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Identity Regulation, Identity Work and Self-identities in IBM

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Abstract

Title: Identity Regulation, Identity Work, Self Identities in IBM

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Keywords: Identity Regulation, Identity Work, Self Identity, Social Identity, Mergers and Acquisitions.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to identify regulatory efforts on identity work and self identities by management in knowledge intensive firms which went through mergers and acquisitions.

Methodology: This study is constructed upon a qualitative research prior to the analysis. The methodology consists of hermeneutical reading of the empirical material.

Conceptual Framework: The chosen conceptual framework consists of several articles about identity regulation, identity work and self identities. However the main focus is upon the article by Alvesson and Willmott (2002).

Empirical Material: The empirical material is based on fourteen semi structured interviews with both consultants and managers of IBM Global Business Services Office in Malmö as well as the secondary data collected from company website, catalogues etc.

Summary of the findings: This paper studies the identity regulation, identity work and self identities in knowledge intensive firms after mergers and acquisitions. Based on one to one interviews and secondary data collected from various sources, we identified two major sources of self identities in IBM Global Business Service Office in Malmö. These two sources of self identification is analyzed and discussed in our paper.

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1. Introduction

In this chapter we will present a brief background of the study chosen followed by research purpose, research questions and disposition.

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The business world has entered a new era shifting from a stable market to a turbulent business environment (Alvesson, 2004). "Structures that we have been used to since industrial revolution are fragmenting into diverse networks held together with information technology" (Parker 1992: 9 in Alvesson 2004). Today, organizations are claimed to be more flexible, and less hierarchical (Alvesson, 2004). This can be seen especially in knowledge intensive firms which specialize in offering sophisticated knowledge and intellectual skills (ibid). The main characteristics of these firms are high degree of autonomy, highly qualified individuals with high intellectual skills, and idiosyncratic client services. Nevertheless, Alvesson (2004) claims that much of the knowledge work is often performed in an ambiguous context due to the reason that knowledge cannot be dissociated from the experience and interpretation of those who participate in knowledge work and it is also a concept that cannot be easily measured. This is why terms such as uncertainty, unpredictability, and instability have been highly associated with knowledge intensive firms. Therefore, much of contemporary work for e.g. lawyers, business consultants, engineers, and other skilled professionals play an essential part in organizational transformations (Alvesson 2004).

Moreover, in order to reduce fragmentation, incoherence and disintegration, more and more company's today have acknowledged the importance of organizational identity regulation and control. This is often practiced through sophisticated HRM system which can be understood as "a device that provides shared meaning about the corporate universe" and actively sustaining the normative order in the organization" (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007). Alvesson et al (2002)

describes identity regulation as the discursive practices that condition identity processes. Whereas Andersson (2008) states that identity work and identity regulation influences the self identity and in return self identity can also affect identity work. In conclusion, identity processes are constituted by the interaction between self identity, identity work and identity regulation (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002).

Today, people in organizations have taken an active part in identity work practice, aiming to attain a feeling of a positively valued self identity as well as a basis for social relations, which is necessary for coping with work tasks and social interactions (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Knights & Willmott, 1989; Pratt et al, 2006). According to Alvesson and Kärreman (2004), social identities can provide the means for integration and orchestration of work and for this reason knowledge intensive firms use social identity as a tool for management control. Because individuals today have several social identites such as parents, children, students, teachers, workers, managers, professionals, and so on, depending on occasion and context. Social identities make expectations and interactions more manageable and less dependent on ongoing negotiation. They provide instruction and direction, and counteract uncertainty and fragmentation (Hogg and Terry, 2000; Kärreman and Alvesson, 2001:7).

1.1 Research Purpose

Contemporary organizations today are facing some of the greatest challenges in regulating its organizational identity. Especially in an acquisition or merger situation this is particularly the case when consultants with different backgrounds, hierarchies, bureaucracies, and professions get mixed in one organization. During the process of acquisition, it is natural to have disagreements, misalignments and difficulties among the mixture of employees given that the goals, visions, values and loyalty are not easily acquired with the organization (Pepper and Larsson, 2006: 4). Empson (2004) states that during mergers and acquisitions the borders of different organizations melt down and until the existing organizational identities change and a new one emerge.

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According to Alvesson (2004) management should not underestimate identity regulation's effect in the process organizational identity construction. Instead, much of the effort should be invested in developing a distinctive organizational identity in order to secure organizational commitment and high performance.

Organizational regulation can be only proven to be effective when the organizational identity integrates with the organizational members' self-concept (Empson, 2004). In order to produce an accessible organizational identity, we think it is important for organizations to understand the existing various sources of self identities within the company. Thus, we believe studying IBM's organizational identity will shed light on the studies of organizational identity regulation in mergers and acquisitions. In order to further investigate the identity regulation, identity work and self identities in IBM, we developed two main research questions.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What are various sources of self identity for consultants?
2. How do the regulatory efforts of the management affect identity work?

1.3 Disposition

In Chapter 2 of this study, the adopted methodology is discussed as well as the data collection methods used during the interviews. In Chapter 3, the theories employed will be discussed including the new structure of the organizations, and the new career paradigm for the employees. However the main focus of this study will be on the article written by Alvesson and

Willmott (2002), Identity Regulation as Organizational Control. In the following chapter, Chapter 4, the Empirical Material collected will be revealed. This part includes the responds of our interviewees as well as the organizational information collected from various sources like company web page and managerial documents. In Chapter 5, we will analyze the empirical material by using the theoretical frame discussed earlier. The last Chapter will contain discussions and conclusions about the overall study.

2. Methodology

The objective of this chapter is to guide the readers through the research process by providing illustrations and clarifications of the chosen method. In order to give the readers a deeper understanding of the research process, research sample, data collection and analysis as well as reliability will be further discussed and analyzed with the intention to explain the underlying reasons of the chosen method.

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2.1 Research Process

Throughout our research process we have adopted a qualitative research method due to it enables flexibility and interactive techniques in the development of research conduction (Jacobsen, 2002). Firstly, in the very beginning of our research we decided to collaborate with IBM Malmö, Global Business Service department as we were inspired in investigating consultant's identity regulation and construction. Secondly we had formulated our research problem and questions around identity and motivation according to the company's request. There was no doubt that our primary data collection would be based on semi-structured open ended face to face interviews as it would allow the interviewees to talk feely and therefore we considered this method to be the most relevant and appropriate to our study. After a careful preparation, the interview questions were put in order according to our research focus areas which included identity, motivation and satisfaction with the intention of finding answers to our research questions.

As an outcome, after analyzing the interview results, the information turned out to be something different than what we have expected and thus we had to reformulate our research problem and questions again based on the problem which we have identified from the

interviewees' responses. However, in order for us to examine from the theoretical point of view, we have studied and analyzed relevant literatures and articles related to our research subject field with the aim of achieving more detailed secondary data in terms of providing a deeper understanding concerning the research matter. As a final step, we have interpreted and analyzed our primary and secondary data received guided by the theories we have chosen; and as a contribution to IBM we provided recommendations and discussions in the end of our thesis with the hope of giving constructive suggestions for the company to take into consideration.

2.2 Field Study and Sample

Our Research illustrates a case study which is focused on investigating the organizational regulation's and control's effect on the employees' self-identity construction. In this case, we have collaborated with IBM, Malmö Global Business Service department as it represents one of the biggest consulting services in the consulting business. We believe that IBM as a multinational and global company could provide us with interesting and exciting materials for this particular research. Thus, as for the sample group we have chosen to interview 14 consultants from various professional levels including both junior and senior manager consultants with an aim to hear all the different voices coming from different backgrounds such as gender, age and status in order to gain a more depth understanding of the current situation in IBM in general. Therefore, we felt that in a qualified research, it is extremely important for us to conduct the interviews with consultants coming from various settings in terms of facilitating a further understanding and interpretation of how they understand things and perceive their pattern of behavior (Denscombe, 1998).

2.3 Data Collection

Primary, data can be defined as information that is directly collected from the focus group and often it is when the researcher collects the data for the very first time. Secondary data on the other hand is the already existing data collected by others than the researcher her/himself. (Jacobsen, 2002) As for the primary data used in this research, we have collected the information through semi-structured interviews respondents and for the secondary data we have utilized sources like IBM brochures and communication materials from the company's internal website in order to further support this particular research study.

As mentioned earlier, we have adopted the semi-structured interview method as our primary data generation instrument. Semi-structured interview allows the interviewee a great leeway when answering questions due to the interviews are often conducted in a quite open outline which encourages a conversational two-way communication between the researcher and the interviewees (Bryman, 2008). Thus, we have conducted the interviews in a fairly open way in order to give more room for the interviewees to reflect and express on their experiences and thoughts. We believed that this was the most appropriate way of obtaining more valid and reliable data for the thesis as the open-ended questions allowed us to gather a large amount of relevant data in a relatively short period of time. The interview questions were prepared accordingly to the research interest of ours has allowed us to find out the answers we were looking for. In our interview guide, we had four main questions regarding subject matters like identity, motivation, loyalty and commitment including several sub-questions with the purpose of enhancing detailed conversations with the interviewees. In the beginning of the interview, we asked the interviewees to give us general information about themselves like their personal information and educational and professional background etc in order to start the interview in a light easygoing atmosphere. Secondly, we carried on the interview by asking important questions

regarding the main focus area of the thesis in order to construct a more depth understanding of the conditions and settings the interviewees are facing in their everyday work and life. As for the last question, we asked the interviewees to think about both the good sides and the improvement areas of IBM in terms of trying to further investigate their perceptions and beliefs about IBM. The duration of the interviews differed between 45 and 60 minutes depending on the interviewees' willingness to talk. All the interviews were recorded and examined afterwards with the aim of interpreting the result from the interviewees' responses.

We are aware that the interview statements have a strong connection to the social context and thus while analyzing the interview results, we have reminded ourselves that there might be some degree of limitations and restrictions which might have affect the interviewees' respondents during the interview as the interview was held in IBM's facilities during the work time. We also understand that in order to interpret the data one should understand the importance of adopting a reflexive approach as it enables us the researchers to be responsive of our own role and the nature of the research throughout the process of carrying out a qualitative research (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2004).

