A Cross-case Study: The Organizational Identification of Millennials in Strong Identity Organizations

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Abstract

A strong corporate identity can only be achieved when there is proper alignment between the corporate identity and the employees, but little is currently known about when millennials identify with corporate identity and what role identity regulation attempts to play in the organizational identification of millennials. A cross-case study design with six purposefully selected millennials was conducted involving semi-structured interviews and observations of the organization's website, the meeting room and the office space. The within- and cross-case analysis derived two main themes that indicate that the organizational identification of millennials is strengthened when a) the corporate values are aligned with their personal values and b) the millennials' experienced positive associations after they capitalized the corporate identity, especially at consultancy organizations. Furthermore, possible identity regulation attempts seem to have a secondary role in relation to the organizational identification of millennials. These findings can offer organizations the opportunity to improve alignment between the corporate identity and millennials in order to be prepared for the generation of employees that is currently entering the labour market. Also, millennials can assess the values of a strong identity organization and the external image when applying for a job to develop insight in a potential fit.

Keywords: corporate identity, millennials, organizational identification, identity regulation, strong identity organization

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In the twenty first century a recognizable identity is fundamental for the existence of an organization, although products and services remain unquestionably crucial (Keller & Richey, 2017). When an identity is built up of strong and unique attributes, organizations are able to achieve recognition and to stand out from the crowd (Alvesson & Empson, 2008; Balmer & Greyser, 2003; vHe & Balmer, 2007). This is shown by organizations such as Starbucks and Coolblue, whom do not sell unique products but they are the first organizations that come to mind when people want to buy coffee or a new blender. This exemplifies that the success of an organization in the twenty first century will rather depend on 'who' it is than what it does. This emergence is broadly established in both management and marketing literature and referred to by the term corporate identity (Keller & Richey, 2017).

A strong corporate identity can only be achieved when there is proper alignment between the corporate identity and the employees (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). Therefore, identity regulation is used by organizations to affect the identity development of their employees (Balmer, 2008; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). Identity regulation, also known as internal branding, has the purpose to make the employees more identified and committed with the organization by managing the 'insides', fears, hopes and aspirations of the employees fitting the boundaries of the corporate identity (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). As a result, strong ties can be produced between employees and the organization. It is important to recognize the influence on employees because identity regulation attempts have direct implications for the development process of an individual's personal identity (Alvesson & Empson, 2008; Anteby & Wrzesniewski, 2014). This already starts in the application process, where the decision of an applicant to join the organization is partly established by their assumptions on the fit with the corporate identity (Barbulescu & Bidwell, 2013).

However, many employees experience conflicts around the desired employee profile and the employee that they believe and prefer themselves to be (Collinson, 2003; Gagnon & Collinson, 2014; Ramarajan & Reid, 2013). This suggests that conflict between the corporate identity and their own identities may be relatively common.

This conflict may be especially present for the young cohort of employees who are more sensitive to external influences because they are more focused on learning new things and developing themselves, whereas older employees have a more fixed-identity (Ebner, Freund, & Baltes, 2007; Freund, 2006). This new generation of employees that is currently entering the labour market is referred to as millennials, who can be defined as a cohort of young, high educated people aged from 20 to 35 years old (McDonald, 2015). Whilst previous generations might have significant career ambitions, work is a less significant part of millennial’s life but more an instrument to support the lifestyle they desire (Hauw & Vos, 2010; Marston, 2010; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Since work plays a less important role in their lives, it can be assumed that this influences their attitude towards work (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010).

Aforementioned, the corporate identity is fundamental for the existence of an organization in this present time and can only be achieved when it is properly aligned with its employees (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). To date, the approach of organizations in regulating individual processes of identity development has received scant attention in research literature. Particularly unknown is when millennials do identify with strong identity organizations, which is highly relevant due to their significantly different attitude towards work. Therefore, this research is concerned with the role of identity regulation in the organizational identification of millennials and when millennials do identify with the corporate identity.

Building the corporate identity

Corporate identity is the textual, instrumental and explicitly created identity which defines what is distinct and unique about an organization (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). Employees build and sustain the corporate identity by representing the organization's values and beliefs. Therefore Cornelissen, Haslam, and Balmer (2007) refer to the social aspect of the corporate identity, the individual employee. Also, symbolic manifestation (e.g. behaviour, logos) is used to support the corporate identity (Cornelissen et al., 2007). Therefore, the corporate identity is generally seen as both the property and construction of a collective, which makes the corporate identity a broad concept consisting of unique aspects that specify the organization (Gioia, 1998). Albert and Whetten (1985) indicate that corporate identity is built upon the of the following pillars: *central* attributes, *distinctive* description and *enduring* over time.

The first pillar of the corporate identity is constructed by the *central attributes*, which provide rules and guidelines that define what is perceived appropriate in the organization (Grant & Hardy, 2004; Hall, 2001). Furthermore, in the construction of corporate identity there is an element of both comparison and distancing (Alvesson & Empson, 2008). That is why the second pillar represents the *distinctive* character of the organization. This distinctive character is often built in comparison to another organization and sends out a message of 'who we are' and 'who we are not'. Presenting a distinctive character by drawing a comparison with another organization, can improve the image of the corporate identity (Alvesson & Empson, 2008). Therefore, corporate identity is a powerful term, because it covers both the boundaries of the organizational identity and what it means to be part of this as a professional (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000; Van Riel & Balmer, 1997). The last pillar includes the aspects employees point out as continuing and *enduring* regardless of changes in the organizational environment (Dutton et al., 1994).

Identity regulation as organizational control

Employees need to represent and ‘propagate’ the corporate identity, which results in great investment of organizations in regulation of both the identity and the behaviour of their employees to achieve a fit with the corporate identity (Albert et al., 2000; Balmer, 2008). Therefore, Alvesson and Willmott (2002) initiate that the employee can be seen as ‘identity worker’ who is encouraged to adapt the managed corporate identity into narratives of self-identity. This paragraph considers how identity is influenced and regulated. The effect of identity regulation depends on the presence as well on the frequency and intensity of an ideological and disciplinary narrative (O’Doherty & Willmott, 2001). Alvesson and Willmott (2002) defined four ways identity regulation is expressed within organizations: the employee, action orientations, membership and the scene.

Employees. By explicitly defining the characteristics of an employee, organizations can distinguish them from others and thereby shape expectations regarding both function and behaviour (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). This can be done by a function description or ‘title’, for instance when a job defined as more appropriate for ‘practically thinking’ employees. This contributes to the acceptance of, for example, hands-on work, which otherwise could have been experienced negatively (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). This kind of identity regulation may emerge from both formal or informal procedures (Ezzamel & Willmott, 1998).

Action orientations. Both in-house education and strategic communication of specific narratives, stories and reference points are used to establish appropriate work orientations. Hereby, the organization’s values can be delivered, defined and explained (Bjerke, Ind, & De Paoli, 2007; Van Riel & Balmer, 1997). For instance, processing values into archetypes or stories can invite employees to intrinsically construct the desired focus (e.g. I am goal- or process-oriented).

Membership. Nowadays, employees are continuously invited to embrace the 'we' of the organization. (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Anteby & Wrzesniewski, 2014). Organizations regulate feelings of belonging and membership through processes of training, induction and corporate education such as in-house magazines and posters (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Ashfort & Mael, 1989). When an employee feels part of the corporate family, this becomes an important source of a person's self-understanding, self-monitoring and presentation to others. De Chernatony (2010) states that a way of getting a sense of the degree an employee defines him- or herself through the corporate identity, is to ask them how they would react if they overheard negative or critical comments about their organization.

The scene. Finally, the scene includes regulations that indicate the identity of the organization in the larger economic field, including establishing of 'how we do things' in this organization. Some organizations have a code of proper conduct, which can have a large influence on identity construction. Because these standards of doing things, ask for self-understanding and adaption of these values (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002).

Identity regulation as described above, is long been seen as a significant medium for organizational control (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Barker, 1993; Ditomaso & Kunda, 1995; Knights & Willmott, 1989). However, employees are not solely reducible to passive consumers of managerially designed and designated identities (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002).

Organizational identification

People define and develop themselves in terms of what is relevant in the social context and what matters to others, referred to as the social identity theory (Oyserman, Elmore, & Smith, 2012; Turner & Oakes, 1986). The social identity theory is often applied to workplace settings and describes this process of developing an identity that is partly derived from perceived organizational membership (Turner & Oakes, 1986). Indicating that if employees embrace the 'we' of an organization, they include at least partly what their organization is thought to represent (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2003). This implication of the self-concept (Pratt, 1998) and perception of oneness with their work (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) is called organizational identification and reflects the specific ways in which individuals define themselves in relation to their work (Mael & Ashforth, 1995). In other words, organizational identification implies the process whereby an individual's identity becomes psychologically intertwined with the corporate identity (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2003). However, this is not merely a passive process because it includes dynamic phases of exploration which leads to adaption or rejection regarding to the fit with other personal identities (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016; Doolin, 2002; Ibarra, 1999; Zikic & Richardson, 2016). In order to emphasize the active iterative process of identification in literature this process is also referred to as 'identity work' or 'reflexive identity construction' (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016; Lindgren & Wåhlin, 2001). Due the focus on organizations in this research, the concept of organizational identification will be maintained which also includes the active construction through repeated self-reflection and social interaction.

