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Will They Stay or Will They Go?

The role of HR practices for the creation of
voluntary employee turnover

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The Role of HR Practices for the Creation of Voluntary Employee Turnover

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Abstract

Voluntary employee turnover is an issue that has received extensive attention among top management and human resource professionals. As a response to this problem, organizations develop various HR practices that aim to enhance the retention attitudes among employees. In particular, retaining employees is argued to be crucial within the management consulting sector, which is a knowledge-intensive industry. Although, a gap has been found in previous research, concerning the investigation of the issue of voluntary employee turnover despite the presence of HR practices. Furthermore, there is a lack of research within the field of voluntary employee turnover that investigates this process in practice. The purpose of this study has been to investigate the role of HR practices for the creation of voluntary employee turnover within a management consulting firm. This article is based on a case study conducted at a business area within a Swedish management consulting firm that experiences a high level of voluntary employee turnover, despite the use of HR practices. The result indicates that HR practices, through their use in practice, not only are the solution but could also be a contributing cause to the creation of voluntary employee turnover, due to both an including and excluding character.

Keywords

Voluntary Employee Turnover, HR Practices, Knowledge-Intensive firm, Actor-Network Theory, Process of Translation

Introduction

Employee turnover is expressed as the rotation of workers around the labor market by movements between organizations, jobs and occupations or between the different states of employment respectively unemployment (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000). The rates of employee turnover vary between and within organizations as well as industries, but the highest levels are found within the private sector (Shamsuzzoha & Shumon, 2007). Disregarding its form, employee turnover is argued to be destructive for any organization. This since it is proven to be a significant cause for declining productivity, as well as decreased morale and stability within an organization (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000; Griffeth & Hom, 1995; Shamsuzzoha & Shumon, 2007). Turnover of employ-

ees within organizations could be explained as either initiated from the management's perspective in the form of conscious employee reduction, or it could also be in the form of employees deciding to leave their employer voluntarily. The latter is described as voluntary employee turnover and is considered to be both a challenging and costly problem that all organizations are experiencing today, as a part of the everyday business. (Bernstein, 1998; Phillips, 1990; Pinkovitz et al., 1997; Shamsuzzoha & Shumon, 2007). The total costs for employee turnover consist of costs for replacement, including costs for administration concerning termination, vacancy coverage, recruitment processes and training of new employees (Mitchell et al., 2001; Phillips, 1990; Reingold & McNatt, 1999). In addition to these direct costs, there are also less quantifiable costs that could emerge. For example, losses in valuable knowledge, interruptions in operational productivity or disruption of established customer relationships (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000; Griffeth & Hom, 1995; Mitchell et al., 2001; Shamsuzzoha & Shumon, 2007).

The issue of voluntary employee turnover has received extensive attention among top management and human resource professionals (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000). Attempts have been made in previous research to distinguish reasons for why employees decide to leave their employer voluntarily. Many factors have been found that aim to explain why employees decide to leave their employer voluntarily. These reasons could either have a push or pull character, or are related to changes in employees' personal preferences. Two factors for voluntary employee turnover that have been most emphasized in previous research of industries with high voluntary employee turnover levels are: dissatisfactions with the workplace and offers of new job opportunities from other employers. These factors could push or pull the employees to leave their current employer (Campion, 1991; Carsten & Spector, 1987; Griffeth et al., 2000; Hall & Moss, 1999; Harman et al. 2007; Mitchell et al., 2001; Mobley; 1977; Mobley et al., 1978). Previous research also states that the occurrence of voluntary employee turnover should be investigated through a process-based perspective, meaning that there are several stages between the employee's initial feeling of dissatisfaction and the definitive action of leaving the employer (Griffeth et al., 2000; Mobley; 1977; Mobley et al., 1978).

In order to handle the issue of voluntary employee turnover, organizations develop various Human Resource practices (hereby referred to as HR practices) that aim to enhance employees' retention attitudes, which in turn reduce the level of voluntary employee turnover (Cappelli, 2001; Mitchell et al. 2001; Steel et al. 2002). HR practices, as a part of Human Resource Management, aim to align the interests of employees with the company's strategic needs, which often is stated within the company's mission and vision (Huselid, 1995; Schuler, 1992). HR practices either intend to improve employees' skills and development or to motivate the employees (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000; De Vos & Meganck, 2008; Huselid, 1995; Jones & Wright, 1992). Traditionally, HR practices in the form of monetary rewards and pay systems were argued to enhance retention attitudes among employees. However, later research indicates that these monetary practices alone are neither cost-effective nor motivational for employees (Cappelli, 2001; Despres & Hiltrop, 1995). Other activities and practices that later have been discussed to enhance employees' retention attitudes are: comprehensive recruitment procedures, training and development programs, different types of job enrichment initiatives, career opportunities and performance management systems in the form of performance appraisals (Alvesson, 2000; Alvesson & Robertson, 2006; Cappelli, 2001; Hislop, 2003; Horwitz et al., 2003; Hsu et al., 2003; Huselid, 1995; Jones & Wright, 1992; Kärreman & Rylander, 2008).

Retaining employees is of particularly high significance within the management consulting sector, which is an example of a knowledge-intensive industry (Swart & Kinnie, 2003). Thus, employees in these firms are perceived as intellectual capital and the companies' most valuable as well as critical resources (Alvesson, 2000; Sarvary, 1999; Sturdy et al., 2009). An employee within a management consulting firm can easily find work opportunities elsewhere. It is therefore suggested that employees within these firms could be perceived as volunteers, which is based on the idea that they stay with their current employer not because they cannot find job opportunities elsewhere but due to their choice and commitment to stay (Ulrich, 1998). Furthermore, the issue of voluntary employee turnover is more amplified within this industry because management consulting firms risk losing knowledgeable and talented employees if they cannot manage to retain their employees. Moreover, management consulting firms risk attaining a decrease in their client base, since leaving consultants tend to take their clients with them (Alvesson, 2000). Within knowledge-intensive firms, as a management consulting firm, employees are considered to be motivated to remain with their employer if there are intrinsic career opportunities in place. For example, employees working in these types of environments prefer possibilities that enable professional recognition. These employees enjoy working in challenging areas and request to work in environments that enable them to accomplish self-satisfaction (Despres & Hiltrop, 1995; Lank, 1997). Consequently, HR practices are meant to be used as a mean to accomplish these interests within these types of firms (Wood et al, 1998).

Despite the belief in and use of HR practices, as a solution to the issue of voluntary employee turnover, the management consulting sector still faces high voluntary employee turnover. Reports show that the average turnover level within a management consulting firm is between 15 to 20 percent per year. This means that the average employment time is approximately five to six years (Batchelor, 2011). Over the years, many attempts have been made to approach the field of voluntary employee turnover. As mentioned, in previous studies there is a strong belief that the use of HR practices is an effective solution to the issue of voluntary employee turnover. However, there is an identified gap in previous research concerning the investigation of the issue of voluntary employee turnover in organizations, despite the presence of HR practices. Furthermore, even though previous research expresses that the phenomenon of voluntary employee turnover should be perceived as a process, there is a lack of research investigating how the occurrence of voluntary turnover unfolds in practice from a process-based perspective. Based on this discussion, the purpose of this study has been to investigate the role of HR practices for the creation of voluntary employee turnover within a management consulting firm. The purpose has been reached by answering these two research questions, which constitute the base of this study. 1) How does the occurrence of voluntary employee turnover unfold in practice within a management consulting firm? 2) How can a management consulting firm experience difficulties with retaining their employees despite the presence of HR practices?

To answer the questions at hand and achieve the purpose of this study, we have conducted a case study at a business area within a Swedish management consulting firm that experiences a high level of voluntary employee turnover despite the fact that they use HR practices. To investigate the issue of voluntary employee turnover in practice within this business area it is relevant to understand the occurrence of this phenomenon from a process-based perspective. As stated, voluntary employee turnover is a phenomenon that occurs at all organizations today and it is almost taken for granted, as part of the everyday business. Therefore, we argue that voluntary employee

turnover emerges within the ongoing process of organizations' daily operations. This ongoing process of the business area's daily operation, in which voluntary employee turnover emerges, is in this article studied from an Actor-Network Theory (hereby referred to as ANT) perspective, and in particular Callon's (1986) process of translation in combination with Galis and Lee's (2014) process of treason. The process of translation, in combination with the simultaneous process of treason, enables a decomposition of the ongoing process, in which interrelations of significant actors involved and the impact of the identified HR practice performance appraisals could be explored. Studying voluntary employee turnover using an ANT approach has helped us to illustrate how this phenomenon could be a result of an ongoing process. This is in contrast to previous normative studies of voluntary employee turnover, in which they attempt to explain this phenomenon as an outcome within organizations. Furthermore, having an ANT approach enables studying the use of the HR practice performance appraisals in situ and further its role for the creation of voluntary employee turnover. The result of this study reveals that HR practices, through their use in practice, could be both a solution as well as a contributing cause to the issue of voluntary employee turnover, due to the incorporation of both an including and excluding character. This adds to previous normative studies of HR practices that foremost have tried to identify a "best practice" or "best fit" of HR practices, which are to be used as universal solutions for similar experienced problems in all organizations (Vickers & Fox, 2010).

