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Newly Screen-ed:

*The Interference of the Digital Work Environment on
New Young Professionals*

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ABSTRACT

Title: Newly Screen-ed: *The Digital Work Context's Disconnect for New Young professionals*

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Five key concepts: *Young professionals, organizational socialization, interaction frequency, networking, digital work environment*

Purpose: To provide insight into the effects an entirely digital work environment may have on organizational socialization of young professionals, and the interactions they are able to have as well as the networks they are able to form.

Theoretical perspective: The thesis draws on the theoretical framework of organizational socialization by Bauer and Erdogan (2011) and combines it with the topics of interaction frequency and socialization rate (Reichers, 1987). Through this combination of frameworks, the aim is to understand how the entirely digital format has impacted the young professionals in their organizational socialization.

Methodology: The data for the thesis was obtained by conducting semi-structured interviews with thirteen young professionals that have embarked on their first job out of college under work-from-home restrictions brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Analysis: The data collected through the interviews was sorted at first using the theoretical subcategories of new employee characteristics, new employee behavior, and organizational effects. Each sorted category was then revisited and categorized based on the development of disturbances generated in the digital context. These disturbances were then linked back to the framework to comprehend how it was affected.

Conclusion: The impacts the entirely digital work environment has on organizational socialization can be sorted into two different categories to describe the digital difficulties: learning and interaction. These difficulties in turn, make it more challenging to reach the stage of adjustment.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

When COVID-19 was announced as a global pandemic in March of 2020, there were an innumerable number of adjustments that needed to be made, especially in where and how people worked (World Health Organization, 2020). While the conditions and restrictions did differ depending on the country, many experienced a forced shift to remote work or working from home due to safety concerns and multiple variating lockdowns (Fogarty, Frantz, Hirschfeld, Keating, Lafont, Lufkin, Mishael, Ponnnavolu, Savage & Turits, n.d.). This included half the global labor force and the U.S. specifically, hitting a high of 70% of their labor force working from home (Lardieri, 2021, Fogarty et al., n.d.). With so many people constrained to a new type of working environment, newer forms of technology like instant messaging and video conferencing increased even further in relevancy, due to its necessity in substituting for the large amount of communication and collaboration that was normally accomplished through regular in-person contact (Parker, Horowitz & Minkin, 2020). This digital form of work has not only affected the individual's physical workspace and communication strategies, but also many other seemingly typical work constructs. The typical workday of nine to five has been altered and stretched, adding an element of flexibility and freedom that comes from people working more asynchronously and within their own time frames (Kost, 2020). Boundaries have also been largely impacted as the home has combined many people's place of rest with their place of work, blurring the lines and adding to the effect of a stretched workday (Schallom, 2021). After enduring a year of the pandemic and its various restrictions, many organizations have learned to adapt and find positives in this new way of working. For instance, many tech companies like Microsoft, Twitter and Spotify, now see the value in offering their employees more flexible working conditions, stating that: "*Work isn't something you come to the office for, it's something you do*" (Spotify, 2021). Additionally, as "[...] over 70% of workers want flexible remote work options to continue," and "[...] 66 percent of business decision makers are considering redesigning physical spaces to better accommodate hybrid work environments," the future of work as a hybrid format continues to be solidified (Microsoft, n.d.). With a dispersion in the location of the workplace, what implications will this have on a newcomer's ability to organizationally socialize and form connections?

As evidenced by the already manifested changes led by top organizations, it might not do so in the same way ever again. The pandemic has not just changed the location of where work takes place, but also how we work, by inflicting a more rapid digital transformation than most organizations had planned for (LaBerge, O'Toole, Schneider, Smaje, 2020). Moreover, a new generation is entering the labor force with new ways of learning and new workplace needs that are different from that of previous generations.

In the midst of the challenges of the time are college graduates that have throughout this time transitioned into young professionals embarking on their first job out of college. Many of the new young professionals' concerns rested on their start in an already unknown and exceedingly unpredictable working world. Many questioned whether they would be hired, maintain their job offers, or be able to navigate their way into a new company under such circumstances. The first job is often seen as a starting point for learning a new landscape or environment that could consequently lay the foundation for a young professional's career. The restrictions and implications of the pandemic have challenged organizations and how they see the concept of a workspace, especially as many employees are enjoying the benefits of working from home (Boland, De Smet, Palter, Sanghvi, 2020).

Thus, due to the strict work from home orders issued in many countries, like the United States, this thesis found interest in understanding the experiences of young professionals starting their first jobs out of college in a work-from-home environment. Intrigue originated in the interest of exploring whether or not the effects of an exclusively digital work format have impacted the young professionals' ability to make connections, gain insights that will build the foundation of their careers, obtain an overall understanding of organizational culture, and develop an organizational and professional identity. Achieving a sufficient level of organizational socialization can be a challenge in the physical work environment, but there are limits to working over digital platforms that could possibly present even greater problems for newcomers. As the future looks to increasingly rely on digital aspects to allow for more flexible work, this situation could require more facilitation or additional support that organizations need to carefully consider if they are looking to foster a successful long term hybrid working environment. But how does this

then affect those who are only starting their efforts towards making sense of a new climate and organization, and what can new young professionals tell us about this experience at this point in time?

1.2 Purpose and research question

In light of what was just discussed, the aim of this research is to provide insight into the effects that a digital work format may have on organizational socialization, focusing on those just starting their careers after college. Consequently, the inquiry of the thesis is framed by the following question:

How does the entirely digital work environment affect young professionals in the organizational socialization process?

In order to embark on the process of understanding the effects of the current situation, and subsequently provide a conclusion to the question, the thesis will continue by detailing the previous research and literature surrounding this topic. This in turn will provide the reader with an overview of the subject, as well as ease them into the thesis' theoretical stance. Following this, the methodology will provide an overview of the approach utilized for data collection and categorization of the material, before delving into the analysis and following discussion. The thesis will then conclude with a summary and collection of final thoughts, before making suggestions for further research of this topic for the future.

2 Previous research

In the following section, the aim is to cover previous research within the scope of this thesis. As the topic of organizational socialization, and virtual working environments are widely researched within many different disciplines, this section will present an excerpt of the previous research on the topic in order to set the stage for the rest of the thesis. The focus will thus be on organizational socialization from a newcomer perspective, whilst focusing on digital working environments as a setting of interactivity. Based on this selection, the keywords guiding the presentation of previous

research are: organizational socialization, digital/virtual working environment, telecommuting, and networking. The section will conclude with a short summary of the research covered with a transition to the thesis theoretical stance.

2.1 Digital working environments and telecommuters

One of the largest and most apparent effects of the coronavirus pandemic has been the shift to working from home rather than commuting to an office (Endresen, 2021). While the scale and variety of contexts may not have been present before, the idea of remote work itself is not a revolutionary concept. It has, however, come under different names like remote work, telecommuting, telework, distance work and the more recently popular term, working-from-home in response to the pandemic's infliction of stay at home or lockdown orders (Allen, Golden & Shockley, 2015). Telecommuting can be defined as carrying out work practices while physically remaining in an alternative place to that of the normal worksite, through the utilization of technology and digital means of communication (Mokhtarian, 1991; Olson, 1983). Due to ever evolving technology, the possibilities and capabilities of this way of working have changed a great deal since the term telecommuting was first formulated in the 1970's (Allen, et al., 2015). There is still a need for additional research on the impacts of telecommuting and its affects workers and work life (Handy & Mokhtarian, 1996; Ellis, Bauer & Erdogan, 2015; Bartel, Wrzesniewski & Wiesenfeld, 2007).

Many companies had to change their business models and/or strategies to cope with the reality of new demands resulting from the pandemic's effects on work (LaBerge, et.al, 2020). In their survey McKinsey & Company (LaBerge et al., 2020) outline that many companies are now doing digital adaptations much quicker than was initially planned, as a result of wanting to keep teams together and the business sturdy, which is furthermore corroborated by Johnson (2020). This in turn may come to effect how organizations approach their socialization process.

In their study on virtual teamwork, Dubikovsky and Friesel (2018) explored the social outcomes of two cooperative trans international projects between DTU Diplom and Purdue University. At first the collaboration was online, which the authors underlined as having a formalizing effect on

the communication styles between the two universities. As they weren't familiar with each other (aside from the interaction they had had online), the students spent a lot of time reviewing their written communication before sharing it, and it was very important that each and every one was involved in every decision, making projects more tedious. Dubikovsky and Friesel (2018) also noticed that the digital work setting made it more difficult for the students to form personal and trustful relationships with each other. Due to this, many of the students grew tired and frustrated of the project, and some even wanted to leave the collaboration. As also pointed out by Astiani, Hämäläinen, Penttinen and Rossi (2020) the absence of face-to-face interaction can, to a certain extent, lessen the ability to understand and be part of patterns of behavior within the organization, as well as the practical adaptation of organizational values. Consequently, Dubikovsky and Friesel (2018) noticed that after the two groups had been given the chance to meet each other in person for the continuation of the joint projects, there was a visible increase of effectiveness, allowing the two groups to begin building trustful bonds between each other along with a sense of togetherness. In line with this Astiani, et al. (2020) underlined that by sharing an understanding of values and practices within a group, it's possible to make people feel part of the same cultural space even if they are not able to share a physical space.

2.2 Organizational Socialization of Newcomers

There's no widely agreed upon definition for organizational socialization, rather it is dependent on the author and what part of the organizational socialization process they wish to highlight (Feldman, 1976). For instance, Cooper-Thomas and Anderson (2006) defined it as the process of integrating an organizational outsider to an effective and integrated insider; whilst Van Maanen and Shein (1979) explained organizational socialization as a tool to make the newcomer incorporated into the organization for the purpose of expediting their ability to start contributing to the work of the organization. Consequently, this underlines that the process of organizational socialization takes place whenever an employee crosses what is referred to as, either an internal or external, organizational boundary. Van Maanen and Shein (1979) described an internal organizational boundary as a move within the organization, either hierarchical or functional, and an external organizational boundary as the move between different organizations.

Feldman (1981) discusses further in his article that the ambiguity of the subject causes variation in what is included in the definitions and processes of organizational socialization, as well as what is considered to be the start and end points of the process. With this in mind, Feldman (1981) described organizational socialization through the lens of a three-stage process model:

1. *“Socialization as the acquisition of a set of appropriate role behaviors;*
2. *Socialization as the development of work skills and abilities;*
3. *Socialization as adjustment to the work group’s norms and values”* (Feldman, 1981, pp. 309)

As part of this process model, Feldman (1981) also looked into the effect attitudinal- and behavioral characteristics played in influencing socialization. This way of understanding and exploring organizational socialization is something that several other researchers have done as well, see for instance Cooper-Thomas and Anderson (2006), Reichers (1987) Bauer and Erdogan (2011). Moreover, the framework applied by Bauer and Erdogan (2011), which is further explored in the theoretical stance, creates a holistic view of the process and components of organizational socialization. The framework also provides insight into the characteristics and behaviors of a new employee, and how they affect the individual’s adjustment to an organization.

Furthermore, many authors find it important to understand the different forces that might have an impact on the path to a successful outcome of organizational socialization. Bauer and Erdogan (2011) underline the impact of new employee characteristics, new employee behavior and organizational efforts whilst Bauer, Callister and Morrison (1998) highlight the influence of company culture and its possibility to influence what is considered successful organizational socialization. Stein and Christiansen (2010) underline that many of the socialization efforts of the organizations can be expressed through onboarding, where new hires learn to understand and make sense of the organizational environment and culture in which they will be working (see also Pike, 2014). This further aligns with much of the additional research on organizational socialization, alluding to the fact that social interaction with organizational insiders plays a vital role in the ability to become organizationally socialized. Furthermore, onboarding is more than just orientations and training as socialization of new employees takes time for other vital learning in regard to the ins

and outs of an organization (Stein & Christiansen, 2010). Organizational socialization gives an indication of the efforts made by the organization to integrate the newcomer into the company with the hope of retaining them for the long term. Onboarding, in turn, is something that can, for instance, be seen as part of these organizational efforts, as it is a process that aims to make the newcomer integrated into the organization and reach productivity as soon as possible (Becker & Bish, 2019). Successful onboarding requires successful employee socialization, but conveying the individual components of employee socialization can be complicated and increasingly so in a virtual environment (Pike, 2014).

