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Identity and the Management Project

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By

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Abstract

The paper discusses the concept of identity in relation to management. We take our starting point in Wittgenstein's concept *language games*. We argue that identity is a question of using linguistic tools to construct reality. Two elements of the language game metaphor are central here: *rules* and *family resemblance*. We argue that rules and family resemblance are central for the construction of identity because they are the link between individual and social realities. We use the concept of narrating to emphasize how individuals construct themselves as meaningful individuals in the world. Narrating is the process by which individuals seek to bridge the gap between the "ought" and the "is": a process of integration. It seeks to integrate past, present and future; it seeks to integrate logic and values; and it seeks to integrate individual and social worlds. Narrating is conditioned on rules and family resemblance. As such, managing identity in organizations is closely linked to rules and family resemblance. Organizations manage identity through the definition of norms and values for right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate, to name but a few. Norms and values are important as reference points for constructing identities. Managing identity has become more important because the rules-of-the-game have become more unstable. Managing identity is important if the bonds between individuals and organizations are to be sustained. But this task is contradictory and paradoxical of its very nature because the conditioning factors of these bonds, rules and family resemblances may be eroded by change.

Keywords: Identity, language games, rules, family resemblance, integration, narrating, managing identity.

Identity and the Management Project

"There is little reason to expect one's loyalty to a group or an organization to be reciprocated. It is unwise ("irrational") to proffer such loyalty on credit when it is unlikely to be repaid." (Bauman 2004: 30).

Introduction

Construction of reality may be described as an integration of four dimensions: *facts*, *logic*, *values* and *communication* (Henriksen, Nørreklit, Jørgensen, Christensen and O'Donnell 2004; Nørreklit, Israelsen and Nørreklit 2005). *Reality* is our conception of world. Construction of reality is that which *works* for us (Nørreklit, Israelsen and Nørreklit 2005: 44-45). While the world is objective, our conception of reality is subjective. The world cannot be spoken of as such, as the ontological objective is merely an ideal concept. Physical and material elements can only be studied as and through human symbols, language and actions. *Facts* are material realities, artifacts, historical facts, what is said done and what has been said and done. Logic transforms facts to possibilities – possibilities that we choose between. *Logic* may be material (technologies and systems), formal (mathematics, science), social (routines) or subjective (individual routines). *Values* describe what is important and valuable for us. Values are what we like or dislike. Values give meaning to reality. They are the foundation for choice and assessment and thus they are our guidelines for what we want to do and how we should treat others. As with logic, values are learned and interiorized through our upbringing and experiences in society and organizations. Facts, logic and values are integrated into the fourth dimension, communication. *Communication* is the medium through which reality

becomes socially constructed. It would not be possible to talk about culture, community, society or history without communication (Dewey 1916). Communication is thus the condition for talking about reality as socially constructed. Communication is a question of life and death for the organization (Gergen, Gergen and Barrett: 2004). Facts, logic and values are integrated in the way that we talk and act. They are integrated in our language and language games (Wittgenstein 1983). The central idea here is that language should not be understood as a mirror of reality. Instead language is a toolbox for the construction of reality (Wittgenstein 1983: §§ 11-12). The meaning of words, concepts and sentences cannot be defined once and for all. Instead they get their meaning through the way they are used in everyday life. The use of language is regulated by rules such as norms, traditions, conventions and so on. These rules are tacit and taken-for-granted (Clegg 1975; Hardy and Clegg 1996; Jørgensen 2006). However, it is these rules that make is possible to communicate with others – to participate in language games – because rules mean that individuals' language or repertoires becomes shared (Wenger 1998). Since we construct reality by playing language games, we also construct our identity through language and language games. We may call our words and concepts in the linguistic toolbox for the *technologies of the self* (Foucault 1988). As such it is impossible to understand identity without understanding society and culture. It is from this understanding that we will discuss identity in this paper.