This article firstly provides a theoretical framework describing relevant concepts from process-based theories, with ANT and especially Callon's (1986) process of translation in combination with Galis and Lee's (2014) process of treason, as the main framework in use. Secondly, an explanation of the methodology used to conduct this study will be provided, in which the process of collecting and analyzing the material for this study will be presented. Thirdly, a case description and the empirical findings of this case study, based on the perceptions of managers and employees interviewed, will be given. Fourthly, a discussion will be presented where the empirical material is analyzed and discussed in the light of the concepts presented in the theoretical framework. In this section, the ongoing process of the business area's daily operation in which voluntary employee turnover emerges will be outlined. Lastly, the conclusions and managerial implications of this study will be given.

Actor-Network Theory

In this case, ANT is used as a framework to understand the interpretations of different actors within a certain situation (Latour, 1999). Within organizational studies, ANT is used as a process-based perspective, meaning that it does not aim to explain an outcome but rather the process leading up to a result (Hernes, 2010). Subsequently, this mindset is suitable for this study where the purpose has been to investigate the role of HR practices for the creation of voluntary employee turnover within a management consulting firm. This by studying the ongoing process of the business area's daily operation, in which voluntary employee turnover emerges. As mentioned, we have viewed the phenomenon of voluntary employee turnover as a result of a process rather than an outcome. The main idea of ANT is that the world consists of heterogeneous networks of actors (Law, 1992), whereas these networks are created by numerous of actants (Callon & Law, 1982; Law, 1992). These actants are further connected, turned or translated into actors if playing significant roles within their context. Consequently, actor-networks are composed by a number of translation processes. (Callon 1986; Callon & Law, 1982; Czarniawska & Hernes, 2005).

Process of Translation

Translation is a key concept within ANT, which describes the processes through how different actors are related to one another (Latour, 1986; 1987). Translation means that ideas are translated in a specific context influenced by actors with specific interests, which indicates that ideas can be interpreted and translated differently depending on the actors' personal characteristics and situational affections (Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996).

Through the process of translation the focal actor, who has the active support from the other actors involved in the network are able to enroll these other actors to act in accordance to their interests. This by persuading them to believe that these actions are in line with their own interests (Callon, 1980; 1986; Callon & Law, 1982; Latour, 2005). The process of translation allows for analysis of how a process unfolds in practice within a specific context, without any preconceptions of fixed roles, identities and interests of actors (Callon, 1986). In the process of translation, identities are under constant development and re-development since actors interact with each other. Thus, these actors are able to shape other actors as well as they are being shaped by others (Callon & Law, 1997). However, when there are no more negotiations between the actors, a type of wall is created around the network. This wall will bind the ideas and practices to become black boxed. A black box is described as when the network has a set of inputs and outputs that are taken for granted by all the actors within the network (Latour, 1987; 2005). Translation processes enable an opening up of black boxes in order to obtain an understanding of how ideas and interests are being translated (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996).

Callon's (1986) process of translation consists of four continuous non-sequential phases, called the four moments of translation. These are: problematization, intersement, enrolment and mobilization. Within the moment of problematization the different actors involved in the process are being identified and the focal actor is defining the problem, which should be acknowledged by all the actors in the network. The focal actor intends to solve the problem by assigning interests and identities to the other actors. These interests and identities represent the ideal images that the focal actor wants the other actors to be enrolled into and further act upon. In the moment of problematization it is also suggested that the problem will be solved if the actors pass through the "obligatory passage point". The purpose of the obligatory passage point is to make the focal actor indispensable and it can be described as being the point that needs to occur in order for the actors' interests to converge. Actors who do not pass through the obligatory passage point cannot be enrolled or mobilized into the network, since they will not accept their assigned interests as being of their own and thereby neither act upon them. The moment of intersement incorporates practices that are in motion as attempts by which the actors sought to be convinced and locked into their proposed interests and identities, as being parts of their own interests and further they will act upon them. However, in order for the intersement devices to be effective they need to be a reflection of the interests defined in the problematization. The aim of the moment of enrolment is to enroll the actors through negotiations, in order to make them attached to the intersement devices. In order to achieve a successful enrolment, the focal actor needs to be able to redefine the other actors' needs and interest. Thereby, a successful intersement is needed to accomplish this (Callon & Law, 1982). Lastly, the moment of mobilization is described as being achieved when the focal actor has managed to stabilize the network. At this point, it will be en-

sured that the actors act as allied spokesmen and in accordance to the set ideal image, and by that do not betray their assigned interests. (Callon, 1986)

Consequently, a successful translation process is argued to be accomplished when certain entities control others (Callon, 1986). On the other hand, if the process of translation fails and the actors do not accept their assigned interests and identities, the actors will neither become enrolled or mobilized. These actors will betray the process and become dissidents (Callon, 1986). Furthermore, translation processes are argued to be ongoing, with no clear beginning or end (Czwiarniaska & Pipan, 2010). Therefore, difficulties can occur in processes, as it is not easy for an idea to be successfully translated when there are many different actors present. Thus, there will be a situation in which it is difficult for the focal actor to control the actions of others (Kjellberg, 2001; Latour, 1987).

Process of Treason

Critical voices have been raised towards ANT, which state that the framework is not comprehensive enough when studying organizations. This due to that it foremost embraces successful translation processes, resulting in achieved enrolment and mobilization of all actors (Gad & Jensen, 2010; Whittle & Spicer, 2008). Thereby, the translation process excludes the interests and process of those actors who are not being enrolled nor mobilized, i.e. the dissidents (Gad & Jensen, 2010; Galis & Lee, 2014). It has been argued that ANT should be used in a more focused and flexible way and an expansion of the scope of the translation process and its four moments has been suggested (Gad & Jensen, 2010; Whittle & Spicer, 2008). The idea of expanding the translation process has further been developed by Galis and Lee (2014) who argue that Callon's (1986) process of translation should be understood in relation to a simultaneous process of treason. In comparison to Callon's (1986) process of translation, the process of treason focuses on the excluded actors, i.e. "the invisible others", who are perceived as the powerless actors who have failed to become parts of the ideal image that the focal actor has envisioned. This additional process adds a contrasting vocabulary to Callon's (1986) process of translation, consisting of the non-sequential phases of distortion, estrangement, rejection and disruption as counterparts to Callon's (1986) four moments of translation (Galis & Lee, 2014). It is stressed that the moment of problematization includes a separation of who/what is a part of the network and who/what is not (Callon, 1980). Thereby, when the problem and the actors' identities and interests are defined in the moment of problematization, the focal actor is at the same time making the other actors dispensable by a distortion of their interests and identities. In the process of treason, the equivalent of Callon's (1986) concept of the obligatory passage point is denoted as the "point of irrelevance", which is defined by the focal actor and means that the actors' interests will not be achieved nor converged by passing through that point. Furthermore, the estrangement incorporates processes, activities and devices in motion that in contrast to Callon's (1986) interessement devices will confound and phase out the distorted actors. The actors will thereby be disassociated and locked out from the other actors. Hence, if the estrangement is successful, a chain of differences is in place, resulting in a rejection of the actors by ensuring the lock out of these actors from the process. Lastly, when the focal actor do not manage to stabilize the network, it will be disrupted and the actors within the process are turned into invisible others by the focal actor and those other actors who are successfully mobilized (Galis & Lee, 2014).

The process of treason, as a complementary perspective to Callon's (1986) process of translation, enables a more complete understanding of either a successful mobilization or a disruption of the network (Galis & Lee, 2014). In this case, to combine Callon's (1986) process of translation with Galis and Lee's (2014) process of treason enables a two-dimensional description and analysis in order to obtain an understanding of the process illustrating employees remaining with respectively leaving the employer. The two simultaneous processes will not be forced into integration and a degree of distinctiveness will be held in order to learn from the different contributions of the two perspectives, as suggested by Wæraas and Nielsen (2015). Subsequently, in this study an attempt has been made to examine the ongoing process of the business area's daily operation, in which voluntary employee turnover emerges. This in order to investigate the role of HR practices for the creation of voluntary employee turnover. We argue that ANT and especially the simultaneous processes of translation respectively treason is a suitable framework, since it enables a decomposition of the ongoing process of the business area's daily operation in which voluntary employee turnover emerges.

Methodology

Research Design

To develop a better understanding of the role of HR practices for the creation of voluntary employee turnover within a management consulting firm, a qualitative method by conducting a case study has been used (Czarniawska, 2014; Silverman, 2013). We chose to conduct a case study on a specific company within the management consulting industry due to the industry's recognized high level of voluntary employee turnover. By examining the studied business area's daily operation, it helped us to understand the occurrence of voluntary employee turnover and how it could emerge within an organizational context where HR practices are in use. A qualitative method was also appropriate, as the purpose and research questions of this study did not aim to explain any predictive or universal theories. Hence, this study only intended to investigate one management consulting firm and a number of employees respectively managers. In order to thereafter draw conclusions from this individual case (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Furthermore, this choice of method enforced us as researchers to place ourselves in the studied context. Thereby, we obtained an advanced form of understanding and knowledge. This since we were able to interpret how different actors in the ongoing process of the business area's daily operation, in which voluntary employee turnover emerges, perceive the situation differently based on their individual perceptions (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Silverman, 2013; Van Maanen, 2011). By closely examining the chosen case company, as an example of a context concerned with a high level of voluntary employee turnover despite the use of HR practices, we were able to draw conclusions concerning how HR practices could be both a solution as well as a contributing cause to voluntary employee turnover, due to an including as well as an excluding character.