For newcomers to be socially integrated on multiple levels has been considered an important aspect of the socialization process, as it is vital for newcomers to gain a sense of belonging both within the organization as well as their smaller working teams (Morrisson, 2002). Morrisson (2002), elaborating on previous research, points to the notion that it is important for the individual to also include more friendship-like relationships in their network. Thus, she makes the distinction between two types of network relationships: informational - and friendship relationships. The friendship networks can help provide the individual with a sense of belonging, support, and identity, which can be seen as important aspects in aiding the individual to become organizationally socialized. Furthermore, the buildup of strong tie relationships thereby fosters commitment for the organization by establishing trust that can also be obtained through friendship relationships. Important to note, is that the newcomers who have attained friendship relationships throughout different groups and hierarchical levels reach a higher feeling of commitment (Morrisson, 2002). Contrarily, Reichers (1987) suggests that if a newcomer mainly focuses on a relationship with his/her peers, it will be at the expense of the connectedness to the organization as a whole. A network that provides a greater insight into the organization as a whole, also provides the newcomer with a better sense of role clarity as they can see how their work fits into the organization when viewed alongside the roles of other employees (Morrisson, 2002).

Next, ineffective socialization has been seen to have effects on turnover, employee satisfaction, job performance, productivity, organizational commitment, and the continuation of organizational culture (Ellis, Bauer, Erdogan, 2015). These aspects are all crucial for organizations to remain sustainable and even more so to be successful, making socialization an important part of

organizational prosperity. Additionally, organizational socialization goes beyond employees simply learning their roles and tasks but focuses on the key soft aspects needed to gain satisfaction at a company. These aspects include communicating culture, fostering connections throughout the company, supporting future career prospects and development, and conveying the employee's important part in obtaining the larger company goals so that they can develop a sense of purpose (Stein & Christiansen, 2010).

Previous research on socialization within telecommuting or virtual environments have shown that establishing a sense of membership is difficult for those first starting at a new organization through remote work, as the lack of a physical context affects an employee's sense of belongingness (Bartel, Wrzesniewski & Wiesenfeld, 2007). This research also indicated that having the office as a background had a significant effect on new hires that allowed for socialization to be more accomplished (Bartel, Wrzesniewski & Wiesenfeld, 2007). Additionally, Ahuja and Galvin (2003) investigated socialization by analyzing emails from groups working digitally, discovering that a more active approach is needed in order to gather information in a virtual setting. This signaled that the setting affected the type of content that was able to be learned since information regarding norms was not greatly inquired about.

2.3 Progression from previous research

The impacts of organizational socialization in an entirely digital organization is not a topic that has been researched to a great extent, since the possibility of digital work environments or virtual businesses has evolved over recent years. With the ability and possibility of a trend toward more remote work accelerated by the pandemic, there is likely to be more remote onboarding and a need for investigation into the unique aspects of accomplishing remote socialization.

Based on the current state of the digital working world inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the previous research presented on organizational socialization, an interesting possibility has developed to study the effects this new reality has possibly had on the organizational socialization process. In regard to relevancy, this thesis provides a qualitative look into the lives of those starting their first ever job entirely digital and brings forth the combination of individual experiences in a changing work climate. The new young professionals are the first to experience the adaptation to

an entirely digital working environment. Their differing experiences and perspectives provide insight into the effects of a limited previous experience and low preparation for entirely digital work that can bring forth vital learning points for the future of work in the digital and possibly hybrid format. Additionally, the effects of digital or virtual work in relation to organizational socialization has mostly focused on telecommuters, who are normally a smaller group within an organization. The pandemic's widespread repercussions on working life which caused entire organizations to telecommute therefore presents an interesting and distinctive opportunity to gain insight into this research question.

3 Theoretical stance

This study aims to use previous research, especially research focusing on the relationship between socialization, telecommuting, and the digital environment, as a foundation on which to contribute further research. The main focus of this thesis will be on organizational socialization in terms of external organizational boundaries as outlined above, since young professionals transitioning into their first job out of college is a first move into the organizational context (Van Maanen, Shein, 1979). As such, the thesis will be focused around the definition of organizational socialization as “[...] *the process by which newcomers make the transition from being organizational outsiders to being insiders*” (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo & Tucker, 2007, pp. 707). Many of the previous studies have had the opportunity to separate remote workers from in-office workers, whilst this study will make no such distinctions as the majority of workers can now be seen as remote (due to restrictions inflicted by the pandemic). This fact will in turn be used to gather how the restriction of an entirely digital working environment impacts the organizational socialization of young professionals in their first job out of college.

As organizational socialization is quite a multifaceted topic, the theoretical stance of this thesis will be guided towards a framework of the topic that aligns with the ambition of the research question. As the thesis aims to understand the effects on the organizational socialization process of individuals, Bauer and Erdogan’s (2011) process model of socialization will be used to develop a frame of reference and guide the analysis. Since the framework sees organizational socialization as a process that the individual takes part in with its success measured by the experiences of the

individual, it aligns with the purpose of this study. The scope, however, will remain on the main process of socialization in the context of an entirely digital environment and therefore not include Bauer and Erdogan's (2011) suggested outcomes. Although the analysis will touch upon what the possible effects on the process may be, the aim is not to test the process model of socialization, but rather let it be a guide to understanding the overview of an organizational socialization process.

By also incorporating the theory on socialization rate through interaction frequency, the hope is to analyze how the rate is affected by the digital format and thereby what effect that has on the socialization process. With the behavior of the new young professional in combination with the organizational efforts interpreted from interviews, the intent is that this will provide an overview of their proaction, which can then determine the overall interaction frequency and in turn the socialization rate. Furthermore, by gaining an understanding of young professionals' interactions, this will provide a look into the scope and range of their networks as it offers insight into which organizational insiders they have had access to and thus distinguishes how their networking opportunities with other organizational insiders have been impacted by an entirely digital setting.

It is important to note, however, that the combination of these frameworks have a certain focus on organizational socialization and that other peripheral, but important factors, will not be as widely covered. Thus, the combination of frameworks and their usefulness will be revisited in the discussion to further highlight possible aspects of the collected data that might not be within the scope of the frameworks but still have an impact on the result as well as the general topic.

To start off, the topic and components of the process model of socialization will be covered and explored, followed by the matrix of interaction frequency, and conclude with the presentation of the combination of frameworks that will guide the analysis of this thesis.

3.1 Process model of socialization

As the focus was developed on the young professionals (i.e. the newcomers), the organizational efforts have thus been derived from their experiences and descriptions. Due to this focus of the thesis and consequently the collected data, it was decided to exclude the subcategory of formal

orientations (within the scope of organizational efforts) as much of it covered the standardized and formal onboarding processes of a company and was thus not our focus or area of interest.

3.1.2 New Employee Characteristics

Bauer and Erdogan (2011) argue that the characteristics of the new employee are important in order to understand to which extent the individual takes their own initiative towards the socialization process. The authors take, what is referred to as, an interactionist perspective (Reichers, 1987) meaning that they see organizational socialization as a mutual process between the organization and the employee.

Proactive personality is outlined as wanting to take charge of the situation (Crant, 2000), and furthermore embracing undertakings which enhance socialization (Bauer, Erdogan, 2011). Depending on the ambition of the individual, this takes form in several different ways, like for instance asking more questions, networking, or initiating socialization opportunities.

Based on the research of Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg (2003), Bauer and Erdogan (2011) underline the importance of the characteristic of extraversion and being open for new possibilities as a factor in higher level adjustment.

The subcategory of veteran employee as outlined by Bauer and Erdogan (2011), refers to the previous experience of the newcomer and argues that previous job-experience provides the newcomer with an additional understanding that can help facilitate his/her adjustment to the new organization. Diving into the topic of new graduates, the authors point to a study made by Carr, Pearson, Vest and Boyar (2006) discerning the heightened importance and concern for this “newcomer-group” to be validated through sufficient performance than it is for veteran-newcomers. As this thesis only aims to analyze the experiences of new young professionals, a veteran employee will instead be re-labeled as veteran intern, but otherwise keep the same definition.

3.1.3 New Employee Behavior

New employee behavior covers the different behaviors that can help the newcomers actively be a part of and speed up their organizational socialization. Bauer and Erdogan (2011) see information seeking as a crucial part of the adjustment of a new employee to an organization. This subcategory encompasses the employee's possibility of taking an active role by, for instance, posing questions about their environment, as well as a passive role, through simply observing their surroundings or scanning through organizational documentation. However, the authors speak more favorably about an active approach as they claim that there is only so much information that can be obtained from a passive approach. It should nonetheless be pointed out that the frequency and the mode of information seeking may vary depending on how far into the socialization process the new employee is. Another important aspect of information seeking is that it is largely related to the characteristics of the new employee, and should the employee not be as proactive in their pursuit of information, then the organization must adapt a more institutionalized approach to socialization.(Bauer, Erdogan, 2011)

As the new employee is generally unaware of an organization's ways and culture, feedback seeking can assist in this adjustment or learning process. By seeking feedback from co-workers or supervisors, the new employee can get a sense of whether or not their behavior and the work they put forward is accepted by the norms of the organization. (Bauer, Erdogan, 2011).

Relationship building is seen as a critical aspect of a new employee's behavior as it is a way for the newcomer to take further responsibility for their own organizational socialization. This connection development can be facilitated by taking the initiative for informal conversations with co-workers and supervisors, as well as partaking in optional company gatherings (Bauer, Erdogan, 2011).

3.1.3 Organizational Efforts

There is no standardized way for organizations to engage in organizational socialization or what efforts should be used when introducing new employees to an organization (Bauer, Erdogan, 2011).

When it comes to different socialization tactics for organizations, Van Maanen and Shein (1979) have listed the following dimensions to guide the different paths of organizational socialization: “*a) collective versus individual socialization, b) formal or informal, c) sequential or random training, e) serial or disjunctive tactics in terms of insider help with adjustment, and f) investiture or divestiture with divestiture asking newcomers to give up their prior self*” (Van Maanen, Shein, 1979, pp. 37). These different dimensions were furthermore arranged on a continuum by Jones (1986) stretching from a more institutionalized to an individualized approach. With an institutionalized approach, the newcomers are separated out from the more experienced employees as they partake in a step-by-step socialization process arranged for them by the organization. This usually also involves an organizational role model that helps the newcomer adjust. The more individualized approach, on the other hand, leaves the newcomer having to take a more proactive approach to organizational socialization. Thus, the newcomer must take initiative in trying to make new connections, as well as independently navigate their way to understanding the company’s norms and values. (Bauer, Erdogan, 2011).

The role of organizational insiders has come to play an important part in the process of organizational socialization. Conducted research has consequently pointed to the importance of mentors, and their role in helping newcomers ease their way into the organization, its culture, and ways. Bauer and Erdogan (2011) also mention that mentors can make it less intimidating for newcomers to have the courage to ask any questions and furthermore, help manage the expectations of the organization and the role of the job. By engaging newcomers in mentoring programs or events that facilitate interaction with future colleagues, Chatman (1991) as well as Cawyer and Friedrich (1998) found that it helps the individual adapt more easily to the organizational culture and become more aware of the organizations key values by making them feel more comfortable with the organizational environment.

3.1.4 Adjustment

The category of adjustment details “[...] how well a new employee is doing as he or she transitions from being an organizational outsider to an organizational insider.” (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011, pp. 57). In measuring the success of the adjustment, Bauer and Erdogan (2011) have chosen to do it through the following four categories: role clarity, self-efficacy, acceptance by organizational insiders and knowledge of organizational culture.

By looking at role clarity the authors aim to see how well the newcomer has adapted to the new role, through determining how well the person knows what their job entails. This has been argued to consequently give an indication of the future level of organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Adkins, 1995). Next, the subcategory of self-efficacy details how assertive the newcomer is when taking on and performing their job. However, this thesis has been aimed to instead be directed towards the understanding of contribution as a combination of Bauer and Erdogan (2011) two subcategories. By having an understanding of one’s contribution to the organization, it is possible to scratch the surface of whether or not the young professionals feel like a valued member of their organization and what aspects he/she feels validates or discourages this feeling. Additionally, seeing how confident the young professional feels voicing his/her contribution, since a part of speaking about one’s contribution to the organization is rooted in the assurance of what your job entails and whether or not you are fulfilling it.