2.1 Data Analysis - A Reflexive Approach

Reflexivity can be described as a methodological issue in social science. The term itself can be characterized as transparency and quality in research method. It can be used in terms of shaping research projects while analysing personal, social and inter-subjective processes. This particular method enables the researchers to be aware of their role and the nature of the research within the qualitative research. Nevertheless, Alvesson and Sköldberg (2007:288) argue that *"the decisive quality in qualitative research is not the way its different components are managed. Rather what primarily determines its value is the awareness of the various interpretive*

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dimensions at several different levels, and the ability to handle this reflexivity." Thus, the idea of inquiring hermeneutics as the methodology for our study is to stimulate interpretation taking into consideration i.e. part, whole, pre-understanding and understanding concepts. First the attention will be turned to a brief introduction of the definition and characteristics of the hermeneutics concept which after a deeper discussion will be provided in order to illustrate the reasons behind the chosen methodology for this particular research.

There are two interpretative principles regarding the hermeneutic approach. The first one applies to the concept of the objectivist hermeneutics. This particular circle of objectivist hermeneutics illustrates the relationship between "part" and "whole". According to Alvesson and Sköldberg (2007:53) "the meaning of a part can only be understood if it is related to the whole." This illustrates that one thing could be described as one part in one situation but could also be described as a whole in another situation. *"Part"* has the tendency to challenge one's *"whole"* re-structuring process in other words the understanding of the whole enables one to acquire the pre-understanding of the part and thus generates one's final interpretation of the subject matter. Alvesson and Skölberg (2007:52) point out in the objectivist hermeneutics *"the understanding of underlying meaning"* is the fundamental cornerstone behind the approach. It is more about interpreting and explaining the underlying meaning of the text instead of providing causal explanations. Meaning construction is always about discovering the meaning through the construction process which means that the meaning is *"hiding"* somewhere. In meaning construction no information should be taken for granted instead it is about looking outside the box. Thus *"part"* and *"whole"* serves the purpose of the movement of meaning construction process in the hermeneutic circle circulation.

The second principle applies to the concept of Alethic Hermeneutics. In this approach one considers bout *"pre-understanding"* and *"understanding"* which can be described as dissolving the polarity between subject and object into a more original situation understanding, meaning to disclose the hidden meaning, rather than concentrating solely on the connection between subject

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thinking and objective reality. In the circle of alethic hermeneutics more emphasize has been placed on *"pre-understanding"* and *"understanding"*. According to Alvesson and Skölberg (2007) both of the understanding forms exist throughout the interpretive process. The authors argue that pre-understanding is a prerequisite of understanding and thus if the former is to be developed, it also requires the understanding of the new knowledge. Therefore understanding is based on the foundation of pre-understanding and understanding must is thus then developed by the new understanding. Nonetheless, this requires us the researchers to position ourselves into the process of the research.
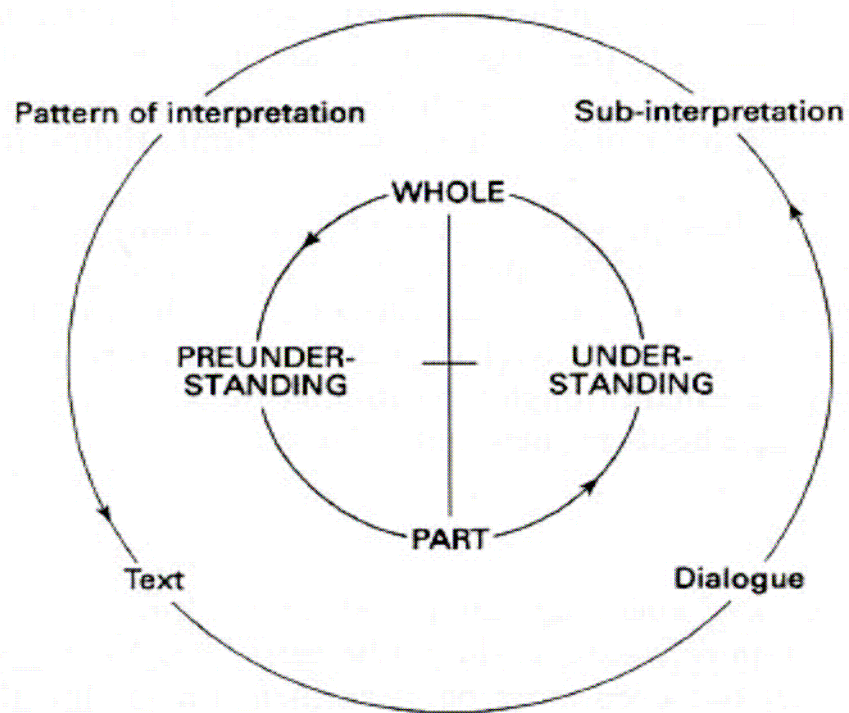

Figure 1: The Hermeneutic Circle (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000: 66).

The reason why we have chosen hermeneutics as the methodology for our study is; in hermeneutics empathy has been often connected to the interpretation of understanding.

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"Understanding calls for living (thinking, feeling) oneself into the situation of the acting (writing, speaking) person. With the help of imagination one tries to put oneself into the agent's (author's, speaker's) place, in order to understand the meaning of the act (the written or spoken word) more clearly" (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2007:54). Therefore, the interpreter's knowledge and information can be complemented by empathy and thus sometimes the interpreter has the ability to understand the agents better than themselves (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2007). We as the researchers have tried to adjust ourselves into the interview situation fully and use empathy to relate and approach the interviewees in order to get them talking. Although one should always stay neutral to make the interviewees feel safe and secured, one is really trying to evaluate the interviewees in a not obvious manner. As a result we should always put ourselves into the *"whole"* and *"part"* movement in order to generate the whole understanding of the situation. For example, in order to let the interviewees speak more and to let the interview flow in a very natural way, we as the interviewers always tried to come up with a follow up question, according to the previous answer received from the interviewee. By asking short questions we the interviewer assure our role to stay neutral and unbiased.

2.5 Validity

Validity indicates "whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about" (Saunders, 1997:82). It refers to the problem of whether the data gathered presents the true description of what is being studied or not (McNeill and Chapman, 2005:9). This does not say that the interviewees are not telling the truth rather they are just expressing what they believe in. Furthermore, language tends to be a restraint when validity is concerned as it may create some misunderstanding when it is not the mother tongue of the interviewers or the interviewees.

According to Alvesson and Sköldberg (2007) researcher should keep four criticisms in their minds while conducting a research. These criticisms are: criticism of euthenics, criticism of

bias, criticism of distance and criticism of dependence (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2007:79). In the first criticism remind the researchers to ask themselves if the observation genuine or fictitious in order to question the authenticity of the research. The second criticism questions the possible bias of the researcher and the affect on his/her interpretation. The third criticism asks the researchers to recall when the observation was made and what the situation was. Lastly, criticism of dependence often relates to the *other* stories which the researcher has been listened to and this might possibly have an influence on the content of the research study. Therefore, with the aim of reducing the risk of misinterpretation, we have listened to our recorded interview results over and over again in order to draw and summarized the main ideas of the interviewees.

3. Theory

In this chapter we will present relevant theoretical concepts which are connected to our investigation area and empirical framework. First we will begin our theory discussion with contemporary organizations' career paradigm and then will introduce organization identification and social identification based on different authors' point of views. Lastly we will present the model by Alvesson and Willmott (2002) on Identity Regulation, Identity Work and Self Identities in order to provide a general overview of the relationships between these three concepts. We hope that this theoretical framework will serve as an inspiration for our analysis which is to be presented later on in this thesis.

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3.1 Contemporary organization and Career Paradigm

Today's contemporary organizations have gone through some of the radical changes within the last two decades. Many of the authors describe this phenomenon as a paradigm shift in management (Clark and Clegg, 2000; and Pearce and Conger 2003 cited in Sandberg and Targama, 2007). This shift has changed the traditional values from fundamental restructuring to revolutionary transformation (Wheeler, 2007 cited in Sandberg and Targama, 2007) which required heavy changes in the organizational management. These changes were promoted as customer orientation, quality, a high degree of flexibility, efficiency, worker autonomy and ongoing learning and competence development. As a result, the companies were forced to restructure its organizational structures and management styles with strong focus on knowledge and competence development, more flexibility in individual autonomy and independence at work (Sanberg and Targama, 2007). Alvesson (2003) characterizes these types of firms as knowledge intensive firms which are defined as an organization that creates value through the utilization of advanced knowledge.

Consultancy firm can also be described as knowledge intensive firm as very large portion of the core activity is based on the intellectual skills, offering fairly sophisticated knowledge or knowledge based products (Alvesson 2003: 18). Being in the consultancy business requires being the best and having various competencies to be competitive on the market. The nature of consultancy work requires flexibility, diverse backgrounds and being among the bests from the consultant while the new type of organization which is presented by Allred, Snow and Miles (1996) as cellular type of organization, transforms organizations by changing the hierarchy, becoming more flat (ibid).

The process of change in organizations also brought a change in the career paradigm. Arthur Claman and Defilippi (1995) explain the new career paradigm which suggests that employees are putting more loyalty towards projects before the loyalty towards the organization (Arthur et al, 1995; Waterman, Waterman and Collard, 1994). Therefore, employees had to focus on their own competencies more, and be loyal to their personal development instead of being loyal to their organizations (Allred et al, 1996). Brousseau, Driver, Eneroth, and Larsson (1996) state that the companies should understand and respect this because the structure of organizations had changed and so did the preferences of the employees. The reason for employees to be more loyal to the projects they get instead of their organizations is that the development they get from the projects is the only strength they have towards the organizations since organizations do not hesitate to choose a better employee (Allred et al. 1996).

One can assume that in this environment, consultants are determined to focus on their own development and undermine the effect and importance of organizations. This is where the identity regulation and the importance of organizational identity come into picture for organizations. Alvesson (2004) states that issues of identity are important for the management of knowledge intensive firms due to securing a base for control and loyalty in the organization. Therefore in the coming section we will discuss identity regulation, identity work and self identities in detail.

