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School of Economics and Management

# The Journalists' Poison

*-a case study on Sveriges Radio*

Master Degree Project

Managing People, Knowledge & Change

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# Abstract

- Title:** The journalists' poison – A case study on Sveriges Radio
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- Keywords:** Identity, Identity struggle, Dis-Identification, Journalist, Freelancer, Temporary employment contracts, Newcomer.
- Thesis Purpose:** The main purpose of this research is to critically examine journalists' work situation at SR from an identity perspective.
- Methodology:** This thesis research concerns a case study, conducted from an interpretative, qualitative perspective.
- Theoretical Perspective:** Previous research concerning Identity, Identity struggle and Dis-Identification provide a theoretical basis. This research is linked to theories regarding freelancers, newcomers and psychological contract.
- Empirical Foundation:** The empirical basis for this research is a case study on Sveriges Radio AB in Malmö, where the interviews provide the main empirical basis.
- Conclusion:** Being a journalist is a strong source of identity. However, dis-identification with SR's employment politics results in a soft struggle. This leads to a hard struggle, which implies difficulties in defining the self-identity, since the profession is a crucial part of their self-identity.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

During the last two decades an increased number of temporary employees in Sweden have been observed. Four years ago 16 % of the total number of employees had a temporary employment contract. (Allvin et. al., 2006) Bergström et. al. (2007) argue that during this period of time, there has been different attitudes toward the full employment contracts than towards the temporary employment contracts, both from a societal perspective and from an organizational perspective. During the late 1990s almost 90 % of the population in Sweden preferred a full employment contract (SOU 1999:27). However, an explanation to the increased number of temporary employees refers to the organizations' changed need for a higher level of flexibility of the workforce. Further, the increase of temporary employment contracts can, according to Laird & Williams (1996), be explained by the changed work preferences of the employees, who often prefer more flexible employment contracts.

Recent research has revealed that work changes have taken place also within the media sector over the latest decades. During this time there has been a significant shift from full-time, permanent, staff work to freelance and contract work. (Storey et al, 2005) This phenomenon is well established in the Swedish media sector, as it is common that newly educated journalists are hired on temporary contracts. In fact the labor market in Sweden is over-established by newly educated journalists, which leads to difficulties to be hired. Due to the low demand almost half of the journalists being educated will not receive a job as journalist. (sjf.se) One can assume that the reason for the high level of journalists, is the view of the journalistic profession as a high-status profession, which is considered an important part of the democratic society.

## 1.2 Problem identification

According to Sveriges Radio's employee report in 2009, almost one-fourth of the employees had a temporary employment contract, which often implies a high employee turnover (Sveriges Radio employee report, 2009). According to SR, a certain level of employee turnover is of importance since it gives opportunities for new recruitments. SR further argues that this leads to opportunities for organizational changes, which is of

importance in a constant changing environment and the employee turnover would minimize the risk of getting stuck in old patterns.

SR has a strong brand name, and was in 2009 elected as the most trustworthy organization in Sweden. According to SR their strong brand name, along with having a good reputation of being a good employer with good working conditions and a modern organizational culture, are important circumstances for attracting new journalist talents. SR has a vision saying that the company strives to be the most important media company and culture creator in Sweden. In order to achieve the vision, SR constantly strives to be an attractive workplace for professional and creative employees. SR has an employment policy which aims to attract and recruit the most appropriate journalists on the labor market. SR argues that the organization always strives to stay one step ahead and manage their employment policy in a professional way in order to avoid losing key competence and knowledge, which will happen if the employees leave the company. Moreover, SR strives to always keep and develop their employees in order for them to contribute to the future of the company. SR states that they think their employee turnover generally is too low in order to have the opportunities to constant change, develop and renew the organization. (Sveriges Radio employee report, 2009)

Despite the ambition to be an attractive employer and the constant work for keeping and developing their employees, it was through an employee survey 2009 found that only 37 % of the employees would recommend SR as an employer and only 34 % of the employees answered that SR is an attractive employer for talents within media and culture. We find the results interesting since these may indicate a different side of SR than what is reflected by the brand's strongly association with being the most trustworthy organization in Sweden. How is it possible for an organization with a great external trustworthiness to have almost two-thirds of the employees not wanting to recommend SR as an employer? Because of this possible contradiction we find SR to be an interesting organization to further investigate. However, we also find SR particularly interesting since it is a knowledge intensive firm where most of the employees are journalists, which is considered a high-status profession. According to Alvesson (2009) a profession is often a strong source of the social identity, whereas the work identity is a crucial part of the self-identity. Further, the author argues that professionals invest much of themselves in work. Sveningsson & Alvesson (2003) argue that individuals are

assumed to strive for comfort, meaning and integration and some correspondence between a self-definition and work situation. We therefore argue that it would be interesting to investigate how the journalists strive for correspondence between their self-identity and their work situation at SR, as they invest much of themselves in work. Moreover, we find it interesting to further investigate the work situation at SR, not only from an individual perspective, but also from an organizational perspective in order to find possible organizational consequences of the work situation.

### **1.3 Research Purpose:**

We aim to investigate journalists' work situation at SR from an identity perspective. Further, we aim to investigate the work situation at SR, not only from an individual perspective, but also from an organizational perspective. By investigating SR from both perspectives our intentions are to explore the work situation's effects on the journalists' identity and on the organization.

### **1.4 Research Questions:**

How do journalists understand the work situation at SR and how does it affect their identity?

What are the possible organizational effects of the work situation at SR?

### **1.5 Limitations:**

The thesis is limited to SR, which is a governmental owned organization, we therefore limited our thesis from private owned media organizations. Moreover, we chose to conduct a case study within SR Malmö in order to gain in-depth knowledge rather than to develop empirical generalizations. Since our thesis focuses on identity related to journalists, we limited our thesis from other professions and the individuals' other sources of the identity.

### **1.6 Thesis Outline**

Initially, chapter two will address the methodical and methodological considerations, on which the thesis is based. Thereafter, a theoretical framework will be given regarding identity struggle, freelancing, newcomers and psychological contracts. The main empirical data will be presented in chapter four and analyzed in chapter five. Finally, this will lead to the conclusions where we outline our main findings, reflections as well as suggestions for future research.



## **2. Method and Methodology**

*In this chapter method and methodology will be addressed. The research approach, which the thesis is based upon, will be described as well as how the empirical research was conducted. Finally, the credibility and knowledge contribution of the thesis will be discussed.*

### **2.1 Research Process**

#### **2.1.1 Abductive Approach**

In our research we used an abductive approach, which according to Hansen (1958) is the ability to see patterns. It is an iterative process which Alvesson & Sköldberg (2000, p.17) describe as “*a general look through the broad outlines of the theoretical and empirical research field, followed as quickly as possible by a leap into one’s empirical material*”. They argue that the reality, in which we search for empirical material, is already interpreted and all data do already contain theory. Therefore, by using the abductive approach we initially did not read too much of existing theories and research, in order to maintain a fresh view of the empirical material and to be able to identify new possibilities. (Ibid.) We argue that the abductive process was the most appropriate approach in our research in order to enhance the understanding of identity within SR. The iterative process allowed us to change the research questions during the research process depending on what empirical data was found (van Dronghelen, 2001). We argue that this further enabled us to have an open approach when empirical material was gathered and analyzed.

#### **2.1.2 A Social Constructionist Perspective**

We argue that it was of great importance for us to apply a social constructionist perspective, which considers reality to be socially constructed and gives meaning to people. According to this perspective reality is constructed by people, therefore it becomes meaningful to understand those meanings that people ascribe to their experiences. (Sandbergh & Targama, 2007) Since different people have different perceptions of phenomenon, we needed to go deep into the phenomenon in order to create a meaningful understanding. We believe that the understanding of reality contains no objective facts as all data, herein concerning the ambiguous term identity, is potentially value loaded and influenced by people’s pre-understanding and contextual factors (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000). The hermeneutic perspective, which is an

interpretative approach, made it possible for us to discover and reveal hidden information in the gathered data. During the research process we constantly moved between the part and the whole in order to be more open to the empirical material. Furthermore, we kept an awareness of the pre-understanding and the understanding of the researchers and the interviewees. (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2000) We argue that the hermeneutic perspective enabled us to gain richer data and more in-depth understanding about the identity of the respondents.

Finally, Alvesson & Sköldbberg (2000, p.246) argue that a reflexive approach concerns an awareness of the constructed object, the subject constructing the object, e.g. the researcher, and the social context in which the researcher is being constructed. Moreover, the authors argue that they: *"(...) demand reflection in research in conjunction with interpretation at several levels: contact with empirical material, awareness of the interpretative act, clarification of political-ideological contexts, and the handling of the question of representation and authority. (p.238)"* During the research process we attempted to apply the reflexive approach in order to further increase the credibility of the thesis and in order to gain a deeper understanding and knowledge of the investigated phenomenon.

### **2.1.3 Qualitative Approach**

In line with the abductive process we used a qualitative approach. The qualitative research strategy focuses on words and how the examined persons experience the world. A common used qualitative method is semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews enable researchers' to gain more insight into what the interviewees' see as relevant and important (Bryman & Bell, 2005). This kind of method makes it possible to find new surprising data (Jacobsen, 2002). The qualitative approach is flexible and we argue in accordance with Jacobsen (Ibid.) that this methodological approach gave us an unique understanding of the phenomenon we investigated. Furthermore, this approach enabled us to continuously analyze gathered data and to revise the further data gathering (Ibid.).

### **2.1.4 Case Study**

We conducted a single case study at SR as this investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 1994). An additionally strength of using case study is that the iteration between research findings and researchers' pre-understandings offer insights

into the nature of a phenomenon (Easton, 2010). During the study we applied semi-structured interviews, complemented with secondary data. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to allow a more open exchange of information between researchers' and interviewees' and to reach insights about the respondents' emotions, beliefs and sensemaking processes (Kvale, 1996). Thus, the choice of using a case study, with semi-structured interviews, was well supported by the interpretative methodological underpinnings of this thesis.

When conducting our fieldwork we did not have any particular hypothesis in mind, however we knew that the phenomenon to study would lie within the area of identity. In order to have an open approach we first conducted an opening interview with one employee having experiences of being both a union representative at SR and being a deputy member of SR's board having the role as employee representative. To gain a deeper knowledge we were posing broad questions about different employee contracts, organizational structure and employment at SR.

In total a number of eight interviews were conducted in a setting with three interviewers and one interviewee present. The selection of the eight interviewees included people from all hierarchical levels, with different backgrounds, ages and genders. Some were recruited to SR as graduates; some from other media companies; some without formal education; some had temporary contracts; some had full contracts; some were freelancers. We presumed the variety of people would give valuable diversity in the pre-understandings and perceptions of the interview questions (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Through the respondents answers we hoped to gain a deeper insight about journalists' identities in relation to SR. After conducting several interviews we found a red thread as we heard the same stories repeatedly from different respondents.

