CHALMERS
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Impact of employees´ professional backgrounds on organizational identity and project chemistry in the construction industry

Master's Thesis in the Master's Programme Design and Construction Project Management

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Examensarbete BOMX02-17-26/ Institutionen för arkitektur och samhällsbyggnadsteknik,
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ABSTRACT

This thesis is based on a case study performed at one of the largest engineering and consulting companies in Sweden, which operates within the energy-, industrial- and infrastructure sector. The segment of the company operating in the construction industry is expanding rapidly and recruits heavily through mergers with smaller existing consulting companies and through recruiting individuals from contractor companies. This results in people with backgrounds from different trades in the industry working side by side in what seems to be a highly heterogeneous organization. This study aims to examine what impact the varying professional backgrounds of the employees, working in the construction industry at the mentioned company, have on the organizational identity. The purpose is also to analyse what consequences these various backgrounds have on project chemistry. The aim is pursued using an identity theory lens to analyse the findings from the case study.

The study revealed that there exist a strong social identity of "Being a contractor" among the people with backgrounds in contracting companies, i.e. who have experience from onsite construction work. The interviews showed that the individuals with onsite experience, now working as consultants, refused to adopt the epithet of "consultant". They chose to spend all their working hours at the constructions sites with the project's contractors and not at the office with their consultant colleagues. The findings indicate that people with experience from building sites identify themselves foremost with "Being a contractor" rather than with an organizational identity. This became extra clear in one interview where one of these individuals was interviewed at a construction site and was wearing both jacket and hard hat with the contractor's logo. The only visible connection to the consultant's own company was a discreet logo on a key string around the neck, partly concealed by the jacket.

There was a dominant narrative attached to the identity of "Being a contractor" which often resulted in these members displaying resistance towards project participants who lack experience from onsite construction work. One interview was conducted with two individuals at the same time, one of the respondents had this experience and the other one lacked it. The interviewees stated that they were friends but throughout the interview they questioned each other's' views and statements, which was a result of the mindset in their particular professional backgrounds. This interaction made it clear how a professional background entails a specific narrative and that these narratives seem to block not only other narratives but also a common organizational identity. The authors to this thesis argue that this resistance can have a negative impact on project chemistry and on overall project success.

Key words: construction industry, identity theory, social identity, organizational identity, consultant, contractor, constructability, “Being a contractor”, project chemistry

Påverkan av anställdas yrkesbakgrund på organisationsidentitet och projektkemi inom byggbranschen

Examensarbete inom masterprogrammet Design and Construction Project Management

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SAMMANFATTNING

Detta examensarbete är baserat på en fallstudie på ett av de största ingenjörs- och konsultföretagen i Sverige, som är verksamt inom både energi-, industri- och infrastruktursektorn. Den del av företaget som är verksamt inom byggbranschen expanderar snabbt och rekryterar stort via förvärv av mindre konsultföretag och individer från entreprenörsföretag. Detta resulterar i att personer med olika professionella bakgrunder från, olika yrken inom branschen, arbetar sida vid sida inom vad som verkar vara en väldigt heterogen organisation. Denna studie syftar till att undersöka vilken inverkan medarbetarnas varierande professionella bakgrunder har på organisationsidentiteten. Syftet är även att analysera vilken inverkan dessa bakgrunder har på personkemin inom projekten. Studiens syfte fullföljs genom att analysera de resultat som framkommer i fallstudien genom en lins baserad på identitetsteori.

Studien pekar på att det förekommer en stark identitet av “att vara en entreprenör” bland de personer som har en professionell bakgrund i entreprenörsföretag och har erfarenhet från byggarbetsplatser. Intervjuerna visade på att de individerna med erfarenhet från byggarbetsplatser, som idag arbetar som konsulter, vägrade att anta epitetet ”konsult”. De valde att spendera all sin arbetstid ute på byggarbetsplatser tillsammans med entreprenörerna i projekten istället för på sitt eget kontor tillsammans med sina konsultkollegor. Studiens resultat tyder på att personer med erfarenhet från byggarbetsplatser först och främst identifierar sig som ”att vara en entreprenör” istället för med en organisationsidentitet. Detta blev extra tydligt under en intervju där en av dessa personer blev intervjuad på ett bygge och bar både en jacka och en hjälm med entreprenörens logga. Den enda synliga kopplingen till konsultens egna företag var en diskret logga på ett nyckelband runt halsen, som delvis doldes av jackan.

Det fanns en stark självbild kopplad till ”att vara en entreprenör” som ofta resulterade i att dessa personer visade ett tydligt motstånd mot de personer som saknar erfarenheter från byggarbetsplatser. En intervju genomfördes med två personer samtidigt, en hade dessa erfarenheter och en hade dem inte. Respondenterna sa att de var vänner men under hela intervjun ifrågasatte de varandras uttalanden och åsikter, vilka var ett resultat av ett tankesätt från deras professionella bakgrunder. Detta samspel gjorde det tydligt hur en professionell bakgrund medför en specifik självbild och att dessa självbilder inte bara blockerar andra självbilder utan även en gemensam organisationsidentitet. Författarna till detta examensarbete hävdar att detta motstånd kan resultera i negativa konsekvenser för både personkemin i projekt och för hur lyckat ett projekt blir.

Nyckelord: byggbranschen, identitetsteori, social identitet, organisationsidentitet, konsult, entreprenör, byggbarhet, ”att vara en entreprenör”, personkemi i byggprojekt

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Preface

This master thesis has been part of the M.Sc. program in Civil engineering of 120 ECTS, Design and Construction Project Management, at Chalmers University of Technology. The thesis has been performed during the spring semester 2017 at the Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering, at the Division of Construction Management. The authors are fifth year graduates and the thesis extends to 30 ECTS. The study aims to explore and problematize the impacts of professional backgrounds in the construction industry on organizational identity and project chemistry.

First and foremost we would like to express our gratitude to our main supervisor Martin Löwstedt, Senior Lecturer at Architecture and Civil Engineering, Construction Management at Chalmers University of Technology, for the great input and support with our work. We would like to thank our contact Per Lorentsson and supervisor Martin Arvidsson at the Company, who assisted with necessary information and support in interviewee selection. We would also like to thank all of the employees at the Company who has designated their time and insights that has enabled this master thesis.

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Sophia Fransson
Axel Sundelius

Keywords and concepts

Here follows a summary of the keywords and concepts discussed in this thesis which serves as a basis for the analysis.

The identity concept

Social categorization – Simplifies the social environment.

Social comparison – Aspects only become emergent in relation to others.

Personal identity – Image of oneself, individual level.

Social identity – Shared identity by groups and collectives, group level.

Organizational identity – Central, distinctive and enduring aspects of an organization.

Strong identity - Widely shared perceptions, articulated by the members.

Downward social comparison – Look down at the less fortunate. Highlighting differences.

Upward social comparison – Look up for inspiration to improve. Highlighting similarities.

The identification process

Components of identification:

Cognitive awareness – “I am A”
Evaluative sense – “I value A”
Emotional investment – “I feel about A”

Self-referential – Identification through affinity, recognition of similarities.

Self-defining – Identification through emulation, changes to become more similar. Not only cognitively but also through feelings as *affections reinforce identification*.

A shared identity – Creates commitment, which in turn reinforces the identity.

Sensebreaking – In order to create sense, there must first exist questions regarding an individual’s self that need answering.

Sensegiving – Fills the void of information that has emerged when the individual began to question the present self.

Top-down – The organization actively influences its members to shape their identities to comply with the laid down values and beliefs of the organization.

Bottom-down - Members of an organization want to reshape their identities of their own will in order to become more like the "ideal" version of a member of the organization in question.

In-group - The sub-group the individual is a part of. Members share more common features.

Out-groups – Other groups that co-exists within the larger group. These members share less common features with the in-group.

Out-group bias exist on three conditions**:**
- Strong identification with the in-group.
- A sense of competition and comparison with the out-group exist.
- The out-group is prominent to the in-group.

Project chemistry

Good project chemistry is characterized by:
- Close social relations between the team members.
- An open and friendly atmosphere.
- Low level of conflict.
- High motivation, focus, morale and team dedication.

1 Introduction

The construction industry has been referred to as “the epitome of a project-based industry” (Löwstedt, 2015, p.2) and involves multiple actors in every building project. The industry has often been accused of reluctance towards change but researchers have begun to question the discourse regarding how the industry should achieve the prescribed change. It is argued that there has not been sufficient research that provides explanations to how industry practise is linked to performance. A socio-cultural perspective have been suggested to unravel the linkage between practise and performance due to its many actors and characterization of the temporary organization. This study endeavours to contribute to this requested field of research.

1.1 Background

The starting point of this thesis was a preliminary screening of one of the main segments of one of the largest engineering and consulting companies in Sweden, which operates within the energy-, industrial- and infrastructure sector. The segment in question provides consulting services within the construction industry. This screening was done through a meeting with the Assistant Segment Manager for the segment in question. It was found in the meeting that the aim of the Company, as well as the segment, is to have the broadest spectrum of expertise of the consulting companies within the industry. This is an interesting aim since the construction industry can be said to be moving towards specialization, thus it seems like the Company is moving in the opposite direction. A mean for the segment to achieve this aim is recruiting competence from various parts of the industry. The segment is expanding rapidly and recruits heavily through mergers with smaller existing consulting companies and through recruiting individuals from contractor companies. This results in people with backgrounds from different trades in the industry working side by side in what seems to be a highly heterogeneous organization. This raises the question what impact these various backgrounds among the employees have on the organization and the environment they work within?

There are plenty of studies focusing on strategic factors to increase performance in the construction industry, such as choice of procurement strategy, applying different management methods (for example Lean and just-in-time production) and new construction methods. However, according to Ankrah & Langford (2011) studies focusing on more soft factors such as the impact of culture and organizational identity have only recently gained momentum. Ashforth et al. (2008) states that the concept of identity is highly connected to how people perceive their surroundings and why they behave in a certain way in these surroundings. According to Löwstedt and Räisänen (2014) extensive research suggests that people working in the construction industry identify themselves primarily with the craft and trade associated with construction work, rather than with the organization they work for or their specific work category. Is this also the case within the segment at the Company, where people from different trades are gathered within one organization? Do the employees at this segment identify with their organization or the trade of the industry?

The construction industry is a project-based industry and is characterized by construction projects (Löwstedt, 2015). These projects only exist for a limited period of time and is made up by numerous actors in the industry who take part in the project for a varying amount of time. After the completion of a project all project participants return to their employer's organization. Thus, several organizations and trades are represented within a construction project. One of the more frequently reported causes of poor project performance in the construction industry is conflicts between project members. These conflicts often arise from project members having different objectives due to them representing different organizations, trades and perspectives. Therefore the project participants do not endeavour to work towards the same goals (Ankrah & Langford, 2011). The structural fragmentation of the industry puts a strain on collaboration, project chemistry and project performance (Nicolini, 2002). If these characteristics can be said to have an impact on a project, it could be presumed that they also would have an impact on an organization that possesses the same characteristics, which is the case for the Company where the employees' varying professional backgrounds to a great extent resemble those found within a construction project.

This thesis is based on a case study conducted at one of the largest technological consulting companies in Sweden, from here on referred to as the Company, with the purpose to explore the questions raised in this introduction through the lens of identity theory. The case study was performed at a particular section at the Company, from here on referred to as section X. The section is part of one of the main segments of the Company that operate within the construction industry and section X provides management services related to construction.

1.2 Aim and objectives

The overall aim of the study is to examine what impacts the varying professional backgrounds of the employees at the Company has on the organizational identity and on project chemistry. The purpose is also to explore in what form these impacts appear. In order to fulfil the aim the following specific objectives have been formulated:

- What professional background do the employees have at section X?
- The Company as a consultant company recruits people from the contractor-side, which makes the line between the traditional roles of contractor and consultant indistinct. How does this affect the employee's professional identity, culture and norms within the section?
- How does the organizational identity and the perception of "Who we are" differ between the employees with a background in on site construction work and the employees with backgrounds only as consultants?
- How does the identity affect project chemistry and project performance in the interaction between the Company's employees and outside parties?

1.3 Limitations

The limitations of this study are connected to the fact that the study only will include section X at the Company. There are various aspects to identity theory and this study will address organizational identity and social identity. The analysis and discussion will specifically address identity and culture within the construction industry and will not include research applied to other industries. Demarcations regarding the literature review, which constitutes the base for the theoretical framework, includes searching for scientific articles and books about identity- and culture theory related only to the construction industry and specifically regarding consultants and contractors.

2 Theoretical framework

This chapter provides the theoretical framework for the study that has been compiled through a literature review. The chapter has been divided into two main sections, the first section addresses identity theory in general and its main findings from some of the paramount researchers in this field. The second section addresses identity theory applied to the construction industry. In this section organizational identity within consultant companies is investigated and a discussion regarding professionalism, professional identity and work ethics within the construction industry is presented.

2.1 Identity theory

This section accounts for the scope of identity theory, starting with a historical retrospect of the research area. This is followed by a more explicit presentation of identity theory and a definition of the process of identification. This process is then contextualised in the following section where the impact of identification, on both individual level and organizational level, is analysed. The section is concluded with a discussion regarding the impacts of identification in organizations.

2.1.1 Historical retrospect

The theory of identity and the link between identity and the ego, role and the organization appeared in the early development of organizational research according to Ashforth et al. (2008). Relationships, feelings and the sense of affinity is deeply intertwined with the identity a person identifies with. This identity, and the roles within it, is a part of who you are and gives expression to the skills and abilities associated with it. Who we are is defined by our roles, relationships and feelings and thus by our identity (Ashforth et al., 2008).

Frederick Taylor (1911) touches on this topic in his well-known work *"The Principles of Scientific Management"*, where he laid out his view of organization theory. Taylor focused on efficiency and regarded workers as commodities that should be controlled and maximized to increase profit. Taylor argued that the interests of individuals and organizations should become "identical" and that "the true interests of the two are one and the same" (Taylor, 1911, p. 10). He also argued that organizations cannot achieve long-term success unless they are underpinned by success achieved by each of the employees and vice versa. This should be achieved through a "close, intimate, personal cooperation between the management and the men" (Taylor, 1911, p. 26). This suggests a link between the identity of an employee and the employing organization that can result in an enhanced performance and organizational success.

Chester Barnard (1938/1968) also mentioned this phenomenon in his book "*The Functions of the Executive"*, where he analysed how organizations actually operate, unlike previous approaches that emphasized prescriptive principles. Barnard discussed the link between the individual and the organization and in his view, this link generates a sense of conviction and willingness towards the organization. The idea of a close connection between organization and employees, which is rooted in the perception, identity and feelings of the employees, has clearly existed since the early days of organizational research.

