

New Research New Book

Exploring work identity

- and how being oneself at work can potentially harm well-being, performance and career trajectory

Work Identity

By Prof. Billy Adamsen

Neurophilosophical Research

Springer Nature Palgrave MacMillan

Agenda

1

Work identity, Behavior and Generations

-what do we know?

3

How do you know if an employee has a work identity or a personal identity at work?

2

What is work Identity?

4

How to support an employee creating a work identity

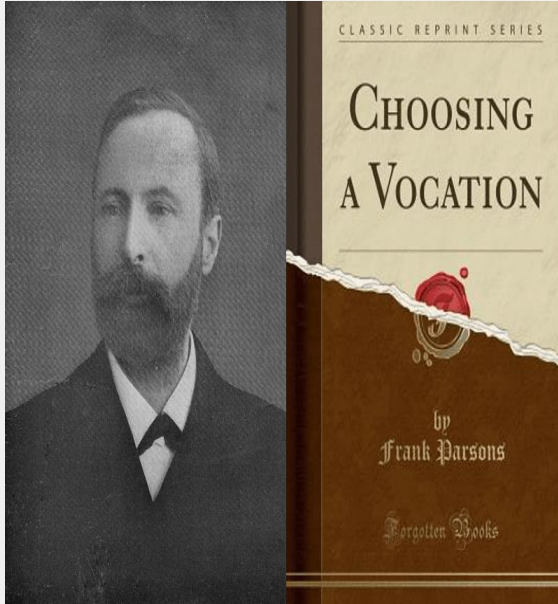
1

Work identity and Behavior

-what do we know?



100 Years of Research

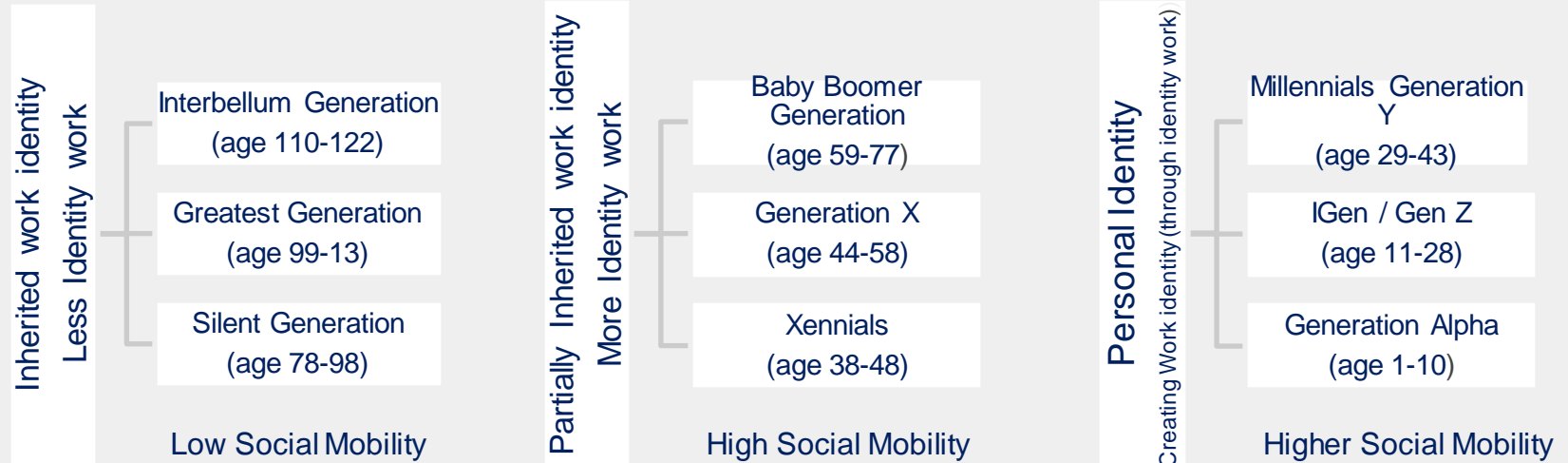


Research shows a correlation between work (professional) identity and the well-being of an individual across different professions.