Acceptance by organizational insiders, indicates the importance of newcomers feeling like they are accepted by their colleagues and peers, along with having the chance to establish professional relationships within the organization (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011). In terms of the young professionals, this subcategory will be applied with regard to how included they feel in their respective team and organization.

Knowledge of organizational culture, another aspect Erdogan and Bauer (2011) claim to be a good indication of the success rate of the adjustment of the newcomer, as it encompasses how well informed the newcomer is about the organizational cultures, values, and norms. As for the young professionals, this thesis takes an interest in understanding how they experience the organizational

culture and whether this aligns with their expectations and perceptions of what the culture should bring.

3.2 Interaction frequency

In his article Reichers (1987) aims to understand which are the important interactions that might accelerate the organizational socialization of a newcomer to an organization. In order to do so, Reichers (1987) adapts the perspective of symbolic interactionism and thus, adapts the perspective of how interaction can give rise to identity and meaning. The author goes on to underline that “[...] *these interactions are the process through which newcomers come to understand organizational realities and establish situational identities*” (Reichers, 1987, pp. 278). The occurrence of these interactions is in turn the result of the proactive actions either by the newcomer, the organizational insider, or both with the attempt of creating meaningful interactions. Important to note however, is that an interaction is only considered symbolic interactionism when both sides understand the significance behind the interaction. (Reicher, 1987)

To grasp how the interaction between newcomers and organizational insiders can have an impact on organizational socialization, Reichers (1987) uses the four-fielder below to indicate how interactions can impact the rate of socialization. As previously mentioned, the interaction between the two parties is a result of their respective proaction and this proaction can in turn be attributed to several different individual and situational factors (Reichers, 1987). Situational factors are understood by Reichers (1987) as elements of the situation for the newcomer. This could for instance be co-workers, management, formal orientation programs, mentoring, and coaching. The individual factors are described through three different elements put forward by Reichers (1987): need for affiliation, tolerance of ambiguity, and field dependence. These factors then give insight to the insider- and newcomer proaction, which for this thesis will instead be explained through the aspects included in the process model of socialization by Bauer and Erdogan (2011). The proaction of the newcomer and insider are then either categorized as high or low, which subsequently through the matrix below will give an indication as to the socialization rate:

		<i>Newcomer Proaction</i>	
		1.	2.
<i>Insider Proaction</i>	high	Intermediate Rate	Rapid Rate
	low	3. Slow Rate	4. Intermediate Rate
		low	high

Figure 1: “Socialization rates as a function of proaction by newcomers and insiders” (Reichers, 1987, pp. 282)

Socialization can then be categorized as intermediate if the insider proaction is high and the newcomer proaction is low or the inverse, and rapid if the proaction is high for both. Should the insider and the newcomer proaction both be low then the socialization will either be categorized as slow (Reichers, 1987). Reichers (1987) concludes his research by alluding to the point that by initiating opportunities for newcomers and organizational insiders to interact the organization has the chance to accelerate the initial socialization of newcomers.

3.3 Combined frameworks

The frameworks will thus be combined in the following way:

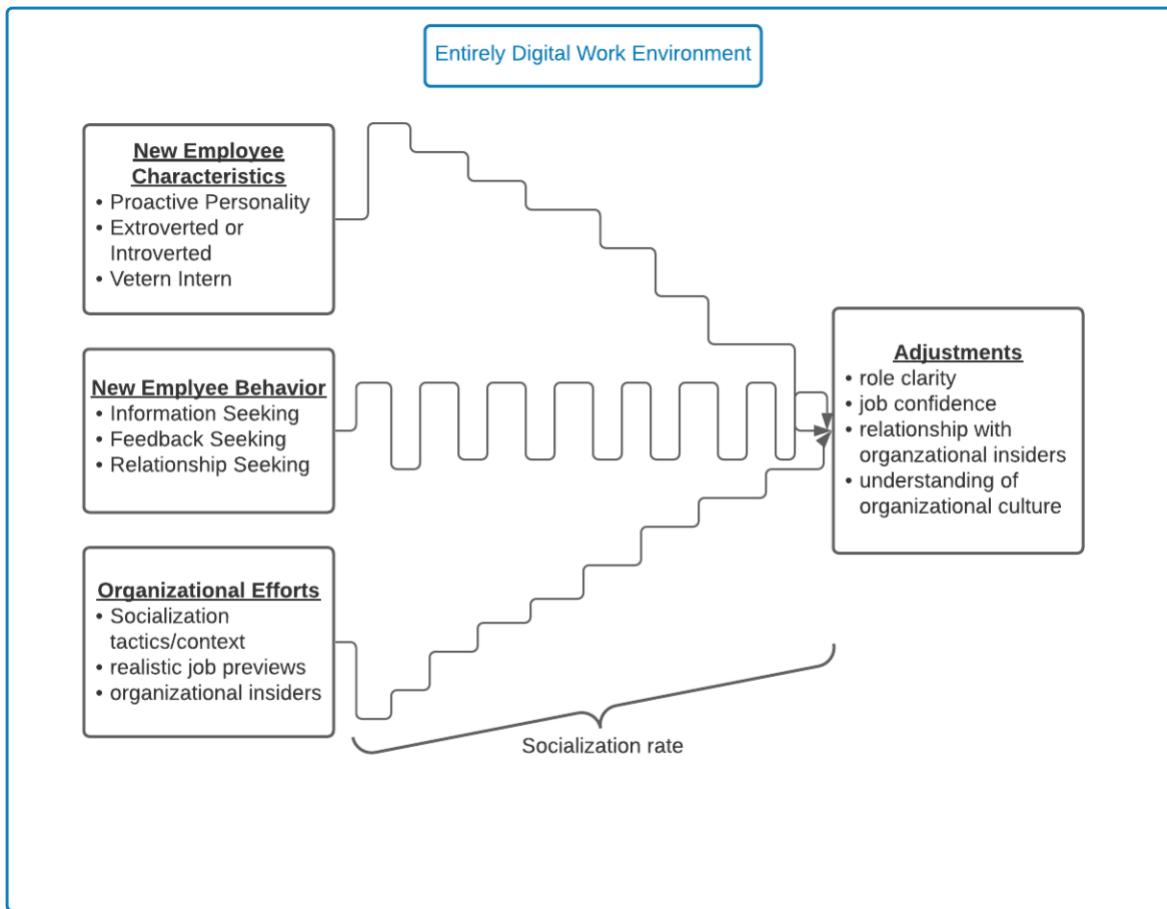


Figure 3: Combined framework of organizational socialization and socialization rate

The utilization of Braun and Erdogan's (2011) *process model or socialization* aims to develop as a backdrop or lens through which one can understand the process of organizational socialization, and Reichers' (1987) perspective on interaction and its relation to the socialization rate intends to establish a more detailed understanding of the process making it more dynamic. The combination of these different theoretical perspectives creates a context through which to analyze and gain an understanding of the effects of an entirely digital work environment has on organizational socialization. Moreover, they provide a frame of reference to highlight the impact of the digital work environment and how this in turn affects the young professionals' ability to reach the adjustment stage within the organizational socialization process. This idea is illustrated through

the use of wavy rather than straight lines from the initial aspects to that of adjustments in the organizational socialization process.

4 Methodology

The following section will cover the systematic approach in which the material was collected, sorted, as well as coded. Guided by the purpose of the thesis and previous research on the topic of organizational socialization, there was a gravitation towards the interpretive tradition of symbolic interactionism. As elaborated on by Prasad social interactionism is “*[...] concerned with the multiplicity of realities within any situation,*” (Prasad, 2018, pp. 22) which is part of the foundation of the thesis purpose as the indication of the effects of an entirely digital work environment on organizational socialization is viewed and understood through the various realities of young professionals.

As such, regarding the ontological perspective, the thesis takes on a constructivist approach, seeing that the purpose of the study is to understand how the entirely digital environment has impacted organizational socialization through the lens of several young professionals. Bryman and Bell (2017) elaborate on how a constructivist approach recognizes that the interaction between social actors is what shapes and gives meaning to social phenomena. The social phenomena and its meaning is in turn constantly revised, and can thus never be seen as a given or constant. (Bryman, Bell, 2017) Consequently, the epistemological approach and what constitutes knowledge (Martinich, n.d.) is subjective considering a subjective reality creates many different interpretations, which impacts the knowledge that can be obtained.

4.1 Data collection

As the interest of the research is in young professionals’ experiences and the relation to organizational socialization, a purposive sampling was adopted when approaching data collection. The aim of the research is to analyze the possible effect that the exclusively digital work environment, imposed upon by the COVID-19 pandemic, has on the process of organizational socialization that young professionals are experiencing, with the intention of contributing to a

better understanding of the social phenomenon of organizational socialization. The respondents were therefore selected based on their plausible contribution to and relevance to the research question. (Bryman, Bell, 2017) Thus to ensure a purposeful selection of young professionals, the selection was narrowed down through the following criteria:

- This is the interviewee's first job after graduating college
- The interviewee has been exclusively exposed to working (not interning) in a digital format, due COVID-19 restrictions and lockdown
- The interviewee started officially working at the job during the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e. past 11th March 2020, when COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020))

The criteria above depicts the aim of the research, and as such the aspect of gender or age will not be widely covered in the thesis. However, they both pose as interesting aspects that could be discussed for future research. Also important to note, is that the thesis makes a distinction between the young professionals embarking on their first job out of college and having had previous experiences with the organization through internship. The distinction lies in that there are different levels of expectation when it comes to an internship versus an employment, where the latter holds higher levels of expectations as well as a longer durability which makes organizational socialization a key. Although the thesis makes this distinction it does not shy away from the fact that having had a previous experience with an organization through an internship might have an effect on the experiences of the young professionals. As such, the topic of 'veteran inter' is covered in the theoretical stance as well as elaborated on in the analysis.

To approach the young professionals, a small initial group of respondents were identified in accordance with the criteria. A snowball-sampling was then used to, through the initial respondents, come in contact with additional possible interviewees. The snowball-sampling facilitated easier access to young professionals in line with the criteria, as the initial group of respondents had a large contact pool of acquaintances, (through college for instance) that were in the same situation. As such, a "sequential goal-oriented selection" was adopted, where interview planning started with an initial estimation of respondents which came to grow as the research progressed and contacts were shared (Teddlie, Yue, 2007). In the interest of those interviewees

who desired to be anonymous as well as to retain consistency throughout, pseudonyms have been utilized in place of real names.

Name	Start at job	Prior intern at job	Date of interview	Length of interview
Interview 1, test Kendall Davidson	August 2020	Yes.	22/03/2021	60 min
Interviewee 2 - Sima Prabhu	July 2020	No.	26/03/2021	58 min
Interviewee 3 - Joey Castilla	January 2021	Yes.	26/03/2021	70 min
Interviewee 4 - Serena Zeng	October 2020	No.	26/03/2021	71 min
Interviewee 5 - Arjun Nanda	September 2020	No.	28/03/2021	70 min
Interviewee 6 - Carla Straub	February 2021	Yes.	28/03/2021	60 min
Interviewee 7 - Suraj Mangat	October 2020	Yes.	28/03/2021	53 min
Interviewee 8 - Kamiko Mikami	June 2020	Yes.	29/03/2021	69 min
Interviewee 9 - Janya Luthra	August 2020	Yes.	30/03/2021, 01/04/2021	52 min + 19 min
Interviewee 10 - Kyla Jun	January/Februa ry 2021	No, but took part in a company case.	30/03/2021	47 min
Interviewee 11- Josh Bowen	January 2021	No, but took part in a company case.	31/03/2021	54 min

Interviewee 12 - Kavita Ramesh	September 2020	Internship and leadership program.	01/04/2021	79 min
Interviewee 13 - Diana Tang	November 2020	Yes.	01/04/2021	63 min

Table 1: Information regarding interviews

To ensure data saturation, scheduling and conducting the interviews, as well as coding and collecting the data were worked on interchangeably. Starting with the data analysis early on in the process allowed the collected data to be processed adequately and ensure that the right questions would be posed. This allowed for relevant data and thus also determined when saturation was reached. It also provided the chance to continuously revisit the collected data, and through comparison re-work our coding as well as possible approach for the subsequent interviews thereafter.