Organizational identification is an active process which can lead to adaption of rejection. When a person's self-concept contains the same central attributes as those in the perceived organizational identity, this cognitive connection is defined as organizational identification (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Dutton et al., 1994). Kreiner and Ashforth (2004) expanded the two-level model of adaption of rejection to a four-level approach to understand the multiple paths by which a person might derive his or her identity vis-á-vis the organization. Where organizational identification (e.g. adaption) refers to high level of identification between the personal identities and the corporate identity, ambivalent identification refers to a mix of adaption and rejection of the identities. This indicates that an employee makes choices in what to include or what to reject When an employee is disinterested in the whole process, this is referred to as neutral identification. And when an employee maintains explicit separation between their personal identity and the corporate identity this is called disidentification. In this case the employee totally rejects the corporate identity (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004).

The experiences in the early years at work are mostly remembered as the critical and formative years for identity construction, therefore it can be assumed that this organizational interference has large influence on the process of identity construction of millennials (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016; Ibarra, 1999; Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006; Van Rijswijk, Akkerman, Schaap, & Van Tartwijk, 2016). While corporate identities and their style towards employees varies (Brickson, 2005), the expectation is that the strength of the corporate identity and presence of identity regulation attempts towards millennials influence their process of organizational identification (Anteby & Wrzesniewski, 2014). This means that corporate identity and corresponding identity regulation attempts are more likely to contribute organizational identification when these are aligned with the employee (Hatch & Schultz, 2002), but currently little is known about how millennials react to both the corporate identity and corresponding identity regulation attempts. Hence, exploring when millennials identify with corporate identity is a first step in identifying how millennials can assess whether or not they fit into a strong identity organization. In addition, it can offer organizations the opportunity to improve alignment between corporate identity and millennials so that they can prepare themselves for the generation of employees that is currently entering the labour market. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to explore when millennials identify with the corporate identity of strong identity organizations. In addition, this research is concerned with the role of identity regulation attempts in the organizational identification of millennials. Which leads to the following main question: When do millennials identify with a strong identity organization and what is the role of identity regulation?

Method

The aim of this study is to explore when millennials identify with a strong identity organization and what role identity regulation plays in the organizational identification of millennials. Due the complex dynamics between the millennial, identity regulation and the strong identity organization, multiple case studies foregrounding a qualitative interview will be conducted.

Research approach

Research design. A cross-case study design was conducted involving semi-structured interviews and observations of the organization's website, the meeting room and the office space. This research design enabled a within-case analysis of the unique phenomena regarding the millennial in the context of a strong identity organization and a cross-case analysis to examine similarities and differences between cases (Yin, 2009). This approach was chosen to consider both the human experiences of the millennial and the contextual factors of a strong identity organization. The observations, using data triangulation, provided additional insight into the perceptions of millennials (Boeije, 2009; Yin, 2009). As a result, the findings and conclusions can be seen as more convincing and accurate, because they are based on different sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Yin, 2009).

Case selection. Purposive sampling was used to select six cases, each consisting of one millennial in a strong identity organization, three of which are consultancy organizations (Boeije, 2009; Creswell, 1998). Table 1 shows an overall description of the sector and size of the organization and a description of the millennial's background is included. All millennials had to be between 20 to 35 years old (McDonald, 2015) and have a (near)full-time job for at least one year to be sure they had experienced a certain amount of identity regulation. Besides that, the organization's website was checked to see if there was a description of the corporate identity.

Table 1

Case description

Company[1]	Sector	Size	Millennial's background
Bravo	Global consultancy organization, specialized in strategy consulting	4.500+ employees in the Netherlands	The Dutch male millennial has completed a MA degree and worked for the past two years as consultant at a subsidiary of Bravo which is specialized in IT-strategy transformation
Delta	Global consultancy organization, which provides advisory services in divergent markets	4.500+ employees in the Netherlands	The Dutch female millennial has completed a MA degree and worked for the past four years as an IT-strategy consultant at Delta.
Papa	Global consultancy organization, which provides advisory services in divergent markets	5.000+ employees in the Netherlands	The Dutch male millennial has completed a MA degree and worked for the past two years as an accountant-consultant at Papa.
Tango	International transmission system operator	2.000+ employees in the Netherlands	The English female millennial has completed a MA degree and worked for the past two years as a business-technologist in the utility sector at Tango.
India	International financial operator	13.000+ employees in the Netherlands.	The Dutch male millennial has completed a Bachelors' degree and worked for the past two years as a business-IT specialist at India.
Kilo	Worldwide telecom and ICT company	14.000+ employees at the Netherlands	The Dutch female millennial has completed a MA degree and worked for the past two years as a lobbyist at the international law department at Kilo.

Data sources

This cross-case study involves the following four data sources: a semi-structured interview and observations of the organization's website, a meeting room and the office space (Table 2).

[1] Pseudonyms are used to ensure anonymity.

Table 2

Data sources and their purpose

Instrument	Data source	Focus
Structured observation sheet I	The ‘about’ page on the organization’s website	The corporate identity, including employee and organization characteristics, as externally communicated
Structured observation sheet II	An external meeting room	The corporate identity as both internally as externally communicated and the physically present identity regulation attempts
Structured observation sheet III	The office space	The corporate identity as internally communicated and the physically present identity regulation attempts
Topic-list and corresponding questions	Semi-structured interview	Explore the experiences of both the identity regulation attempts, the level of organizational identification and the negotiation of between the personal and corporate identity

Website. An observation sheet (Appendix A) was developed to record notes from the ‘who we are’ or ‘about’-website page of each organization, focussing on the communicated employee characteristics (e.g. central attributes) and unique characteristics of the organization (e.g. distinctive). The sentences on the website page were coded (e.g. central attributes or distinctive) and added to the observation sheet. This observation was completed before the interview, because this made it possible to identify subjects in the interviews that were related to the corporate identity.

Observations. The millennial gave a tour to show his / her office space and an external meeting room, from which notes were written down on the observation sheets (Appendix A). Examples of expressions of the corporate identity are the presence of logo’s or organizational colours and identity regulation is observed by the presence of quotes, video screens used for internal marketing proposes or in-house magazines, with a distinction in the reference to ‘membership’ or ‘action orientations’.

Semi-structured interviews. The interview framework (Appendix B) includes three topics and several questions to guide the interviewer and indicate the scope of each topic (Mason, 2004). The concept of 'identity' was not explicitly mentioned. Instead numerous open-ended questions related to the corporate identity, personal identity and identity regulation were asked followed by targeted questions about the concepts. For instance, "*If I visit* [name organization] *as a client, what are typical things that I will notice?".* Instead of asking for the distinctive aspects of the corporate identity. A key advantage is minimizing the potential for social reporting or imposing an awareness of identity which might otherwise be absent (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The interviews were held at a meeting room in the organization and lasted 40 minutes on average. Before starting the interviews, each millennial was told that their participation was voluntary (no compensation or incentives were provided) and the interview procedure was briefly introduced. All millennials signed the informed consent beforehand. The interviews were recorded for later analysis, transcribed verbatim and stored confidentially on the University server. Afterwards, a summary of the interviews was presented to the interviewees to check for right interpretation.

Quality

First, both the semi-structured interview framework (Appendix B) and structured observation sheets (Appendix A) were based on the theoretical framework. An overview of the constructs and related theory is included in Appendix C. Second, to increase the validity of the instruments, an expert in identity consulting was contacted to audit both the interview-framework and the observation sheets. The observation sheets were approved and the interview-framework was expanded with an additional question about exemplary manager behaviour. Furthermore, a pilot was conducted to test the interview-framework (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). In this pilot the whole interview was completed and afterwards feedback was requested from the interviewee to increase the clarity of the questions, discuss ambiguous questions and questions the participant felt uneasy about answering. Following the pilot interview, the order of the topics was changed, since questions about the organization were asked prior to the personal questions. As a result, the interviewee felt limited in his personal answers, because he felt framed by the initial questions. The final interview-framework (Appendix B) contains three topics with a total of 25 questions. Finally, the background of the researcher contributes to the objectivity of both the observations and the interviews as the researcher has never worked in a large organization with a strong corporate identity.

An external audit was conducted (Appendix F) for which the researcher left a trail of data, choices and decisions made (e.g. logbook), which were subsequently checked by an auditor to foster the accuracy or validity of this research (Akkerman, Admiraal, Brekelmans, & Oost, 2008). The auditor also worked in the field of educational research, but not previously involved in the research. The auditor could clearly deduce the conclusions from the raw data. The instruments were well substantiated from literature and the links between the instruments were clearly described. After the audit, the sample selection was described more briefly and the transparency of the data analysis was improved as the documents about the axial coding phase were added to the server.