In fact, work identity contributes to an individual's improved engagement, retention, and adaptation to one's work' while 'protects individuals against stress and burnouts.

(Szulik & Cachia 2021: 252/ Adamsen 2023:84)

Generations and their work identity



From 1960 to 2023

Our view of work is more influenced by personal identity than work identity



How does identity work affect well-being at work?

Spend more time on identity work means:

- Facing difficulties functioning, performing, and delivering. This is because, during this time, we are not aligned with our work and work environment, but instead at odds with them.
- Researchers refer to this as a subjective contradiction that creates tension and conflicts between our personal and expected professional selves/work environment
- Studies have shown that when a significant amount of time at work is spent on identity work due to a weak or non-existent work identity, individuals may become more emotionally vulnerable, unstable, and impressionable. This may lead to issues with self-esteem and confidence, questioning whether the job is right for them and if they have the necessary skills

The absence of a work identity leads to:

- Disengagement, difficulty adapting to one's work' and problems staying in that job (retention)
- Increase in work related stress and burnouts among employees

Prediction %

If so, we assumed that we would see a significant increase in disengaged and stress struck employees/workforce around the world – even though we know a lot and do a lot right to create a good work environment

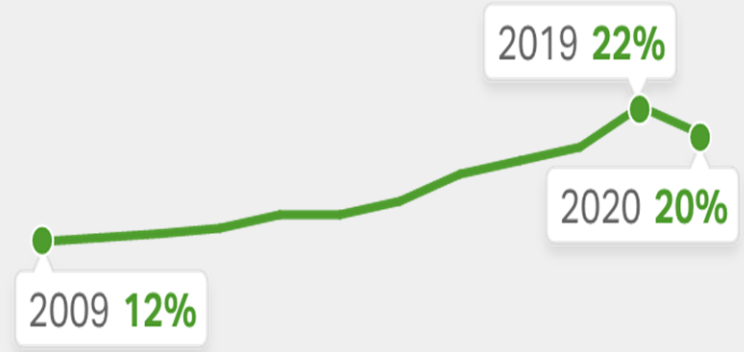
Employee Engagement

(In the last 13 years)

Employee Engagement, Country by Country

Engagement results and margin of error estimates for 94 countries in which at least 300 employees were interviewed

	Engaged	Not engaged	Actively disengaged
Albania	11% ±5	69% ±6	20% ±4
Algeria	12% ±6	35% ±5	53% ±4
Argentina	16% ±4	56% ±4	28% ±3
Australia	24% ±3	60% ±4	16% ±3
Austria	14% ±4	74% ±5	12% ±4
Azerbaijan	5% ±6	63% ±6	32% ±3
Bahrain	19% ±6	52% ±7	29% ±5
Belarus	9% ±4	58% ±5	33% ±3
Belgium	12% ±5	66% ±6	22% ±4
Bolivia	22% ±4	58% ±5	19% ±4
Bosnia and Herzegovina	9% ±6	58% ±7	33% ±4
Botswana	10% ±8	51% ±8	38% ±5
Brazil	27% ±2	62% ±3	12% ±3
Bulgaria	12% ±5	68% ±5	20% ±4
Canada	16% ±3	70% ±3	14% ±3
Chile	23% ±3	58% ±4	18% ±3
China	6% ±2	68% ±3	26% ±1
Colombia	26% ±3	61% ±4	13% ±4
Costa Rica	33% ±3	53% ±5	14% ±4
Croatia	3% ±4	65% ±4	32% ±2
Czech Republic	8% ±5	62% ±5	29% ±3
Denmark	21% ±4	69% ±5	10% ±5