Identity theory has gained traction throughout the years and became widely accepted with the publications of Albert and Whetten (1985); Ashforth and Mael (1989); and Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail (1994). Identification can be seen both as a state of being, symbolizing stability, as well as a process of transformation, becoming an identity (Ashforth, 2001; Cheney & Tompkins, 1987). Because of Albert, Ashforth, and Dutton, identity and identification are viewed as an underlying construct in the way that every entity within an organization have a desire to have a sense of who or what it is and how the entities are associated with each other. Barnard, Taylor and Ashforth all describes the nature of the relationship between the self and the social context it arises within and connect this to the identity concept. Identity and the process of identification is somewhat described as the critical glue that holds the group or organization together, forming collectives and creates a feeling of affinity.

Ashforth et al. (2008) further explains that as the environment, i.e. a society or an organization, becomes more turbulent and the relation between the individual and the organization becomes weak, the desire for some kind of work-based identification is likely to increase among the individuals. The search for identity is an essential human desire and identification with collectives or roles defines the self of the individual in the social landscape.

2.1.2 Identity – “Who am I?” and “Who are we?”

These questions stated above are part of an individual's self-definition in a social context and possible answers can be explained by the notion of social identity. When Tajfel (1978) endeavours to explain this complex entity of identity, he first assumes that individuals seek to create a satisfactory self-image. Anchoring his ideas with Festinger’s work *"A theory of social comparison processes"* (1954), Tajfel (1978) describes that the individual's self-definition process is strongly defined by the individual's membership of numerous social groups. These memberships contributes either positively or negatively to the image the individual has of him- or herself in a process of constant comparing and analysing of attributes and actions.

Social categorization

In order to fully understand the phenomenon of social identity one has to consider the concepts of social categorization and social comparison. The process of categorization is according to Tajfel (1968) a mean for the individual to systemize and simplify the surrounding environment. Categorization of one's social environment creates order and simplicity to an otherwise complex and dynamic environment. The categorization begins with the individual as a starting point which subjectively groups persons in the surrounding environment in a manner that makes sense to the individual. This process helps to structure the social environment and creates a sense of subjective order of the social landscape.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) describes the complex phenomenon of social categorization as the construction of a psychological reality for the individual. This occurs when a person realizes him- or herself, i.e. recognises his or hers identity, within the socially defined society which forms the frame for the individual's psychological reality. Individuals are all members of different social groups and tend to seek membership of new groups if these groups have a positive impact on an individual's social identity. Tajfel (1978) explains that no groups live isolated from other groups and that the positive aspects of social identity only become emergent when groups are compared and put in relation to each other.

Identity - personal, social and organizational

Identity exists on three different levels to life. There is the *personal identity* which refers to how an individual sees him- or herself. There is the *social identity* which is closely linked to social groups and networks. Finally there is the *organizational identity* which comprises the traits and characteristics that define an organization and thus also its' members to certain extent. Tajfel (1978) has provided a famous definition of social identity that is deliberately limited to avoid endless discussions of what identity really is and to simplify the infinitely complex image of the individual. Social identity is defined by Tajfel (1978, p. 63) as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership". Social categorization, together with social identity, is considered by Tajfel (1978) as a mean by which individuals seek to create and define their place in society.

In contrast with the term social identity, personal identity is defined as an individual's unique sense of self according to Postmes and Jetten (2006). This unique sense of self can be described as how an individual defines him- or herself and is based on the individual's personality attributes such as qualities, abilities and interests. In contrast with social identity, which is shared by members and distinguishable between groups, a personal identity is unique to the individual. The distinction between social and personal identities is therefore not their attributes but their respective levels of self. As the interest in this thesis lies in the identification with collectives and roles, personal identities will not be considered further.

Moving from the individual's personal identity, via the group's social identity, one reaches the last level of identification; the identity of the organization. Defined by Albert and Whetten (1985), organizational identity can be summed up as the central, permanent and differential characteristics that define an organization. The organizational identity is defined via the answers given by the organizational members to the question "Who are we as an organization?" according to Ashforth et al. (2008). Since the answers may vary among the members of the organization, the shared identity of the members of the organization is something that is difficult to pinpoint. Whetten and Godfrey (1998) experienced this themselves when an insignificant budget cut at their university provoked irrationally harsh discussions. They could only explain this behaviour as being a response to an impending threat to their organizational identity. The identity may not have been prominent earlier, but when faced by an external threat it revealed itself.

Combining these three conceptualizations of identity, an individual's identity inside an organization is viewed as emerging from the central, distinctive and enduring aspects of that social and/or organizational identity that embeds the individual. A strong identity have perceptions that are widely shared and distinctly articulated by the members of the collective or role (Ashforth et al., 2008). A stronger identity gives stronger potential for identification, and also disidentification (i.e. "this is *not* me"). Social identities are usually a mixture of the perceived characteristics of a certain collective or role and the perceived attributes of its members. As social identities are relational and comparative, they change in comparison with others and what is seen as salient traits changes with the comparison situation.

Social comparison

Social comparison links social categorization with social identity. Festinger (1954) lays out his hypotheses that there exists a drive in humans to evaluate their opinions and abilities. Festinger (1954) used the parable of a person's running ability as an example for his hypotheses. In this way, Festinger (1954) shows that the time measured by running a distance is only valued in the light of other peoples' result for the same measurement. The value measured in time is insignificant, it is the comparison that matters. When objective, non-comparable ways of evaluation is not possible, people will evaluate their opinions and abilities by (social) comparison with others. Festinger (1954) explains the consequences of his hypotheses as subjective judgements of what is correct or incorrect opinions and evaluations of abilities entirely depend on the selection they are compared to. The judgment is therefore highly dependent on the reference used. The social comparison process, where we subjectively judge our opinions and abilities based on comparison with our surroundings, therefore plays an important role for the image of ourselves. If the surrounding changes, the judgment will also change.

In the context of social identity, Festinger (1954) argues that a group will become more important to a member as a comparison the more attractive this group is to the member. His theory of social comparison centres on the belief of a drive for self-evaluation and it is in Festinger's (1954) opinion a necessity for such evaluation to be based on comparisons with other people. The need for comparison with others is a human desire and a way of self-enhancement. As there is no feasible way to objectively determine opinions and abilities, the comparison with others is the only way to establish a sense of correctness of one's own perception of objective reality.

Later, Gruder (1971) and Wills (1981) continued on this subject, introducing the concept of downward and upward social comparison. Downward comparison means that a person looks at a group or individual that is perceived as worse off than the individual, as a defensive mean of self-evaluation. This downward social comparison typically makes the person feel better about his or hers own self and personal situation. Upward social comparison is made with the opposite, creating an inspiration to improve and better oneself. In the upward case, people want to highlight the similarities between themselves and the perceived superior group or individual, unlike the downward case, where focus lies in highlighting the differences (Suls et al., 2002).

2.1.3 Identification as a concept

Tajfel (1982) describes two components necessary to achieve the stage of identification. First, you need to be cognitively aware of your membership and second, have an evaluative sense that this awareness is related to some sort of value connotations. Tajfel (1982) also describes a third component of emotional investment in this cognitive awareness and evaluative sense that further strengthens the process of identification. The three components can be described by the phrases: I am A (cognitive awareness), I value A (evaluative sense), and I feel about A (emotional investment). These are the core attributes of identification.

Pratt (1998, p. 172-174) states that identification is either “self-referential” or “self-defining”. Self-referential identification occurs through affinity, by recognition of a group similar to one’s self. In contrast, self-defining identification occurs through emulation, when one’s self changes to become more similar to that group, collective or role. In these definitions identification is seen as a cognitive process. Harquail (1998) added to the discussion that identification also engages feelings and emotional investment. The individual values the identity in question, not only cognitively but also through feelings as affections reinforce identification.

Organizational commitment is also linked to the identification process and overlaps in some cases the construct of social and organization identity. Porter (1979) defines organizational commitment as the relational strength of an organizational member’s identification with its organization and the member’s commitment to the organization. Commitment, and its relation to identification, is in this view more connected to the self-referential concept, while social identity theory have more emphasis on self-definition via organizational membership. Ashforth et al. (2008) describes commitment as a positive attitude towards the organization, but the self and the organization still remain separate entities, clearly distinguishable from one and another. In contrast, organizational identity, as defined previously, can be described as the perception to be one with the organization. As mentioned earlier, there are three levels to identity in life and if an individual subscribes to an organizational identity this would co-exist with the individual’s personal and social identities.

As organizational identity is more intertwined with the self of the individual, the individual defines him- or herself in terms of the organization. The fate of the organization is therefore also the fate of the individual, as argued by Taylor (1911). In comparison, commitment lacks this strong connection to the defining of the individual's self and are somewhat isolated from the fate of the organization according to Ashforth et al. (2008). Organizational identity creates commitment among the members, which in turn reinforce the organizational identity.

2.1.4 Identification in organizations

Ashforth et al. (2008) describes identification as a dynamic process and the constant development of an identity. The process never stops due to new impressions, experiences and surroundings, but there are stages to the process that are more active than others. Sometimes the identification process demands active and conscious decision making and at other times the process is more stable and contributes to solidifying the present state of the identity. Ashforth (2001) identified five motives related to the self to why individuals seek identification. These are *self-knowledge, self-expression, self-coherence, self-continuity,* and finally *self-distinctiveness*. Self-knowledge means that a person locates the self in a context where it can be defined. Self-expression refers to the person’s yearn to express the values and beliefs linked to the self. Self-coherence refers to the maintaining of one coherent self-based on input from several identities that may coexist within the individual. Self-continuity is quite similar to self-coherence but refers to maintaining a coherent self over a period of time instead of over a range of identities. The last motive, self-distinctiveness, refers to the individual appreciating a sense of distinctiveness when compared to other individuals.

Ashforth et al. (2008) identifies the procedure of identification as an interaction between the two entities individual and organization. The authors to that study describe how the individual incorporates certain elements from the group, e.g. an organization, into the personal identity as the process progresses. The results of these incorporations and the display of them to the group is analysed and processed by the individual and form a base for subsequent decisions and actions. The process of identification also entails a story telling by the individual as experiences and elements from the surrounding environment are linked together like a chain of events forming a narrative of the individual (Ashforth et al. 2008). This storytelling is a mean of sensemaking to individuals as it addresses the questions of "Who am I?" as well as "Who did I used to be?" and "Who will I be in the future?". DiSanza and Bullis (1999) identified as many as 14 different identification tactics used by organizations in their communication with their members. A few examples of these tactics are bragging, using the word "we" to create a sense of unity, highlighting certain attributes as desirable, unifying against a common enemy, for example a rival company, and communicating consideration for the individual members.

Pratt (2000) stated that identification is underpinned by the two phenomena *sensebreaking* and *sensegiving*. Sensebreaking means that in order for an individual to create sense of all the aspects of his or hers identity there must first be a need for sensegiving, i.e. there must exist questions such as "Who am I"? and "Who do I want to be?" that need answering. Sensebreaking consists of the questioning of the perception of the individual's present self when asking the questions stated above as well as exploring what values and beliefs are held most deeply and what purpose in life is. This challenging of the self creates a need for more information in order for the individual to make sense of his or hers surrounding.

Sensegiving is the opposite of sensebreaking and fills the void of information that has emerged when the individual began to question the present self. Sensegiving provides the perception of the self with new elements from the collective, e.g. organization, and rebuilds the individual's identity with new features gained from the group (Pratt, 2000). The process of sensebreaking and sensegiving can act in two different ways, either from the top-down or from the bottom-up. The first one occurs when an organization actively influences its members to shape their identities to comply with the laid down values and beliefs of the organization (Cardador & Pratt, 2006). The second one describes the case when members of an organization wants to reshape their identities of their own will in order to become more like the ideal version of a member of the organization in question (Harquail, 1998).

According to Ashforth et al. (2008, p. 343) sensegiving within an organization provides "raw material that individuals use to craft their organization-based identities while signalling the degree to which individuals can incorporate their past experiences into their present selves". Via sensegiving the individual incorporates new attributes and values into their self-image. When these are found satisfactory by the individual and approved by other members of the organization it encourages the individual to further commitment to the identification process and exploration of the organization-based identity. As Weick (1995) stated, individuals form their identities through enacting them in their surrounding environment and analysing the receiving of this identity by other individuals.

2.1.5 Impacts of identification

Ashforth et al. (2008, p. 334) states that "it is an essential human desire to expand the self-concept to include connections with others and to feel a sense of belonging with a larger group". Identification is a big part of organizations because it entails how organizational members navigate through the environment they operate within, i.e. the organization. Which path members choose depends upon how they define themselves and how they communicate this identity to other members of the organization as well as how this identity is perceived. Identity is highly connected to how people perceive their surroundings and why they behave in a certain way in these surroundings. Identity can help explain this behaviour displayed by members of an organization and why they act as they do (Ashforth et al., 2008).

How organizational members act and behave is also linked to organizational success, whether members choose to act according to laid down organizational strategies and policies or not, and therefore a relevant part of business life (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Among the most frequent recorded positive outcomes to an organization from the identification process is improved collaboration, beneficial decision making and increased effort from the members (Ashforth et al., 2008). If organizational members find the image of their organization undesirable the results of the identification process can have negative outcomes for the members such as stress, anxiety and depression according to Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail (1994). This means that it lies in the interest of an organization that its members perceive the organization and its image as desirable since this can result in increased performance and success for the organization.

Identification also matters to organizations because of the aspect of self-enhancement that follows. Ashforth et al. (2008) highlights that a person's self-esteem is linked to the collective self-esteem of the group. This means that identification results in both a group member's sense of "we" and also enhancement of the member's self-esteem because of the feeling of belonging to a desirable group. After a person's identification with a group, Ashforth et al. (2008) suggests that another dimension of self-enhancement begins where the individual strives to become even more like the ideal version of this particular group's members. This is done, for example, by differentiating the so called *in-group* (the sub-group the individual is a part of) from *out-groups* that co-exists within the larger group. The in-group consists of members that share more common features than they do with other members in the larger group which then by definition belongs to the out-group (Ashforth et al., 2008). This can lead to the rise of intergroup conflicts when in-groups display favouritism towards their own members and differentiate themselves from other groups within the organization. However, the mere existence of in-groups and out-groups does not suffice for the rise of conflicts. According to Tajfel and Turner (1979) there are three conditions for so called *out-group bias* to take place, these are 1) when the identification with the in-group is strong, 2) when there exists a sense of competition and comparison with the out-group and 3) when the out-group is prominent to the in-group.