4.2 Research process and tools

To ensure that certain themes would be covered in the interviews, a draft interview guide was sketched out detailing the following themes:

- *Background information about the young professionals working situation,*
- *Expectations of the new job,*
- *Implications of local COVID-19 restrictions on work,*
- *Understanding of company culture, interpretation of place in organization.*

The draft interview guide was first used during a test interview with young professional, Kendall Davidson, to determine whether or not it was sufficient or if additional themes should be added. After the interview, the draft guide was indeed revisited and slightly adjusted to make sure that more adequate data would be obtained in later interviews (for more information, please see the updated interview guide as an appendix).

The interviews were conducted using Google Meet, due to all respondents being located overseas and given the restrictions in place because of the on-going COVID-19 pandemic. All of the interviews were consensually recorded, and later transcribed using the AI-driven aide Otter. These transcriptions were also checked back with the recordings to verify that the interviewees would be cited correctly. As outlined by Bryman and Bell (2017) there's an interest as an interviewer to encapsulate both what is being expressed during the interview as well as how it was expressed. To ensure that less explicitly expressed elements of the interview were grasped, it was decided that there would be one lead-interviewer following the interview guide, and one active observer taking notes and recording with the option to intervene with additional questions believed to be missed by the lead-interviewer. As the interviews were quite lengthy, these roles and responsibilities would switch in the middle of some interviews.

4.3 Data analysis

After the transcription of all of the interviews were completed, began the process of structuring and coding the data. The coding process was conducted using the online tool MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software. MAXQDA allowed for the importation of all interview transcripts that could then be marked and sorted out using color coded categories.

The coding process was done in several steps to ensure that the most essential elements, patterns and interconnectedness of the two were encapsulated. Consequently, the coding was in line with Miles and Huberman (1994) types of codes descriptive-, analytical-, and pattern coding. Furthermore, the thesis' use of the codes was inspired by the adaptation presented by Catino and Patriotta (2013). The three categories are approached sequentially, starting off with the descriptive coding where the aim is to create categories that provides an overview of the data collected, and can be used to describe its contents. After that, analytical coding is done guided by theory used in the research, with the intent of understanding and grasping the material through the theoretical stance. Lastly, pattern coding was done with the objective of displaying the connections between the different established categories (Catino, Patriotta, 2013).

Guided by this sequential coding, the collected data was first coded to shine a light on the experiences the young professionals expressed in regard to the entirely digital work environment

as well as the initial onboarding processes. The material was thus sorted into the following codes: Organizational support, Network building, Organizational culture, and Digital difficulties. The material was then coded through the lens of the combined theoretical frameworks of Bauer and Erdogan (2011) process model of socialization as well as the Reichers (1987) matrix on interaction frequency. This in turn produced the following coding: Characteristics, Behavior, Organizational efforts, and Organizational insiders. Lastly, pattern coding was used to highlight the connectedness of the two previous categories which resulted in the following codes: Learning and Interaction. The coding was then used to guide the analysis of the thesis, as well as provide insight to interesting topics to elaborate on in the discussion.

4.4 Validity and Reliability

As outlined by Bryman and Bell (2017), there has been debate among qualitative practitioners in regard to whether or not it is appropriate to adapt widely recognized quantitative criteria to determine the quality of qualitative research. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) used the notion of validity and reliability and adapted them to suit qualitative research by focusing on the following concepts: external validity, internal validity, external reliability and internal reliability.

External validity relates to the extent that the results presented can be translated into another setting (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). As the study is conducted in a rather unique setting, as the entirely digital work environment has been inflicted by a pandemic, this might impact the external validity of the thesis. However, it is possible that the way organizations conduct work in the future will be more digitized than before, but it is still important to be reflexive over the additional emotional implications that the pandemic might have inflicted on the situation. Internal validity is described by LeCompte and Goetz (1982) as alignment between the observation presented and theoretical concepts introduced by the researchers. To establish high internal validity, data was collected through semi-structured interviews thus allowing the young professionals to speak more or less freely about their experiences. Furthermore, the interviews continued until a saturation for new information was reached, and a good understanding of the young professionals' experiences and environment could be established. The recordings and transcriptions of the interviews were then

thoroughly discussed and revisited to ensure alignment of the material and theoretical concepts, and consequently sent to each of the interviewees for consideration and approval.

External reliability concerns to what extent the research can be replicated (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Thus, to ensure high external reliability the thesis will clearly detail the steps and measures taken to conduct this study and in reaching its conclusion. Internal reliability refers to how well the researchers align their interpretations of the data collected (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982), which in turn has been established through continuous discussion between the two authors. Before writing the analysis, a unanimous interpretation of the data in relation to theory was put forward to guide the writing. Furthermore, the ambition has throughout the writing of the thesis been to clearly lay out each argument and interpretation for the reader to follow.

5 Analysis

This section is structured to analyze and develop an understanding of the proaction behavior of the newcomer and the organizational insiders in order to then be able to look into the interaction frequency and socialization rate. By highlighting the digital difficulties and their impact, the analysis utilizes the difficulties to make sense of the impact that the digital environment has had on the process of organizational socialization, which is later interpreted through the lens of interaction frequency. Based on the variety of organizational climates, cultures, and environments that each of the young professionals found themselves in, it is through the culmination and combination of their accounts that one is able to grasp the experience of the young professionals starting out in the digital climate. It was therefore necessary to include a series of quotes at times, in order to illustrate this assortment of perspectives that aid in reaching a specific direction of reasoning.

5.1 Socialization aspects

When delving into the different categories and subcategories of the initial aspects of the process model of socialization, young professionals' correspondence to them were expressed in a variety of ways, but there are certain patterns that bring them together under each of the groups in the framework. First, the various elements of new employee characteristics are exemplified or

understood as important by the young professionals. As what is considered proactive is very subjective to each of the young professionals and their reality, it became important to highlight their understanding and reasoning around this key concept. A majority of the interviewees have expressed that they see the importance of having a proactive personality and take more initiative in trying to socialize, ask questions, and through this establish the working environment they feel that they need. This characteristic of proactiveness is also something that the young professionals to some extent see as going hand-in-hand with being extroverted, as they both entail a drive toward interaction with others:

“I think you’re gonna see people who are extroverts who are putting themselves out there, do a little bit better in the job world because I would say they could be viewed as people who are trying to push themselves to be better, even though a lot of introverts could be better, and they could be better for a job or better for something, but they’re not putting themselves out there so it’s like they don’t exist.” – Arjun Nanda

However, whilst discussing the topic of extroverts and introverts some of the young professionals mention that despite being extroverts, the work-related implications of the pandemic has made them more introverted:

“It’s like, the whole term Zoom-fatigue is just... it’s so real. I don’t know if that’s COVID making people that used to be extremely extroverted, a little bit more introverted, maybe that has something to do with it.” – Josh Bowen

As highlighted in the quote by Josh, it becomes evident that the change of environment has had an impact on the extent to which one can have the energy to be extroverted.

“I learned that I’m actually introverted now. I used to be extroverted before virtual work, but with the increased amount of screen time and talking to people, because meetings are so easily accessible, I think it’s turned me into an introvert. I get really tired after a couple of meetings, and so I’ve learned that I need space or else I will just be so dead at the end of the day. [...]” – Diana Tang

The quote by Diana encapsulates the essence of the relationship between young professionals and their environment, and how the two are impacting each other. It furthermore provides insight into how the environment can have a negative impact on the ability of the young professionals to be proactive or extroverted.

Having had some previous interaction with the organization seemed to give previous interns a head start when it came to creating a connection with the organization and its insiders. A majority of the interviewees that had proceeded to work within the same division they had interned at felt that this gave them an advantage when they started working. As elaborated on by one of the young professionals:

“I mean, that's really how I learned about the company when I interned there and got a feel for it. [...] I kind of knew what to expect in that, you know, I already knew what the office looked like, I knew what the environment looked like, kind of going into it. I had already seen what types of people that were working there, I kind of had an understanding of the work life balance.” – Kendall Davidson

By having this advantage, many of the young professionals that had previously interned at the organization they were now working for felt that they could better manage their expectations and more easily see how they fit into the bigger picture. However, when viewed from a broader perspective and in relation to other non-intern responses, this did not prove to provide significant aid in the overall organizational socialization process as being an intern was still quite different from being employed in a specific role.

Next, each of the different new employee behaviors are embodied and conveyed by the various young professionals. As will be elaborated on in the coming sections, the young professionals seek information and feedback as part of their learning within the organization. Their ability to seek out relationships has mainly been evident by their own ability to seek out interactions or the opportunities that are introduced by their organizations. This will also be further elaborated on in

the coming section detailing interaction, since the new employee behavior experienced by the young professionals is linked to the problems experienced in the digital environment.

In regard to organizational efforts, the young professionals outline and describe quite distinct organizational contexts and socialization support aspects provided that help them to various extents. Without going into the specific actions of each of the organizations, it was instead possible to distinguish a pattern among them when it came to their socialization tactics and organizational insiders. During the interview many of the young professionals expressed that their organizations try to engage them in non-work-related events in a digital format but that it's hard to interact if there are many people joining. As such, it's possible to see that the organizations make an effort to keep much of the socialization process within the company going by arranging opportunities for the newcomers to engage in both informational- and friendship relationships. These events, however, leave little room for interaction alluding to the fact that organizations are thereby favoring informational relationships. This then puts the responsibility of establishing friendship relationships solely on the young professionals. The same pattern could also be detected in regards to young professionals' relationships with organizational insiders. Either the organization had facilitated opportunities for the newcomers to establish new relationships (both informational- and friendship) through, for example, mentorship programs, or this was something the young professionals had to arrange for themselves.

Regardless of the efforts of the organization in terms of socialization tactics and the accessibility of organizational insiders, almost all of the young professionals said that the deepest socialization happened within their teams. Many also put emphasis on the role of their manager, and that much of the interaction was down to their motivation and time.

"There's some, like my current manager, he has a huge emphasis on career growth. [...] He's like, I don't view you like I have you for nine months, a year, on this project, I view you as I'm helping you, and helping you grow your career. So you're at this level, I want you to get to this level, and I'm trying to help you get there. So these are things you need to be doing." – Josh Bowen

As in the case of Josh, he has a manager that shows a lot of proaction in wanting to assist him in his career, but also helping him make sure that he's not missing out due to the virtual work environment. Some managers, on the other hand, don't always have the opportunity to be as involved:

“My manager tries, but it's also hard because we don't have a touch point every single day where she'd be like, are you doing this and we talk three times a week and it [is] always about work, it's like we only have like that 30 minute updates [...]” – Janya Luthra

As elaborated on by Janya, it becomes evident that even managers aren't always able to be as forthcoming as they might have wished to be, due to the limitations of the digital working environment.

Regarding realistic job previews, almost all of the young professionals said that this was something that they felt that they had been given. In the odd case of not receiving realistic job previews, it was triggered by uncontrollable events such as a middle manager leaving, or implications caused by the pandemic.

5.2 Digital Difficulties

The digital format induced by the pandemic has uncovered numerous significant disturbances in learning and interacting in a digital format that causes interferences in the organizational socialization process. While the socialization aspects are present or understood by the interviewees, the digital environment causes significant disruptions that hinder the young professionals from being able to fully or adequately reach the adjustment stage in their new organization.

5.2.1 Learning

As learning is a vital part of gaining knowledge and adapting to a new environment, the aspects that greatly hinder young professionals' ability from becoming socialized within the digital

environment, including the reception of feedback, a normal ease in asking questions, the ability to observe, and a restricted view, are great roadblocks to their success. This in turn can also be interpreted as a hindrance of the young professionals' ability to reach adjustments like role clarity, job confidence, as well as an understanding of organizational culture.

