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### Balancing multiple organizational identities

*The communication and evaluation of multiple identity organization Sanquin*

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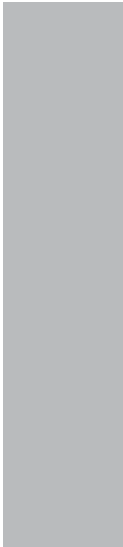
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## **Identification by Identity: Organizational Members in Search of the Balance Between Identities**

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## ABSTRACT

An organization that gives several answers to the “who are you?” question, is a multiple identity organization (MIO). When those identities are based on antithetic value systems, identification by organizational members may be complicated. In this case study the Dutch Blood Supply Foundation Sanquin serves as an example of an MIO. A mixed method approach is used to determine the multiplicity of organizational identity and thereby tries to enrich theory about identity and identification. Since identity is conceptualized as what organizational members find central, distinctive, and enduring, the answer to the identity question is obtained by semi-structured interviews with *employees* and by a questionnaire.

The Sanquin identities turn out to be the ones that are usually recognized in MIOs: an ideological and a utilitarian identity. The multi-identity character of the organization hampers the identification of organizational members, but they still identify with the organization’s mission.

The interview results provoke discussion about the enduring identity proposition. The utilitarian identity partly has displaced the ideological identity in a rather short period of time. Identity in an MIO is dynamic rather than enduring or continuous. Possible generalizations are discussed.

## INTRODUCTION

*Endurance* has long been considered one of the defining characteristics of organizational identity (e.g., Albert & Whetten, 1985). But identities might not be that immutable as has been proposed initially (Gioia et al., 2013). Specific dynamics show up when identity change is taking place in a multiple identity organization (MIO). Such an organization's members give diverse answers to what they perceive as central, distinctive, and enduring in character and use to define their organization (Van Riel, 2012). The rather intractable multiple identity issue and identity change come together in the Dutch blood supply foundation Sanquin. The dynamic and changing character of identity, especially multiple identity, has not been scientifically addressed often. However, knowledge in this field of study could be key to a better internal and external understanding of MIOs, defined as organizations whose identity is composed of two or more types that would not normally be expected to go together, and who consider themselves to be two different types of organizations (Foreman and Whetten, 2002, p. 621). This chapter provides insights in how organizational members experience (multiple) identity change. Previous insights into identity change (see Gioia et al., 2013) will be applied to the “most likely” MIO casus Sanquin.

The identity of an organization is multiple when more answers are given to the “who am I?” question. Especially when those answers belong to antithetical value systems, the multi-identity character of an organization can become problematic. The multiple identity character of an organization may hamper identification by its members, which is harmful for their performance (Jäger & Schröer, 2014). Identification reflects the perceived oneness of organizational members with the organization, the extent to which the self is defined in collective terms (Van Knippenberg and Sleebos, 2006, p. 572). Multiple identities create complications in managing the organizational identity internally, especially when those identities are competing (Pratt & Foreman, 2000). Since the organization's projected identity (Chapter 2) impacts the way an organization is evaluated by its constituents, multi-identities problematize the comprehension of the organization by external stakeholders (Van Riel, 2012). The presupposition that the hybrid character of the organization could explain the low level of internal identification and of numerous external communication hick-ups, gave rise to study the multiple identity of Sanquin. Below, general notions will be described about identity after which will be focused on the conception of multiple identities. Identity is foremost developed as an internally oriented conception. However, since an identity is self-reflective, it affects how the organization's strategic issues are defined and resolved (Glynn, Barr & Dacin, 2000, p. 731). To increase insights into the dynamic identity *proposition* from the multi-identity perspective, the following research question is formulated: *Can Sanquin be considered a multiple identity organization and how does this affect the perceptions of and the identification with the organization among employees?*

Earlier publications about multiple organizational identity are implicit about what defines an MIO (e.g., Glynn, 2000; Foreman & Whetten, 2002; Ashforth et al., 2014). Authors conclude

about the multiple identity character of the organization on theoretical grounds or common sense. Only Elstak et al. (2015) used a survey, on business unit level, to measure identification.

To contribute to organizational multiple identity theory building, this study employs a mixed method of qualitative and quantitative small-scale empirical research. The method enables to determine the multiple identity character of an organization and can reveal underlying value systems. Gained insights in multiple identity may be a starting point to a better understanding of MIOs by their stakeholders.

## THEORY

### What is identity?

Who am I? Although we might not ask ourselves that question every day, it is important for both individuals as well as for organizations to know who they are. The answer has preoccupied in the minds of people for centuries. The Greek philosopher Plutarch (first century AD) for instance was already intrigued by the quality of *continuity* regarding identity. He used the story of Theseus' ship to illustrate the refractory character of identity. Is the ship of which the Athenians year by year replaced parts with identical replacements still the same ship as it was used by Theseus a millennium ago? Has its identity changed?

The entity asking "who am I" can be an individual, or a collective, like an organization, or even a country. In 2015, the Netherlands were portrayed by essays on 51 objects, like a crumbsweeper, face flannel or cheese slicer. The portraits together tried to capture the identity of the country in the 21st century (Brands & Kan, 2015).

Regarding identity, the theory of Albert and Whetten (1985) is a standard reference and has been reiterated throughout much of the organizational identity literature (Schultz, Hatch & Holten Larsen, 2009, p. 15). Albert and Whetten state that specific identity traits must express the organizational core in what members perceive as ostensibly *central*, *distinctive*, and *enduring* in character and contribute to how they define the organization and their identification with an organization. Identification is affected by what employees consider their organization's identity (Jäger & Schröer, 2014). A certain degree of identification is needed for the motivation of the workers. More identification is not always better. A too strong identification strengthens the resistance to identity change, but a too weak identification causes "member apathy and lack of commitment" (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 134). During changes the communication climate "plays a central role, mediating the impact on organizational identification of the content of communication" (Smids, 2001, p. 1051). Identification is "especially critical during times of organizational change" and it "helps ensure that members maintain their connection with the organization" (Elstak et al., 2015, pp. 32–33), even more during merging processes (Sung et al., 2015). Reorganizations might cause a lack of feelings of continuity and certainty, which are harmful for

members' identification (Elstak et al., 2015, pp. 36–37). There is a pivotal role for identity and employee management (Pratt & Foreman, 2000; Giessner, Horton & Humborstad, 2016, p. 47).

Centrality traits “show the degree to which certain characteristics are evenly spread throughout the organization” (Van Riel, 2012, p. 17) and show what members feel are fundamental traits for the organization. Often centrality is understood as “an internally consistent system of beliefs, values, and norms that inform sense-making and action of organizational members” (Schultz, Hatch & Holten Larsen, 2009, pp. 36–37), or it is even defined, in a more external oriented vision, as the soul of the brand (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009, p. 117). Distinctiveness traits set the organization apart from others. They are “almost unique to a given organization and (...) are not found at competitors or similar-sized firms” (Van Riel, 2012). Enduring traits are “those traditions, practices and expressions that show a link between the past and the present”, like Volvo that keeps the safety characteristic alive from the start, externally as well as internally (Christensen & Cheney, 2000, p. 249), but issues new models every other year and adopted Corporate Social Responsibility only recently. Virgin acquires companies in its own industry and in others, successfully and unsuccessfully, thereby changing its commercial scope, but protecting its “break the rules” mentality (Hatch & Schultz, 2009, p. 24).