3.2 Identity Regulation, Identity Work and Self Identities

In contemporary organization studies, organizational identity construction has certainly become one of the popular and debatable discussion topics. The importance of recognizing organization identification is unquestionable as it has a direct impact on both individual satisfaction and organization effectiveness. Many organization behavior academics argue that organizational regulation is significant and highly important when it comes to organizational control as it possess a great influence on managerial identity work. It has been highly contested that managerial "manipulation" has made the employees become more and more vulnerable to recognize themselves under the corporate identity. In this section we will discuss Alvesson and Willmott (2002) model of identity regulation, identity work and self-identity in order to provide a deeper understanding on organizational control's influence on reproducing and transforming employees' self-identity construction. Along the theory discussion we will consult to other authors' opinions.

In recent years, passion, charisma and soul have been presented in association with discourses of quality management, service management, innovation and knowledge work and naturally this has increased managers' interest in regulating employees "insides" - through shared meaning, values, self-image, beliefs and identifications (e.g. Willmott, 1993). Today, managers are interested in how to practice managerially inspired discourses in order to achieve organizational control through the self-positioning of employees (Deetz, 1995). According to Alvesson and Willmott (2002), the role of discourse facilitates the process in identity construction, support and transformation. Watson (1995) explains that discourses are created through social systems of meaning which structure the way people understand act with regard to a certain specific issue. In contemporary organizations, managers use discourses to make themselves understood and at the same time to make sense of themselves (Watson 1995; Thomas and Linstead, 2002; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003; Sveningsson and Alvesson; 2003; Kornberger and Brown, 2007).

The most common way for an organization to employ managerial discourses is through development of training, induction, and corporate internal communication channels. These practices create concept of "We" in order to emphasize a sense of group cohesiveness, belongingness and shape the direction of organization identity. Thus identity regulation can be illustrated as discursive practice which is directed by identity definition which shapes the processes of identity construction and reconstruction. According to Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003:1165) identity work can be characterized as "forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of precarious sense of coherence and distinctiveness". Moreover identity regulation, identity work and self-identity are all interrelated and thus they all have a complementary and reciprocal interact on each other. See table below.
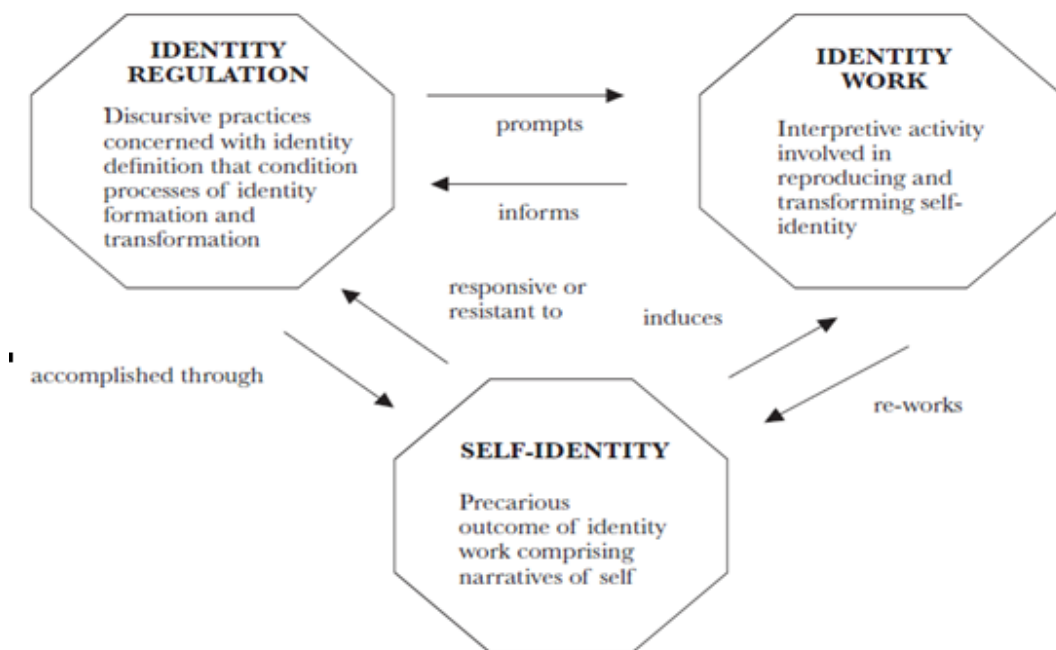

Figure 2: Idenity Regulation, Identity work and Self-identity (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002:627)

Alvesson and Willmott (2002: 630) state that there are so few studies to identify the modes of control when it comes to identity, and they identified the need for more categorization of identity control modes. In their article they discuss various tools to control identity such as; use of legacies, values, and symbols, defining the person, defining a person by defining the others, defining the hierarchy etc. In this part we will discuss the values, symbols, and legacies as the modes of organizational control which targets to regulate the self identity.

Identifying self with the organization and regulating the self identity of the employees became popular in recent years given that identifying with the organization assists the employee to be motivated while working (Alvesson & Karreman, 2007). In order for an individual to identify him/herself with the organization the values carry a great importance. Alvesson and Björkman (1992) suggest that an employee's view of organizational identification is affected by how clear the values are defined in an organization. Clarification of the values in an organization provides it with more distinguished image from others in the environment. Alvesson and Karreman (2007) further agree that the experience of the company values will provide the employees with a significant organizational identity, and help them identify with the company. However one should state that there is a difference between identification with the organization and internalization of the values (Ashforth & Mael 1989, Pratt cited in Whetten & Godfrey 1998). Ashforth *et al* (1989) has a description of identification as a perception of unity or "oneness" with the organization which does not necessitate the internalization of the values (Ashforth and Mael, 1989 in Pratt; Whetten and Godfrey, 1998). Nonetheless as Pratt mentions in his article that later article by Mael & Ashforth (1995) suggests identifying with an organization requires one to internalize the values as their own (1998:176).

In order for organizations to create a perception of a unique corporate identity using stories, myths, and legacies are also highly important (Alvesson, 2004), and some symbols are more effective than others in sense making. This concept is called sedimentation of meaning (Fine 1992 in Prasad 1993, pp. 1405). When a symbol is sediment, it has gained a high level of materiality and durability within an organization (ibid). Focal point on the sedimentation of

meanings by Fine implies the importance of understanding the more powerful role of some symbols in sense making than others (in Prasad 1993). In organizations, use of legacies, heroes, values are employed to help employees' organizational identification (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002).

Alvesson and Willmott (2002) further argue that dividing the social world into 'us' and 'them', means creating social categories, is an effective way to regulate identity through sustaining social distinctions and boundaries (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Turner, 1982, 1984 in Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). They refer to this as 'defining the person by defining others' (p 629). Being a member of a social group/team may possibly become a source of one's self understanding, and presentation to others (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). "Social identity refers to an individual's perception of him or herself as a member of a group, particularly in terms of value and emotional attachment" (Alvesson *et al.* 2008: 10). Ashforth and Mael (1989) label social identification as the 'perception of oneness with or belongingness to some human aggregate' (p. 135). Social identification theory is interested in people's views of themselves and others in terms of social categories (Alvesson *et al.* 2008). Alvesson *et al.* (2008) further argues that nowadays several authors study the multiple targets of identification stating that the organization itself does not have to be the only source of identification for individuals (Kuhn and Nelson, 2000; Pratt, 2000; Pratt and Foreman, 2000; Scott *et al.* 1998 cited in Larson & Pepper 2003). Alvesson *et al.* (2008: 19) states that there can be other reasons or materials out of which identities are crafted. According to them institutional arrangements as status, job titles, salaries; groups and social relations at work; and anti-identities, the vision of others, can all constitute the self around what it is not. One can state that social identification can be utilized as identity regulatory effort.

One might state that self-identity is an outcome of identity regulation and identity work (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Identity work and regulation represents an ongoing identity process as they take part in an influential role in self-identity construction (Pratt et al, 2006). Thus, self-identity construction can be induced or reworked by identity work. It can also be

described as an outcome of identity work consisting narratives of self. Alvesson (2004: 189) states self-identity answers to the question of "who am I" and by implication "how should I act". Nonetheless Giddens (1991) further associate self-identity with self-images, traits or social attributes. He states the reflexive construction of self identity consists of language, symbols, sets of meanings and values which are originated from constant interactions with others and presentation of messages communicated by organization as well as understanding of early life and other unconscious processes (Giddens, 1991). Identity regulation and identity work process is shaped from an interpretive and reflexive framework which is constructed from a blend of conscious and unconscious elements (Giddens, 1991). According to Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) identities can be commonly described as multiplicity; that is the subsistence of mixtures of elements competing and shifting self-identities of an individual.

To conclude; one might suggest that in recent years there has been a change in the structure of contemporary organizations. Many organizations changed their structure to being less hierarchical and more flexible. By preferring only the bests and not being able to provide job security to their employees as the old days, this has led to a weakened the trust bond between the employees and the organizations. As a result of this change, employees started to prioritize themselves and their career over the loyalty towards the organizations. This situation occurred in knowledge intensive firms since they are mostly based on knowledge of their employees and the success of projects (Brosseau, 1996). Therefore identity regulation in consultancy companies became very important and necessary. Alvesson and Willmott (2002) state that, use of discourse can assist the process of identity construction and control. The most common way to employ discourses is through training and internal communication channels since these efforts create the sense of "We" in organizations. Alvesson and Willmott (2002) describe identity regulation as a discursive practice which is directed by identity definition which shapes the processes of identity construction in organizations. They further describe the identity work as an interpretative activity involved in reproducing and transforming the self identity. Furthermore they state that identity

regulation; identity work and self identity are interrelated and affected by each other (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002: 627).

While regulating and controlling the identity there are different tools to be utilized such as values, symbols, legacies, and defining others which are known to affect the self identity (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Regulating the self identity aims to affect employees level of loyalty and motivation (Alvesson & Karreman, 2007). Therefore self-identity construction can be induced or reworked by identity work and identity regulation (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). In the next chapter we will illustrate the empirical material we collected from primary and secondary sources.