Starting with feedback, young professionals shared the hardship of receiving a diminished amount of feedback. As made evident when sorting the empirical material, there are two types of feedback missing for young professionals starting their new careers in a digital format. The first type of feedback missing can be exemplified through a series of quotes from various interviewees:

“I feel like I’m significantly less relaxed. I have to just, it just feels so much more forced. I don’t feel like it comes naturally, especially because I don’t see them on camera too. I’m kind of just making guesses as to how... what... how... how to read the virtual realm. And I feel like that’s honestly now that I’m thinking about it. I know altogether why but I just think, yeah, by the end of the day I’m just very rundown. [...] I think this would have definitely been a lot better if it was in person. Just because I’m able to gauge what a person’s impression is about you by reading their body language and reactions, but I feel I have no idea what that is it’s just kind of literally just seeing the words, and not getting a feel for the situation.” – Kyla Jun

“Like, in person you can see body language, facial expressions and understand. In a virtual setting, it’s a little bit harder. So when you want to talk to someone, you ping them or you send them a message, right? So, it’s nothing like talking in person. So I think just understanding that, you know, being self aware, but also understanding that this is your perception of performance, it’s more of a conscious effort.” – Suraj Mangat

“I gave my end of rotation presentation. And, you know, you try to make jokes, and try to make it entertaining, but everyone’s on mute. You know, I don’t even know what you’re doing [when] your cameras are off, like, are you laughing? Are you like, what is this girl saying? What? What are your feelings towards me in this moment? You know there’s just no feedback. You don’t see how people react to who you are.” – Kendall Davidson

Non-verbal aspects that are normally involved in conversation are important parts of communication and therefore also feedback. The severe reduction of nonverbal communication heavily affects young professionals' ability to gauge where they are in their learning. With the digital format adding an increased employment and significance to emailing or chatting, the added aspects of communication are stripped. Kyla makes clear that people's body language and reactions are a key element to developing an idea of where one stands, and Suraj also elaborates on the added effort that is needed in order to try to gain a sufficient perception of how one is doing without nonverbal cues like body language and facial expressions. The nonverbal cues emerge as quite influential when individuals are in the process of developing and learning, as every additional piece of information can progress a person forward. This showcases an increased need from the new employees for additional communicated feedback as the missing aspects of normal communication make the feedback given less meaningful and more difficult to interpret. Another more subtle example of this is during video call meetings as young professionals, like Kendall, have described feeling like they are not receiving enough feedback as others provide limited responses when remaining on mute or having their cameras off. Kendall describes this challenging experience when giving a presentation where she found it difficult to understand the appropriateness of her actions in the presentation and received limited feedback on her efforts as a new young professional.

The next form of feedback that emerged can be identified from another set of quotes:

"I think it's harder to get feedback, because it's harder for people to see what you're doing all day. And like, I think my manager would have given me a lot more or a lot less to do depending on the week if she saw what I was working on, but it's kind of up to me to tell her, like, hey, I'm gonna be working on this, like don't worry I'm getting back to you with X, Y and Z. Instead of her being able to kind of just lean over and be like hey, this is what I want you to be doing or maybe stop doing that like do this instead. [...] you're not as quick to get feedback. [...] It's very difficult to manage it like you'd have to set aside time for the maybe concentrated feedback instead of the day to day, 'Hey, you could have done this a

'little differently,' [...] like 'I noticed that you did this,' so those other minute interactions aren't there [...]' – Janya Luthra

"I want to have that like, one on one in person with my manager, like, I want to be able to sit down on a computer and like, work through something or he teaches me something or like, I mean, even have those like career building conversations and decisions that are like important, and probably a lot easier, not over zoom. So I think it's more important for me that he's in person. And maybe like the people I directly work with, like my consultants, my associates on my projects, because we can really, like do that part in person." - Carla Straub

An unexpectedly important and missing aspect in learning is the immediate or on-the-spot everyday feedback that is easily provided in an in-person work setting, as elaborated on by some of the young professionals. As Janya points out, while working in person managers are able to observe and have a better understanding of what young professionals are doing. Managers are therefore able to offer more guidance and provide little pieces of feedback that help steer, correct, and assist young professionals toward success. The idea of "*concentrated feedback*" can present drawbacks as there are many tidbits of information on an everyday basis that can easily be forgotten and fall through the cracks when trying to be compiled and communicated all at once. Additionally, Carla discusses the idea of being taught something or engaging in conversations related to her career in person, alluding to the idea that she would receive more immediate feedback were she present with those she is working with, especially her manager. The absence of this feedback creates setbacks in learning for the new employees as they have to sit alone with directions, lacking guiding adjustments throughout the workday. This requires young professionals to be self-sufficient and active in regard to their own growth and learning by needing to ask for what they want assessment on. Greater self-sufficiency can be seen as a positive, but for young professionals trying to become acquainted with a new organization, the lack of feedback can disrupt their ability to reach the adjustments phase of the organizational socialization process, especially those subcategories of role clarity and job confidence.

Furthermore, the digital format brought about a heightened level of intimidation or apprehension in asking questions as can be seen from young professionals' subsequent remarks:

"It's not that I wasn't supported but I didn't get that coaching that you get just sitting next to someone on your team, like, you could just tap someone's shoulder and be like hey, like how do you do this, but now I have to set up a formal meeting, And I have to lay out my questions and that's a lot more intimidating than just being like, Hey, can you show me where this is " – Kavita Ramesh

"When you have a question for your manager, usually you can just walk over and be like; 'Hey, I have a question. But now you have to ping them and be like; Hey, I have a question, do you have a minute? And then they're like in meetings back to back. So you're waiting for like, two hours. And then you have to schedule 15 minutes to be like... [I] have this question. And then there's more questions and then you figure that thing out? And you have another question, then you have to wait another two hours. Like, they're so busy. And all you do is wait for them to not be busy. So you can get the help that you need to do the work that you need to do. So that's one thing that's different is it's a lot more scheduling everything. [...] I definitely started like, if I have a question, I'll try to just do as much as I can, get like five or six questions. I'm gonna ask all of them at this one time so I can get the best use of their time that I have." – Sima Prabhu

"It just feels a lot bigger when you send, when you type it out [...] Whereas when you say it it's zero effort." – Kyla Jun

"I said it's really hard to when you're just texting them, and it feels like you're getting in the way or feels like you're like a burden because you keep asking questions" – Kamiko Mikami

"I can't just call someone just because like, you know, I have a question you know they have their own time" – Serena Zeng

As we can see, increased trouble in asking questions stems from several different underlying issues that come from the limitations of the digital format. Due to the separation and forms of communication, an extra initiative is needed to pose a question as the young professionals need to either spend the time to type out their question in a message or schedule a meeting. This brings on several different worries. As we can see from Kavita, and Sima, there is a necessity to set up formal meetings to ask questions, which develops a sense of intimidation and nervousness as the young professionals feel the need to make the most of the meeting by gathering up questions and ensuring that the questions are of quality. As Kavita mentions, she must “*lay out [her] questions*” suggesting that these meetings take time and preparation that would be simpler if one had the ease of in person proximity. Additionally, Sima’s description exemplifies how difficult it can be to even gain access to or schedule a meeting with a manager causing there to be more waiting, which obstructs learning. Furthermore, young professionals demonstrated a heightened sense of anxiety in the digital format of bothering others since they are hyper aware of the value of time and the added distraction that others must take to type out or schedule calls to answer questions. Video calls have caused young professionals to feel like they need to gather several questions in order to make a video call meeting worth their manager’s time. As an added aspect, there is an increased number of delays for young professionals’ as they must wait for responses to their questions before being able to move onto something else, which ultimately affects how much they are able to achieve and learn. While chatting allows for respondents to take their own time to answer, which some young professionals find as a positive, others are caused to think twice before they send a question as they are still worried about it being a significant question or sending too many messages to those they seek information from. As Kyla shares, questions carry more weight in the digital realm. As someone must take the time to respond, young professionals want to make sure the question is worth others time. Kamiko elaborates on the added burdensome that develops when posing many questions in the digital environment as opposed to in person. While it would be easier and more in tune with the in-person environment to simply call someone, Serena makes clear that this does not seem to be acceptable as the awareness of time means that one must be respectful of others schedules and therefore allow them to respond to a question when they see fit. The extreme focus on time and people’s schedules that is uncovered in the digital format shows how the lack of a shared working space distorts the young professionals’ perception of availability and preoccupation of those around them. The newcomers come to develop a hesitation in asking

questions, especially simple ones, as they have formed the assumption that their more experienced colleagues are extremely busy and that they have more important work to accomplish. Consequently, the main takeaway is that young professionals are more worried in the digital work environment about bothering their colleagues with too many questions that they see as taking time from problems and roles they assume to be more important. Ultimately, without the ability to truly see if colleagues are busy or even having them nearby to verbally ask quick questions to, prevents new young professionals from learning smoothly and stalls their socialization. This problem was also somewhat dependent on the openness and comfortability young professionals interpreted of their organizational environment, as well as the age gap between them and their colleagues. The underlying intimidation or interference in asking questions that stifles learning in the digital format can thus prevent young professionals from smoothly reaching adjustments in job confidence, role clarity, and an understanding of organizational culture.

Next, young professionals revealed a belief in stifled learning due to their inability to make and utilize observations from the working environment, which can be identified in this group of expressions:

“If I was in the office, I could see Oh, what is this organization doing on this floor in a different building, and you have that ability to [see] those conversations with people in different organizations and you can just see how the culture differentiates and all these different organizations or groups in the company. So I think being in person, especially as a new person, is really important. Because then you really get to see the long view and you get to see the full picture.” – Kendall Davidson

“The in person nuances of how to run a meeting, how to start it, how to end, how to engage with the people and like level of formality, what to wear even like, sometimes I’m like, do I wear a suit on an engagement or do I wear like bus cas (business casual) because our company’s super cas.” – Carla Straub

“I would see like, physical embodiment of this core values and company culture, for example, like the way maybe people like, keep the door open, or they like greeting each other in the hallway. I don't get to see that anymore. It's all Zoom. So yeah, I think if I were in person that would probably just be amplified.” – Diana Tang

“It's hard to compare yourself, and like what you know versus what you don't know because you don't know if you're the only one that doesn't know it or it's like everyone else doesn't know it, [...] what do I know that someone else doesn't know or like, at least when you're in the office or you're working with other people you can be like, oh, like you're working on that I should also work on that.” – Kavita Ramesh

“When you're working at the building, or at the site, you also see other people's contribution. And right now, I just know what I'm doing, I don't know how other people are talking to their clients. I don't know what different things they're doing that could maybe improve myself or will help. [...] So right now I can only see how I believe I'm contributing to the company. I can see how clients interact with me. I can see how clients talk to me, but I can't see how they deal with other people. And I think that's the part where maybe I won't get until I go back to the building because, you know, sometimes you can see if another colleague talks to a client, whether it's better or whether it's worse and how you can improve your contribution” – Arjun Nanda

Many small practices or nuances that can be picked up from observing others and the overall working environment. As Kendall, Carla, and Diana point out, there are many aspects to an organization that can be picked up through observing the environment where experienced employees are working, whether it be colleague's conversations, surrounding variations in group norms, meeting etiquette, or instances that exemplify company culture. New hires indicate a feeling of missing out and thereby gaining limited knowledge or growth in regard to understanding company culture, structure, and subcultures. Young professionals are unable to make their own observations in the organizational setting that aid them in developing an understanding of the intricate functionings of the organization and how it operates and flows. Young professionals' isolation in their work also limits their ability to observe and learn from their peers. According to

both Kavita and Arjun another aspect that is normally present, but hindered by the isolation of working from home is the possibility to compare and thus learn from peers or coworkers. As others may ask questions that are useful or someone else may have a more successful way of completing a task or speaking with a client, the observations and knowledge one can gain from others who are also learning can be valuable and help accelerate a young professional's growth. In a normal work setting new hires are able to observe each other as they each make mistakes, allowing them to learn at an exponential rate as they watch each other. In the digital format, however, each new hire is sitting on their own and they can only obtain this information if it is offered or willingly shared. There is an overall feeling of detachment and reduction of stimulation that inhibit new young professionals from gaining the big picture perspective as well as the detailed nuances that can only be understood through directly witnessing organizational situations. This perspective as well as its details are key in gaining an understanding of an organization's culture making it difficult for young professionals to reach an adequate level that allows them to truly reach the adjustment stage of the organizational socialization process.