Most scholars mentioned above state that the organizational identity is held by its organizational members. Scott and Lane view organizational identity as emerging from complex, dynamic, and reciprocal interactions among managers, organizational members, and other stakeholders (Scott & Lane, 2000, p. 43). This suggests that identity cannot exist on its own but exists only then when the organization is in interaction, like a play, which is in fact not a book, but a performance on stage for and with an audience.

## Multiple identity

Among several other scholars (see Corley et al., 2006, p. 87) Pratt and Foreman (2000) demonstrate that the answer to the question “Who am I” is often not a single answer. They argue that multiple identities within the same individual and within the same organization not only exist, but that those multiple organizational identities can and should be managed. It is a matter of managerial choice to integrate, compartmentalize, or aggregate identities or even to try to delete one of the identities. These kinds of interventions are meant to release the tension of competing or incompatible value systems within an MIO.

### *Ideological and utilitarian identities.*

Foreman and Whetten (2002) follow Albert and Whetten (1985) to define an MIO (or hybrid) as “an organization whose identity is composed of two or more types that would not normally be expected to go together. It is not simply an organization with multiple components, but it considers itself (and others consider it), alternatively, or even simultaneously, to be two different types of organizations” (Foreman & Whetten, 2002, p. 621). They consider a particular type of MIO, namely “those that are constituted according to two seemingly incompatible value systems

(...): an ideological or normative system (emphasizing traditions and symbols, internalization of an ideology, and altruism), like that of a church or family; and a utilitarian system (characterized by economic rationality, maximization of profits, and self-interest), like that of a business” (Foreman & Whetten, 2002, p. 621). They stress that multiple identities refer to the organization as a whole and that multiple views on the identity traits are not necessarily *antithetical*. Nor need these views to be *universally held* by all organizational members. Those members even do not have to be *conscious* of the distinct views.

Lack of consciousness is present in the case of an *ideographic* multiplicity. The multiple identities in this case are retained by specific subgroups that exist in different parts of the organization. An example of an ideographic multiplicity is the case study discussed below dealing with an American orchestra, with an “artistry” and a “utility” identity. When each of the multiple identities inherent in the organization is held by all organizational members, we call it a *holographic* multiple identity (Sillince & Brown, 2009, p. 1832). An example of a holographic multiple identity that is discussed in scientific literature is Medlay, a health care organization. In this organization, latent contradictions in the organizational identity emerge. Directors are faced with a conflict of upholding one dimension of identity while undermining the other. The mission of Medlay is “to eliminate particular diseases through research, education, and service” (Golden-Biddle & Rao, 1997, p. 595). In this non-profit the tension between the identity of a “family of friends” (conflict avoidance) and the identity of the volunteer-driven “guardian of public trust” (vigilance and volunteer-control) was espoused across all subgroups in the organization (Pratt & Foreman, 2000, p. 21).

### ***Is a multi-identity problematic?***

While Pratt and Foreman (2000) simply make the case that multiple identities exist, Van Riel suggests that any organization probably has multiple identities, because members of the organization will have a variety of visions about the organization’s most typical characteristics. This need not be a problem per se, but “it can become an issue when senior-management and communication professionals do not realize or acknowledge that multiple identities exist, or if they do not reflect and make use of those traits in stories, advertisements, position papers and marketing collateral that present the company to stakeholders” (Van Riel, 2012, p. 29). This external communication perspective is important, but also the internal consequences of a multiple identity must be recognized. In short, multiple identities need to be managed. More internally focused, Pratt and Foreman state that identities that are too unrelated may increase the potential for identity conflicts. Identities may even be “incompatible because they either hold *conflicting values* or they impose conflicting demands on organizational members” (Pratt & Foreman, 2000, p. 23). It looks like Pratt and Foreman are adopting a conception of conflict avoidance. Seemingly, they search for “what unites us rather than what divides us”. This approach might be not so far from what Sanders and McClellan (2014) frame as “productive tension”, because the inherent tension of two value systems will not disappear completely.

Another complication of multiple identities is that they may lead to *ambivalence* within the organization (Ashforth et al., 2014, p. 1457). Ambivalence is the coexistence of positive and negative feelings towards the same object. The managerial responses, as strategic considerations of the organization's management, to ambivalence (Ashforth et al., 2014) will differ from the responses to MIOs (Pratt & Foreman, 2000). That is why it will be important to determine how organizational members appreciate the identity traits of the organization, also in the Sanquin casus. Coexistence of identities is possible, provided there are enough harmonizing elements in the overarching identity of the company as a whole. Problems generally only arise when companies try to foster alignment among sub-identities that are fundamentally at odds (Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007, p. 74).

### **Where to find multi-identities?**

Although scholars seem to target their multi-identity research on professional organizations like hospitals, law firms (see Pratt & Foreman 2000) and universities (Lam, 2010), or cooperatives (Foreman, 2002), multiple identities can be found in both profit and non-profit companies as well as in semi-public organizations. Non-profit MIOs adopt market and business strategies while pursuing a social mission. They can be looked upon as a specific kind of an MIO. They use market principles to meet idealistic goals. Jäger and Schröer take the definition of a multiple identity organization a step further for non-profits: non-profit organizations are characterized by “an organizational identity that systematically integrates civil society and markets, exchange communal solidarity for financial and non-financial resources, calculate the market value of communal solidarity, and trade this solidarity for financial and non-financial resources” (Jäger & Schröer, 2014, p. 1281). Jäger and Schröer observe a tension between the social mission of this kind of organizations and their strategy to acquire funds. The non-profits are in a way forced to create business-oriented strategies because of resource scarcity. Sanquin has been funding its research partly with its commercial pharma activities.

### **Identity change**

Traditionally, identity is viewed as an enduring state, as illustrated by the classic definition of Albert and Whetten (1985), which considers centrality, distinctiveness and *continuity* as defining parameters. But even a centuries old monastic order's identity (Pratt and Foreman, 2000, p. 29) can be subject to change after a few 100 years of continuity. Managers “often attempt to foster the perceptions of continuity by simply couching the organizational identity at a higher level of abstraction” (Schultz, Hatch & Holten Larsen, 2009, pp. 258–9).

Although the subject has been touched upon before (e.g., Weick & Quinn, 1999), scientific literature on organizational identity change does not go back much further than the early years of this century (e.g., Fiol, 2002; Corley & Gioia, 2004; Chreim, 2005). The idea takes root that identity is dynamic (Navis & Glynn, 2010), or that at least the organization's narrative is evolving over time (Humphreys & Brown, 2002), that identity can be managed (Pratt & Foreman, 2000),



constructed (Sillince & Brown, 2009), or formed (Kroezen & Heugens, 2012). Earlier publications elucidate organizational change (e.g., Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995), but do not cover the concept of changing identity. Gioia and Thomas (1996) already suggested though, that under conditions of external change, top management team members' perceptions of identity and image, are key to the sense-making process and serve as important links between the organization's internal context and the team members' issue interpretations. The liaison with "political" issues suggests that identity cannot be immobile over time because the political context is always on the move. It gives food to the concept of *adaptive instability* (Gioia et al., 2000).