Analysis

Directed content analysis was used, which has the advantages of a systematic approach, but also offers the possibility of discovering new themes (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). The purpose of this analysis is to identify themes that have explanatory power both within individual cases and across the sample (Ayres, Kavanaugh, & Knafl, 1996). Table 3 includes all steps for both the within and cross-case analysis. The length of the coded statements differed, as meaningful units were selected from the transcriptions (Boeije, 2009).

Table 3

Strategies and steps within- and cross-case analysis

Strategy	Analytic focus	Result
	Phase 1	
1. Analytical immersion	Within each case	Development of a sense of the experiences of the millennial in the context of the strong identity organization
2. Coding process using predetermined codes	Within each case	First sense of the corporate identity, identity regulation attempts and extent of identification in each case
	Phase 2	
3. Iterative process of open coding	Within all cases	Segmentation of the transcriptions into meaningful expressions, by describing, naming or classifying statements with single words or short sequence of words
4. Iterative process of axial coding	Within and across cases	Development of main categories by relating codes to each other
5. Comparing the observations with the main categories	Within and across cases	Further development of the sense of the experiences of the millennial in the context of the strong identity organization by focussing on code occurrence and code connection
6. Iterative process of selective coding	Across cases	Previously identified main categories were develop into two themes

During the first phase, three theory-driven categories with 11 predetermined codes were used (Appendix D). Phase 1 started with analytical immersion by reading and reading the observations and interviews. To complete further analysis, the predetermined codes were used to code all transcripts.

The coding process was continued in the next phase, by extending it with open codes. First, each transcript was coded in an iterative process of open coding. If new codes were identified, earlier cases were revisited to check whether these codes were also present. Next, using an axial coding approach, similar codes were grouped into main concept within and across cases (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). After that, the observations were compared with the main concepts to develop further insight in the connection between the codes. Finally, with constant comparison across cases, two themes were identified.

Results

The findings of the within- and cross-case analysis indicate that there are two main themes that provide insight in when millennials identify with a strong identity organization. Besides that, possible identity regulation attempts seem to be subordinate to those themes in relation to the organizational identification of millennials. The first theme includes the alignment between the central attributes and values of the strong identity organization with the personal values of the millennial. The second theme includes the capitalization of the distinctive corporate image by the millennial. Which means that the millennial seems to expand his / her own identity with the distinctive characteristics of the strong identity organization. These themes, along with illustrative quotes, are described below.

Identity regulation

The observations showed that there was no physical presence of the corporate identity in the three consultancy organizations (e.g. Bravo, Delta, Papa), but there were various references to the corporate identity and identity regulation attempts in the other three organizations. Bravo, Delta and Papa have a recognizable corporate identity which includes mostly distinctive aspects and a description of employee characteristics combined with action orientations, such as stated on the websites of Bravo: *"These diverse individuals have […] a passion for helping clients succeed",* Delta: *"Our people solve complex problems and make meaningful progress"* and Papa: *"[…] We build trust in society and solve important problems.".* Besides that, on all three websites numbers where shown about the organization's success, referring to the distinctive character of the organization. Unlike the consultancy organizations, in both the office space and meeting room at India, Tango and Kilo there were different references to the corporate identity such as, tv screens on each floor, several quotes on the wall and the corporate colours were everywhere in the building. The quotes referred to action orientations: *"Empowering people to stay a step ahead in life and in business"* (the office of India) and *"Do you still know them? We are responsible, engaged, connected"* (the office at Tango). Also, referring to the distinctive aspects of the corporate identity, organizations' successes of or new developments in the market were shown on the tv-screens, interchanged by the presence of quotes. For example, at Kilo: "*We are the centre of society*". Table 4 shows the level of identification of each millennial, added with an overview of the attempted identity regulation as observed in the office space and meeting room, and other actions for identity regulation as recognized by the millennial.

Table 4

Degree of identification and identity regulation attempts

Millennial	Level of identification	Identity regulation attempts
Bravo	Strong identification including international Bravo-offices	*Observations:* Corporate colours *Interview:* Manager behaviour
Tango	Strong identification including international Tango-offices	*Observations:* Corporate colours, quotes, tv-screens, narratives *Interview:* Manager behaviour, tv-screens, lunch-meetings, intranet
India	Strong identification	*Observations:* Corporate colours, quotes, tv-screens. *Interview*: Onboarding, manager behaviour, tv-screens, 'Orange code', regularly e-learnings, corporate e-mails
Papa	Ambivalent identification limited to Papa-Netherlands	*Observations:* Corporate colours *Interview:* Onboarding, in-house training, each quarter a value-week in which one value is addressed
Delta	Ambivalent identification limited to her own department	*Observations:* Corporate colours Interview: Manager behaviour, corporate e-mails
Kilo	Neutral identification	*Observations:* Corporate colours, quotes, tv-screens *Interview:* TeamKilo, sharing of question and answers through video-clips, e-learnings, corporate e-mails

The millennials at India and Tango appreciated the corporate values and mentioned various references to the corporate identity by, for instance, the presence of quotes as mentioned above. Suggesting that in these organizations the reminders in the building play a part in the organizational identification of their employees. However, in the case of Kilo, despite the high degree of identity regulation recognized by the Kilo-millennial, the Kilo millennial has a neutral identification with the organization. She mentioned that Kilo carries out the image in different ways. For instance, the Kilo-millennial gives a description of TeamKilo "*An online environment on which messages are added. This includes a lot of positive branding about Kilo. For example, when they have developed something new a blog will be published*.". Referring to status and therefore the distinctive aspects of the corporate identity of Kilo. In addition, the central attributes are brought to the attention in different ways. She gives examples such as, on the windows there are a references to the value "*As Kilo we are at the centre of society*", because on all windows there were arrows with names of important buildings that you could see from that point. In each stairwell they printed the number of calories you burn per stairs referring to the "*The green connection*".

This rich expression of the corporate identity at Kilo is in contrast to the case of Bravo where, besides exemplary manager behaviour, no other regulation attempts could be discovered. Yet he was the millennial who identified most strongly with the identity of his strong identity organization. This leads to the assumption that identity regulation attempts seem to be subordinate to other themes. That is why in the following two paragraphs the themes are first discussed in more detail, after which the relationship is established with the present identity regulation attempts.

Alignment with personal values

Millennials often referred to a (mis)alignment between their own values and those of the strong identity organization. In three cases the values of the millennials seem to align with the corporate values. These were also the cases in which the millennials strongly identified with the corporate identity. Furthermore, there were two cases in which the millennials partly identified with the values and in those cases the millennials were ambivalent identified with the organization. Lastly, there was one case in which the millennial was neutral in her identification with the corporate identity and she mentioned that she only felt aligned with the environmental sustainability of the organization. The cases are explored in more depth below, grouped by alignment and corresponding level of identification.

Strong alignment. For the Bravo-millennial, just as in the cases of Tango and India as discussed below, the recognition of his own values in those of the strong identity organization has strengthened his organizational identification. He expressed that he likes working in a team, likes to work very hard but structured and pursue high quality standards. When comparing to the 'about-page' of Bravo: '*We are collaborative problem solvers; We emphasize high quality standards; We are fighting for the client's best solution*', similarities are visible. The Bravo-millennial himself reflects on the alignment: *"I feel very much at home here. With the people here and therefore also with the company*". Then he continues about his previous job at Delta: "*Then it was less. I think that is one of the reasons why I left* [Delta] *when I think about it now. In addition,* [I felt] *just less motivated to fully commit myself, if you feel a kind of mismatch. I didn't realize it then, but I don't think I got the most out of myself at Delta. I underperformed and was just not as enthusiastic as it seems to have happened here.".* In the following case of Tango, the values of the Tango-millennial seem to correspondent with the values as expressed on their website: "*We* [Tango] *take every effort to meet the needs of society by being responsible, engaged and connected*". The Tango-millennial states that: *"I like working with different people.* […] *At the beginning I was really hesitant to do that because I never seen the person who I'm asking a favour. Yeah but the people are open to it."* And *"I value that we keep the safety first. The responsibility part, and* *do as much as we can for society*". In this case the expressed values by the Tango-millennial correspond with the corporate values of 'responsible' and 'engaged'. The India-millennial expressed that by applying the Scrum-method[2], India sets the opportunity for their employees to give really propagate the corporate value of 'staying ahead'. Or as shown on the office-wall at India: *"Empowering people to stay a step ahead in life and in business"*. The India-millennial continues that: "… *it is also necessary for me because I don't like talking to people about wild ideas for a long time. I just think it is much more important to have an idea and to put it into practice as quickly as possible.*" In these three cases, the action orientations that are communicated internally to encourage employees to promote the values are appreciated by the employees.