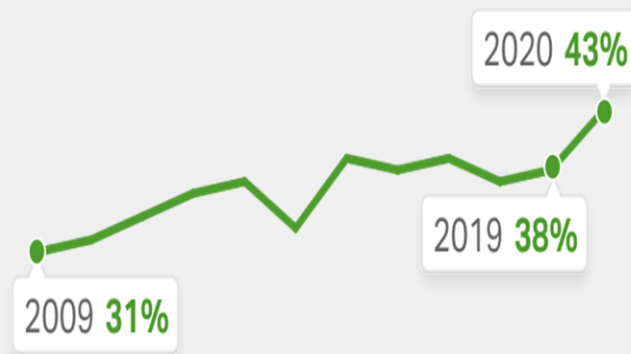
Gallup: Engagement

In 2022, engagement figures are overwhelmingly pessimistic. The report found that 60% of employees worldwide are not engaged and as many as 19% are 'actively disengaged'. Consequently, this lacking of engagement causes negative impacts on the wider team and organization

Work related Stress, Sadness and Worry

(in the last 103years)

ADULT DANES WITH HIGH SCORES ON THE STRESS SCALE HAVE INCREASED %



Adult Danes with a high score on the stress scale has increased from 21 per cent in 2013 to 25% in 2017 and 29% in 2021

Gallup: Stress, Sadness and Worry Same % in 2022

2

What is a work Identity?

Multiple Dynamic Identities

Social Identity

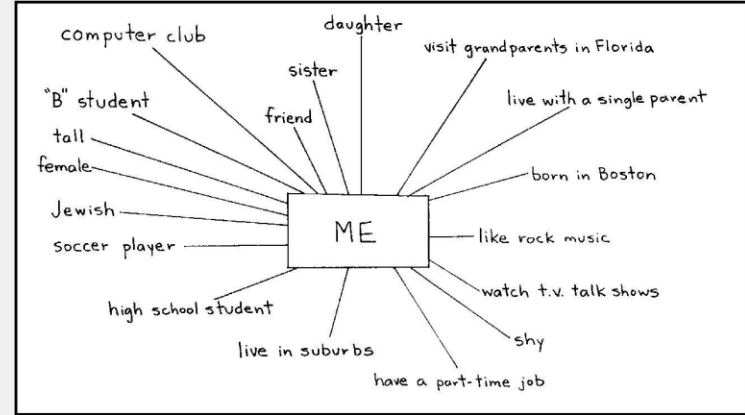
Educational background, Nationality,
Religion, Marital-Parental status,
Hobbies, Work Identity