In an elaborate review of identity literature, Gioia et al. add the "dynamic identity proposition" to the "enduring identity proposition" (Gioia et al., 2013, pp. 124, 131). Identity appears to be not enduring per se, but it has *continuity*. The labels that an organization uses to describe its identity are stable, but the meanings of those labels are malleable. Especially the lower echelons in the organization change the meanings associated with the labels, while the upper echelons might change the labels themselves (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 143). The intangible attributes (beliefs) at the core of the organization are difficult to change, whereas more tangible identity attributes like products being at the periphery are more changeable (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 176). We will establish below if these mechanisms can be observed in the Sanquin case. When we use the enduringness or even the continuity criterion too rigid, we might oversee *change* as an important factor.

The idea that identity cannot be understood as a fixed entity is also generally accepted in other knowledge fields such as Cultural Studies. Focusing on a people living in diaspora, cultural identities are described as constantly producing and reproducing themselves, through transformation and difference, like everything which is historical. Cultural identity is a matter of "becoming" more than of "being", positions people within the narratives of the past and lives by hybridity (Hall, 1989, pp. 225, 235). Consistent with the view of Gioia et al., the Hall school opposes the view that there is a "transcendental, general and eternal essence of a thing" (Zhang, 2017). Despite this consensus, it is important to realize that socio-political and cultural views on identities of gender, sexuality, race, class, and nationality have not been shared along the same lines by *organizational* identity scholars. Selznick's theory of organizations (King, 2015) implies that organizations are "personalities", social actors, equivalent in many aspects to human actors, with their own characters and identities. This theory makes comprehensible that organizations relate and respond to their environments and thereby develop their identities. An individual human being and an organization have in common that there is some kind of central steering committee that guards coherence. A people living in diaspora often lacks this kind of coordination and is forced to adapt to local circumstances. Gioia et al. conclude that it is a mystery how such an essential concept as identity can apparently be both immutable and mutable, and plead for more research, also on the multiple identity issue (Gioia et al., 2013, pp. 183–184). This conclusion fits in with the central question of this paper. The case-study should reveal the

impact of a multiple identity organization on its members in a context of organizational change including a change of identity.

## CASUS SANQUIN

The case of Sanquin Blood Supply Foundation is more than appropriate to research multiple identity issues. It is an illustrative and, in a sense, a rather extreme example of a multiple identity since the organization is even *legally* an MIO: the collective supply of blood as a monopolist on the one hand and the commercial activity as a pharmaceutical industry on the other. The blood bank activities correspond with roughly 30% of yearly turnover, the pharmaceutical activities 55% (Sanquin, 2015)<sup>4</sup>, and still growing. This embeddedness in Dutch legislation of the organization chart, public and market activities, implies that the boundaries are set and that there might be little elbow room left to manage the identities by reconstitution interventions. The inherent and legally grounded hybrid nature could make the casus a *most likely case* and a representation of other organizations that might face multiple identities, or at least well-chosen to demonstrate implications of an MIO.

In the second decade of the twenty-first century semi-public organizations find themselves in a turbulent field of force. The interference of government and other superintendents is increasing (Duursma & Logtenberg, 2015). Members of the Executive Board of Sanquin feel that in many situations their organization is not getting the benefit of the doubt by many important stakeholders: hospitals, politicians, civil servants, media and even blood donors.

Apparently, management complains about clarity about who they are as an organization, the organization's *identity*. And what could be a plausible explanation for this incomprehension? Is Sanquin an easy-to-understand identity? Pratt and Foreman (2000) recognize that the answer to the identity question is not a single answer for some organizations. This may well be the case for Sanquin. Indebted to Albert and Whetten (1985), Pratt and Foreman (2000) and other scholars sketch all kinds of organizations that keep a multiple identity. Applying this to Sanquin, the combination of the public and market activities makes Sanquin an MIO. And this Janus-faced character of the organization could very well provide the explanation for the difficulties in understanding and accepting the character of the organization.

The identity of the organization impacts the identification of the organizational members and the projected identity. The main tension for Sanquin seems to be the incongruous both commercial and non-profit identity, although the public duty (social mission) and the market activities (business-like) are two parts of the not-for-profit corporate foundation's mission. To fully understand this duality, we need to know how it has grown historically.

4 The other 15% is generated by the Diagnostic and Reagents divisions.

## **The organization's history**

Sanquin Blood Supply Foundation was established in 1998 through a merger between the 22 Dutch blood banks and the Central Laboratory of the Netherlands Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service (CLB). CLB was an Amsterdam-based research institute, blood bank and small pharmaceutical factory. The Foundation is responsible for blood supply on a not-for-profit basis and advances transfusion medicine. Sanquin delivers products and services, conducts scientific investigations, and provides education, instruction, in-service training, and refresher courses. Sanquin produces plasma-derived medicines. The combination of a public service (blood supply) and pharmaceutical industry (medicines derived from blood plasma) competing internationally was meant to nourish synergy, create efficiency and to avoid difficult choices for donors about where to go and donate blood. The merger was and presented itself as a Blood Bank with a research and diagnostic institute. The pharmaceutical activities were underexposed and still are. Since 2010 the demand for Blood Bank products falls with 5% a year. At the same time, the pharmaceutical activities grow tremendously. Large part of the growth is in the contract manufacturing: producing medicines or semi-manufactured medicines for other pharmaceutical companies.

### ***Merger.***

There is no indication whatsoever that the implications of the merger for identity management have been top of mind for the then management of Sanquin. On the contrary, the tangible aspects of the corporate identity (Argenti, 2013, p. 72) were left intact. Even today some people are wearing CLB T-shirts: relics of an organization that ceased to exist more than two decades ago.

Within the organization, there was still the Amsterdam-based and Amsterdam-centric research institute with a highly educated staff, nourishing identity traits of contained anarchy, and having strong ties with the academic world. On the other side, there was the donor focused nationally spread Blood Bank organization. In the first half of Sanquin's existence, no noticeable efforts were made to integrate the multiple identities or otherwise manage them.

The, felt as never-ending, reorganizations within the Blood Bank division to make one Blood Bank out of twenty-two, may not have been beneficial, since they contributed to a lack of feelings of continuity and certainty. Since 2006, several internal communication campaigns and the staff magazine tried to show the (potential) synergy and let people identify with the corporate organization. Board and management buy-in for these actions was seemingly low and employees were complaining about shortcomings of the communication climate.

