understand that teenage boys are one target group, so for them I guess you have to also give those fantasies, and there is nothing wrong with that but ... (Jussi)

Both Jussi and Ronaldo talk about diversity in positive terms as influencing the quality of the products and how the company can meet customer needs. Diversity is also framed as something in which their work organisation has been successful. In contrast, potential difficulties related to diversity, such as possible inequalities between different groups of people, are not addressed. In the interview, Ronaldo also combines the talk about diversity at the organisational level with more personal reflections around his ethnicity and age, whereas the discussion in the interview with Jussi is primarily at the organisational level, except for experience and age.
On similar lines to Ronaldo and Jussi, Roni, the CEO of one of the other companies, talks about diversity as having positive effects on the work organisation. He draws on a similar kind of discourse on diversity being beneficial for the company in terms of getting different points of view. However, in his description, diversity is not so much a current state of affairs but rather something to be aimed at. In particular, Roni ponders on the difficulties in finding more women to hire. Recently, the company has managed to hire one additional woman, which Roni sees as having had a positive impact on the organisation in terms of getting more points of view and a better working team.

A: There are very few women. Now we have two, which is already really good. It has big influence. When Tiina started we thought a lot about the fact that we would have to behave in a different way. But then we didn’t [laughter].

Q: When you said that it had big influence, what was it?

A: Well, it’s exactly the point of view that we can talk and take into account better. I have noticed that we have got more different kinds of ideas. It’s maybe that this kind of mind that engineers have, that you get into a rut. It is precisely these classic things that we can take into account, maybe a more human approach to many things, specifically getting more points of view. I can’t say precisely what it is, but clearly the team works better. (Roni)

In the interviews with Ronaldo, Jussi and Roni, diversity was represented in positive terms, either as a recipe for an already successfully functioning company or something to be aimed at. Keeping the discussion on the positive sides of diversity can be, however, seen to lead to being silent about possible challenges related to relations between different groups of people. Notably, the interviewees did not ponder on the possible inequalities often inherent in social categories. By not addressing inequalities between different groups of people, the interviewees could be seen to have indirectly constructed the organisations as equal.

In talking about social categories at organisational level, the interviewees can also construct a specific kind of job-related identity for themselves. Roni and Jussi have a tendency to keep the discussion on social categories at the organisational level, often, but not totally, avoiding reflections on oneself as a member of various social categories that could have an impact on their position and identity at work. In doing that, they manage to represent themselves primarily as managers having successfully been able to manage diversity at the organisational level without exploring power relations within the organisation nor one’s own position of privilege.

Whereas the two ways of talking or not talking about wider societal social categories at work, that is, ‘constructing a neutral and equal organisation’ and ‘embracing diversity’
can be seen to draw on rather different kinds of discourses and to follow different kinds of logics, they both produce silence about inequalities related to social categories in organisations. In ‘constructing a neutral and equal organisation’, the interviewees directly or indirectly depict wider societal social categories as being unimportant at work and through that also manage to avoid discussing inequalities both with regard to the organisation as well to as oneself. In ‘embracing diversity’, the interviewees highlight what they consider to be positive aspects about diversity in organisations and avoid talking about inequalities between different groups of people, including pondering on oneself at work in terms of one’s own positions of privilege and disadvantage.

9.5. Talking about others

In addition to the organisation, the interviewees also talked about wider societal social categories as related to others instead of oneself. By focusing primarily on others, the interviewees could be silent about themselves as members of different social categories. Talking about others can be seen to be somewhere in the middle between talking about social categories in relation to the organisation and talking about social categories in relation to oneself at work. In line with at least some of the talk about the organisation, the focus is outside oneself and thus implications for one’s job-related identity and identity work are more indirect. However, rather than being about social categories as related (or unrelated) to the whole organisation, here the focus is on social categories as related to specific groups of people within the organisation.

9.5.1. Talking about others as different

When interviewing people about social categories at work, talking about others in terms of their social categories becomes commonplace. For example, people from SmartGameSoft, frequently mention examples of characteristics of different ethnic groups working in the company. While talking about social categories in relation to others can exist alongside similar talk about oneself, some of the interviewees discuss social categories primarily in relation to others instead of oneself, avoiding reflecting on themselves in the same way.

The first way is to talk about others as members of social categories is to talk about them as being different from oneself and from what one considers to be normal. Oneself, in turn, is primarily defined indirectly as being opposite to the difference of others, leading to one’s own social categories remaining rather invisible. Sami, a young Finnish man ponders on his experiences related to gender at work. Working with technology, he talks about his immediate reactions when meeting women who work in the same job as him or have similar kinds of interests to him. He describes his surprise
when he encounters women with an interest in coding. His own interest in technology, 
and that of the other men, is, in contrast, indirectly constructed as natural and normal 
by not reflecting on it.

A: Maybe if you are a woman who is really good at coding or likes to work with 
servers, it can be a little bit, you might wonder, where her interest comes from.

Q: It’s not very common?

A: When I have gone to courses to study new things, there might have been some 
female doing exactly the same job. First you wonder a bit but then you forget 
about the whole thing. (Sami)

Rather than discussing his own gender, Sami talks about that of others, constructing 
women as different, both in relation to himself and not corresponding to what he 
between the lines constructs as normal. His own position in terms of gender remains 
less discussed. However, indirectly Sami constructs himself as corresponding to what is 
normal and as such his gender becomes represented as something rather 
unproblematic, not in need of explanation.

On similar lines, Marko discusses ethnicity and cultural differences from the position of 
a middle manager responsible for several teams. Marko talks about getting along with 
different kinds of people working in his teams, describing Italians and Spaniards as 
being the ‘most heated guys’. This is how Marko talks about working with Giovanni, an 
Italian co-ordinator in his team, comparing him to Finnish engineers. Whereas Finns 
(Finnish engineers) are talked about, they are not described in detail but rather used as 
contrast to the Italian employee.

But for example one has to take into account that, if you take one of those co-
ordinators, one is an Italian guy, or he would probably say Sicilian. He’s like, I 
don’t want to highlight it but Giovanni is very different from the other Finnish 
guys, all my engineers are Finnish. And a Finnish engineer is pretty different 
from an Italian co-ordinator. So you need [to do] quite a lot of calming down at 
work. (Marko)

The way Sami and Marko talk about their experiences have a lot of similarities. They 
both discuss their experiences at work with people different from themselves, focusing 
on the social categories of the other people. Their own category can be mentioned, but 
it is not further explained. With regard to ethnicity, this can be obviously also due to the 
interviews, as we all are Finns, thus the category Finn could be thought of not being in 
need of explanation. However, the differences in treating the different categories can be 
also seen to relate to the different statuses of the categories as being marked or
unmarked. Being a Finn or a man could be seen as being an unmarked category in the context of the Finnish ICT industry and, as such, a kind of a starting point requiring no further exploration. In contrast, being a woman or non-Finn, Italian or Spanish, can be seen as being marked, an exception needing to be elaborated.

In addition, whereas they talk about others in terms of a social category, Sami and Marko seem to talk about themselves primarily as individuals coming to terms with the collective characteristics of other groups of people. The people representing other categories are pondered on in terms of their ethnicity or gender, but rather than talking about themselves as gendered or ethnicised, Sami and Marko mainly remain at individual level. In their position as part of the majority they are maybe less prone to ponder on themselves in terms of social categories (Pease 2010).

Others can be talked about as different also by people in minority positions. For example, in the interviews done in SmartGameSoft, non-Finns often talked about Finns as different in relation to them. However, this was oftentimes done along with pondering on their own ethnicity. For example, Anna talked at some length about Finns as different from herself as Argentinian, talking also a lot about her own ethnicity. Catherine, a non-Finn visibly different from the Finns takes, however, a different approach. In the interview with Catherine culture and/or ethnicity also was a frequent topic of discussion. Catherine talks about working in a team with different kinds of people, drawing also on representations on different cultures. In accordance with Marko, she describes her experiences of how the cultural characteristics of others can influence her work.

A: And also working with different people sometimes has its pros and cons. And trying to understand how other people work can sometimes be a bit more difficult and challenging.

Q: Could you describe a little bit more the challenges that you have?

A: Like for example, if you were to work with an Aussie, he has a very laid back character, so they have this, like ‘no worries mate’, and nothing gets done and you get panicky and wonder what’s going to happen. And then you realize that finally, the day before the project is supposed to hand over, then you realize it’s all done [laughs]. So, you’re panicking for no reason. So just to know how people work, and you know some people are more efficient, and they get things done immediately after you say, then when you check after couple of hours: ‘I’ve done it already three hours ago’. So it’s like, just trying to identify how different people work. That is like a challenge for me. (Catherine)
However, differently to Marko, Catherine also discusses her own ethnic background alongside talking about the ethnicity of the others. Talking from a minority position in terms of being a non-Finn but having a rather international background of having lived in different countries throughout her life, Catherine addresses the question of her ethnicity, but at the same time defines herself as not having one. Thus, in line with Marko, she manages to construct herself as an individual unattached to any specific ethnicity or culture even if directly addressing the question.

Others can be talked about from different kinds of positions in terms of one’s own social categories, albeit in somewhat different ways. Sami, Marko, and Catherine all talk about others in terms of social categories, but from rather different kinds of positions. Whereas Sami and Marko are part of the majority on a variety dimensions, Catherine can be seen to form part of the minority on multiple dimensions. All of them have, however, similarities in terms talking about others as different and at the same time constructing oneself as unattached to a specific social category. However, in the case of Sami and Marko, silence on social categories as related to oneself tends to become more total, in the sense of talking little, the silence of Catherine becomes more verbal. In Marko’s and Sami’s case, silence about themselves as gendered or ethnicised could be seen to relate to the invisibility of and silence on social categories as related to people in positions of privilege (see Collinson and Hearn 1994, Pease 2010). In the case of Catherine, there is, in turn, not the same invisibility but rather the category is actively dismissed.