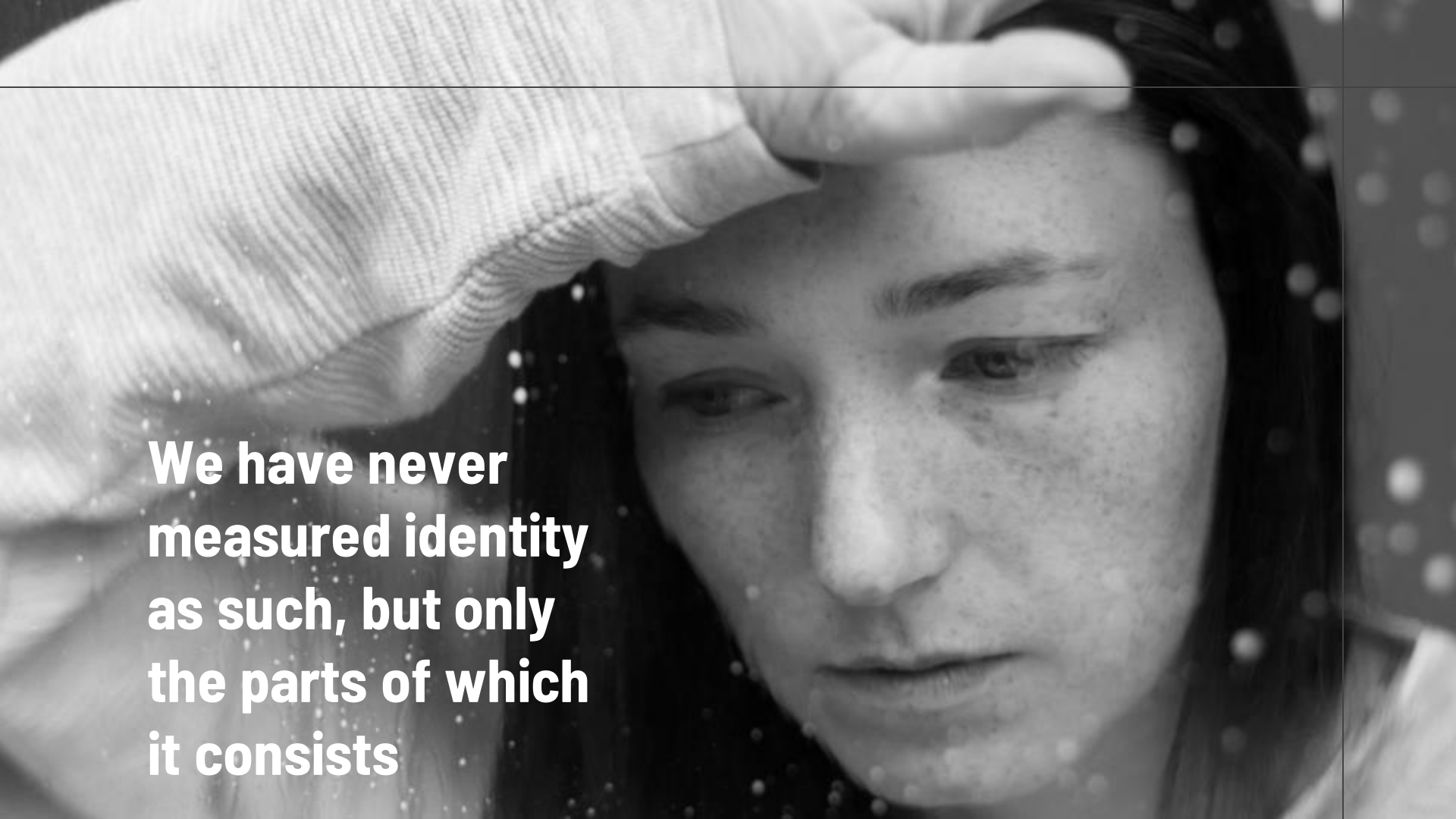
Personal Identity

Gender, Age, Ethnicity, Religion,
sexual orientation, Personality traits

I Identity

Personality traits





**We have never
measured identity
as such, but only
the parts of which
it consists**

Identities

Personal Identity



I- (sub)Identity



Personal (sub)Identity

Social(group)-Identity



Social (sub)Identity



Collective (sub)Identity

Work Identity is a Social (collective) Identity



Work Identity (Social
identity)

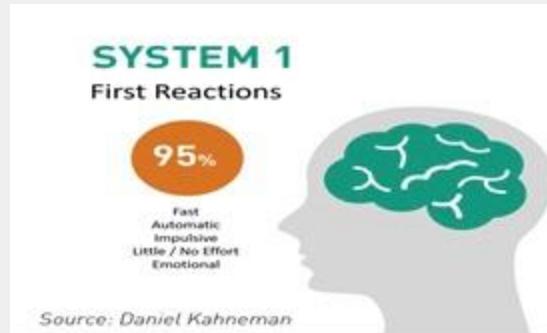


Work Identity (Social-
Collective)