For the interviews we created a semi-structured interview guide with the following themes; background and employee role at SR; employment and contracts; employee turnover; employment expectations. Within those themes our questions evolved and changed throughout the research process, which is a part of the iterative process. In order for us to gain a deep insight into the respondents' identity it was of great importance to ask questions which concerned the subject, without mentioning the term identity. We asked open questions which related to the respondents' feelings, experiences, personal relations and personal opinions. Moreover, we asked questions

concerning how they relate to SR, employees and managers. Those kinds of questions enabled the respondents to openly discuss their emotions, beliefs and sense making processes related to their identity (Kvale, 1996).

Consequently, during the interviews, one of the interviewers was in charge of asking the main questions, one was asking follow up questions and one was taking field notes. Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 1 hour and 20 minutes and all of them were made in a face-to-face setting. Three of the interviews were held at conference rooms within SR, three at a conference room within another office and two were conducted at café's. All interviewee's got an option to choose a place feeling natural for them in order to make them feel more likely to be open. Further, all interviews were conducted in Swedish as this is the native language of the researchers' and the interviewees'. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to be used both in the empirical section and in the data analysis. The transcribed material was categorized into different categories such as identity, psychological contract, culture and employment contracts. After categorizing the material we translated it into English. By employing a hermeneutic reading we treated the answers subjectively and within their context by iterating between the part and whole to consider both researchers' and interviewees' pre-understanding (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2010). In this way we recontextualized what was said in the specific conceptual interview context (Kvale, 1996).

## **2.2 Credibility of research findings**

Validity refers to whether or not the results are measuring what the researcher is attempting to measure and if there is a connection between different variables. Furthermore, validity refers to the issue whether the results are trustworthy and plausible. (Saunders et.al 2007) Alvesson & Sköldbberg (2000, p.69) describe that source criticism concerns four criteria for "*the evaluation and interpretation of data*". Those criteria regard the issues of authenticity, bias, distance and dependence, which we use in order to confirm the credibility of our research. Concerning the authenticity of our data, we argue that all interviewees are sincere and can be considered a source. We find no reason for the interviewees to be dishonest since they were all offered anonymity. Alvesson & Sköldbberg (2000, p.72) also argue that the issues concerning bias refers to the consciously, or not consciously, interest of the informant to distort the information. The authors therefore argue that it is of great importance to ask "*who is speaking, and*

*whit what purpose.*" (p.72). During the interviews and the analysis of the data, we were constantly aware of the risk of the informants' bias. With this constant critically awareness of issues concerning bias in mind, we argue that we have minimized the bias. Moreover, we argue that it is possible for us to neglect the criticism concerning distance since all interviewees were currently working for SR or had worked there within this year. Further, we were only dependent on the primary data which consists of the interviewees conducted by us. The only secondary data used, which had passed through the hands of SR (p.74) was the material from SR's homepage. This data was only used to get a background picture of SR as a preparation for the interviews in order to gain an even deeper understanding.

Alvesson & Sköldbberg (2000, p.271) argue that: *"By emphasizing the researcher's active construction of reality –through perception, cognition and the handling of language as well as social interaction with those being researched – a fundamental critique of traditional empirical epistemology emerges."* Bryman & Bell (2005, pp.318-321) refer to the main areas of critique concerning traditional qualitative research. Two of those areas regard the critique that qualitative research is too subjective and the difficulties of repeating an interview. We have taken this critique under consideration and attempted to limit possible sources of error during the research process. Firstly, concerning the critique that qualitative research is too subjective Jacobsen (2002) mentions that there is a risk that the researchers unwarily ignore empirical material. We argue that we have limited this risk since all three researchers were present during the interviews and we together analyzed the empirical material. Jacobsen (Ibid.) also emphasizes that in order for a researcher to understand the interviewee a personal relation is important. Thus, we argue in accordance with El-Sawad et. al. (2004) that a personal relation is important in order to identify interesting contradictions and double-thinking of the interviewees. Those will only be revealed if the interviewees feel comfortable enough to answer the question openly and honestly. Therefore, we argue that we tried to limit the subjectivity; however we emphasized the importance of having the interviewees feel comfortable in order to gain as rich data as possible. Secondly, the critique concerning the difficulties of repeating an interview is an important critique, which is further stressed by the fact that the interviewees were anonymous. However, the anonymity was important in order for the respondents to be able to answer the questions honestly. As previously mentioned,

we have tried to take on a reflexive approach, which have enabled us to interpret our own interpretation. This approach has therefore helped us to keep a high level of credibility in the research process.

### **2.2.1 Generalisability**

Generalisability is sometimes called external validity and refers to whether the result of the research is applicable to other organizations. If one is conducting research in only one organization or a few organizations it is important since there are risks that the result of the research may give misleading information (Saunders et al 2007). Therefore, we do not argue for an empirical generalization since we are doing a single case study at SR, which follows the case study logic identified by Yin (2003). Studies like this rather aim for a theoretically generalization which in our study concerns a further development and redefinition of the concept of identity struggles.

### **2.2.2 Knowledge contribution**

According to Eisenhardt (1989, p. 548) case study research is most appropriate in order to provide freshness in perspective to an already researched topic or in early stages of research on a topic. The identity concept has been widely researched upon, however we hope that through our case study, provide with some freshness. With this research we aim to contribute with an in depth knowledge of identity and we seek to enhance the understanding of this social phenomenon. As mentioned above we do not argue for empirical generalization, since we have selected to do our research in one organization. Instead our intention is to make a theoretically generalization since we aim to further develop and redefine the concept of identity struggle.

### **3. Literature Review**

*In this chapter literature concerning Identity will be presented. Firstly Identity, Self-Identity and Identity work will be explained. These will be followed by theory concerning Multiplicity of Social Identities and Identity Struggle. Moreover, in order to understand the complexity of identity, aspects such as Group Identity and Identity of the Other will be reviewed. Since the investigated organization has many newcomers within the organization the term identity will be linked to newcomers. Further, since a media organization is examined the term identity in regard to freelancing is of importance to understand and will therefore be presented. Finally, the meaning of psychological contracts in the new career environment will be discussed with a linkage to Identity.*

#### **3.1 Identity, Self-Identity and identity work**

According to Alvesson (2009) identity is a construction defined as a subjective meaning and experience. The definition of identity answers the questions “*Who am I, and how should I act?*” (p.189). The author argues that a personal identity includes a person’s feelings, thoughts and values, which form how the person see herself or how a group of people see themselves. Identity is described as constructed, multiple and varying. Further, identity is viewed as central for issues of meaning and motivation, commitment, loyalty, group and intergroup relations (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). In identity work, identity is a conscious struggle to respond to the question “*Who am I*” (Ibid.). Watson (2008) states that identity is rather a project than something a person achieves and that identity work is an ongoing cycle. Identity can be seen as a continuous process of interpretations and unstable and varying narrative constructions, which results in the self-identity (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). An individual’s strive to shape a personal identity is an identity work that occurs in social contexts, which an individual see as crucial for the understanding of identity work (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Further, Sveningsson and Alvesson (Ibid.) argue that identity work concerns the *self* or the internal aspect of identity and whenever identity work occurs there is an element of working on the external identity of that individual, alongside the shaping of these internal aspects of the personal identity.

### 3.2 Multiplicity of Social Identities

Watson (2008) defines the distinction between the internal self-identities and the external discursive social-identities, where social-identities can be seen as a link between socially available discourses and self-identities. “(...) *social-identities can be seen as cultural, discursive or institutional notions of who or what any individual might be*” (p.131). The author argues that for instance managerial identities are something which take place among the multiplicity of social-identities and that the managers relate to this in both their internal and external identity work. The author distinguishes between different types of social-identities, where we find three of particular interest. One is the *formal-role social-identities*, which includes occupation, rank, citizenship etc (e.g. manager, cleaner, captain). Another is the *local-organizational social-identities*, including for instance an old-style Nottingham professor or a Boots pharmacist. The last one is the *cultural-stereotype social-identities*, which includes for instance a garrulous Frenchman, a boring accountant or a devoted mother. (Ibid.) Thus, an individual has multiple identities, since the social identity consists of several identities loosely linked together (Alvesson, 2009). Further, Watson (2008) argues that the work identity is only one part of a person’s whole identity. Alvesson (2009) argues that an individual has many sources of identity and a profession is often a strong source of the social identity, whereas the work identity is a crucial part of the self-identity. Moreover the author argues that in Knowledge Intensive Firms (KIF) the boundaries between self, work and sometimes the organization are not distinct. Individuals in KIF are vulnerable to frustrations and lowered status, since they invest more of themselves into their work.

### 3.3 Identity Struggle

Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003, p.1164) argue that identity work emphasizes “*dynamic aspects and on-going struggles around creating a sense of self and providing temporary answers to the question “who am I” (or “who are we”) and what do I (we) stand for?*” The authors further describe that individuals create many often changing identity positions (e.g. many managerial identities), rather than one ongoing, stable and secure identity position (e.g. one managerial identity) (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Individuals’ identities are frequently in movement, a process where individuals change identities rather than having a continuous stable identity. Hence, different discourses, roles and narrative self-identities fuel and constrain identity work. This leads to an identity struggle, as individuals are assumed to strive for comfort, meaning and integration and



some correspondence between a self-definition and work situation (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Furthermore, Kreiner et. al. (2006) argue that identity work concerns negotiation of identity in order to balance personal and social identities. The authors argue that there may be struggles between a person's individual identity and her social identity, since there may be differences between those identities. There might be special demands from the social identity which not always fit the personal identity and therefore it can be difficult for the individual to find a balance.

### 3.4 Dis-Identification

Ashforth & Mael (1989) argue that even though an individual defines herself with the organization she works for, it is possible that the individual disagrees with some aspects, such as organizational values. Sveningsson & Alvesson (2003) argue that an individual may develop an anti-identity, which contains the *"not-me qualities"* (p.1184). The anti-identity implies a negative identity, developed in order to distance oneself from for instance the organizational identity. Humphreys & Brown (2002, p.425) call the anti-identity, dis-identification which they describe as: *"a self-perception of an active and negative connection between the self-narrative and the dominant identity narrative of the organization"*. The authors describe that individuals might identify with certain aspects of an organizational identity, however at the same time dis-identify with other aspects of the organizational identity. This struggle is what Humphreys & Brown (Ibid.) call Schizo-identification.