9.6. Talking about oneself

Apart from talking about the organisation and others, social categories are also directly talked about in relation to oneself at work. However, whereas oneself is talked about as a member of one or more social categories, the interviewees can be seen to use different ways of controlling what they say and do not say about themselves as members of social categories at work. I identified two different ways: ‘contextualizing disadvantage’ and ‘moving between identification and disidentification’. Both can be seen to produce silence on inequalities around social categories in organisations.

9.6.1. Contextualizing disadvantage

The first way to talk about oneself is to contextualize disadvantage. Intersectional identity work is not only done from and in relation to contexts, but it can also be argued that contextualizing can be seen as a part of intersectional identity work. By ‘contextualizing’ I mean here choosing the context in which a social category is primarily talked about, since the one and same category can take rather different meanings depending on the context. Consequently, contextualizing can serve to control
how social categories are talked about, what kind of aspects are chosen to be silent about and ultimately what kind of job-related identity is being constructed.

Some of the interviewees were in rather different and sometimes contradictory positions depending on the exact context in which the social category is talked about. Mike, a non-Finn working with customer service, chooses to discuss his ethnicity primarily at the job-level and only in passing mentions difficulties he had experienced as a non-Finn searching for a job in Finland. Talking about his ethnicity at the job-level enables him to focus on what he sees to be its benefits in terms of the cultural competence needed in his job that his ethnicity has brought him. Mike talks about differences in service culture between his native country and Finland, constructing the former one as more developed. By drawing on his cultural background Mike indirectly describes his own work as being of better quality than that of his teammates. At the same time, any further discussion on the difficulties of not being a Finn at the Finnish job market is avoided.

For me, service, I’m paid to provide service to someone, so if someone asks a question I’m there to answer that question. If it’s a stupid question, or obvious question or doesn’t interest me question I still have to answer it and answer it the best I can. But I've noticed that other nationalities or cultures think that well this is a stupid question you can answer it yourself or that’s not part of my job to answer that. (Mike)

Contextualizing can be also seen as the core of one of the downplaying strategies identified in the previous chapters. According to the strategy, inequalities experienced by oneself as a member of one or more social categories are talked about but primarily discussed as taking place outside one’s own work organisation or one’s own job, thus not directly influencing oneself at work. Alexander, Anton and Christian all discuss prejudices against non-Finns or people of their ethnicities but locate the difficulties primarily outside their work organisations. By doing that, they manage to acknowledge inequalities related to one’s position as a member of a social category but at the same time render them harmless by locating them outside the immediate work context. Thus, by locating inequalities outside one’s own work or work organisation, they avoid constructing themselves as being disadvantaged at work.

Therefore, contextualizing talk about oneself and social categories can be seen as a way to manage difficulties related to one’s potentially disadvantaged position in terms of a social category. Choosing the context in which the social category is talked about could be seen to be used for two purposes: firstly, for influencing the overall tone in which the category is discussed, highlighting the positive aspects in relation to oneself as a member of the category and, secondly, for managing the damage caused by talking about inequalities related to a social category by locating them outside the immediate
context of one’s work and work organisation. As such, both of the ways can be also interpreted as ways of being silent about one’s potentially disadvantaged position at work.

9.6.2. Moving between identification and disidentification

The second way to talk about oneself is to move between identification and disidentification. In line with ‘contextualizing disadvantage’, ‘moving between identification and disidentification’ can be partly seen as one of the downplaying strategies. Maria and Milan moved between identification and disidentification in a way that enabled them to distance themselves from unwanted characteristics connected to their social categories while emphasizing the beneficial ones. By claiming themselves to be different, they managed to at least partly reject difficulties caused for their identities as members of the category. By moving between identification and disidentification, Maria and Milan were able to address some of the difficulties that are seen as typical for people from their social categories but define themselves as personally not influenced by them.

Moving between identification and disidentification can also serve to avoid any discussions related to oneself as potentially disadvantaged based on a social category. Terhi and Heidi both talk about the masculinity of their work environment and themselves as the rare women working in such an environment. Rather than defining the masculinity of the organisation and the industry as a problem, it is portrayed as something positive also for them personally. This is how Heidi talks about working with men compared to that of working with women. Heidi defines herself as a woman but at the same time distances herself from other women by describing them as dramatic and envious. The masculinity of the work environment is also talked about in terms of a male way of talking consisting of, for example, ‘male jokes’. Rather than that being a problem, Heidi says she shares the same sense of humour as her male colleagues.

A: I get really well along with these boys. I think it is much easier to work with men than women.

Q: Can you tell me a bit about that?

A: Women always want to have some drama. You have to come up with a crisis from somewhere. Moping enviously, that I don’t like at all myself and don’t understand it at all. And then in all the male dominated work places that I’ve been to I haven’t noticed. What is wrong with us women? That you have to always start at some point to make a fuss about something ... It felt like the boys were thinking about whether they can talk about tits when I’m around or will I die or
quit the job, but now they don’t watch at all what they talk about and it doesn’t matter. I have pretty much same kind of humour with all of them that you understand that, that you are not like ‘you a terrible chauvinist!’ [laughter].

(Heidi)

On similar lines, Terhi explains how she prefers working with men instead of women. Terhi plays with the different sides of her gender, drawing both on femininity and masculinity, thus constructing herself as both similar to other women but also as different. On the one hand, Terhi advocates traditional gender roles, women and men being different and doing different things and talks about she herself being a traditional woman. On the other hand, she also constructs herself as masculine, knowing how to manage in the male-dominated world. She talks about the different sides of her gender (as being both ‘boyish’ and traditionally female) and explains how it is part of her professional skills to play with the different roles.

A: There have been boys, boys, boys and I’ve been the only girl. I’ve been a little brother my whole life, starting from my family. So I get along with men a thousand times better than with women. I’ve been also in work environments where there have been women. I don’t like that. I’m a chauvinist and sexist, I’m a matron. Also at home, there is women’s work and men’s work, if something is heavy or somewhere high, I’m certainly not lifting it.

Q: You said that you are a chauvinist and sexist, what does it mean in practice?

A: For example, just before in the garage Samuel asked me to reverse the car, and I said I would not. I always have a preconception of women, and also of men of course. It can appear like, ‘Oh, you are a man but that artistic’. Sexual orientation comes also up as a powerful thing. I don’t know, it’s just that kind of internalized way of thinking, through which you look at everything. Then again, I don’t care who likes whom or what kind of colour people are, it doesn’t matter, the person matters. But still, it’s always the starting point, from where I look at things.

(Terhi)

By constructing themselves as different from other women Heidi and Terhi could manage to avoid considerations around themselves as being potentially disadvantaged because of their gender. Rather, the masculine work environment is constructed as a benefit also for them personally, as they get better along with men. In addition, by talking about oneself as somewhere between femininity and masculinity and able to use the different sides of herself, Terhi represents herself as not put in any specific position because of her gender, but rather gender being something that she can use according to her needs and for her purposes.
‘Moving between identification and disidentification’ can be seen as a way to manage what is told about oneself and social categories at work, including being silent or downplaying certain aspects while highlighting others. It can be seen as a way of managing potential disadvantages related oneself as a member of a social category either by downplaying the difficulties or by avoiding any discussion pondering on possible disadvantages.

9.7. Combining silence with non-silence

My findings suggest that silence in intersectional identity work is not so much about being literally silent about wider societal social categories at work, but more about telling certain kinds of stories while leaving out others. I looked at silence in three different ways of talking about wider societal social categories in organisations: talking about the organisation, talking about others, and talking about oneself. Each of the ways entailed different kinds of silences. Organisational talk included two, at first glance, opposite ways of talking and not talking about wider societal social categories: ‘constructing a neutral and equal organisation’ and ‘embracing diversity’. In other words, wider societal social categories could be constructed as not relevant at the work context or were alternatively constructed as an asset for the organisation. However, what the two opposite ways had in common was that they tended to create silence about inequalities related to wider societal social categories in organisations, and also could serve as a way not to talk about oneself in terms of wider societal social categories, constructing oneself as uninfluenced by them.

Thus, in both ‘constructing a neutral and equal organisation’ and ‘embracing diversity’ the interviewees could be seen to (re)produce discourses around an equal organisation, albeit in different ways. In ‘constructing a neutral and equal organisation’ the way in which the interviewees describe wider societal social categories as unimportant in their work organisation could be seen to be in line with findings from earlier research showing how organisations can be and often are constructed as equal despite inequalities taking place (Benschop and Doorewaard 1998, Korvajärvi 2011). Furthermore, the findings on ‘embracing diversity’ could be seen to be closely related to tendencies towards often overly positive managerial accounts of diversity that treat all differences the same and/or ignore power dimensions related to diversity, as noted by critical diversity scholars (Prasad et al. 2006). The shared silence on inequalities in these two apparently different ways of talking raises questions around the power of the discourse on equal organisation and the different ways it can be produced and/or maintained.

When talking about others, ‘talking about others as different’, the interviewees focused on discussing other people in terms of their wider societal social categories, while talking about themselves in more individualistic terms. In other words, through
focusing on others, people were being silent on themselves as members of social categories, as being gendered or ethnicized.

When talking about oneself, wider societal social categories were discussed in relation to oneself; however, also here inequalities related to social categories were silenced in different ways. One way was to contextualize talk about oneself and social categories, which might also serve to control the kinds of things that the interviewees said about themselves and social categories at work. In my data, contextualizing was primarily related to managing the talk about potential inequalities related to oneself as a member of a social category at work. Another way, in turn, was to move between identification and disidentification to downplay or to be silent about one’s position of disadvantage.

Thus, my findings indicate that silence around wider societal social categories and inequalities in organisations can be seen as a multi-level phenomenon, being entangled with various simultaneous constructions of oneself, others, and the organisation, with the different constructions reinforcing and/or challenging each other. Moreover, moving between the different levels can be also seen as a part of intersectional identity work in the sense of enabling people to ‘control’ in which (if any) context they talk about wider societal social categories, and in particular inequalities related to them. This obviously has consequences for how oneself at work is represented.

However, silence in intersectional identity work is not only important in terms of understanding individual people’s identities and identity work in organisations. What happens at the individual level of intersectional identity work can also be important for the organisation more generally in terms of (re)producing and/or challenging inequalities in organisations (Boogaard and Roggeband 2010). Thus, looking at how silence operates in individual level intersectional identity work can add to the understanding of inequalities and silences in organisations more generally.