One example of intergroup conflict is the clash that may arise between management and shop floor workers in an organization (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Both groups are part of the same larger group, the organization, but they do not share common features such as training, work tasks and so forth. The two groups may even use different types of expressions and use of language in their everyday work. These features differentiate the two groups from each other and a sense of “we and them” is the result when identification takes place within the two groups. The groups become in-group and out-group respectively to each other. When favouritism occurs towards the in-group’s members the consequence may be a sense of dislike towards the out-group members through strengthening of the positive image of the in-group. This distancing from the other group can lead to poorer collaboration and misunderstandings between the groups that may have an impact on overall organizational success (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Tajfel and Turner (1986, p. 16) also added that social identities are “relational and comparative” which is explained by Ashforth et al. (2008, p. 327) as “group members gain both a descriptive sense of their identity (Who are we?) and an evaluative sense (How good are we?) by contrasting the in-group with a salient out-group(s).”

Albert et al. (2000) points to the clear link between identification and the outcome of a group, e.g. and organization, because of the social aspect that is associated with a collective. An individual’s identification with the collective reduces the sense of uncertainty and discomfort of new surroundings and facilitates for individuals to manoeuvre through life. This phenomenon is highly present in organizational life where identification together with everyday rituals and customs bring meaning to the members of the organizational collective as well as creating mutually held values and beliefs (Ashforth et al., 2008).

2.2 Identity theory applied to the construction industry

This section anchors the previous section within the construction industry and begins with an examination of organizational identity within consulting firms followed by a discussion regarding project chemistry in construction projects. The section is concluded with an immersion into the concept of professionalism, work ethics and professional identity within the industry.

2.2.1 Social identity in the construction industry

According to Löwstedt and Räisänen (2014) there is extensive research which suggests that people working in the construction industry primarily identify themselves with the craft and trade associated with construction work, rather than with the organization they work for or with their specific work category. The industry has often been accused for a traditional masculine mindset and reluctant to embrace change (Löwstedt & Räisänen, 2014). Identification in the construction industry is highly based on what is seen as traditional masculine values and the praise of experiences from construction sites. This satisfies the notion of adherence to an occupation associated with heavy and rough work where you get your hands dirty. The authors to that study found this to be a self-fulfilling phenomenon within the industry. In their study, Löwstedt and Räisänen (2014), adopts the notion proposed by Coupland and Brown (2012); that exploring identity is not enough and researchers should endeavour to identify how processes of identification are produced. Researchers should also turn their focus to what impact these underlying factors have on, for example, organizational practises and outcomes (Coupland and Brown, 2012). Löwstedt and Räisänen (2014) found in their study that identification is maintained across the industry as well as over time since it is constantly reproduced, they also highlight that there has been little research exploring the underlying reasons to why this may be.

Löwstedt and Räisänen (2014) used theory regarding self-reinforcing mechanisms in their study, which serves as a mean for a present pattern in organizations to remain the same. This served as the basis in their attempt to explain the reasons to why identification in the construction industry seem to remain the same. There are various mechanisms that contribute to an organization’s becoming to remain the same according to Löwstedt and Räisänen (2014). One mechanism that was highlighted is called adaptive expectation effects, where a member of an organization is willing to adopt certain preferences and behaviours because of the expectations of other members to do the same. Another mechanism is linked to legitimacy and the fact that if a member does not adopt the mainstream behaviours and values the member risk losing legitimacy in the eyes of other members and being labelled as an outsider. Löwstedt and Räisänen (2014) argues that there is a strong link between self-reinforcing mechanisms and social identity because of the relational aspects that characterizes both phenomena. A strong organizational narrative blocks alternative narratives within an organization and therefore becomes reinforcing. This results in so called blind-spots that prevents the members from questioning the present narrative’s original motives and foundations. These blind-spots are an incentive for inertia. This could to some extent explain the reluctance toward change the industry so often have been accused for because members of the industry are so anchored in their mindset and ways of thinking which prevents them from embracing new perspectives, ideas or notions (Löwstedt and Räisänen, 2014).

Project based work is frequent in the construction industry and projects involve participants from both various professions and various organizations. Members of the industry are forced to constantly renegotiate their boundaries on both an intra- and inter-organizational level in their professional life (Löwstedt & Räisänen, 2014). This puts a strain on collaboration, project performance and project chemistry according to Nicolini (2002). As an environment becomes more turbulent the desire for identification is likely to increase as stated by Ashforth et al. (2008). As the desire for identification becomes more apparent in-group and out-group patterns are also more likely to increase and become more visible. This is supported by Whetten and Godfrey (1998) who found that an identity reveals itself the most when faced with an external threat.

Self-reinforcement within organizations arises from the dominant group imposing its beliefs and behaviours on members not yet belonging to the group and pushing those individuals that won't subscribe further away (Löwstedt & Räisänen, 2014). In their study, the authors found that identification in the construction industry is constructed collectively in relation to two categories of out-groups, as defined by Tajfel and Turner (1986). The first out-group was the out-group within the company at centre of the study and the second out-group included parties outside the industry. Members of the out-group within the company lacked the same experience as members of the in-group, from actual construction sites. These members were therefore de-legitimized, pushed away and labelled as lacking preferred characteristics by the in-group. The members of the out-group within the company were frequently told they needed to seek and gain the preferred experience in order to truly belong to the industry and enhance their careers (Löwstedt & Räisänen, 2014).

In the study by Löwstedt and Räisänen (2014) the collective identification became the most apparent when the in-group interacted with the out-group from outside the construction industry. However, the collective identity did not affiliate with the employer or different work categories among the in-group members, but rather with the trade and craftsmanship associated with construction workers. The results of the study suggests that there was a strong social identity in the company and strong sense among the in-group members of "Who we are" and "What we do". This was reproduced through a dominant narrative and through self-reinforcing mechanisms as described above.

Löwstedt and Räisänen (2014) argue that the de-legitimizing of the out-group within the company as well as the blind-spots caused by the dominant narrative had implications on organizational outcomes. This behaviour prevented other competencies than the traditionally preferred competencies, mainly experience from construction sites, to be incorporated into the organization. Thus preventing new ideas and perspectives that could enhance organizational performance. The results indicate that the collective identification in the industry becomes a self-reinforcing mechanism because of its ongoing and iterative nature. It results in members adhering to the preferred beliefs and behaviours while turning a blind eye to why they act as they do, preventing new inputs and perspectives. Though this may be linked to the accusation of reluctance toward change, the authors to that study stress that it may also be seen as a turbulent industry's way of navigating through a complex business landscape that forces its participants' to continuously renegotiate their positions.

2.2.2 Organizational identity within consulting firms

The identity concept is perhaps more important in a consulting firm than a construction company in general according to Alvesson and Empson (2008). As the consulting firm does not produce any product, owns any machinery or real estate, their only value lies in the knowledge and skill of their personnel. The work is performed in projects and is shifting fast, often charged by the hour for the client. The work environment of consultants in the construction industry could be argued to be turbulent due to the fact that a consultant may work in various projects at the same time. The environment may also become turbulent because a consultant may only be involved in a project for a short while with very little time to get familiar with the project and the participants. A common identity in a turbulent environment is a type of glue that can hold an organization together according to Alvesson and Empson (2008). A shared organizational identity can provide a form of stability in an insecure environment. It can foster group cohesion as well as provide a foundation of affinity to counteract the abstract nature of the services performed. All these characteristics are prominent in consulting firms. Thus, this kind of ambiguous work context can create a yearn among the members for a clear sense of who they are as an organization (Empson, 2004., Alvesson & Empson, 2008).

A consulting company has an especially complex mixture of identities, because the many different types of work categories that may be represented within the same company. The organizational identity of a consultant company co-exist alongside with the professional identities of its employees, whose professions can span over a wide range (Alvesson & Empson, 2008). In addition, the social identity of the industry where the company acts within goes sideways through the whole organization. In many cases, the organizational identity is not prominent under normal conditions and can be difficult to pinpoint in day to day business life. The organizational identity often reveals itself the most during periods of dramatic organizational change. According to Alvesson and Empson (2008), when faced by an external threat, such as mergers or acquisitions, bad publicity or crises, a shared identity will help unite an organization's members. Thus, the presence of an external threat can contribute to a more clear organizational identity.

Alvesson and Empson (2008) conducted an extensive interview study of identity within consulting firms and their results can be summarized into four core dimensions: *Knowledge work*, *Management and membership*, *Personal orientation* and *External interface*. These four dimensions provide the basis for an organizational identity and allows for an accessible approach to what can be difficult to isolate (Ashforth et al., 2008). The four dimensions are further described below.

Knowledge work

This dimension goes beyond the usual answers to the question "What do we know?" within the organization. It goes beyond descriptions of technical knowledge and focus more on how that knowledge is conceptualized in the organization. It addresses what kinds of skills and backgrounds that are considered legitimate and valuable. It also answers the question "How do we work?" which is summed up as routines, norms and tactics within the know-how of the organization. The dimension can be summarized as content of knowledge and consists of both theory and education and of work processes such as practices, procedures and processes.

Management and membership
This dimension explore how the organization is managed and how its members relate to this management. To what extent are the ideals of the organization's members influenced by, or independent of, the management that governs them. The dimension also includes how the organization motivate and control their employees as well as their degree of freedom and creativity within their work and how all this is linked to the organization.

Personal orientation
This dimension addresses and explores in what ways the organizational identity impacts the individual. That is, impacts in terms of values and morality that may shape or influence an organizational member's personal identity. This is related to the ideas of Pratt (2000) regarding sensebreaking and sensegiving as to what degree an organization affects an organizational member, causing the individual to challenge their present state of self and rebuild it through sensegiving with new elements from the organization.

External interface
This dimension explores the answer to the question "How are we seen?" and how organizational members believe that they are perceived by their surroundings, i.e. clients and competitors. The external interface is therefore a subjectively based understanding of the organizational image. This organizational image also have direct implications on the member's personal images. Who you work for and who you compete with is in some way used as a measurement of your quality and competence. Consulting firms therefore often emphasize prestigious clients to enhance their external image, as well as its members can emphasize their work on senior levels or with prestigious projects. We are selectively drawing a picture of how others see us and this forms a key element in the answer to the question "Who are we?" and "Who am I?". Connected to the image of ourselves is also the image of other actors and competitors and the comparison to them. In this case the question "How do we see others?" is at centre. The element of comparison and distancing is an important part of the identity concept and to describe our identity by comparing it with others is a central way to define the self.

2.2.3 Project chemistry in construction projects

The importance of interpersonal relations, team spirit and collaboration in construction projects is generally accepted in the field of construction management according to Nicolini (2002). Social, human and cultural factors, within the cooperation of a project, are vital parts to the project's success. The increased recognition of these soft management factors in a project's success has led to the question; what is good project chemistry in reality? In general, research shows that good project chemistry occurs within projects where members are valued, their importance is recognized and they are provided with the necessary support and assistance to be able to do a good job (Nicolini, 2002).

The term “good project chemistry” is intertwined with the interaction between people in a project, often based on affinity of intents and dispositions. It can be described as an intangible characteristic of the interaction process. Social and organizational climate has an effect on the behaviour of individuals in groups and organizations (Nicolini, 2002). This theory is supported by the psychologist Kurt Lewin's who stated that “behaviour is a function of the person and its environment which aims to define human behaviour” (Lewin, 1936, p. 12). A particular behaviour is therefore reliant on personal attributes of the individual as well as the environment the person finds him- or herself within. Organizational climate can thus be described as the attributes of an organization or the shared perceptions of the organizational members. Organizational climate can also be a mixture since the climate is a shared consequence of organizational policies, practices and procedures (Nicolini, 2002).

Nicolini´s (2002) investigation of the topic shows that collaboration within the project community is important to achieve good project chemistry. Early involvement of the different actors and periodic project reviews were factors identified as affecting project chemistry positively. Participants in the study also expressed that bad project chemistry in some cases can be traced back to the ways people are trained to behave. The reluctance shown by some people while performing construction work as a team, was a result of the way they were trained to behave in their professional trades (Nicolini, 2002). Team composition is highlighted as a key characteristic to project chemistry in Nicolini´s (2002) interview study. In particular, the possibility to retain a successful team throughout several projects, allowing repetition of good collaboration and learning from previous experiences proved helpful to gain advantage from the time, effort and resources already invested. Expansion of the original project team should be done carefully according to Nicolini (2002) and be based on proven compatibility in order to maintain a good chemistry. Leadership in the projects are also pinpointed as a key factor, as the leadership sets the boundaries for the team to work within. Collective team building activities were identified as a positive mean to achieve better chemistry, these would preferably be set outside the usual environment of the office or construction site.

As seen in Nicolini’s (2002) study, good project chemistry enhances quality of the work, benefitting from the creativity from all team members. It also reduces time, in the way of better forecasting future problems and improved problem solving abilities in general. Nicolini (2002) concludes his findings stating that the atmosphere of good project chemistry and work climate acts as a motivator and helps people to work in the same direction, towards shared goals. Loosemore´s (1998) study of construction teams’ reactions during project crises, revealed that a crisis can represent either an opportunity for increased team cohesion or a cause of section and conflict. In the light of project chemistry, a crisis is a time in a project that makes the difference between a success and a failure. It poses both as an opportunity and as a threat. Just as discussed earlier about organizational identity, the social or organizational identity often reveals itself the most when its members are faced by an external threat.

A project with good chemistry often have close social relations between the team members, an open-, and friendly atmosphere, low level of conflict, high motivation, focus, morale and team dedication (Nicolini, 2002). This mixture of characteristics is likely to produce outcomes that are in direct relation to the performance and success of the project. Nicolini (2002) defines project chemistry not as a characteristic of the people involved, but more as a combination of the relationships between participants, the task and organizational conditions that the project possesses. This social phenomena, climate or even atmosphere is an intangible asset in any project and needs to be nurtured to keep bringing success in future projects.

2.2.4 Professionalism and ethics

A profession in a social context is the complex interplay of practitioner, organizational practices, professional associations and shared knowledge associated with that profession (Brown and Phua, 2011). Traditionally, a profession was associated with established categories of occupational groups, such as engineers, architects and lawyers. The label “professional” is generally used as an identity claim made by practitioners in a specific field, using the term as an indicator of competence, integrity and skill. The identity of professionalism is often associated with a specialist vocabulary, technical and educational qualifications and claims of knowledge and expertise. As certification is not always required to work in the construction industry, a strong identity may also strengthen the legitimacy of the specific professions. For some in the construction industry, their own conceptions of themselves as “professionals” may be more important than university diplomas and certifications (Brown and Phua, 2011).

Ethical considerations have been increasingly more salient in the contemporary work among organizations today and are now central in the presentation of an organization’s identity, i.e. “Who we are” and “How we work”. Though ethics are more frequently conveyed and included in the image and identity of construction work, and words such as “professional integrity, “honesty” and “fairness” have grown more common in the construction industry, unethical behaviour among construction professionals is often discovered (Brown and Phua, 2011). Transparency International (2005) stated that corruption is more widespread in construction compared to other industry sectors and the image of professional integrity has received some criticism.