Sense of what we are good at

Understanding of what we are good at

Sense of what we are good at
Experienced Work Identity
Unconsciously



Understanding of what we are good at
Narrative Work Identity
Consciously

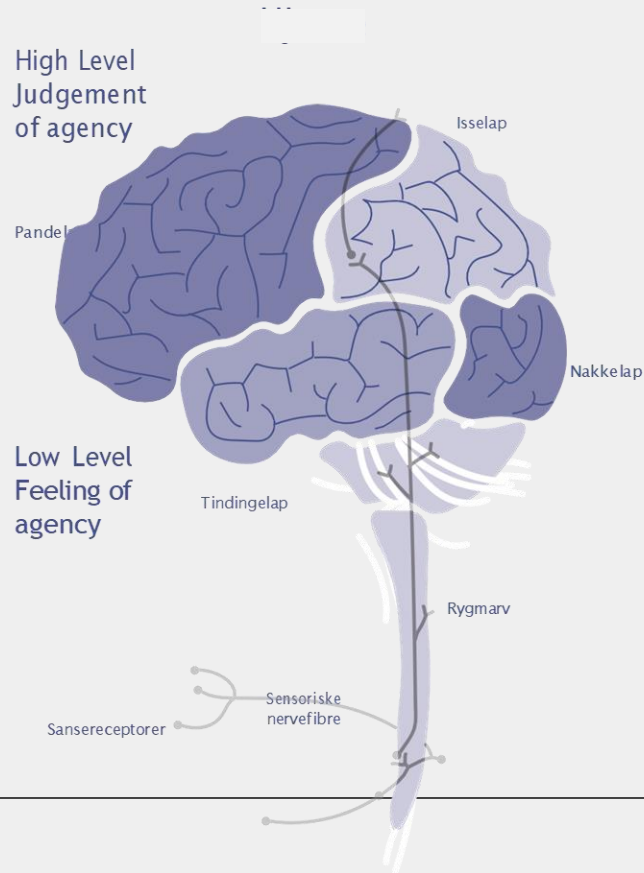


Between 40 and 60% employees state that they do not work with what they feel they are good at – that many of the tasks are not a good match

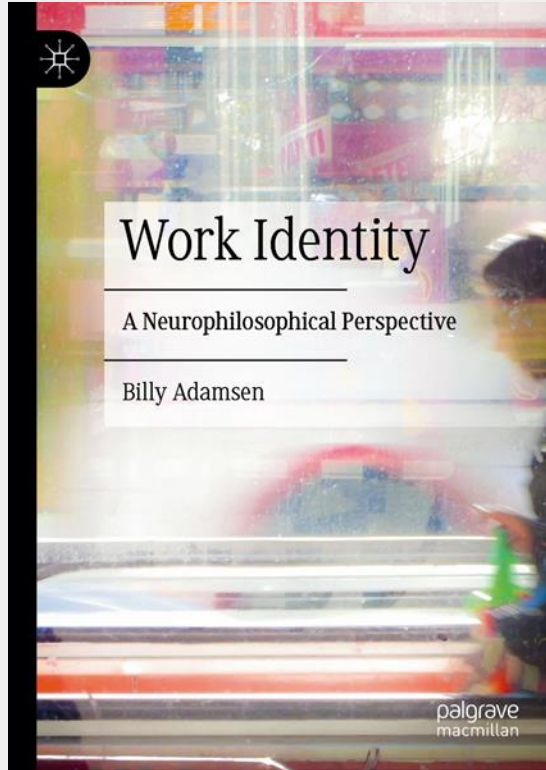
Satisfaction and well-being surveys from different public and private companies

In order to have an identity

- It is necessary to have a sense of ownership and an identity



Born with a sense of who we are
– a sense of ownership in our body
- A sense of agency (control) over my actions
(movments, skills)



Questions

3

How do you know if an employee has a work identity or personal identity at work?

Identity balance

professional boundaries

Work identity
We-oriented

Personal Identity
I-Oriented

Me

We

Personality

Profession

Attitudes



Examples of I- and Work Oriented Language/statements

"I'm pleased with the quality
of the work I you just did?"

Or

"I'm glad that it is done"