The different ways of being silent also relate to the intersectional strategies identified in the previous chapter in different ways. ‘Constructing a neutral and equal organisation’ can, to large extent, be seen as a reinterpretation on disregarding and rejecting strategies, however, looking at silences on social categories at the level of the organisation, instead of or in addition to, that job-related identities and identity work. In addition, ‘contextualizing disadvantage’ and ‘moving between identification and disidentification’, partly but not solely, draw on downplaying strategies. ‘Embracing diversity’ and ‘talking about others as different’ are, in turn, not related to the intersectional strategies discussed in Chapter 8. Table 7 summarizes the different ways of being silent and their relations to the intersectional strategies identified in the previous chapter.
The ways of being silent identified in the data should be seen as different combinations of silences and non-silences rather than being only about silence. In other words, silence in my data is not absolute in the sense of excluding the entire topic of social categories; rather, there are different combinations of to what degree and on which

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Silence/non-silence</th>
<th>Way(s) of being silent</th>
<th>Level of talk</th>
<th>Related intersectional strategy/ies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constructing a neutral and equal organisation</strong></td>
<td>Questioning the importance of social categories in the organisation either directly, by refusing them, or indirectly by not talking about them.</td>
<td>Organisational</td>
<td>Disregarding and rejecting strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Embracing diversity</strong></td>
<td>Talking about diversity in positive terms as contributing to the organisation and not discussing inequalities related to social relations.</td>
<td>Organisational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talking about others as different</strong></td>
<td>Talking about a social category primarily as related to others and being silent about oneself concerning social categories, being gendered, ethnicized, etc.</td>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contextualizing disadvantage</strong></td>
<td>Giving a social category its meaning by choosing the context in which it is talked about and constructing disadvantage outside the current work organisation, thus downplaying or being silent on disadvantages as related to oneself at work.</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Altering the context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moving between identification and disidentification</strong></td>
<td>Moving between identification and dis-identification and, as such, making a potentially disadvantaged social category to a benefit for one’s job-related identity, being silent or downplaying potential disadvantages related to oneself as a member of a social category.</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Constructing oneself as different from others in the category, giving a positive meaning to the category</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
level or levels (organisational, individual, interpersonal) they are talked about, as well as the kinds of issues. Table 8 summarizes the different combinations of silences and ‘non-silences’ as related to social categories in the organisation or in relation to oneself at work.

Table 8  Silence on social categories in the organisation or in relation to oneself at work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constructing a neutral and equal organisation</strong></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>(X)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Embracing diversity</strong></td>
<td>X (in relation to oneself)</td>
<td>X (in relation to organisation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talking about others as different</strong></td>
<td>X (in relation to oneself)</td>
<td>X (in relation to others)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contextualizing disadvantage</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moving between identification and dis-identification</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The interviewees talk about social categories, but say that they do not or should not matter in the organisation.

In all the ways of being silent, social categories are talked about either in relation to the organisation, to others and/or to oneself. However, in ‘embracing diversity’ and ‘talking about others as different’ there can be seen to be silence on social categories in relation to oneself at work, and in ‘constructing a neutral and equal organisation’ there can be seen to be silences on all the different levels. In ‘contextualizing disadvantage’ and ‘moving between identification and dis-identification’ the interviewees are not silent about social categories in organisations and/or related to themselves per se, but more about some aspects of them.

The different combinations of silence and non-silence not only become a matter of the level on which social categories are and are not talked about but also a question of what kinds of issues are being included and excluded. What the different ways seem to have in common is that there seems to be silences around possible inequalities related to social categories at work, whether at the level of the individual or the organisation. Table 9 summarizes the different combinations of silences and non-silences as related to inequalities connected to social categories in the organisation or in relation to oneself at work.
Table 9  Silence on inequalities related to social categories in the organisation or in relation to oneself at work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constructing a neutral and equal organisation</strong></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Embracing diversity</strong></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talking about others as different</strong></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contextualizing disadvantage</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moving between identification and dis-identification</strong></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In ‘constructing a neutral and equal organisation’, ‘embracing diversity’ and ‘talking about others as different’, talk about possible inequalities around social categories in the specific work organisation and/or related to oneself at work is being avoided. Whereas in ‘constructing a neutral and equal organisation’ and ‘embracing diversity’ the organisation in itself is constructed as neutral and equal or positively diverse, in ‘talking about others as different’, oneself is constructed as unrelated to social categories and as such also to possible inequalities connected to them. It should be noted that silences do not mean that there was no organisational or interpersonal level talk around unequal social relations in the interviews. In SmartGameSoft, the interviewees talked about inequalities in relation to the different national units in India, USA, and Spain, which are, nevertheless, outside the scope of this analysis. The contrast between talking about what happens within the unit in Finland and in relation to other national units is, however, interesting. Studies on, for example, gender neutrality have noted that whereas inequalities in organisations in general can be acknowledged, people tend to adopt different ways of distancing them from their own work organisations (Korvajärvi 2011). Thus, rather than totally avoiding talking about inequalities, silence seems more to become a question of where the boundaries are set, what is considered distant enough.

‘Contextualizing disadvantage’ and ‘moving between identification and disidentification’ differ from the others in the sense that inequalities related to social categories can be discussed in relation to oneself. However, at the same time, their importance is downplayed in different ways: by distancing them as not being valid in the specific context of the work organisation or one’s job or for oneself as a specific individual in the context. Continuing with the same line of thinking, the combinations of silences and non-silences on inequalities as related to oneself can be also interpreted in terms of the ambiguity around unequal social categories in organisations being acknowledged or addressed but at the same time silenced in different ways (Korvajärvi 2011).
10 DISCUSSION

In the thesis, I have examined different ways of doing intersectional job-related identity work, that is, doing the relations between a job and wider societal social categories in constructing a (self-)identity at work. I have analysed intersectional identity work particularly in relation to two aspects: inequalities around social categories in organisations; and silence versus non-silence. My findings suggest that how intersectional identity work is done in practice often becomes a question of relating oneself to disadvantages and/or privileges around relevant social categories. In addition, while inequalities become central for doing intersectional job-related identity work, at the same time they became in my data the topic that people were most silent on.

This discussion chapter comprises four parts: the first part discusses the main findings; the second reflects on the relations between the three most central concepts, that is intersectional identity work, inequalities, and silence versus non-silence; and the third part discusses intersectional job-related identity work as taking place between discourses silencing inequalities in organisations and people’s personal experiences of inequalities. In the last part, I discuss the contributions of the study and ideas for future research.

10.1. Reflecting on the findings: from positions to positioning

In this thesis, I have examined people’s job-related identity work from the point of view of intersectionality. In the following, I will summarize the main findings from the four analysis chapters (chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9). Whereas the different chapters look at intersectional job-related identity work from somewhat different angles, what they all have in common is the focus on different ways of doing the relations between a job and wider societal social categories in order to answer the question of ‘Who am I?’ (or ‘Who are we?’) at work. I have looked at intersectional job-related identity work in particular in relation to two themes: inequalities and silence versus non-silence. In the thesis, I have examined the following research questions:

1. How do people do the relations between different social categories when constructing themselves a job-related identity?
   1.a. How do people relate themselves to inequalities connected to wider societal social categories when constructing themselves a job-related identity?

12 By ‘job-related’ here, I refer to a rather wide notion of identities at work also encompassing collective level work identities.
1.b. How are people silent about wider societal social categories when constructing themselves a job-related identity?

In Chapters 6 and 7, I looked at intersectional identity work in relation to the construction of unit versus job-related identities. In Chapter 8, I examined the different intersectional strategies that people used for positioning themselves in relation to wider societal social categories and inequalities related to the categories, and, finally, in Chapter 9 I looked at intersectional identity work through the notion of silence. Thus, question 1 was examined in all of the analysis chapters. Question 1a was implicit in all the chapters, but was more explicitly examined in Chapters 8 and 9, and question 1b was primarily looked at in Chapter 9, even though some of the findings in Chapters 7 and 8 can be also seen to relate to question 1b.

Moreover, the findings can be divided into two entities in the sense of having somewhat different approaches to intersectional identity work, being based on different sets of data, and having been analysed during different periods of time. When moving from the first part to the second, there can be seen to be a shift from ‘positions’ to ‘positioning’, the prior emphasizing the importance of different positions constraining and enabling people’s intersectional identity work, and the latter moving towards increased complexity in terms of people’s ways of positioning themselves towards the different categories. I will start by discussing the ‘positions’ part that consists of Chapters 6, 7 and the first part of Chapter 8, after which I move to the ‘positioning’ part, drawing on the last part of Chapter 8 and Chapter 9. Thinking in terms of McCall’s (2005) categorical complexities in understanding intersectionality, both of the parts can be seen to be close to intra-categorical complexity in the sense of focusing on people’s identities as being constructed at the intersections of different social categories. The notion of social categories is not problematized or questioned as such, even though the ways in which the categories translate and do not translate into concrete relations and positions influencing people’s identity work is seen as a complex matter (see Anthias 2013).

In Chapters 6 and 7, I examined people’s intersectional identity work as related to constructing a positive identity at work (cf. Boogaard and Roggeband 2010). The two chapters are based on the same data (interviews from SmartGameSoft) and have a similar focus. I looked at the kinds of positive identities that people constructed for themselves by making (and not making) use of wider societal social categories in different ways. However, they examine intersectional identity work at different levels: collective versus individual. Whereas identity work as a concept has been far more commonly used at the individual level (see for exceptions Kornberger and Brown 2007, Ybema et al. 2012), in Chapter 6 it was applied to the collective level in terms of looking at the construction of a unit identity. I examined intersectional identity work as being located within the dynamics of international acquisitions the company had recently
gone through and the kinds of relations the Finnish unit had with the other national units, finding itself in rather different kinds of positions in relation to the US headquarters and the newly acquired units in India and Spain. I identified four different unit identities: ‘hardworking and competent Finns’, ‘fun and games’, ‘reluctant babysitter’, and ‘well-meaning older sibling’ that were constructed for the Finnish unit in relation to the other national units by drawing on different meanings related to age and ethnicity. Whereas the ways of making use of social categories varied depending on the specific relations between the Finnish unit and the other national units, there seemed to be some important similarities in the different unit identities regarding being successful, professional, and having the core competence of the company.