### 3.5 Group Identity

Group Identity is a part of the social identity and Tajfel (1974) argues that: *"(...) an important contributing aspect of an individual's self-definition, namely that he is a member of numerous social groups and that this membership contributes, positively or negatively, to the image that he has of himself."* Ashforth & Mael (1989) describe four factors, which increase the tendency to identify with certain groups. Firstly, the distinctiveness of a group's values is crucial in order to differentiate from other groups and provide a unique identity. Also a group which is different from other groups, in a negatively sense, is able to provide a unique identity. Secondly, the prestige of the group is important since self-esteem is affected by intergroup comparisons. Thirdly, the salience of the out-group is likely to affect the identification, since awareness of the out-group strengthens the awareness of the in-group. Lastly, factors which are usually linked to group formation,

such as similarity, liking and common history, can further affect whether one identifies with a group or not. Alvesson (2009, p.188) argues that: *"We form identities through social groups, and how others relate to us is crucial to how we see ourselves."* Tiedens et al. (2000) discovered in studies that certain emotions were associated with low-and high-status groups. People who were angry and proud were in the studies considered as high-status, and sad, guilty and appreciative people were considered to belong to a low-status group. However, according to Ashforth & Mael (1989) group identification may be strong even though a group is considered to be a low-status group. The authors argue that the group identification may easily result in subunit identification within organizations. If two groups within an organization are considered to be low- or high status groups, intergroup conflicts may occur. The intergroup conflicts may result in that the in-group creates negative stereotypes of the out-group or keeps a social distance to the out-group. Moreover, the authors argue that a low-status group is threatened by the high-status group and has a greater need for positive affirmation than the high-status group. Tajfel (1974) argues that in order for an in-group to hate or dislike an out-group, the members of the in-group must feel that they belong to and identify with the in-group, which is clearly differentiated from the out-group. However, sometimes an individual wishes that her group would be more similar to another group, which might be the case when the other group is considered as a high-status group. This is a significant sign of that the group, which the individual belongs to, does not contribute positively to the external social identity. Further, the author argues that in-group and out-group attitudes are partly based on the ongoing process of self-definition.

### **3.6 Identity of 'the Other'**

Ashforth & Mael (1989) argue that in order to identify one self, one also needs to compare, categorize and identify *the Other* in the social environment. According to Brewer (1991) the personal identity contains the characteristics, which differentiate a person from *the Other*. Further, the author argues that the social identities include *the Other* and define *me* as a member of the social unit, where *"I becomes we"* (p.476). Watson (2009, p.446) argues that: *"identity work is about establishing both who one is and who one is not (in the eyes of oneself and others). This is connected, it can be argued, to a process of establishing to oneself and others that one is a good person – one of the goodies and not one of the baddies."*

### 3.7 Newcomers

According to Ashforth & Mael (1989) the organizational identification is of importance since that can have an impact on the individual satisfaction, the effectiveness and the process of forming different roles within the organization. For organizational newcomers, the organizational identification is of importance since newcomers often have uncertain feelings about their roles and status within the organization (Ibid.). The authors argue that newcomers need to learn different policies, logistics role expectations and behavioral norms within the organization, in order to understand the organization and act as expected. This is important in order to answer the previously mentioned identity questions “*Who am I, and how should I act?*” (Alvesson, 2009). According to Ashforth (1985) newcomers make sense of their workplace and create social roles within the workgroup through social interaction, observations and action. In a similar way Young & Lundberg (1996) describe that organizational socialization, such as adaptation, is important for newcomers in order to go from being an outsider to be an insider. Furthermore, the organizational socialization is seen as a process where newcomers learn different values, behaviors and knowledge in order to create an organizational role, understand what is expected of the newcomer and to be a part of the whole organization and their members. According to Young & Lundberg (Ibid.) newcomers within an organization sometimes experience conflicts since they on one hand have many questions about the organization and about their work and role. On the other hand, they try their best to perform well and find their role within the organization. This implies that the newcomers have a feeling of confusion, since they try to find a balance between not having too much questions and to do their job as good as possible (Ibid.).

### 3.8 Freelancing

According to Storey et.al (2005) employment practices and changes in the organizational structures within the media industry have lead to that employee must work as freelancers instead of having fulltime contracts. This implies that freelancing is a common phenomenon in the media industry. From a study about journalists who have gone from having fulltime contracts to freelancers made by Storey et.al (Ibid.), the authors argue that freelancing is a part of the social identity. Furthermore, Storey et.al (Ibid.) state in their study that freelancers identify themselves with being more flexible, having an ability to take own initiatives and are responsible for their own success or

failure. It is further important that the freelancers market themselves, create their own strategies for their work and establish a personal brand not only in order to survive the competition in the market, but also to survive as a journalist. Even if there are many positive factors of being a freelancer, the study also shows that there are some negative aspects about being a freelancer, which are of importance for the freelancers to be aware of. This could, according to Storey et.al (2005), be that the freelancers are responsible for that they always have work to do and also that they are entirely responsible for their income, which also implies their redundancy pay and other securities associated with fulltime contracts. The study made by Storey et. al. (Ibid.) revealed that being a freelancing journalist is a strong source of identity.

### **3.9 Psychological contracts and a New Career Environment**

Storey et.al. (2005) argue that within the media-sector there has been a significant shift from full-time, permanent, staff-work to freelance and contract work. According to Guest (1998) the “traditional” work guarantee, which concerns hard work in return for work safety, has therefore been less common. Sturges et. al (2005) argue that despite the new career environment, employees have a traditional view of what a psychological contract signifies. According to Rousseau (1989, p.123) a psychological contract is defined as: *“an individual’s beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between that focal person and another party. Key issues here include the belief that a promise has been made and a consideration offered in exchange for it, binding the parties to some set of reciprocal obligations.”* Sturges et. al. (2005) argue that the new career environment implies an increased responsibility for employees to manage their own careers. The authors argue that organizations, which want their employees to engage in career management, often signal those expectations in the recruitment process or in the beginning of the employment. Therefore, Sturges et. al. (Ibid.) argue that employees have to be proactive and view themselves as assets worth investing in, in order to create their own careers within an organization and to receive career help from the organization. Further, the employees have to engage in career management in order to create a strong work profile. The work profile is linked to what Alvesson (2009) refers to as work identity, which is a crucial part of the self-identity. Further, he argues that a professional working in KIF invest much of themselves in work. This implies that the career is of great importance for professionals, such as journalists. Sturges et. al. (2005) argue that informal career help from the organization, such as career advice and

getting to know influential people, is important for the employees in order to perform better and to commit more to the organization. Further, the authors argue that despite the new career environment employees still expect the employer to help them in managing their careers, and if the employer does not help them, it is a sign of the psychological contract being broken.

## 4. Empirical Material

*In this chapter the empirical material will be described. Initially, the case company SR will be shortly presented. Thereafter, the interviewees' sources of identity will be outlined as well as the sources of dis-identification with SR. Moreover, the journalists described their view of SR's employment policy which will be thoroughly explained. Finally, the organizational consequences of the work situation at SR will be revealed.*

### 4.1 The story of SR

Sveriges Radio AB (SR) is a public service organization which was founded in 1925. The company transmits 270 000 hours every year in 45 different channels with 400 programs. SR is a company with diversity and variation with more than four million listeners every day. SR has around 1670 full time employees, however employees with temporary contracts are not included in this number. SR consists of many different workgroups, such as program workers, technicians, musicians, administrators, team leaders and managers and SR continuously uses freelancers and employees with temporary contracts for special assignments. SR is financed by those Swedish citizens obliged to pay a TV-fee, an amount stipulated by the Swedish government. As a public service company, financed by Swedish citizens, SR plays an important part of Swedish democracy (Public Service Redovisning, 2010). Eight out of ten people in Sweden believe that the information and news broadcasted by SR is trustworthy (Ibid). (MedieAkademin Förtroendebarmetern, 2009 & 2010). The company is strongly decentralized, however the top management is responsible for the economically and efficiently assignments of the organization and also for ensuring that goals made by the Swedish parliamentary are achieved. SR has 25 local channels from south to north of Sweden. One of these channels is Sveriges Radio Malmö, which we in this thesis have chosen to focus on. SR in Malmö has more than 80 employees working with different assignments.

### 4.2 Sources of Identity

The journalists at SR openly described how they perceive their current work situation at SR and what they think about it. They described their experiences of the employment policy at SR and explained their opinions about it. Moreover, several sources of identity were implicitly and explicitly described in the interviews and will be further described. We will start with one of the most distinct sources of identification which refers to the

identity of being a journalist. Thereafter, it will be described how the journalists view SR as a source of identity. Since the journalists described significant group identities within SR, these will be explained and especially the group which is referred to as second rate team. See figure 1.

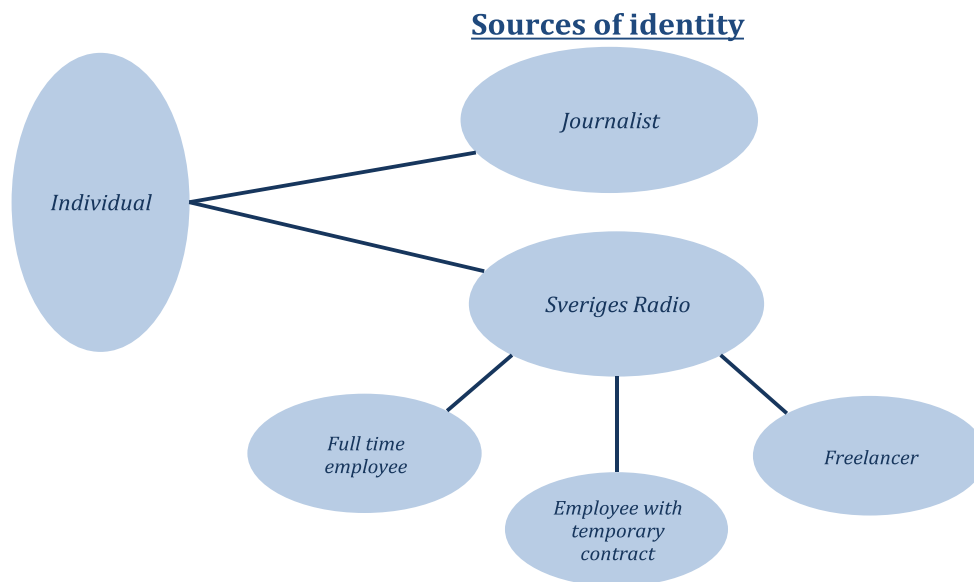


Figure 1: Sources of identities

#### 4.2.1 I am a Journalist

Every journalist explicitly expressed that they identify themselves as a journalist. They described journalists as professionals who are ambitious, perfectionists who always question everything. Moreover, the journalists proudly explained that they work for the listeners and that they do not feel loyal to the managers or the employer. They stressed the importance of performing well regardless of other circumstances such as the work conditions. One journalist described the journalistic work identity:

*“The professional identity is strongly connected to your particular workplace, at a specific time - and if I do not work for SR then I am not a journalist.” (Lisa)*

The journalists argued that being a journalist is strongly related to journalistic ethical values. They emphasized the importance of showing respect when performing journalistic work. The journalistic ethical values were described as the main reason for why the journalists want to work for SR. The journalists argued that it is an organization

well known for journalism in accordance with those values. Therefore, they argued that a successful journalist works for SR. The source of identity of being a journalist was therefore closely related to the organizational identity of SR and those identity sources were partly overlapping.