Facts, logic and values are integrated in our language and language games. This also suggests that these are created by our language and language games. The integration of

these three dimensions in language is central in understanding what identity is. Bauman (2004) suggests the following:

> "*The idea of "identity" was born out of a crisis of belonging* and out of the effort it triggered to bridge the gap between the "ought" and the "is" and to lift reality to the standards set by the idea – to remake reality in the likeness of the idea." (Bauman 2004: 20).

According to Bauman, identity is an integration of "is" and "ought". The idea is thus that identity creates consistency and coherence between past, present and future (Harré and Gillett 1994) – a continuity in the way that we live our lives and the purpose of living our lives. Thus identity has a double character. On the one hand it is a question of being a particular person. On the other hand it concerns a continuous struggle towards becoming a particular person. Identity can be spoken of as an ideal model, as a goal if you will, but it can also be seen as a process of creating this goal. Values are thus integrated in the way we create new possibilities in the world by participating in language games. The integration of "is" and "ought" is thus the integration of logic and values and at the same time it is an integration of past, present and future. This integration is normally tacit in our daily participation in language games. As such identity is tacit and taken-for-granted. We do not usually reflect too much about who we are. In everyday situations identity works tacitly in merging the individual and the social (see next section). When this merger is relatively unproblematic it is a sign that our language *works*. When our language does not work, it is an indication that the individual and the social begin to fall apart. An example in organizations is when individuals begin to work independently of the organization, even though they are formal organizational members. In such situations

the bonds between the individual and the organization are torn apart. It may happen in periods of rapid change; technological, social, economic or others. Or it may happen as a consequence of internal organizational changes; managerial, structural, cultural or others. Or, of course, it may happen due to some combination of these factors. It is perhaps because present day organizational life is characterized by relatively rapid changes that the contemporary interest in identity has emerged in sociology (Giddens 1991; Bauman 2004), in educational research (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998; Chappell, Rhodes, Solomon, Tennant and Yates 2003; Sfard and Prusak 2005) and in organizational research (Czarniawska 1997; Boje 2001; Ainsworth and Hardy 2004). "You tend to notice things and put them into the focus of your scrutiny and contemplation only when they vanish, go bust, start to behave oddly or otherwise let you down" (Bauman 2004: 17).

In any case there is a renewed interest in, and need for, understanding identity in relation to management. This paper seeks to contribute to such an understanding. We suggest using the concept *language games* to understand identity. More specifically we use two elements of the language game metaphor to aid such understanding: *family resemblance* and *rules*. Rules and family resemblance are important because they constitute the link between individual and social realities on which the bonds between the individual and the social must be created. These bonds include such things as trust, mutuality, expectations, obligations and aspirations. We use the concept *narrating* to characterize a specific aspect of language games - individuals' continuous efforts to bridge the gap between the "is" and the "ought". In other words narrating integrates who we want to become and

who we are. These efforts are expressed as identifications with, and subjugations to, talk, actions and attitudes of particular persons, groups, professions, organizations, institutions or societies. Narrating integrates different dimensions of reality. On one hand, it comprises our *hopes, dreams, role models* and so on. On the other hand, it also comprises how one *legitimizes* what one says and does. We deal with the question of *managing identity* in the final section of the paper. We argue that management of identities is actually about communicating the "ought" embedded and embodied in the norms and rules of the organization's language games. Rules are important in managing identity; so is *power*. We argue that present day organizational life has created a greater emphasis on managing identity because the rules of the game are increasingly subjected to continuous change. When the rules change, the bonds between individuals and organizations are also put in jeopardy. This means that managing identity has emerged as perhaps one of the most important but also contradictory and paradoxical managerial challenges.