In Chapter 7, I looked at intersectional identity work as taking place within the Finnish unit at the level of individual people’s job-related identities. In line with Chapter 6, the focus was on positive identities. I identified six job-related identities, each being constructed in relation to a specific social category, that is ethnicity, gender, and age. ‘Experienced professionals’ was constructed in relation to age, ‘career women’ in relation to gender, ‘romantic migrants’, ‘internationals’, and ‘non-ethnic professionals’ in relation to ethnicity, and finally in ‘individuals’ the job was kept separate from wider societal social categories. One and the same interviewee could construct many of the identities. As in the case of the collective level identity work, intersectional identity work was interpreted as taking place between different kinds of positions provided by the social categories and a positive job-related identity. The ways in which the social categories were used varied depending on experiences of privilege and/or disadvantage provided for the interviewees as members of those categories.

The first part of Chapter 8 can be seen as a direct continuation of Chapter 7 as it is based on the findings from that chapter. I identified different intersectional strategies, that is to say different ways of doing the relations between the categories that people engaged in in their identity work. The intersectional strategies were divided into two main strategies, combining and separating strategies as well as various sub-strategies under the main strategies. Combining strategies are intersectional strategies in which a job was combined with wider societal social categories in different ways, consisting of supporting and downplaying strategies. A supporting strategy is a strategy used by the interviewees to deploy (positive) meanings from a wider societal social category to support the construction of a positive job-related identity, whereas downplaying strategies refer to managing a disadvantaged social category to make it less harmful or even positive for one’s job-related identity. The findings on combining strategies can be seen as closely related to earlier studies having identified different strategies of emphasizing and downplaying aspects related to social categories in intersectional identity work (Boogaard and Roggeband 2010, Essers and Benschop 2007, 2009).
Separating strategies, in turn, are the different ways in which wider societal social categories are kept separate from a job. Thus, my findings suggest that intersectional job-related identity work is not only about doing the relations between the categories in the sense of combining them in different ways, but also about keeping wider societal social categories more generally separate from one’s job-related identity (cf. Ramajan and Raid 2013). Keeping a job separate from wider societal social categories could be seen to have important consequences in terms of producing individualistic notions of oneself at work as uninfluenced by social categories and related inequalities.

In previous studies around intersectionality and identity work, people have been identified as engaging in different ways of relating to inequalities, for example, turning the disadvantages of their social categories to their advantage (Adib and Guerrier 2003, Zanoni and Janssen 2007). In similar ways, my findings indicate that intersectional strategies might be best interpreted as different ways of relating to privilege and/or disadvantage connected to different categories relevant for people in a specific context. In other words, rather than becoming a question of social categories in general, intersectional identity work seems to be a question of privilege and disadvantage in particular. The very same social category could be handled in rather different ways, and different categories could be handled in the same way, depending on people’s experiences of privilege and/or disadvantage. The findings also raise questions around the importance of differences versus similarities between the categories in intersectional identity work (Anthias 2013, Walby 2007, Verloo 2006, Yuval-Davis 2006). To what extent do the differences between the categories matter for the kinds of intersectional strategies that people use in their identity work? What seemed, in my data, to become particularly important for doing intersectional identity work, were the similarities between the categories, in the sense that they are all connected to inequalities. The inequalities, in turn, seemed to operate somewhat similarly in relation to identity work both 1) by being a central issue in relation to which identity work was done and 2) by providing experiences of disadvantages and/or privileges often influencing the intersectional strategies being used in identity work.

The findings so far suggest a relatively straightforward way of thinking about intersectional job-related identity work. People are seen to construct their job-related identities from different positions of power in terms of their social categories, which, in turn, seems to influence the ways in which intersectional identity work is done, that is the kind of intersectional strategies that people deploy in their identity work. Moving from the ‘position part’ to the ‘positioning part’ increases the complexity of the interpretation of intersectional identity work. The ‘positioning part’ should, however, not be seen as separate from the ‘position part’ but rather a continuation and partly a reinterpretation of it. The ‘positioning part’ draws on findings from the last part of Chapter 8 and Chapter 9. The last part of Chapter 8 increases the complexity of
intersectional strategies identified in the first part of the chapter, claiming that intersectional identity work does not necessarily neatly fall into the intersectional strategies but people can and often do have rather complex ways of relating to both privilege and/or disadvantage of their various social categories (Essers et al. 2010, Wetherell and Edley 1999).

Furthermore, the findings from the last part of Chapter 8 question the notion of people being engaged in identity work and intersectional identity work for their own advantage, for example in order to construct a positive job-related identity, suggesting a more varied notion of identity work or intersectional identity work (see Collinson 2003, Alvesson 2010). Maybe, more importantly, not all the identity work has to be intentional in terms of being done in order to achieve a desired end. This also raises questions around terminology: to what extent can one talk about intersectional strategies and managing social categories instead of just talking about doing the relations between the different categories?

In Chapter 9, intersectional identity work is examined through notions of silence and non-silence. Instead of focusing on how oneself is talked about in relation to wider societal social categories at work, the chapter examines what is not being talked about, what is being excluded or played down. Whereas in the two previous chapters I had focused on what happens at the individual level, silence becomes analysed as a wider phenomenon more generally related to social categories in organisations and that could also be often seen to have consequences for individual level identities and identity work. According to my findings social categories were talked about at different levels, the organisation, others and oneself, all including different kinds of silences and non-silences around unequal social categories at work. Rather than being total in the sense of not at all talking about social categories at work, silence became more a matter of different combinations of silence and non-silence. What the interviewees seemed to be mostly silent on were inequalities around social categories in organisations and/or those related to oneself at work. Being silent on inequalities related to oneself at work was often a combination of silence and non-silence in terms telling about one's experiences, but at the same downplaying their importance.
Figure 6   Main findings of the thesis

Intersectional strategies in identity work
- Combining and separating strategies
- Positioning oneself towards inequalities

Job-related identity
- A self-identity in an organisational context combined with or separated from wider societal social categories

Silence in intersectional identity work
- Silences and ambiguities around inequalities in organisations
- Part of intersectional strategies
- Provides a discursive context silencing inequalities

Figure 6 presents the process and outcome of intersectional job-related identity work in terms of the main findings of this study. The boxes on the left side on intersectional strategies and silence concern the process of intersectional identity work, whereas the box on the right side on job-related identity is about the outcomes. The figure does not include unit identities, since intersectional strategies were examined only at the individual level. The box in the left upper corner presents intersectional identity work in terms of intersectional strategies, that is, combining and separating strategies that people engage in as ways of combining job with wider societal social categories or keeping it separate from them. Intersectional strategies could be seen as often being different ways of positioning oneself towards privileges and/or disadvantages connected to the relevant social categories.

The box in the left lower corner represents the enactment of silence in intersectional identity work, that is, people being particularly silent and/or ambiguous about inequalities around social categories in the work organisation or related to oneself at work. The relation of silence to intersectional strategies and job-related identities can be seen as twofold. First of all, silence could be seen to make part of the intersectional strategies or, at times, even being an intersectional strategy, since silence contributes in part to how people relate to wider societal social categories in job-related identity work. It should be noted that I do not view silence (nor the intersectional strategies) as necessarily something intentional. At the same time, silence is not only about intersectional strategies, but could also be seen to be central for forming a specific discursive context for doing intersectional identity work in terms of not talking about or

The ways in which people do the relations between a job and wider societal social categories lead to different kinds of job-related identities, meaning a self-identity at work that is combined with or separated from wider societal social categories.

10.2. Combinations of unequal social categories and silence versus non-silence in intersectional identity work

My findings suggest that whereas inequalities related to social categories seem to become central for understanding how intersectional job-related identity work is done in practice, at the same time, they also become the topic that the interviewees seem to be most silent on. In this section, I move on to further reflect on the different ways in which unequal social categories and silence (and non-silence) interconnect or can interconnect with each other in intersectional identity work.

I discuss how inequalities around social categories in organisations can be seen to be connected to silence and non-silence in intersectional job-related identity work at least in two different ways. The first way is about being silent about social categories and inequalities around social categories in organisations as identified in my data. This way is not necessarily (but can be) related to particular groups or categories of people, but it is more generally about specific ways of talking and not talking about (unequal) social categories in organisations. The second way of being and not being silent can be seen as connected to unequal social categories in the sense that people’s experiences and positions in terms of privilege and/or disadvantage can be argued to relate to who is being silent on what and how. The first way touches upon questions around how the different and relevant discourses on the topic can be seen to relate to what people are and are not silent on, whereas the second looks at how people’s different discursively and materially produced positions of privilege and/disadvantage translate or do not translate into different kinds of silences versus non-silences in intersectional identity work.

10.2.1. Inequalities and silence: being and not being silent on (unequal) social categories

The first way relates to being and not being silent on (unequal) social categories in organisations more generally, also meaning that the connection to intersectional job-related identity work can become more indirect. This raises questions around the boundaries of what kind of talk is or can be seen as intersectional job-related identity work. Looking at silence can be argued to be important, since silence as well as non-
silence can be seen to be constitutive of people’s identities (Foucault 1981, Ward and 2003). Thus, from the point of view of intersectional identity work, it becomes important to examine silence (and related non-silences) to the extent that they can be seen to construct people’s job-related identities. As such, silence and non-silence can be seen to relate to a wide range of phenomena touching upon unequal social categories in organisations, which are maybe not necessarily directly about intersectional identity work, but indirectly become relevant for how oneself at work is constructed.