4. Case Description

In this particular case description we will provide a brief introduction of IBM's company structure, acquisition background and the managerial work practice in IBM. The presented information is mainly based on IBM's published communication material, the company's intranet and website as well as interviews conducted with fourteen individual employees from the Global Business Service Department of Malmö, Sweden office.

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4.1 Organization Structure

IBM is headquartered in Armonk, New York in the United States and it has approximately 388.000 employees worldwide. Its wide talent workforce ranges from professionals like engineers, scientists, consultants and sales professionals in over 170 countries which makes it the largest information technology employer in the world. In 2008, the company's annual turnover was around 103.6 billion U.S. dollars. The company name "IBM" is abbreviated from International Business Machines Corporation which also known as "Big Blue". IBM is one of the biggest IT companies in the world and its history can be stretched all the way back to 19th century. Today, IBM is a leading innovation driven company holding 4000 active patents on its worldwide patent portfolio. It provides services and products including hardware, software and consulting.

The organization is split up in geographical pieces but each piece does not necessarily have their own Head Quarters. For example IBM Nordics is constituted by countries of Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland, however, IBM does not have any formal Nordic Head Quarters

and the management group is spread out throughout Nordics. Region wise IBM Nordics, UKI (UK and Ireland), Germany and Alps (Austria and Switzerland) make up the NE IOT (North East) group. North East and South West groups make up EMEA. Thus for a consultant, working in IBM Sweden, the line of managers would follow as: Sweden, Nordics, North East, EMEA, and Global. In IBM Sweden there is no any specific formal IBM Consultancy Head Quarters. The offices in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Sundsvall and Malmö constitute IBM Sweden. The current Nordic GBS manager is located in Copenhagen, Denmark and Swedish Global Business Services manager stays mainly in Stockholm.

4.1 Expansion Background

In the recent years, IBM has been an active "acquirer" on the IT industry market. The company's acquisitions purchases may vary from multibillion-dollar contracts to smaller deals. It's biggest and the most remarkable acquisitions have been with companies like PWCC consulting service, FileNet Corporation, Internet Security Systems (ISS) and Cognos. The company has been characterized as a "disciplined acquirer". It only engages in acquisitions that fit into IBM's expansion strategy and where new opportunities serves purposes of generating profitable growth in a high-paced market, and high value delivery for clients and for its investors. The aim of acquisition is to increase the company's market share and growth in IT industry business by constantly looking ahead in terms of gaining new products, technologies and customers access.

There are two main reasons behind IBM's acquisition strategy which are "to get a jump-start into emerging markets" and "to fill gaps in company's existing technology, round out key aspects of its portfolio and quickly move into new markets to further differentiate itself from the competition". IBM has a propensity to acquire companies which possess a strong history partnership background with itself in order to avoid the possibility of failing efforts of bringing

two entirely different companies together. Acquisitions are often taken place under a careful consideration of six month to a year planning.

In 2002, the company made a strategic move and acquired PricewaterhouseCoopers for price of US$3.5 billion in order to cement its status as by being the only company providing services from business consulting to IT solutions. While IBM consultants were known as experts in technology services like systems set up, data centre outsourcing and maintenance, PwCC were recognized as highly reputable business consultants who were experts in helping clients to rebuild their core business processes and models. As a result of this acquisition, a new global business unit, IBM business consulting was created under the unit of IBM Global Services, representing the world's largest consulting service organization comprising more than 30.000 IBM and 30.000 transferring PwC consulting professionals. Today, IBM Business Consulting Services is an industry-leader in providing end-to-end solutions in key areas including client relationship management, financial management, human capital management, business strategy and change, and supply chain management. In the next section, IBM Malmö office's acquisition history and integration will be presented.

4.2 Current situation at Malmö Office

As stated earlier, Malmö office is one of the four consulting offices in Sweden. In total there are approximately 200 people working in the Malmö office, whereas GBS represents one third of the personnel in total. The majority of the GBS staffs are from acquisition mergers, only few are hired externally by IBM mainly through the graduate program.

From 2002 till 2009 the office has also gone through some major acquisitions which include companies like PwCC in 2002, Maersk Data and DMdata in 2004, Maximo MRO in 2006 and Telelogic AB in 2009. Like mentioned above, many of the IBM employees are acquired from

different companies and thus after math people integration has become an important identity work within IBM. To illustrate this, some of the IBM managers have given insights on the company's transformation work as presented below:

A Nordic manager of IBM states:

"We work very hard to integrate people, and it is a long time process. The company itself has gone through a lot of changes during the recent years and especially in the consulting business one can still identify different cultures. GBS was founded in 2003 and we are still trying to merge these two cultures which include the deep blues who have been working 30 years who have seen all the changes and the GBS consultant who are very much influenced by the PWC consultancy culture".

A female manager says:

"Acquisitions over the years have affected IBM's culture and identity and thus it is hard to define a clear culture."

A human capital manager stresses PwC and IBM transformation as the following:

"The transformation from PwC to IBM was a bit cultural clash, especially for the PwC people. I also think it was a cultural clash for the IBM consultants. The two companies had two completely different cultures. PwC represented the partner owned organization and with strong local interest where as IBM on the other hand was a truly global enterprise meaning that everything is kind of designed based on the global capability rather than the local".

One of the consultants said that due to his background in finance, he felt that IBM carries little prestige in his mind compared to finance companies. Instead, he would be proud to work for a company like PWC.

He says:

"It was something to be employed by PWC".

One of the ex-PWC states:

"I was very loyal to my old company, PWC, but I do not feel the same about IBM. I am only here for my own good."

4.2.1 Loyalty and Motivation

Junior consultants claim that they do not believe in the old fashion loyalty to a single organization. They feel that as long as IBM provides them with individual and professional development they will continue to work for IBM. The consultants say that they are loyal to the company but if the right opportunity comes along they are ready to leave IBM. Another consultant declares that he does not have an 'old fashion' loyalty to the employer. He feels that in big companies even if you make a good job, it is still possible to be sent away. Currently, he is not looking for another employer, but if there is an opportunity, he would listen. Thus, majority of the consultants see the quality of the projects as the major influence on their level of motivation. In IBM, getting more exciting and interesting projects ensures better professional opportunities and wider social networks within the company.

According to one senior consultant, his motivation is directly affected by the projects he gets, and sometimes he feels very down and underutilized for not being able to work on desirable projects.

He says:

"Bad projects are really bad; they almost make you want to leave IBM."

A new fresh hire expresses her frustration of finding suitable projects for herself.

She says:

"Many of the projects require technical background which I don't have so for the most of the time I have to be patient and wait for things to happen and it is very frustrating. I am trying to fill my time by doing e-training when not having projects but in a long it is very difficult to keep the motivation up."

For many of the consultants we interviewed, development opportunities are highly important. In fact, this is one of the main reasons they have chose to stay in IBM or wanted to work for IBM to being with.

"It allows you to gain new knowledge, meet new people and take up new challenges"
IBM Consultant

To motivate a team in IBM one should be able to find interesting projects, give training and support management.
GBS Consultant

The majority of the interviewees also believe that by providing the best possible service to their clients ensures their professional excellence status and thus this represents another important motivation factor for them.

"Making my clients happy is number one motivator factor for me, when my proposal team wins a deal and gets the recognition from the client is when I feel good about myself. I will continue to seek those kinds of experiences in my job. If I don't get them and get buried into too administrative things, then I lose my motivation very quickly".

GBS Manager

4.3 IBM's HRM Tools

In this section, we will present IBM's sophisticated human resource management tools which include managerial work, values, 3D strategy, career path, personal business commitment and individual development plan, compensation and salary and work life balance to illustrate the company's effort of creating a motivational working environment for the consultants.

4.3.1 Managerial Work

Now we will take a closer look on the managerial efforts practiced within IBM. Leading by values has been highly emphasized within IBM. In order to activate the values fully, managers are encouraged to communicate and make employees understand the big picture and linkage connection between company's values, strategies and their own work. Most importantly, the employees should be able to understand the overall strategy and their role in contributing to the company's success. It has been proven that employees who understand strategy's alignment relationship with their own job responsibilities are most likely to perform better and thus have deeper commitment towards the company. The managers' job is to make the employees feel more passionate, excited and dedicated to IBM's success.

IBM has identified clarity as one of the drivers to develop deeper employees' commitment towards the company and recommended the following actions for the managers to

follow. The first one is "Walk your employees through IBM strategy". This encourages the managers to give examples of how his/her or the department's priorities fit in with the overall IBM strategy. The second recommendation is "Share results of business strategies" which allow the managers to share IBM's strategy with their teams by connecting employees' efforts to company's strategy. The third one is "Ensure employees know their organization's business goals and how their jobs specifically support those goals." Managers play an important role in interpreting company's strategies and goals to their subordinates. Their job tasks of doing managerial work include helping the employees to understand the relevance of their own role and ability to create a sense of excitement around, and to build commitment and loyalty towards company's direction and opportunities. Finally the last one is "Ensure Feedback meetings with employees". This refers to a great chance of two way communication between the manager and the employees which does not only enable the managers to give feedback but also encourages the employees to give feedback to the managers (W3 News, Clarity, 15th June, 2007).

4.4.2 Values

At IBM, values are more than just ethics, compliance, or even a code of conduct. Values serve as guide to aspiration, decision making, actions and behaviour both collectively and individually and most importantly is it what differentiates IBM with its clients, employees, investors and communities. First value, *"Dedication to every client's success",* addresses that an IBMer should be passionate about building strong, and long-lasting client relationships and are result oriented in selling products, services and solutions to help clients succeed. Personal dedication and customer success attitude should be always demonstrated in a client relationship, no matter the size of the client's company. Second value *"Innovation that matters –for our company and for the world"* demonstrates that IBMers are forward thinkers who love challenges and believe that technology can change and improve business, society and the human condition. IBMers are innovators who always seek ways to tackle the problem and strive to be first in technology, in business, and in responsible policy. Finally, the last value *"Trust and personal*

responsibility in all relationships" represents IBMers' way to build trust, relationship with its clients, partners, communities, investors and fellow IBMers by listening, following through and keep their promises even when formal relationship ends (W3, About IBM, 11th Feb, 2009).