Partly aligned. Both the millennials of Delta and Papa made a distinction in what part of the strong identity organization they felt related to. This is exemplified by the case of Delta in which she expresses that she feels related to the hard work, working efficiently and delivering quality. Delta states on their website: *"Our people solve complex problems and make meaningful progress"*. She relates to the expressed action orientations as she wants to make a difference by helping clients secure their IT systems to prevent hackings or data leaks. However, she continues that traditionally Delta had a really formal image. As result, that in this present time it depends on the department to what extent this image is still being represented. Therefore, she makes an explicit distinction between her department, where the employees are relatively young, and other departments of Delta. She said that on her department "[…] e*veryone can do whatever they want. And that distinguishes us from all the other departments at Delta, because they are still somewhat formal."*. She continues that she really values flexibility, both in her choice of clothing and in her working hours, what is

[2] Scrum is an effective and flexible method for project management that makes it possible for a team to deliver projects in a more productive manner and to quickly tackle any problems. They work in multidisciplinary teams that deliver working products in short sprints, with a fixed length of 1 to 4 weeks. (De Boer et al., 2015)

valued at the IT-department, but not at the other departments. Although she is very positive about Delta and she is proud that she is part of that, she emphasizes that she is part of the more informal and younger Delta, not the traditional image that Delta is sometimes associated with. Also, the Papa-millennials makes a distinction in what to relate to. He expresses that *"… I can be myself at Papa.* […] *If I would leave Papa, then I think it's important that my follow-up challenge does have an environment where people are taken into account. Where people can lean on each other*.". But he only feels personally addressed if something is said about 'his' office in the Netherlands. "*It [scandal] was happening in America. Those are just people, so that didn't bother me that much.".*

Misalignment. Finally, the case of the Kilo-millennial exemplifies a certain misalignment with her personal values. *"Kilo is still slow and not really 'hip and happening' but we do cool things,* <u>*people here*</u> *have a real heart for the business and I really like to see that.".* Despite the fact that Kilo has the corporate values clearly expressed on their website: "*We're [Kilo] guided by three important principles: customer, together and simplicity. These three values form our compass; they give direction to what we do."* During the interview the Kilo-millennial explains that she prefers complex issues, which contrasts to the principle 'simplicity'. She has the responsibility to keep track of changes in the law and its effect on the Kilo-employees, because of this position in the company she doesn't have much to do with the customer, the first principle of kilo. It was noticed in her way of speaking that the Kilo-millennial takes a certain distance from both the organization and her colleagues as she refers to them with 'people here' and 'they' instead of for example the Bravo-millennial continuously spoke in words of 'we' and 'us'. In sum, when looking at the role of identity regulation in this theme, depending on the alignment with the millennial's personal values identity regulation attempts can stimulate the process of organizational identification.

Capitalization of the corporate image

The corporate image seems to expand millennials' identity, depending on the image, it stimulates or limits the millennial to organizational identification. On the one hand, being part of a consultancy with a recognizable corporate identity comes with a broad network of people. On the other hand, they experienced that when they bear the name of the strong identity organization, they were personally associated with this image. This is explained in the following quote by the Bravo-millennial: "*I do notice, I don't know why, but I am happy with the status that the company has. Yes, that just gives me a nice feeling somehow. I'm not sure why. I do notice it makes it easier to do my job when I'm at the client. For example, I worked for Delta, I wrote something down, then Delta was linked to it. Then people would sometimes ask questions. The following day I went to work for Bravo, then it was assumed to be true. You just notice that in your daily work. I think that's so nice. You will be a bit more opportunistic or something. And sometimes it just makes your work easier because of that. There is of course an enormous quality standard. But I also think that the things we say are correct because we think about it a lot and have a structure*."

In line with this, it can be stated that strong identity organizations contribute to creating this image by offering their employees 'financial perks'. As this contributes to the distinctive image of the company, which, as mentioned above, is part of the corporate identity. This is reflected in the cases of Delta and Papa, as they mentioned financial perks such as bonuses, a lease car and internal training options that is in their opinion characteristic of their organization. Papa-millennial: "*I also like, for example, that we get lease cars here, that is a bonus. In addition, I also think that certain secondary employment conditions, I like that very much. As you can declare lunch, internet costs, things like that. But that is rather a plus than a must. It is nice to earn enough in any case. But you also have to do it for the other things, so the study is paid for, you will have a car."*

Providing employees with financial perks impacts, in those cases, millennials' perception of the strong identity organization. Besides that, it contributes to the distinctive character of the strong identity organization. Therefore, it can also be considered as a certain amount of identity regulation to encourage employees to propagate this image.

Nevertheless, it can be said that identity regulation only contributes if the other themes are experienced as positive. Since in the case of India the millennial mentioned that the extended identity can also cause negative associations: "*The news about the bonusses and fraud, those are simply all difficult things that you cannot just love. You can say, I experience still a bit of a struggle.*" Furthermore, he mentioned that he does relate himself to India, but not to the specific employees that committed fraud. But outside of the company, he notices that he is personally associated with the damaged image of the company, despite the fact that he could not have had anything to do with it. In sum, strong identity organizations can invest to a certain extent in a positive distinctive corporate image which can contribute to the organizational identification of millennials. As this positive image helps millennials because being part of an organization with a recognizable corporate identity comes with a broad network of people and they experienced that when they bear the name of the strong identity organization, they were personally associated with this image.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore when millennials identify with a strong identity organization and the role of identity regulation attempts in the organizational identification of millennials. Aforementioned, in the present time a strong corporate identity is fundamental for the existence of an organization, but employees are not solely reducible to passive consumers of managerially designed and designated identities (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Keller & Richey, 2017). This emphasizes the importance to look at organizational identification from the perspective of the millennial. The findings indicate that there are two main themes that provide insight in when millennials identify with a strong identity organization. Besides that, possible identity regulation attempts seem to be subordinate to those themes in relation to the organizational identification of millennials. The first theme includes the alignment between the central attributes and values of the strong identity organization with the personal values of the millennial. The second theme includes the capitalization of the corporate image by the millennial, especially at a consultancy organization. Besides that, the level of identification does not appear to depend on the presence of identity regulation.

In the first theme, the similarity between the personal values and the central attributes seem to strengthen the process of organizational identification. This finding is consistent with that of Dutton and colleagues (1994) who state that when a person’s identity contains the same central attributes as those in the perceived organizational identity, this leads to a cognitive connection (e.g. identification). When this finding is viewed from the role of identity regulation, it seems amplify the finding of Hatch and Schultz (2002) who stated that identity regulation attempts evoke different reactions by millennials compared to previous generations. Also, O’Dohorty and Willmott (2001) state that effect of identity regulation depends on the presence as well on the frequency and intensity. Referring to the statements in the cases of Kilo, Delta and Bravo, this research can suggest that it rather depends on the alignment with the millennial’s values, than the identity regulation attempts. It can be concluded that millennials do react differently to identity regulation than previous generations, but this does not depend on identity regulation itself, but rather of a misalignment with the millennial’s personal values.

One unanticipated finding was included in the second theme. While this research was mainly focused on exploring organizational identification inside the strong identity organization, this finding indicates that when a millennial capitalizes the corporate identity they are treated differently by outsiders. Depending on the external image of the strong identity organizations, this can both weaken or strengthen the organizational identification of the millennial. This theme is explained by Cialdini and colleagues (1976), who have observed the effect of publicly announcing one's associations with successful others after a school's football team lost or won a game. They state that when a millennial believes outsiders see the organization in a positive light, the millennial can improve his or her public image by the reflected glory of the organization (Cialdini et al., 1976). This phenomenon could explain why on the one hand, the millennials experience that when they bear the name of the strong identity organization, they were personally associated with this image. And on the other hand, that being part of a consultancy with a recognizable corporate identity comes with a broad network of people. When millennials gain positive experiences when associated with an organizational identity, and it helps them building up a professional network, it could explain the identification with the strong identity organization. In contrast, when they work at an organization with an unfavourable image, they might be associated with negative experiences just as explained by the millennial at India. Which contributes to a weaker organizational identification (Cialdini et al., 1978).

As this process was mentioned by all three consultants, but only once mentioned in the other cases, it can be assumed that this process applies more to the organizational identification of consultants. A reason why it is only explicitly mentioned by the consultants can depend on the nature of their job which is characterized by temporarily working as an external partner in a company, in which the external role is inseparable linked to the name and therefore identity of the consultancy organization. Therefore, it can be assumed that the public image has more effect on their work, than it does for the other millennials. As consultants switch between the corporate consultancy organization and the client, their influences of identity regulation are segregated. However, the aforementioned financial 'perks' can be seen as symbolic manifestation which is used support the corporate identity

(Cornelissen et al., 2007). By strengthening the corporate image, as was characterised in the cases, this can contribute to the organizational identification with the strong identity consultancy organization.

Limitations

A first limitation of this study is the nature of the data sources. The observations of both the meeting room and office space corroborated the interviews. However, at the consultancy organizations, all further identity regulation attempts were done by manager behaviour, trainings or through corporate e-mails. As those elements also partly provide insight in the corporate identity and the expected central attributes, including these data sources in the study would have yielded a richer insight into the organizational identification and identity regulation attempts. Secondly, only self-developed instruments were used. However, all instruments were based on theory and checked by an expert in identity consulting. Third, because this study implies a comparison between millennials and other generations, including the other generation could have strengthen the findings and better substantiated the implicit comparison. Besides that, this research started with theoretical research which can have the limitation that the researcher analyses the data with an informed but, nonetheless, strong bias. Hence, researchers might be more likely to find evidence that is supportive rather than nonsupportive of a theory, related to the concept of objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To achieve neutral or unbiased results, both an audit trail and a second coding phase of open coding is used. A last limitation is that only six cases were purposefully selected, albeit based on theoretical grounds. As such, more research is required to explore if and how these results can be generalized.