First of all, silence and non-silence becomes a matter of organisations as a specific type of context for intersectional identity work relating to the complex and broader issue of (unequal) social categories in organisations, and the different and sometimes rather widely spread discourses on the topic (Louvrier 2013, Prasad et al. 2006). In my data, traces could be found of two different discourses, that is constructing the organisation as neutral and equal and social categories as such being unimportant for people’s positions, experiences and identities, and constructing diversity as an ideal of a successful work organisation and, at the same time, disregarding inequalities related to social categories in organisations (see also Louvrier 2013, Prasad et al. 2006, Zanoni and Janssen 2007). (Unequal) social categories can be talked about at a more general level in organisations instead of or in addition to the individual level talk of oneself at work. Remaining at the organisational level could be a way of being silent about social categories in relation to oneself at work.

Furthermore, silence and non-silence with regard to unequal social categories in organisations becomes a matter of whether social categories are talked about in general in organisations or in the context of one’s own work organisation. Whereas inequalities around social categories in organisations in general can be more easily addressed or acknowledged, talking about inequalities in one’s own work organisation becomes far more complex (Korvajärvi 2011, Khoreva 2012). Previous studies have identified this ambiguity around talking about unequal social categories in organisations, on the one hand acknowledging inequalities but on the other hand distancing them in different ways from oneself or one’s work organisation (Korvajärvi 2011). In my findings, too, people engaged in different ways of distancing inequalities from their organisations and/or themselves by, for example, talking about inequalities more generally existing outside one’s own work organisation. However, this did not mean that inequalities were not discussed at all within the organisation. People, for example, could talk about their experiences of disadvantage, whilst often downplaying their importance. Also talking and not talking about inequalities seemed to become a question of what is distant enough. In SmartGameSoft, people frequently discussed inequalities in relation to the other national units, while at the same time being more silent on those within the Finnish unit.
In addition, silence and non-silence in intersectional identity work becomes a matter of specific social categories. First of all, not all categories are equally addressed but some social categories seem to be totally or almost totally absent whereas others are frequently talked about. Social categories can be thought of not being addressed for different reasons; for example, historical and/or contextual ones (cf. Lutz et al. 2011). In addition, some categories may not be addressed because they are not necessarily visible to others, and people can choose not to talk about them, for example, in order to avoid stigma (Clair et al. 2005, Ward and Winstanley 2003).

That a category is absent does not, however, necessarily mean that it is not of importance. In my interviews, ethnicity, gender, and age were frequently discussed, whereas others such as health or class were less addressed. The prevalence of gender, age, and ethnicity could be partly explained by the interviews themselves, the context in terms of the diverse workforce in the industry and some of the companies, and whom I interviewed there. However, this is not to say that other less-discussed categories may not likewise influence people’s job-related identities in the same context.

Silence and non-silence also become a question of who is talked about in terms of social categories. Some people tend to be more frequently discussed in terms of social categories than others. Who is and is not talked about can be seen to relate to inequalities in the sense of privilege often making a category more invisible whereas disadvantage tends to have the opposite effect (e.g. Pease 2010). For example, in organisations and organisation studies men tend to be less discussed in terms of their gender than women. However, the invisibility does not mean that it is not important in organisations, rather the contrary (Collinson and Hearn 1994). Different kinds of statuses in terms of a category being marked or unmarked can also be seen to be important, making the unmarked categories less discussed, defined and visible in comparison to the marked ones. The status of the categories as being marked or unmarked often, but not always, relates to the hierarchical position of the categories in relation to each other as being privileged or disadvantaged in a specific context. Whereas in the case of some categories (like gender) the privileged categories become unmarked and the disadvantaged ones marked, in the case of other categories (like age), the categories ‘in the middle’ remain unmarked while in the categories at both ends become marked (Brekhus 1998).

10.2.2. Inequalities and silence: ‘who is and is not being silent on what and how’

Moving on to the second way, the question becomes if and how inequalities around social categories translate into silences and non-silences in intersectional identity work. In approaching the question, it becomes important to ask ‘who is and who is not being
silent on what, and how’. ‘Who’ refers here to people in terms of their positions of
disadvantage and/or privilege, ‘what’ refers to social categories, and ‘how’ refers to the
different ways of being and not being silent on social categories as part of one’s
intersectional job-related identity work. It should, however, be highlighted that ‘who’
does not refer to people as ‘whole’ being disadvantaged or privileged but to the different
and shifting positions and experiences that they have as specific kind of individuals in
different contexts often related to privilege and/or disadvantage.

Inequalities have been identified as influencing whether or not and to what extent
people understand or see themselves in terms of social categories, arguing that
disadvantage tends to make a category more visible to oneself and central to one's
identity, whereas privilege has the opposite effect (Kimmel 2003, McIntosh 1988, Pease
2010). Interrelated with this, my findings indicate that privilege and disadvantage can
relate to silence and non-silence in intersectional identity work in different ways:
firstly, in terms of whether or not social categories are talked about in relation to
oneself at work more generally; secondly, in the sense of which social categories are
talked about, if they are discussed; and, thirdly, how they are talked about. What can be
seen as central for all these ways is the idea of people's positions as shaping the
experiences they have and thus their knowledge of the world and themselves (e.g.
Calhoun 1995).

Whether and to what extent social categories are ‘at all’ talked about in relation to
oneself at work could be seen to be first of all a question of intersectionality of
privileges and disadvantages related to social categories relevant for the individual in a
specific context. Kimmel (2003) tells a story of overhearing a conversation by a black
and a white woman talking about what they see when they look at the mirror; whereas
the black woman in the story sees herself as both black and woman, the white woman
sees herself only as a woman. In turn, the author, as a white man not being
disadvantaged based on any ‘major’ dimensions, catches himself thinking about himself
in more individualistic terms (Kimmel 2003, Pease 2010). The story illustrates how
people are likely to reflect on themselves through the social category or categories in
which they are disadvantaged and the kind of consequences that different and
intersecting inequalities can have for if people ‘at all’ ponder on themselves in terms of
social categories. To put it somewhat differently, inequalities can be seen to have
consequences for the kind of identities people in different positions construct or can
construct for themselves, meaning that being privileged on multiple dimensions (or not
disadvantaged on any ‘major’ dimensions) can enable people to construct themselves as
individuals unattached to and uninfluenced by social categories.

Furthermore, if and to what extent social categories are talked about in relation to
oneself at work could be also a matter of specific positions in the organisation, between
those whose differences are being managed and those who manage (Lorbiecki and Jack 2000). A recent study by Louvier (2013) has shown how minority employees in managerial positions pondered less on themselves in terms of their social categories than minority employees in other positions.

My findings indicate that inequalities can, but not necessarily always, relate to whether people talk about themselves in terms of social categories. As discussed before, I identified two kinds of ‘general’ silences: the first was talking about social categories in relation to the organisation and/or others but less in relation to oneself, and the other was more total in the sense of in general avoidance of talking about social categories or rejecting their importance. Whereas in the first type of silence people tended to be privileged either in terms of the wider societal social categories or in terms of their position in the company or both, in the second type people could talk from very different kinds of positions. What the interviewees instead seemed to have in common was that they drew on a discourse of an equal and neutral organisation in which social categories did not seem to matter.

Moving from silences around social categories more generally to silences and non-silences around specific social categories, it becomes relevant to ask ‘which categories are talked about by whom’. The question can be answered, for example, through the concept of salience, referring to the relevance of a category for a specific individual in a specific context (Ashfort and Mael 1989). It becomes, however, important to ask to what extent inequalities around social categories influence which social categories become salient for whom. The ways in which inequalities can be seen to translate into silences and non-silences can be seen as a rather complex matter related to intersectionality and contextuality of the categories (cf. Anthias 2013) influencing the specific meanings that the categories take. For example, in my data, gender as a category was mainly talked about by women, but it could be seen to take different meanings depending, for example, on the organisation or the specific event context in which it was talked about. Related to this, the kinds of positions that it seemed to create for different women also depended on how gender intersected with other categories from their job to wider societal social categories, such as age.

In my data, whether social categories were talked about seemed to be partly, but not solely, influenced by inequalities. There were some tendencies that people having experienced disadvantages would more frequently talk about the category they were disadvantaged in, in terms of women being more prone to reflect on their gender than men. However, in the case of other categories, the relation to inequalities was less clear. Age was predominantly reflected by people that were somewhat different from the average, however, often not having particularly experienced disadvantage because of their age. Thus, rather than being a question of inequalities as such, in the specific
context, silence and non-silences around age seemed to become a question of the status of a category in terms of being marked or unmarked. Moreover, ethnicity seemed to be a case of its own due to the internationality of the industry, and was as such talked about more evenly by Finns and ‘non-Finns’, particularly in SmartGameSoft, which was very international.

In addition, inequalities can be a question of how they are and are not talked about by whom. My findings indicate that if a social category is talked about it is often done differently depending on the position of the individual in relation to the category. In my data, ethnicity could be talked about both by people being disadvantaged in the category as well as by those being privileged (or in some cases both). However, the ways in which the category was talked and not talked about seemed to differ. In the case of disadvantage, talk about the social category people were disadvantaged in frequently seemed to be more complex in the sense that people had to manage inequalities related to the category by addressing inequalities but at the same engaging in different ways of downplaying their importance. In the case of privilege, the social category could be (but was not always) used for strengthening the construction of a positive job-related identity.

10.3. Between discourses and experiences

I have thus far discussed how silence and inequalities can be seen to intertwine in intersectional identity work in two different ways: 1. in the sense of people being silent about inequalities around social categories in organisations and 2. in the sense of inequalities relating to who is being silent on what and how. By combining the two ways, I examine here intersectional identity work as taking place between more general discourses on social categories in organisations and the presence or lack of personal experiences that people might have of inequalities at work. Discourses on social categories in organisations create a specific context in relation to which personal experiences are discussed and vice versa. I had identified two main discourses on social categories in organisations in the data: 1. embracing diversity and 2. the equal and neutral organisation. What is important here is that in both of the discourses inequalities are silenced in terms of not being talked about or being rejected.