Identity as Language Game

Identity is an integration of "is" and "ought", an integration of past, present and future, and an integration of individual and social realities. As noted above, we suggest that this integration is accomplished by playing language games (Wittgenstein 1983), where language and the ways in which language are used constitute the toolbox – our technologies of the self – for constructing identity. In this way identity becomes a question of using linguistic tools such as concepts, methods, statements, symbols, myths, sagas, stories and narratives to construct reality. Language is the toolbox and the point of reference in identity creation. It follows that the source of identity lies in culture and in

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shared cultural symbols and resources (Geertz 1973; Bruner 1996). Identity is conditioned on the ability to use language – in other words to be able to participate in language games. We deal here with two concepts linked to the concept of language games. The first concept is *family resemblance*, which simultaneously is a projection from the body towards external objects and thus a condition for being able to play language games in the first place. The second concept is *rules*, which deal with how using language presupposes recognizing and learning the language game rules, which over time become tacit and taken for granted. In the process of assimilating the rules-of-the-game identity is conditioned and regulated by social norms, conventions and traditions making up organizations, cultures and societies. Clearly, family resemblance and rules also condition each other, as the latter can only be understood *through* and *as* the former. Family resemblance is, for example, at one and the same time a consequence of the rules of language and a condition for using language in a particular situation.

Family resemblance

Family resemblance denotes the solution that Wittgenstein offers in the face of the fact that he cannot find any common characteristic that defines a language as a language, a game as a game and so on. Instead, there are networks of similarities that overlap and criss-cross each other. Language is not called language because of one common characteristic. Languages look alike in the same sense as brothers and sisters look alike —"…build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way. – And I shall say: 'games' form a family" (Wittgenstein 1983: § 67). Thus the phenomena called language is not called language simply because they share

one common characteristic that unites them. They are called language because they look like each other just as brothers and sisters look alike in terms of looks, temperament and so on. Yet, they are different from each other. This network of similarities is crucial both in terms of understanding how individuals recognize unique events as similar to others. A crucial part of these similarities is the rules for using language, which means that similarity to other situations is just as much something that is constructed as it is something that is experienced. Identification relies on *family resemblance* experienced by individuals. Identification cannot be accomplished without experiencing that situations are similar to what individuals have learned and seen before. As such, identification is a result of what the individual has done and experienced before in similar - but not analytically identical - situations. Identification is not analogous but metaphoric in character. It is not mathematical but to some extent imprecise and vague, yet precise enough for human understanding and cooperation. In dealing with everyday situations, individuals draw from how they have learned to use language in similar situations – thereby constructing reality. They use the past to construct the present – and indeed they often use the past to give new content to the present. Through family resemblance, situations are made relatively similar and thus predictable. If situations are not predictable, it is impossible to make sense of reality. It would also be impossible to coordinate social actions because they rely on predictability (Weick 1979: 100).

It is important to realize that family resemblance is not only a question of recognizing specific situations as similar to others. Identification should not be misunderstood as a passive automated response to whatever comes up. It is an active and often quite

reflective process whereby individuals use language to position themselves in the language game. As such family resemblance is a construction. It is a projection from the individual to the external world. Identification becomes an undertaking of imposing familiar structures and coherence onto new situations. Identification is thus a way of establishing truth in reality by using language. "Metaphorically speaking, identifying is an attempt to overcome the fluidity of change by collapsing a video clip into a snapshot" (Sfard and Prusak 2005: 16). "When people punctuate their own living into stories, they impose a formal coherence on what is otherwise a flowing soup" (Weick 1995: 128; see also Boje 2001: 2). Identification is thus essential for our very existence. Identification is a way of making reality manageable through an active process of construction, whereby meaning is projected from the body to the world. Polanyi (1958, 1966) introduces the ideas of a tacit dimension in every kind of talk and action. Implicit in this idea is the conception that knowledge is basically characterized by from-to movements. Our knowledge moves *from* the body *to* its meaning in a way where the meaning is projected away from us. These internal processes are incredibly complex and characterized by the fact that they are difficult to control and even feel or experience. But the ability to integrate and to shape elements in from-to movements is none-the-less learned through a process which can be quite strenuous (Polanyi, 1966: 14-15). Reality is thus a projection where the projection is the result of a learning process. But it is a process that moves from the body to external objects.