Data Collection

In order to obtain a better understanding of how the occurrence of voluntary employee turnover unfolds in practice within a management consulting firm, we decided to collect detailed information about the company's daily operation and how they are working with HR practices today. Due to the company's characteristic of being a knowledge-intensive firm it was clarified that the employees are the company's most valuable as well as crucial resources. In order to retain their

valuable employees, it was identified through the interviews that the company is investing in various HR practices. In this article, the primary focus has been held on the most emphasized HR practice, which we identified to be the use of performance appraisals, as a mean to plan the employees' work in projects as well as career and development by translating the employees' interests into individual action plans. We further studied how the carrying out of these individual action plans, established during the performance appraisals, was structured and perceived in practice by the managers and the employees. After we had collected this data, we could through a process-based perspective and the unfolding of the occurrence of voluntary employee turnover distinguish and answer how the firm can experience a high level of voluntary employee turnover despite the use of HR practices. This by using different data collection methods, both primary data in the form of interviews as well as secondary data in terms of documents (Silverman, 2013). The use of several different data collection methods is argued to be suitable when conducting a study through a process-based perspective. Thus, it allows for combinations of sources, which enables access to different dimensions. Hence, possible limitations of one source could be compensated by the strengths of others (Langley, 2009; Silverman, 2013).

The data was exclusively collected at the case company's HQ in Stockholm within the business area of Management Consulting (hereby referred to as MC). The choice of specific case company was based on the knowledge of its characteristics of being a typical knowledge-intensive firm within the management consulting sector. Furthermore, the company experiences a relatively high level of voluntary employee turnover despite their use of HR practices, which in previous research are discussed to enhance the retention attitudes among employees. The decision to only focus on one of the company's business areas was based on our obtained knowledge that the different business areas within the company are decentralized. Hence, there are major differences in the structures and characters between these. Therefore, the choice to limit the research to only conduct the study at one business area allowed us to achieve a deeper and more focused understanding of a single context (Eisenhardt, 1989).

The data collection was conducted during a period of three weeks. We started the data collection with a start-up meeting with our contact person at the company. This person has multiple years of experience from the management consulting industry, and holds a position within the business area from where he/she is able to provide an overview of the current position and history of the studied business area. This meeting was the starting point that further guided and directed us towards relevant managers and employees to interview as well as to significant secondary data to analyze. A clear communication was held from the beginning with our contact person, in order to assure that all parties agreed upon the terms for the following procedure. This in order to mitigate the risk of not getting access to the required number of respondents to interview due to time and accessibility limitations.

The first series of eight pilot-interviews, were conducted with the managers of the five different business units within the business area, as well as with two managers with an overall oversight of the business area and the HR manager of the business area (see Table 1). In this article, all of these respondents have been grouped together, and hereby they are all named as managers. The purpose of these interviews was to obtain an initial understanding of the business area's daily operation, the elements that are of significance for this daily operation and the managers' perceptions of the employees as the business area's most valuable as well as crucial resources. At this point, we obtained the understanding that the HR practice performance appraisals

was considered, from the managers' perspectives, to be essential to enhance the retention attitudes among the employees. We also obtained the knowledge that the practice of performance appraisals incorporates identifying and translating the employees' interests into individual action plans that should be carried out in practice through two significant elements. These two elements are the models for work allocation of projects as well as career and development, and these models were thereby recognized as essential in the upcoming process of this study. Thereafter, interviews with a number of employees were conducted (see Table 2). These interviews provided us with an understanding of the employees' perceptions and interests concerning their work situation, with focus on their day-to-day work in projects as well as the career and development opportunities they are being offered. The choice of sample size, in terms of number of respondents and interviews conducted, was based on the approach of purposive sampling (Silverman, 2013). This means that the final outcome of thirty interviews was based on our subjective judgments, as well as our feeling that we at that point had obtained a satisfactory amount of information in order to conduct this study. Investigating employees' perceptions and attitudes towards their employer as well as to the company's internal strategies could be perceived as sensitive information to discuss and spread outside the company, which could result in restrained answers from the interviewees. In order to mitigate this risk we offered the company and all respondents to be anonymous (Silverman, 2013). Thereby, the company has been assigned a fictitious name and the respondents are named as managers respectively employees.

| Position | Number of Interviewees |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Business Area Manager | 1 |
| Vice Business Area Manager | 1 |
| HR Manager | 1 |
| Business Unit Managers | 5 |
| TOTAL | 8 |

Table 1. Showing the position and numbers of interviewees with the managers of the business area of MC.

| Position | Number of Interviewees |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| Analyst | 3 |
| Consultant | 5 |
| Senior Consultant | 5 |
| Manager | 5 |
| Senior Manager | 4 |
| TOTAL | 22 |

Table 2. Showing the position and numbers of interviewees with the employees working within the business area of MC.

All conducted interviews were semi-structured, with open-ended questions and lasted for approximately 45 minutes. At the start-up meeting, we stated our requirements concerning respondents to our contact person. The requirements were as follows: to have the ability to interview both male and female employees, from different positions, with different years of experience, representing different business units within the business area and all with individual experiences of the company's daily operation and the HR practice performance appraisals. We had these requirements in order to obtain different perspectives and prevent the possible exclusion of any voices

that could be relevant for this study. During all interviews, notes were taken. However, the main focus during the interviews was to listen actively and try to understand the interviewees' interpretations. Therefore, the interviews were also recorded and subsequently transcribed. (Kvale 2006; Silverman, 2013)

In recognition of the limits of using only one data source, and in order to achieve a better understanding of the context under study, we complemented the data obtained through conducting these interviews with collection of secondary data (Silverman, 2013). We gathered two different types of secondary data. Firstly, we collected documents that were used both before the conduction of the interview questions and then throughout the whole process. This in order to achieve an overall understanding of the case company and its business. These documents were obtained through the case company's web page and through our contact person. Secondly, we also obtained a quarterly report including information collected through exit dialogues with former employees. This report helped us to obtain an understanding concerning former employees' decisions to leave the company voluntarily.

Data Analysis

Semi-structured interviews and case studies often involve a large amount of data, in which many concepts and themes could arise (Silverman, 2013; Turner, 1981). To structure the analysis of the data, we started by transcribing the interviews with the managers of the business area. After transcribing these interviews, the data was codified and categorized into relevant themes using a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 2009; Martin & Turner, 1986). At this moment, several themes were found concerning the business area's daily operation, for example: recruitment, work tasks, project allocation, career ladder, employee turnover, work environment, corporate culture and corporate structure. Next, we identified certain themes to focus on, which were the models for work allocation of projects as well as career and development. These elements represent the content of the individual action plans that are established during the performance appraisals. Hence, which was identified as the most emphasized HR practice that aims to enhance the retention attitudes among the employees within the business area. We compared the answers of all interviews made with the managers to find patterns and within-group similarities (Czarniawska, 2014; Eisenhardt, 1989). Thereafter, we transcribed, codified and categorized the material collected through the interviews made with the employees. In order to analyze this data, we looked for the same themes that we had found in the material from the interviews with the managers, i.e. the models for work allocation of projects as well as career and development. Likewise, as the data collected from the interviews with the managers, this data was also arranged and categorized using a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 2009; Martin & Turner, 1986). This material was later on compared with the result found in the material from the interviews with the managers in order to achieve the purpose of this study. This procedure for data analysis enabled us to recognize both within-group similarities, as well as intergroup differences (Eisenhardt, 1989). The material from the interviews was continuously complimented with the analyzed secondary data collected, in order to explicate the context of the study (Silverman, 2013).

Case Description

The investigated company is a Swedish management consulting firm listed at Nasdaq Stockholm stock exchange. The company has approximately 1800 employees and the company primarily

operates in Sweden. The company provides services within five different business areas, whereas this case study is focused on the business area of MC.

The business area of MC employs approximately 500 people in Sweden and is divided into five different business units, approximately similar in sizes, specialized in certain fields and all with the aim of providing services in terms of “helping their customers to reach sustainable business value”. Each business unit has its own group of employees reporting to their specific business unit manager, who in turn reports to the business area manager. The HR department at the company is centralized. Furthermore, each business area has its own HR manager who is responsible for the recruitment of new employees and the general HR work regarding the whole business area. However, the business unit managers are responsible for some of the other HR practices within the company’s HR policies.

The managers of the business area described the company as a typical knowledge-intensive firm where the employees are the company’s most valuable as well as crucial resources. Thereby, they regard their employees as significant for the firm’s success and development. The managers stated that the voluntary employee turnover level within the business area is exceptionally high, which is perceived as a problem. The total employee turnover within the business area is at a yearly level of approximately 23 percent, in which voluntary employee turnover constitutes a major part. The average time of employment within the business area is approximately four to five years. As one manager described the situation:

The voluntary employee turnover is definitely very high and this is of course a problem for us. It feels like several people are deciding to quit every month, while at the same time many people enter the organization. This implies that we almost have the same number of people working in the organization all the time, even though our business is continuously growing. (Manager)

The managers further highlighted the occurrence of voluntary employee turnover as a problem, by expressing that when employees decide to leave the company it does not only cause a reduction in the workforce but it also results in losses of important knowledge and experiences. This is also a costly issue for the company, since it is consistent with processes concerning recruitment and training of new employees to replace the vacancies. Thereby, the managers claimed that it is of great importance to reduce the level of voluntary employee turnover within the business area.

Within the business area, they historically do not have any statistics in numbers and the managers expressed that they find it hard to see any patterns regarding why employees decide to leave the company voluntarily. As an attempt to obtain a better understanding for why the employees decide to leave the company voluntarily, the company has in recent years hired an external firm that conducts the exit dialogues with the leaving employees. The company is receiving information from these exit dialogues quarterly in the form of a compiled report. However, guidelines concerning how to further use the information in these reports have neither been developed nor determined. Nonetheless, in the latest report several reasons explaining former employees’ decisions to leave the company were expressed. Among these reasons, dissatisfactions concerning lack of individual development opportunities and the perception that the business area is engaged in the wrong projects are two of the most common explanations.