3 Method

In this chapter the strategy and approach for the study is described. The initial point for the study was a literature review and to compile information regarding identity theory and identity theory applied in the construction industry, specifically concerning consulting firms and contractor firms within the construction industry. The material used in the literature review consists of published academic articles, papers and books. The study is underpinned with a case study that was conducted at section X at the Company. This was carried out through 12 interviews at the Company and one additional interview with an employee at one of the Company's main clients, adding up to 13 interviews in total. The interview with the Company's client supplied the customer's as well as an outsider's perspective and acted as a verification of some of the findings from the interviews at section X. The data collected through the case study has been analysed in comparison using the theoretical framework compiled through the literature review throughout the study. This research approach where data from a case or an interview is compared with research theory in a back and forth style is an iterative process and an abductive approach to research (Dubois & Gadde, 2002).

3.1 General approach

The outline to this study has been of a qualitative nature rather than of a quantitative one. This approach allows for pertinent data to be collected through interviews, informal dialogs and observations according to Bryman (2004). The research method highlights the interpretations of the statements and stories recorded from the conducted interviews. The qualitative approach was deemed to be more suitable with regard to the nature of the study and the subject in question. The authors to this study believes that if the study would have been of a quantitative nature the same in-depth results would not have been reached. The subject of this study requires elaborative answers to questions asked during the interviews which would not have been possible in for example a survey. Hence, a qualitative approach seemed preferable.

The authors of this study have chosen an abductive research method. This is based on an iterative process which allows for a link between theoretical data, empirical data and the data collected through interviews, as the insight to the subject in question becomes more emergent (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). The abductive research method has enabled for the authors of this study to learn more about the subject in question while the study progressed through comparison of data collected in the field with data collected from published research. This was an important aspect of the study as some aspects of identity theory relevant to this study did not become apparent until the interview part of the study. Thus, the authors did not have all the necessary theory before the interview part of the study commenced and the authors believe that the abductive research method resulted in a better study.

3.2 Description of the case

The Company in focus in the case study is one of the largest engineering and consulting companies in Sweden and operates within the energy-, industry- and infrastructure sector and employs 9 000 people worldwide. It currently holds offices in more than 30 countries and was involved in projects in more than 100 countries around the world in 2016. The Company is currently expanding rapidly, mainly through purchasing smaller companies and incorporating them into the main organization. The Company is focusing on the breadth of their expertise in an industry that is moving towards specialization as the Company wants to hold the most diverse expertise as a technological consultant in the industry. An active recruiting of new employees with an extensive experience from various parts of the construction industry, including construction sites, is part of the company's aim to offer their clients a service characterized by constructability. It could be argued that the specialization of the Company is their unique breadth of expertise.

Section X at the Company provides services within management mainly related to construction and infrastructure and the projects that the employees are involved in spans a wide range within these fields of expertise. All employees at the section are employed as consultants and most of them are working on site in the projects they are involved in and only come in to the Company's office a few times every month. Most of the employees at section X have only worked as consultants in the construction industry and done so their whole careers but some employees have worked as contractors before they became consultants.

The Company has a wide expertise and a broad spectrum of skill as there are both straight-out consultants and former contractors now working as consultants among the employees. The Company was chosen for the case study because it is one of the largest consulting companies within the construction industry in Sweden. This study what impact the different professional backgrounds of the employees at the Company has on the organizational identity. Does the fact that some employees have a background in a different work category than as "consultant" affect the organizational identity at the Company? If so, in what way does this impact make itself visible? These are some of the questions that have initiated the case study in question. The case study was intended to serve as a mean to compare existing literature within identity theory applied to the construction industry to an operating company in the industry. According to Bryman and Nilsson (2011), a representative case illustrates situations that frequently occur in everyday business and with this definition in mind the Company was accepted as a representative case for the study.

3.3 Interview approach

The case study was underpinned by interviews with employees at section X at the Company and one interview with an employee at one of the Company's main clients. These interviews were supported with notes taken during the interviews and, to some extent, informal dialogues prior to and after the interviews. An anonymous list of the titles held by the interviewees can be found in Appendix I along with the number of interviewees that held each title. The data from the interviews were then analysed using a narrative analysis (Czarniawska, 2004). This analysis focuses on which stories and narratives an interviewee chooses to answer questions with and what these choices indicates.

Interviewees with different levels of positions within the section were selected using a snowball technique (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2016). The snowball effect was started by the Assistant Segment Manager at the Company who suggested a possible section for the authors to contact. The head of that section then provided possible interviewees for the study which all were approached by the authors with a request for an interview. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach which is based on a soft structure that allows for follow-up questions and adaptation to the notions brought up by the interviewee (Bryman & Nilsson, 2011). Since the interviews were semi-structured the exact same questions were not always asked to all of interviewees, but all questions were based on the same interview template, see Appendix II. Semi-structured interviews are suitable to use when the researchers possess knowledge about the subject, but further and more in-depth information is needed (Bryman & Nilsson, 2011). The total number of interviews were limited due to the choice of a qualitative research approach, however the emerged results from the interviews began to form a distinct pattern after only a few interviews were conducted. This pattern became more apparent the more interviews that were conducted. Because of this pattern the authors of this study believe that a larger number of interviews still would have resulted in similar outcomes as the ones presented in this report.

Overall 13 interviews were conducted, all face to face and lasted for about one hour. All interviews were recorded with the full consent of the interviewee and later transcribed verbatim for interpretation. Notes during the interviews were taken as a support for both the interview and the following transcript. The study took place in Sweden and all interviews were held in Swedish and later translated into English. Since both authors speak Swedish as their native language and English as their second language which may have had an effect on choice of words while translating and some nuances in the quotations printed in the report may have been weakened. It is however the hope of the authors that most of the colourful expressions recorded in the interviews are perceptible to the reader in the report. The interviewees and their answers were all treated anonymously and the authors of the thesis were the only persons with access to what information each interviewee provided. To ensure that all interviewees are kept anonymous, no names or professional titles held by the interviewees have been printed in the report in order to diminish the likelihood to identify the respondents. Most of the interviewees were based at the same office but most of them were working at their client's premises or at the site of the project. A few of the interviewees were based in another city than the others but they too spend most of their time working at other locations than at their office.

The first interview were treated as experimental and allowed for some improvements in the following interviews. This was done through rephrasing of a few of the questions in the interview template, see Appendix II, to achieve more precise and relevant answers. The first interview made it clear what impact phrasing a question in a certain way can have to how an interviewee interprets the question and consequently chooses to answer the same. The rephrasing of some interview questions made them clearer to the interviewees and resulted in more clear answers. The informal dialogues off tape were considered to provide a better understanding of the Company, the way of practise among its employees and underlying attitudes and this was used to improve the interview template.

3.4 Literature review

The theoretical framework that constitutes the basis for this study was assembled through a literature review with focus on identity theory and identity theory applied specifically to the construction industry. Academic research concerning corporate culture within the construction industry, organizational identity within consulting firms and contracting firms as well as the concept of project chemistry were also included in the literature review. The starting point for the literature review was to screen existing research about these topics and specifically to pinpoint research related to the construction industry. The existing research material used in this thesis consists of scientific articles, papers and books concerning identity theory and construction management. The theory that constitutes the theoretical framework in this study is the result of big names in academia regarding identity theory and construction management. It is the belief of the authors to this thesis that the publications referred to in this study are both acceptable and suitable for the examined topic as they have proved most useful and enlightening.

3.5 Reflection on chosen method

Due to time constraints it was decided that only one section at the Company, section X, would participate in the case study. Though only one section at the Company participated in the study some conclusions regarding the organizational identity at the Company could be derived from the interviews. The aim to this study is to examine what impact a professional background can have on an organizational identity. It was therefore not the intent to pinpoint the organizational identity as such at the Company. If this would have been the case more sections would have had to participate in the study. Because the authors to this study have endeavoured to identify impacts on the organizational identity at the Company it was deemed valid to draw conclusions regarding the Company and not only regarding section X. It is the belief of the authors that the results from the case study may be applied to further participants in the construction industry due to the varying backgrounds of the interviewees. These backgrounds are found in various companies and actors in the industry and it would be interesting for future research to extend this study and examine possible verifications at additional parties in the industry. It must however be emphasized that there is a possibility that the chosen method and approach to this study can have resulted in some limitations to the extent of application of the study.

The choice of section X at the Company is a result of an initial meeting with an Assistant Segment Manager at the Company which suggested section X due to a geographical factor as well as factors related to human resources. A more comprehensive knowledge of section X prior to the commencement of the literature review would have been preferable. This would perhaps have resulted in a better understanding of what theory would be more salient to underpin the study with. During the case study, there was one time when the interview was held with two interviewees at the same time. This was due to the preference of one of the interviewees and in hindsight this was not ideal. If the interviews were to be held again they would be done separately to ensure that each interviewee was given the possibility to speak freely. When the interview was conducted with two interviewees at the same time the interviewees sometimes interrupted each other, preventing the interviewee talking from fully elaborating the answer. However, the fact that the two interviewees had different backgrounds, from two different job categories, resulted in a possibility to observe the interaction between these two job categories. This was very interesting because the two interviewees often chose to represent different sides in the discussed hypothetical situations, questioning the other interviewee's beliefs.

As a final remark, the authors have equally shared the work with the different parts of the thesis and jointly constructed and carried out the study and analysed its findings to arrive at the conclusions.

4 Findings

The results from the case study are divided into main sections based on the interview template. The results take a starting point with the professional background of the respondents because this was found to influence their perceptions of their organization, their organizational identity and the impacts of the continuous mergers. Then, the role of consultant and the role of contractor are addressed and put in relation to each other, as a clear distinction was found between the employees who had respectively did *not* have work experience from construction sites. The chapter concludes with the identification of potential factors relating to this distinction between the employees that may have an impact on project chemistry and performance.

4.1 The professional backgrounds of the employees at section X

All the respondents at section X work as consultants in the construction industry. The following section has been divided into three subsections according to the employees' varying professional backgrounds; a background in consulting companies, a background in contracting companies and finally a background in other industries than the construction industry. The authors of this study arrived at this particular division because the members of each group communicated views and experiences specific to their own group. These views and experiences thus had a clear relation to the interviewees' professional backgrounds. It was decided that the most appropriate way to reflect these views was to divide the respondents into the following three groups, according to their professional backgrounds.

4.1.1 Background in consulting companies

Most of the interviewees had previous work experience as consultants and the majority had only worked in consulting companies during their time in the industry. Among these respondents breadth in experience and social skills were highlighted as important characteristics in their work. They explained that as a consultant you are expected to work with many different professions and groups of people. Earlier titles as consultants ranged from Mission Manager and Project Manager to Construction Manager. The assignments were often focused on construction, maintenance and building but also on administrative tasks regarding the construction. Documentation of the performed work, documents concerning quality and maintenance and also drawings and maps of the construction projects were all part of earlier experiences as consultants.

Many of the interviewees performed similar work today as they did at an earlier employer. Sometimes the assignments, worksite and even client had stayed the same, despite that the respondents had switched to a new employer. A common feature of the interviewees with backgrounds in consulting companies was that many of them had worked at a company that recently had been bought and integrated into their current employer's organization. Some had even worked for the Company at an earlier time in their careers, left to join another organization which then had been bought by the Company, resulting in the interviewees being integrated back into the

Company. People with this scenario had experienced that they wanted to work for a smaller cooperation and to be freer in their work situation. A smaller organization is easier to navigate and act within, they explained. Short decision paths, a closeness to their colleagues and executives and a large portion of independent work and freedom were reasons to why these interviewees chose to leave the Company back then. Those who choose to stay with the Company after the mergers explained that they were happier at the Company now. As their smaller firm became integrated into the Company, they experienced that many of the good qualities of the small firm were allowed to live on. They often kept their negotiated contracts, colleagues and manager and worked with similar or even the same projects and clients as before. Most felt that these retained benefits along with the benefits of a large cooperation in the sense of organizational and job security made it worthwhile to remain at the Company. Most of the interviewees experienced the merger with the current organization as a somewhat confusing period with a lot of uncertainty. However, the ones that did not choose to leave all highlighted that they were glad that they stayed.

4.1.2 Background in contracting companies

Some of the interviewees had a background in contracting companies, or “as a contractor” as they expressed it. Many of these respondents had already during their time in high school chosen an education with direction towards the construction industry. Some chose a high school education to become electricians and carpenters, and rose in the hierarchy within their former organizations through work experience. Some pursued a further education after working in the industry for some years to become civil engineers, construction engineers and technical college graduates. It was common among the interviewees with this background to work in the construction industry early after, or even during, their educations. Many worked with road or rail road projects in the beginning of their careers and appreciate that experience and the lessons learned there in their current work and positions. A background in construction, operation and maintenance of roads and general ground work was the most usual contractor background found among this group. The majority of the respondents with construction background worked many years in that field before they started working as consultants. The most common reason to why they chose to become consultants was “*I wanted a change*”.

During their time as contractors, the interviewees had many titles and different work assignments, as project engineers, foremen, site managers and work managers. It was common to also have worked with calculation and purchase operations. Many expressed that their time at the construction site gave a good practical understanding of the theoretical knowledge learned during their educations. One of the interviewed explained that: *"By doing things [practically], you increase the speed of learning and it is a little easier to remember what has been learned when it sits in an execution."* A continuous matter among this group was that new employment opportunities were often relayed by personal connections and coincidences. The opinion that interpersonal relations, connections and social skills are very important in the construction industry was an opinion shared by all of the interviewees. Relations with people they have in their work are generally viewed as very important and to nurture them. The ability to know people and have good relations in the industry were considered to be important in the daily work and also as a way to future work opportunities. When searching for new employment, one of the interviewed said

"Then I thought, who have I talked to? So I called around, one gets to shake the phone for a bit."

Many of the interviewed had, during their careers as contractors, gained a lot of responsibilities and were in charge of the establishment of large contracts, public procurements and productions. But to get involved in large contracts, volumes and money was not always easy. They explained that ethics and good behaviour are sometimes set aside to gain, or keep, profitable contracts by some actors in the industry. This phenomenon was also believed to have a geographical dimension, as the norms and behaviour shifted in different regions. Taking large and profitable contracts from established actors in a region could have its risks. The view can be summarized by the quote: *"City Y is not known for being an honest city and we have tasted that"*. Threats and pressure could be the consequence if you stepped on the wrong toe, they explained. Despite this risk, the participants often expressed a can do attitude and seemed to gain strength in overcoming challenges.