### ***Recent history.***

Several surveys on employee satisfaction show that the Sanquin employees tend to identify with the goals of the organization rather than with the organization itself. The satisfaction about the communication climate and about communications, especially by the management, is below

benchmark (Effectory, 2013). What might trouble identification is that the organization does not have a *single* identity. It is becoming more and more what Jäger and Schröer (2014) describe as a hybrid non-profit that tries to act business-like while pursuing a social mission. Their wording is not tailored towards organizations such as Sanquin, but is meant for organizations like Amnesty International, that needs to exploit a web-shop selling candles, fashion, books, and postcards to finance its actions. It is obvious that this is not core business, nor core competence. At Sanquin the public duty and the market activities are both part of the foundation's mission. The argumentation used, at least internally, has been the same as Jäger and Schröer describe. The business model of Sanquin rests upon two pillars. The Blood Bank takes care of the blood supply and provides the fractionalizing factory with blood plasma; the medicine production delivers the funding for research and development. To keep producing medicines in an efficient and justified manner, year after year increasing in scale was executed mainly by contract manufacturing.

## HYPOTHESES

This study investigates how different employees' express characteristics of the organization's identity and how this multiple identity impacts their identification. Special attention is paid to the incompatibility of value systems belonging to the composing identities and to the enduring character of identity. Since the organization chart shows a legally based distinction between a public and a private part, it would be acceptable to presume that the ambivalence within the organization is ideographic (Ashforth et al., 2014, p. 1473) and that each identity "houses" in another collective or part of the organization (Golden-Biddle & Rao, 1997; Glynn, 2000; Pratt & Foreman, 2000). This would imply that the organizational members will vocalize one of the identities, depending on the part of the organization where they are engaged. This brings us to the first two hypotheses:

- (H1) *Blood Bank employees will emphasize ideological identity characteristics.*
- (H2) *Pharma employees will emphasize utilitarian identity characteristics.*

Since multiple identities are individually connected with multiple sets of values, it will be easier to identify with a single set of values than with multiple, seemingly incompatible value systems (Foreman & Whetten, 2002, p. 621; Jäger & Schröer, 2014). This seems rather self-evident, but one could just as well call it counterintuitive, because people that accept the factual hybrid character of the organization will most probably identify easier with the corporate organization. The hypothesis to be tested is:

- (H3) *The organization's employees experience difficulties in identifying with the organization.*

Pratt and Foreman (2000, p. 25) mention a possible explanation for incompatibility of identities. They might hold conflicting values. Research can tell if the Sanquin employees are hindered by multiple value systems.

(H4) *The organizational members of the multiple identity organization realize that the identities hold values in an area of possible conflict.*

The relatively recently introduced dynamic identity proposition (see Gioia et al., 2013) provides a more fruitful basis to understand a multiple identity than the enduring identity proposition. Preliminary indications about changing identity urge the enduring character of identity to be tested:

(H5) *In a multiple identity organization, identity is dynamic over time*

It is an interesting fact that scholars typically do not mention time frames when they refer to identity change. Since the insight of the identity notions vary between the rather immutable DNA of the organization (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009), the enduring characterization of Albert and Whetten (1985) and the continuous character development (Gioia et al., 2013, King, 2015), I choose to define a short period of time in terms of a few (two or three) years. Identity change will be determined by the reflections of organizational members on the subject. In an MIO, identity change can take place just by a changing balance of power between the identities.

## RESEARCH METHOD

To assess how employees experience the identity of the organization, a mixed methods approach has been applied. First, in semi-structured interviews, employees have been asked to answer identity questions and to explain their answers. What do they consider central, distinctive, and enduring characteristics of the organization? Do they agree on the provisionally formulated identities, based on academic literature and on my insights and observations<sup>5</sup>, and how do they evaluate these identities? Are ideal and reality close to each other? Which clues can be identified for identity management? Second, the results of the interview data and the “gauged” identity characteristics formed the basis of a small-scale survey study on the organization’s identity among employees.

Specifically, these traits were the orientation on human needs (focus on the donors’ well-being) and on the importance of processes of the utilitarian identity (attention for the pharmaceutical industry) as well as overarching traits and values. These qualitative findings

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5 See the author’s resume in this dissertation and the Ethics section in this chapter.

were confirmed by a small-scale quantitative survey existing of a series of propositions about organizational traits and values. The characteristics of the identities as identified in previous studies are supplemented with case specific determinants.

Respondents have also been asked if they observed changes through the years.

Briefly, the research process consists of the following steps. First, a multiple identity organization is characterized on a theoretical basis: The ideological and the utilitarian identity are identified. Academic literature provides us with indicators for both identities. Second, qualitative in-depth interviews with members of a multiple identity organization were used to refine the universal indicators for the identities in an iterative process and to add case-specific identity traits. Third, the obtained insights are used to design a set of issues and questions for semi-structured interviews and on top of that propositions are made to be scored by employees on a Likert scale. This makes the qualitative data more tangible. The fourth and last step is to analyze and interpret the qualitative and quantitative data.

The first three steps were meant to define and refine the identity question in an iterative way, a “zigzag” process between the empirical field and the analysis behind the desk and back out again, which is often associated with the grounded theory approach (Creswell, 2007, p. 64). The interview “transcripts” contained the organizational identity traits mentioned by the interviewees and scores on the pre-coded characteristics of the first two steps. Traits and recurrent remarks were simply tallied. The outcomes were used based on a frequency more than twice, and clustered into interview items and propositions on intrinsic grounds (step 3). Remarkable and elucidative statements were transcribed literally to illustrate important tendencies (see “Results” section), or to formulate propositions.

The selection of the respondents has mainly been done by a select number of Sanquin employees that were willing and able to select men and women in different parts of the organization to cooperate. The aim was not to select the “usual suspects”, the dominant coalition, but to look for common employees in the commercial and the non-commercial part of the organization, having enough eloquence to answer questions in Dutch or English. My concern was to have a *stratified sample*, using the following stratifying criteria: age, gender, hierarchical position within the organization and length of service (Bryman & Bell, 2015, pp. 192, 520–521). Even with a small sample this turned out to be possible. The sample consists of 27 employees and all three board members (Appendix A). The employees are engaged in the commercial and the non-commercial part of the organization. Twelve of the twenty-seven are Blood bank employees and twelve others work at Pharma. The three other interviewees work for Diagnostics, Research and Human Resources. They were selected to test whether their responses would generate additional insights. The conversations took place in a quiet room with no other people around. They lasted between 25 and 60 minutes. The analysis of the interview transcripts and notes was done in a qualitative manner, distilling the answers on the questions mentioned above. Numerical representativeness was not the aim, but representativeness concerning content, and identification of trends were pursued.

## Standardized questionnaire

After the first half of the interviews being conducted, the qualitatively obtained insights were used to construe propositions. These propositions were used for a concise survey that would allow for a standardized assessment of and an addition to the insights gained from the qualitative data. The propositions were to be judged by the second cohort of internal respondents first. The questionnaire was filled out directly after the interview. After that the first cohort also completed the query. The questionnaire that was put before the respondents held a 5-point Likert scales to fill in.<sup>6</sup> Fifty propositions were used to establish their position towards the organization's identity and their own identification with the organization. The 5-point Likert scale offered answers from (1) totally agree to (5) totally disagree. The propositions were grouped in a few clusters, like *Focus on money versus focus on patients*. The world of large pharmaceutical enterprises is often associated with identity traits as international appeal, fancy conditions of employment and patients lost out of sight. What do employees observe? *Transparency*. How clear is the organization about its identities? *Internal cooperation, people management and employees' involvement*. Is there a stimulating communication climate?