> "Our body is the ultimate instrument of all our external knowledge, whether intellectual or practical. In all our waking moments we are relying on our awareness of contacts of our body with things outside for *attending* to these things. Our own body is the only thing in the world which we normally never

experience as an object, but experience always in terms of the world to which we are attending from our body. It is by making this intelligent use of our body that we feel it to be our body, and not a thing outside." (Polanyi 1966: 15-16)

Knowledge goes from the body to the world and we depend on the body in our actions and understandings. We know the body from what it does in the world. Hall describes it as follows: "Insofar as I act, I am not conscious *of* myself *but* from myself" (Hall 1979: 276). Polanyi uses the concept "indwelling" in this connection (Polanyi 1966: 16) to denote how we use our body to capture the meaning of external objects. Hall also uses the description "participating in" to denote the active process by which we create reality. "On this epistemology, I am not a detached, impersonal observer in knowing, but on the contrary, I pour myself into things." (Hall 1979: 275). As such the borderlines between *the knower* and *the known* are dissolved. It is the knower, who gives the world meaning and character. What is known is not known on its own conditions, but is known on the knower's conditions. In other words a merger occurs between the individual and the world, so that they are not anymore two different things. We recognize ourselves from what we see, hear, feel and do in interaction with other people in time and space. We do not recognize ourselves by focusing upon who we are but by talking and acting in the world. As such identification is always experienced by someone in a specific context, which means that any concept of truth is inseparable from subjective mind. It takes a human being to conceptualize truth and create identity as the external can only be experienced internally (Blumer 1969). Going against Cartesian dualism, we argue that the individual *is* her external world. There is no way to establish subject or object as ontologically apart from each other. This merger is normally not something that we reflect upon. It is tacit and taken-for-granted. Therefore we do not normally reflect upon

who we are. Normally, we take our identity for granted (Bauman 2004). But this taken-for-grantedness relies on the fact that the world also behaves in familiar ways when we act in it. Otherwise identity is lost and becomes a sign that our language does not work in this context and therefore that we do not have any position in it – except of course the position of an outsider. Identity is conditioned on family resemblance. If the world suddenly began to behave in unfamiliar ways, we would not know what to do in it.

Rules

The other central concept in Wittgenstein's philosophy in relation to an understanding of identity is the concept of rules – a concept also linked closely to family resemblance. Identification relies on the fact that language is *rule-governed*. *Rule-governed* suggests that even if it is impossible to specify what words means, and thus that words may have countless different uses, this in no way indicates any relativistic understanding of reality. The language game metaphor calls attention to the fact that social situations are regulated by rules-of-the-game (Hardy and Clegg 1996; Clegg 1975) that *govern* talk and actions. The rules are thus not deterministic in the sense that people *have* to talk and act in particular ways. People can choose to say and do whatever they say and do. The important point is that these statements and actions may not count as knowledge in the social situation in which they take place (Haugaard 1997: 56). Being brought up in particular cultures we have learned to speak and act in a particular manner. But these rules are usually implicit, tacit and interiorized in the very way that we live our lives. In everyday conversations and actions we don't usually have to specify how we know the meaning of words and concepts and we don't usually have to specify how we know how

to walk for example. We simply walk and talk. Even if these examples on simple everyday situations, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to specify exactly how we know these things. Yet, we do know; and further we are even capable of using words to communicate and accomplish things with other people even if we are not capable of specifying precisely the rules of the game. Words are perfectly applicable anyhow. If, asks Wittgenstein, "I tell someone "stand roughly there" – may not this information work perfectly" (Wittgenstein, 1983, §88). The answer is that of course it may work perfectly. The important question is not whether the information is precise or imprecise but whether the information is *understood* or *misunderstood*. The usability of language does not require that the meaning of language must be defined once and for all. But it requires that situations are similar to other situations and that symbols from the past are made significant in the present; that they are contextualized and given particular meanings.