The managers of the business area perceive the relatively high level of voluntary employee turnover as an issue they wish to counteract. However, at the same time the managers ex-

pressed that they are aware of that the industry they are operating within, i.e. the management consulting industry, has a reputation of experiencing a relatively high level of voluntary employee turnover in general. As mentioned by one manager:

(...) on the other hand, the level of voluntary employee turnover that we experience is at the same time not that remarkable since we are operating within an industry that is recognized for experiencing a high level of voluntary employee turnover. (Manager)

The lack of understanding among the managers of why the employees decide to leave the company voluntarily and the awareness of that the management consulting industry, in general, is recognized for experiencing a high level of voluntary employee turnover indicates that the occurrence of voluntary employee turnover is perceived as a taken for granted phenomenon within the business area. It is perceived by the managers to be a part of the business area's everyday business. Hence, in the following section, a description of the business area's daily operation, interpreted as the ongoing process in which voluntary employee turnover emerges, is described. Firstly, the managers' perspectives will be given, where it will be determined that the business area as a profit-driven knowledge-intensive organization is dependent on their employees as crucial resources, in order to obtain profit. To motivate the employees to remain within the business area, the managers have a strong belief in their use of the HR practice performance appraisals, as a mean for establishing individual action plans concerning the employees' work in projects as well as their future career advancements. This practice and its incorporated elements will be further demonstrated. It will also be outlined how the employees' interests are translated into these individual action plans, established during the performance appraisals, based on the managers' assumptions. Secondly, it will be described how these individual action plans are followed and played out in practice, where both managers' and employees' perceptions of the situation will be presented. Additionally, the roles of the different actors who are essential in the ongoing process of the business area's daily operation, in which voluntary employee turnover emerges, will be identified and presented in the following section.

The Business Area's Daily Operation

The ultimate aim of the ongoing process of the business area's daily operation is to generate profit by delivering "high value services" to their customers. The services, i.e. the project portfolio of the business area, depend on the customers and their needs. Thus, as the needs of the customers determine the characteristics of each project. The customer base of the business area is broad and consists of both globally and regionally public and, but mostly, private customers within several industries. The managers explained that there are different procedures regarding how the business area receives new projects to their portfolio. The customers are either reaching out to the business area with a project inquiry or the consultants working within the business area are selling in projects to new or established customers. In most cases, the managers declared that they do not reject project inquiries from customers. Especially, not if the customer is a well established key customer for the company or when the customer is considered as a large customer. Refusals of project inquiries from these types of customers can damage established business relationships that have been built up for years. A manager described why it is crucial for them, as a company, to not reject any inquiries from their defined key or large customers by using this example:

Consider your regular hairdresser, if that one turns your request down once you will go to another one the next time. It works in the same way in our industry, if we say no to our customers' requests they will turn to one of our competitors the next time instead. (Manager)

The managers continued to state that they seldom ever turn down project inquiries from new customers where they believe there is potential for long-term relationships, which can secure future profit for the business area. Furthermore, the managers expressed that it is very uncommon that the business area turns down project inquiries due to their nature of being considered as boring, as they are not in line with the employees' interests. Thus, as the company is listed at Nasdaq Stockholm stock exchange and therefore has requirements towards the shareholders to present a profit in the end of the year, which means that it is difficult for them to turn down project inquiries. As one manager described it:

Since we are a listed and profit-driven company we have shareholders that we need to consider and therefore we often cannot afford to say no to project inquiries when they occur. (Manager)

For the business area to be able to achieve the aim of generating profit by providing services in terms of "helping their customers to reach sustainable business value", they are dependent on their employees who are responsible for delivering the services to the customers. As described by one manager:

As we are a service company, we are highly dependent on our employees. Therefore, it is very crucial for us to have the most knowledgeable and talented consultants on the market who are able to deliver the best services to our customers. (Manager)

In order to motivate the employees to remain within the business area, the managers stressed that the company is allocating a great amount of resources and effort in HR practices that aim to enhance the retention attitudes among their knowledgeable employees. The managers expressed a strong belief in their HR practices and especially in their use of continuous performance appraisals, as a mean to plan each employee's future work in projects as well as his/her career and development. This practice was described as well constructed and thereby it should, according to the managers, have the ability to increase the level of retention among the employees by motivating them to stay and be committed to the company. The managers continued to explain that the performance appraisals are held between the employee and its manager twice a year. Through the performance appraisals, the managers are able to obtain an understanding regarding the needs and interests of the employees. This based on the negotiations held between the employee and its manager. During these meeting the employees should have the ability to raise their requests about their work concerning projects as well as career and development opportunities. The purpose during the performance appraisals is to establish an agreement between the managers' and the employees' interests, which will be translated into an individual action plan concerning each employee's future work in projects and career advancements. Thereby, the managers assume that they are obtaining a relatively clear image of what their employees request and are motivated by, and further what interests they as an employer should try to achieve for each individual employee. From the interviews with the managers, it was also clarified that there are some general as-

sumptions of interests that could be assigned to all employees, regardless of career stage. The managers expressed that the employees are assumed to have a strong desire for development and they are described as competent, driven, ambitious, social and extrovert. Furthermore, based on what is expressed during the performance appraisals, the employees are described by the managers to request the possibilities to work in complex, challenging and developing projects during their time of employment. Employees are also assumed to be motivated by continuous development opportunities. Consider for example how one of the managers described what motivates the employees:

Our employees are motivated by their own development. Imagine the movie *Annie Hall* by Woody Allen, in which the character Annie Hall describes a relationship between two parties using the metaphor of a shark. If the shark does not move, it will die. A similar description could be used for our consultants. If the employees feel that they have stopped moving, they will become frustrated and scared that others will run past them. Hence, a feeling of that you will be given more development opportunities and learn more elsewhere could start to grow within them. (Manager)

However, the managers also expressed that they through the performance appraisals have recognized some patterns of differences concerning what is expressed as interests and requests between employees at different career stages. These assumptions could be described and categorized into two groups of employees, which are summarized as follows:

First Group of Employees: The employees positioned at the three first steps of the career ladder namely analysts, consultants and senior consultants were described by the managers as having a “terrier-like” behavior, meaning that they are eager to work and thereby willing to participate in any project they are allocated. In their work situation they request and are motivated by development possibilities, both regarding career advancements and individual development in the consultant role. As one manager described the interests of the employees in the first group:

As a newcomer in the consulting industry you are like a hungry terrier that just want to learn more and more, and thereby you take on any upcoming possibility that can push your development forward. (Manager)

These employees were also described by the managers as aiming for developing their internal résumé through the projects they participate in. They want to learn and by time achieve the necessary tools needed in the consultant role. Their individual development is desired to be fast and they do not prefer spending longer times in the “wrong” projects, which they perceive as the projects that are not in line with their interests.

Second Group of Employees: The employees positioned at the two upper steps of the career ladder, namely managers and senior managers, are besides their roles as consultants also described by the managers as being engaged in acting as role models by leading and sharing their knowledge to younger consultants. This is in contrast to the first group of employees, who mainly focus on their individual roles as consultants. The employees in the second group are also responsible for and driven by finding new business development opportunities, which incorporates generating sales to the company and reaching sales targets. As one manager described the interests of the employees in the second group:

It could be noticed that employees at the higher positions still have a strong willpower and drive for development. However, there is a significant decrease in the “terrier-like” behavior among these employees and instead they are more focused on becoming experts within their specific area of interest and sniffing up new business opportunities. (Manager)

The managers have also interpreted, through the performance appraisals, that these employees value and are motivated by continuous development opportunities. However, in contradiction to the first group of employees, this second group of employees primarily requests the possibility to obtain expert knowledge within their specific area of interest.

In sum, the ultimate aim of the ongoing process of the business area’s daily operation is to generate profit. This is important since they are listed at Nasdaq Stockholm stock exchange and thereby have requirements towards the shareholders, in terms of presenting a profit at the end of the year. The business area is achieving the aim of generating profit by delivering “high value services” to their customers. Consequently, the customers and shareholders are identified as significant actors in the ongoing process illustrating the business area’s daily operation. This as the project portfolio of the business area depends on the customers and their needs, as the needs of the customers determine the characteristics of each project. The shareholders is an actor whose interests the managers also have to consider and thereby the business area in most cases cannot afford to turn down project inquiries, even though the projects are not in line with the employees’ interests. This illustrates that there is a situation in which it is difficult for the managers to entirely affect the projects available since they have to consider the different actors’ interests. The employees are also identified as a significant actor, whose interests are identified and translated, as they are described as the business area’s most crucial resources in this case. This is illustrated by their role and responsibility to deliver the services to the customers, and thereby ensuring the gaining of profit to the business area. Therefore, it is important for the business area to retain these crucial resources. In order to motivate the employees to remain within the business area, the managers have a strong belief in their use of continuous performance appraisals. During the performance appraisals, the purpose is to establish an agreement between the managers and the employees’ interests, which further will be translated into an individual action plan concerning the employee’s future work in projects and career advancements.

Carrying Out the Individual Action Plans

The carrying out of the individual action plans for each employee that have been established during the performance appraisals is done through the employees’ participations in projects and through career advancements. Therefore, the models for work allocation of projects as well as career and development that are in place within the business area, as means directly linked to the accomplishment of the individual action plans, will hereby be described.