Future research and implications

The findings of this research have identified two themes that contribute to millennial’s identification to a strong identity organization. Also, it can be stated that identity regulation attempts seem to a secondary role when both the organizational values and the values of the millennial are not aligned or whether the image of the organization has been compromised. When strong identity organizations want to attract millennials that help sustain and build the corpore identity, they have to engage their corporate values with values that feel relevant for millennials. Because first employees have to embrace the ‘we’ of an organization, before they include at least partly what their organization is thought to represent (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2003). Based on the second theme, it can be concluded that it is important, particularly for consultancy organizations, to pay attention to both creating and maintaining a positive external image in addition to the internally communicated corporate identity because due the segregation the employee pushes to alternate sequentially between those identities depending on whichever is most salient (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Besides that, millennials can assess the values of a strong identity organization and the external image when applying for a job to develop insight in a potential fit. Furthermore, this research contributed to de development of theoretical themes that improved the insight in the influences that are involved in the organizational identification of millennials.

This research contributed to the exploration of the dynamic processes between the millennial, identity regulation and the strong identity organization. Quantitative methods could be used to assess the possible relationships among these concepts that arose in two themes. Future research could therefore examine part or all relations between the personal values of the millennial, various identity regulation attempts, values of the strong identity organization, the view of outsiders and /or the external corporate image. Secondly, this research only focused on millennials that chose to work, and still work at a strong identity organization. This raised the question whether the first theme can be generalized to organizations with a less strong identity. Therefore, future research could explore if in those organizations an alignment between the organizational and the personal values is also preferred. Lastly, future research could measure the aspects that shape the corporate identity (e.g. central attributes, othering, distinctive) and their possible match with the personal values of millennials.

Nevertheless, this study can be seen as a first step to an improved understanding of the active role of millennials in the organizational identification with strong identity organizations. After all, it is desirable for both the millennials and the organizations that the alignment can be improved so that both the organizations and the millennials can reach their full potential.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Observation schemes for website, meeting rooms and office space

Appendix B: Topic list interview

Appendix C: Description of the data sources and topics in relation to the theoretical construct

Appendix D: Up-front codes based on theoretical concepts

Appendix E: Open themes and codes derived from the interviews

Appendix F: Audit-trail Scheme

Appendix G: FETC-Form

Appendix A

Observation Schemes for Website, Meeting rooms and Office space

I Website		
Theoretical themes	Construct	Data
a. Corporate Identity *(Albert & Whetten, 1985; Alvesson & Empson, 2008; Dutton et al., 1994; Gioia, 1998; Grant & Hardy, 2004; Hall, 2001)*	Central attributes Distinctive	

II External meeting room		
Theoretical themes	Construct	Data
a. Corporate Identity *(Albert & Whetten, 1985; Alvesson & Empson, 2008; Gioia, 1998; Grant & Hardy, 2004; Hall, 2001)*	Central attributes	
b. Identity regulation *(Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Anteby & Wrzesniewski, 2014; Ashfort & Mael, 1989; van Riel & Balmer, 1997)*	Action orientations Membership	

III Office space		
Theoretical themes	Construct	Data
a. Corporate Identity *(Albert & Whetten, 1985; Alvesson & Empson, 2008; Gioia, 1998; Grant & Hardy, 2004; Hall, 2001)*	Central attributes	
b. Identity regulation *(Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Anteby & Wrzesniewski, 2014; Ashfort & Mael, 1989; van Riel & Balmer, 1997)*	Action orientations Membership	

Appendix B
Topic List Interview

Thanks again for participating in this interview.

The interview takes 30/40 minutes.

As stated in the informed consent, I will record the interview so I can make a transcription.

The first part of the interview will be centred upon getting a better understanding of your drivers as a person and as an employee. In the second part we'll dive deeper into the set-up and way of work of the company

Before starting, I would like to have the following information:

- Age:
- Number of years working in this company:
- Completed education: University of applied sciences / University bachelor / master

Do you have any questions before we start? *** Start recording ***

Concept 1: Personal questions for the millennial **Person / qualities** • Can you tell me something about yourself? • And if you were to introduce yourself in a job interview what qualities would you mention? **Current position** • What does your current position entail? • What is typical for your function? What are the attitude / qualities / working method that are most valued? • If you would apply again to your current job, what qualities or aspects would you mention with the knowledge you have now?
Concept 2: Company questions **Distinguishing company characteristics** • Can you give a description of [company]? • What makes this company different from other companies? • If I visit [company] as a client, what are typical things that I will notice? Behaviour of employees, working methods... • What are the company values that characterize [company] • To summarize... these are ... the typical characteristics. What can be propagated more or less to your opinion? • How did these characteristics and values became clear to you when you started working here? Did you go through an onboarding program? **Current internal communication** • Are most employees aware of the company's core values? • How are these values communicated? How often? (Manager behaviour, in-house magazines, mail, videos, quotes, stories, training)

• What do you see when you look at your colleagues? How do they propagate the company's values? Example? Are there differences between colleagues? • And you? How do you deal with this? How important do you think it is to fit in with this? **Relationship of own values** "In summary, these are ... the values that you mentioned earlier." • I notice differences between this personal value you referred to and the corporate value. How do you handle this? •And to what extent do you think it is important that these connect together? • If you couldn't agree with it, how would that influence you at your work?
Concept 3: Level of identification "We mainly talked about internal communication and the relationship with you as an employee. Now I want ask questions about the external image of the company" • How important is work to you? If you relate to other aspects of your life? • Is the external image of the company important to you? • What is one of the most recent events within the company that you are proud of? • What are the successes that [company] has recently achieved? Does this feel like a personal success to you? • If someone publicly praises the company in the media, does this feel like a personal compliment to you? • And if someone publicly expresses a negative opinion about [company] Do you take offense? • What we talked about today, do you notice differences between generations?

Appendix C
Description of the Data Sources and Topics in Relation to the Theoretical Construct

Data source	Theoretical construct	Example question or observation focus
Interview	Corporate identity	*If I visit* [name organization] *as a client, what are typical things that I will notice?*
	Identity regulation	*Are most employees aware of the company's core values? How are these values communicated? How often?*
	Identification	*What are the successes that* [name organization] *recently achieved? Does this feel like a personal success to you?*
	Explore themes	*I notice differences between this personal value you referred to and the corporate value. How do you handle this?*

Data source	Theoretical construct	Observation topics
Website	Corporate identity	The following central attributes are integrated in the observation: description of the employee characteristics, reputation, service, guidelines/rules, management style and norms and values.
Office space	Corporate identity	The following central attributes are integrated in the observation: text and visuals that refer to the description of the employee characteristics, reputation, service, guidelines/rules, management style and norms and values.
	Identity regulation	The following identity regulation attempts are integrated in the observation: presence of quotes, video screens used for internal marketing proposes, magazines and a description of the atmosphere.
Meeting room	Corporate identity	The following central attributes are integrated in the observation: text and visuals that refer to the description of the employee characteristics, reputation, service, guidelines/rules, management style and norms and values.

Appendix D

Up-front Codes Based on Theoretical Constructs

Theoretical construct	Code	Descriptions	Example from the data
a. Recognizable corporate identity	Central attributes	Description of all behaviour and preferred values is perceived appropriate in the organization	Website: *Our people solve complex problems and make meaningful progress.* (Delta)
(Albert & Whetten, 1985; Alvesson & Empson, 2008; Gioia, 1998; Grant & Hardy, 2004; Hall, 2001)	Distinctive	Description of the 'we' of an organization compared to others or achievements (e.g. we are the best)	Interview: *Papa was the first of the big consultancies that really lived the values, at Papa the values are really followed.* (Papa)
	Enduring	The consistent aspects that are described referred to as enduring over time	Interview: *The 'Safety first' is the same. It doesn't matter if you sit in your office or you're outside handling high voltage equipment. It really doesn't matter. Everybody's on the same level.* (Tango)
b. Identity regulation attempts	Top-down communication	Includes the communication of narratives related to the corporate identity, such as archetypes, stories and reference points in which is established what is or is not important for an employee. Also includes manager behaviour.	Observation: *Do you still know them? We are responsible, engaged, connected.* (On a banner in the office at Tango)
(Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Anteby & Wrzesniewski, 2014; Ashfort & Mael, 1989; Dutton et al., 1994; van Riel & Balmer, 1997)	Frequency	Reference to the frequency of possible identity regulation attempts	Interview: *We are overloaded with it* [the values]*, it is always repeated during training.* (Papa)
	Job description	Includes a specific job description in which is clear that a specific value is more valued then another.	Website: "*We measure our success by our clients' success. We make all of our resources available to our clients and commit ourselves wholeheartedly to their success*." (Bravo)
	Standardized regulation	Includes everything that refers to standardized Identity regulation. Such as trainings, quotes on the wall, magazines, short movies, posters, in-house education.	Observation: "*Empowering people to stay a step ahead in life and in business."* (On the office-wall in India)
c. Level of identification	Identification	High level of identification between the personal identity and the corporate identity	Interview: "*I feel very much at home here. With the people here and therefore also with the company."* (Bravo)
(Albert & Whetten, 1985; Dutton et al., 1994; Kreiner &	Ambivalent identification	A mix of adaption and rejection of the identities which means that an employee makes choices in what to include or not	Interview: *Delta America is a completely different entity. (...) I have a less bonding with them*. (Delta)