The quantitative results have been used to enrich the qualitative interview results. Because of the small sample, only a tentative statistical comparison could be made. The Likert scale data have been used to look at scores and compare means and an independent samples t- test has been executed. Results will be interpreted with caution, given the small sample size. First was to be determined whether there were good grounds to assume that the organization really is an MIO. Following the earlier mentioned definitions of hybridity, we can call an organization an MIO when diverse identity traits, in particular both ideological and utilitarian variables, are mentioned or recognized by its members. In this research this is done both in the interviews as by the questionnaire. A positive score ( $< 2.5$ ) on the proposition scales is interpreted as "existing". Second, the quantitative scores are used to see which propositions divide employees most. Interviewees were invited to reflect spontaneously on identity questions and later in the interview on the proposed identity traits of Table 1.1.

## ETHICS

### Look who's talking

Analyzing qualitative data is not only depending on the researcher's analytic and integrative skills, but also on the personal knowledge of the social context where the data are collected (Bhattacharjee, 2012). And reporting on an issue in your own organization is not unusual. The authors who write about the multiple identity of Medlay, for instance, based

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6 See Appendix B for the questionnaire (propositions and scale). Only the propositions discussed in this paper are given. The selection of relevant propositions to discuss in this paper was made by focusing on the ones that enquired about identity traits, identification, and communication climate. Doublings were skipped.

**Table I.1***Overview of the identities: shared and unique identity traits*

Blood bank	Pharma
Human material	Human material
Focus on product safety	Focus on product safety
Health care	Health care
Research-based	Research-based
Dutch	Dutch
Non-profit	Non-profit
Human centered	Process centered
Donors as “clients”	Pharmaceutical industry as a client
National	International
Public	Private
Social	Business-like
	Commercial
Not for profit	

their research on both authors' involvement with top management (...) and volunteer leaders for three years (Golden-Biddle & Rao, 1997, p. 596). My position has been manager corporate communication at Sanquin for ten years. This has given me easy access to people and to rich information. This information is entered in the Reference list as unpublished. The influence of my professional position on the integrity of the interview and survey responses will be minimal. In an organization of 2,850 people, many of the interviewees even did not know me, especially when working at another office. Besides that, the questions were asked in a relaxed setting where “wrong” answers did not exist. People were guaranteed anonymity and their answers were not meant for internal use.

## Approval

The Executive Board of Sanquin has taken cognizance of this paper and approves publication.

## RESULTS

After identifying the overarching identity traits, the multiple identity (MI) of the organization will be described, and the “places of residence” of the two identities will be determined. To conclude, employees' observations about the identity change, their appreciation of this change and the impact on their identification with the organization will be reported as well as some observations about the communication climate. When people (referred to as *interviewees*) are quoted, the interviewees will be referred to as “int. x” (interviewee, number x, in Appendix A denominated by age, gender, division and length of service). Figures refer to the questionnaire,



filled in by respondents (referred to as *respondents*), and the interview data are presented in qualitative terms and as illustrations or anecdotal evidence. Quotes are used to illustrate the opinions of the interviewees. Box plots (Figure 1.1 and 1.2) and a Means and t-test table (Table 1.2) are added for easy reference.

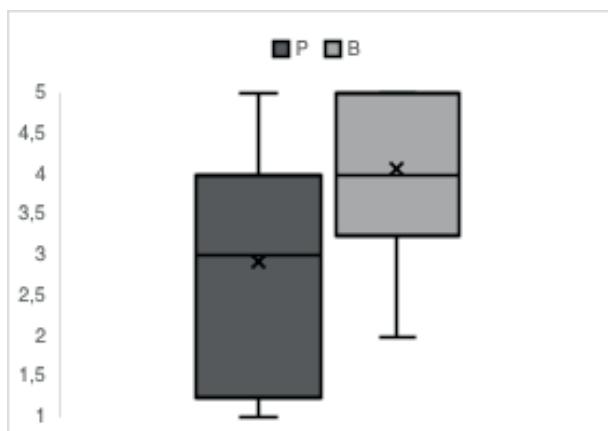


Figure 1.1 The proposition that *profit is needed for helping patients* divides Pharma (P) and Blood bank (B) workers. 5-point Likert scale, from (1) totally agree to (5) totally disagree.

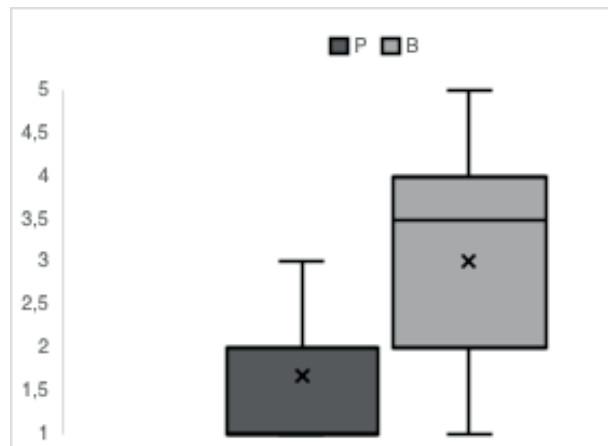


Figure 1.2 The proposition that *there is no future for the organization without profit* gets recognition from Pharma workers (P) rather than from Blood Bank employees. 5-point Likert scale, from (1) totally agree to (5) totally disagree.

## The (multiple) identity of Sanquin

Some identity traits are overarching. Interviewees agree that blood is *central* and *enduring* and that working with human material is part of the identity (all interviewees). Focus on product safety is recognized as important and the research-driven character is also acknowledged

(almost all interviewees). The organization is not always seen as part of health care, “it is a company that supplies health care” (int. 17, 34). This looks more like a question of definition than an abyss between identities. When it comes to value-based characteristics, the answer to the identity question (Pratt & Foreman, 2000) is multi-vocal. A few interviews suffice to conclude that Sanquin is a multiple identity organization very much indeed.

The same identity categories as identified in multiple organizational identity literature are reported. Blood Bank employees tend to focus on *ideological* characteristics and describe the organization as a Dutch not for profit public health care organization. Pharma workers rather mention *utilitarian* characteristics and see their organization as an internationally operating business-like pharmaceutical company. Only a few interviewees are real *archetypical* representatives of the Blood Bank social identity stressing traits like human centered, social, Dutch, and not for profit. These respondents also do not report nor experience conflicting values within the organization. Remarks like “people like us” indicate high levels of identification. But most interviewees spontaneously mention the hybrid character of the organization. It is even felt as the *distinctive* identity trait: pharma and Blood Bank in one organization. The organization considers itself to be two different types of organizations. The answer to identity questions when asked to Sanquin organizational members is not a single, in unison answer. Sanquin is an MIO.

## Identity whereabouts

One could presume that the ideological identity houses in the Blood Bank and that Pharma is forgetting the patients in favor of money and an international playground (hypotheses 1 and 2). The picture that arises from the data is more nuanced, however. There is only a stronger occurrence of ideological identity traits in the Blood Bank and a weaker occurrence of utilitarian characteristics, the other way around for Pharma. Interviewees from both units underline the importance of the human factor in the organization and of making medicines for small groups of patients. They differ on the subject of profit.