#### 4.2.2 Sources of identity within SR

SR was implicitly described as a distinct source of identification for the journalists. They were all proud to work for SR because of the reliable journalism strongly associated with the organization. The journalists argued that the journalism at SR means a high level of moral and respect and several of the journalists claimed that SR is by no means similar to the tabloids. The journalists said that they are glad to work at SR since they have a fantastic job and also clearly stated that they love SR. Another aspect of SR which the journalists were particularly proud of was the fact that they work with public service. This was described as extremely important and honorable to work with. One journalist said:

*"It is a great privilege to work in Public Service."* (Sophie)

Initially the journalists described the positive aspects of working at SR and the strong sense of *we* at SR. One of the journalists described that she had a feeling of a great employee community and argued that all employees are equally treated and there is an atmosphere which allows knowledge sharing and open discussions about new ideas and experiences with other at work. Another journalist described how she felt that the managers had trust in her. Furthermore, some of the journalists explained how they felt they had great opportunities to participate in different employee training courses. One interviewee said:

*"The feeling of always fighting to be better than the competitors, results in a strong sense of belonging. It is we against the world. It is just us".* (Julia)

Despite the positive aspects of SR, initially raised by the journalists, another picture of the work situation at SR was revealed during the interviews. The journalists expressed a fragmented view of the identification with SR. The first sign of this picture was a description of two separate groups within SR, described by the journalists.



#### 4.2.2.1 Group Identity within SR

Even though everyone viewed themselves as journalists they also described themselves depending on which employment contract they were on. They referred to themselves as an employee with a temporary contract, a freelancer or an employee with a full contract. A significant difference between being an employee with a temporary contract or a freelancer and being an employee with a full contract was described. Some of the journalists referred to these groups as first class team and second rate team, where temporary employees and freelancers form the latter. Additionally, one of the journalists with a temporary employment contract mentioned that she views herself as a member of the second rate team. However, many journalists described that instead of having temporary contracts they would rather have full contracts. They argued this would give them the safety of being able to plan their life for a longer term. At the same time it would give them more freedom, because they would at least have the power to decide when they want to quit their job and do something else. They wanted to belong to the first class team in order to take part of those advantages, however they emphasized the difficulties of washing off their temporary employee label. One temporary employee said:

*“I think you have to consider yourself as an employee with a full contract instead of constantly thinking of yourself as an outsider.”* (Cathrine)

The difference between the groups was further emphasized when the journalists described *the other* group of journalists with a different employment contract than their own. The older employees with a full contract, who belong to the first class team and have been in SR for a long time were described, by temporary employees, as a bit lazy, relaxed and awaiting their retirement. Furthermore, journalists from both groups, argued that employees with temporary contracts work hard, are flexible and more dedicated to their work. One of the journalists with a temporary contract said:

*“It is irritating to see those dinosaurs who do not perform anything, and who are not on the same level as I am, or do not work in the same speed as I do, and to see that they do not develop and do not want to participate any courses.”* (Christine)

One of the journalists with a full employment contract acknowledged this stereotype by talking about a fear of stagnating and ending up in a corner at SR because of lack of work tasks. She had seen this happen with other employees and thought it would be sad to end a career like that.

#### **4.2.2.2 Second rate team**

The journalists with temporary employment contracts described a pressure, which concerned expectations that they should be high performing. These journalists often argued that they put the highest expectations on themselves. They also mentioned that there is a constant individual willingness to perform excellent which leads to a high competition within the organization. Temporary employees were said to always want to be the best journalist because of expectations that hard work may lead to a full contract. Two journalists described:

*“Yes it is high competition, I think many of us work more than they need since all of us wants to be the best performer.”* (Ing-Marie)

*“You work so hard since you want to show that you are the one who deserves the job.”* (Jennie)

However, this constant pressure of always performing excellent was described as stressful and it required a lot of energy. Another result of this pressure was mentioned by the journalists when they described that there is a fear of being inconvenient. They were afraid of questioning or criticizing anything at SR since they were afraid of having to leave the organization. One journalist described that a possible solution to this problem is to act as a full time employee instead of being the silent person who is afraid of having opinions. Many journalists mentioned that their work situation has led to a constant feeling of always having the job in mind, a constant feeling of never being able to relax or plan for other activities outside work. The journalists also described that they often have a feeling of tiredness and a loss of strength and energy as a result of this. In an attempt to be the best journalist who will get the chance to stay, the journalists mentioned that they always have to think about what they can do to perform and deliver results. Moreover, it was described that they always have to be available for work and never say no to a temporary position. If they would say no, there might be a risk that someone else gets the job and the person that said no will never get a new chance.

Another journalist described that the pressure of always being high performing and never being able to say no to job, also led to frustration, a high level of stress and eventually to a burnout. According to the journalist, the solution was to say no to job since the situation affected the journalist's health. The journalist described:

*"Saying no to job was a survival strategy for me, which also gave me happiness in life back."* (Caroline)

The journalists raised additionally aspects of the work situation at SR, which concerned the lack of belongingness and identification with the organization. One journalist, with a temporary contract, described that she sometimes felt excluded from participating in various employee training courses and that a feeling of exclusion from the rest of the workforce often appeared. The journalist further described that when other employees talk about the organizational future, a sad feeling appears since the interviewee does not know if she is a part of the future at SR. Moreover, the journalist said that this situation is not only difficult for the employees with temporary contracts, but also for the full time employees. They spend much time and energy to get to know and coach these persons but after a few months or one year, they disappear and new persons arrive to the organization. Therefore, the journalist argued that it is both frustrating and demanding for all parts within SR. Another journalist described that she has a feeling of being a guest at SR, since she knows that the contract is temporary. A further consequence of the work situation is that many journalists felt that they are not involved in their workplace. The journalist described:

*"I believe that everyone would feel more involved if you knew that you could work here for a long time."* (Cathrine)

The employees do not feel involved in their workplace since they lack knowledge if they are allowed to stay or not. Therefore there is an insecurity concerning whether they belong to SR or not, which in turn negatively affects their strong identification with SR. The situation does not only affect the temporary employees, but also those with full contracts, since the situation depends on the employment policy, which they also disagree with. Therefore, the employment policy leads to that the identification with SR is less distinct for both groups within SR.

### 4.3 The sources of Dis-Identification with SR

Further into the interviews, when talking about the work situation in regard to the high employee turnover and how that affects the journalists, strong sources of dis-identification were revealed. This dis-identification concerns SR's employment policy, which the journalists strongly disaffiliate with. Initially, we will describe the journalists' feelings concerning the employment policy and thereafter how that leads to dis-identification with SR.

#### 4.3.1 The employment policy

The journalists described a strong feeling of insecurity at SR. They mentioned that there are many factors determining whether one will stay or not, but they do not understand those. Most of the journalists argued that what determines whether a person's contract is extended or not, depends on timing and luck, which one cannot affect. Most of the journalists we talked to had had several temporary employment contracts, which had been continuously extended. They described a frustration of not being able to affect whether the contract would be extended or not and this constantly worried them. However, they said that one has to perform excellent to have a chance to stay. One journalist said:

*"It is hard to understand that no matter what I do, they will not let me stay. I refuse to understand this, and my approach is to do my work as good as possible in order for them to have no reason to sack me."* (Ing-Marie)

The journalists also described that if a manager likes a person and really wants that person to stay within SR, it may be possible even if it is against the rules. One of the journalists described this situation as:

*"It is a game that no one sees. If you are lucky, the manager likes you and she will let you stay."* (Sophie)

However, the journalists argued that an effect of this *game* was that instead of feeling happy when their contract was extended they were feeling ashamed to be prioritized while their friends were not asked to stay. One journalist also said:

*"If you are on a temporary contract you often become friends with other people having temporary contracts and when they extend your contract, but not your friend's, it feels like you have to defend yourself in front of your friends. It is a tough feeling."* (Lisa)

An additionally aspect of *the game* of SR's employment policy, which the journalists described, concerned different kinds of dubious employment contracts. Several journalists expressed that they have been offered dubious employment contracts which they felt pressure to sign in order to have a chance to stay within the company. The journalists explained that signing the contracts was their only opportunity not to be redundant, even though the contracts were uncertain and contained special conditions such as rejecting your legal employment rights. One of the journalists explained that because of private circumstances she could not risk being unemployed and therefore thought of this as her only chance to stay at SR. She felt a pressure from SR that this was the only solution, since they did not want to give her a full contract. The journalist said:

*"Afterwards one can imagine that it was a stupid deal, but it helped me in that situation."*  
(Julia)

Another form of dubious employment contracts described by the journalists, concern the freelancers who work for SR. Journalists who have been working as temporary employees at SR for a while, are according to Swedish employment laws impossible for SR to keep without giving them a full contract. Some journalists talked about the magical boarder as the time were employees according to law have to get a full contract if they continue working at SR. When employees reach this, they are taken aside by their manager who tells them they really like them and that they have performed well, but unfortunately they have to leave SR. However, according to the journalists, the managers tell them that there is a solution. If the employee starts an own company, SR can buy services from that company. Some of the journalists described that SR moves their employer responsibilities and passes it on to the employee. The problem is that many managers do not have the right knowledge within the field of employer responsibilities. The managers, and sometimes also the employees, are not fully aware of all economic responsibilities such as health insurances, parental leave insurances and paid vacations, which are passed on to the employee. Further the journalists described that when employees are asked to become freelancers, they are told to find other employers in addition to SR, otherwise the Swedish Tax Government is likely to claim that the freelancer have a full contract with SR. However, according to the journalists, many of the freelancers work for SR only, which would be considered illegal. One journalist described:

*"...at SR freelancers work as if they had full contracts. If they only dared to push the button and conduct a legal dispute, then SR would risk having many people with full contracts."*  
(Jennie)

Some of the journalists said that the managers are feeling ashamed when they have to ask the employee to become a freelancer. One journalist said:

*"All managers have started out working on temporary contracts or as freelancer and therefore they feel ashamed, because they treat other people in the same way as they were treated themselves."* (Caroline)

Despite the dubious contracts for the freelancers, being a freelancer has resulted in a strong identification with being a freelancer and they described themselves as independent and creative.