Overall, interviewee, Kendall Davidson, expressed the final setback of the digital format for young professionals' ability to adequately learn when she expressed "*[...] with everything being virtual, you can only see what they show you.*" Kendall's remark showcases a great difficulty with the digital format in that young professionals are isolated and stalled in their learning by their limited view. As a consequence of the digital format and in relation to the inability to learn from observations, newcomers are limited by what they are invited or allowed to be shown on a confined screen and time frame. The restricted view presented by entirely virtual work causes impediments in learning that act as additional hurdles for young professionals in their ability to become organizationally socialized. This problem heavily impacts the learning of organizational details or nuances, professional growth, and stands in the way of developing a holistic view of young professionals' organization. Young professionals' learning curve is decelerated and therefore their professional growth is stunted, which inhibits them from being able to cultivate an understanding of the organization and its culture.

The reduction of sources for valuable learning presented by the digital format, including less feedback, added obstacles in the way of gaining answers, inability to make individual observations, as well as an overall limited view, causes disturbances in the socialization process.

5.2.2 Interaction

Another aspect that has both significantly changed and consequently caused a great deal of difficulties is the way individuals interact, which has caused an absence of natural pauses, lack of personal connections, an over prioritization of efficiency, and a need for adequate reasoning to engage with someone. A variety of substantial and meaningful relationships are lacking or missing for each of the young professionals in the digital context, as the everyday and meaningful interactions that help form relationships are no longer present or have seriously declined. Forming relationships are vital for employees to gain enjoyment from their work life, form a connection to the company and its culture, and ultimately build a professional network. There are several issues arising in the digital format which hinder young professionals from being able to build a wide and diverse network despite their relationship seeking behavior or proactive characteristics that will be further developed below.

Establishing personal connections as well as communicating one's own personality has presented itself as a hindrance in the digital format that keeps young professionals from developing quality relationships. As the following group of quotes can showcase:

“When you're online, it's definitely harder to meet everyone because you only see like x many people on your screen and then you have to get to know each other.” - Kavita Ramesh

“When you're in person, the energy levels are a lot higher, and you're able to grab people's attention more, instead of just hearing your screen” - Josh Bowen

“The interactions I feel I have on the Zoom are just not as meaningful and memorable as it could have been.” - Kyla Jun

“It's so different, talking with colleagues, talking with your boss, talking with upper management, over, Microsoft Teams, or Google, or Skype or whatever it is that people use, because you don't get that personal, personable kind of feeling, you know, like when you talk with someone, like in front of you, it's a lot different than talking with someone over a video call.” - Arjun Nanda

“In my last role, especially, I would only talk to my boss and this one other girl and there's so many people in the group and an organization that I would see in all these other meetings, but I would never have a one on one conversation with them or like I had never really been introduced to them. So it really just felt like I was in this bigger group, but I was isolated to one, two people that I would actually have a one on one like actual relationship with. So in that sense, it feels like I'm a part of the group, but people don't know who I am.” - Kendall Davidson

“If I schedule a 30 minute coffee chat with you... For example, there's this one manager that I have recurring chats with every month, and that's really great. And, like, that's the most I want, like, it's fine. But past that if I try to schedule coffee chats to just people in the office, [to] get to know them. Okay, I'll do a 30 minute coffee chat with you on a random Tuesday in January. And then I won't talk to you for months. And so when we return to [the] office, I still am not gonna know who you are, you're not gonna know who I am.” - Sima Prabhu

“If you're going to a disco party you're not gonna have a disco party and then I'm dancing in one room, and then you're in another part of the world and you're dancing in your own room it's not interactive. No, you want that interactive. I think the only way you get that is if you are in person, and that's what I like personally.” - Arjun Nanda

In accordance with the remarks above, the possibility of forming a personal connection has been greatly reduced in the online format as there are vital aspects to building this connection that are disturbed. In the first few quotes by Kavita and Josh we can see that it is difficult to form a bond with others when they are only a small square on a screen and when one is being heard through

the digital format. As Josh points out “*energy levels*” can be an important part of communication and interaction that are not as easily communicated in the digital world because it relates to a feeling or vibe that someone gives off. Continuing, Kyla and Arjun also hint at the idea that sensing a person’s true feelings, vibes, or character and whether they are really friendly is quite difficult over online communication tools, even video chat, as the young professionals describe being unable to “*get that personable kind of feeling*” and interactions not being as “*meaningful*” and therefore not as “*memorable*” either. The interactions that occur online therefore become less meaningful and personal, causing the quality of interactions to be greatly diminished. This ultimately hurts the chances of forming quality work relationships and friendships as these aspects are important starting points for initial personal connections that can then be built upon. The next three quotes from Kendall and Sima shed light on the idea that introduction, individual encounters, as well as the possibility of running into or seeing someone again are elements that attract people to investing time in fostering a personal connection, which young professionals are missing in digital work. Newcomers gather a feeling of insignificance in that they are not important enough to contact and therefore get less exposure and remembrance from their colleagues. Due to the detachment that comes from working individually in isolation, they believe that organizational members will not recount who they are. Also, the lack of presence around the office to ensure an obvious link between people who do not directly work together breaks the potential for a personal connection to be worth investing in or caring about. Lastly, Arjun’s metaphor speaks to the unspoken connection that forms when moving within the confines of a shared space and the importance of that connection in order to develop a personal connection. The reference of everyone dancing in their own rooms brings forth the key aspect of that there is a shared camaraderie and understanding that develops from presence and being in the same working space. While this can be seen as an important aspect for all employees, it is even more so for newcomers as it creates an initial sense of association or togetherness within an organization that they can then use to grow connections and later quality relationships from.

The next set of quotes continue the issue around personal connection, but move into the young professionals own troubles of communicating themselves through the online platforms that work has taken place on:

“You know, we have those meeting times where I'll meet with my senior or like a team member or something and we have 30 minutes to get through something and there's not a lot of time for my personality to kind of bleed through that time, I'll say a few jokes but you know jokes don't translate really well over Google Hangouts or Skype or whatever you're using.” - Kavita Ramesh

“I feel like you could show more of your personality. You could be more charismatic in person... personally. Over Zoom I'm not very creative with writing emails, it's almost like every email is like a sales pitch, like I was selling myself, like how can I creatively write this, writing a catchy subject line, it's not like I'm just trying to sell like just a whole different company. I'm just trying to sell myself with someone within the company to hire me onto their project. So it's a very interesting dynamic.” - Josh Bowen

As Kavita explains it is challenging to communicate one's personality in the digital working climate as the opportunities to personally get to know people or share oneself are limited as well as condensed into scheduled meetings. Additionally, Josh describes the trouble in trying to communicate personality over purely digitally written formats, especially when one is new and trying to develop who one is within the organization. Establishing a connection is a two-way street and young professionals inhibition in conveying who they are personally affects their potential to connect with and form personal connections with experienced organizational members.

Ultimately, the various side effects that emerge from an entirely digital work environment show impediments in trying to develop personal connections with colleagues, which obstructs the possibility for quality relationships to form. As Josh expressed “*the frequency has gone up [...] but the quality has gone down,*” so even if there are more scheduled interactions the quality is still absent because the possibility for quality interactions not exclusively related to work tasks that can then manifest into quality relationships are no longer present. Without the possibility for quality relationships, young professionals are greatly hindered in their ability to build and expand their personal and professional networks that are vital to young professionals’ future careers as well as for establishing their place within their organizations. As Brauer and Erdogan (2011) make apparent in their organizational socialization process framework, a vital aspect of reaching the

stage of adjustment is developing quality relationships with those inside the organization. The many interferences the digital format creates around evolving personal connections therefore leads this aspect to remain underdeveloped together with the scope and range of network the young professionals are able to create.

Moving on, the entirely digital format has inhibited the young professionals' means for in-person interactions and thus eliminated the possibility of shared natural pauses, as can be seen through the following comments:

"I think there's an aspect of it that just has to come from work. Like, even when you're, working into like 'Hey, I'm gonna go grab coffee, you want to come?' You're like, 'Oh, yeah, let's go.' And then you just go for a quick little walk and grab coffee and you meet a new coworker, or you're going out to lunch and you see someone across at a different table. And you're like, hey, and they drop by me, like, get to know them a little bit, like just chat like those things you can't facilitate virtually." - Sima Prabhu

"It is a lot harder, I would say a lot harder because you can't just go up to be like Hey, dude, if you go to work during lunchtime you sit down in a cafeteria maybe if your company has cafeteria, and you can go to someone and be like 'Hey, like, I would love to get to know you and what you do here,' but now it's like you're eating in your own kitchen." - Arjun Nanda

"I know there's probably so many senior managers [who] would love to talk about themselves and their background, their experience, [and] give wisdom to the younger people. That's always fun for people like I know it, but you just have never met them. You don't run into them getting coffee and gauge how friendly they are. And like, throw it in like 'Oh, would you want to grab coffee sometime.' And they're like, 'Oh, I'd love to!' [...] In person, it's more natural. Like you run into them, you have a five minute conversation somewhere and you're like, Oh, I want to talk to this person longer. And you can gauge it. You know, like, we have one thing in common. We both like the same Starbucks drink, let's talk... something like that. Whereas in person, it's like a shot in the dark." - Carla Straub

"I feel like small talk is that one time that first impression time period where we really get to know someone just off of general stuff. And I think small talk is what helps you figure out whether or not you even want to delve into deeper talks. [...] It is a lot more challenging now because you don't do that small talk, you don't see them for lunch, you know, seeing them around the office or anything like that so I think that's the biggest challenge." - Kavita Ramesh

"[...] when you're working in [an] office [...] you know, people are 5-10 minutes late, you stay an extra 5-10 minutes, because you're just talking about random stuff and then there's that sort of social part of working, which is great. And I've really missed that." - Joey Castilla

"Sometimes, when I think this is post onboarding, there'll be times where I don't talk to one of my co workers for like, a month and that's somebody who's on my direct team. And that's just because we're working on different projects that the only time we see each other are weekly team meetings, but even then I don't talk to them because there is just no natural, organic, post meeting conversation." - Diana Tang

Through the synthesis of the different interviewee descriptions above, it becomes apparent that there are countless instances throughout the workday to interact and form relationships that have been stripped away in the digital format. Sima and Arjun specify the importance of the greater ease in meeting and speaking with people at the shared breaks of lunch and coffee throughout the day. Carla also points to the importance of coffee breaks, but takes it a step further in explaining its necessity in creating encounters that develop first impressions and simple things in common that young professionals are able to use as a stepping-stone to plan further interactions. Whether it be before or after meetings, at lunch, coffee breaks, to or from one's desk, or in the hallway there are many more instances to naturally interact with others in the organization and establish grounds for further interaction or relationship building. Building on this idea, Kavita distinguishes it in the identification of the elimination of small talk and its influence in creating first impressions and initial sparks of connection. As she outlines the chance for small talk has been eliminated in the

digital format, making the possibility to have short conversations that can determine whether you would like to get to know someone further and establish a connection for future the possibility of future interactions as Carla spoke of attainable. Joey and Diana touch on this aspect as well, but relate it more to before and after meetings for opportunities to engage with coworkers. Since there is no arriving to, waiting, or leaving a meeting together with other employees in the digital format, then there is no chance to develop bonds from it either. The digital format removes the possibility of relationships forming within the natural pauses or breaks that employees take throughout the day. While the flexibility of the digital format is a positive, the isolation and differing schedules disrupts the chances for colleagues to form relationships that prompt employees to feel a part of a larger whole. Arjun makes a point of this when he articulates that he, “*just feel[s] like a person that's basically like a contractor just working, and [he is] just waiting for the time where [he] can feel that [he is] part of a community or part of a group of people.*” A physical workspace where employees interact daily coincides with employees' natural pauses so that they are able to develop relationships within and between producing work for the organization, while the digital format opens and spreads these natural pauses causing them to need to be scheduled in advance. This scheduling negatively impacts relationships as the mental capacity and motivation needed to focus and produce work takes precedence over the scheduling of interactions. The added side effect of increased prioritization of efficiency also hinders the scheduling of interactions, but this will be elaborated on further later. Overall, the limit in interactions and chances to build relationships with other employees once again affects young professionals from being able to grow their network and their relationships with organizational insiders.