Identification is about construction. We are able to recognize social patterns because we actively construct these patterns ourselves based upon what we have learned from our social surroundings. As children we learn very quickly that the social world is comprised of specific rules of conduct. We learn about specific instruments of communication; that some things can and should be used if we are to be allowed to participate. We learn how to use language to accomplish particular things. The ability to learn about the social world is not something we ask for as much as it is cast upon us. In a way we are forced by our own bodily capabilities to learn to use language and we cannot help but go with this flow in one way or another if we are to create identity. It is an inevitable part of growing up and being socialized. With regard to society as a whole, we must come to

terms with its many games if we want to play a role in it. And to understand and play a game one must master its instruments. "To understand a language means to be master of a technique" (Wittgenstein, 1983, § 199). On a generic level such tools are what are commonly labelled linguistic or significant symbols. This implies that they carry more or less the same meaning for all those involved in a game (see also Mead 1934). Learning and using linguistic symbols is then not an arbitrary exercise. To use Heidegger's terms (Nicolaisen 2003) it is a process of meticulously building up a fore-having in accordance with experienced social structures, which subsequently is used as a tool to create identity in the social world. To grasp the logic of a language game means to enrol its rules in one's fore-having so as to continually apply them (creatively) to new situations; to reconstruct them in-context for the purpose of creating identity. Hence, identification can be seen as the rational and contextual application of (or play with) linguistic rules in order to maintain coherence in a spontaneously lived moment. For a hammer to be a hammer, it must be used and understood as such over time. As for any symbol it must be logically applied in a systematic manner in specific contexts. Using a hammer correctly means playing a language game the way it is intended; the way it is interpreted intersubjectively across time and space (Okrent: 1988). Like a carpenter must know how to use a hammer, other occupational groups, such as physicians, teachers and managers must master a range of professional techniques and rules of conduct unique to their everyday contexts. As all language games are different, they require a range of different theoretical insights, bodily skills and practical know-how. Any sign can be used in a language game to produce meaning. Odours, sounds, physical objects or shapes, or abstract signs such as musical notes, words and rules of conduct are all linguistic tools.

What they have in common is that more than one individual can agree upon their meaning, as they reside as somewhat identical potentials of meaning for all involved. Creating identity must involve using such tools, to retrieve them from the depths of memory and re-create them in situ. And only if linguistic tools are used in accordance with established norms do they provide intersubjective sense. As such they work as tools or recipes providing sufficiently predictable and meaningful ways of interaction. The abstract rules underpinning a game reach from the past into the present as action. That the language game is continued from situation to another, however, does not mean that it is exactly replicated, for as human action it is inevitably imprecise, which *in technical terms* implicates some amount of change. Change, however, is perhaps a poor choice of word here, because it implies that there exists something *to be* changed to begin with - in this case the rules of language games. But as these can never be singled out as such there cannot be any real change in the ontological objective sense. We are thus able to collapse a 2500 year old debate initiated by the philosophers Parmenides and Heraclites as identification is recognized as something living and to some extent imprecise. Or, indeed, in Heidegger's terms: identity only exists in the moment of its making, and immediately (if learned) it turns into fore-having, from where it potentially shapes further identification. To identify (with) something is to understand it as similar to what is already in the fore-having; to construct a coherent world.

Language game and narrative

To summarize, identity is a question of *playing language games* by using language according to traditions, uses, conventions – in short the *rules* - of a particular culture, thus

identifying and recreating *family resemblances*. Identity is internalized ways of talking and acting and it is shaped from playing language games in particular social and cultural surroundings according to the rules of these surroundings. Identity is a historical construction shaped by individual life paths. As such identity is first of all complex, paradoxical, pluralistic, fragmented, and intersected by many different and contradictory forces (Foucault 1978, 1979, 1984). So the toolbox for the construction and reconstruction of identities derives from language and the way it is used. Identity is highly implicit and conditioned on language rules and the capacity to employ family resemblance.

We try to relate this conception to another idea about identity construction that has attracted great attention over the past decade - the idea that we *narrate* our identities (Boje 2001; Czarniawska 1997; Chappell, Rhodes, Solomon, Tennant and Yates 2003; Sfard and Prusak 2005). Narrating is about giving sense and coherence to what we do (Boje 2001: 2). To narrate is to try to bridge the gap between the "ought" and the "is"; it is a process in which individuals seek to integrate facts, logic and values as well as individual and social worlds, past, present and future (Henriksen, Nørreklit, Jørgensen, Christensen and O'Donnell 2004: 40-44). Narrating is thus a description of how we seek to construct ourselves in relation to the situations in which we are players. We believe that it is a mistake to suggest that identities are "… collections of stories about persons, or more specifically, as those narratives about individuals that are *reifying*, *endorsable* and *significant*" (Sfard and Prusak 2005: 16). The focus here is almost unambiguously moved away from the ways that people talk and act to the stories available in the social