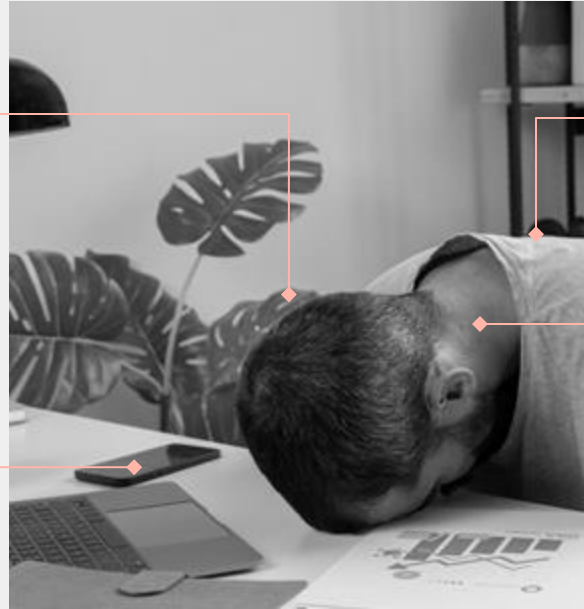
The way we dress



Signs of personal identity affecting work behavior while working

**No
Ownership**

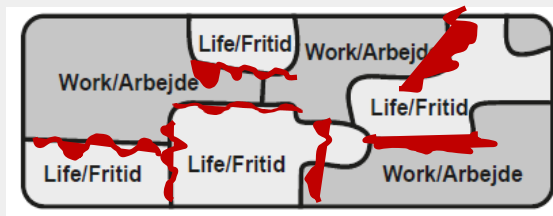
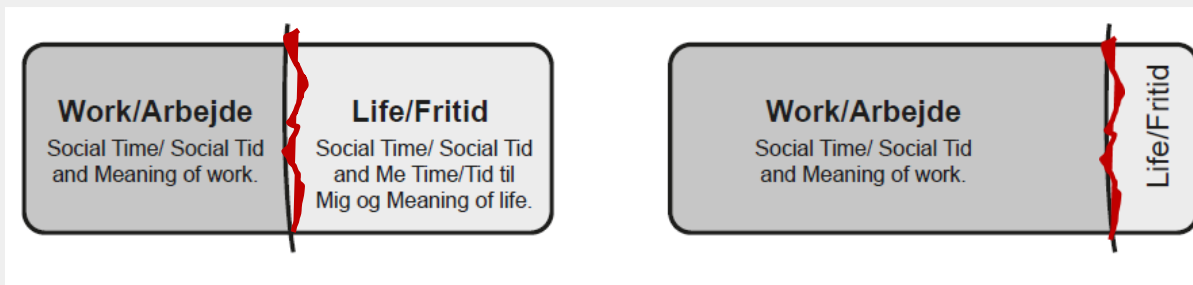
**Lack of
control**



**Problems
performing**

Stress

No healthy, functional boundary between private and professional life



4

How to support an employee creating a work identity

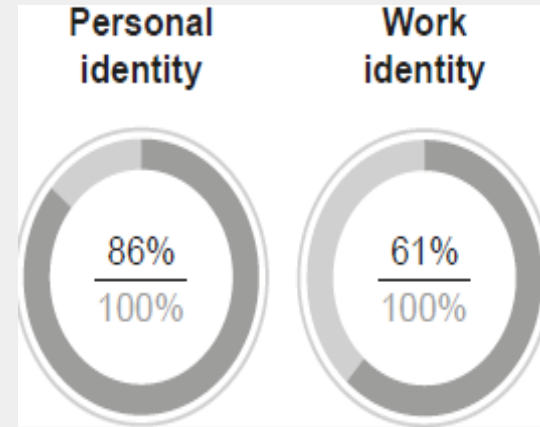
Awareness of your work identity

Work Identity Prominent

- ❖ Try to put into words and describe what work means to you and how you think you should be at a job and in a working environment. Then you will be able to see how your work identity is reflected in your description (narrative), how it affects your behavior when you are at work, and how/why it makes you function, perform and deliver.

Personal Identity Prominent

- ❖ Try to explain why the job is so personal to you. Ask about what it is that is personal to you, an attitude, a value or a behavior and how it affects your behavior when you are at work



How to create a work identity

Make two rows with the headings Personal Identity and Work Identity respectively.

- ❖ In the first row under Personal identity, write your personal attitudes, values and behavior (how you are and what you can do).
- ❖ In the second row under Work identity, you write the values, attitudes and behavior patterns that occur in the company you are employed in, or in the working environment you want to work in.
- ❖ When you compare the two rows with each other, you will be able to see, which values and attitudes and behavior patterns (skills) are similar and which are not. Those that are similar can be part of your work identity, while those that are not, you must reflect whether they are relevant to you in a work context and why.