If there's no way to optimize IBM through organizational structure or by management dictate, you have to empower people while ensuring that they are making the right calls the right way. And by "right", I am not talking about ethics and legal compliances alone: those are stable stakes. I am talking about decisions that support and give life to IBM's strategy and brand, decisions that shape a structure. That is why values, for us, aren't so soft. They are the basis of what we do, our mission as a company...You have got to create a management system that empowers people and provides a basis for decision making that is a consistent with who we are at IBM. (Harvard Business Review Interview, Leading Change when Business is Good)

<div align="right">

Sam Palmisano
CEO of IBM

</div>

In 2003, the company rewrote and re-examined their values the first time in nearly 100 years. Through value jam technology 50.000 employees participated in an unprecedented three day discussion on IBM's global intranet. As a result three reformed values were created which was "Dedication to every client's success", "innovation that matters – for our company and for the world", "Trust and Personal responsibility in all relationships". In 2004, another jam session was conducted with a goal to find actionable ideas to support implementation of the existing identified values in order to bring the values to real. This time 52,000 employees participated in a 72 hours best practice exchange. Recently, in 2008, an innovation jam session was launched and involved participation from IBM's own employees, clients, business partners and academics around the world.

4.4.3 3D Strategy

In order to drive company's profitable growth 3D strategy has been implemented to help the consultant to achieve the company goals in Global Business Service department (GBS). These strategies help the company to better address their clients' agenda and provide them with better innovative solutions. GBS' 3D strategy can be summarized as Deeper, Differentiated and Delivered Globally. Deeper addresses deeper client relationships as GBS work with a set of core clients, which plays an important role in bringing in revenue and profit to the company. Insights from these accounts may enhance and drive IBM's solutions capabilities into other opportunities. Differentiated Services concentrate on the business solutions, application and management services. These services are very important to IBM's business as they differentiate IBM from its competitors. Lastly, Delivered globally highlights the need to meet clients' demand through IBM's growing network of centres of Excellence, providing the clients and teams access to the right skills and expertise at the right time, regardless of the location. (W3 News, 2007)

4.4.4 Career Path in GBS

IBM Global Business Service organization provides four career paths focusing on consulting, sales, project management and technical competencies towards leadership or specialist positions. There are six different bands in IBM, the lowest band 6 -7 represent junior and professional consultants, band 8 stands for experienced consultants and specialist, band 9-10 implies managers and vice presidents and lastly the highest band 10 indicates titles such as executive and director.

Figure below illustrates GBS' career path structure:
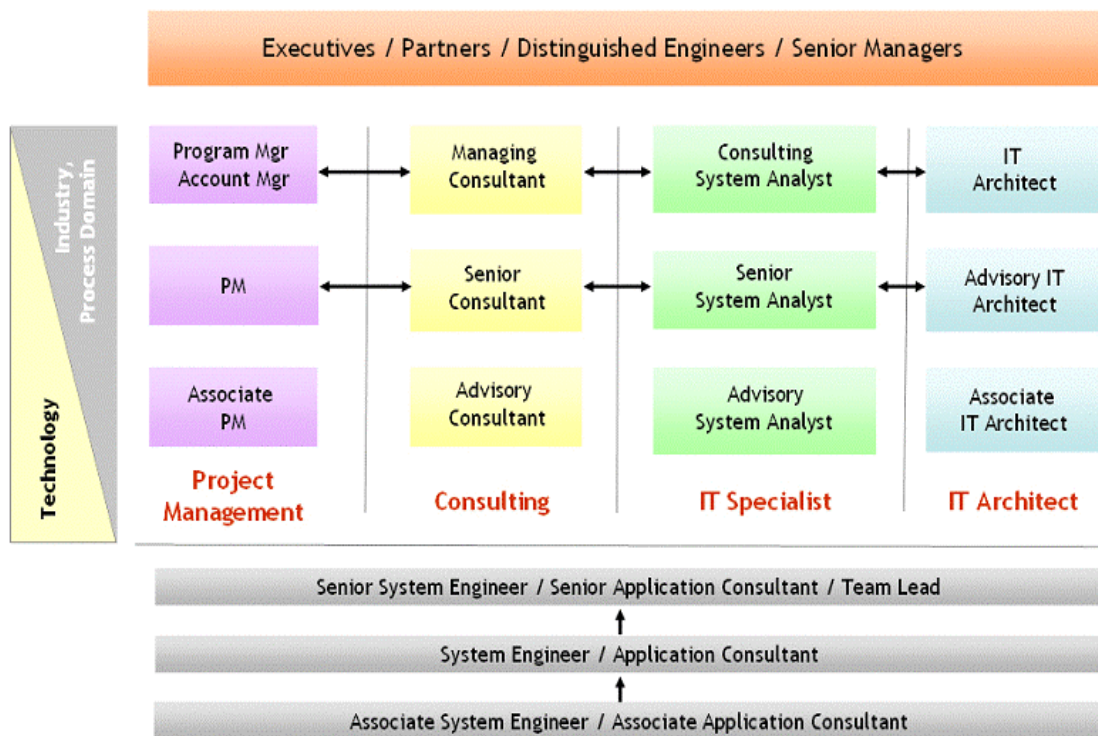
Figure 3: IBM GBS' Career Path Structure (IBM.com).

4.4.4 Personal business commitment (PBC)

IBM encourages their employees to discover their own career paths within the company. Personal Business Commitment (PBC) is a people management tool with aim to help and guide the employees to determine their own goals. It is recommended that each year the employees set their own business commitment objectives for the calendar year together with his/her manager. The manager will then ensure that the employees' goals are in alignment with the divisions', the department's and IBM's goals.

At the end of the year, an evaluation will be made based on employee's performance and whether the goals were met. In this evaluation customer's opinion is also counted. Also, the employee him/herself is responsible for keeping in track on their own achievements by maintaining a specific database. The manager then uses this database as a part of the evaluation procedure. After this, employees will be placed and ranked regarding their past year's performance and a specific percentage will be identified as "top performers". This represents a key factor in determining ones performance bonus and future career opportunities. The purpose behind this ranking system is to better motivate people to achieve their goals and exceed their peers' performances. This has also fostered IBM's "top performer culture" (W3 News, 2009 GBS Principles and the GBS Career Model).

4.4.5 Individual Development Plan

Individual develop plan know as (IDP) is a tool which provides the employees to identify his/her interest, goals, strengths and improvement areas. Employees work together with their managers in putting together the IDP plan which should provide a clear picture of both their short and long term goals and aspirations. The IDP plan will then be reviewed every year together with the employee and the manager's duty is to keep it up to date.

4.4.6 Compensation & Salary

In consultancy business overtime work is very common and frequent and it is not paid or compensated. Some of the interviewees expressed their lack of motivation for overtime work without compensation.

"I spend a lot of time travelling and doing overtime work, but it is unpaid and sometimes I question myself why I'm I working for so long hours when I can also choose to be with my family."

IBM Consultant

However, instrumental reward is important for some of the consultants.

A senior consultant in GBS says:

"The reason for me to come back to work is the salary itself, compensation is more important than titles."

4.4.7 Work Life Balance

In IBM Nordic work – life balance is very important. Unlike many other consultancy companies, IBM GBS chooses to provide flexibility to their consultants. The company does not have an up or out partner culture which might force consultants to work more and have no balance in their life. Instead, they provide their employees with the opportunity of choosing between their career and their private life. Consultants are not required to be present in the office; they can work from home, their car or another IBM Office. Many employees have small children and they perceive IBM as a very understanding employer when it comes to work life balance. In the following chapter, we will analyze this particular case description by applying the theories presented from the previous chapter in order to exemplify IBM's identity regulation, identity work and self-identities.

5. Analysis

In this chapter we will analyse IBM's identity construction in the context of organization fragmentation and identity struggle caused by the consequence of acquisitions and mergers. First we will start analysing the sources of self-identification identified within IBM. Then we will move on to provide a deeper investigation on the types of identity work performed within the organization and the approaches IBM uses to regulate its organizational identity. Hopefully, these discussions will give a deeper understanding to IBM's identity sources and its identity work.

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Many studies emphasize the importance of identity work as it is fundamental for issues like commitment, loyalty, motivation, decision-making, group and intergroup relations stability and change leadership, organizational collaborations etc (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003). However, in the process of acquisitions and mergers, building an identity may be a highly challenging and demanding as it questions individual beliefs concerning organization's values and attributes (Oliver and Ross, 2007 cited in Alvesson, 2004) which can easily initiate organization fragmentation and identity incoherence (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003). During our study of IBM case we faced similar identity fragmentation and incoherence among consultants. We believe that variation in self-identity might hinder the chances of constructing an internal alignment and coherence with an organization. In order to regulate and control the organizational identity', we will act towards exploring the self identity sources and necessary managerial tools to regulate the organizational identity. Identity regulation and self-identification construction are the key themes explored in our analysis. First we will begin our analysis by examine the identity regulation and identity work practiced within IBM and later in the chapter we will present the identified self-identities in the organization.

5.1 Identity Regulation

Management uses different forms of control to regulate organizations. Varying types of approaches are being used to control organizations and these include behaviour monitoring, instrumental rewards, such as pay and promotion and non-instrumental rewards including status, confirmation and assignment to appealing projects. However, in industrial and occupational cultures, management tend to emphasize on connecting values and ideas of employees at the organizational level in order to make the employees take responsibilities and work hard in the absence of monitoring. Thus much of work needs to be done by the management in terms of influencing and constructing corporate cultural orientation and identity (Alvesson, 2003). As we introduced in our case description, IBM uses various HR tools such as managerial work, values, strategies, career path, personal business commitment, individual development plan, compensation and salary and work life balance to regulate its organizational identity in order to create a stronger sense of belonging. In the next section we will discuss the identity work performed in IBM to provide a deeper understanding of the company's identity construction process.