Because of the uncertainty within SR, which the game of the employment policy causes, the journalists' expressed a strong need for confirmation. The journalists described that an extended contract is a strong confirmation for them which implies that they have performed well. They described the confirmation as important in order to get enough energy to keep performing well at SR. Therefore, they are often encouraged by their managers who confirm that they will probably get an extended contract soon, even though they might not. They do so in order for the temporary employees to continue to be high performing. One journalist, who has a managerial position with a full employment contract, said:

*"You try to encourage the employees with temporary contracts and tell them that if they perform well enough all will work out sooner or later."* (Christine)

Despite the fact that the journalists described the employment policy at SR as a game which contains dubious contracts and a high level of insecurity, they accepted the game in order to be able to work at SR. Two journalists described why they chose to accept the dubious employment contracts:

*"This work can be described as a honey trap, the job is so incredibly fun, it is a poison."*  
(Lisa)

*"If you did not find the job so interesting, you would probably have protested more, or refused to join this high employment turnover. But I guess, since you find the job so interesting you just accept it."* (Ing-Marie)

However, accepting the contracts was also dependent on a fright of taking an individual stand against SR and the employment policy. The journalists described that they felt a fright of being put on a black list if they would raise their voices. One journalist said:

*"You do not want to burn your bridges as you have put all your efforts in becoming a journalist."* (Sophie)

Another journalist said:

*"I know examples of managers saying that this person should never be hired again, even if that person is the best one suited for the job."* (Cathrine)

The described game with a high level of uncertainty and dubious work contracts, results in an even more ambiguous identification with SR. The journalists are not treated with respect and therefore they do not identify themselves with the employment policy at SR.

#### **4.3.2 Disidentification**

During the interviews the journalists described a strong identification with their work identity and also with parts of SR. They also revealed a significant dis-identification (see figure 2, p.30) with SR's employment policy. However, the journalists argued that they always prioritized performing their work well regardless of their opinions about the employment policy. One journalist said:

*"I have to focus on doing my job as good as possible and I have to ignore all sources of irritation concerning recruitment and employment policy."* (Julia)

Another journalist dis-identified with the employment policy by clearly stating that she did not understand the reasoning behind why the managers act in a way that encourages the high employee turnover. However, she believed the situation occurs because the managers are still waiting for the top journalist and therefore want to keep the doors open until a star journalist shows up. The journalist further expressed that acting like that disparages all the employees with temporary contracts. She said that it signals that it is acceptable to let them work at SR on temporary contracts and when the temporary

contracts are ending they are not allowed to continue since the managers are holding the door open for a star journalist. Another journalist also described the situation in a similar way and said:

*"We often joke about that the employers have a Hemingway syndrome, they must keep the doors open for Ernest Hemingway, since they really want to hire the star, the true journalist talent."* (Jennie)

Many journalists said that they do not know who is responsible for deciding who will stay within SR. They believed that most decisions concerning high employee turnover were made in Stockholm and therefore they said that Stockholm is an invisible threat. Moreover they believed that the local managers cannot make decisions since some persons in Stockholm have the final word. The journalists described Stockholm as a large diffuse enemy. One respondent stated a clear dis-identification with the employment policy at SR by saying:

*"It is easy to feel contempt for the organization, however it is usually targeted towards Stockholm and the persons who make all the decisions. But you do not know who those persons are, you do not know who to be angry with."* (Christine)

Moreover, one journalist had difficulties in trusting the managers at SR because of her fear of being deceived by them. She said:

*"The managers wait until the last week or second last week before they give you a new contract and therefore they can deceive you if they want to. (...) It is a feeling I have, that it could be like this, and one have to constantly rely on that they will not deceive you."* (Lisa)

One of the journalists described that she did not find the employment policy at SR as logical. She described how she sometimes was informed by the manager concerning who will stay before the persons leaving were informed. However, the journalist thought the manager did so, in order to encourage her not to apply for other jobs. She said:

*"Managers can tell you that there are more people here than just you, but now it is you and one more who will get extended contracts and therefore you can figure out who has to leave before that person knows about it. This has happened to me many times and it feels illogical."* (Ing-Marie)

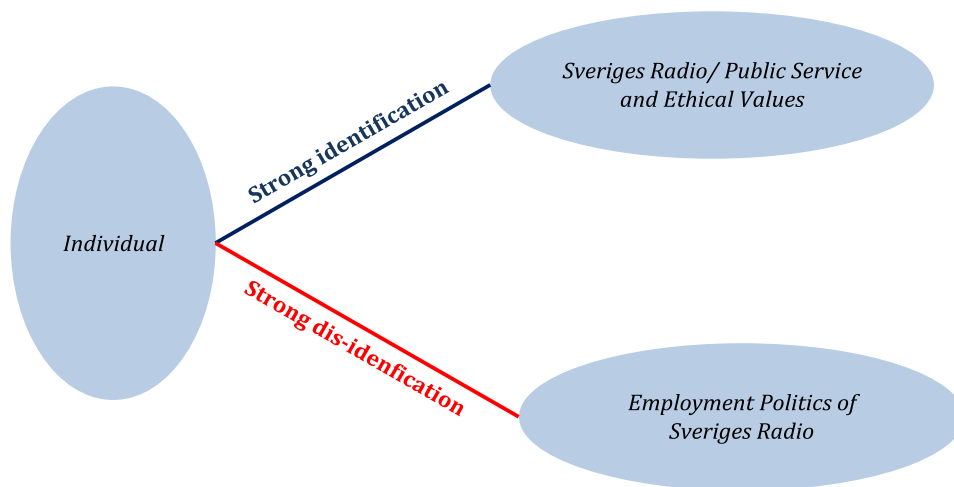


Another journalist also clearly dis-identified herself with SR's employment policy when she said:

*"Somewhere on this road my feelings for SR have become a bit damaged."* (Julia)

One of the journalists described how she had been deceived by SR which resulted in a clear dis-identification with SR. This journalist said:

*"I am mentally set to never trust SR again. I do not trust anyone within that company. It is not an emotionally conditioned reflex, it is just something I have learned."* (Caroline)



*Figure 2: Dis-identification*

As a consequence of this the journalists described some advices concerning SR, which they would give to newly educated journalists. Those advices would be to be prepared for a tough time which eventually will end in a freelance situation and also that they should never believe they will be able to stay within SR.

Further, the journalists described how the work situation and the employment policy lead to organizational consequences.

#### **4.4 Organizational consequences**

SR's employment policy is the source for the journalists' dis-identification with the organization. The journalists described that the dis-identification does not only affect the individuals, it has also organizational consequences.

#### 4.4.1 Loss of knowledge and competence

The journalists described that the employment policy within SR results in a constant loss of knowledge. They argued that SR educates every new employee since their work assignments require this. Many journalists described that SR lacks long-term plans for many employees, especially those with temporary contracts and that SR is seen as educating people with temporary contracts, but not for a long-term reason. One journalist said that while the expenses for employees are quite constant, the actual problem for SR is that they let these educated and experienced employees leave the organization instead of giving some of them full contracts. The journalists described the phenomenon by saying that you get your education and work experience within SR. However, when you reach the two years magical border you get less attractive since SR cannot offer you an extension of your contract. Some journalists said that a positive aspect is that they get work experience and education, which makes them more attractive for other employers. One of the journalists said:

*"We educate young people, but we do not always reap the fruits of this our self and it feels like a waste of competence for SR. It feels illogical, because SR would not need to have a high employee turnover if they had hired more employees on full contracts." (Jennie)*

As a result, all journalists were arguing that this lead to an enormous waste of competence for SR.

#### 4.4.2 Energy Loss

The journalists also argued that another consequence of SR's employment policy is the employees' energy loss. Some of the journalists described the high employee turnover to be tiresome in two ways. Firstly, it is tiresome to always find and recruit new employees willing to work on a temporary contract. Secondly, it results in an atmosphere where the employees with full contracts do not bother to get to know new colleagues on temporary contract because they know that they will only stay for a short period of time. Most of the journalists said that it is quite depressing not knowing whether someone can stay or not and there is a lack of safety among everybody working at SR. One journalist said:

*"It is very sad, but it feels like you do not have the energy to get to know all these new people. It is sad for them, but it is also sad for the work atmosphere. I think that you have*

*this feeling because you are quite exhausted and when you know that someone has to leave that makes you feel very empty and bitter.” (Sophie)*

Furthermore, another journalist said:

*”It is like some of my colleagues told me. There is no point of getting to know someone, because they will soon leave anyway. Everybody knows that it is like this, but nobody can change this.” (Cathrine)*

The employment policy within SR results in a high employee turnover which requires a lot of energy from everyone who works at SR. This results in tired employees and a work atmosphere which does not gain the work performance. One journalist argued that:

*”The struggle of not knowing if you will be able to stay or not, it takes a lot of your energy and it restrains your creativity” (Caroline)*

The worsened work atmosphere was therefore described to affect the quality of the journalistic work.

#### **4.4.3 Work quality**

The journalists argued that the high employee turnover results in a negative work atmosphere which in turn affects the work at SR by lowering the quality of what is produced. The production takes longer time as a new employee always has to start over from scratch. One journalist said:

*”Having a temporary contract makes it harder to dig deeper into a subject as you do not have a long-term prospect and it feels like it is not worth to read all these books just to gain deeper knowledge or to establish new contacts with people within my subjects.” (Christine)*

Some journalists mentioned that since they do not know whether they can stay or not, they save some of their best creative ideas for future projects. One of the journalists with a full contract said:

*”I can understand why temporary employees save their best ideas as they do not know if they will be able to stay. That is just rational thinking.” (Lisa)*

The journalists argued that by saving ideas, SR misses important opportunities, which may imply a lowered work quality.

To summarize: The journalists started by describing their strong identification to their profession and to SR. However, further into the interviews the journalists expressed their thoughts concerning SR's employment policy, which proved to be a strong source of dis-identification to the organization. The employees with temporary contract described how the organization is divided in a first class team and a second rate team and how that leads to uncertainty and a feeling of alienation. The journalists further described how the poor employment leads to negative organizational consequences, such as loss of knowledge and competence, energy loss and work quality. In next chapter we will discuss our main findings from a more theoretical perspective.

## 5. Analysis of Data

*This chapter is a combination of analysis and discussion. Firstly, we discuss the sources of Identification in-depth, in particularly the sources of Identity within SR. These concern the Group Identification within the organization as well as the considered status of those. Moreover, the sources of Dis-Identification with SR will be thoroughly discussed. Finally, the organizational consequences will be further outlined and discussed.*

The empirical material has revealed a different picture of SR and SR's employment policy, than what is communicated by SR. The journalists have given us a deep insight into what it means to be a journalist within SR. SR may have developed a desirable vision concerning how their employees should be treated, however the empirical material reveals a darker side of SR's employment policy. Moreover, our study indicates a complex picture of journalists' identity work. We have found that the journalists' have many sources of identities, rather than having one stable and secure identity (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). In line with Alvesson (2009), we argue that journalists' work identity constitutes a main part of their self-identity, which implies that they invest much of themselves in their work. Furthermore, they identify themselves only with some aspects of the organizational identity of SR, which results in difficulties in answering the questions of "who am I and what do I stand for?" (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). This implies that they have an ongoing struggle around creating a sense of self. Further, we have identified different degrees of identity struggles, which we refer to as soft and hard. We argue that these identity struggles contain a high level of complexity, which we aim to further clarify in the analysis. Finally, we will shift from an individual focus to an organizational focus and discuss how the employment policy affects the organization.