Personal I	Work I

**DESCRIBE WHAT YOU
SENSE YOU ARE GOOD AT**

Experienced Work identity

Doing things yourself

Analyze, calculate, generate knowledge

Create, Imagine, Develop

Interact, cooperate (emphasize)

Lead, persuade and influence

Routine and do things again

**DESCRIBE YOUR UNDERSTANDING
OF WHAT MATTERS TO YOU**

Narrative Work Identity

Profession and what it does

Organization and how it is

Skills/Competences and what you can do

Methods and how you do things

Cooperation and how you work together

Gender/ Ethnicity and what it means to you

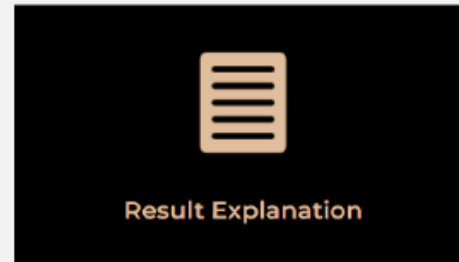
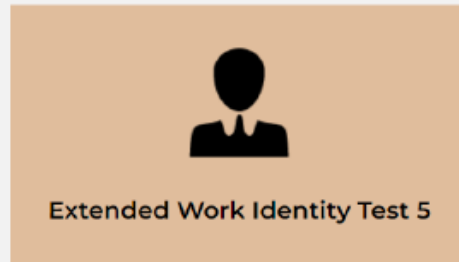
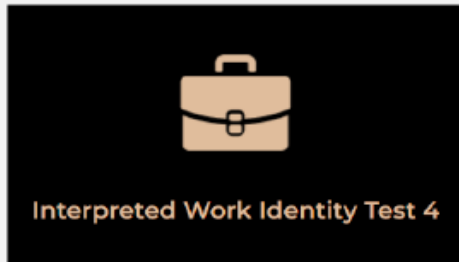
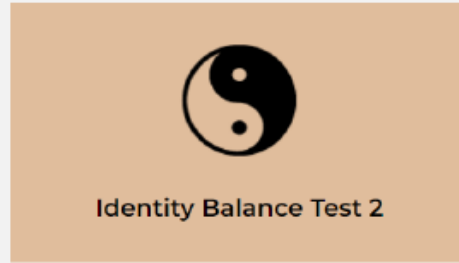
Ethics/Moral and what's acceptable

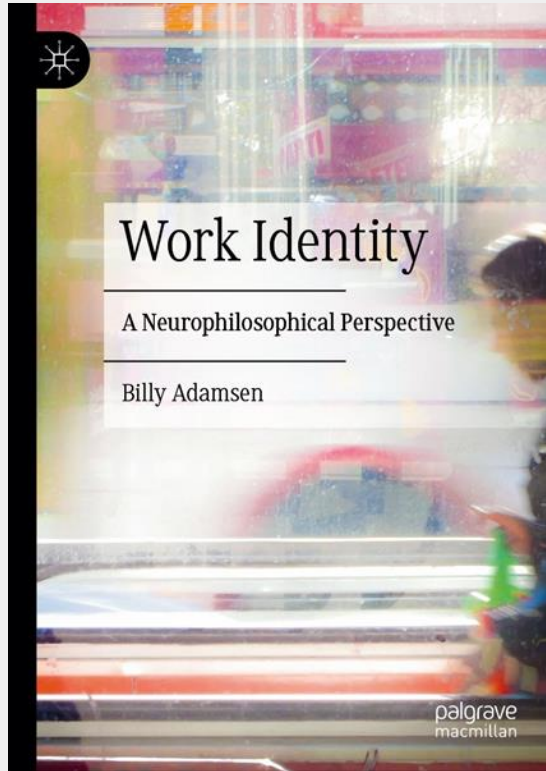
PRACTICAL EXERCISE CREATING A WORK IDENTITY
How does it match your job (assignments)

The Work Identity Pro Test

-the first work identity test to independently measure work identity.

Below are boxes with the headings of the 5 tests





THANKS!

Questions

<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-37734-1>