The personal experiences varied in the sense of how well they paralleled these discourses noted above, putting people in rather different situations in terms of intersectional identity work. I discuss three different situations: being disadvantaged

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To my understanding, discourses and experiences relate to each other in at least two different ways. First of all, people’s personal experiences can be seen to be formed in relation to who they are in a specific discursive and material context. Moreover, the meanings that people give to their experiences can be seen as discursive.
on multiple dimensions, being both disadvantaged and privileged, and being privileged on multiple dimensions. The different situations are illustrated by examples with different people from the three companies. Whereas the companies can be seen to share the more general discourses on the equal and/or diversity valuing organisations, they also provide somewhat different contexts for the intersectional identity work being done. In SmartGameSoft there seemed to be a strong emphasis on being meritocratic in the sense that what is constructed as mattering is doing well at one’s work regardless of any wider societal social categories. At the same time, diversity was widely celebrated, particularly by the management. Also in Apps2Trust there seemed to be an emphasis on equality, the organisation being constructed generally as an equal place. Moreover, diversity was celebrated by the management. Enginiously was slightly different in the sense that some of the interviewees seemed to be more open about the disadvantages they had faced. Moreover, there seemed not to be as strong an emphasis on celebrating diversity as in the other two companies.

10.3.1. Situation 1 – being disadvantaged on multiple dimensions

Person A works in SmartGameSoft. She has a university degree in the field she is working in, and she describes herself as performing well and getting good feedback for her work. However, despite her aspirations, person A has not been able to advance in her career but has remained at the lowest level in the organisation. Being frustrated regarding the lack of possibilities, person A decides to leave the company. Being a non-Finn, visibly different from Finns and a woman, person A could be seen to be disadvantaged on multiple dimensions, those of gender, ethnicity, and race. However, she does not explain her lack of possibilities by inequalities; rather, on the contrary, she constructs very explicitly wider societal social categories as unimportant both for herself personally and the organisation. By not talking about inequalities, person A manages both to comply with the discourses of the organisation as being equal as well as to construct a positive job-related identity for herself as being well-performing and hardworking and having better opportunities in the next company.

Person B works in Enginiously. She talks about the difficulties she faces when meeting customers. Person B explains how she is often not taken seriously and has to prove that she knows what she is talking about. A lot of her customer contacts are older men, and person B explicitly talks about the disadvantages she has experienced as a young woman with no background in ICT. Person B is rather open about her experiences, also framing them as inequalities. However, the inequalities person B talks about happen outside the immediate context of her work organisation, thus she manages to talk about inequalities without constructing her own work organisation as unequal.
In the case of both persons A and B, there could be seen to a discrepancy between the more general discourses silencing inequalities in organisations and their personal experiences as specific kinds of people. However, as seen before, persons A and B have very different ways of solving the discrepancy in their intersectional identity work. The situations of persons A and B are rather different to start with. While the disadvantages experienced by person B could be seen as more restricted (except those related to gender), connected to the specific context she is talking about, the situation of person A could be seen as likely to be more comprehensive, not only being disadvantaged in the specific job or the specific company. Moreover, the organisational contexts A and B work in could be seen to be somewhat different. In SmartGameSoft there seemed to be a stronger emphasis on the organisation being diverse but at the same time equal, so it might have been more difficult for person A to contradict the discourse(s). In Enginiously, diversity seemed not to be celebrated in a similar manner, which ironically might create more room for taking up inequalities.

10.3.2. Situation 2 – being disadvantaged and privileged

The second situation is that of being both disadvantaged and privileged. The distinction from the first situation could be seen primarily as an analytical one, since, in practice, while being disadvantaged in some categories, people often are privileged in at least some others. Here, I discuss the situation of people being disadvantaged in one category, while privileged in others. The discrepancies between the discourses and personal experiences can be seen as partial.

Person C works in SmartGameSoft. SmartGameSoft had recently made an international acquisition, which had meant substantial changes both for the Finnish unit and for person C personally. The personnel of the Finnish unit heavily criticized the acquisition and Person C, who was originally from the country in which the acquisition had been made, ended up in a difficult position, his colleagues starting to exclude or ignore him after the acquisition. Moreover, his colleagues commonly talked about people from his home country as neither being very intelligent nor performing very well. At the same time, person C said that the acquisition benefitted him professionally in the sense that he was able to advance in his career as having the knowledge and cultural competence for understanding the acquired unit.

Ethnicity and nationality were central topics in the interview with person C. The way person C talked about his experiences in terms of his nationality was characterized by ambiguity. He talked about the negative stereotypes and having been treated badly by his co-workers, because of his nationality. However, at the same time he engaged in different strategies to downplay the importance of his ethnicity or make it into something positive by both highlighting his professional competences and
distinguishing between himself and people from his home country. Person C emphasized his being a professional who ‘had proven’ himself and had consequently been given the opportunities he had deserved. As such, person C can be seen to have managed both to construct himself a positive job-related identity and at the same time follow the discourse of the Finnish unit as being equal in the sense of that everyone, regardless of their ethnicity, has same the possibilities.

As in the case of persons A and B, person C can be seen as an example of people having faced inequalities in terms of a wider societal social category or categories, causing discrepancy between the more general discourses and their personal experiences. The discrepancy is often reflected in intersectional identity work in terms of ambivalence around experiences of inequalities, which can be talked about but whose importance is often downplayed (for example, not in this organisation, and not me) (Korvajärvi 2011). The ambivalence could be also interpreted as a way of managing to talk about the experiences and at the same time comply with the discourses. Downplaying inequalities could, in turn, be seen as having consequences for maintaining or reproducing the discourses on and in the organisation as equal, fair, and/or successfully diverse.

10.3.3. Situation 3 – being privileged on multiple dimensions

The third situation is about being privileged on multiple dimensions or more importantly not being, at least visibly, disadvantaged on any major dimension. In contrast to the two previous situations there is no discrepancy between the personal experiences and more general discourses.

Person D works in SmartGameSoft as a manager, leading the work of game development professionals. He is a Finnish man with two university degrees being slightly, but not too much older than people on average in the company. Person D is interested in diversity and talks about the positive sides of diversity enhancing creativity and thus the quality of the products. Whereas person D talks about wider societal social categories in relation to others or the organisation, he rarely discusses them in relation to himself. Moreover, person D does not discuss inequalities either in relation to himself or more generally.

The situation of person D could be seen as an example of being privileged on multiple dimensions. There could be seen to be a match between discourses on an equal and diverse organisation and one’s personal experience that can reinforce each other. Particularly, if people lack personal experiences of disadvantages on any major dimension, inequalities can easily remain invisible (cf. Davis and Robinson 1991, Khoreva 2012, Shapiro and Kirkman 2001). Turning it the other way around, some discourses, for example nationalist discourses, also enable people not to have to think
necessarily about themselves in terms of social categories or even less themselves or others in terms of inequalities. This is especially so for those in positions of privilege (Collins 1991).

However, being privileged does not necessarily mean being unaware of social categories. Person E works in Apps2Trust with product development. Being a young Finnish man he could be also seen as privileged on multiple dimensions. In contrast to person D, person E discusses wider societal social categories also in relation to himself, defining the ICT industry as being masculine and yet distancing himself from masculinity. However, person E neither talks about inequalities nor the company he is working in; thus, he manages to discuss social categories without directly challenging the equality of the company.

10.4. Social categories, inequalities, and silences

As discussed earlier, the match or mismatch between the more general discourses and personal experiences concerning social categories in organisations can be seen to have consequences for intersectional identity work, putting people in rather different kinds of situations depending on who they are. People having experienced disadvantages can be seen to be in a situation of discrepancy between their personal experiences and discourses on social categories in organisations that silence inequalities. Situations in which people are privileged on multiple dimensions and simultaneously have little experience of disadvantages could be seen as less complex, the discourses and personal experiences corresponding to each other.

Moreover, what people do in intersectional identity work could be seen as feeding back into the discourses in the sense of reproducing, maintaining, and challenging them (cf. Boogaard and Roggeband 2010). The lack of personal experiences of disadvantages can reinforce silences on inequalities around social categories in organisations in the sense of inequalities simultaneously being invisible both at the individual and organisational level and as such often remaining unaddressed. However, discourses are not only reproduced or maintained by people with little personal experience of disadvantages, people that have experienced disadvantages could also be seen to maintain or reproduce discourses in which inequalities are silenced by downplaying the importance of their experiences.

While inequalities are silenced in many ways, they continue to produce rather different kinds of realities for different people in organisations. For individuals, silences on inequalities can be seen as making it more difficult to make sense of their own situations and to see and understand those of others in organisations. For people privileged on multiple dimensions and with little personal experience of disadvantages,
inequalities can often remain quite invisible. It may be relatively easy to interpret oneself in terms of universality and individuality: universality in the sense of also assuming others are in a similar kind of position compared to one’s own, and individuality in the sense of oneself being an individual, independent and free from social categories (e.g. Smith 1987). For people having experienced disadvantages, inequalities often become at least partially visible through their experiences. However, silences around inequalities in organisations can lead to it becoming more difficult to see and name the personal experiences of inequalities as inequalities. Not recognizing inequalities as inequalities makes them, in turn, easily appear as a personal problem, instead of the collective level phenomenon it is.

Making inequalities less silenced and more visible can also be challenging, since awareness of inequalities tends to be restricted, often related to the personal experiences that people as specific type of individuals might have. Having experienced disadvantages in one category does not necessarily mean that one is aware of inequalities in relation to other categories (McIntosh 1988). Thus, awareness of inequalities could be seen as being at best partial. Moreover, privileges in terms of wider societal social categories (at least those of race, ethnicity and gender) seem, at least to some extent, to coincide with positions of power in organisations, meaning that people in positions of power might often have fewer personal experiences of being disadvantaged on a major dimension. Furthermore, even if they had such experiences, it is not necessarily the case that they would then be less silent on inequalities, which can sometimes be the case with managers of, for example, a minority ethnic background (Louvrier 2013).

To make inequalities more visible and thus ultimately to be able to make organisations less unequal, inequalities need to be addressed at a more collective level in organisations, being led by and having the commitment of the management. Whereas there is increasing discussion on and celebration of diversity in organisations, the implications of wider societal social categories for the organisation as well as for people working in them cannot be understood if the inequalities themselves are not addressed. Rather, emphasizing diversity, but at the same time being silent on inequalities can further obscure inequalities, making it more difficult for people to see or name inequalities as inequalities. Thus, rather than simply celebrate diversity, it could be seen to be more important to openly and actively address inequalities in organisations (cf. Hearn and Collinson 2006).