Based on the easier visibility and access that is normally present in the shared working space, newcomers have developed the misleading assumption that their colleagues are constantly busy. This is illustrated through the following depictions by several young professionals:

“*Everyone has a schedule, so kind of need to get your work done, and then you wrap up. [...] You just have no sense of how busy people are actually.*” - Kamiko Mikami

“*You want to respect their time and like versus being in the office you can just walk up to them and ask them a question.*” - Serena Zeng

“You can see their schedule. And so you see if they’re free, but you don’t know what their schedule is, you just see the blocks. So I feel like it would be overstepping to just assume they want to talk to me or assume they have time to talk to me unless we have a direct relation, or we know each other. And it’s somehow facilitated where I feel comfortable asking,[...] but that’s also just being new and being so virtual. I’m like, I don’t know, the appropriateness of reaching out or who or when or how” - Carla Straub

“Usually you have an icon, right, that says if you’re available, or you’re busy, or you’re in a meeting, so a lot of times, like, my boss will have it red. So I don’t want to reach out to you because like, it says that your bubble is red. So that either means you’re in a meeting or you’re busy. So I feel weird messaging if I know that you’re busy, because I don’t want to bother you. At the same time, it’s like they have very limited availability. So you never know when to reach out and or it’s harder” - Kendall Davidson

The inability to see colleagues throughout the day develops a misconception around their perceived availability. As illustrated by both Serena and Kamiko, there is a heightened awareness around people’s schedules and the time they have available. Young professionals have no other perception of their colleagues other than through the schedules displayed, which is still limited in visibility, as Carla indicates when saying that you “*just see the blocks.*” The blocks display meetings, but they do not include spontaneous contacts, times when colleagues are trying to get work done, or their natural pauses as elaborated on previously. Newcomers are intimidated and limited by the inability to observe and find an appropriate time to reach out to their colleagues as evidenced by Carla describing an inability to understand a good time to contact people, as well as by Kendall when she states that she doesn’t want to “*bother*” anyone who may be busy. Essentially, young professionals are set back by the inability to recognize when others are actually busy and therefore develop the illusion that others in the organization are always busy.

Moreover, the merging between where individuals interact and where they sit down to do their work has generated a shared worry or fatigue over remaining online, as the following excerpts demonstrate:

[...] no one really wants to be online more than they have to anymore.” - Sima Prabhu

“I do feel like that aspect has been pretty highly diminished in this, it's not that people aren't willing to talk to you, it's also that I'm not as motivated to get on Zoom with people because it doesn't feel like you're making the same connection. And it kind of feels like another Zoom meeting in their day that they probably would rather not do, and they're less incentivized to talk to you. I think, they're never gonna say no, they're just probably going to be like, less excited about it than they would be when you're in person, [and] you get to go like, walk by the river and like get a cup of coffee.” - Janya Luthra

“when you're sitting in like an hour and a half Zoom call, at the end of it, you're fried, your... your attention span is so low” - Josh Bowen

The virtual format has drastically narrowed the choices for interaction as connections must be made through scheduling and meeting over video or written chats. While previously interactions allowed for individuals to gain a momentary distance from their work and achieve a change in atmosphere, entirely digital work forces individuals to remain at their desk or place of work in order to interact and form organizational relationships. Instead of allowing for a much needed break throughout the work day by “*walk[ing] by the river*” or “*get[ting] a cup of coffee*,” interactions in the digital environment become part of work and just “*feels like another Zoom meeting in their day*” and creates the feeling that people “are less incentivized to talk” as Janya indicated. Josh gets this feeling of being tired from video calls as he indicates that by “*the end of it, you're fried.*” Newcomers are aware and empathize with others over being tired of staying online and in meetings, causing them to be hesitant over keeping people online and at their desks for longer than truly necessary. This hinders young professionals from putting as much effort toward initiating and scheduling meetings to interact and build relationships with others in the organization.

Based on the misconception of frequent unavailability and the collapse of all work-related aspects to the digital screen, an underlying emphasis on efficiency has developed which negatively affects

young professionals as they work to become organizationally socialized into a new company and work environment.

“[...] everything is so much more business focused, too. So, when you have a meeting with someone you just get straight down to business, you know, there's no, oh, let me get to know you and, you get to know me, because it's like, people are just not interested. Because it's all virtual, like, what's the point?” - Kendall Davidson

“I think outside of those work time meetings, there's just been a lot more focus on automation, because we shouldn't be spending hours a day doing these things. And I think we noticed that nowadays more because we're at home, when you're [in] an office, it's like, oh, like I'm just working. But now it's like I'm at home, I could do this better. There's other things that could be doing. So, there's definitely the sense of efficiency, those meeting times, like I said, like cutting those out, because they're inefficient. So a huge focus on how can we be more efficient now that working from home is not as fun as working in office.” - Joey Castilla

“So it feels weird when it's quiet on the calls. Yeah. And everyone has a schedule, so kind of need to get your work done, and then you wrap up.” - Kamiko Mikami

In their above comments, Kendall and Joey portray the element of efficiency in outlining the digital climate’s “*business focus*” and “*sense of efficiency*,” which is signaled through the exclusion of getting to know people in meetings and the limitation of unnecessary meetings. Additionally, as outlined previously the possibility for personal connection is limited causing conversation topics to be sparse, and when paired with the sense of efficiency leads to the odd feeling Kamiko mentions when she claims that “*it feels weird when it's quiet on the calls.*” This along with her acute awareness of other individuals schedules causes the stress to “*get your work done*” in meetings “*and then wrap up.*” Every interaction in the digital climate becomes timed and highly work focused, therefore establishing an intensified focus on efficiency. This negatively affects young professionals who are first starting at an organization and attempting to find their way and build organizational ties that allow them to reach the adjustment phase.

An atmosphere geared toward productivity generated in the digital way of work causes newcomers to develop a guilty feeling when considering the planning of interactions with colleagues.

“They do encourage you to, like, facilitate one on ones and getting to know people and stuff, which I've been doing a good amount, but I have been doing it with people 2,3,4 years older than us max, just because I know they went through this program, and they can relate and I can ask advice, but I don't want to spend 30 minutes and waste the time of like some senior manager who's like, Alright, kid, I don't need... why am I spending 30 minutes talking to you?” - Carla Straub

As showcased by Carla, this idea of efficiency manifests a fear of taking other people's time. This guilt is heightened based on generational or hierarchical differences as it becomes more difficult for the newcomers to find things in common or discern a proper gauge on how busy they are. Guilt along with the inability to establish personal connections makes it extremely difficult for young professionals to form quality relationships. This affects young professionals' ability to meet new people, their development of strong connections with coworkers, establish mentor or coach-like relationships, and overall expand their professional network. The professional network has been pointed out as a vital way to learn and grow as an individual for their future career, but the digital difficulties obstruct young professionals' from building an adequate and balanced network within their organizations. Some individuals did express that they were still somewhat able to build a network, but that the pace of exposure and ability to form quality relationships was much slower than before. The ability to utilize mutual contacts is significantly restricted and it is difficult to form personal connections with multiple people at once. The efficiency when it comes to creating a diverse quality network has been restrained. Overall, the problems and effects on young professionals' ability to form relationships, make connections, and build a network strongly impairs their ability to reach the adjustment stage in the organizational socialization process.

Furthermore, the guilt that is developed over scheduling interactions discourages young professionals from doing so or leads to the disadvantage of needing a sufficient rationale in order to support the idea of interaction.

“I would definitely love to talk to people, because you know I am in my own bubble and there's kind of an easy way to see what people's titles are but at the end of the day, it's not that easy because you know I can't just approach you out of nowhere and be like ‘Hey, you want to chat.’ But yeah, it's harder.” - Serena Zeng

“I need to have a purpose. If that makes sense. I don't want to just get on the call and be like, yeah, how's your day? Where are you located? That's cool. Do you have any kids? Oh, like, it's not small talk the whole time. It starts off with that to kind of like, get there. But I want to have a purpose, like what I'm asking of you or something. And it usually is advice, where I'm right now. It's like, oh, your advice about this, or this or this. Or just like, share your experiences and then I'll ask questions in the middle. But it wouldn't be just yeah, it's not like a casual just say hi, get to know you. But [I] always want to add in a value piece where I'm asking for advice, or for help or specific questions. But it's not just all an intro of chatting.” - Carla Straub

“But different [in the] virtual format, it feels more transactional, in the sense of the language you use; ‘Hey, thank you for taking the time’ and having an agenda [whereas if] you're in person you could just casually bump into them in the coffee room; ‘Hey, how's it going? Oh, what are you working on by the way,’ you know just in terms of the way you phrase things, because you have to put a Zoom meeting, you schedule a time it's understood that you want something” - Suraj Mangat

The above quotes exemplify young professionals' concern with having “*a purpose*” or “*one thing in common*” in order to reach out to their colleagues to schedule interactions and connections as “*you can't just approach them out of nowhere.*” This is yet another undesirable effect of the entirely digital way of work as Suraj proclaims, “*it feels more transactional.*” Needing a reason to chat with or build a relationship with someone generates a great hindrance on the width and diversity of the network young professionals are able to form.

Lastly, this string of effects from the digital way of work leads newcomers to huddle with their teams and rely on initiating connections with those in similar age groups or new hire situations.

“Obviously the most interaction I have is with my team. And so I know that with my team, I can see that company culture, and the company attitude and what you want for a company be shown within the team, because like with my colleagues we chat every day and help each other out, you know, ask how our day is going and how are weekend plans.” - Arjun Nanda

“I feel a lot more connected to my team. Because we talk every day, we have meetings every day. Whereas on the floor companies scale, I don't necessarily feel as connected to the company as a whole. But I do think that one great thing is that even though I feel that disconnect, there is definitely a flowing company culture that goes from the top all the way to the bottom and across every team.” - Joey Castilla

“I definitely feel super close [to] my team because we were able to lean on each other and ask questions or contribute to what we need to do, and I mean, I think it's more team based now [more] than anything, and feeling supported by your team.” - Serena Zeng

“I do think my extension to the people outside my team is very limited. It's been just very surface level” - Kyla Jun

The limit on information, feedback, as well as relationships greatly hinders the young professionals' ability to stretch their networks beyond their teams. As each of the young professionals indicate, connections or bonds to those within their team are the strongest due to the consistency of meetings and interaction along with a comfortability to confide in one another for help which accompanies it. The lack of natural and spontaneous interactions along with the guilt that surrounds scheduling interactions makes the exchange with others outside of their team restricted, as specified by Kyla. Consequently, the relationships that become the strongest are those the young professionals cultivate within their teams as it is the scheduled team exchanges that give them a chance to try to progress interactions into relationships.

Apart from their teams, many of the young professionals also seek to establish a relationship with their peers as they are more likely to share the same sense of reality. By reaching out to another new hire or someone in the same age or previous college, the feelings of uncertainty and missing out are reciprocated.

“You know you need those human interactions, otherwise we're all going to lose it and so we set those [meetings] up now with the newer people as like a team kind of just checking in, because I feel like they were always... they don't want to bother each other. So I'm like no, just set up time, you know they're not that busy, so we'll just chat like twice a week. And then, with whoever's new mostly that's who we focus on.” - Kamiko Mikami

“I have hourly sessions with my class of other people that were hired. And like, we just work together on a Zoom-call and are able to work but also just chit chat and, see how things are going. One thing that's really great is that my manager's not too much older than me. And he definitely understands where I'm coming from of missing out on working in the office. So he tries his best to get to know me and gets to know what I'm doing outside of work and really pushes for me to have a better work life balance.” - Joey Castilla

“So, why even try making friends, because I'm not even going to meet these people in so long. But I think that's how I felt about older coworkers. Whereas the new hires, like my new hire class, I think there's 10, or 12 of us, I've actually become really good friends with them. And talk to my coworkers, the new hires, pretty much every day all day, like, I consider them to be actual friends. And I think it's because I can relate to them a lot more of how we came into the company, whereas like, the older coworkers that have already been there, I just feel like I can't connect with them on a lot of things.” - Sima Prabhu

As elaborated on by Sima, the connections made with those one considers to be peers are easier to facilitate as you share a similar context and perspective. As further detailed by Kamiko, creating a safe environment together with other young professionals that are in the same situation becomes a way to mitigate the guilt of asking too many questions or bothering someone. Instead, the feeling

as well as the experiences of the young professionals can be shared among them. Since it's harder for the young professionals to establish relationships, it is easier to initiate interaction with those individuals with whom one has common features, like age, job experience, or organizational status. This is further exemplified by Joey since he is able to create a quality relationship with his manager due to similar age allowing them to better understand one another. As little can be found in common with the older co-workers, it becomes more difficult to create a natural connection and even more so if you're not able to interact with them as frequently as Sima articulates.