The path from contractor to consultant was not always straight. Some of the interviewed were headhunted to the consultant side, others became consultants because they wanted to try something "*new*", and some were persuaded into taking a consultant job by contacts. The general opinion of those from the contractor side was that they liked the contractor role more than the consultant role and many had hesitated before becoming a consultant. As one of the respondents stated "*Your average picture of a consultant is a suit brownie*." Even though they communicated that they had wanted a change and are all working as consultants today, many of the interviewed still work in a similar way to their old jobs as contractors. Some of them still spend all their time on the construction site by choice, performing similar tasks. Others are still out in the field but have switched role to surveyor, now inspecting the work they used to perform. The vast majority spend their time at the customer's premises and not at their employer's office and seemed very pleased with that setup.

4.1.3 Background in other industries

The majority of the employees interviewed in the study had a professional background in the construction industry, either as a contractor or as a consultant. Some came from other industries, such as trade, travel and the academic world. Some had no experience of the construction industry before they started as consultants at the Company. They considered their somewhat different path to their current employment as a strength, as it has broadened their perspectives. A different understanding of use of language, ethics, morals and culture were highlighted as a width that others in the industry may miss, but they had gained during their time in their different industries. These skills were believed to be an asset in their current work. One of these interviewees expressed that: *"There was a very fast learning curve at the start of the project."* However, as the interviewees primarily work with project management and focus on the general picture of a project they expressed they did not need a detail knowledge of the business. As one interviewee stated *"Then you don't need exactly the right type of background"*. They explained that communication and planning are two of the most important skills in their work at the Company and that their backgrounds in other industries had a positive impact in their daily work. The ability to come into a project with a different perspective and perhaps a broader view, than their colleagues, were found to be an advantage in many situations. Not having followed the same career path as "*all the rest*" was seen as an advantage and strength rather than a disadvantage, by this group. They experienced that learning comes with performing their work assignments and felt competent and confident in their roles in the industry today.

4.2 The employees' feelings about their organization

This section accounts for the different attitudes towards the Company recorded among by the interviewees and how the respondents positioned themselves in relation to the Company. After a differentiation was detected among the employees according to the three professional backgrounds described earlier, a second pattern emerged in the interviews. The group of employees with professional backgrounds in only consulting companies (with no work experience from construction sites) was clearly separated from the group of employees with professional backgrounds from contracting companies (who possessed experience from construction sites). The separation was made clear in the different views, values and perspectives held and displayed by the members of the two groups. Because the members of the two groups had views and beliefs distinct to their own group, often not shared by the members of the other group, the authors to this study have chosen to reflect this division in the report. The members of the two groups are from here on referred to as; "the respondents with backgrounds in c*onsulting* companies", referring to employees with no work experience from construction sites, and "the respondents with backgrounds in *contracting* companies", referring to the employees with work experience from construction sites. This division serves as the base for the study and for the analysis of the findings.

4.2.1 Unclear organizational structure and responsibilities

Most of the interviewees expressed a sense that the main organizational structure was a bit unclear. There are several sections that work within the same area of expertise and perform similar tasks and have similar names. There was some confusion among the interviewees about what exactly separates these sections that seem so alike and why they were not incorporated into one larger section. As one interviewee said when talking about section X "*When the Company buys another company that has its own section that does what our section does here at the Company, that section often becomes an independent section at the Company. I think it's a negative thing that we have several sections at the Company with similar names to ours, and we don't have any communication with those sections even though we work with similar things.* The interviewees seemed puzzled with the underlying strategic reasons to why the Company chose this kind of organization and they all concluded that it was probably inevitable because of the rapid expansion of the Company. Another interviewee said "*There is a horror example, that I will not mention by name, where one section did the initial work in one project and when the project was handed over to another section they would not share the work that had been done."* Though the interviewees complained about the messy structure of the Company they all ended with a note that this did not affect their own section's work or the relationships within it.

4.2.2 Emotional bonds to the organization

Many of the interviewees felt proud to be working at the Company and expressed that it was a modern company that focuses on diversity, equality and care for the employees. However, most of the interviewees with a background in contracting companies expressed that they did not care so much for the business strategies at the Company. They felt their work with the clients was more important than the work at the top of the Company to increase business and acquire more shares of the market. They seemed to distance themselves from the Company in that regard as they would not identify with the top management of the Company. One of the interviewees with a background in a contracting company, who was based in another smaller city than the majority of the interviewees, stated "*I get so annoyed that everything will be in English, the titles and the Company's website is all in English. When I get emails from the top management in English it feels like a facade".* Because the Company's office in that particular interviewee's city was quite small the interviewee felt somewhat separated from the rest of the Company and top management.

Another interviewee with a background in contracting companies expressed that "*I see the Company as any other consulting company, I don't see myself specifically as a part of this firm, I am me and it's my work that matters".* The majority of the interviewees with a background in contracting companies expressed the notion that it was the people "on the floor" that made the Company successful. They expressed that it was their abilities to do a good job and keep good relations with clients and contractors that increased business rather than the work performed by the top management of the Company. The respondent went on saying *"I haven't worked a single hour at the Company's office, I'm always working at my client's office. It makes me wonder sometime what use the Company is to me, I could easily do the same job as freelance.* A third interviewee added "*I don't feel any connections with the Company, none, if I have to go to the office I'll make it very quick".* The respondent explained that the reason to this feeling was the respondent's experience from construction sites and that most of the colleagues at the Company lacked the same experience. This resulted in a barrier between them and the respondent preferred to be at the construction site with the project's contractors who understood the respondent better.

Many of the interviewees with a background in consulting companies expressed more interest in the business concepts at the Company than the interviewees with a background in contracting companies did. One interviewee stated *"I believe there are competent owners and visionaries at the top with more than 100 years of experience and that they succeed with accomplishing their visions".* Another interviewee said "*We do everything in accordance with the Company's policies and how the Company is run, we follow laid down strategies to reach the set targets*". Many of the respondents in this group expressed the notion that the Company was one of the best of the consulting companies in the industry because of its business strategies. Strategies mentioned were possibilities for further training internally, a good personnel policy and breadth of expertise through extensive experience and requisitions. As one interviewee stated "*We have an opportunity to develop ourselves [here at the Company] and this is an advantage with working at the Company. I believe the Company has the confidence of the market because of its knowledge through experience."* The interviewee continued *"They clearly communicate your value here, that's unique. I have often reflected upon how well they manage the HR* *aspect here together with how they [the top management] plan ahead, it's remarkable.*

Many of the interviewees with backgrounds in consulting companies reflected upon the brand of the Company and stated that the top management of the Company had done well in building the brand over the years. This branding, they believed, were part to why the Company was doing so well in the industry and able to expand. This group among the interviewees also expressed a willingness to come in to the Company's office more frequent than the group with background in contracting companies did. They believed that it was important to maintain good relations with the colleagues at the office and tried to go to the office as often as they could. As one interviewee said *"I only have a reason to come in to the office once a month or once every other month, so it is very important that I come in of my own will more often than that."* The importance of occasionally visiting the Company's office, where you officially have your job, had divided opinions among the interviewees. Some viewed it as an important part of the job, as they believed that their real colleagues were the ones at the office of the Company, not on the construction site or on the client's premises. Others was of the opposite opinion and believed that the people on the sites and at the client's premises were their real colleagues, as they spend most of their time with them. The interviewees that had extensive experience as contractors were more often of this opinion, than those who had only worked as consultants in their careers.

4.3 The perceived identity among the employees

In the interviews the respondents were asked to elaborate on what it meant to be a consultant and in what way the two roles of consultant and contractor differ or resemble each other. The responses showed a clear distinction between the two main groups and a sense of "we and them", interviewees with backgrounds in consulting companies versus those with backgrounds in contracting companies.

4.3.1 "To be, or not to be a consultant"

When asked to identify what it means to be a consultant most of the interviewees with a background in contracting companies stated that it was a bit difficult for them to pinpoint what it meant exactly. They felt more at ease identifying the characteristics of contractors. Most of the respondents in the study, including the respondents with contracting experiences, shared the view that "*You have to deliver*" as a consultant and that you are always "*Chasing hours"* in order to charge 100 % of your working hours. Several interviewees also said that the clients did not only employ them to perform the stated tasks, but also to contribute with new perspectives, ideas and detect procedures that could be made more effective. As long as you deliver as a consultant you have a big freedom to plan and spend your time as you see best, but it is a freedom that comes with responsibility as many respondents expressed. The general opinion was that you have to be able to work under a big amount of pressure and stress as a consultant, you can never feel satisfied and "*It is always the next deal that matters.*" as one respondent stated. The person continued saying "*This may sound awful but you are going for the kill as a consultant, you ARE going to get this deal and you ARE going to do a good job. There is no place for rest or to relax for a few weeks in this job*." Some of the interviewed explained that the work as a consultant can become quite lonely at times since you are hired by the client as an individual.

Even though there are plenty of colleagues at the client's premises or at the construction site you don't get very close with them because there is a barrier between you and them.

The interviewees with a background in consulting companies highlighted the ability to learn quickly and to benefit from other people's knowledge as crucial abilities in their job. The respondents that had a professional background from other industries than the construction industry described that they saw this as an advantage. They felt that they had more legitimacy to ask "*The stupid questions"* than someone who had been in the industry their whole career and lacked the knowledge in question. The interviewees with a background in contracting companies expressed that their group among consultants displayed more "*Assurance and calmness"* in their professions because of their experiences from construction sites. They described that they sometimes felt that colleagues with professional backgrounds as only consultants at times displayed an uncertainty in their behaviour out at the construction sites which immediately was picked up on by the contractors.

When the interviewees described the industry they explained that they could get a new job within five minutes by picking up their phone. Despite this, all of the interviewees expressed that they wanted to stay with the Company for now. Some reasons mentioned to this were because the Company was doing so well in the industry, the HR policies were good and a good boss. It differed among the interviewees whether they thought the clients wanted the Company or specific employees at the Company. The more experience an interviewee had in the industry the stronger was the feeling that clients wanted them as individuals and whether they worked at the Company or not was irrelevant. One interviewee that was of this opinion said "*As a consultant you always advertise for your company, even if no one wants to listen, because they are only interested in you as an individual.*" Respondents with less experience expressed a stronger belief that it was mainly the Company brand and the breadth of expertise within the Company that was requested by clients.

Another notion brought forward by the interviewees with a background in consulting companies were that as a consultant you have to know yourself in order to be able to adapt to different situations and kinds of people. One interviewee expressed that if you are an introvert kind of person you have to work at your skill to talk with people. If you are more of the extrovert kind you might have to work with your ability to focus and to listen. The respondent explained that if you do not have insight to how you function as a person you will struggle as a consultant. What matters is how you are perceived by other people and how you communicate with them. This is the core to being a consultant. Several of the respondents also expressed the importance to be firm but humble at the same time, and being able to take unpopular decisions. "*You can't be best friends with everybody all the time, sometimes you have to put your foot down, but you should always seek advice from other project participants first if you don't know the answer.*" one of the respondents said.

Working as a consultant can mean a different everyday work life than other actors working in a construction project. When the interviewees reflected on the differences the absence of having your manager directly on site was highlighted. As a consultant, you are expected to get into the project with a new, different perspective and a blank setting. You have to pick up all the signals and be very awake and aware of your surroundings. The importance of adapting to the environment you find yourself in, mainly in terms of behaviour, was a general view among the interviewed. As a consultant you are expected to emit a sense of calmness and capacity, inspiring confidence. Also the ability to collaborate with different types of people were features that were highlighted as desirable. The ability to stay away from all extremes and not to stand out, neither in the sense of humour nor in appearance, were a big part of the role as a consultant, they explained. One of the interviewees explained *"When I'm out in the project, I'll behave in one way. When I'm at the office, I'll behave in another way."*

4.3.2 Identification with respective job category

Identification with the construction industry also varied among the respondents as the interviewees explained the industry as a very wide spectrum and made a difference between officials and workers. The interviewees with only consultant backgrounds identified more with their own group. As one respondent with a background in consulting companies stated "*I don't feel a fellowship with the workers down in the pit, I mean we belong to the same industry but we're not in the same business.*" Interviewees with contractor backgrounds identified more with the workers and contractors of the construction site, despite that they now themselves had shifted to work as consultants. The larger amount of experience and time in the industry the stronger the identification seemed. The amount of experience could also have an impact on a person's legitimacy. More experience and know-how gave more legitimacy and was highlighted to a greater extent by the interviewees with contractor experience than those with only consultant experience.

In the interaction with workers, the respondents with a contractor background pointed out that it was important to "*Understand what the guys say"*, be able to process it and make a productive output with it. Their general opinion was that only academic qualifications does not suffice and with no practical experience*"You will get eaten here [on the site]"* one of these interviewees said. The respondent clearly distinguished the consultant world from the world of contractors. The downright consultancy role is *"Just a ruin of money. Actually."* as stated by the respondent when the two worlds were compared. Many of the interviewed with contractor backgrounds still despised the traditional role of the consultant and still felt like contractors in their hearts. Many of them still worked in a very similar manner to their former roles as contractors, hired as Construction Manager or similar by the client, just with a key band or jacket signalling their association with the Company. Almost all of them still spend the majority of their time on the construction site.

The role of the consultant was also criticised for being stiff, strictly following statutes and agreements and focusing too much on paperwork assignments, by those with contractor experience. There was a feeling among these interviewees that consultants live a sheltered life and choose the comfort of the office whenever they can. The opinion that you need to have practical experience to be able to both understand the work and to communicate efficiently was widespread among this group. One of the interviewees said, self-critically, that the people within the construction industry are really good at producing and building but very bad at communicating. "*The way we choose to meet people have a great impact on the response you are given"* according to the respondent. You should communicate in a way that makes people listen. That kind of respect was earned best working practically out in the field and not in the office, was the belief.

4.3.3 Impacts on a personal level

Another aspect brought forward by one of the interviewees was that as a result of working in the construction industry you become *"Very neutral to things, due to the high level of stress you face every day*". The interviewee stated that *"When something goes well you don't have time to feel happy because tomorrow it can go badly again."* The respondent explained that it would be very hard on you as a site manager to cope with all the constant highs and lows if you weren't quite neutral as a person. The respondent felt that this also affected aspects in the personal life. It was a bonus when faced with stressful situations in the personal life but had negative effects in joyful situations where the respondent felt unable to be as happy as near and dear ones. The respondent said that when really positive events took place in the personal life people around the respondent showed an intense satisfaction, but the respondent's feeling was only "O*h well, I guess this was fun*." The interviewee concluded *"It is not only a positive thing to become more stress resistant because you miss out on the highs."*

4.4 The role of consultant vs. the role of contractor

Though working in the same industry many of the respondents chose to highlight the various differences rather than the similarities between the two job categories. This phenomenon was equally present among the interviewees with backgrounds in consulting companies as the interviewees with backgrounds in contracting companies. The following section accounts for the statements made by the respondents regarding this topic.