During the interviews, Blood Bank employees strong-mindedly deny the necessity of profits needed to help patients. Their Pharma colleagues do not: “We must see to how we can earn more money” (int. 24). One interviewee at the pharmaceutical side of the organization even called the central identity trait of Sanquin “profit, profit, profit!” (int. 15).

The survey results (Table 1.2) are consistent with the interview data. The schism mentioned above also shows in the responses on a few propositions. The Pharma workers are more devoted to making profits than their Blood Bank colleagues. The scores on the proposition that raising the profits is an important goal, show a 1.1 difference on a 5-point scale. Pharma workers agree ( $M = 1.9$ ), Blood Bank workers respond reluctantly ( $M = 3.0$ ). The proposition that profits are a *sine qua non* for helping patients shows a difference of 1.2 between the same two groups (Figure 1.1). An independent samples t-test indicates a statistically significant difference between Blood Bank ( $M = 4.08$ ,  $SD = 0.10$ ) and Pharma ( $M = 2.92$ ,  $SD = 1.56$ );  $t(18.66) = 2.18$ ,  $p = .009$  employees.

**Table 1.2***Mean scores on identity propositions*

Proposition	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> ) blood bank	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> ) pharma	Mean difference	<i>t</i>	95% CI
Raising profits is important goal	3.0 (1.4)	1.9 (1.1)	1.1	2.11	.048
Profits conditionally for helping patients	4.1 (1)	2.9 (1.6)	1.2	2.18	.042
Existence of organizations depends on profit	3.0 (1.3)	2.7 (1)	1.3	2.77	.012
Donor in mind	1.8 (1)	3.3 (1.4)	-1.5	-3.02	.007
Patient in mind	2.1 (1.2)	2.4 (1.5)	-.03	-0.61	.551
Organization is typical Dutch	1.8 (1)	1.9 (0.9)	-0.1	-0.18	.856
Internal media important source to know what's on	3.1 (1.4)	2.8 (1.3)	0.3	0.48	.634
Management is source to know the strategy	3.3 (1.5)	3.0 (1.5)	0.3	0.4	.696
One BU knows what the other BU is doing	4.1 (1.2)	4.4 (0.7)	-0.3	-0.71	0.485
Employees talk and work at cross-purposes	2.8 (1.4)	2.0 (1.1)	0.8	1.47	0.156
Changes in organization are positive	3.8 (1.3)	2.4 (1.4)	1.3	2.45	0.023

Note. 5-Point Likert scale. 1: completely agree, 5: completely disagree.

When asked if the continued existence of the organization depends on profit, the difference between the two identities is 1.3: a 1.7 score for Pharma (indicating fairly strong agreement:  $M = 1.67$ ,  $SD = .98$ ); Blood Bank workers ( $M = 3.00$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ ;  $t(20.14) = 2.77$ ,  $p = .012$ ; Fig. 2).

All propositions that concern the importance of profit give significant differences (1.2 on a 5-point scale) between the two equal sample sizes with an assumed equal variance.

The Blood Bank employees have the donor in mind in their daily work, the Pharma colleagues do not. "At the Blood Bank, we do have that unit of blood in our hands" (int. 5), versus, "We are at the end of the chain. Your mind is bothered with the industrial processes. You don't normally realize where the raw material comes from" (int. 17). Both have the patient in mind, the Blood Bank slightly stronger than Pharma. Both groups agree on the proposition that Sanquin remains in essence a Dutch organization.

The above-mentioned soft borderline implies that both identities do not exist in isolation and that confrontations of the two value systems are omnipresent. Organizational members often realize that the identities hold values in an area of possible conflict. It is even stronger: They worry how to cope with these conflicts themselves, or how the organization should do this (almost all interviewees).

## Identity change and identification

There is something peculiar about identification at Sanquin. The results of the last survey on employees' satisfaction (Effectory, 2013), which can be compared with a benchmark, are not very reassuring. The general satisfaction and many other parameters, like working conditions and "the organization", are below benchmark. The engagement equals the national benchmark (7.1 out of ten, Effectory, 2013), although you might expect a higher score in an organization

that works for the benefit of patients. Interviews that were done at the time to obtain insights in involvement and identification showed that people didn't identify with the organization that much. They identified with the organization's mission; the same phenomenon we could observe in the Red Cross case. In my recent interviews the same picture comes up. When people were asked to tell something about identification and if they feel an "insider" (see Ashforth et al., 2014; Scott & Lane, 2000), many interviewees initially say to identify with the organization. But at the same time, they often use the word "they", talking of Sanquin, instead of "we". Why? 'We are not involved in organizational development and decisions' (int. 7). And once again people say that their identification is facing the mission rather than the organization itself. Some mention a "loss of identity" (int. 13) and "My identification with the organization is not as strong as it used to be" (int. 3). Blood Bank employees mention a risk of identity loss, talking about organizational change ("To pay for donation would be a loss of identity", int. 6), Pharma workers experience a lack of feelings of continuity and certainty which is harmful for their identification. Some already know what the future is going to look like: "We are a prey. It will not take that long for Shire (large pharmaceutical enterprise, RH) to by us" (int. 2).

In some cases, the length of service can also be important for identification. "I feel an insider, but people who work here for more than 5 years consider me an outsider" (int. 24). The presupposition that multiple identities problematize identification gets an extra dimension when we take the identity change perspective into account. The interviewees mention identification difficulties caused by coexisting sets of value-based identity traits. They also report uncomfortable feelings about the evolving power relations between the two identity-related value systems.

A bad communication climate can also undermine identification. The appreciation of the internal media as sources to know what's going on in the organization is moderate, as a mean score: 3.0 on a 5-point Likert scale. But the employees give a (totally) agree (13 times) almost as often as a (totally) disagree (12 times), resulting in a high standard deviation of 1.2. The same picture arises requiring the respondents about the management as a source of knowing where we are going as an organization. The standard deviation here is even 1.4 and a mean of 3.2, indicating a lack of trust that the senior manager is providing adequate information about the organization's strategy. About the interaction between the business units, people give a simply crushing judgment. "The one business unit knows what the other is doing" scores a 4.2 (disagree), and nobody totally agrees with this proposition. Their collaboration is not up to the mark. Respondents agree on the proposition that people work and talk at cross-purposes (two thirds, score 2.4).

Standard deviations are all between 1.2 and 1.4, except for two propositions. There is agreement on the organization being typical Dutch at the end of the day and on the proposition that business units do not mutually know what they are doing (no significant differences, see Table 1.2, SD both 0.9).

The hypothesis (3) that the existence of *multiple* identities in one organization makes identification more difficult for organizational members can be accepted, although we must

realize that this phenomenon can be reinforced by shortcomings of the internal communication climate, external criticism and by identity *change*.