space. It is more appropriate to say that individuals construct realities by using the narrative resources available in the language games. By the term narrative resources we retrieve language as a toolbox where narrating is the active process by which identity is created from the toolbox. *Narrating is in other words game-playing*. Secondly Sfard and Prusak's definition of identity seems to build on a rather high level of consciousness about identity: "…a story about a person counts as endorsable if the identity-builder, when asked, would say that it faithfully reflects the state of affairs in the world" (Sfard and Prusak 2005: 16). This is problematic for the simple reason that identity is highly implicit and tacit as we have noted above. Finally, we believe that Sfard and Prusak's definition emphasizes too much the narrative as such, where identity is rather expressed in narrating, where narrating is characterized as a continuous effort to bridge the gap between the "is" and the "ought" and where this effort seeks to create unity and consistency from material that is complex, pluralistic and fragmented - that which is *ante-narrative* (Boje 2001: 1): "Antenarrative is the fragmented, non-linear, incoherent, collective, unplotted and prenarrative speculation, a bet". Narrating seeks to create consistency in these different forces, but therefore there will always be differences between who we are and narrating. *Genealogical analysis* (Foucault 1984; Nietzsche 1992; Haugaard 1997; Flyvbjerg 2001; Jørgensen 2002, 2006) takes this as its primary starting point in that– by means of history – it seeks to demonstrate the difference between who we are and the stories and narratives we tell about who we are. Concepts like *self-narration* (Giddens 1991) or *reflective identity* (Chappell et al. 2003) need to be interpreted in this way, and it plays an important part of the creation of identity. Narrative is a model of who we are and what we want to pursue. It is an *ought* rather than an *is*. It is

constructed through narrative resources or what is also referred to as *identity capital* (Pullen 2005), which is present in our language games and their surrounding cultures (Bruner 1996: 3). We call it narrative resources to emphasize the fundamentally incomplete, fragmented and inconsistent in these narrative resources. It is individuals that create consistency through a tacit but rule-governed process.

Narrating is important as an integration of "is" and "ought". In narrating we create a meaningful reality for ourselves in the world and thus connect with the social world. Further, narrating seeks to construct a desirable future. Narrating thus has two purposes. Firstly, it expresses our goals and aims in life. Narrating is to let our talk and actions point in a desired direction. It contains our hopes and dreams, our role models and desired futures. It gives sense and direction. Secondly, narrating also expresses the legitimacy of what we say and do. Our narratives are what we show to the world. It is a mask (Pullen 2005) – a mask that is sometimes fragile, incidental and superficial, adaptable to any situation and purpose. Thus on one hand, our narratives contain our hopes and dreams. But we also hide in our stories and narratives. Narrative as goal and legitimization are two sides of the same coin. Both are expressions that in everyday life an implicit identification is going on to the talk, actions, opinions and viewpoints of particular people, groups, organizations, institutions, or professions. This prevails no matter whether talk and actions are ironic, sarcastic or humoristic; or if talk and actions have a particular function in that they often rebuff rationalization initiatives and demands for effectiveness by giving them a *human face* (Gabriel 2000; Pritchard, Jones and Stablein 2004). Narrating and narrative thus express an important aspect of identity in

that they express the "ought". At the same time, however identity is something more. It comprises both the "is" and the "ought", where "is" in reality is a lot more complex, contradictory and fragmented than suggested by narrating. The "ought" is something that is produced by every society, every organization and every group as part of their own image and their own conception of who they are.