### 5.1 Sources of Identity

#### 5.1.1 Professional identity – I am a journalist

During the empirical research we found that the journalists described their work identity of being a journalist as a strong source of identity. They had a clear view of what it means to be a journalist and they were proud of calling themselves journalists. We argue that being a journalist is a formal-role social identity (Watson, 2008). Moreover the journalists described themselves as professionals with personal characteristics such as having high moral, being ambitious and perfectionists. In line with Alvesson (2009),

we argue that journalists' work identity is a crucial part of the self-identity and that they invest much of themselves into their work at SR. We also found that the journalists strongly identify themselves with the journalistic ethical values and reliable journalism, which they argued that SR stands for. Because of this, the journalists' professional work identity was strongly connected to their workplace. Some of the journalists even argued that if they were not working for SR they would not be real journalists.

### **5.1.2 Identification with SR**

We argue that the journalistic work identity is a crucial part of a journalist's internal aspects of identity (Alvesson, 2009). This overlaps with their external aspects of identity because of what SR stands for regarding journalism (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Watson, 2008). We found that the journalists thought of SR as an organization which stands for journalistic ethical values and a high level of moral and respect in the journalistic work. The journalists expressed that these aspects were important in order to identify themselves with SR, which we believe is a way of feeling committed to SR. Another important part of SR, which we found that the journalists identified themselves with, was public service. They said that it is a privilege to work in a public service company. We argue that working with public service indicates that the journalists are an important part of the democratic society. Therefore, being a journalist at SR implies being a contributor to the democratic society which we argue is a strong source of the journalists' social identity as they are feeling proud. This contributes positively to their self-identity. We believe this further emphasizes the importance of the journalists' work identity as an identity source, and the journalists were therefore proud of working at SR and thought they had a fantastic job. According to Alvesson (2009) a personal identity includes a person's feeling, values and thoughts. With this in mind, we argue that the journalistic values are a main part of the personal identity since the journalistic values and thoughts are linked to the work identity, which in the case of journalists is a main part of their personal identity. Those values clearly overlap with the identification with SR, which results in that SR is a strong source of identification. The identification with SR therefore helps the journalists to answer the identity questions "*Who am I, and how should I act*" (Ibid. p.189). The identification with SR further clarifies to the journalists that they stand for the journalism SR stands for, and they act as reliable journalists which working at SR implies. The strong identification with SR was further emphasized by the journalists when several of them stated that they love SR.

Even though the journalists identify themselves strongly with SR, we have during the empirical research identified other sources of identity within the organization which we argue affect the journalists' identification with SR. Those additionally identity sources within SR concerns the first class and second rate team, freelancers and newcomers. We argue that the identity sources imply that the identification with SR is more ambiguous. This also leads to that the journalists' internal and external identity work becomes more ambiguous (Watson, 2008).

### **5.1.3 Group Identity within SR**

During the empirical research we identified that the different employment contracts, temporary, full or freelance contracts, were a source of identification for the journalists within SR. We argue that being a journalist at SR together with the different employment contracts, are a form of local-organizational social identity (Watson, 2008). The journalists described how an employee with a temporary contract or a freelancer were seen as belonging to the second rate team, while an employee with a full contract was considered to be a member of the first class team. The journalists described great differences between the two groups. Members of the second rate team described the older employees' with full contracts as being a bit lazy, relaxed and awaiting their retirement. We argue that this is in line with Ashforth & Mael (1989) who describes that if two groups within an organization are considered to be low- or high status, in this case the second rate and first class team, intergroup conflicts may occur. Further, they mean that the intergroup conflicts may result in that the in-group creates negative stereotypes (i.e. lazy, relaxed, awaiting their retirement) of the out-group or keeping a social distance to the out-group. In addition, we argue that some journalists clearly described the negative stereotype by using the word dinosaur for members of the first class team, which we argue is a cultural-stereotype social identity (Watson, 2008). The journalists with temporary contracts described how irritating it is to see the dinosaurs who do not perform anything, do not work in the same speed, do not develop themselves and are not seen as being on the same level as them. This is in accordance with Tajfel (1974) who argued that in order for an in-group to hate or dislike an out-group, the members of the in-group must feel that they belong to and identify with the in-group. We argue that the journalists with temporary contracts and the freelancing journalists clearly felt belongingness to the second rate team and disliked the out-group, which from their

perspective is the first class team. Moreover, some journalists who belonged to the second rate group described themselves as being hard workers, more flexible and more dedicated to their work. We argue that these positive attributes are in line with Ashforth & Mael (1989) who described that if a low-status group is threatened by a high-status group, they have a greater need for positive affirmation, which they achieved by viewing themselves like this. However, one journalist with a temporary contract said that you have to consider yourself as an employee with a full contract instead of constantly thinking of yourself as an outsider. We argue that this is in line with Tajfel (1974) who describes that sometimes an individual wishes that her group, in this case study the second rate team, would be more similar to another group, the first class team. Additionally, some journalists described that it is hard to wash off the temporary employee label. We argue that this is a sign of saying that it is hard to be seen as a first class member, once you have been identified as a second rate member. We argue in accordance with Watson (2009) that identity work is connected to the process of establishing the self and *the Other*. This process were revealed in the two groups, which were distinctively defined by the journalists and through the social categorization and the identification of *the Other* group within SR, the journalists were able to categorize and identify themselves as well, in the social environment at SR. We argue that the two distinctive high- and low-status groups within SR is a result of SR's employment policy, due to the differences in their employment contracts. Moreover, we argue that the identification with one of the groups makes the identification with SR more ambiguous. The journalists who identify themselves with the low-status group experience a lot of negative consequences linked to their group identification. They described a pressure on how to behave, a high level of insecurity and a lack of confirmation that they are well performing journalists who belong to SR.

#### **5.1.4 Second rate team**

Several journalists described that the high employee turnover has led to a high competition between the employees with temporary contracts. This has created a pressure and expectations of always being flexible, saying yes to work and to be high performing. However, they are also expected to be silent and not to question or criticize anything. According to Young & Lundberg (1996) newcomers within an organization want to find a balance between not having too much questions and to perform their job as good as possible. Therefore we argue that the pressure might be even higher for the



newcomers within this organization who constitute a part of the second rate team, since they already have a strong struggle with defining themselves. We argue that the balance is even harder to find in SR since people with temporary contracts want to perform as well as they can, but at the same time they are afraid of asking questions and being perceived as inconvenient. As organizational identification is of importance for newcomers, this process can be seen as a part where newcomers try to understand the organization and act as expected (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Another aspect of why the identification with the second rate team leads to a more ambiguous identification with SR, is the lack of belongingness to SR. The journalists with temporary contracts described that they sometimes feel excluded from SR which we argue results in an ambiguous identification with SR, because the journalists who belong to the second rate team do not always feel as if they were a part of SR. We argue in accordance with Sveningsson & Alvesson (2003) that identity is a central issue of meaning and motivation, commitment and loyalty, because if the journalists do not feel as if they belong to SR then the loyalty towards SR is limited. Moreover, the motivation of the temporary employees is negatively affected because of the difficulties in identifying with SR. The journalists described that they do not feel involved in the organization since they do not sense a future in SR, which also affects the sense of meaning. We argue that the result of the ambiguous identification with SR is that the journalists with temporary contracts do not see a meaning in performing well since they will not be allowed to stay. Further, we believe this ambiguity is a part of the journalists' conscious identity struggle (Ibid.). In line with Watson (2008) this proves that journalists' identity work is an ongoing cycle.

## **5.2 The Sources of Dis-identification with SR**

### **5.2.1 The Employment Policy**

The poor employment policy at SR results in an insecurity within the whole organization, which leads to an ambiguous identification with SR. The identification with SR is ambiguous because the employees do not stand for the employment policy. The insecurity is based on several factors, however the main aspect concerns the confusion regarding what really determines whether a journalist will get an extended contract or not. The journalists argued that they have to perform excellent in order to get their

contracts extended, however they also argued that it all depends on timing and luck. We argue that the *luck*, which many of the journalists referred to, symbolizes the journalists' frustration. The frustration emerges because the journalists want to believe that it is possible to affect their working situation by working hard and performing excellence, however they realize that their performance does not matter, in terms of an extended contract. They also argued that you can get an extended contract if the manager likes you, however the journalists will then feel ashamed of being allowed to stay when their friends have to leave. Therefore, we argue that the only source of confirmation for the journalists, which is an extended contract, is also linked to negative feelings. Another aspect of the employment policy which results in insecurity and ambiguity is the freelancing contracts. The freelancers are often treated as if they were employees at SR, which makes it difficult for the freelancers to define themselves in the social environment at SR. The difficulties of defining themselves in the social environment, results in an identity struggle since they do not know whether they belong to SR or not. The freelancers sometimes felt like they belong to the low-status group within SR, or sometimes not even this group because they do not even have the same legal rights as the temporary employees within SR. Therefore it is problematic for the freelancers to answer who they are, are they journalists at SR or just freelancing journalists? The freelancers have to invest much of themselves in their work which makes it difficult for them to separate their self-identity from their work-identity. This contributes to the ambiguous identification with SR. Finally, all sources of insecurity are based on the employment policy at SR, which results in a significant identity struggle with SR.

Since there is a high level of insecurity concerning the employment policy, we believe the need for confirmation is of importance. We argue that the main source of confirmation for the employees, especially for the temporary employees, is to get an extended employment contract at SR. This is a confirmation that one is a high performing journalist. We also believe, in accordance with Ashforth & Mael (1989) that the low-status group, in this case called the second rate team, has a greater need for positive affirmation than the high-status group. Therefore the journalists with temporary employment contracts have a need of positive affirmation, which they get if their contracts are extended. Once again, as Alvesson (2009) argues, since the journalists invest much of themselves in their work, they are therefore vulnerable to a

lowered status, which leaving SR would imply. We also argue that the high level of uncertainty concerning an extended contract at SR, results in a greater need for a psychological contract. The journalists with temporary contracts often believed that if they work hard they may have a chance to get an extended contract. We argue that this is in accordance with Sturges et.al. (2005) who describe that the employees expect the employer to help them managing their careers if they view their work profile as an asset worth investing in. The journalists described how managers tried to infuse hope to the employees with temporary contracts to keep on fighting, even if they knew that their contracts soon would end. One journalist described how some people in this way had felt that they had received a promise from their manager to stay, but still they had to leave SR. In accordance with Rousseau (1989), we argue that this promise can be seen as a psychological contract where the employees believe in some set of reciprocal obligations of being given an extended contract. However, in this case the managers cannot give the employees extended contracts and therefore it results in a broken psychological contract. To summarize, we argue that a higher level of insecurity, caused by the employment policy, results in a greater need for a psychological contract in order for the journalists to get some form of confirmation. Therefore, this leads to that they are severely affected when the psychological contract is broken, which results in disappointment and dis-identification with SR. Moreover, we argue that the employment policy at SR creates an identity struggle and an ambiguous identification with SR.