4.4.1 The experience of constructability

It was very common among the respondents with a background in contracting companies to highlight the importance of practical experience from building sites. This was often referred to as "*constructability*" and said to be crucial in order to perform a good job and to gain respect from other participants in the industry. This group of participants often displayed strong appreciation for the practical parts of their jobs and disregarded administrative assignments and documentation. The practical know-how gave, in their view, a deeper insight that wins in the long run. Among the respondents that did not have a background from building sites the practical experience was more seen as "*a cherry on top*" but not as crucial. This group was of the opinion that they could perform their work just as well as someone with "*practical experience"*. They stated that the most important aspect in their job was not experience from building sites but rather the ability to learn quickly, ask the right questions and to be able to work with different kinds of people. One interviewee said that "*It is important to understand the contractor's workday and circumstances so you understand their needs. But you yourself don't have to sit at the construction site, not as a project manager. The important bit is to meet people that work at the site and to have a personal contact with them*". Several of the respondents from both groups pointed out that the personal connection to project participants (colleagues, clients and contractors) and the social aspect of their job was the thing that matters the most.

Most interviewees expressed that it is common in the industry to be faced with scepticism when you lack the constructability, i.e. experience from construction sites. The general opinion was that it can take longer time for a person without this experience to be accepted than for a person who has this kind of experience. Lack of practical building experience, misunderstanding technical terms and slang expressions make you meet resistance in the industry and face questioning. The interviewees communicated that people in the industry are not afraid to open and clearly express their dissatisfaction. The interviewees also highlighted that when a group finally accepts you, that initial attitude goes away fast.

The interviewees with a background in contracting companies all seemed to be of the opinion that as long as a person lacking this kind of experience "*Admitted*" this fact and were willing to "*Put on the rough boots for a day or two"* that person would be accepted. Several of the respondents in this group expressed that if a person were not willing to do this and behaved like a "*Know-it-all*", that person would have serious trouble with being accepted by and getting along with the contractors in a project. The interviewees expressed that there are different management styles and to order people about was the least successful style. Instead one should steer a project through persuasion, explaining and consulting the project participants according to all the respondents. As one of the interviewees with a background in consulting companies stated "*You have to be a part of the gang, not patronising people, they [the contractors] have to understand that we're all sitting in the same boat"*.

4.4.2 The distinction between consultants and contractors

The interviewees communicated that there is a substantial difference between the two roles consultant and contractor and members of the two job categories have very different attitudes and perspectives. One respondent with a background only as a consultant stated that "*As a consultant you have to deliver, you work as a consultant because you think it's fun to work"*. The respondent went on saying "*The contractors in my project often call in sick, of course they have a more toilsome work but I don't think they are as dedicated to their work as consultants are"*. The interviewee expressed a notion that contractor's did not think that if they worked hard and performed well they could move upwards in life, which seemed to be the case among consultants according to the interviewee. Another respondent with a background as a contractor expressed a similar notion and said "*As a consultant you work hard so you can live a good life outside work, as a contractor you don't think there is more to life than your work"*. The respondent explained that there is a sense among consultants that there is more to life than just work and this sense did not exist to the same extent among contractors. Another interviewee with a background in consulting companies explained that as a consultant in the construction industry you do not only perform engineering tasks but there is another dimension to the job. You have to flexible, well mannered, keep an eye on the whole picture and often cope with being a lone wolf. The respondent stated "*As a consultant you have to be broad and be able to handle most things, from relations to technical aspects and provide the needed expertise*."

Many of the interviewees with a background in contracting companies expressed that they experienced their present work as consultants as more stress free and with less personal responsibility than when they worked as contractors. As contractors they had felt that they were personally accountable for mistakes and delays, now as consultants any blame that arose would be put on the Company and not on them as individuals. As one interviewee stated "*I'm still very interested in doing my very best for my client, but if somethings goes wrong I don't feel that my boss calls me up and yells at me like before".* Another interviewee said that *"When I was working as a site manager I had a more heavy responsibility. As a Construction Manager you can retreat back to a safe environment at the office while the rough environment is out there [at the construction site]."*Another major difference that was brought forward by this group was that as contractors the main focus had been the project but as consultants they felt that the main focus was to charge hours. As contractors they had worked with the production and construction and solved issues that were related to these aspects. Many respondents in this group felt that as consultants they were dealing with a plethora of administrative issues and perhaps issues that were not directly linked to the construction site, which they seemed to miss. The respondents with backgrounds in contracting companies also highlighted that you work much more alone as a consultant than as a contractor, a fact that was referred to as working as "*A lone wolf*" by many of the respondents with backgrounds in consulting companies.

The interviewees that had a background in contracting companies but are now working as consultants had the opportunity to compare the two different job categories. Several of these respondents expressed a deep sympathy for their former profession and felt they were still contractors in their hearts. They stated that as a consultant you have basically all the time in the world to develop and redevelop specifications and documentations for a project. But when the contractors are brought on board they have far too little time to actually build what has been decided by the consultants and client. The general opinion was that it is tough to work as a contractor because of the stressful environment and the immense economic pressure to deliver on budget. One respondent said "*It is common to have to bid with a zero or even a negative marginal just to get a project. Your chance to make any money on the project is the additional work that was not specified at the start of the project".*

When asked about this topic many of the interviewees with a background in consulting companies said that it was their job to make sure that the contractor did not "*cheat"* trying to make specified work seem like additional work or choosing cheaper options than specified in order to make more money. One of the respondents with a background as contractor said "*It is my job to function as a bridge between the contractor and the client. The client wants to spend as little money as possible and the contractor wants to perform the work to the lowest possible cost*". The respondent described that the job as a consultant included being good friends with both sides and helping both sides to understand the other side, many times through personal talks after official meetings.

4.4.3 Two different worlds

The group with a background in contracting companies also expressed the sense of solidarity and fellowship to be greater among contractors. This was supported by statements among the interviewees with backgrounds in consulting companies who experienced a barrier between them and the contractors or ordinary workforce at the client's premises. This barrier made itself visible through subtle details such as use of language, not sharing all information and a greater appreciation by managers employed by the client for the permanent workforce. Some of the interviewees said that that as a consultant you should fit in quickly into a group, be social and nice, but also leave fast. There is a clear difference between consultants and the permanent workforce with one client. "*You don't get any employment award ceremony and cake when you move on from a project after it is completed if you are a consultant, which is the case for the client's own staff "* one of the interviewees said. Sometimes there is even a pronounced difference between the consultants and the permanent workforce. Several respondents working for the same client had experienced confusion when managers from the permanent workforce called "*Everybody"* to a meeting and it turned out that the meeting was only for the permanent workforce and not for the consultants.

One respondent said that such a small thing as buying a cake to celebrate when a new job had come in increased the feeling of fellowship in the group during the respondent's time as a contractor. The respondent felt that there were seldom reasons big enough at the Company that gave cause to celebrate in this manner and this had an impact on the team spirit and group dynamics at the Company. Another interviewee, also with a background in contracting companies, said that there were many different wills at the Company pulling in different directions. This was not the case at the construction site and among the contractor's employees, according to the respondent. This led to mistakes in the specifications and documents the consultants produced and sent out to the contractors. The interviewee proposed that if the same team with consultants could move on together from one project to the next this would result in better collaboration and all participants pulling in the same direction. This would mean that you did not have to "*Invent the wheel again*" in every new project and that lessons learned from one project could be useful in the next project.

One of the interviewed with a background in contracting companies now working as a Construction Manager chose to spend all working hours at the client's construction site. The respondent expressed a sense of distance to the colleagues at the Company and said that "*The Company is so good when it comes to technical knowledge, but people at the Company think it's uncomfortable to talk about the work I do [at a construction site]. Nobody understands that [the work]. Nobody. We stand so incredibly far from each other.*" The interviewee continued explaining that the atmosphere at a construction site is so much tougher than at any office environment in the consulting world. The respondent felt very lonely at the Company's office and unable to communicate with the colleagues there in the same manner as with the colleagues at the construction site. Despite of this the respondent chose to remain with the Company because of the possibility to spend all working hours at the construction site. The interviewee shared an anecdote about an interaction with a consultant colleague at the Company's office who had "*Grand ideas*" but according to the respondent did not understand how things actually work. The interviewee had told the colleague that the person in question needed to meet "*The old man Barry at the site*", which refers to a generalization of a typically older construction worker. The respondent continued stating that "*Everybody has met the old man Barry. He breaks you down, destroys you, is really mean. When you're at rock bottom he starts to be nice to you. That's how you learn to understand things in this world.* The respondent continued explaining that you can't behave like a know-it-all when you have no experience from construction sites. If you do you will never be respected, *"It will* *show immediately if you're a fake"* the interviewee concluded. Thus, people lacking the experience of constructability have to meet, in the eyes of the contractor community, the old man Barry who will teach them not to behave like know-it-alls.

At one time the interview was conducted with two interviewees at the same time, one with a background as a contractor and one with a background as a consultant. This provided an opportunity to observe an interaction between the two professional backgrounds. The interviewees stated at the beginning of the interview that they were friends but throughout the interview they interrupted each other and questioned the other interviewee's answers. They also seemed very surprised that the other person held so different opinions to what they themselves did. This became the most apparent when the importance of practical experience from construction sites was discussed. The interviewee with a background in contracting companies said that it is crucial to have practical experience in order to gain respect from your co-workers. This was met with the other interviewee's response that for a consultant you cannot gain any respect without competence, and this did not necessarily have to come from construction sites.

4.5 Factors influencing project chemistry and performance

In this section factors that may have an impact on overall performance and on project chemistry that were mentioned by the interviewees are presented.

4.5.1 Resistance and prejudice from project participants

During the interviews, some respondents explained that they had experienced resistance by other participants in the construction industry. One observation from the interviews was that the experience of resistance was more widespread among the female respondents than among their male colleagues. The interviewees that had experienced this all said that it is important in their jobs to be able to handle different kinds of people and to be flexible. They stated that there had been tough situations in their professions and that their competence had been questioned. It was common among these respondents that they had experienced resistance from senior colleagues and project participants when they themselves were junior or fairly new in the industry. However, they did not describe the construction industry as a tough industry, but as one interviewee said "*It is rather an industry with very direct communication*".

The general feeling mediated from this group of interviewees was that you in some way must prove your skill and earn your place in the team. Some experienced it as a "*Carrot"* and a mean to spur one's fighting spirit, others as a moment of doubt. Many felt totally surprised about how harsh, open and direct the critic could become. Among the individuals giving this critic was colleagues, executives and even the client. One interviewee explained a meeting as *"I was sawed along the footstools from the start"*. The first meetings in a new project were usually the hardest. But the people who were willing to fight to prove the critics wrong also earned the respect of the team after some time. A bad relation could turn to a good one with some effort and time as one interviewee explained.

Resistance was often the case in the situation of a less experienced consultant interacting with an older construction worker. As the construction worker often had extensive experience of the work performed, listening to a consultant was not always popular. Some of the interviewees found that the way they communicated with others had a big influence on the attitude they were met by. Just by reformulating their assignment could result in a big difference. One example was given when the assignment was to organize and document routines, this was met by resistance by the permanent workforce. They felt threatened and that documenting their expertise knowledge and know-how would make them replaceable. The consultant in question chose then to reformulate the assignment and said it was to make the workers' jobs easier. This was instead met by a positive response from the workers and many of them showed an interest for the consultant's work from that point. The lesson learnt was that your own way of communicating affects the response you are given.

Another lesson learnt among the interviewees was that the visual element could also have an effect on the way people and groups are perceived. Just a simple feature as a common jacket with the company logo distinguishes people into different groups. This was made very clear at one client's premises. The interviewees explained that at one time, many consultants from the Company were hired by the same client to work at one common workplace. The large amount of consultants at the workplace became apparent first when they all were given new jackets with the Company's logo printed big. The talk of the amount of consultants at the workplace quickly spread among the permanent workforce. This resulted in rumours of how expensive and well paid the consultants must be. A sharp "*We and them*" feeling was the result as one respondent pointed out.

4.5.2 Other factors

Another factor that was highlighted by one of the interviewees was the fact that today the industry is under so much pressure to deliver on time that the workforce on the construction site do not have the time to familiarize themselves with the complete picture of the project. The workers on the site only knows what job are required to be done by them but they seldom know why or what part their work plays for the project. The respondent that mentioned this explained that if all workers on the site were involved and informed about these things both the quality of the work and the team spirit would increase. The interviewee shared stories from contractors on the site that they felt they did not know what was going on, they just did what they were told to do. The respondent also mentioned how modern technology could be put to use to enable these participants to take part of information and the complete picture of a project. However, the respondent concluded that as always it is a matter of time and money. Though some contractors would like to be informed there were also other contractors that just wanted to get the job done and move on to the next project as quickly as possible. Some of the interviewees believed that collaborations such as partnering might have a positive impact on the industry in the future with regards to sharing information and pulling in the same directions.

4.6 The perspective of the client

One interview was conducted with an employee at the Company's main client to add the perspective of the client and to compare with the interviews conducted with the employees at the Company. The respondent was employed as Project Manager and have extensive experience in this professional role with the client's organization. The interviewee had earlier experience as both consultant, contractor and client. During the time as a client, the respondent's assignments had been both in the form of Construction Manager, performing quality controls of the contractor's work, and as Project Manager.

The interviewee explained that the practical experience acquired during the time as a contractor and Construction Manager was of value in the present work. This practical experience was also something that the interviewee often chose to share with others, especially junior colleagues at the office. Having practical experience of construction work was something that was not common among the client's employees, the interviewee explained. To only have consulting experience was more common which is good "*But someone needs to have the practical side as well*", according to the respondent. The importance of practical experience was highlighted and the respondent thought that this should be valued by both contractors, clients and consultants. The interviewee explained that you can sometime feel this difference in experience just by discussing with people, *"If someone has been out for a bit and had contact with a construction project, then you notice it."*

The value of good project chemistry was also highlighted during the interview. Failed projects most often had been a result of poor project chemistry. Even if the collaboration with the assignment conductor was good, money issues were often relayed to a higher level of the organization and collaboration had to be good at that level too. Most conflicts in the collaboration had its roots in money related issues. The interviewee explained that consultants today are contracted with a fixed price per assignment. Back in the days, cost reimbursable contracts were more common. This difference put strain on describing the assignment in detail beforehand and there was always a risk of misinterpretation, which often lead to conflicts and discussions about money. The interviewee also put across some critic to one of the executives at the consultant company studied, saying that one bad relation could blacken the reputation of an entire organization.