Work Allocation of Projects

The business area offers and delivers two different types of projects to their customers. These project types are called commitment versus resource projects. In commitment projects the consultants work in teams and in resource projects the consultants work individually. One manager explained the differences between the two project types, by using a metaphor:

A commitment project involves a project team that should provide and cook a complete meal to the customer, so that they will be full and satisfied. On the other hand, a resource project is when we are providing the customer with one consultant specialized in only a certain part of the cooking. (Manager)

In order to allocate the projects available to the employees, the managers stated that this procedure is supposed to be based on the individual action plans established during the performance appraisals. One manager described this matching procedure by stating:

We always strive for acknowledging each employee's individual action plan. However, as we are a profit-driven company we cannot allow our employees to just sit on the bench and wait for the "right" projects to come up. Sometimes we just have to tell our employees that they need to take one for the team, with the promise that hopefully the next project will be more in line with the employees' individual interests. (Manager)

The managers continued to claim that they have, as they call it, a formal model for how projects should be allocated. They explained that this procedure proceeds by firstly having the business unit manager suggesting a project leader for the project, who in turn will contact the staffing manager. The project leader tells the staffing manager about the profile and experience requirements for each project. The staffing manager's purpose is further to match all the résumés of the available consultants to the projects and come up with a suggestion of a project team or a specific consultant, depending on the nature of the project, which then will be presented to the project leader. Additionally, this formal model incorporates the idea that employees at the higher levels in the career ladder have sales targets that they need to reach. This allows these employees to be involved in the process of selling in projects to both current and new customers. However, the managers also claimed that there is an occurrence of an informal model, which is simultaneously used as the formal one. In this informal model the work allocation of projects is primarily focused on each consultant's individual internal network. Hence, in this informal model a person already engaged in the project and its sales process poses the position as the project leader for the project. Thereafter, instead of having the project passing through the staffing manager, this project leader will directly contact the consultants in his/her internal network whom they believe possess the knowledge and experiences required in order to succeed in each specific project. The managers stated that this situation with two simultaneous models for work allocation of projects have been ongoing for a long time and the informal model has by now become a normalized procedure within the business area, even though this has never been formally announced.

First Group of Employees: For employees in the first group, the most important for them concerning projects are the possibilities to work in projects that are challenging and developing for them as consultants, and preferably in team settings, as in commitment projects. However, these employees said that they experience that there is a larger number of resource projects than commitment projects available and allocated to them. The employees continued to argue that they know that the projects they participate in should be in correspondence to their individual action plans, which have been established during the performance appraisals. Despite this, the requested projects are not always available. As one employee described it:

As a consultant you more often than seldom need to take one for the team by accepting a less attractive project in order to hopefully become rewarded with a more attractive one that better corresponds to your individual action plan and interests the next time. (First Group Employee)

Concerning the question of how the employees in the first group are allocated the projects they participate in it was claimed by them, in correspondence to the managers, that this procedure is carried out through both a formal and informal model. However, these employees perceive that the informal model is most commonly used. Consequently, the first group of employees claimed that they are assigned projects either through the formal way, through the staffing manager, or the informal way, through their individual internal network. These employees also emphasized that the projects considered as more attractive and in line with their interests, described as the “right” projects, are most often assigned through the informal model. Hence, they perceive that the lack of a structured and standardized model for work allocation of projects put pressure on them as employees, especially as many of them are newcomers in the company. They explained that they feel that they have to be outgoing and promote themselves among their colleagues. Thus, in order for them to be able to create their individual internal networks, which in turn is perceived as essential if they want to participate in the “right” projects. As one employee in the first group described the work allocation of projects:

There is a formal model regarding how projects should be allocated among the employees, and that is through the staffing manager. Although, you quickly understand that the projects that are allocated that way are not the most exciting ones. But there is rather a lot of informal networking going on around the work allocation of projects that is based on “who knows whom” and “who has worked with whom before”. This process should perhaps be more structured so that those who enter into the company, and do not have an established individual internal network, are better taken care of. Especially, since this is the type of company that continuously hires a lot of new people. (First Group Employee)

Second Group of Employees: Similar to the first group of employees, the employees representing the second group also prefer commitment projects, in which they are able to work in teams. These employees in the second group emphasized, in correspondence to the first group, that the business area is accepting project inquiries that are in contradiction to their interests, meaning that there are a larger number of resource projects than commitment projects available and allocated to them. It was further claimed by these employees that the involvement in these types of resource projects easily creates isolation and make you, as a consultant, lose your connection to the company in the longer run. Therefore, the second group of employees emphasized that the managers have to become better at turning down project inquiries that are not in line with the employees’ interests or not related to the core competences of each business unit within the business area. One employee in the second group described the situation as follows:

In the role as a consultant you are expecting opportunities to participate in different projects that are linked to your specific business unit and it is important that the employer acknowledges this. The downside with a big company, such as our company, is that sometimes the management forgets the individuals behind the company. It could sometimes be worth saying no to some short-term profits in the exchange of having the individual consultant working for some more years. The managers should also acknowledge that it is never worth forcing consultants to work in a longer resource project if they do not want to. (Second Group Employee)

The employees in the second group were similar again to those in the first group as projects were more commonly allocated to them through the informal model, rather than following the formally announced procedure. As a result, these employees asked for a more structured and transparent model for work allocation of projects, as they have acknowledged that the system with two simultaneously used procedures in place is confusing. As one consultant at the higher career levels described the work allocation of projects:

Since I am a consultant positioned at one of the highest steps in the career ladder I can be allocated projects through three different ways, which now when I am thinking about it, is a bit confusing and disorganized. (Second Group Employee)

In sum, there are both a formal and an informal model for work allocation of projects within the business area. However, even though not formally announced, both managers and employees perceive them as standardized models for work allocation of projects. These standardized models for work allocation of projects limit the possibilities for adaptations and negotiations to individual needs and interests in the establishment of the employees' individual action plans. This is exemplified by the employees' raised dissatisfactions about the procedure for work allocation of projects and what it entails. According to the employees' perspectives, despite minor differences between the two groups, they perceive the procedure for work allocation of projects and what it entails as not entirely satisfying. The employees in both groups experience that they are not allocated nor participating in projects that are converged to their own needs and interests. The employees perceive the "right" projects as team-based projects that are in line with their interests. Furthermore, it is difficult for the managers to influence and support the matching of projects with the employees' needs and interests, as a majority of the projects are allocated through the informal model. This implies that there is a situation, in which a majority of the work allocation of projects is determined by actors who are not involved during the establishment and translation of interests into the individual action plans.

Career and Development Opportunities

The notion of career and development opportunities at the company was described by the managers in terms of the formal model of a consulting career ladder, which incorporates five steps. These steps are: analyst, consultant, senior consultant, manager and senior manager. Before, the career ladder within the business area incorporated both a generalist as well as a specialist track. However, according to the managers, the specialist track was removed a few years ago and the career ladder now only incorporates a generalist track. This is in contrast to the career ladders within the other business areas at the company where there are two simultaneous tracks, one specialist and one generalist. Thus, there is a possibility to become a specialist consultant within the other business areas at the company, but not within the business area of MC. The managers further stated that the employees are well informed and conscious about the career ladder and what is individually required of them to reach each level. As mentioned, the career advancements of employees are discussed and planned during the performance appraisals between the employees and managers. Hence, the future career advancements of employees are incorporated in the individual action plans. In order to advance a step in the ladder there are certain requirements estab-

lished by the HR department that has been locally adapted to the business area according to the managers. These requirements are specified in terms of different types of internal courses, participation in certain projects, degrees of responsibility in projects and sales targets that the employees are required to accomplish in order to be considered for promotion to the next step in the ladder.

First Group of Employees: When asking the first group of employees about their opinions concerning the career and development opportunities offered within the business area, the employees stated that the career ladder is too limited in its structure, in order to be entirely motivating for them. This is partially described by them to be based on the limitations concerning to what degree the employees can influence what projects they can participate in, and thereby their limited potential to influence their own career advancements. They also expressed that this is partially described by their doubtfulness concerning how the career ladder is structured, as the career ladder is mostly focused on sales rather than offering the possibility to become a specialist within a certain area of consulting at the higher steps. Furthermore, for these employees the formal structure of career advancements within the business area, meaning climbing the career ladder and the titles and monetary incentives it entails, are mostly mentioned as secondary. Instead, the employees in the first group stated that they are more interested in individual development in their roles as consultants. This was described by one of the employees in the first group as:

I find rising in the career ladder as secondary. For me, it is much more important and crucial, concerning if I will stay with an employer or not, that I achieve opportunities for personal development by working together in team settings with experienced and competent people that I can learn from.
(First Group Employee)

Second Group of Employees: Similar to the first group of employees, the employees in the second group find the career and development opportunities to be neither completely interesting nor motivating. The employees in the second group stated that the main reason behind this is that many of the employees in this group are positioned on the highest or second highest step in the career ladder. Therefore, they stated that they are not longer motivated by the career ladder. Thus, it is hard for them to visualize the next step, as they are already positioned at the higher steps. The lack of motivation towards the career ladder was also explained by this group of employees to be due to the limitations within the model for career and development within the business area. Hence, as the career ladder is today mostly focused on sales at the higher steps. The employees in this group thereby claimed that it is difficult to be recognized as a knowledgeable and appreciated consultant in the career ladder within the business area today. As one employee in the second group described it:

At the higher levels in the career ladder, you are not rewarded as a senior consultant at the moment. As it is right now, it is all about how good you are as a salesman and not your experiences and knowledge as a consultant. (Second Group Employee)

The employees in the second group therefore emphasized a request concerning wider career advancement possibilities than the single tracked career ladder offered within the business area today. They request the possibility to be able to choose between a salesman or a specialist track, which is found within the other business areas at the company. Hence, these employees declared

that they wish they had the choice to become specialized consultants by obtaining great knowledge and experiences within a specific field, instead of becoming generalist consultants primarily focusing on sales.