Ashforth, 2004; Oyserman et al., 2012)	Neutral identification	When an employee is disinterested in the whole process	Interview: "*I only looked at the position in the sense that, because of my background in politics, I wanted to work for a European company. So not, for example, Facebook or Google. So, I looked at Kilo in that sense, because it is a Dutch company but I thought Kilo was just a dull company."* (Kilo)
	Disidentification	When an employee maintains explicit separation between their personal identity and the corporate identity	Interview: *The news about the bonusses and fraud, those are simply all difficult things that you cannot just love. You can say, I experience still a bit of a struggle."* (India)

Appendix E
Open Themes and Codes Derived from the Interviews

Codes	Code description	Millennial	Example from interview		Theme description
Flexibility	Flexibility so millennials have freedom to make choices in what to wear and when/where to work	Delta India	"*It doesn't matter what time you start. If you just make your hours. Yes, that's the point. If you deliver before your deadline, then it is also ok. Or even when you do it at night or when you do it in the morning. (…) and here at cyber security, everyone wears casual clothes. More towards the casual than towards formal. Yes, there are colleagues who always wear a suit, because they like that, it's their style. Everyone can do whatever they want. And that distinguishes us from all the other departments at Delta, because they are still somewhat formal."* (Delta)	1. Personal values	Includes references to personal values that the millennial finds important to see reflected in his/her work.
Impact	Wants to make impact on society	Bravo Delta India Kilo	*"It is also necessary for me because I don't like talking to people about wild ideas for a long time. I just think it is much more important to have an idea and to put it into practice as quickly as possible.*" (Kilo)		
Team	Wants to work together	Bravo Delta India Papa	+ "*If I would leave Papa, then I think it's important that my follow-up challenge does have an environment where people are taken into account. Where people can lean on each other*." (Papa) - *"That* [work individually] *would, for example, be something that I don't really support and why I never choose to work there. So, I would either leave the organization or stay at the background. Or I would secretly try to form teams. Set up shadow practices to work in teams, ha-ha."* (Delta)		
Clarity	Strong corporate identity gives clarity through rules and behaviour expectations	India Tango	*"Uh yeah those pillars you have to integrate them into work. And everybody's doing the same. So, there's no real surprise and let's say a bad surprise."* (Tango)		

Misalignment	Values do not match	Bravo	"*Then it was less. I think that is one of the reasons why I left* [Delta] *when I think about it now. In addition,* [I felt] *just less motivated to fully commit myself, if you feel a kind of mismatch. I didn't realize it then, but I don't think I got the most out of myself at Delta. I underperformed and was just not as enthusiastic as it seems to have happened here.*" (Delta)		
Network	Being part of the corporate identity helps you to develop your professional network	Delta Papa	*"(…) the experience you gain, all the people you get to know. The amount of companies you see."* (Papa)	2. Extended identity	Includes references to side effect that are related to the existing image of the organization
Status	Being part of the corporate identity gives status to the work you deliver	Bravo	*'I do notice, I don't know why, but I am happy with the status that the company has. Yes, that just gives me a nice feeling somehow. I'm not sure why. I also notice it makes it easier to do my job when I'm at the client'.* (Bravo)		
Financial	The organization provide millennials of financial 'perks' such as lease car, study is paid for etc.	Delta Papa	"*I also like, for example, that we get lease cars here, that is a bonus. In addition, I also think that certain secondary employment conditions, I like that very much as you can declare lunch, internet costs, things like that. But that is rather a plus than a must. It is nice to earn enough in any case. But you also have to do it for the other things, so the study is paid for, you will have a car."* (Papa)		
Training	The corporate trainings are perks that are experienced as positive	Bravo India Papa	*"There is also a difference because with Papa, you also choose to gain a certain experience, a certain knowledge. For me that also weighs more than wages."* (Papa)		
Fraud	Being part of the corporate identity which is associated with fraud gives struggle	India	*The news about the bonusses and fraud, those are simply all difficult things that you cannot just love, say, I experience still a bit of a struggle.*' (India)		

Appendix F
Audit-trail Scheme

Audit trail Components		Quality		
		Visibility *Are decisions explicated and communicated?*	**Comprehensibility** *Are these decisions substantiated?*	**Acceptability** *Are these substantiated decisions acceptable according to the standards, norms, values in the research domain?*
Data gathering	Planned	6 case studies with semi-structured interviews, observation of the website, office space and meeting room.	Both the frameworks for interview and observation are based on literature, checked by an expert and a pilot is conducted	Data-triangulation used with multiple sources and based on theory; Expert interview; Pilot. De organizations are purposefully selected and checked through the website on presence of corporate identity.
	Realized	6 millennials were purposefully selected, website was checked for ‘corporate identity’. Could increase transparency about sample selection (in logbook)	Yes, the interview theoretical topics were visible in the transcripts. The theoretical concepts were visible in the filled in observation forms. And a description is included about the changes made after the expert-interview and pilot.	Data sources are based on theory and checked by an expert and pilot. The quality of the instruments is acceptable. The case-selection is appropriate for the research design and therefore acceptable.
Data analysis	Planned	4 phases of coding, started with deductive coding, then open coding, axial and selective.	The concepts from the theoretical framework are analysed + an open coding phase to explore new concepts.	Clear description of the qualitative data analysis.
	Realized	Clear description of the phases, explained in a table and supporting text Also the final coding-schemes are included with examples from the data in appendices. Did not include examples of codes in open coding phase, or after axial coding of main categories.	Yes, the coding schemes include examples of the data and a reference to the theoretical constructs. By doing this data could be traced back to both the used codes and the theoretical constructs. Besides that, the second framework (in appendix) includes the new explored concepts and final two themes.	The analysis and audit trail (e.g. transcripts, coding schemes, logbook) gave transparency about research process.

Appendix G
FETC-Form

APPLICATION FORM FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF A RESEARCH PROTOCOL BY THE FACULTY ETHICS REVIEW BOARD (FERB) OF THE FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES

General guidelines for the use of this form

1. This form can be used for a single research project or a series of related studies (hereinafter referred to as: "research programme"). Researchers are encouraged to apply for the assessment of a research programme if their proposal covers multiple studies with related content, identical procedures (methods and instruments) and contains informed consent forms and participant information, with a similar population. For studies by students, the FERB recommends submitting, in advance, a research programme under which protocol multiple student projects can be conducted so that their execution will not be delayed by the review procedure. The application of such a research programme must include a proper description by the researcher(s) of the programme as a whole in terms of the maximum burden on the participants (e.g. maximum duration, strain/efforts, types of stimuli, strength and frequency, etc.). If it is impossible to describe all the studies within the research programme, it should, in any case, include a description of the most invasive study known so far.
2. Solely the first responsible senior researcher(s) (from post-doctoral level onwards) may submit a protocol.
3. Any approval by the FERB is valid for 5 years or until the information to be provided in the application form below is modified to such an extent that the study becomes more invasive. For a research programme, the term of validity is 2 years and any extension is subject to approval. The researcher(s) and staff below commit themselves to treating the participants in accordance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki and the Dutch Code of Conduct for Scientific Practices as determined by the VSNU Association of Universities in the Netherlands (which can both be downloaded from the FERB site on the Intranet[3]) and guarantee that the participants (whether decisionally competent or incompetent and/or in a dependent relationship vis-a-vis the researcher or not) may at all times terminate their participation without any further consequences.
4. The researcher(s) commit themselves to maximising the quality of the study, the statistical analysis and the reports, and to respect the specific regulations and legislation pertaining to the specific methods.
5. The procedure will run more smoothly if the FERB receives all the relevant documents, such as questionnaires and other measurement instruments as well as literature and other sources on studies using similar methods which were found to be ethically acceptable and that testify to the fact that this procedure has no harmful consequences. Examples of studies where the latter will always be an issue are studies into bullying behaviour, sexuality, and parent-child relationships. The FERB asks the researcher(s) to be as specific as possible when they answer the relevant questions while limiting their answers to 500 words maximum per question. It is helpful to the FERB if the answers are brief and to the point.
6. **Our FAQ document that can be accessed through the Intranet provides background information with regards to any questions.**
7. The researcher(s) declare to have described the study truthfully and with a particular focus on its ethical aspects.