### **5.2.2 Disidentification**

Even though the journalists strongly identify themselves with public service and the journalistic ethical values of SR, we have found that the journalists dis-identify themselves with some parts of SR. As previously mentioned, all journalists described many positive aspects with SR and they really wanted to be a part of the organization. We argued that the journalistic profession and working at SR are two strong sources of identity. Despite this, we found it obvious that the journalists have ambiguous thoughts and feelings about SR and that the journalists have constant ongoing struggles which we in this study have identified is due to that they on one hand are proud of their work and want to belong to SR and on the other hand, they strongly dislike the employment policy within SR. The reason for this argument is that we found that all journalists went from arguing for all positive aspects of SR, to a more dejected and upset feeling about SR due to their employment policy further into the interviews. We argue that this poor

employment policy, described by all journalists is the reason why the journalists experience separate groups within SR.

We further argued that the poor employment policy is the reason why the journalists who belong to the second rate team, constant have a feeling of pressure and why there always is a strong need for affirmation. We believe that the affirmation which the journalists describe they are in need of may be of importance at SR, since the affirmation is important for the feeling of belongingness. A stronger belongingness to SR may reduce the journalists' dis-identification with SR. The uncertainty and the feelings concerning SR's employment policy becomes a gap in their strong identification with SR which strengthens the journalists' ambiguous feelings for SR. The journalists described how they must ignore their feelings concerning how they are treated in order to not be irritated which would affect their work performance negatively. This also shows a strong dis-identification for the employment policy. Furthermore, we have found that since the journalists do not understand the reasoning why the employees encourage the high employee turnover, the journalists have a feeling of contempt against SR, which is a source of the dis-identification with SR. The journalists described that they have a feeling that the reason for the high employee turnover might depend on the constant waiting for the star journalist, which implies that the employees with temporary contracts are feeling disrespected. We argue that having a feeling of being disrespected for something that one is proud of and strongly identify oneself with, may be a strong source of the contempt that the journalists described. We believe that the uncertainty of not knowing who to be angry with, further contributes to a frustration which also makes the dis-identification to SR even stronger.

The journalists described Stockholm as a diffuse enemy, something or someone they did not know anything about, which implies that Stockholm is something the journalists want to distance themselves from. They only know that the decisions concerning employee contracts are made in Stockholm which is a further dis-identification from the employment policy. There are many reasons for us to argue that the journalists constantly have an ongoing struggle concerning their identification with SR. Their positive feelings about SR are colliding with their negative thoughts which imply that the journalists are only able to identify themselves with some parts of SR. We argue that this is in line with Humphreys & Brown (2002) as the journalists' identify themselves with

certain aspects of an organizational identity, but at the same time they dis-identify with other aspects of the organizational identity. Hence, this struggle is a form of Schizo-identification (Humphrey & Brown, 2002). A Schizo-identification, in which the journalists described that their feelings for SR have, due to the bad employment policy, become damaged and that they do not trust anyone within the company. A strong dis-identification with the employment policy was proven when the journalists described how colleagues and friends have had feelings for trust and promises from the managers, however the persons later had to leave SR. The journalists also described how much they love SR and that they hope that their hard work will result in a full time contract in the future. We argue that the strong dis-identification leads to an ambiguous picture of SR. This is in line with what Ashforth & Mael (1989) describe, that even though an individual identify herself with an organization, the person may not agree with everything that the organization stands for. Further Sveningsson & Alvesson (2003) argue, that individuals sometimes develop an anti-identity, a negative identity, which is developed by individuals in order to distance oneself from different parts which the individual do not want to identify with, which the authors describe contain "*not-me qualities*". We argue that this ambiguous view of SR affects the work identity, which is a crucial part of the journalists' self-identity.

We further argue that the strong sense of dis-identification with the employee policy might be a reason for the poor result in the yearly employee survey where only 37 % of the employees would recommend SR as employer and only 34 % of the employees answered that SR is an attractive employer for talents within media and culture. There are strong reasons to believe that the poor survey result depends on that the journalists dis-identify themselves with the employment policy, since many of the journalists during the interviews described how their advices to new journalists at SR would be. They described how they on one hand would recommend SR for new journalists, however they would also give the advice that there are no reason for the new journalists to believe they can stay within the company, since that will not happen. This argument gives us another reason to argue for dis-identification with the employee policy, which also give the journalists an ambiguity view of SR. We thus believe that this view contributes to a constant ongoing identity struggle for the journalists.

### 5.2.3 Hard and soft struggles

We have defined different kinds of identity struggles. These are identified as hard and soft, which will be described below. We have proven in accordance to Sveningsson & Alvesson (2003) that the individuals within SR have different sources of identities, rather than one stable and secure identity. Due to the poor employment policy at SR, we have identified different soft struggles, which are different depending on what the journalists identify themselves with, such as freelancer, temporary contractors or full-contractor. These sources of identities are affected by the employment policy in different ways, however the common denominator is that the journalists cannot completely identify themselves with SR due to the employment policy. We have previously mentioned that the journalists strongly identify themselves with their profession and with parts of SR, however when they cannot identify themselves completely to the company, it affects their self-identity, which implies difficulties in answering the questions *“who am I and what do I stand for?”* We argue that the difficulties for the completely identification to SR leads to a hard identity struggle around creating a self-identity for the journalists (Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003). Firstly we will describe the soft struggles, which eventually lead to the hard struggle. One of the soft struggles we have identified is how the freelancers find it difficult to know if they are a journalist at SR or an external freelancer, since they on one hand work at SR as if they have full contracts, however on the other hand they are independent freelancers with their own economic responsibilities. Furthermore, we have identified another soft struggle, which the employees with temporary contracts experience. Even though they work at SR and identify themselves with the company, they have a feeling of being outsiders. They described how they experience uncertainty whether they will stay or not and also a lack of affirmation, which leads to a feeling of contempt towards SR. This results in that employees with temporary contracts also have difficulties in identifying themselves completely with SR, whether they belong to the company or not. The last soft struggle we have found concerns the full time employees. They strongly identify themselves with SR and public service and they have already been confirmed that they are well performing journalists. However, their soft struggle emerges due to their dis-identification with the poor employment policy, which leads to an ambiguous identification of SR. They cannot stand for how SR treats new journalists, since they have been treated in the same way and they therefore feel ashamed. The journalists

experience individual soft struggles, which make it impossible to completely identify themselves with SR. This in turn leads to a hard struggle, which implies that the individuals have difficulties with defining their self-identity as a whole, since their profession is a crucial part of their self-identity. See figure 3 p.44.

### Sources of identity

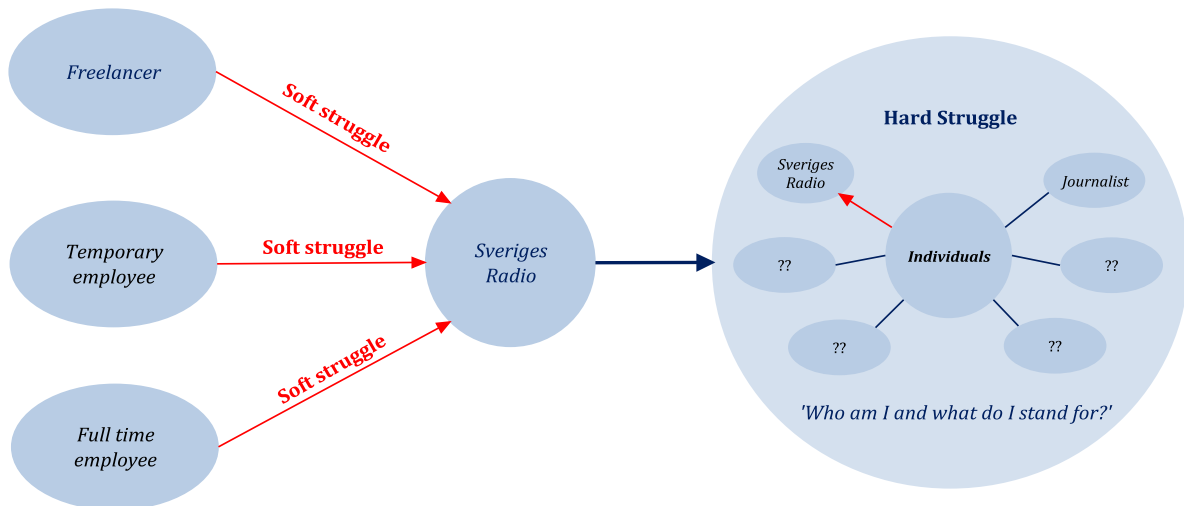


Figure 3: Soft and Hard Struggles

## 5.3 Organizational consequences

From our empirical research, we have found that SR's poor employment policy does not only affect the journalists, it also leads to organizational consequences. From what the journalists described, we have identified these consequences as loss of knowledge and competence, energy loss and work quality. Below we will describe how these factors affect the organization.

### 5.3.1 Loss of knowledge and competence

The journalists described how the employment policy negatively contributes to a loss of knowledge. We argue that even though it for one individual journalist is positive with the education and work experience they get from SR, it is still negative for SR since the journalists will learn a lot at SR, develop their creativity and get new ideas, which they later can use in other media organizations. The journalists described how SR continuously educates new employees who sooner or later need to leave the company, which implies that SR must restart with new education for every new journalist. We argue that this is a waste of competence for SR and a main consequence due to the poor

employment policy. This waste of competence may also lead to advantages for the competitors, since they can use the full educated journalists and take part of their ideas.

### **5.3.2 Energy Loss**

A further organizational consequence we have identified because of the employment policy and the high employee turnover, is the energy loss for the employees within SR. We found that the high employee turnover leads to that the full time employees lack energy of getting to know people with temporary contracts, even if they want too, since they know that the contracts soon will end. Some journalists described this as a tiresome feeling not knowing whether their colleagues are allowed to stay or not. Several journalists also described a depressed feeling for themselves since they do not have the energy to get to know people with temporary contracts, which we believe leads to a poor work atmosphere. This phenomenon is difficult for both employees with temporary contracts and those who have fulltime contracts. They also found it tiresome to constantly find and recruit new people, which one can assume is a waste of time since they need their time to perform their work. Since the full time employees experience that they lack energy to get to know the new journalists, we believe that this may be the source of the experienced separation between two groups within SR. For the new journalists this phenomenon is difficult since they experience that it restrain their creativity. However, we also argue that since the full time employees do not have energy to get to know them, they may find it hard to identify themselves with the organization. According to Ashforth and Mael (1985) this can have an impact on the individual satisfaction, the effectiveness and the process of forming roles within the organization. The authors also argue that it is of importance that the newcomers learn different policies, logistics role expectations and behavioral norms within the organization, in order to understand the organization and act as expected. We argue therefore that the new journalists may have difficulties with these factors mentioned above, since there will be a risk that they will not feel welcome, which implies that they will not create an organizational role.