The main obstacle with collaboration with the Company was, according to the interviewee, to *"Explain our expectations of a consultant"* and it was common to come in conflict over details and money. Competition over the projects used to be harder than what it is today and the price level have increased significantly as skilled people are hard to find. The aspect the interviewee especially appreciated of the collaboration with the Company was the ability to have a personal contact despite the large size of the organization. The fact that the assignment conductor at the Company has mandate to conduct the discussions necessary for a project and not only relaying issues to the manager was also highlighted as positive. The Company had also recently opened a local office in the same city as the client, which also were believed to be a good quality. Being able to exist close to the market was believed to be important.

5 Discussion

The discussion has been divided into three main sections, first the organizational identity of the Company is analysed, followed by a discussion regarding the social identities among the employees at section X. The chapter concludes with an analysis of how the employees’ organizational identity and social identities affect project chemistry.

5.1 Organizational identity at the Company

As defined by Albert and Whetten (1985), organizational identity can be summed up as the central characteristics that define an organization. The organizational identity is defined via the answers given by the organizational members to the question “Who are we as an organization?” As supported by Ashforth et al. (2008), the shared organizational identity among the interviewees at the Company has proven somewhat difficult to pinpoint, and to what extent it was shared varied among the respondents.

5.1.1 The employees´ professional backgrounds

A palpable difference was registered during the interviews between the interviewees that have experience from construction sites and those who do not have this experience. The authors have chosen to divide the interviewees into two groups according to the professional backgrounds, i.e. experience of constructability. This division was communicated by the interviewees themselves throughout the interviews and was thus considered suitable to apply in the analysis. This division form the basis for a comparison between the two groups’ stories and perceptions of their surroundings, including the perception of their identities.

The findings in this study show that the perceptions of “Who we are” and “What we do” differed between the two groups. The interviewees with backgrounds in consulting companies highlighted what it meant to be a consultant and what characterized the job. As a consultant you have to be flexible, adaptive, well-mannered and have great people skills. This group of respondent thus highlighted three of the four core dimensions for consulting firms as defined by Alvesson and Empson (2008), namely *Knowledge work*, *Management and membership* and *External interface*. *Knowledge work* because they elaborated on what it means to be a consultant, highlighting certain attributes and characteristics that goes with their work. *Management and membership* because this group showed a bigger interest in the business strategies decided by top management and an overall interest in how the Company was managed. Finally *External interface* as they reflected about the image of the Company and how they as employees of the Company were seen in the industry by clients and competitors.

The other group, with backgrounds in contracting companies, including the interviewee at the Company's main client, highlighted the importance of experience from building sites, i.e. constructability. They were of the opinion that it was the work they performed as individuals that mattered, not the employer’s organization, strategies developed by the top management or any attributes related to the consultant occupation. Their clients wanted them as individuals and not the Company in particular, according to this group. The core dimensions did not seem to be present in the same extent among this group of respondents and they were generally more individualistic in their approach towards their work.

5.1.2 Identification from the old companies lives on

Among the interviewees there were many individuals that had come to the Company together through a merger between their former employer and the Company. Many had thus worked together at earlier times in their careers and some have even had the same boss as they do today. At section X the majority of the interviewed had come to the Company through the Company's mergers with two other companies. Some of the respondents had come to the Company via other career paths. The bonds and sense of collective among the former group, formed at their former organizations, seemed to have endured and lived on after the mergers.

The organizational identity at section X at the Company seem to compete with pre-existing organizational identities from the former organizations. Confusion among the employees as to what the organizational identity at the Company actually is was widespread. One reason to this was the feeling of an unclear structure of the Company, which several of the respondents communicated. They seemed to find it difficult to identify with an organization they could not fully grasp due to the somewhat messy structure. Another reason was that section X appears to mainly operate as an independent unit with very little communication with other sections at the Company. Many of the interviewees explained that this fact enhanced the feeling that the former companies lived on within the Company and, to some extent, also the former organizational identities. The respondents seemed to define themselves and their section as the in-group and the rest of the Company, along with its other sections, as an unfamiliar out-group, as defined by Ashforth et al. (2008). Some of the respondents also explained that they had been at the Company such a short time, from a few months up to two years, that they could not yet identify with the organization.

The identification with the Company also differed among the respondents according to what professional background a respondent had. There was a distinct difference in attitudes toward the Company between the two groups of respondents and to what extent they were willing to identify with their organization. It was more common among the interviewees with backgrounds in consulting companies to identify with the Company and highlight what attributes they appreciated the most and could relate to the most. As mentioned earlier, there seemed to be a more widespread pronounced appreciation for the Company's business strategies among these respondents. They communicated that they reflected upon these strategies actively in their jobs and upon issues relating to branding, human resources, and business strategies. The majority of the respondents with a background in contracting companies did not spend much time thinking about what strategies had been decided upon by the top management of the Company. Several of these respondents communicated the view that it was the job they performed for their clients that was crucial, not some grand ideas among the top management and CEO. These respondents seemed reluctant to subscribe to an organizational identity.

Furthermore, the respondents with backgrounds in consulting companies chose to come in to the office more often than the respondents with backgrounds in contracting companies. This group expressed that it was important to spend time with the colleagues at the office, an opinion that was less widespread in the other group. These different behaviours affects the organizational identity at the Company since not all employees show the same will to share a common identity. The fact that the employees seldom work together, because of the nature of their work as consultants, also obstructs the creation of a shared organizational identity.

5.2 Social identity liked to job category

Social identity is defined by Tajfel (1978, p. 63) as "That part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership". An individual's social identity is created through the process of identification which, according to Tajfel (1982), is based on three necessary components. These three components can be described by the phrases: I am A, I value A and I feel about A. Even though the interviewees with only consulting backgrounds had more positive impressions of the organization they worked for, most of the respondents at the Company seemed hesitant to subscribe to a common organizational identity. When asked about their professional identity identification with their particular job category seemed to be more appealing. The respondents with backgrounds in consulting companies identified themselves primarily as consultants and the respondents with backgrounds in contracting companies still identified themselves as contractors, "*I'm still a contractor in my heart*" as one of these interviewees stated.

5.2.1 Identification with respective job category

An individual's self-definition process is strongly defined by the individual's membership of numerous social groups, according to Tajfel (1978). The employees at section X often spend more time in other social groups and with other people in the industry than with their colleagues at the Company. It is likely that this has an impact on the organizational identity at section X, since it has to compete with numerous of identities among the employees.

Overall, the respondents with backgrounds in contracting companies seemed less interested in identifying with the organization they worked for, both now and at earlier times in their careers. This group also highlighted the importance of constructability, i.e. experience from building sites. They stressed the fact that in order to be able to perform a good job you have to have practical experience and have spent time *"Out in the reality"*. As discussed by Brown and Phua (2001) these respondents considered themselves to be professionals mostly because of their experience and not their diplomas. These interviewees expressed a deeper sympathy with the craftsmanship of the industry than what the respondents with backgrounds in consulting companies did. Several of these respondents expressed the view that they were still contractors in their hearts and still identified themselves with the contractor job category. They often considered consultants as "*A ruin of money*" and it seems as the pre-existing notions about consultants acquired during the time as contractors had endured the job category switch.

The interviewees with backgrounds in consulting companies explained that as a consultant you often have to work as "*A lone wolf*" and you spend more time with the colleagues at the site or at the client's premises than with your colleagues at the Company. These respondents expressed a view that it is important to understand the everyday work life of contractors but that it is not necessary to share the same experience as they do in order to a good job. They often felt separated from the social groups they found themselves in outside of the Company's office. The reasons to this were misunderstanding of technical details, use of slang expressions and a distinction made by the managers at the client's premises between the consultants and the permanent workforce.

The interviewees with backgrounds in contracting companies expressed the same sense of separation but from their consultant colleagues. They highlighted the fact that they were misunderstood in interactions with these colleagues and lacked the same knowledge in academic knowledge, such as computer science. Because of this sense of separation many of these respondents chose to spend all their time at the building sites in the projects. They seemed to identify themselves foremost with being a construction worker and with the craftsmanship of the industry, which is in line with the results found in the study by Löwstedt and Räisänen (2014). These respondents did not put any emphasis on their job title or work as consultants. Some even refused to identify themselves as consultants because they considered consultants to be "Suit-brownies", even though they had made an active switch from contractor to become a consultant.

The varying identification between interviewees with different backgrounds resulted in the two groups becoming in-group and out-group respectively to each other. They work at the same section, at the same Company but they do not always share the same beliefs or values. The interviewees frequently used the word "them" to describe the other group throughout the interviews and ascribed certain attributes to the members of the other group. The contractors were "Rough", worked "Down in the pit" and "Live so they can work". The consultants, on the other hand, were "Suit brownies", "A ruin of money" and had never "Been out in the reality". It was interesting that most of the members of the group with backgrounds in contracting companies refused to subscribe to their new job category as consultants, even though they had made the switch out of free will. The two groups provided different answers to the three questions related to identification (Tajfel, 1982) which separated them from each other. Thus, there was a clear distinction between the two groups of interviewees where a particular experience, or lack of said experience, acted as an invisible barrier.

This contradicts the conclusion brought forward by Löwstedt and Räisänen (2014) where people in the construction industry generally identify themselves foremost with the trade and craftsmanship of the industry, rather than with their organization or job category. The findings in this study suggest that the respondents with experience from building sites choose to identify with the craftsmanship of the industry, which they referred to as "To be a contractor". The respondents lacking this experience have not however identified with the craftsmanship or with being a construction worker. In this study the interviewees have identified themselves with their job category rather than with the craftsmanship of the industry. A possible reason to this could be that the Company employs both straight-out consultants and former contractors, who will not subscribe to their new job category. This results in two job categories working within the same organization, making it easy for the members to detect any differences between their own category and the other category. This suggests that there are more nuances to the industry than suggested by Löwstedt and Räisänen (2014). The findings indicate that in an environment where you rarely meet your organizational colleagues and where you are often questioned and challenged, it is easier to identify foremost with your job category than with your organization.

5.2.2 Narratives and self-reinforcing mechanisms within the job categories

The majority of the interviewees expressed that the two job categories have very different attitudes and perspectives. There seem to be many fundamental beliefs and values embedded within the two categories that are very difficult to challenge. This is supported by Löwstedt and Räisänen (2014) who state that identification in the industry is maintained over time through self-reinforcing mechanisms and a dominant narrative which blocks other narratives. As found in this study, the contractor job category was dominated by one narrative and the consultant job category was dominated by another narrative.

The stories shared by the interviewees suggest that the narrative among consultants, “Being a consultant”, is more flexible and open to new inputs, as these respondents displayed a bigger interest in the Company’s business strategies and goals. This group also highlighted the fact that as a consultant you constantly have to adapt to other groups which also suggests that the narrative of this group can adapt to new inputs. The narrative among the group with backgrounds in contracting companies seemed to be more solid and anchored, as this group still defined themselves as contractors even though they are working as consultants today. The narrative of “Being a contractor” among these respondents clearly blocked the narrative of “Being a consultant” among the group with backgrounds in consulting companies Thus, the contractor narrative endured and prevented the consultant narrative to be incorporated into the identity process of the interviewees with backgrounds in contracting companies.

The narrative among the interviewees with backgrounds in consulting companies seemed to be driven by the alienation of these interviewees by the contractors and permanent workforces at the client’s premises. Many of these respondents felt isolated and alone at their workplaces in their projects and chose to identify with their job category rather than with the industry, after all it was other members of the industry that questioned them. These interviewees expressed a stronger yearn to come in to the Company’s office and meet their fellow consultant colleagues. In the light of the “Lone wolf” characterization of their work, it is logical that they seek confirmation and appreciation in a place where they are more likely to find it. As Alvesson and Empson (2008) stated, a common identity can act as a glue which holds an organization, in this case a job category, together in a turbulent environment and it can foster group cohesion as well as provide a foundation of affinity.

One of the interviewees with background in contracting companies explained that when you switch from contractor to consultant you lose your competence as a contractor quite quickly, because of the development of new materials and construction methods in the industry. As mentioned earlier, the contractors who had switched to work as consultants seemed reluctant to adopt the social identity of a consultant. This suggests that these former contractors find themselves in between two job categories and constitute a job category of their own of “Former-contractor-now-consultant”. These respondents explained that they very quickly could tell if a consultant had spent time “Out in the reality” or not. Through this screening they could determine whether consultants they meet belong to their in-group or to the out-group who lack experience from construction sites. This behaviour was actively displayed towards out-group members, which was frequently described by the individuals on the receiving end of this resistance during the interviews.

The group with background in contracting companies stressed that the only way to become legitimized in the construction industry is through constructability, a notion that was denied by the other group. This correlates with the findings in the study by Löwstedt and Räisänen (2014). In their study a group with experience from construction sites became an in-group, labelling the individuals lacking these preferred characteristics as the out-group. The in-group de-legitimized the out-group and pushed them further away. In this study, the members of the in-group (who share the experience from construction sites) displayed the same behaviour. They also chose to spend their time away from the Company’s office, and thus removing themselves physically from the platform of the out-group.

Sensebreaking and sensegiving

The narrative of “Being a contractor” among the interviewees with backgrounds in contracting companies seemed to act as a self-reinforcing mechanism, as defined by Löwstedt and Räisänen (2014), as it endured the interviewees job category switch. This narrative resulted in these members choosing to remove themselves physically from their colleagues at the Company, seeking out the contractor community. The narrative was refuelled from interactions with actual contractors on the sites which solidified the narrative and made it an iterative process. One of the interviewees shared the anecdote about “*The old man Barry*” at the site who, according to the respondent, is present in some form at every construction site. Barry is a typically grumpy old man who has been in the industry for a very long time and knows how things work in this world. This old man breaks down every new recruit at the site and treats them really mean until they are at rock bottom low. Then they can be moulded and build up from scratch by the old man who becomes friendly and guiding.

This is a typical example of sensebreaking followed by sensegiving (Pratt, 2000) and a colourful description of how a common identity can be shaped in a group. Through harsh comments and unfriendly behaviour the new recruit is forced to question his or hers present perception of self, because it is not accepted by the group. When the present self has been completely disassembled the sensegiving part follows. The new recruit starts to rebuild his or hers self with new features and elements gained from the collective. This new self is met by a more friendly atmosphere and encouragement, as long as the individual behaves in a manner acceptable to the group. Any other narratives than the dominant narrative at the site is blocked through clear signals from the workers that other behaviours than the preferred one is unacceptable. Thus, a new generation with new perspectives can be strong-armed to fall into the same patterns and beliefs as the older generation, in their search for acceptance by a new social group. This narrative seem to be so anchored within the contractor job category that it could endure a member switching to a new job category.