Signed for approval[4]:
Date:

[3] See: https://intranet.uu.nl/facultaire-ethische-toetsingscommissie-fetc
[4] The senior researcher (holding at least a doctoral degree) should sign here.

A. GENERAL INFORMATION/PERSONAL DETAILS

1.

a. a. Name(s), position(s) and department(s) of the responsible researcher(s):
Riet (M.G.) Smits, Master student Educational Sciences, Faculty of Social sciences

b. Name(s), position(s) and department(s) of the executive researcher(s):
-

2. Title of the study or research programme - Does it concern a single study or a research programme? Does it concern a study for the final thesis in a bachelor's or master's degree course?:

Final thesis master's degree course of Educational Sciences

A Cross-case Study: The Organizational Identification of Millennials in Strong Identity Organizations

3. Type of study (with a brief rationale):

- otherwise: A cross-case study design with six purposefully selected millennials was conducted involving semi-structured interviews and observations of the organization’s website, the meeting room and the office space. Due a within- and cross-case analysis an explorative research is conducted about when millennials identify with corporate identity and what role identity regulation attempts play in the organizational identification of millennials.

4. Grant provider:

No

5. Intended start and end date for the study:

Start: February. End: June.

6. Research area/discipline:

Educational Sciences

7. For some (larger) projects it is advisable to appoint an independent contact or expert whom participants can contact in case of questions and/or complaints. Has an independent expert been appointed for this study?[5]:

No

8. Does the study concern a multi-centre project, e.g. in collaboration with other universities, a GGZ mental health care institution, a university medical centre? Where exactly will the study be conducted? By which institute(s) are the executive researcher(s) employed?:

No.

9. Is the study related to a prior research project that has been assessed by a recognised Medical Ethics Review Board (MERB) or FERB? If so, which? Please state the file number: -

No.

[5] This contact may, in principle, also be a researcher (within the same department, or not) who is able to respond to the question or complaint in detail. Independent is to say: not involved in the study themselves. The FERB upholds that an independent contact is not obligatory, but will be necessary when the study is more invasive.

B. SUMMARY OF THE BACKGROUND AND METHODS

Background

1. What is the study's theoretical and practical relevance? (500 words max.):

    The experiences in the early years at work are mostly remembered as the critical and formative years for identity construction, therefore it can be assumed that this organizational interference has large influence on the process of identity construction of millennials (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016; Ibarra, 1999; Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006; Van Rijswijk, Akkerman, Schaap, & Van Tartwijk, 2016). While corporate identities and their style towards employees varies (Brickson, 2005), the expectation is that the strength of the corporate identity and presence of identity regulation attempts towards millennials influence their process of organizational identification (Anteby & Wrzesniewski, 2014). This means that corporate identity and corresponding identity regulation attempts are more likely to contribute organizational identification when these are aligned with the employee (Hatch & Schultz, 2002), but currently little is known about how millennials react to both the corporate identity and corresponding identity regulation attempts. Hence, exploring when millennials identify with a strong identity organization is a first step in identifying how millennials can assess whether or not they fit into a strong identity organization. In addition, it can offer organizations the opportunity to improve alignment with corporate identity and millennials so that they can prepare themselves for the generation of employees that is currently entering the labour market. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to explore when millennials identify with a strong identity organization. Besides that, this research is concerned with the role of identity regulation attempts in the organizational identification of millennials.

2. What is the study's objective/central question?:

    When do millennials identify with a strong identity organization and what role does identity regulation play?

3. What are the hypothesis/hypotheses and expectation(s)?:

    Given the exploratory design of the research, expectations are difficult to formulate. The expectation is that different processes will emerge, why individuals do or do not adapt the identity regulation of organizations

Design/procedure/invasiveness

4. What is the study's design and procedure? (500 words max.):

    A cross-case study design was conducted involving semi-structured interviews and observations of the organization's website, the meeting room and the office space.
    This research design enabled a within-case analysis of the unique phenomena regarding the millennial in the context of a strong identity organization and a cross-case analysis to examine similarities and differences between cases (Yin, 2009). This approach was chosen to consider both the human experiences of the millennial and the contextual factors of a strong identity organization. The observations, using data triangulation, provided additional insight into the perceptions of millennials (Boeije, 2009; Yin, 2009).

5.

a. Which measurement instruments, stimuli and/or manipulations will be used?[6]:
This cross-case study involves the following four data sources: a semi-structured interview and observations of the organization's website, a meeting room and the office space (Table I).

Table I

Data sources and their purpose

Instrument	Data source	Focus
Structured observation sheet I	The 'about' page on the organization's website	The corporate identity, including employee and organization characteristics, as externally communicated
Structured observation sheet II	An external meeting room	The corporate identity as both internally as externally communicated and the physically present identity regulation attempts
Structured observation sheet III	The office space	The corporate identity as internally communicated and the physically present identity regulation attempts
Topic-list and corresponding questions	Semi-structured interview	Explore the experiences of both the identity regulation attempts, the level of organizational identification and the negotiation of between the personal and corporate identity

b. What does the study's burden on the participants comprise in terms of time, frequency and strain/efforts?:
Semi-structured interview, website observation and observation of office space and an external meeting room, which takes a total effort of 1hour.
c. Will the participants be subjected to interventions or a certain manner of conduct that cannot be considered as part of a normal lifestyle?:
No
d. Will unobtrusive methods be used (e.g. data collection of uninformed subjects by means of observations or video recordings)?:
No
e. Will the study involve any deception? If so, will there be an adequate debriefing and will the deception hold any potential risks?:
No

[6] Examples: invasive questionnaires; interviews; physical/psychological examination, inducing stress, pressure to overstep important standards and values; inducing false memories; exposure to aversive materials like a unpleasant film, video clip, photos or electrical stimulus; long-term of very frequent questioning; ambulatory measurements, participation in an intervention, evoking unpleasant psychological or physical symptoms in an experiment, denial, diet, blood sampling, fMRI, TMS, ECG, administering stimuli, showing pictures, etc. In case of the use of a device (apparatus) or administration of a substance, please enclose the CE marking brochure for the relevant apparatus or substance, if possible.

6. Will the participants be tested beforehand as to their health condition or according to certain disorders? Are there any inclusion and/or exclusion criteria or specific conditions to be met in order for a participant to take part in this study?:

No

7. Risks for the participants -

a. Which risks does the study hold for its participants?: None
b. To what extent are the risks and objections limited? Are the risks run by the participants similar to those in daily life?: None

8. How does the burden on the participants compare to the study's potential scientific contribution (theory formation, practical usability)?:

The time invested by the participants in the interview (60-90 minutes) outweighs potential insights

9. Will a method be used that may, by coincidence, lead to a finding of which the participant should be informed?[7] If so, what actions will be taken in the case of a coincidental finding?:

No

Analysis/power

10. How will the researchers analyse the data? Which statistical analyses will be used?:

Directed content analysis was used, which has the advantages of a systematic approach, but also offers the possibility of discovering new themes (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). The purpose of this analysis is to identify themes that have explanatory power both within individual cases and across the sample (Ayres, Kavanaugh, & Knafl, 1996). Table II includes all steps for both the within and cross-case analysis. The length of the coded statements differed, as meaningful units were selected from the transcriptions (Boeije, 2009).

Table II

Strategies and steps within- and cross-case analysis

Strategy	Analytic focus	Result
	Phase 1	
1. Analytical immersion	Within each case	Development of a sense of the experiences of the millennial in the context of the strong identity organization
2. Coding process using predetermined codes	Within each case	First sense of the corporate identity, identity regulation attempts and extent of identification in each case
	Phase 2	

[7] For instance: dementia, dyslexia, giftedness, depression, extremely low heartbeat in an ECG, etc. If coincidental findings may be found, this should be included in the informed consent, including a description of the actions that will be taken in such an event.

3. Iterative process of open coding	Within all cases	Segmentation of the transcriptions into meaningful expressions, by describing, naming or classifying statements with single words or short sequence of words
4. Iterative process of axial coding	Within and across cases	Development of main categories by relating codes to each other
5. Comparing the observations with the main categories	Within and across cases	Further development of the sense of the experiences of the millennial in the context of the strong identity organization by focussing on code occurrence and code connection
6. Iterative process of selective coding	Across cases	Previously identified main categories were develop into two themes

During the first phase, three theory-driven categories with 11 predetermined codes were used. Phase 1 started with analytical immersion by reading and reading the observations and interviews. To complete further analysis, the predetermined codes were used to code all transcripts.

The coding process was continued in the next phase, by extending it with open codes. First, each transcript was coded in an iterative process of open coding. If new codes were identified, earlier cases were revisited to check whether these codes were also present. Next, using an axial coding approach, similar codes were grouped into main concept within and across cases (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). After that, the observations were compared with the main concepts to develop further insight in the connection between the codes. Finally, with constant comparison across cases, two themes were identified.

11. What is the number of participants? Provide a power analysis and/or motivation for the number of participants. The current convention is a power of 0.80. If the study deviates from this power, the FERB would like you to justify why this is necessary:

Creswell (2002) has recommended to examine three to five cases in a case study. This research contains six cases. The participants were five Dutch and one English-speaking millennial and were purposefully selected.