5.2 Identity Work

In knowledge intensive firms two forms of controls are used widely in organizational regulations and these are socio-ideological and technocratic control. The former relies in influencing the beliefs, ideas, norms and the later is associated to soft rules, plans, behaviour and performance measurement indicators (Alvesson and Kärreman 2003). Both of these controls are influenced by impact of the company's HRM practices aiming to reduce "ambiguity", "fragmentation" and "arbitrariness" in the context of consultancy work. (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007:721).

IBM regulates the organization by practicing both socio-ideological and technocratic controls. First we will proceed by exploring the socio-ideological influence on IBM's organization control and identity work, and then an analysis of technocratic control will be followed in the later section. As noted earlier socio-ideological control is focused on managing organizational meanings, norms and interpretations and thus this type of control center the attention on constructing emotions, ideology and identity formation. (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2003) In IBM socio-ideological control is practiced through value and strategy communication. Initially, the values were identified by the employees in a jam session which was then formulated and put together by the upper management team. In order to make the values and strategies *"real"*, a big part of the managerial work within IBM is about making employees understand the linkage between the values, strategies and their own work in order to contribute to the success of the company. However, when we asked about company values and strategies many of the consultants answered the following;

"I don't remember the values, they are just common sense, and it is obvious that we need deliver the best work in order to satisfy the clients"

"I understand the values but really they are just common sense. For me I have always wanted to do a good job and get appriciation from other people and that is very important for me."

"When I work I need to follow the way of doing the job. I like the Global company goals because they are highly ambitioned, agreeable, visionary and fluffy. However when it boils down to the Swedish level, financial goals is more emphasized. In a real world you will be rated as a bad employee if you don't live up to the financial goals of the company even though you have made your clients very happy and satisfied."

<div align="right">IBM Consultants</div>

"IBM is a great company to work for and I fully identify myself with this company"

IBM Junior Consultant

"I think the values influence our work. We are extremely focused on doing the right thing. It has influenced me to think about these things. Compared to PWC, the values are used more often to justify things. I think in IBM the corporation is trying to use that all the time and the values are built bottom up and it is visible on the internet and it has influenced the way we do business with our clients."

"They are very important. First of all the values were developed by the IBMers. I like the values; they are broad but focusing on important things. If I didn't like the values of the company, I wouldn't work here. The big discussion around innovation value was also the corporate responsibility part of it being innovation matters for us and also for the world. By just adding that made us a bit different from the most of the companies having values around innovation. It shouldn't be just for IBM, it should be important for the world as well for being such a big company we should take corporate responsibility.

IBM Managers

Based on the above stated interviewee responses, IBM consultants perceive the company values and strategies to be very generic and the conflict between the company values and the financial goals has also hampered and hindered the employees' identification and trust for the company. Thus the consultants do not feel a strong connection towards the values and strategies. In other words, they do not care or internalize the values or the strategies as their own, in fact delivering excellence and customer satisfaction is self-evident for the consultant. This demonstrates their identification to the consultancy profession and a strong will of doing a good job. Furthermore, the interview results have indicated that the IBMers love challenges and they

are extremely dedicated in delivering excellence. However these values do represent certain coherence and connection with the IBM company values which are "Dedication to every client success", "Innovation that matters- for our company and for the world" and "Trust and personal responsibility in all relationships". Therefore, we believe that the IBMers carry the company values unconsciously in their everyday work. Nonetheless, due to the consultants' weak identification towards the company, the values are not fully integrated or interacted in alignment with their own job tasks and the company goals.

However, junior consultant and IBM managers seem to have a strong understanding and identification towards the company values and strategies. They understand the importance of the values and the influence on their work. The managers also believe that the values have played a great role in terms of guiding their behavior of doing business. Thus, we have acknowledged that that they have fully internalized the values as their own and understood the linkage between the values, strategies, and business goals in relation to their own work. Many of the authors discuss the importance of organizational values which tend to guide the employees' behaviors and actions within the organization (Hultman, 2005; Alvesson 2002). Alvesson and Björkman (1992) stress that in order to facilitate the employees' identification towards the organization, having clear organizational values is very vital. O'reilly and Chatman (1986) point out that organizational commitment is often created when an employee has successfully internalized the organizational values and objective.

Alvesson (2003) points out that a corporation's successfulness depends heavily on image management, meaning that in order to meet the company goals, management must be able to get the employees to act and interact in line with their wishes. Thus, to facilitate this interaction, rhetoric, in other words talking persuasively is the key element for the management to shape and form the organizational culture and the identity of personnel. Alvesson and Willmott (2002) emphasise the importance of discourse. According to the authors discourse is not only used to regulate identities but it can be also applied in identity work. Furthermore, identity work and regulation represents an ongoing identity process which play an influential role in forming

identity construction. In IBM managers engage themselves in a continuous management discourse in their everyday managerial work in order to activate the awareness of the organization values and strategies around its employees. Nevertheless, the identity work performed by the IBM managers has showed a weak indication of integrating the employees' identities through their current job tasks with the organizational values and strategies.

Alvesson (2000) and Grey (1994,1998) argue that identity work has a great influence on employees' self-construction and thus the goal of managerial work is to create coherence, distinctiveness by fostering a strong sense of organizational identity. As the employees come to internalize with the organizational values and objectives, a part of the company's organizational identity will integrate with their self-identity concept. As noted earlier IBM managers have showed a strong indication in adopting and integrating the company values. They also seem to be more committed both to the company than the rest of the consultants. This occurrence illustrates a successful integration of the managers accepting and allowing the organizational identity to become a part of their own self-identities. However, most of the consultants experience a weak identification towards the organization.

Further, we will take a closer look on the technocratic control. This type of control is focused on controlling worker's behavior where the managerial identity work is concentrated on arrangements and tools focusing on behavior and measurable performance evaluation. (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2001) IBM practices technocratic control through continuous performance evaluation, client control, career path, and work life balance. The employees at IBM go through continuous performance evaluations which are classified as personal business commitment and individual develop plan. The evaluation process proceeds in the following way: first the employee should set their own goals and the manager will then ensure that the employee's goals are connected with the divisions and IBM's goals and values. The employee her/himself is encouraged to maintain a specific database of their own achievements. Lastly, the evaluation and ranking will be based on the employees' performances and accomplishments.

The ideal behind the evaluation is not simply just to evaluate the individual performances but also to motivate and encourage the employees to achieve higher goals. This is done by trying to understand how these individuals are as people in terms of thriving for excellence, creating trust and willingness to develop and so on. Thus, in other words IBM's evaluation systems provide a certain type of regulation direction indicating how one should behave and what should one become. This way the company can enhance its organizational identity development process while performing their managerial identity work. When managers are perceived as counselors or mentors who try to provide a direction to help the employee in her/his won career planning, they are actually trying to regulate the employees' "inside" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002) by raising questions like who I want to be or who I want to become. Alvesson and Kärreman (2007) label this kind of control as aspirational control as the intention of the managerial work here is to attach the employees with a particular career goal and prospect.

"To reinforce the values, the values represent the big part of things we do. The values are present in our performance process, so the targets are rapped around the values. It is not something you invent one time and forget about it. Initiatives are linked around the values and performances, so everything is connected to the values and that is reinforcing them within an organization. You see a specific part under each values but it is related to the values. For instance, sharing knowledge internally is a rule under innovation because that would never happen in an isolated way to trying to bring down all the silos of that. "

IBM Human Capital Manager

IBM uses values in its evaluation measurement to regulate its employees' behavior and performance. This also demonstrates a form of structural control the company practices. Organization identification is facilitated through a constant identity work in terms of constructing a more coherence, distinctive and committed work force identity. According to O'reilly (1991, in Dutton 1994) stronger identification is possible when the employees' attitudes and behaviors are

in fit with the organization identity. Moreover, the company also uses client control to regulate its employees' behavior which means that the clients also play a part in consultants' evaluation measurement process.

"The clients are obligated to rate us after the project is done and this is also counted as a part of performance evaluation."

<div align="right">IBM Consultant</div>

We may draw a suggestion here that evaluation system is not simply just about separating the low performance and top performance from each but to practice identity work and constructing a stronger organizational identity through self-identity reconstruction. Alvesson and Willmott (2002) claim that identity regulation; identity work and self-identity are all interrelated and have a complementary reciprocal influence on each other. For example, IBM is well known for its top performer culture and thus this identity is strongly linked with excellence. Therefore by identifying the top performers is a way for the company to maintain or rebuild on its existing culture. According to Alvesson and Kärreman (2007:721) aspirational control has an influence on individual "motivation", "self-confidence" and "compliance" which affects the construction of one's self-identity. The authors also stress that self-esteem is also tightly connected to career progress.

"There are lots of opportunities within IBM, it is not a in or out partnership system like the other consultancies. Here we have a bit of everything for everybody for instance, one may switch roles from consultancy to internal roles or to specialist roles depending on one's interest."

<div align="right">IBM Consultant</div>

However,

"In IBM we do offer different kinds of career path for our employees. But unfortunately in reality if one moves from consultancy to an internal role, one may never have the opportunity of getting back to the consultancy role again."

Senior IBM Manager

IBM offers a transparent and predictable career path for its employees. Unlike the other consultancy companies, IBM's career path is not based on a partnership principle; rather it is more flexible and offers range of opportunities for professional development. The bands indicate one's experience and hierarchical status in the organization. This also means that the higher band level, the wider social network which demonstrates one's ability to influence on one's own personal development, meaning better and challenging projects. Undoubtedly, higher band level also represents better compensation, personal autonomy and higher status. The idea behind the career system is to provoke employees' motivation as the reward and compensation is perceived to be very attractive for some of the employees. As stated earlier, career path may have a great impact on one's self confidence and thus career goals and anticipated identities form a *"joint career/self project"*: *"people define themselves partly through their expected trajectories and forthcoming success"* (Grey, 1994 c.f Alvesson and Kärreman 2007). Based on the interview responses, being a consultant is very challenging and requires a lot of dedication and long hours of work time. Although IBM does not have up or out system, once the individual has decided to step down from the consultant position, chances of going back is very small. This way IBM keeps only the best and the brightest on top, which are motivated and committed to the company based on their free will. This is also a good way to regulate the consultants' identities in terms of creating a more coherence, distinctive GBS identity within IBM. In order to support the employees' work life balance, the company has given more personal autonomy and flexibility to its employees.