### **5.3.3 Work quality**

The last organizational consequence we have found is how the employee turnover leads to poor work quality. The journalists described how the production is affected due to the employee turnover, since the new journalists need education in order to learn. This implies that the journalists with temporary contracts can receive education from SR and



then save their best ideas and then leave the company for a competitor's advantage. We argue that this implies that the full time employees spend much time on continuously teaching newcomers instead of performing their ordinary work. This also affects the quality because the newcomers do not have same routines as the other journalists. We believe this has a negative impact on the work quality. Furthermore, the journalists with temporary contracts described that there is no point to dig deeper in a project and instead save their best ideas since they know that they must leave anyway, which we believe affect the work quality negatively. We further argue that this eventually may affect the listeners, despite the journalists' loyalty towards the listeners.

We have found that even though SR argues they generally have too low employee turnover, in order to have the opportunities to change and develop the organization, the journalists definitely strongly disagree with that. We argue that one part of the poor employment policy is the high employee turnover, which is a reason why the journalists feel insecure. We have found that acting in a way like this leads to organizational consequences for SR, which we believe can have future impacts. Since the journalists described that their advice for new journalists would have been that they need to be prepared that it will be tough and that will end in a freelance situation, we argue that a poor reputation may affect SR's strong brand name, which in turn may lead to difficulties to find and recruit new journalists. In the beginning we described how SR constantly works for being an attractive workplace for professional and creative employees with an employment policy which means to attract and recruit the most appropriate journalists. Moreover, SR says they strive to keep and develop their employees and also manage their employment policy in a professional way in order to avoid losing key competence and knowledge. What we argue for is that we in this study have found that SR rather acts in the contrary than what their vision is and that it will be difficult to achieve the vision. We argue that having employees who are afraid to question and criticize SR and their employee policy in order to avoid being put on a black list, is not in line with managing employment policy in a professional way. If the reason for the high employee turnover is that SR will hold the doors open for a star journalist, we rather believe that it can lead to opposite effects since a poor reputation may lead to loss of key competence and the star journalist will never show up. This implies that the result of the employee survey will be rather worse than better. We argue that this may lead to a situation where the journalists avoid recommending SR for

new journalists due to how they treat their employees. The journalists describe how this leads to frustration, stress and even burnout. We question where the moral is and if it is worth sacrificing their employees' health. We further question if the effects of the high employee turnover is something SR reflects on or if they lack knowledge about how it affects their employees and if there is a reason for it.

To summarize, the journalists have provided us with a deep insight into what it means to be a journalist within SR. Our study indicates a complex picture of journalists' identity work. We have found that the journalists' have many sources of identities, rather than having one stable and secure identity (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Furthermore, the journalists identify themselves with some aspects of the organizational identity of SR and simultaneously dis-identify themselves with the employment policy. We have therefore revealed the individuals' ongoing struggle around creating a sense of self. Further, we have defined different degrees of identity struggles, which we refer to as soft and hard. The soft struggle concerns the individual identity struggle towards SR due to the poor employment policy. The soft identity struggle leads to a hard identity struggle around creating a self-identity for the journalists, since their work-identity is a crucial part of their self-identity. Finally, we shifted from an individual focus to an organizational focus and discussed the areas which are affected by the employment policy. These were defined as the loss of knowledge and competence, energy loss and a lowered work quality.

## 6. Conclusion

Our research purpose was to investigate journalists' work situation at Sveriges Radio Malmö (SR) from an identity perspective. We examined this by conducting a case study at SR, where we critically focused on an individual perspective in order to clarify how the journalists' view their work situation and how they are affected by it. We also shifted focus to an organizational perspective in order to critically investigate the effects of the work situation on the organization. We were guided by our main questions:

How do journalists understand the work situation at SR and how does it affect their identity?

What are the possible organizational effects of the work situation at SR?

### 6.1 Main Findings

Our case study contributes with an in-depth knowledge of identity. We have found that the profession of being a journalist and the organization SR, are strong sources of identity. Another source of identity is the employment contracts, which are the temporary contract, the full contract and the freelance contract. We have also found that journalists' work identity constitutes a main part of their self-identity and that they invest much of themselves in their work. Further, we have revealed an ongoing identity struggle where the journalists continuously defines and redefines their identity around creating a sense of self in relation to their identification with being a journalist and working at SR. Our research has illustrated the complexity of the journalists' identity struggle and how this is affected by the ambiguous identification with SR. We have also proven that journalists clearly dis-identify themselves with the employment policy of SR, which results in difficulties in answering the questions of "*who am I and what do I stand for?*" We have found that when journalists strive for comfort and meaning, they simultaneously strive to find a balance between their self-identity and their social identity. Further, they strive to find the balance through integration and correspondence between their self-identity and their work situation. However, as the work situation is constrained, due to the poor employment policy at SR, this leads to an identity struggle.

### 6.1.1 Soft and Hard Struggle

Our research enhances the term identity struggle with two different degrees of intensity, soft and hard. Due to the poor employment policy at SR, we have identified different soft struggles, which are different depending on whether the journalists identify themselves with being a freelancer, having a temporary contract or a full contract. Due to their dis-identification with SR's employment policy, these soft struggles make it impossible for them to completely identify themselves with SR. We argue that this, in combination with our findings that the journalists strongly identify themselves with their profession and with parts of SR, affects their self-identity. This in turn leads to a hard struggle, which implies that the individuals have difficulties with defining their self-identity as a whole in their own subjective identity struggle, since their profession is a crucial part of their self-identity. See figure 3.

#### Sources of identity

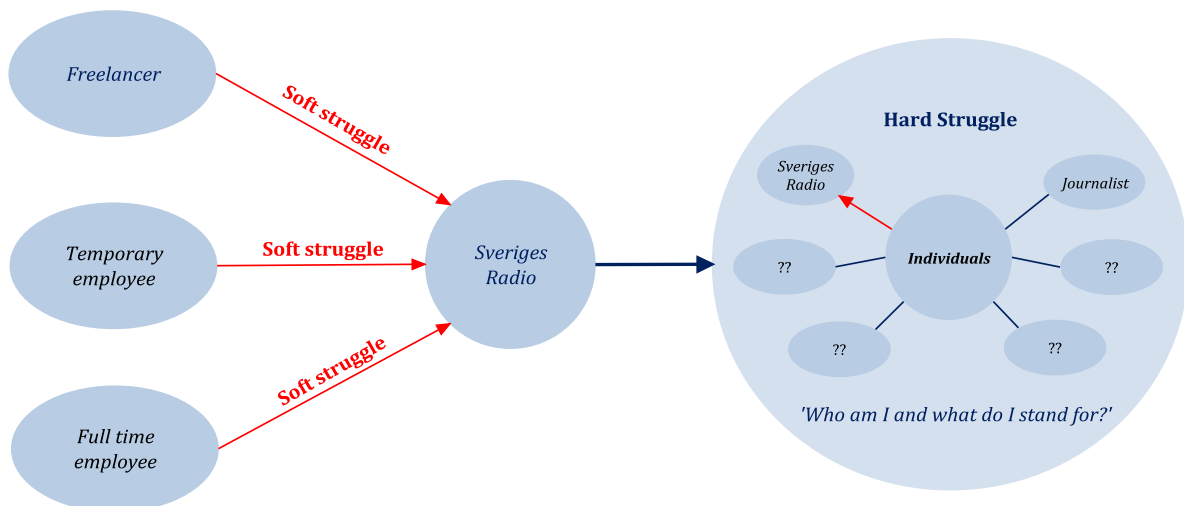


Figure 3: Soft and Hard Struggle

### 6.1.2 Learning potential by reducing struggles

In our research we have shifted focus from the individual perspective to the organizational perspective in order to map the organizational consequences of the work situation at SR. By doing this we have clarified how a reduction of the individual identity struggles may lead to organizational improvements. We have defined three areas within SR, which we argue can be improved by reducing the soft identity struggles. Those areas are the loss of knowledge and competence, energy loss and the quality of the journalistic

work. The high employee turnover leads to that journalists continuously are educated within SR despite that they will leave the organization in a short period of time. This results in a loss of knowledge and competence, which could have been prevented with improved employment policy. We argue that an improvement would result in a stronger identification with SR and therefore a reduction of the soft struggles. Further, the work atmosphere, which was characterized by a resignation, would be improved and the employees' energy loss reduced. We argue that the energy loss is a result of the soft identity struggle concerning the employment policy, which eventually negatively affects the quality of the journalistic work. Further, we argue that there is a great learning potential within SR, which could be fully utilized if the soft identity struggles would be reduced. We argue that by reducing individual identity struggles the learning potential can be improved, which we argue can be applied even in other media organizations.

## **6.2 Reflections**

Through our case study we have revealed a different picture of SR than what is communicated by SR. The empirical material has given us an in-depth knowledge about how the journalists view their work situation and how they are individually affected by it. We have found that SR's employment policy, which the journalists strongly dis-identify themselves with, implies the use of dubious employment contracts. We argue that SR is acting highly immorally in order to keep a flexible workforce. Unfortunately, we believe it is possible for SR to continue year after year like this, since the labor market is over established and SR is considered a dream organization for journalists to work in. This situation enables SR to easily replace those journalists who do not stand the pressure or explicitly disagree with the employment policy. By doing this we argue that SR systematically exploit the unbalanced labor market. However, we believe that there is a risk that this may have several future impacts for SR. One risk by acting immorally is that it might lead to a situation where even more journalists will avoid recommending SR for new journalists. This may further result in a poor reputation for SR. The strong brand name will therefore be weakened, which in turn may lead to difficulties in finding and recruiting new journalists. In opposite to SR's vision of being an attractive employer, we argue that the poor reputation and the weakened brand name may lead to loss of key competence and that the star journalist never will show up.

### 6.3 Future research

We have approached this case study from an identity perspective, however we believe it would be of importance to approach this from other perspectives as well.

From a legal perspective, one interesting research aspect to examine is whether SR's use of dubious employment contracts is a violation of the Swedish laws concerning employment rights.

Another interesting research topic would be to investigate from a strategic perspective how the top management team and the human resource team in Stockholm views the high employee turnover. Do they lack knowledge about how it affects their employees, has it become a strategic choice or is it just an effect of the Swedish laws regarding employment rights?

Finally, it would be interesting to investigate how cost efficient it is for SR to have this high employee turnover instead of giving people full contracts. This would be interesting to examine from a financial perspective, as SR always educates new people who only work for a short period of time.

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