In sum, the standardized model of a single tracked career ladder within the business area limits the possibilities for adaptations and negotiations to individual needs and interests in the establishment of the employees' individual action plans. As exemplified by the employees' raised dissatisfactions about the career and development opportunities offered within the business area. Despite minor differences, both groups of employees perceive the career and development opportunities and what it entails as not entirely satisfying nor motivating. The employees in both groups feel that this single tracked career ladder does not correspond to their own interests due to its characteristics of being too limited as well as its restrained capacity for individual development. Hence, to advance in the career ladder towards becoming a salesman at the higher career steps is not perceived as desired among the employees.

Discussion

In order to unfold the ongoing process of the business area's daily operation in which voluntary employee turnover emerges, ANT and especially the process of translation (Callon, 1986) in combination with the process of treason (Galis & Lee, 2014) can help us to illustrate how a HR practice, through its use, in practice can incorporate both an including and excluding character. We will follow the suggestion by Wæraas and Nielsen (2015), meaning that the two simultaneous processes will not be forced into integration and a degree of distinctiveness will be held in order to learn from the different contributions of the two perspectives. Therefore, each process will hereby be outlined separately. Drawing on Callon's (1986) process of translation we will firstly show that this case does not illustrate a successful translation process, which means that it does not result in an inclusion of all actors, i.e. enrolment and mobilization. Hence, by further drawing on Galis and Lee's (2014) process of treason, as an expansion of Callon's (1986) process of translation, an understanding of a simultaneous gradual exclusion of actors in this case is achievable.

The problem of having a relatively high level of voluntary employee turnover within the studied business area, is as mentioned perceived by the managers as a taken for granted phenomenon. Thus, the phenomenon of voluntary employee turnover is in this case perceived as being black boxed (Latour, 1987; 2005). We argue this, since there is an identified lack of understanding of why employees decide to leave the company voluntarily and the managers have also closed their eyes for the issue by saying that this is a universal problem among all management consulting firms. Until now, there have not been any deeper reflections or attempts from the managers' perspectives to trace the problem back to its cause. By drawing on Callon's (1986) process of translation, an opening up of this black box in order to outline how ideas and interests are translated (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996) to obtain an understanding of the role of HR practices for the creation of voluntary employee turnover within a management consulting firm is achievable. Thus, by starting with identifying and analyzing this case using Callon's (1986) four moments of translation, a decomposition of the ongoing process of the business area's daily operation in which voluntary employee turnover emerges is enabled. Furthermore, the interrelations of the significant actors involved (Law, 1992) and the role of the HR practice performance appraisals will also be explored.

The Inclusion of Employees

In accordance to Callon's (1986) process of translation, the first moment is called problematization, which involves the identification and assigning of interests to the actors in the network by the focal actor. This moment also incorporates that the focal actor is defining the problem (Callon, 1986). In this case, the focal actor is identified to be the managers of the business area and other significant actors are identified as the employees, customers and shareholders. The ultimate aim of the ongoing process of the business area's daily operation is to generate profit, which is identified as the defined problem in this case from the managers' perspectives, i.e. the focal actor's. This problem is illustrated as especially important to acknowledge, since the company is listed at Nasdaq Stockholm stock exchange. Thereby, they have requirements towards the shareholders, in terms of presenting a profit at the end of the year. In order to solve the defined problem, i.e. generating profit, the business area is delivering "high value services" to their customers. In accordance to Callon (1986), the defined problem needs to be acknowledged by all actors in the network. In this case, we argue that the defined problem is acknowledgeable by all identified actors. Firstly, it is in the customers' interests to have all project inquiries accepted and delivered, which in turn will generate profit to the business area. Secondly, the shareholders request that the business area should present a profit at the end of the year. Lastly, it should be in the interests of the employees concerning individual development in their roles as consultants to participate in and deliver different types of projects.

To generate profit and solve the defined problem, the managers are dependent on the employees, who are responsible for delivering the services to the customers. In line with the defined problem, the managers consider the ideal employee to be a person who is extrovert and willing to work hard, and thereby generate profit to the business area. This is illustrated as the managers assume that the employees are driven, ambitious and social. The managers also assume that in the beginning of the employees' careers they have a "terrier-like" behavior to work hard. The employees at the later career stages are further assumed to be willing to work hard, as they are driven by finding new business development opportunities.

Furthermore, another part of the moment of problematization is the identification of the obligatory passage point (Callon, 1986), which in this case is identified to be the achievement of a managerial position. If paraphrasing Callon (1986), the defined problem will be solved if the actors pass through this obligatory passage point. The managers assume that the employees are motivated by and are aiming for continuous development opportunities, which is a prerequisite for advancing in the career ladder within the business area. Hence, if the employees are acting in correspondence to the managers' assumptions they will work in line with the defined problem of generating profit until they have advanced in their careers and achieved a managerial position, and by that pass through the obligatory passage point. Passing through the obligatory passage point would also mean that the interests of all actors involved would be converged (Callon, 1986). When achieving a managerial position, the interests of the employees will be converged with the company's and thereby also manager's interests. By passing through this obligatory passage point, the employees will be enrolled based on an acceptance of the assigned interests and further on also mobilized, which is in accordance to the idea of Callon (1986). The employees will also by passing this point also become spokesmen for the business area, which is described by Callon (1986) as part of becoming mobilized. The interests of the other identified actors in this

case, i.e. the customers and shareholders, will also be converged if the employees are passing through the obligatory passage point. Hence, as the customers will have all their project inquiries accepted and conducted as well as the business area will make a profit due to the acceptance of all project inquiries, which is in line with the interests of the shareholders.

In order for the employees to pass through the obligatory passage point, they have to remain within the business area until they have advanced in their careers and achieved a managerial position. To motivate the employees to remain within the business area and advance in their careers by working in line with the defined problem of generating profit, the managers have a strong belief in their use of the HR practice performance appraisals. In this case and based on previous research, the HR practice performance appraisals illustrates a mean for aligning the interests of the employees with the company's strategic needs (Alvesson, 2000; Alvesson & Robertson, 2006; Cappelli, 2001; Hislop, 2003; Horwitz et al., 2003; Hsu et al., 2003; Huselid, 1995; Jones & Wright, 1992; Kärreman & Rylander, 2008; Schuler, 1992). The performance appraisals in this case illustrate how the managers have translated their idea of how to solve the defined problem, i.e. generating profit to the business area by involving the employees in the delivering of the services to customers, into a practice.

During the performance appraisals, the purpose is to through negotiations establish an agreement between the managers' and the employees' interests, which further will be translated and locked into an individual action plan concerning the employee's future work in projects and career advancements. In this case, the individual action plans, established during the performance appraisals, are interpreted as what Callon (1986) describes as *interessement devices*. The moment of *interessement* involves practices that are in motion, as attempts by which the actors sought to be convinced and locked into their proposed interests and identities as being part of their own interests, and thereby they will act upon them (Callon, 1986). When the individual action plans are being established there are limited possibilities for adaptations and negotiations in order to fit with each employee's individual needs and interests. We argue this since there are ready-made and standardized models and structures in place concerning the work allocation of projects as well as career and development, which will set the frames in which the translation of interests into the individual action plans occurs. Rather, what is negotiated is whether each individual employee fits into the standardized roles or not. If the identified *interessement devices* are reflecting the defined and translated interests in the problematization, they will support the enrolment and further on also the mobilization of the actors in the network (Callon 1986; Callon & Law, 1982). Thus, in this case it would implicate that the ready-made and standardized models and structures in place, concerning the work allocation of projects as well as career and development, which constitute the individual action plans' contents are accepted as being a reflection of the employees' individual needs and interests.

The moment of enrolment aims to enroll the actors through negotiations in order to make them attached to the *interessement devices* (Callon, 1980; 1986; Callon & Law, 1982; Latour, 2005). Drawing on Callon's (1986) idea, the moment of enrolment would in this case incorporate the achievement of the employees' needs and interests by making the employees attached to the ready-made and standardized models and structures in place, concerning the work allocation of projects as well as career and development, which constitute the individual action plans' contents. Consequently, in this case the enrolment of the employees is illustrated by how the individual action plans are further translated into practices for work allocation of projects as well as career

and development, which illustrate how the role as a consultant is being appointed to the employees. In order for the employees to become enrolled by passing through the identified obligatory passage point, i.e. achieve a managerial position, it is crucial that the employees are willing to work and generate profit to the business area. However, this is difficult to achieve, as there are various factors that can counteract the enrolment of the employees in this case. This is exemplified by the employees raised dissatisfactions towards the standardized models for work allocation of projects as well as career and development and what it entails. Despite the efforts made from the managers' perspectives and based on the dissatisfactions raised, the employees today have the impression that they are not able to participate in projects that are in line with their individual interests. Furthermore, the employees in both groups are not motivated by the single tracked career ladder as it does not correspond to their interests, due to its characteristics of being too limited as well as its restrained capacity for individual development.