C. PARTICIPANTS, RECRUITMENT AND INFORMED CONSENT PROCEDURE

1. The nature of the research population (please tick):

1. General population without complaints/symptoms

~~2. General population with complaints/symptoms~~

~~3. Patients or population with a diagnosis (please state the diagnosis)~~

2. Age category of the participants (please tick):

- 18 years or older
- ~~16-17 years~~
- ~~13-15 years~~
- ~~12 years or younger~~

3. Does the study require a specific target group? If so, justify why the study cannot be conducted without the participation of this group (e.g. minors):

   All millennials had to be between 20 to 35 years old (McDonald, 2015) and have a (near)full-time job for at least one year to be sure they had experienced a certain amount of identity regulation. Besides that, the organization's website was checked to see if there was a description of the corporate identity.

4. Recruitment of participants -

   a. How will the participants be recruited?:
      A purposive sample is used, whereby the participants are selected on the basis of above stated criteria.

   b. How much time will the prospective participants have to decide as to whether they will indeed participate in the study?
      One week:

5. Does the study involve informed consent or mutual consent? Clarify the design of the consent procedure (who gives permission, when and how). Does the study involve active consent or passive consent? If no informed consent will be sought, please clarify the reason:

   Each participant is presented with an informed consent form to ensure confidentiality and to gain permission for recording the interview

6. Are the participants fully free to participate and terminate their participation whenever they want and without stating their grounds for doing so?:

   Yes

7. Will the participants be in a dependent relationship with the researcher?:

   No

8. Compensation

   a. Will the participants be compensated for their efforts? If so, what is included in this recompense (financial reimbursement, travelling expenses, otherwise). What is the amount?
      No
   b. Will this compensation depend on certain conditions, such as the completion of the study?
      No

D. PRIVACY AND INFORMATION

1.

a. Will the study adhere to the requirements for anonymity and privacy, as referred to in the Faculty Protocol for Data Storage[8]?:
   - anonymous processing and confidential storage of data (i.e. storage of raw data separate from identifiable data): yes~~/no~~
   - the participants' rights to inspect their own data: yes~~/no~~
   - access to the data for all the researchers involved in the project: yes~~/no~~

If not, please clarify.

b. Has a Data Management Plan been designed?
   Yes, with regard to the guidelines of the master's thesis, all research data has to be placed on the server. The guidelines from the master's thesis on this are followed.

2.

a. Will the participant be offered the opportunity to receive the results (whether or not at the group level)?: Yes

b. Will the results of the study be fed back to persons other than the participants (e.g. teachers, parents)?: No
   If so, will this feedback be provided at the group or at the individual level?

3.

a. Will the data be stored on the faculty's data server?: yes~~/no~~

b. Will the data that can be traced back to the individual be stored separately on the other faculty server available for this specific purpose? Yes
   If not, please clarify where will the data be stored instead?:

[8] This can be found on the Intranet: https://intranet.uu.nl/wetenschappelijke-integriteit-facultair-protocol-dataopslag

E. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Optional.

F. FORMS TO BE ENCLOSED (CHECKLIST)

- Text (advert) for the recruitment of participants
- Information letter for participant
- Informed consent form for participants
- Written or oral feedback information (debriefing text)
- (Descriptions of) questionnaires
- (Descriptions of) measurement instruments/stimuli/manipulations
- Literature/references

Signature(s):[9] Date and place:

Name, position:

[9] The senior researcher (holding at least a doctoral degree) should sign here.

Op dit moment ben ik bezig met mijn masterthesis waarbij ik mij richt op medewerkers in bedrijven met een herkenbare corporate identiteit. Als toekomstig Learning & Development consultant vind ik het namelijk erg interessant hoe werknemers samen het bedrijf representeren. Ik ben erg benieuwd hoe jij dit ervaart en ik zou daarom graag om een uur van je tijd willen vragen.
Het uur bestaat uit een interview (30/40 min) waarbij ik vragen wil stellen over hoe jij als werknemer deze corporate identiteit ervaart. Om een beter beeld te krijgen van het bedrijf wil ik je daarnaast vragen om een korte rondleiding langs je (flex)werkplek en een ruimte waar gasten ontvangen worden.
Alle data wordt geanonimiseerd waarbij je niet te herleiden bent. Wat ik wel opneem bij de casus is een generieke beschrijving van het bedrijf met daarin de sector, beschrijving van de core business en een indicatie van de omvang waarbij ik werk met categorieën.
Mocht je het interessant vinden kan ik je eind juni (een samenvatting van) mijn thesis sturen.
Ik hoor graag van je of je bereid bent om mee deel te nemen aan mijn thesisonderzoek.
Met enthousiaste groet,
Riet
06-1010 7625
Riet.smits@live.nl
https://www.linkedin.com/in/riet-smits-45050314b/

Utrecht University

Research: development of employees in a company with a recognizable corporate identity

During the interview (30/40 min) questions are asked about how you, as an employee, experience the values of the company.
All information in this study will be made anonymous and will only be used in ways that will not traceable to the individual. In the case study I will include a generic description of the company, which entails the sector, description of the core business and an indication of the size (shown in ranges).
Your participation is completely confidential.
A sound recording of the interview will be made which will assist with accurately documenting your responses. You have the right to refuse this audio recording. Recordings and the data will only be used for the purpose of this specific research.

Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

Name: ………………………………………

Place: ……………………………………… Date: ………………………………………

Signature participant: Researcher: Riet Smits

Observation Schemes for Website, Meeting rooms and Office space

I Website		
Theoretical themes	Construct	Data
a. Corporate Identity *(Albert & Whetten, 1985; Alvesson & Empson, 2008; Dutton et al., 1994; Gioia, 1998; Grant & Hardy, 2004; Hall, 2001)*	Central attributes Distinctive	

II External meeting room		
Theoretical themes	Construct	Data
a. Corporate Identity *(Albert & Whetten, 1985; Alvesson & Empson, 2008; Gioia, 1998; Grant & Hardy, 2004; Hall, 2001)*	Central attributes	
b. Identity regulation *(Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Anteby & Wrzesniewski, 2014; Ashfort & Mael, 1989; van Riel & Balmer, 1997)*	Action orientations Membership	

III Office space		
Theoretical themes	Construct	Data
a. Corporate Identity *(Albert & Whetten, 1985; Alvesson & Empson, 2008; Gioia, 1998; Grant & Hardy, 2004; Hall, 2001)*	Central attributes	
b. Identity regulation *(Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Anteby & Wrzesniewski, 2014; Ashfort & Mael, 1989; van Riel & Balmer, 1997)*	Action orientations Membership	

Topic List Interview

Thanks again for participating in this interview.
The interview takes 30/40 minutes.
As stated in the informed consent, I will record the interview so I can make a transcription.
The first part of the interview will be centred upon getting a better understanding of your drivers as a person and as an employee. In the second part we'll dive deeper into the set-up and way of work of the company
Before starting, I would like to have the following information:

- Age:
- Number of years working in this company:
- Completed education: University of applied sciences / University bachelor / master

Do you have any questions before we start? * Start recording *

Concept 1: Personal questions for the millennial
Person / qualities • Can you tell me something about yourself? • And if you were to introduce yourself in a job interview what qualities would you mention? Current position • What does your current position entail? • What is typical for your function? What are the attitude / qualities / working method that are most valued? • If you would apply again to your current job, what qualities or aspects would you mention with the knowledge you have now?
Concept 2: Company questions
Distinguishing company characteristics • Can you give a description of [company]? • What makes this company different from other companies? • If I visit [company] as a client, what are typical things that I will notice? Behaviour of employees, working methods... • What are the company values that characterize [company] • To summarize... these are ... the typical characteristics. What can be propagated more or less to your opinion? • How did these characteristics and values became clear to you when you started working here? Did you go through an onboarding program? Current internal communication • Are most employees aware of the company's core values? • How are these values communicated? How often? (Manager behaviour, in-house magazines, mail, videos, quotes, stories, training) • What do you see when you look at your colleagues? How do they propagate the company's values? Example? Are there differences between colleagues?

• And you? How do you deal with this? How important do you think it is to fit in with this? Relationship of own values "In summary, these are ... the values that you mentioned earlier." • I notice differences between this personal value you referred to and the corporate value. How do you handle this? •And to what extent do you think it is important that these connect together? • If you couldn't agree with it, how would that influence you at your work?
Concept 3: Level of identification “We mainly talked about internal communication and the relationship with you as an employee. Now I want ask questions about the external image of the company” • How important is work to you? If you relate to other aspects of your life? • Is the external image of the company important to you? • What is one of the most recent events within the company that you are proud of? • What are the successes that [company] has recently achieved? Does this feel like a personal success to you? • If someone publicly praises the company in the media, does this feel like a personal compliment to you? • And if someone publicly expresses a negative opinion about [company] Do you take offense? • What we talked about today, do you notice differences between generations?

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