"IBM is a very tolerant company. We take good care of people. It is a culture of if someone has a problem such as a family, personal or medical; there is no company like IBM to put so much effort and resources to help the people come back to the track. Other consultancies are more about up or out but we are more like up or if not then you can do a lateral move."

IBM Manager

Sometimes, this type of action helps the employees to re-identify themselves with the organization as it represents a shared understanding between the employer and the employee. Also, by enhancing work life balance, the company is more likely to be perceived as an attractive and understandable employer which may then add more value to employees' existing organizational identification.

In brief, Identity work can be characterized as "forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of precarious sense of coherence and distinctiveness". Self-identity is on the other hand is an outcome of identity regulation and identity work and it can be also comprised of identity work. (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002: 1165). In IBM, much of work is done to regulate the organizational identity; identity regulation and identity work is formed and shaped through elements such as meanings, values and shared understanding. Thus the self-identity of the consultants is derived from repetitious organized narratives which are constructed from a blend of both conscious and unconscious mixture of elements and processes. In this section we have analyzed the necessary HRM efforts and tools effects on organizational identity regulation and control within IBM. In the next section of our analysis, we will identify the importance of self-identity in a work place by discovering various sources of self identification in consultants' life in IBM.

5.3 Self-Identities

The concept of self identity refers to subjective meaning and experience. It answers questions such as who am I, how should I act and could be understood as a process of the construction of identity. Besides, a specific self-image tend to have a high influence on decision making in a logic inherent way. According to Mitchell (1986) *"a particular personal identity implies a certain form of subjectivity, and thereby ties a person's feelings, thinking, and valuing in a particular direction."* Different identities can be identified, for instance, whether a manager defines her/himself as primarily a working professional in a particular company, or as an organization member doing a certain job. The professional may be less eager to act upon the management instructions, whilst the organizational member might be ready to take the company's interest into account. Alvesson (2002) also states that different identities can be identified despite the "objective" work situation is the same. When asked about self-identity, a consultant replies the following:

"In Nordics people are too hung up on their job for their identity, which means people get much more hurt when they lose their job. If you ask them who are you: An Italian guy might say "I am the greatest lover, and Spanish can say "the best son in the world". But a Swede would say "I work for IBM". Swedes like to identify themselves with their jobs."

"My ambition is to be the best father for my kids. For living I work for IBM, and for stimulus. Family is my priority number one. Career path is also important because it is important to have goals for me. . I need to feel that I am developing and learning something every day."

According to Giddens (1991), self-identity can be associated with self images, traits or social attributes. In IBM's case, many consultants identify themselves with various attributes such as their professions, their social networks within their organization or different things they value in life. These different sources of self identification create a variety of identities in the work

place. As Mitchell (1986) stated that self identities involve some level of subjectivity and that affects the person's values, logic, decisions and reactions, therefore one can claim that variety of self identification sources bring variety of thinking, valuation, and feelings in to the work place and that effects the way job is accomplished. In the next section we will analyze more specific sources of self identification in IBM.

5.3.1 Social Connections and Interactions

Managing social relationship is highly important in knowledge intensive firms. Structural as well as individual attachment can be developed though relationship exchange in organizations. According to Broshak (2001), structural attachments provide regulations and guidelines to manage the relationship. Alternatively, Individual Attachments are often being referred as personal skills, interpersonal and knowledge relationships developed by the employees who are in charge of collaborative communication. The difference between these two types of attachments is that the former is not dependent on a specific individual whereas interpersonal attachments illustrate a bonded relationship created and maintained by key individuals (Sharma, 1997, cited in Larson, & Pepper, 2003). As noted earlier, social connection and interactions are extremely important in IBM as it is the best channel for the consultants to find projects that are challenging and interesting for them.

A consultant who is also a salesperson in IBM stated that

"It is a network based system I keep contact with. The reason for me to come back to office is because there are people depending on me and calling me at work, if I stop showing up people will call others and I would miss interesting tasks."

Basically he is stating that the networks are crucially important in a knowledge intensive firm like IBM Business Services.

Another consultant says;

"Networking is very important in IBM and the reason is that; if you want to find the right people and projects you need a network."

Both quotations emphasize the importance and direct effect of networking and social connections in their jobs. In these frames, one can claim that in IBM Individual Attachments are employed by consultants and are highly important in terms of fulfilling the job. When considering the acquisitions that IBM goes through, the effect of such systems are debatable. In a company like IBM, networking and individual attachments are significantly important and necessary. However this also means that for the ones who are merged into the organization recently, it is not as easy to get the same chances as the members of larger networks.

One of the consultants stated that

"In IBM it is crucial to be connected to the right people in the organization, only they can get you the good projects".

In an environment as this, it is expected to rely on Individual Attachments.

5.4 Sources of Self Identification

After conducting fourteen interviews with consultants of different levels in IBM Malmo Office, we identified several sources of self identity for consultants. Sometimes many self

identity sources could be discovered at one consultant. Namely, a consultant could state that being a successful family father/mother is one's self identity whilst being a member of a group/profession in an organization. We identified two major self identity sources in IBM. These are the professions of consultants and the networks/groups that they are part of. In this section you will read about the different self identities of IBM Malmo consultants.

5.4.1 Profession Orientation

New structure of the professional life brought major changes on the preferences of employees and their career paths. These changes were hierarchical; disappearance of middle managerial levels, strategically; choosing the bests to employ and ignore the importance of the relationship between employee and employer and change on human resource strategies; such as giving up on employee career path planning for employees (Allred, Snow and Miles. 1996). There have been several changes in strategies and structures of the organizations; and actions as these triggered a shift among the employees and pushed them to be more profession oriented since the organizations broke the trust relationship (Allred *et al.* 1996). Especially in knowledge intensive firms, the competition for positions increased day by day and only the best among bests could be employed (Alvesson, 2004). Due to the situation, employees tried to protect themselves and understood the importance of continuous self improvement strategy. This way the major source of self development is the job itself and thus the employees prioritize the projects over organizations. This makes them very employable in any kinds of organization as long as they have devoted themselves fully to their profession and projects. In IBM many consultants share this attitude. They are mostly aware of the system and that only projects can keep them employed in IBM. One IBM consultant says:

"I am trying to fill my time by doing e-training when not having projects but it is very difficult to keep the motivation up."

The projects are the main source of motivation and improvement for many consultants. Getting involved in exciting projects is motivating, challenging and interesting for them.

"It allows you to gain new knowledge, meet new people and take up new challenges. To motivate a team in IBM one should be able to find interesting projects, give training and support management."

A strong professional identity can serve the organization in a positive way (Russo, 1998). For example, professionals who recognize themselves as members of a profession would be more willing to take more challenging and stressful work tasks without blaming the organization for the heavy workload as they believe that represents a part of their occupational nature (Russo, 1998). Knowledge intensive firms like IBM are based on this concept. The heavy work load on consultants is presented as natural since many of them are profession oriented and willing to improve themselves via new responsibilities. In the next section we will analyze another source of self identity in IBM Malmo office.

5.4.2 Social Identification

The organizational literature is strongly dominated by the idea that identity represents a sense of coherence, a distinctiveness of a person, a group or an organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985). According to Alvesson and Sveningsson (2009) the term identity has been frequently addresses in the context of some ambiguity and uncertainty with an aim to produce a coherent, positive and distinct version of e.g. an occupation, a company or a person. Nevertheless, the authors describe the nature of consultancy work as ambiguous and vague. As a result more fragmented and vulnerable identities might be found in knowledge intensive organizations. In order to avoid incoherence and fragmented identities Tajfel suggests that when the individual

acknowledge his belongingness to a certain social group together with some emotional and value, this significances to him of this group membership" (Tajfel, 1972: 292 in Hogg and Terry, 2000: 122). Alvesson (1995) also stress the importance of achieving cohesion among the employees. He argues that it is very crucial for the organization to recall the importance of creating a "we-sense" in order to build a strong feeling of belonging in the organization. Therefore, uncertainty and anxiety caused by the lack of identity confirmation may lead to serious identity problems within the organization (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2009).

According to the interview results, a sense of belonging is perceived relatively low within IBM as well as the concept of "We-sense". This has indicated consultants' identity-struggles and thus played a vital role in facilitating incoherence and fragmented identities within the organization.

"We should create a sense of belonging and meet more often. I feel I belong to this office, but in my competence area I only have two colleagues here. If I wouldn't like to learn from my colleagues I would start my own consultant business. For me, one thing I miss is to meet my colleagues and talk more than just business. In PWC there were parties every month. Segmenting employees' is extremely important. And this has been hindered the informal knowledge sharing."

IBM Consultant

" When I was working in U.K there was all sorts of after work and get together events, but here in Sweden we don't really have that and I think it is a pity. These kinds of events allow you to share both informal and formal knowledge with your colleagues."

IBM Consultant

Based on our interview results, most of the consultants in IBM do not identify themselves with the organization. The reason for the organizational de-identification and commitment is the lack of the sense of belongingness. Most of the consultants we interviewed indicated the fact that they wish to have more support from their own competence team. But because the consultants are located in different countries, it is almost impossible for the whole team to meet. Therefore, the consultants express the difficulties of not being able to share or discuss their area of specialty with the rest of the team in a fastest and easiest way. Social events are also perceived to be rare in IBM and thus this has hindered both the formal and informal knowledge sharing according to the consultants. Alvesson (1995) explains that the sense of "we" strengthens the employees' sense of belonging to a certain organization and this ideal often emerges when individuals with similar background and interests gather on a regular basis. Thus, if such base is solid, then the employees are more likely to have a stronger identification towards the organization which also has a positive impact on their loyalty and commitment to the company.