The raised dissatisfactions also exemplify that the employees are not convinced by the identified interessement device, as it is based on standardized models that all employees do not consider as being a reflection of their own needs and interests. This is explained as the managers have translated the interests of the employees within the set frames for the individual action plans, which are based on the standardized models. Hence, these models are developed based on the managers' own incentive of generating profit to the business area. This is in similarity to what is discussed by Czarniawska and Sevón (1996), concerning that translation of ideas can be interpreted and translated differently depending on different actors' personal characteristics and situational affections. Moreover, in accordance to what have been stated in previous research, the expressed feelings of dissatisfactions with the workplace and its structures among the employees could enhance the employees' receptiveness to accept new job opportunities offered by other employers (Campion, 1991; Carsten & Spector, 1987; Griffeth et al., 2000; Hall & Moss, 1999; Harman et al. 2007; Mitchell et al., 2001; Mobley; 1977; Mobley et al., 1978). The raised dissatisfactions, towards work allocation of projects as well as career and development opportunities, among the employees are further similar to what former employees have expressed as reasons for leaving the company. This also supports the argument that the employees in this case might have a higher receptiveness to leave the company voluntarily.

The managers cannot force the employees to work. Thus, in order for the employees to become enrolled there is a need from the managers' perspectives to motivate the employees to become attached to the standardized models incorporated in the identified interessement device. The managers can either do this by finding and allocate projects that are perceived as "right" by the employees, or they can motivate them by linking the available projects to the set requirements for the employees' advancements in the career ladder. The first alternative would implicate that the managers are trying to change the projects available and allocated to the employees, in order to transform the employees' perceptions concerning their work in projects. On the other hand, the second alternative would instead implicate that the managers are trying to modify the employees' perceptions of their work in projects, as being a reflection of their individual career and development. However, as this case has shown, it is difficult for the managers to motivate the employees to become enrolled. Firstly, as the managers cannot influence and support that the employees only are allocated projects that are perceived as "right". Thus, as a majority of the projects are allocated through the informal model. This implies that there is a situation, in which a majority of the work allocation of projects is determined by actors who are not involved during the estab-

lishment and translation of interests into the individual action plans. Furthermore, the managers do not control the project portfolio of the business area, which is explained, as the managers have to consider other significant actors 'interests, i.e. the customers and shareholders, in addition to the employees'. The content of the project portfolio is determined by the customers and their needs, as the needs of the customer determine the characteristics of each project. Moreover, the shareholders are actors whose interests the managers have to consider. Thereby, the business area in most cases cannot afford to turn down project inquiries, even though the projects are not in line with the employees' interests. This illustrates that there is a situation in which it is difficult for the managers to entirely affect the projects available to the employees, since they have to consider different actors' interests. Consequently, it is difficult for the managers to control the achievement of the employees' needs and interests and obtain a convergence of all actors' interests, which is described as a prerequisite for a successful enrolment (Callon, 1980; 1986; Callon & Law, 1982; Latour, 2005). Additionally, achieving a successful enrolment of all actors is difficult when there are many different actors present, as it is difficult for the focal actor to control the actions of others (Kjellberg, 2001; Latour, 1987). Secondly, trying to motivate the employees by linking the projects available to their individual career and development is also difficult for the managers since the employees are not motivated by the single tracked career ladder.

Based on what has been presented, we further argue that all employees do not fit into the standardized image of an employee that has been translated within the set frames for the individual action plans, established by the managers, which in turn have been translated into the standardized models for work allocation of projects as well as career and development. It is therefore difficult to make the employees attached to the identified interestment device, i.e. the individual action plans established during the performance appraisals. Therefore, we argue that the employees in this case are not enrolled. However, the employees are still employed and are thereby generating profit to the business area. This indicates that the employees have chosen to remain within the business area even though they are aware of that their individual needs and interests cannot be fulfilled through the individual action plans, due to the standardized models for work allocation of projects as well as career and development. As this case has shown, the employees' have accepted to work in an uphill struggle. This means that the employees have accepted to work with the "wrong" projects as well as not being offered the possibilities to become specialist consultants nor have their individual development considered. Furthermore, if they continue to accept working in this uphill struggle, for a longer period of time, they will advance in the career ladder and eventually pass through the obligatory passage point by achieving a managerial position. Hence, which is explained as a prerequisite for becoming enrolled and further mobilized according to Callon (1986).

Furthermore, due to this stated prerequisite, we argue that the employees are neither mobilized, as the moment of mobilization is described by Callon (1986) to be when the actors are enrolled and the focal actor has managed to stabilize the network. However, we argue that the managers, as the focal actor, are both enrolled and mobilized as they have passed through the obligatory passage point, i.e. achieved a managerial position. The managers therefore act in line with what Callon (1986) denote as allied spokesmen for the business area in relation to all the identified actors in the network, i.e. the customers, shareholders and employees. This implies that the managers act in accordance to the translated and set ideal image. As this case shows, the enrolment of actors is not always complete or comprehensive (Callon, 1986). Thus, resulting in that

all employees in this case are not willing to accept working in an uphill struggle. These employees will instead choose to leave the company voluntarily before they achieve a managerial position, with an hope of finding another employer that better fit with their individual needs and interests. When leaving the company voluntarily the employees will betray the managers' image of the ideal employee, i.e. an employee who is extrovert and willing to work hard in order to generate profit to the business area. This corresponds to what Callon (1986) describes as actors who are transformed into dissidents when betraying the process.

The Exclusion of Employees

When analyzing the ongoing process of the business area's daily operation in which voluntary employee turnover emerges by using Callon's (1986) process of translation, it is illustrated that this case exemplifies a non-successful translation process. This as it does not result in enrolment and mobilization of all identified actors in the network. As Callon's (1986) process of translation foremost embraces successful translation processes, i.e. resulting in achieved enrolment and mobilization of all actors in the network, this framework is not comprehensive enough when studying unsuccessful translation processes (Gad & Jensen, 2010; Whittle & Spicer, 2008). Therefore, to be able to understand the role of HR practices for the creation of voluntary employee turnover, we also need to shed light on the excluded actors, i.e. the dissidents, by using Galis and Lee's (2014) simultaneous process of treason in order to illustrate the ongoing gradually exclusion of actors.

Galis and Lee (2014) argue in accordance to Callon (1980) that during the moment of problematization it is determined who is part of the network and who is not. In this case, when the managers define the problem as being that the business area should generate profit by delivering "high value services" to the customers they also define and translate an image of the ideal employee, based on their assumptions in line with this problem. By this, the managers are simultaneously, in accordance to Galis and Lee (2014), distorting the translation of the interest and needs of those employees who do not fit into this standardized role. This means that the employees who do not fit into the managers' assumptions, i.e. being extrovert and willing to work hard during their employment, are being disregarded. Furthermore, if the needs and interests of the employees differ from the managers' assumptions, the achievement of a managerial position will not converge to their individual interests. Hence, we argue that advancing in the career to achieve a managerial position either can be an obligatory passage point (Callon, 1986) or a point of irrelevance (Galis & Lee, 2014) depending on the individual employee's willingness to work in an uphill struggle for the time it takes to achieve this point or not. Moreover, in accordance to Galis and Lee (2014), we argue that if the practices that are in motion as attempts by which the actors sought to be convinced and locked into their proposed interests and identities do not reflect the actors' individual needs and interests, these practices will not be acknowledged as an interessement device, but will instead obtain an estrangement character. This is illustrated in this case since the individual action plans, identified as an interessement device, do not correspond to each employee's individual needs and interests due to the limited possibilities for adaptations and negotiations in the translation of the employees' interests. This argument is supported by the fact that the employees do not perceive the ready-made and standardized models and structures in place concerning work allocation of projects as well as career and development, which constitute the content of the the individual action plans, to be a reflection of their own needs and interests.

In accordance to Galis and Lee (2014), if the estrangement is successful a chain of differences is in place resulting in a rejection of the actors, by ensuring the lock out of these actors from the process. In this case this is illustrated since the managers do not manage to motivate the employees to become attached to the standardized models and thereby no enrolment of the employees is achieved. Thus, as the individual action plans that are attempting to lock in the employees simultaneously are locking out the employees who do not fit into the standardized models for work allocation of projects as well as career and development. We thereby argue that simultaneously as there is an enrolment and inclusion of the employees who fit into the standardized models, concerning work allocation of projects as well as career and development, there is also an exclusion of the actors who do not fit into these models. The employees who do not fit into the standardized models are perceived as what Galis and Lee (2014) refer to as the invisible others, meaning that these actors are powerless as they have failed to become a part of the ideal that the focal actor has envisioned. The rejection and lock out of these employees is exemplified by the dissatisfactions raised among the employees concerning their impressions of not being allocated the “right” projects, which are described to be team-based projects that are in line with the their interests. This is partly explained by the content of the project portfolio and the occurrence of an informal model for work allocation of projects. The managers favor the interests of the customers and shareholders, which means that the project portfolio primarily is based on these actors’ needs and interests. At the same time, we argue that the needs and interests of the employees are rejected as they are considered as secondary even though the managers stated that they have obtained a clear image concerning the employees’ interests through the performance appraisals. The use of the informal model for work allocation of projects also results in an exclusion of employees due to its structure of being based on internal networking in order to participate in the “right” projects. Hence, the employees who do not succeed with developing their individual internal network by being extrovert and promote themselves are being excluded from the process. The rejection and lock out of employees is also illustrated by the limited career and development opportunities offered within the business area. If the employees do not request to become selling generalist consultants, they are being excluded as the career ladder only offers a single track that everyone has to accept and follow. This further means that individual development requests are being overseen. Consequently, simultaneously as there is an enrolment of some employees, the needs and interests of the employees who do not fit into the standardized models that the individual action plans are built upon, i.e. the invisible others, are rejected. This implies that the employees who do not fit into these standardized models, meaning that the translation of interests do not reflect their own needs and interests, are gradually being excluded from the process. This results either in a situation in which these employee choose to leave the business area voluntarily, and are transformed into dissidents, or they remain within the business area and continue to work in an uphill struggle. Hence, as mentioned, in the long run they are able to advance in their careers to achieve a managerial position. Based on that we have shown that the employees are neither enrolled nor mobilized in this case, we argue that the network is what Galis and Lee (2014) denote as disrupted. Thus, as the network is not stabilized since the managers, as the focal actor, have not managed to enroll and mobilize all actors into their assigned identities.