10.5. Contribution and future research

Being located at the interface of identities and intersectionality, this thesis seeks to contribute to research on identities in organisations, more specifically to the literature
on identity work and what I call intersectional identity work in organisations. First of all, the thesis seeks to contribute to the existing literature by examining (intersectional) identity work through the notion of silence\(^{14}\). Whereas silence as a more general topic or as related to social categories is not new in organisational research\(^{15}\), it has been surprisingly little examined in relation to individual level identities and identity work in organisations (pace Moaşa 2012, 2013, Ward and Winstanley 2003). Empirically, this study could be seen to add to the literature on (intersectional) identity work by identifying different ways in which people are silent about wider societal social categories in organisations as a part of their identity work.

Moreover, and maybe more importantly, silence could be also seen as having theoretical relevance for the understanding of (intersectional) identity work taking place in organisations. Silence has been argued to be an integral part of the construction of identities in organisations (Moaşa 2012, 2013, Ward and Winstanley 2003) in the sense that what is being excluded or not talked about, as well as what is being included or talked about, can be seen as constitutive of people’s identities (Foucault 1981, Ward and Winstanley 2003). However, prior literature on identity work in organisations has predominantly focused on what is foregrounded in identity work, for example, what kinds of meanings or discourses people draw on when constructing a sense of self. My thesis seeks to contribute to the literature on identity work, seeing silence or being silent as an important activity that people engage in when constructing themselves a self-identity at work.

Furthermore, silence can be argued to be important in the context of intersectional identity work, with silence being closely connected to inequalities around social categories in organisations (e.g. Collinson and Hearn 1994, Hearn and Parkin 2001). Silence has long been identified as taking place in relation to inequalities in organisations in different ways. For example, organisations are often constructed as equal despite the existing inequalities (Benschop and Doorewaard 1998, Korvajärvi 2011) or they can be depicted as diverse in an overly positive way that obscures

\(^{14}\) The order of the issues in which they are taken up is different in this section compared to the other parts of the thesis.

\(^{15}\) In organisation studies silence has been examined in relation to a variety of topics. There is, for example, a rather established discussion on employee voice and silence around issues of people voicing or not voicing their concerns in organisations (e.g. Hirschman 1970, Morrison 2011, Morrison and Milliken 2003). Silence in organisations has been also looked at in relation to different social relations or categories, especially, gender (e.g. Collinson and Hearn 1994, 1996, Harlow et al. 1995, Simpson and Lewis 2005), race (Macalpine and Marsh 2005), and sexuality (e.g. Ward and Winstanley 2003). In addition, in working on the Academy of Finland Project ‘Age, generation, and changing work-life balance and boundaries’ I have completed a literature review on organisations and silence. This generated about 200 published items, which interestingly were unevenly distributed in relation to specific organisational issues and aspects. For example, there were many items on employee voice and silence, as well as, on gender and sexuality, and few on age.
inequalities (Prasad et al. 2006). At the same time, in the context of individual level intersectional identity work, silence has remained less explored. By combining the notions of identity work, intersectionality and silence, I have examined intersectional identity work at the interface of intersecting inequalities and interrelated silences. Whereas previous literature has identified inequalities as central for doing intersectional identity work, the topic of silence has often remained rather implicit, relating to, for example, different ways of downplaying a disadvantaged category (e.g. Boogaard and Roggeband 2010, Essers and Benschop 2007, Zanoni and Janssen 2007). My findings indicate that while inequalities can be seen as important for how intersectional identity work is done, at the same time they can also become a topic that is in many ways silenced. Furthermore, the study suggests that intersectional identity work takes place between people’s particular and more immediate experiences, or lack of experiences, of inequalities at work, and more general discourses on social categories at work silencing (or indeed not silencing) inequalities. Silence could, as such, be seen as a central part of how inequalities operate in intersectional identity work.

Looking at individual level silences and non-silences around social categories at work can be also argued to be important, since it can be seen as contributing to the understanding of how inequalities operate in organisations also more generally. Individual level intersectional identity work has been identified as potentially (re)producing inequalities in organisations (Boogaard and Roggeband 2010), and my findings raise questions around how silence in intersectional identity work might operate in (re)producing organisational inequalities.

In addition, this study seeks to contribute to the literature on identity work and intersectional identity work, through the identification of different intersectional strategies, notably combining and separating strategies as ways of relating to wider societal social categories as constructed or not as part of one’s job-related identity. The findings around combining strategies seem to be in line with some strategies identified by earlier research on intersectional identity work. In particular, there seem to be similarities in how disadvantages are downplayed, with the interviewees occasionally marginalizing a disadvantaged category not fitting their job-related identity (Essers and Benschop 2007) and/or even turning it to their benefit (e.g. Boogaard and Roggeband 2010, Zanoni and Janssen 2007). Thus, the findings suggest that there are some similarities in ways of relating to disadvantage at work across different social categories, by national, industry, and company contexts, and occupational and other groups of interviewees.

While previous literature around intersectional identity work has identified many ways in which wider societal social categories can be combined with job-related identities, there has been less emphasis on how the two are kept apart. Thus, this study can be
seen to add to the literature on identity work and intersectional identity work in organisations by having identified different ways in which people separate wider societal social categories from their job-related identities by constructing them as unimportant or irrelevant in the organisational context (cf. Ramajan and Raid 2013). I suggest that intersectional job-related identity work is not only about combining categories in different ways, but maybe equally importantly about keeping one's job-related identity separate from wider societal social categories (cf. Ramajan and Raid 2013). Separating strategies can be also argued to be important in terms of their implications for what kind of identities people construct for themselves in organisations, favouring, for example, individualistic notions of self. Moreover, they can be seen to maintain or reproduce a discourse on identities in organisations as being unattached to wider societal social categories, obscuring the importance of different positions of privilege and/or disadvantage influencing who people are or can become at work.

In terms of managerial implications, my findings call for recognition of the importance of keeping equality in a full and complex way on the organisational and management agenda. People’s experiences and possibilities in organisations are rather different depending on who they are in terms of not only their organisational position but also their wider societal social categories. At the same time, existing inequalities can easily be obscured, possibly leaving an illusion of equality, which may make organisational and societal inequalities all the more difficult to combat. Thus, it is important to critically evaluate equality and inequality at the organisational level in terms of the organisational culture, structures and practices, and also to reflect on them in relation to oneself. Being reflective on one’s own privileges and disadvantages might also help one to understand others’ experiences in the organisation, as well as to see power relations that could otherwise remain rather invisible. This can be seen to be particularly important in the case of management or others in organisational power positions who have greater opportunities to influence the direction and development of the organisation.

In future research, it would be particularly interesting to go further into examining the ways in which silence and inequalities, particularly privilege, are or can be interlinked in intersectional identity work. Since silence can be seen as central for intersectional identity work but remains, in the context of identities in organisations, in many ways an under-researched area, there is a need for more studies examining different ways of being silent in intersectional identity work. Looking at silence in the context of privilege could, in turn, be thought to be in particular fruitful, since privilege can be seen as often connected to silence in intersectional identity work.
Turning it the other way around, there is a need for more studies focusing on privilege in intersectional identity work. Studying privilege in intersectional identity work is important for a variety of reasons as people in positions of privilege can be frequently seen to have considerable power in organisations but the intersectionality of their identities often remains obscured (cf. Collinson and Hearn 1994, Hearn 2011), and they are often understudied within intersectionality (Walby et al. 2012). Silence can be seen as a possible route for approaching privilege in intersectional job-related identity work that can otherwise easily remain invisible.

I began this thesis by being interested in social categories and identity work and on the way moved increasingly towards inequalities and silences in intersectional identity work. People’s identities and identity work in organisations are in many ways connected to inequalities, people continuing to have very different realities in terms of who they are or can be in organisations. At the same time, inequalities tend to be hidden or obscured, rendering it more difficult for people to recognize either their situations or those of others. By making the silenced inequalities more visible, organisations may be made more equal.
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APPENDIX 1 DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY – ORGANISATION (PHASE 1)

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A STUDY ON CULTURAL IDENTITIES IN INTERNATIONAL MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS

Background and objective

I am conducting a study on the role of cultural identities in international postacquisition companies. Identities play an important role in forming organisational reality. They influence issues like decision making, cooperation between different actors and the wellbeing and overall atmosphere at work places.

In an international context the different cultural backgrounds of the employees often become important. This study focuses on how cultural and other identities influence the relations between individuals and groups of people working in a multicultural company. For example how employees make use of different identities in their daily routines and practices at the office. The emphasis is on the interplay between different identities, such as on how identities divide and unite individuals and groups of people. For example, a common professional identity may unite employees that are divided by different national identities.

Methodology

Case study: Case study method has been chosen to capture detailed accounts of identity dynamics influencing the relations between the different actors.

Interviews: The research material is planned to consist of interviews of employees made in the case organisation. The plan is to interview approximately 20 employees, each interview taking from 1 to 1.5 hours.

Observation: In order to acquire a coherent idea of the interaction and the identity dynamics in the organisation, the plan is to combine the interviews with observation. This would mean for example being present in some team meetings or in other activities and observing how and which identities are drawn upon in the interaction. The researcher would not interfere or interrupt the activities but would only observe the interaction.

Schedule: Interviews would ideally take place in September – October 2007 within the most suitable schedule for SmartGameSoft. The scope, the duration, the timing and other details of the observation could be agreed upon later depending on the preferences of the company.

Goal and usefulness of the research

The goal of the study is to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of identity dynamics in international business context. The study will be a doctoral dissertation
consisting of internationally published articles in scientifically refereed journals. For SmartGameSoft study would provide information on the identity dynamics of the company that could be useful for decision making, HR practices and further development of activities. The identity of the company will naturally be kept secret in all stages of the research.