But there is a more varied story behind every conception of how people think about themselves. There is a darker side, something that people do not express in their language about themselves. Sometimes this side is uglier, more unpleasant and more embarrassing but it is nonetheless a part of who people are. As such narrating and narratives always have an aspect of cover-up for reality at the same time as it communicates reality. Thus language and communication are both used to construct reality but also to disguise reality. Even so one should be careful how this masquerade is uncovered – sometimes one should not uncover at all. Narrating and narrative mean something for people. In the end, they express foundations of life that people stick to and sometimes hang onto. In this way, genealogical analysis is, for example, ethically problematic, because it seeks to reveal the difference between the "is" and the "ought": between the conceptions of who we are expressed in narrating and narrative and what we have factually said and done before. Besides, a difference is necessary, because otherwise our lives would contain no desirable opportunities or futures. On the other hand, the difference may become so big, that in reality the "ought" becomes an illusion where there is no continuity between past, present and future. In these cases "Ought" is an empty façade. There are people, who believe that this problem is among the most pressing in western societies (Bauman 2004).

And it is perhaps one of the reasons why we discuss the problem of *managing identity*. The problem is related to the global conditions of existence of present day organizations characterized by great technological, political, economic and social changes, where the conditioning of identity creation, rules and family resemblance, become more unstable and in some instances a lot more unstable.

Managing identities

The problems noted above provide an understanding of what managing identity is all about. We have demonstrated how our values are integrated in the way we speak and act. Integrated in language games are ideas, what is right and what is wrong, appropriate and inappropriate etc. Integrated in language games within organizations are norms and standards – that is *rules* - for talking and acting. These rules are guidelines for individuals when they construct their identity in the organization. They constitute the criteria for competence and incompetence: what it is one should strive for when one wants to become a member of the group, the organization or the community. Through its language games the organization communicates certain values that promote and hamper particular forms of talk and action. These values are expressed in stories, in organizational role models, in punishment and rewards, distribution of resources, organization of career patterns, distribution of authority etc. The organization's norms and standards are thus central to the management of identity. Rules and family resemblance are a condition for the construction of identity. It follows that power becomes closely linked to identity because organizing is a question of defining the rules for correct and incorrect behavior. Here we define who is inside and who is outside. Power is within the language game and

is located in ways of speaking, thinking, acting and being (Hardy and Clegg 1996: 631; Jørgensen 2004). Hence, the rules of language games within organizations are practices of *surveillance* (Hardy and Clegg 1996; Clegg 1989) in the sense that these rules govern talk and actions towards conformity and normalization. These rules are, as noted above, tacit and taken-for-granted but they regulate and modify ways of talking, acting, thinking and being; they are the criteria for judging what counts as knowledge and learning (Haugaard 1997: 56-57). As such the basic idea of surveillance is that actors represent different institutions and are required to speak and act in a particular manner. They do so as responsible actors and as actors located in specific social positions. Part of power analysis thus focuses on the scope for the construction of identity which is embedded and embodied in the organization's language games. This is especially the case for writers, who are concerned with power in relation to organizational discourse, which "…focuses on the way in which broader discourses are used to construct subject positions that both enable and limit a range of social practices" (Ainsworth and Hardy 2004: 164). In this case the focus of power is on "…discursive formations, as bodies of knowledge that "systematically form the object of which they speak" (Hardy and Philips 2004: 301). It is a one-sided way of speaking about the construction of identity, where there is not much room for the individual. However, it has its strength in the ways in which it links identity with norms and standards – and thus the values - embedded and embodied in the language games. History has demonstrated that these norms and standards are very pervasive and have the power of making people do almost anything as part of the sense of obligation and responsibility to the community in which they belong. This includes participating in systematic, meticulous and "rational" planning and implementation of

mass murder such as Holocaust (Bauman 1989). The "crime" committed was "just" to live out the values of a society where the problem in judging these criminals in the Holocaust case lies in the fact that the right to judge relies on saying that people should be able to distinguish right from wrong even when right was contrary to the perception of the whole society (Bauman 1989: 273-274). Identity and society are closely interveawed. Individuals construct their identities in relation to the rules and norms of society and organizations. Without these stabilizing structures, it would be much more difficult to act because there would be no family resemblance. In circumstances where the rules are too unstable, the bonds between individuals and organizations are lost and jumbled. Trust, mutuality, loyalty, obedience, but also ambitions and aspirations are based on the fact that the rules-of-the-game are relatively stable and that reality behaves in relatively familiar ways. Otherwise there would be nothing to stick to when constructing identities.