In sum, the ongoing process of the business area’s daily operation in which voluntary employee turnover emerges illustrates an unsuccessful translation process. This as it does not result in enrolment and mobilization of all actors, which is described by Callon (1986) as a prerequisite

to obtain a successful translation process. By analyzing this case by drawing from both Callon's (1986) process of translation and Galis and Lee's (2014) process of treason, we have illustrated that the HR practice performance appraisals, as a mean for planning each employee's work in projects as well as career and development, through its use in practice simultaneously incorporates both an including and excluding character. This has been shown by illustrating an actor-network that is composed by a number of translation processes, which is in accordance to the fundamentals of ANT (Callon 1986; Callon & Law, 1982; Czarniawska & Hernes, 2005). The managers are translating their idea of how to solve the defined problem into the HR practice performance appraisals. Furthermore, when the interests of the employees are translated into the individual action plans during the performance appraisals, there are limited possibilities for adaptations and negotiations in order to fit with each employee's individual needs and interests. Thus, there is a situation in which a complete translation of each employee's individual needs and interests is inhibited. Rather, what is negotiated is whether each employee fits into the standardized roles or not. Therefore, we argue that the employees are included in the process if they fit into the standardized roles that are translated into the individual action plans established during the performance appraisals, which in turn are translated into practices in the form of the standardized models for work allocation of projects as well as career and development. On the other hand, if the employees do not fit into these standardized models, meaning that the translation of interests do not reflect their own needs and interests, they are instead excluded from the process. These employees either choose to leave the business area voluntarily or remain within the business area and accepting working in an uphill struggle. Consequently, in this case, the HR practice performance appraisals, through its use in practice incorporates, both an including and excluding character. The latter results in a process of gradually exclusion of employees until they eventually leave the company voluntarily. Hence, we argue that this HR practice is a contributing cause to the creation of the voluntary employee turnover, i.e. number of dissidents, within the studied business area.

Conclusion and Implications

The purpose of this study has been to investigate the role of HR practices for the creation of voluntary employee turnover within a management consulting firm. The purpose was achieved by answering these two research questions: How does the occurrence of voluntary employee turnover unfold in practice within a management consulting firm? How can a management consulting firm experience difficulties with retaining their employees despite the presence of HR practices? To investigate the role of HR practices for the creation of voluntary employee turnover within a management consulting firm, this study was conducted at a business area within a Swedish management consulting firm. The business area experiences an yearly employee turnover of 23 percent, in which voluntary employee turnover constitutes a major part. The use of continuous performance appraisals, as a mean for planning the employees' work in projects as well as career and development, was identified as the most emphasized HR practice from the manager's perspectives. The managers have a strong belief in this HR practice and its ability to enhance the retention attitudes among the employees. During the performance appraisals the purpose is to, through negotiations, establish an agreement between the managers and the employees' interests, which further will be translated and locked into an individual action plan including the employee's future work in projects and career advancements. When the individual action plans are being

established, there are limited possibilities for adaptations and negotiations in order to fit with each employee's individual needs and interests. Thus, since there are ready-made and standardized models and structures in place concerning work allocation of projects as well as career and development, which set the frames for the individual action plans. On the one hand, these individual action plans, as a part of the use of the HR practice performance appraisals in practice, are illustrated as having an including character in the situations when the employees fit into the standardized models. On the other hand, when the employees do not fit into these standardized models, the individual action plans instead have an excluding character. In this situation, the employees either accept working in an uphill struggle or not, where the latter is expressed by their decision to voluntarily leave the company with an hope of finding another employer that better fit with their individual needs and interests. Consequently, this study illustrates that HR practices, through their use in practice, can incorporate both an including and excluding character, where the latter results in a process of gradually exclusion of the employees until they eventually will leave the company voluntarily. We therefore argue that HR practices can have a contributing role for the creation of voluntary employee turnover.

This study contributes to the research on voluntary employee turnover in several aspects. Even though it previously has been argued that voluntary employee turnover could be understood from a process-based perspective (Griffeth et al., 2000; Mobley; 1977; Mobley et al., 1978), there has been little attention illustrating how the process, in which voluntary employee turnover emerges, unfolds in practice. We have illustrated this by presenting and analyzing the ongoing process of a business area's daily operation, in which voluntary employee turnover emerges. This by drawing on ANT and especially Callon's (1986) process of translation in combination with Galis and Lee's (2014) process of treason. Studying voluntary employee turnover using an ANT approach has helped us to illustrate how this phenomenon is a result of the ongoing process of the business area's daily operation, which contributes to previous normative studies of voluntary employee turnover where they instead attempt to explain this phenomenon as an outcome within organizations. Furthermore, previous normative studies of HR practices have foremost tried to identify a "best practice" or "best fit" of HR practices. It has been argued that voluntary employee turnover emerges in the situations in which the "best practice" or "best fit" of HR practices have not yet been implemented (Vickers & Fox, 2010). Having a process-based perspective, the result of this study has instead indicated that whether or not the HR practices will enhance retention among employees depends on how these practices are used, translated and further perceived by the different actors in the network. We argue that HR practices that aim to enhance retention attitudes among employees instead can contribute to the creation of voluntary employee turnover. This as the result of this study shows that HR practices, through their use in practice, could incorporate both an including and an excluding character. This study thereby contributes to previous research made within the field of voluntary employee turnover and the role of HR practices. Additionally, this study contributes to previous research within voluntary employee turnover by arguing against the idea that dissatisfactions among employees should be perceived as the ultimate reason resulting in the decision to leave the employer voluntarily (Campion, 1991; Carsten & Spector, 1987; Griffeth et al., 2000; Hall & Moss, 1999; Harman et al. 2007; Mitchell et al., 2001; Mobley; 1977; Mobley et al., 1978). This can be stated since this study contributes with a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of voluntary employee turnover and its creation.

This study also allows for reflections upon what managerial implications our result may have for a management consulting firm. Based on the result from this study, we argue that in order for HR practices to enhance retention attitudes among employees and by that contribute to a reduction of voluntary employee turnover, they must be successfully translated and reflect the employees' needs and interests. Hence, to achieve the potential effectiveness of HR practices it is not only significant for the company to create an optimal portfolio of HR practices. It is also important to manage the employees' interests concerning what they request among their employer in return for their loyalty and retention. This study further shows that it is a challenge for companies today to establish and develop their work structures to correspond with all their employees' needs and interests. Consequently, the result of this study is useful for management consulting firms that are in the process of developing or reorganizing their HR practices, in order to reduce the level of voluntary turnover among their employees. However, it is important to acknowledge that adapting the portfolio of HR practices to fit with the needs and interests of the employees could result in a negligence of the interests of the other actors in the network. Hence, it is difficult to achieve a convergence of all actors' different interests. The result of this study also shows that companies should not have too much belief in their HR practices as being the ultimate solution to the issue of voluntary employee turnover. Thereby, this study also presents implications for managers within other knowledge-intensive firms. This, since it is acknowledged in these type of firms that the employees are the company's most valuable and critical resources (Alvesson, 2000; Sarvary, 1999; Sturdy et al., 2009). However, to entirely reduce voluntary employee turnover is not a reachable situation. Companies need to expect a certain level of voluntary employee turnover and should further adapt to this level and not only perceive it as a problem.

There are several limitations with this study. Firstly, we have only investigated one business area, within one Swedish management consulting firm. This makes this study not certainly illustrating for realities within other management consulting firms nor within other organizations in other industries. Nonetheless, these stated contributions can conduce to applicable insights within the studied field. Secondly, due to accessibility this study is only based on interviewed employees and managers working within one specific business area at the company's HQ in Stockholm. Furthermore, the findings of this study are only based on a selected number of employees and managers, and only an internal perspective has been incorporated. This means that the perceptions of customers and shareholders have not been taken into account. Thirdly, this study has been focused on merely one specific HR practice, which limits the understanding of the role other HR practices could have for the creation of voluntary employee turnover in this case. These limitations also need to be considered, as the result cannot be entirely generalized to the other business areas of the company nor to other cases, countries or other industries where any of these contextual factors differs. Based on these limitations, for future research we therefore suggest studies examining the role of other HR practices besides performance appraisals. Moreover, we also suggest that it could be interesting to investigate the occurrence of voluntary employee turnover from a process-based perspective within other knowledge-intensive firms or industries, where they experience a high level of voluntary employee turnover despite their use of HR practices. Hence, similar processes or mechanisms that have been found in this case might certainly be encountered in other knowledge-intensive firms or industries that also are experiencing a high level of voluntary employee turnover. These suggestions for future research could contribute to further insights to the field of voluntary employee turnover, as well as to the question of how an

organization can experience a high level of voluntary employee turnover despite the use of HR practices that are supposed to enhance the retention attitudes among employees.

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