5.3 Adjustments

Looking at the series of problems of starting work in the digital format in relation to Reicher's (1987) fourfielder framework for interaction frequency, a deeper understanding of its effects on the socialization process can be made based on its impediment on the socialization rate. While there is evidence of proaction from both organizational insiders and newcomers based on the evidence first presented in relation to Brauer and Erdogan's (2011) three aspects needed to start the organizational socialization process. There is of course a difference in the level of proaction understood of the organizational insiders based on the different organizational climates and cultures, however all the various contexts were understood to have facilitated some form of proaction. Additionally, there were different levels of proaction described by the young professionals or newcomers themselves as some were more driven than others. Every single organization and newcomer, however, had some adequate level of proaction that would under normal, in-person circumstances put them in intermediate or rapid rate of socialization on Reicher's (1987) framework. An intermediate rate of socialization would be characterized by frustration from the newcomers, over the lack of proaction from the organizational insiders and furthermore impact their (the newcomers) willingness to continue being proactive (Reichers, 1987). A rapid rate of socialization is the ideal stage, where the anxiety surrounding interaction is reduced and newcomers thus become integrated insiders more quickly due to high levels of interaction (Reichers, 1987).

It is important, however, to note that the results of the socialization rate only provide a surface-level point of view on the proaction and willingness to interact from both parties. There are several different factors that can have an impact on the proaction of the newcomers as well as

organizational insiders and many of them have become especially evident under the digital format. As Reichers (1987, p. 281) describes, proaction “*includes behaviors such as asking questions, stopping by other people’s offices or work areas to talk, initiating social opportunities such as lunch engagements, asking for feedback, [and] participating in discretionary social activities.*” On account of the digital format, there is a reduction in the variety of possible proaction behaviors that can be utilized and those behaviors that remain are suppressed, making them less influential.

As the digital format hinders the opportunities for more natural and less planned interactions, it makes the newcomers very dependent on the perceived availability of the organizational insiders, since they no longer have the ability to observe this in the office. This in turn made many of the young professionals increasingly hesitant to schedule meetings regarding questions as it made them feel like they were bothering people. Many of the young professionals also felt that they had to adapt to the digital behavior of their organization. This was for instance exemplified in that if the organization did not initiate or encourage interactions or endorse the idea of having cameras turned on during online meetings, young professionals felt unsure whether to challenge this, which further impacted their proaction. For the organizational insiders the digital format also presented many challenges in terms of being proactive and reaching out to the newcomers. The new format has made it more difficult to grasp what is happening in different parts of the organization. As such the proaction of the organizational insiders were most prominent within the young professionals assigned working team.

Moreover, a greater amount of proaction behaviors are required in the digital environment of work in order to make a significant impact on the socialization rate. This is difficult for employees as many described fatigue from being online for long periods of time and having a hard time coping with the blurred lines between home and work. The inhibition of the digital format therefore lies in its demand for the overexertion of organizational members and newcomers in order to gain the most basic socialization rate, as every level of proaction on each end is subdued due to the digital format’s disturbance and elimination of previously common everyday interactions.

This interference in the socialization rate ultimately decreases the effects of the initial elements in the socialization process and leads to difficulties in reaching the adjustment stage. As outlined by

Bauer and Erdogan (2011) the aspects within newcomer personality, newcomer behavior, and organizational efforts are key inputs in order to transition to newcomer adjustment, which includes understanding and confidence in their job, acceptance from established employees, as well as comprehension of the organization's culture. Understanding of one's role was not nearly as negatively impacted for the young professionals interviewed and several recounted knowing their individual role better. In regard to the other three adjustments newcomer's need to reach in order to be organizationally socialized, the digital format presented challenges that have greatly hindered their ability to complete the adjustment stage in the organizational socialization process.

6 Discussion

Overall, with the changes in interaction which have occurred under the digital format, a larger effect can be seen on newcomers or young professionals' overall scope, variety, and strength of network within their individual organizational contexts. While the amount of interaction and communication has not necessarily been negatively affected, the types of interactions and the implication of it have been made evident by the disturbances in reaching the adjustment phase in the organizational socialization process.

As the young professionals seem to be engaging in plenty of meetings that have formed close relationships with their own individual teams, it's also evident that the ability to extend their network to form wider and more diverse relationships that then allow them to craft a professional network has become a major roadblock. While it was understood to be somewhat helpful to have worked as an in-person intern prior to starting careers with the organizations, these young professionals still had great difficulties and hence was not highlighted as a boosting factor. Career growth and learning as well as the ability to truly feel part of their organizations as a whole has been severely affected by the limitation and isolation of working in an entirely digital format. The shift to scheduled interactions rather than more spontaneous, has severely narrowed the newcomers' sense, awareness, and understanding of potential contacts. Without the ability to form quality relationships within their organization, young professionals will have a hard time being able to feel supported and completely socialized within their organizational context. It should also be mentioned that some of these aspects were also elaborated on within the previous research on

organizational socialization, but because of the distinctive digital work environment that the pandemic has produced it becomes evident that all of these difficulties with interaction and networking are enhanced.

Looking into the potential future effects of the discoveries made, it can be gathered that it is vital for organizations to adapt to the needs of young professionals in order to mitigate the risk of losing their motivation to be proactive. In accordance with that, it is vital for organizations to look deeper into how to alleviate digital disturbances and successfully socialize new employees through the online format if they plan to continue with online or even hybrid work, which predictions suggest. Dismissing the disruptions can not only greatly affect young professionals in their future careers, but also have a sequence of ramifications on organizations, including organizational culture and knowledge transfer. It is thus essential for both organizations as well as organizational insiders to make time to understand, empathize, and work to mitigate the difficulties newcomers reveal of the struggle to become socialized in the entirely digital working environment. Interestingly, most young professionals expressed a desire for hybrid work as they did not enjoy the limitations of the digital work environment on their ability to form relationships, but still desired some of the flexibility that digital work provided. Also, another intriguing bit of information was that regardless of whether or not the young professionals said that they wanted to continue working remotely, in the office, or a hybrid, they each underlined that the way organizations have handled the COVID-19 pandemic would be an important aspect to consider when applying for jobs in the future. Many explained that how an organization managed the pandemic in regard to their employees would give an indication of how they considered and valued them. This in turn highlights the importance of the organizational efforts made, and why it's important to make insiders, as well as newcomers, feel part of the organization and continuously uphold this feeling. Throughout the process of understanding organizational socialization based on previous research, and furthermore applying that knowledge under an entirely digital work environment has brought with it many new insights regarding the topic and its frameworks. The framework guiding the analysis of this thesis had a focus on the interaction between the young professionals and the organization and its insiders, whilst giving less room for other narratives. As for instance, relating back to the research of Bauer et. al (1998) culture can have a huge impact on the organizational efforts made in the socialization process, and what is considered successful socialization. For

instance, some of the young professionals (although not seeing the situation as ideal) applauded their company and the way in which they created interaction opportunities for them. These individuals also highlighted that this was something that could be traced back to the organization's culture and core values.

7 Conclusion

The purpose of the thesis has been to understand the effects that an entirely digital work format has had on organizational socialization. The object of study for the organizational socialization process were young professionals embarking on their first job out of college, with the ambition bringing insight to the following question:

How does the entirely digital work environment affect young professionals in the organizational socialization process?

Through the analysis of the collected data, the effects of the entirely digital work environment are heavily disrupting the young professionals from reaching the adjustments stage based on the process model on organizational socialization by Bauer and Erdogan (2011). These digital difficulties can in turn be categorized into the aspect of learning, and interaction.

Due to these hindrances and the inability to fully reach the stage of adjustment, the young professionals become very dependent on their organizations and their proaction. As natural interaction is less frequent, the organizations need to communicate and provide the young professionals with the less tangible aspects of socialization, like how to act, interact, and converse with certain organizational insiders that they are no longer able to simply observe. Thus, due to the screen that the digital working environment is confined to, young professionals need to be given more opportunities for quality interactions with organizational insiders rather than more meetings or random group bondings.

7.1 Future research

As organizational socialization is a very multi-facilitated topic, and that the world is yet to fully grasp the implications on work caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the hope is that this thesis can be an interesting starting point for future research into the combined area of study. For instance, it would be interesting to explore the topics from an organizational point of view with the purpose of going through their efforts to see what they believe young professionals need to stay proactive and retain rapid socialization rates in a digital work environment. This could furthermore provide an insight into what a high level of proaction can bring to their organization, and how they can work to ensure meaningful interactions are still taking place in the digital climate.

Consequently, it would have been interesting to use these understandings to conduct an ethnographic study with an organization, to further understand the different forms of interaction that take place and how extensively organizations are actively considering the importance of interactions and the impact of their organizational efforts.

This thesis does not pay any attention to the real effect of gender, age, and or (in depth) previous experience which could also be an interesting topic to cover for future research. As elaborated on in the analysis it became clear that many of the young professionals sought out their peers for interaction, thus forming sub-cultures within the organization. It would be interesting to elaborate on this and the topic of age or generation to see what further contributions could be derived from this notion.

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9 Attachments

9.1 Interview guide

Interview details to give to the respondent:

- This is the purpose of the interview and what the answers will be used for.
- We will send you the transcript of the interview as well as the draft thesis for your consideration and comments.
- We estimate that the interview will be around 45 min - 1 hour, and will be organized around the following themes:
 - *Background information about the young professionals working situation*
 - *Expectations of the new job*
 - *Implications of local COVID-19 restrictions on work*
 - *Understanding of company culture*
 - *Interpretation of place in organization.*
- The interview is semi-structured, meaning the interview questions are open-ended to allow for more of a “normal conversation”

Formalities for the interview:

- First and foremost: are we allowed to record this interview?
- Would you prefer to be anonymous or are we allowed to use your name in the master thesis? Please note that the thesis will be published.
- Do you have any questions before we start?

Theme 1: Background information about the young professionals working situation

- How long have you been working at the company?
- Have you had any previous engagements with the company? Internships, Traineeships, extra work, etc.?
- How was your job described when you received and accepted your job offer and does that differ from what you are engaging in now? If so, how?

Theme 2: Expectations of the first job

- What type of work environment were you hoping for, in general, from your first job out of college?
- Did you have any expectations about the specific organization? If so, what?
- How did the organization prepare you before you started working?
 - What were the specific things the organization did or provided you with?

- What are your thoughts around this preparation process (or possible lack thereof)? Did it differ from what you expected?

Theme 3: Implications of local COVID-19 restrictions on work

- How do you feel the communication has been from your organization during this time?
 - Have there been any adjustments done through the last year? E.g. more meetings, more follow-up, feedback, personal support?
- How has the digital format impacted your view of the company or working life?
 - How do you think your ability to ask questions and learn has been impacted?

Theme 4: Understanding of company culture

- As a young professional what do you feel are the most helpful or nurturing aspects of company culture that help you grow?
 - Are these present in the digital format? If so, how or how do you believe they could be improved?
- What has your view or understanding been of your company's culture since you started working?
 - Do you see this understanding as a representation of the department or team you are working in or your entire company or both? Why?
 - (How do you think this understanding would have differed if you were able to go to your actual place of work?)
- What efforts have you received in trying to integrate you into company culture?
 - Has it been enough for you?

Theme 5: Interpretation of place in organization

- What do you feel are your needs as a young professional starting out in a new organization?
 - How do you feel that digital work has helped or hindered your ability to achieve these needs?
- What is your understanding of your contribution to the organization under the digital format?
- Do you feel you are a part of the organization and what aspects do you feel validates or discourages this feeling?

Theme 6: Telecommuting

- Would you consider telecommuting in the future after the COVID situation has passed? If so, why or why not?
- Will the amount of remote work a company chooses to have later on affect how you choose or apply for jobs in the future?

- What is something you have learned about yourself as a working individual while having to telecommute/work from home?

Is there anything else that you would like to add that you believe is important, interesting, or that we missed?