### **Identity change.**

Very striking in the interviews is the apparent deep-rooted understanding by organizational members of the changing identity. Almost all report about it spontaneously. They generally agree on the direction of this change. The utilitarian character is gaining importance: "We are becoming more and more business-like" (int. 21). The employees differ in their orientation on where we are in this development and are divided on how to judge the change and in their appraisal of what the influence of this change will be on the future of the organization and on the organization's values and beliefs. The tone of voice of the interviews becomes more personal and shows emotional interest when value-based characteristics are discussed. Most interviewees report conflicting values (hypothesis 4), talking about the ideological and utilitarian identity traits. They recognized that putting patients first and pursuing financial gains are not always compatible. All interviewees (the qualitative research) and all respondents (the quantitative research) provided feedback on this subject. In the context of the changing identity, the proposition "I judge the changes in the organization as positive" is answered rather positively by Pharma workers (2.4 on a 5-point scale, where 5 indicates strong disagreement) and negatively by Blood Bank workers (3.8). The standard deviation is 1.4, the highest (shared) score of all propositions, indicating a rather strong difference in judgment about the organizational changes. Some regard the profit focus as a necessary evil. Others welcome it as refreshing. The same ambivalence is observed for the not-for-profit atmosphere: "People have internalized it, but it hampers the commercial activities" (int. 2).

The earlier mentioned dynamic identity proposition implies that employees tend to perceive identity as stable, even when it is changing. They do so because change in organizational identity causes psychic pain, anxiety, conflicts, and overall loss of self-esteem. Notwithstanding this discomfort, it is the personnel of Sanquin itself that reports change. The change is either framed as *nostalgia* (good past, bad present; Blood Bank) or as *postalgia* (bad past, great future; Pharma).

As described in the introduction, the enduring identity proposition must be modified. Models are meant to make reality comprehensible and explainable by simplifying it. This implies in many cases that they presume the internal and external conditions to be stable. Scholars describing MIOs observe organizations as constant entities in a quiet world. This can be visualized like in Figure 1.3 left, below. Although the boundary between the two identities might be fuzzy, like in the Sanquin casus, the situation itself is stable. Sanquin, after years of stability, finds itself this decade in a situation of increasing turbulence. Part of this turbulence is due to entering the American market and the corresponding regulatory demands. With the growing volume and importance of the pharmaceutical activities in an open market environment, relatively new

values, demands, convictions and identity traits enter the organization. Adding the perspective of change over time would boil down to Figure 1.3, right.



Figure 1.3 Traditional (left) and dynamic (right) view on multiple identities. The ratio between identities can change over time. At Sanquin the utilitarian identity B grows, while the ideological identity shrinks. The position in 2016 is P (the relative position of P is my personal educated guess after dozens of interviews. The X and Y axes do not have units, because this would suggest a precision that does not exist. Imagine the time lapse two decades). It is a matter of a displacement effect: the utilitarian identity “eats” the ideological identity.

#### *Identification. Appreciation of the identity change differs.*

Many interviewees spontaneously report changes of the organization and its identity. When asked, more than three-quarters confirm. Nobody totally disagrees; no big differences occur between Blood Bank and Pharma employees. But when asked how to *judge* these changes during the last few years, there definitely are differences. The “average” Pharma employee finds the changes positive, the Blood Bank employee does not. The extremes of the scale are used by more than a third of the respondents.

The interviews made clear what the explanation could be. “Formerly people wanted to create a better world. Now they are hunting their own careers” (int. 29). For some people, it is hard to understand why a production line that is meant for medicines for Dutch patients is exclusively reserved for production of an expensive medicine for American patients. They worry about old pharmaceutical showpieces, medicines for rare diseases, being neglected.

Especially the doctors I spoke with were tremendously concerned about the direction of the organization’s strategy and identity. It seems that their professionally incorporated identity dynamics (Glynn, 2000, p. 295) clash with the utilitarian identity traits. “When I joined the organization I year ago, I had a social, not-for-profit organization in mind. Now I am worrying about the commercial plans of Sanquin” (int. 1). “We are moving away from our mission instead of approaching it” (int. 6). This feeling of discomfort is not reserved for the Blood Bank employees. It can be heard at Pharma as well. But generally, you could say that Blood Bank employees are the more fanatic defenders of the ideological body of ideas and that the Pharma employees

welcome the utilitarian characteristics more easily. “It was going to be time”, I heard on several occasions. And: “Old staff is being replaced by people who think more commercially. I like that” (int. 21). The Pharma staff is being helped to internalize the utilitarian principles by an elaborate culture program. The scale of the pharmaceutical activities grows, and the Blood Bank shrinks. Employees express the observation that both identities follow the same dynamics. In the “fight” between the identities a loss of ground falls to the Blood Bank.

Although it has been specified in 2016 for the first time (Heckert, 2016), the impression that interviewees of the organization provided was that the change of identity as illustrated in Figure 1.3 has kept pace with the change in the volume of trade of the two identities. This means that the change is not *episodic* but *continuous*. The latter has been paid little attention to by scholars (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 178). Organizational members themselves report a steady change over years and an acceleration during the last 5 years. This period is characterized by a strong growth of the pharmaceutical division and by attention for imposed American regulations and mores. The casus shows an identity change in a period of only half a decade: a conversion that has not been documented before.

Although the general audience thinks of Sanquin as an *expert* and a *trustworthy professional* (TNS Nipo, 2014), there are some vulnerabilities in the external perception that resonate with the employees, like transparency, social organization, and foreign activities. Both internal and external critics refer to the wages of the Board. Seventeen percent of the externals mentions the commercial attitude (TNS NIPO, 2014). The remuneration issue shows the clash between the ideological and the utilitarian value system best. The remuneration of the Executive Board belongs to the utilitarian identity and is judged from the ideological point of view. External critics (e.g., Heighton & Rengers, 2008) use the *glaring contrast frame* to describe the combination of the non-remunerated gift and the remuneration of the Board, 30 percent above “Balkenendenorm” (salary cap for Dutch government and civil service officials equal to the salary of the prime minister). Emotions can rather raise the temperature around this issue; Sanquin responds rationally: “We obey the law” and “our work is complicated”.<sup>7</sup>

This issue turned out to be an open wound, internally. Most interviewees mentioned it spontaneously and report to feel troubled by it.

To get a better insight in the relationship between sub-identity and change attitude, Blood Bank employees were asked why they showed reluctance toward change. A mixture of merger tensions and multiple identity problems occurs. The employees are tired of change after several cases of restructuring. My interpretation of what respondents reported about this phenomenon is best expressed by the commonly used expression around the workplace when getting repeatedly frustrated: “BOHICA”: Bend over, here it comes again! The money saved by the restructurings has been squandered by Pharma, they presume. They feel that what happens

7 For the official line of speaking on behalf of Sanquin see: <http://www.sanquin.nl/over-sanquin/pers/achtergronden/> For the sake of this essay I bluntly summarize it in a few words.

in “the world of fast motorcars” (int. 29) will not benefit them. The more luxury salaries and fringe benefits will shower upon the Pharma colleagues. The identity change happens to them. They are not at the steering wheel. Their ideological convictions seem to be more ingrained. It is also about center and periphery. The Pharma site is in Amsterdam at Headquarters, the Blood Bank is scattered around the country. Strategy decisions are made in Amsterdam.