As mentioned above, this is perhaps why we are interested in managing identity. We are interested in identity because our sense of belonging has begun to vanish or behave oddly and threatens to let us down (Bauman 2004: 17). "Managing identity" has thus emerged as an important challenge in management because there are more and more aspects of organizations that can no longer be taken for granted. This includes the notion of organization itself as a stable structure clearly demarcated from its environment. This is an effect of globalization, technological, political and economic changes, which have led to the demise of stable institutions such as society, nation state and organization. The challenge for the organization in this context may be characterized as *a quest for narratives* that may hold the organization together. But this problem is not only relevant

here and now; it is a problem that probably will continue to be salient because of continuous changes - changes that may in fact erode and hollow out these narratives before they have had a chance to have an impact. For the individual employees the challenge may also be described as a *quest for narrating*. The narrative challenge here is to construct a sense of self, a coherent "I" that desperately seeks a "We" in the context of an ever shifting, dynamic and fragmentary form of life imposed by constant changes that threaten to collapse and corrode character (Sennett 1998). Both processes are symptoms of the same phenomenon; a rather severe loosening of the bonds between the organization and the individual where the bonds are not strong enough to withstand the constant pressure of change. In such circumstances the relations between what is done and its consequences are no longer clear. This is one effect of the global world creating a greater distance, and often an arbitrary one, between decision making and its local effects.. People are influenced by decisions and events that may take place thousands of miles away under conditions not easily decoded by the people affected by them. Thus the criteria and circumstances of these decisions are far less transient. In such circumstances, it does not provide much meaning to simply view identity from, for example, a *community of practice* point of view (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998) because the mechanisms of *mutual engagement* and *alignment* are not sustainable enough to create what we usually think of as a *community*. What is left for identity work is *imagination*: that is an imagined belonging to a group, a profession or an idea but increasingly without the amplification of actual interactions with the people with whom one identifies. It is especially in these circumstances that managing identity becomes extremely important in organization. But it is a task that is difficult, contradictory and paradoxical by its very

nature because the conditioning factors of these bonds, rules and family resemblance, may be eroded by change. In such organizations the demands for communication are very high because it must seek to maintain and create consistency between individual life paths and organizational life paths. Otherwise there is a risk that the individual and the organization fall apart in the sense that concepts like culture, community and solidarity become superficial. Instead we will have a world where individuals will experience a more or less permanent *questioning of the self* because there are no stable reference points for the construction of identity. And this is a world where individuals continuously have to struggle for themselves in a continuous search for appreciation and legitimacy, with the latter never being automatically accounted for.

Conclusions

Identity is a question of using linguistic tools to construct reality. Construction of identity is conditioned on rules and family resemblance embedded in our language games. By means of language we pour ourselves into the world and gain a position in this world. As such language and language games are the tools by which individual and social worlds are integrated. Narrating is the way in which individuals construct themselves as meaningful individuals in language games. Narrating is the process by which individuals seek to bridge the gap between the "ought" and the "is". Narrating denotes a process of integration. It seeks to integrate past, present and future; it seeks to integrate logic and values; and it seeks to integrate individual and social worlds. But narrating is also conditioned on rules and family resemblance because they provide individuals with stable reference points for the construction of identity. Trust, mutuality, loyalty, obedience,

respect, ambitions and aspirations would disappear without rules and family resemblance - bonds between individuals and organizations would be lost. Organizations manage identity through the definition of norms and values for right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate and so on. By such a process they define the rules-of-the-game and they seek to create family resemblance. As such, norms and values are important as reference points for constructing identities. There is, however, a tendency that the rules-of-the-game have become more unstable. Managing identity thus becomes more important if the bonds between individuals and organizations are to be sustained. But this task is contradictory and paradoxical by its very nature because the conditioning factors of these bonds, rules and family resemblance may be eroded by change.

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