However, in IBM consultants chose to identify themselves more with their former employer instead of IBM. Therefore, the second source of identification detected in IBM Global Business Services was the former organizations of consultants. Many of them used the term "*I am an ex PWC worker not an IBMer*". This might create bigger problems in longer terms in IBM's organizational identity control and regulation strategies due to that the consultants repeatedly articulate: *"It was something to be employed by PWC"*. Besides being proud of being an ex-PWC employer, in IBM these people, as expected, stick together and support each other in the organization. They are highly relying on their social contacts and networks. The main source of their identification is their former employer and most of them find this prestigious. One of the ex-PWC states: *"I was very loyal to my old company, PWC, but I do not feel the same about IBM. I am only here for my own good"*. Alvesson *et al.* (2002) argues that a social group can become the source of one's self identity in an organization, and the ex-PWC group in IBM constitutes one example of this, as they are identifying themselves in a way that gives them a shared history and keeps them together.

Another factor triggering this sub-grouping in IBM is because the key to the success in the organization is to have right connections and reach good projects. This strategy helps creating different groups in IBM. As stated earlier in the empirical part a consultant commented that,

"It is a network based system I keep contact with. The reason for me to come back to office to work is because there are people depending on me and calling me at work. If I stop showing up people will call others and I would miss interesting tasks."

"Networking is very important in IBM and the reason is that if you want to find the right people and projects you need a network."

Both quotations emphasize the importance and direct effect of networking and social connections on their jobs.

5.4.3 Family and Benefit Orientation

Other than the two obvious sources of self identity, there are other identification sources in IBM. Identifying him or herself as a responsible family member (mother/father figure) is a strong source for many consultants. It is very common that people with families and kids prioritized these over IBM.

A second self identification made by consultants is "benefits oriented person" which is mainly focusing on financial benefits received from the company and do not care about anything else or appreciate the organization.

"I was very loyal to my old company, PWC, but I do not feel the same about IBM. I am only here for my own good."

"The reason for me to come back to work is the salary itself, compensation is more important."

As the interviewees stated above, some of them do not prioritize the organization or their feelings for the organization. The compensation, projects, and self development are more important for them. Their idea of loyalty towards the organization is limited with the ethical rules and leaving the company for a better opportunity is always present in their minds. Therefore they are mainly benefit oriented individuals.

Due to the space constraint we will not be able to analyze these two other self identity sources in IBM. Still, we would like to state that there are other self identity sources for consultants in IBM Malmo Office.

In this chapter we have seen that consultant did not really internalize the values, in other words the regulatory efforts of management. The main reason for that is the values are very common sense for them, so it does not feel as something special, in other words; even though they identify themselves with the organization's values, they don't fully identify the values with the organization itself; therefore values appear to be not affective as an identity regulation tool in IBM. Behavioral identity work is practiced through various HR efforts such as performance evaluation, career path, compensation and benefit and work life balance. The aim behind these HRM tools is to help the employees to achieve higher goals and motivate them along their career path and to identify themselves with the company. As mentioned before, self identity refers to subjective meaning and experience and it is known to be affective on decision making process. In IBM consultants identify themselves with several identity sources such as their professions, social network, family and benefit and former employer identification. The main sources of self identities identified in IBM are profession and networks oriented consultants. We concluded that the reason behind this identification might be the flexible nature of knowledge intensive firms

and ambitious quality of consultancy work. Many of the IBM consultants are aware that the projects are the main source for self development and it is also the fastest way to extent one's social network. Lastly, there is a strong social identification within IBM. Many of the consultants still prefer to identify themselves with their former employees than with IBM. We believe that there are several reasons for this such as strong PwC legacy, weak identity work etc. However, it is obvious that by relying on the existing social relationships and networks it enables the consultants to find better projects opportunities.

5.5 Limitations

As stated before, this study focuses on the IBM Global Business Services office in Malmo. Due to the reality that they are experiencing in IBM, we think they are aware of the problems they might already have. As a result of the acquisitions they are aware that they need alignments for the organizational identity regulation. Caused by the proximity of Malmo Office, and the opportunities to contact people easily, and interview face to face, our research is limited with one office of IBM. We believe, owing to the culture, traditions, and values of Sweden and Swedish society, the results of our interviews and analysis can only be applicable to IBM offices in Sweden, in view of the fact that in Sweden, employment law, employee rights, and approach to business life can be different than other IBM Offices at different places in the world. Given that our studies are about professional service firms, it is limited to the consultancy section of the Malmo Office.

During our interviews we detected various sources of self identification. However analyzing every specific source of identification lies beyond the scope of this research; this study therefore limits itself with only two sources of self identification and identity regulation accordingly. The target group of this study was chosen by our contact in IBM GBS Office; hence we had no power on controlling the numbers of interviewees from each gender, age, profession etc.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter, we will conclude the results of our research findings and discuss the challenges and IBM is facing is their current identity work. Lastly we will provide some recommendations to the company.
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To answer our research questions: How do the regulatory efforts of the management affect identity work? What are the various sources of self identity for consultants? We have primarily used the Alvesson and Willmott (2002) model to illustrate the relationships between identity regulation, identity work and self-identity. As presented in our analysis, in IBM, identity regulation is performed through controlling HR efforts such as: managerial work, values, strategies, career path, personal business commitment, individual development plan, compensation and salary, work life balance and client control. In this thesis we have explored two types of control such as socio-ideological and technocratic control in order to illustrate IBM's identity work. In the former we have investigated company's belief and ideologies' influence on the employees such as values and strategies and in the latter we have analyzed regulated behaviour controls such as career paths, feedback procedures, and work and life balance. However, our analysis has indicated that the identity work performed by the IBM managers has pointed to be weak in terms of integrating the employees' believes in alignment with the organizational values and strategies. The interview results have indicated that most of the consultants have a weak organizational identification towards IBM; instead, they identify more with their profession and excellence delivery. Thus, we believe that excellent consultancy project and feedback seem to provide a great chance of involving identity work in IBM which has enabled the consultants to have a sense of securing identity. Therefore, the company should continue to emphasize on its resource management in terms of meeting the basic needs of the consultants and consequently strengthen their organizational commitment and loyalty. Nevertheless, our findings have showed that the company managers and junior consultants are

more identified the organization. As discussed above they have fully internalized the company strategy and values and thus have to come to understand the connection between the values and their own job tasks.

On the subject of our second research question, this research have showed us that in IBM there are various sources of self identification such as profession, network and family and benefit oriented and former employer identification identities. The profession oriented seems to identify themselves more with the consultancy business and profession which has been proven to be their main source of motivation. We feel that this is because the consultants are very much self-driven in nature and thus they thrive for challenges and further self-development. Networks are also crucially important for consultants as it is the best way to search out challenging and interesting projects. Family oriented source of identity is also quite common since many of the consultants identified themselves as farther or mother. There are also few consultants who identified themselves to be benefit oriented. However, most of the consultants in IBM expressed a relaxed attitude to benefit and compensation, highlighting the self-development to be the most significant aspect of work. It is evident, that when one company acquires another, identity tension is unavoidable (Pepper and Larsson, 2006). In fact "Becoming identified" (Glynn, 1998, in Kuhn & Nelson, 2002, p. 8) may include a phase of disidentification. In IBM, many of the consultants have remained their identification towards their former employers. Today, there are still employees who identify themselves as *Ex-PwC* after quite few years working for IBM. We believe that there might be several different reasons behind the consultants de-identification towards the company such as the causes of numbers of mergers and acquisitions, the nature of their autonomy work etc. However, we feel that the biggest reason relies in the lack of sense of belongingness and low degree in "We-sense" concept as there are not any kinds of social activities arranged in the effort of bringing the consultants together. Alvesson and Robertson (2006: 199) emphasize that "a self-categorization which indicates belongingness to an exclusive group and provides for feelings of high-esteem is more likely to generate a degree of normative control, self-discipline, consultants to work collaboratively with others in an organization context". According to Kunda (1992) having a distinctive strong social identity allows the

organization to better shape and regulates predictable, responsible behaviors around the work processes in a self-directed environment like consultancy business. Therefore, in order to create a successful coherence identity within the organization, IBM should invest more identity work in terms of constructing a strong sense of belongingness. Identification with the company does not happen only through formal identity work; instead it can be also achieved through informal social activities. This may facilitate the bonding process among the consults and extent their social ties with no limit which is also a great way for them to exchange knowledge and information.

To conclude, the nature of consultancy work involves high degree of ambiguity and thus it is very important to construct a strong sense of organizational identity in terms of creating a sense of coherence and consistency which requires intensive identity work. Identity represents a central element of organization regulation and therefore a strongly shared identity may help the consultants to stabilize a sense of security in an ambiguous, fast changing business environment. As a final point, according to Dutton (1994:244) "The stronger the attractiveness of the perceived organizational identity the stronger a person's organizational identification".

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8. Appendix I

Interview Questions

- Can you tell us about your background?

- Which position do you hold in IBM?

- Why were you chosen for this position? Can you make your own decisions in your position?

- When did you join the company?

- Why did you join IBM?

- How do you like working for IBM?

- Were you always interested in what you do?

- Was IBM your first choice employer if not then what would be the company you would like to work with?

- What makes you come back every day?

- What motivates you at work?

- What makes you work hard?

- Do you enjoy challenging tasks? - Do you enjoy routine tasks?

- Do you work over time a lot?

- How do you deal with frustration and stress at work?

- How do you reflect the company values in your work and how does it affect your motivation?

- What do you value in life? What are your values?

- What are your priorities in life? Career, goals, family life, personal life etc…….

- Do you feel that you understand the linkage between company values, strategy and goals and how has that been reflected in way you work and your way of thinking?

- Do you perceive your role important in the organization?

- How has the company tried to engage all the employees in encouraging them to speak up their minds freely?

- Where do you see yourself in 3 years?

- How has the financial crisis affected you?

- What is so great about IBM and why are the improvements areas that are needed within in company?

- Do you feel appreciated in the company?

- Have you ever had "sitting on the bench" experience? How did you deal with that situation? – Did you feel isolated and "lonely" like no one cared for you?

- Are you proud of working for IBM, do you think it gives you a prestigious status?

- Do you think your skills are fully utilized within IBM?

- How would you describe yourself to a person you don't know?