The enduring identity proposition is not satisfactory for at least this multiple identity organization (Sanquin). The dynamic identity proposition does more justice to the MIO (hypothesis 5). The power relation between the identities can change relatively fast.

## CONCLUSION

Since identification with an organization finds its roots in tangible and intangible characteristics, *organizational identity* is an important field of study. When the identity is multiple, complications that need attention may arise. This study focused on the Dutch Blood Supply Foundation Sanquin.

First was determined that the organization has a multiple identity, using a, for this purpose developed, mixed research method. The method consists of qualitative interviews that enabled to draw up a statement of identity characteristics to be scored quantitatively. This procedure may help other scholars to be more precise about organizational ambiguity. Second, we saw that there is a soft permeable line between the ideological and the utilitarian identity. Blood Bank employees, stronger than their Pharma colleagues, adhere to the ideological identity. Especially when it comes to the importance of profit, both groups disagree with one another. They agree on their dissatisfaction with the internal communication and the communication climate. Sanquin is a “light” version of an ideographic multiple identity (Pratt & Foreman, 2000, p. 21). There is no Chinese Wall between the identities. There is not such a thing as a complete diverging of opinions. So, it is true that *Blood Bank employees emphasize ideological identity characteristics* (hypothesis 1) and that *Pharma employees emphasize utilitarian identity characteristics* (hypothesis 2) more than the others. But the differences are not that huge. Backed by studies on identification (Smidts, 2001; Gioia et al., 2013; Jäger & Schröer, 2014; Elstak et al., 2015; Giessner et al., 2016) and based on the field work, my interpretation is that the multi-identity character of the organization influences members’ *identification*, chiefly negatively. Many of them are aware of the two different identities and their underlying value systems. For an organizational member, it is not always evident with which identity to identify. I even observed mixed feelings about the identity: *ambivalence*, which is identified earlier as a possible implication of a multi-identity (Ashforth et al., 2014). This means that individuals at the same time have positive as well as negative feelings towards certain qualities of the organization. Those qualities are identity traits like “commercial”, “business-like” and “social”.



That the organization's MI problematizes the identification with the organization holds water since dynamics between the identities are changing. People realize that values are changing under the influence of trading internationally. Vital is the conflict between the ideological and the utilitarian values. A displacement effect is determined in favor of the utilitarian identity. On top of that, identification does not find fertile soil in the communication climate. This finding is not the mere outcome of my research but was reported earlier in an employee satisfaction survey (Effortory, 2013). Still the organization-specific sense-giving for both groups of employees is one way or another to be found in the overarching mission. This mission can serve as an adequate target of identification: identification with the goals of the organization. This implies that, when managerial responses as compartmentalization, deletion, integration, or aggregation (Pratt & Foreman, 2000) are not preferable or impossible, more focus on the common grounds of the organization would be able to relieve the multiple identity tension. People realize that values are changing under the influence of trading internationally.

## DISCUSSION

The finding that the mission can unite employees from different parts of the organization implies that, when managerial responses as compartmentalization, deletion, integration, or aggregation (Pratt and Foreman, 2000) are not preferable or impossible, more focus on the common grounds of the organization would be able to relieve the multiple identity tension.

This needs managerial awareness of the existence of "competing" identities and value systems in the first place. Consciousness of the importance of employees' identification with the organization and the relationship of identification with identity is necessary. Managing identity internally starts with a good communication climate. The organization's leaders must have easy access to information about the current and future strategy and be equipped with communication tools to inform their employees and to get their thoughts about the organization and its future. They must realize that an uprooted feeling can arise fast when identity dynamics are animated. In an ideographic multi-identity where the strategy presupposes synergy between the identities, internal communication must focus on mutual interests and cooperation. If the organization changes, management can emphasize the organizational utilitarian, ideological or overarching identity characteristics that harmonize with the preferred direction of the change.

The above-mentioned displacement effect reveals the untenability of the enduring identity proposition. Identity change can even occur in a relatively short period of time. A "fight between the identities" has been described earlier (Glynn, 2000), but the displacement effect over time, like in the Sanquin case, has not been documented before. This shift in perspective on hybridity makes several avenues for future research apparent. Besides the well-known drawbacks on (interview-based) case studies (e.g., Diefenbach, 2009), it is important to realize that the identity change is a change that interviewees reported comparing the current situation with the

past, *in retrospect*. A longitudinal study, and a bigger sample of respondents to pronounce upon identity-associated propositions, would certainly enhance the reliability of the current results and could provide insights in the change process. Can a threshold value be recognized in the shift of identities after which we can no longer speak of a multiple identity?

The high speed of the identity change in the case at issue could be explained by the mere fact that both opposed identities were already at hand and that external developments induced the rise of the one and the fall of the other identity. To back up this conclusion, case studies of other multiple and single identities are of utmost importance. Including civil society organizations might be interesting. The ideological (Blood Bank) and utilitarian (Pharma) identity traits are typical of e.g., universities (Albert and Whetten, 1985; Glynn, Barr & Dacin, 2000; Golden-Biddle & Rao, 1997), and based on different value systems that normally are not expected to go together (Foreman and Whetten, 2002). Although Sanquin is not part of “civil society” in the narrow sense of the word, the organization bears many characteristics of a hybrid non-profit that should bother integrate market-related issues within the organization’s social mission. It also mobilizes private resources such as volunteers and donors (Jäger & Schröer, 2014, p. 1291).

Another consequence related to hybridity is mission drift: value convergence of the non-profit toward for-profit values. This might affect the trustworthiness of non-profits that are assumed to be more trustworthy than for-profit companies (Jäger & Schröer, 2014, pp. 1283, 1301). The Sanquin case shows that value convergence can also go the other way around: Ideological principles hamper an entrepreneurial attitude that is needed in a competitive market.

The volatility of the here-depicted multiple identity will not stand on its own. A comparison with other multi-identity organizations could provide a more thorough insight in the relationship between continuity and dynamics of identity. My presumption is that organizations with the same kind of hybridity, public and market activities combined, will meet the same dynamics, although possibly not as strong as the Sanquin most likely case. They probably face comparable external economic pressure and the same internal tension between normative and utilitarian values. Special attention might be paid to mergers. Just as the private sector, so too has the public sector become familiar with mergers and acquisitions. The number of mergers in the public sector ‘appears only set to increase’ (Giessner et al., 2016, p. 48).

To some extent the Sanquin casus is not in line with earlier findings. There is no change of labels, nor a change of meaning of those labels. It is the balance of power relations between the identities (and labels) that changes. This causes psychic pain, especially for the ideological oriented organizational members. The intangible attributes (beliefs) at the core of the organization would be difficult to change, whereas more tangible identity attributes like products being at the periphery should be more changeable. The product *blood* belongs to the core of Sanquin and is thereby turning out to be a more stable identity characteristic than e.g., *social* in the eyes off the employees.

Identity is an internally defined notion. It would be interesting to see how the multiple identities are projected in the organization’s external communications and how these would

impact the public perception and appreciation. The internal confusion about the identities could spill-over to external audiences as well. Further research is needed to determine if the exposure to different identities has a negative impact on public comprehension and appreciation of multiple identity organizations.