**Context and duration**

The study is conducted at the Department of Management and Organisation, The Swedish School of Economics (Hanken). The work is supervised by Professor Eero Vaara of The Swedish School of Economics. The research is estimated to last four years (2006 - 2010).
APPENDIX 2   DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY – ORGANISATION (PHASE 2)

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Differences at work

Differences between people can be seen as important in almost any organisation. For example people come from different backgrounds and belong to different groups, which can influence their work and the organisation. This research studies how different people see themselves and others in different ways at work.

I am interested in talking to a small number of people (five to six) to find out how they see themselves at work. The interviews are a part of a larger study of a PhD thesis, consisting of also interviews done previously for the same purpose. They are short and focused taking approximately 30 minutes each.

The interviews are confidential, and the identity of the company, as well as the interviewees will be anonymised and naturally kept secret.

The study is conducted at the Department of Management and Organisation, Hanken School of Economics and is supervised by Professors Jeff Hearn and Eero Vaara. It has been funded by various scholarships, currently by a four year scholarship given by the Hanken School of Economics.
APPENDIX 3  CONSENT FORM (PHASE 1)

EMPLOYEES’ IDENTITIES IN A MULTICULTURAL POST-AQUISITION COMPANY

This research project studies employees’ identities in a multicultural post-acquisition company. The study will be Annamari Tuori’s doctoral dissertation conducted at the Swedish School of Economics and business administration (Hanken).

The information acquired during the research is confidential. The identities of the interviewees or any other information revealing the identities will not be published at any point. The findings of the research will be published at scientific journals and in doctoral thesis.

During the research process it will be necessary to discuss the content of the interviews with supervisors Eero Vaara and Jeff Hearn of the Swedish School of Economics (Hanken).

CONSENT FORM (two similar copies)

This is a research interview. Researcher Annamari Tuori has informed me on above mentioned matters and I give my consent to participate in the research interview.

___________________________  .  . 2007
___________________________
Annamari Tuori  2007
APPENDIX 4  DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY – INTERVIEWEES (PHASE 1)

EMPLOYEES’ IDENTITIES IN A MULTICULTURAL POST-ACQUISITION COMPANY

This research project studies employees’ identities in a multicultural post-acquisition company. The study focuses on how different identities influence the relations between individuals and groups of people working in a multicultural company.

The study will be Annamari Tuori’s doctoral dissertation. It is conducted at the Department of Management and Organisation, The Swedish School of Economics (Hanken). The work is supervised by Professors Eero Vaara and Jeff Hearn of The Swedish School of Economics. It is funded by Ehrnrooth Foundation, Marcus Wallenberg Foundation and KAUTE Foundation. The research is estimated to last four years (2006-2010).
APPENDIX 5 CONSENT FORM (PHASE 2)

DIFFERENCES AT WORK

This research project studies differences in work organisations with a perspective on how people see themselves at work. The interviews are a part of Annamari Tuori’s doctoral dissertation conducted at the Hanken School of Economics.

The information acquired during the research is confidential. The identity of the interviewees or any other information revealing the identity will not be published at any point. The findings of the research will be published at scientific journals and in doctoral thesis.

During the research process it will be necessary to discuss the content of the interviews with supervisors Jeff Hearn and Eero Vaara of the Hanken School of Economics.

CONSENT FORM (two similar copies)

This is a research interview. Researcher Annamari Tuori has informed me on above mentioned matters and I give my consent to participate in the research interview.

________________________________________________________________________________

. . 2012

Annamari Tuori . . 2012
APPENDIX 6  INTERVIEW GUIDE (PHASE 1)

Interview guide

1. Work/professional identities

What is your profession and how would you describe your work?

What project/s do you work in at the moment?
What is your role in the project?

Could you tell me about your normal day at work?
- What happens normally?
- What do you do?
- Who do you work with? Ask to list and tell about the different persons.

What do you like most/least in your work? Why?

What kind of challenges would you see that there are in your work/ the project you are working in? Can you give me an example of concrete situation/situations?

Could you tell me concretely how you ended up in your current work at...? (Briefly)

How long have you had your current work? What did you do before that?

What does it mean for you to be a ...(profession/position)?
In your opinion what is an ideal ... like? Why?

What do video games mean to you?

2. Identities and relations

I would like you to think yourself with other people at...(company)
- people from your team/unit
- with other...(profession/position)
- with other ...(nationality)
- with other...(ethnicity)
- with other...(gender)
What makes you similar and what makes you different to them?

Who are you most similar to in the organisation? Why?

Who are you most different to in the organisation? Why?
Could you describe me the informal and formal groups you know at...? (ask to draw the different relations)
- Who are working together?
- Who spend time together more informally? What do you think that unites them?

Where would you position yourself in the drawing? Why?

Do you think there are any differences between different groups (e.g. between nationalities, different professions, men and women)? What kind of differences?
- Can you give me an example of a situation where you can see the differences?

Have you experienced or noticed any disagreements between different groups? Could you explain me the situation/s?

Have you experienced or noticed any prejudices between different groups of people? Could you explain me the situation/s?

3. Acquisitions

Year 2004 ...(subsidiary) was acquired by ...(parent company). Can you tell me what happened?
- Did the acquisition influence your position and every day work? In what way?

During the year 2007 ...(the company) has acquired two additional companies (India, Spain). Can you tell me what happened?
- Have the acquisitions influenced your position and every day work? In what way?

Do you have contact with people from other units of the company?
- Can you tell me about the contact you have with the other units? (What kind of contact do you have? Who do you work with? What has gone well/ not so well? Have there been problems?)

Are there differences/similarities that you notice between the units? (e.g. are things done differently, are there any differences between people working here and there?)
- Do the differences influence your work in some way? In what way?
- Do the differences pose some challenges for working together? What kind of? Could you give me an example?
4. Transnationalism/cultural identities

Have you worked within the same industry in other countries? Which countries?

How is your current work environment/company compared to the previous ones?
  - Do you see any differences/similarities? What are they?

Can you tell me about working with people from different cultural backgrounds?
  - Have you experienced cultural differences when working together? Can you explain me the situations?
  - Have you experienced cultural differences in your relations with your work mates? Can you explain me the situations?

Can you think of situations at work where it has been positive (useful/good)/negative to be a ...(nationality/ethnicity)? Could you give me examples of these kinds of situations?

What does it mean for you to be a ...(ethnicity/nationality) here at work?

Do you think it would be different for you to work in ...(‘home country’)? In what way?

If the office in Helsinki would have a nationality what would it be?
  - In what kind of things you can see that?
  - What kind of consequences do these things have for your work and your relations with your colleagues? Have you experienced any problems because of them?

5. Personal data

- Age
- Married, single, in relationship
- Nationality and national background
- Education
- Language skills

Check list for personal data

- Age
- Gender
- Married, single, in relationship
- Nationality and national background
- Education
- Profession
- The professional history: jobs, duration, locations
- The time spent in Finland
- Other times spent abroad
- Reason to come to Finland
- The time spent employed at the case company
- Language skills
APPENDIX 7  INTERVIEW GUIDE (PHASE 2)

Interview guide

Can you tell me what your job is? What kind of work do you do? What does your work consist of?

If you think about your own experiences of differences at work, can you tell me of any event or situation in which differences between people would have been important?

- Can you give an example?
- Why/how does it relate to differences?
- Who were a part of this?
- How do you think this should have been handled?
- Did the incident lead to changes/was something learned from it?

I would like you to look at a list of possible differences and tell me how important you have experienced these differences to be for you or others at work? Which differences have you experienced as important and which less important and why?

Examples of differences

Age
Class
Dis-ability
Education
Ethnicity
Family (care/dependence)
Gender
Job
Language
Nationality
Profession
Position at work
Race
Religion
Sexuality
Other?
If you think about your own experiences of differences at work, can you me of any event or situation in which differences between people would have been important?

- Can you give an example?
- Why/how does it relate to differences?
- Who were a part of this?
- How do you think this should have been handled?
- Did the incident lead to changes/was something learned from it?

Demographic information

- Age
- Nationality/ethnicity


273. DHANAY MARÍA CADILLO CHANDLER: The Role of Patents in Latin American Development: 'models of protection' of pharmaceutical patents and access to medicines in Brazil, Chile and Venezuela. Helsinki 2014.


Social categories, such as ethnicity and gender, have been shown to be important for people’s identities in organisations. Different categories of people can experience very different realities in terms of who they are or can be at work, often influenced by inequalities in relation to and indeed between the categories. However, the inequalities often tend to be silenced. At the same time, silence in individual people’s identity work in organisations has remained relatively unexamined in the research literature. Accordingly, this thesis examines identity work in organisations at the interface of social categories, inequalities, and silence(s).

The thesis examines people’s identity work in organisations through a notion of ‘intersectional job-related identity work’, meaning the construction of a job-related identity at the intersections of different social categories. It focuses in particular on, first, how in identity work people relate to inequalities, and, second, how they are silent about social categories as a part of their identity work. The empirical context for the study is three small to medium-sized ICT companies in Finland. The thesis is based on 33 semi-structured interviews.

The main findings of the study concern two aspects related to intersectional job-related identity work. First, the study identifies two different types of ‘intersectional strategies’, namely, the combining and separating strategies that people engage in in their job-related identity work. These refer to different ways of combining and separating social categories with and from one’s job-related identity, respectively. Intersectional job-related identity work is not only about different ways of combining a job-related identity with social categories, but also about how social categories are kept separate from one’s identity at work. Moreover, in line with previous studies, this study suggests that inequalities, in terms of different positions and experiences of privilege and/or disadvantage are often central for how identity work is done.

Second, the thesis identifies different ways in which people are (and are not) silent on social categories at work. It identifies organisational, interpersonal and individual level silences, identifying inequalities as the issue that the interviewees seem to be mostly silent on. Thus, while inequalities related to social categories seemed to be important for how intersectional job-related identity work is done, they are also simultaneously that which the interviewees seemed to be most silent on.

The thesis contributes particularly to the research literature on identities, identity work and intersectionality in organisations, by providing new knowledge on both silence in and around (intersectional) identity work in organisations, and how social categories may be kept separate from job-related identity.