“Being a contractor”

The interviewees with contractor backgrounds, including the interviewee representing the Company’s client, highlighted experience from building sites as something crucial. Whereas the interviewees with consultant backgrounds regarded it as something good but not necessary. The fact that practical experience is so highly valued by the interviewees with contractor backgrounds could possibly be explained by the practical orientation of the industry. The norms and views of the people within the industry reflects the industry they act within. The focus of the industry becomes the norm of preferred characteristics for those acting within it. The industry is known for producing, building and creating and maybe not so much for developing, communicating and evaluating. As one of the interviewed said; *“We are very good at producing, building but at communicating - awful actually”*. The general view found among the interviewees with backgrounds in contracting companies that practical experience affects the legitimacy of a person can also be linked to the focus of the industry. As highlighted by all of the interviewees with backgrounds in contracting companies, the more experience from building sites you have the more legitimate you become as a project participant. This strive for legitimacy could also be a reason to why constructability is so highly regarded.

The strong social identity of “Being a contractor” may also emerge as a response to the turbulent social landscape of the construction site (Whetten & Godfrey, 1998) and results in a very strong set of shared norms and beliefs. Together with an inclination for very direct communication this set of shared norms and beliefs is articulated and pointed out, especially to those who lack them. These individuals can choose to either adopt the same norms and beliefs or to be labelled as outsiders. Relating to this strong collective identification, Löwstedt (2015) described the industry as *“One of its main mechanisms is to self-reinforce itself to remain the same.”* The strong social identity of “Being a contractor” can be seen as part of this as it works as a self-defining identification process where the identification occurs through emulation. The colourful anecdote about “*The old man Barry at the site*”, illustrates this identification process as new recruits are pressured to adapt in order to become more similar to the norm with accepted values. To achieve acceptance by the group and to gain the other members respect you must earn it by working on the construction site, “Out in the reality”.

5.3 Project chemistry and performance

The importance of good project chemistry was highlighted during the interview with the representative from the Company’s client. The respondent stated that failed projects most often was a result of poor project chemistry. A project with good chemistry often have close social relations between the team members, an open and friendly atmosphere and low level of conflict (Nicolini, 2002). This mixture of characteristics is likely to produce outcomes that are in direct relation to the performance and success of the project. Nicolini (2002) defines project chemistry as a combination of the relationships between participants, the task and organizational conditions in a project. As seen in this study the organizational identity of the Company was perceived as somewhat unclear and the interviewees seemed more inclined to identify themselves with their respective job category. Thus, it is plausible that it is not mainly the organizational identity that influences the employees’ interactions with outside parties but more likely their social identities.

To be a consultant was described as to be neutral and adaptable. The consultant is expected to be able to work with many different people, come into the projects fast with a blank setting and not stand out. Being a temporary co-worker creates a distance between the consultants and the contractors and permanent workforces. The contractor role was, on the other hand, described as more straightforward and as a contractor you communicate views and beliefs in a very direct manner. The interviewees with backgrounds in contracting companies found it easy to dismiss someone who had not spent time "Out in the reality". They seemed strengthen by their social identity of "Being a contractor" and displayed a typical in-group behaviour. The interviewees with backgrounds in consulting companies often expressed how they had to adapt their positions and communication to the contractors and permanent workforces in projects. This perception was not widespread among the respondents with contractor backgrounds as they highlighted that they could communicate in the "proper" manner with the other parties because of their experience.

Resistance and prejudice are found at various places in the industry, according to the interviewees, often in the situation of a less experienced consultant interacting with an older construction worker, i.e. the old man Barry. The distinct in-group behaviour to de-legitimize the out-group of people lacking the preferred construction experience was frequently described in the interviews. Project chemistry is thus affected by the existence of the strong social identity of "Being a contractor". Project participants lacking the preferred experience are immediately labelled as outsiders and openly criticized. According to Nicolini (2002), good project chemistry occurs within organizations that value the organizational members, recognize their importance in the projects and provide them with the necessary support and assistance to be able to do a good job. As seen in the interviews, project participants lacking the experience of constructability are often met by resistance from those who have it.

This resistance has a direct impact on the possibilities to create good project chemistry as it prevents the close social relations and a friendly atmosphere highlighted as necessary by Nicolini (2002). Bad project chemistry can have a negative impact on overall project performance and can in some cases be traced back to the ways people have been trained to behave in their professional trades (Nicolini, 2002). Prejudice and resistance seem to be a part of the narratives of the different job categories in the industry and members may have been trained to display resistance towards other categories. As described by Löwstedt and Räisänen (2014), these blind spots caused by a dominant narrative may result in losing new perspectives and ideas. Losing this new input could result in a negative impact on overall project success.

6 Conclusion

This chapter presents the conclusions of the master thesis which have been derived from the analysis. The chapter has been divided into three main sections in accordance to the aim and research questions. The chapter is concluded with a reflection on possible further research within the studied area.

6.1 The employees´ organizational identity

The employees at section X at the Company had varying professional backgrounds, some had always worked as consultants, some had experience from working in contracting companies and a few had come to the Company via other industries. However, the employees at section X could be divided into two main groups, according to their professional backgrounds. The ones with backgrounds in only consulting companies and the ones with backgrounds in contracting companies. The majority of the interviewees had been in the construction industry all their careers. Most of the interviewees had come to the organization from mergers between the Company and other companies. The bonds and identification among the employees from the former organizations seemed to live on, even though the employees now were a part of the Company's organization. The organizational structure of the Company was sometimes hard to grasp by the employees and they described an organization with numerous sections where some sections to great extent resembled each other. The respondents explained the structure of the Company as unclear due to the many mergers and the rapid expansion.

A clear difference was noticed among those employees who had, respectively did not have a background from onsite construction work, referred to as constructability. The interviewees with consultant backgrounds, lacking said experience, displayed a bigger inclination to identify with the organization they worked for. They showed a bigger interest in the business strategies and planning of the organization and communicated that they frequently reflected upon these issues. As described by Alvesson and Empson (2008) a tangible organizational identity can counteract the abstract nature of the services performed in consulting firms and may explain this group's reflections. Interviewees with contractor backgrounds identified less with the organization they worked for and they showed little interest in organizational strategies. They remained to a greater extent individuals, as the general opinion was that it was themselves as individuals that mattered, not the organization they worked for. The organizational identity of section X at the Company seemed to be weak, partly because the employees struggled with understanding their organization and partly because the will to identify with the organization varied. The fact that the employees rarely get a chance to create common grounds because they, as consultants, seldom work together also seemed to contribute to a weak shared identity. The findings of this study suggest that the employees at section X chose to identify more with their respective job category than with their organization, or in the case for the respondents with backgrounds in contracting companies their *former* job category.

6.2 The social identities among the employees

A strong social identity of "Being a contractor" was found to be present among the interviewees with onsite experience even though they had made an active decision to become consultants because they "*Wanted a change*". These interviewees often chose to spend all their time in their former work environment at the construction sites and regained the strong feeling of cohesion with the contractors there. This strong identification resulted in that these interviewees still identified with their former job category, the contractors. This palpable identification did not have an equally strong equivalent among the interviewees with backgrounds in consulting companies. Even though this group displayed a clear identity of "Being a consultant" this identity did not result in the same strong sense of fellowship as the identity of "Being a contractor" did within the former group. The respondents with backgrounds in consulting companies often felt isolated from other project participants such as contractors or the client's permanent workforce. They often felt alienated by these groups due to lack of technical knowledge or use of language. The respondents with backgrounds in contracting companies, on the other hand, often felt isolated from their colleagues at the Company, who lacked the same experience of constructability as they had. The narrative of "Being a contractor" among the interviewees with backgrounds in contracting companies seemed to be so anchored that it endured these respondents' switch to a new job category. Thus, there was a clear distinction between the two groups of interviewees and their answer to the question "Who we are" differed according to their professional backgrounds, where a particular experience, or lack of said experience, acted as an invisible barrier.

In this study the interviewees have mostly identified themselves with their job category rather than with a trade or craftsmanship. The findings suggest that in an environment where you rarely meet your organizational colleagues and where you are often questioned and challenged, it is easier to identify with your job category than with your organization. This contradicts the findings in the study by Löwstedt and Räisänen (2014) where people in the construction industry were found to generally identify themselves foremost with the trade and craftsmanship of the industry, rather than with their job category. The findings in this study suggest that people with experience from building sites identify themselves with the craftsmanship of the industry, i.e. with "Being a contractor". But people in the industry lacking this experience do not identify with the craftsmanship of the industry or with being a construction worker. This study had only focused on one particular section at one company and it is difficult to determine whether the findings can be applied to the industry in general. However, if this is the case this suggests that there are more nuances to the industry than suggested by Löwstedt and Räisänen (2014).

6.3 Impact of the social identities on project chemistry and performance

A project with good chemistry often have close social relations between the team members, an open and friendly atmosphere and low level of conflict (Nicolini, 2002). This mixture of characteristics is likely to produce outcomes that are in direct relation to the performance and success of the project. As seen in this study, project participants lacking the experience of constructability are often met by resistance from those who possess this experience. The interviewees with backgrounds in contracting companies, strengthen by their social identity of “Being a contractor”, found it easy to dismiss someone who has not spent time *“Out in the reality”*. The distinct in-group behaviour to de-legitimize the out-group of people lacking the preferred experience was frequently described in the interviews. Project participants lacking the preferred experience were immediately labelled as outsiders and openly criticized by those participants possessing this “preferred” experience. Project chemistry can thus be argued to be affected by the existence of the strong social identity of “Being a contractor”.

According to Nicolini (2002) good project chemistry occurs within organizations that value the organizational members and recognize their importance in the projects. As seen in this study, this is far from always the case in the interaction between participants in a construction project. Therefore it can be argued that the two different narratives of contractors and consultants have an impact on the possibilities to create good project chemistry and ultimately on project performance. Bad project chemistry can in some cases be traced back to the ways people have been trained to behave in their professional trades (Nicolini, 2002). Prejudice and resistance seem to be a part of the narratives of the different job categories in the industry and members may have been trained in their professions to house this resistance. As described by Löwstedt and Räisänen (2014), these blind spots caused by a dominant narrative may result in losing new perspectives and ideas. Losing this new input could result in a negative impact on overall project success and widespread consequences for the industry. Based on the findings in this thesis and that more questions has emerged than the thesis aimed to explore, the authors to this study encourage further studies within the studied field.

6.4 Recommendations for further research

Several employees at section X at the Company have been recruited from the contractor role to the consultant role. These respondents still identified themselves more with the strong social identity of “Being a contractor” than with “Being a consultant”. The found invisible barrier between the different social identities raises questions regarding where this barrier has its roots and what makes it so strong. Only one company and one organizational section have been the focus in this study and further studies in the same area to confirm the findings are encouraged. If this study were to be performed again it would include either more sections at the Company or several consulting companies to explore if consultants with contractor experience refuse to subscribe to the consultant identity in more places in the industry. The study would also be supported with observations made “out in the field” where consultants and contractors interact with each other, which would have displayed how the differences between the two job categories affect project chemistry more visible. Suggestions of future research questions for further research have been compiled below;

- What does “Being a contractor” entail?
- What is the perception of a “Suit brownie” based on?
- Where does the perception of a “Suit brownie” come from and how is this perception transferred in the industry?
- Why are people with contractor experience working as consultants so reluctant to identify themselves as “consultants”? Which are the characteristics that they will not identify with?
- Why do these people that actively chose to become consultants make that choice if they do not wish to be seen as consultants?

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Appendices

Appendix I – List of respondents' professions

<u>Titles of the respondents interviewed at section X at the Company</u>

- Project Manager (6)
- Construction Manager (3)
- Construction and Project Manager (2)
- Construction Manager and Surveyor (1)
- Group Manager (1)
- Consultant (3)

Some of the interviewees held several titles. The number (x) indicates how many interviewees that held that specific title.

<u>Title of the respondent interviewed at one of the main clients of section X at the Company</u>

- Senior Project Manager

Appendix II – Interview Template

This appendix provides a record of the questions asked during the conducted interviews. Due to the semi-structure of the interviews questions have been adapted to suit the respondents' professional roles but all questions have been based on the template.

Respondent's background:

- Current position within the company you work?
- What are your work assignments?
- How do your days look like?
- What do you have for education?
- What previous experiences and jobs have you had?
- What skills are needed in your job?
  - Example?
- Do you have practical experience in building production (construction sites)?
  - Where do these experiences come from? Example?
- How do you view your professional role? What does it mean to be a consultant?
- How does your role differ from the role you would have had if you were employed by a construction company? Example?
- How do you think the Company´s customers are looking at the Company?
  - What competence does the Company's customers seek?
  - What skills will be desirable in the future?
- How do you view the Company?
  - Are there any values and norms typical for the Company?
- How does the Company view itself in terms of innovation and creativity in a "traditional" industry?

Competence within the section:

- Are employees recruited primarily from construction companies or from other consulting companies?
  - Is there a professional background that is more common than others among the employees? Example?
  - Is there a certain type of company that many have worked on before? Example?
- Is it common with experience from construction sites among the employees?
  - Does employees differ from each other among those who have, respectively have not experience from construction sites? How are these differences observed?
  - Are you encouraged to get such experiences if you lack them?
  - Do you think that there are groupings between employees with such experiences and those who do not have it?
    - Do you feel cohesion with a certain group within the section? Why?

- Is it important to have practical experience from construction sites or is it sufficient to be able to carry out your own duties, i.e. CAD, work in BIM, economics etc. ?
    - Do you meet resistance in your career if you lack these skills / experiences? If so, where do you encounter resistance?
    - Does a colleague's academic background affect a person's legitimacy in the same way as practical experience from the construction site does?
- Is it beneficial to have practical experience in order to reach a managerial position within the company?
    - Are there managers with background from other industries?
    - What kind of background of a manager is most desirable?
    - Is it a prerequisite to have experience from construction sites to be perceived as a legitimate leader within the section?

The Company in comparison with construction companies:

- What do you think are the biggest differences between working at the Company as a consulting company and working on a larger construction company? (I.e. Skanska, NCC, Peab)?
    - What differences have you experienced personally? Example?
    - Have you heard others in the industry describe more differences? Example?
    - What similarities are there?
- Do you experience these differences when you work with people from these companies? What are the biggest difficulties in the cooperation? (Do you understand each other?)
    - Why do you think it looks like it does?
    - What are the differences in working methods and attitudes to work? Do you work, for example based on different business models?
    - Where lies the biggest focus in the Company's projects, compared to the construction companies? What are the most important aspects for the consultant Company? What aspects are most important for the construction company? Example?
        - Are there any differences in how to make money in the projects?
        - Do you notice these differences in your daily work? How?

Client specific interview questions

During the interview with the client, the same interview template was used with some minor modification. The following questions were added or further emphasized:

- How do you think the Company's customers view the company?
- What is your personal view of the Company?
- How is the cooperation working between the Company and you as a client?
- Is there any differences and/or similarities to what it used to be in the past?