KNOWLEDGE SHARING IN ACADEMIA AND IN THE CONSULTING INDUSTRY

-A COMPARATIVE STUDY-

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Acknowledgements

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Abstract

As we have shifted from a goods-centered logic to a service-centered logic, knowledge has become a key parameter for success. The management knowledge industry has expanded over the years, where knowledge constitutes the core product. Knowledge sharing has become an important process to develop new knowledge and to retain it in the organization. Academia and the consulting firms are two important actors in the management knowledge industry, with different approaches towards managing knowledge. Both spheres interact with each other. However, in recent years they have started to grow apart. The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the differences in knowledge sharing between academia and the consulting industry. Our focus is on motivational factors and possibilities to share knowledge. The study is conducted through semi-structured interviews with professors from the Department of Business Studies at Uppsala University and senior consultants of four of the largest consulting firms in Sweden. We conclude that the two spheres are driven by different motivational factors. They also utilize different information channels for sharing knowledge. This stems from the fact that the spheres are inherently different with academia acting as a knowledge creator and is non-profitable, whilst the consulting industry more utilizes already existing knowledge and also has a demand to be profitable.
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1. Introduction

We have over the past decades seen a shift in focus from goods towards services and relationships. As Vargo & Lusch (2004) put it we have moved from a goods-centered logic to a service-centered logic. The “new” market is focused on customers’ wants and needs. Following from this, knowledge has become a more important parameter. Many approaches in a variety of disciplinary contexts, such as sociology, philosophy, social psychology etc., have been made to understand and define what drives the process through which an individual gains and disseminates knowledge (Patriotta, 2003). Ackerman et al.(2003), among others, state that a firm’s knowledge and its ability to produce knowledge constitute the core of the firm.

Kipping & Engwall (2002) bring forth that over the past years there has been a rapid growth of interest in the management knowledge industry. These are industries with knowledge as the core product. Two important actors are academia and consulting firms. Much of the literature has focused on the explosion of the consulting industry. However, academia and the consulting industry are closely interlinked. The former mentioned institution provides future managers and consultants for the companies, while the latter have come to influence educational curriculum. Thus, there exists an interesting interplay between these two spheres. Alvesson (2004) adds that both consultants and academics highlight knowledge as a key element in the organization.

Kipping & Engwall (2002) emphasize that despite their similarities the combination of academia and consultancy might be unfeasible. The specialized research in academia differs from what is seen in the consulting industry. Furthermore, academia has downplayed the advantage of practical experience and the consulting firms have grown larger and grown apart from the academic setting.

1.1 Problem statement

One part of managing knowledge is knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing can be used as a tool for retaining and developing new knowledge in the organization. According to Teigland (2003) the nature of knowledge is that it is situated in practice. Individuals within the certain practice create boundaries around their practice, where their knowledge is embedded. This makes it easier for knowledge to be shared within the practice but it is more difficult to share knowledge with others outside the same.
According to Kipping & Engwall (2002) academia and the consulting industry both utilize knowledge in their daily work. Academia’s main goal is to generate new knowledge, while the consulting industry focuses on utilizing existing knowledge in their everyday work. Thus, the role of the worker and the way of utilizing knowledge must differ between these two spheres. In our study we want to investigate whether there are any differences the knowledge sharing process, in the academic world and the consulting industry, respectively.

1.2 Purpose
The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze if there are any differences in knowledge sharing between academia and the consulting industry. By differences is meant in motivational factors and in possibilities to share knowledge.

Our research questions are:
1) What are the motivational factors for knowledge sharing?
2) What kinds of possibilities exist for knowledge sharing?
3) Are there any differences in knowledge sharing between academia and the consulting industry?

1.3 Delimitations
The focus of this paper is on knowledge sharing. We examine the motivational and possibilities to share knowledge, to see whether there are any differences between these two settings and also if this has an impact on how knowledge is shared. Discussions about knowledge sharing also tend to include the type or nature of knowledge, as an important factor for knowledge sharing. We choose to disregard from this parameter in order to fully focus on differences regarding the two above mentioned factors. In other words, we are not interested in the actual knowledge, but what makes people more or less prone to share it. We do not aim to draw general conclusions from the sample utilized in this investigation. Academia in this study is represented by the Department of Business Studies at Uppsala University, and not the academic world in general.
2. Theory

2.1. Introduction to organizational knowledge

There are many theorists and theories on knowledge and knowledge is defined in different ways. Tsoukas (1996) views the firm as a knowledge system. Knowledge is not something given, it cannot be contained by a single individual and it is not predetermined which enhances the concept of knowledge as inherently abstract. Organizational knowledge is something emergent, evolving and should not be mistaken or equated with knowledge possessed by any individual. According to Tsoukas & Vladimirou (2001), organizational knowledge is more than the sum of the individual knowledges in the company.

Huber (1991) brings up the fact that organizations often do not know what they already know and they cannot possibly know what they need to know. Different organizational units might have information that would enhance the overall effectiveness of the organization when combined. However, these organizational units are unaware of this fact and how to disseminate the information. The organizational unit in need for the information normally does neither know about the whereabouts of such information, nor how to access it.

2.2 Tacit and explicit knowledge

A split popularised was made by Nonaka (1991) who talked about a knowledge dichotomy in the form of tacit or explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is defined as hard to express and is often acquired through experience, either individually or by belonging to a group. Explicit knowledge surrenders itself for dissemination. This form of knowledge can be found in databases, corporate policies or other information channels. Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995) talk about the interplay between these kinds of knowledge and the transformation process associated with them. Nonaka et al. (2000) argue that both forms are essential. A written speech is useless without the tacit knowledge of how to deliver it. Thus explicit knowledge without tacit insight to back it up, quickly loses meaning.

Another theory is provided by Tsoukas (1996) who opposes this view arguing that splitting knowledge into tacit and explicit is not only unfeasible, but impossible. In line with Polanyi’s work (1962) this view entails that tacit knowledge can indeed be expressed with the right attention focused on it. Explicit knowledge always has a tacit part to it. Tsoukas (1996) does not agree with Nonaka’s view that tacit knowledge should be explicit knowledge internalized into the
organization, but points to what is labeled as tacit knowledge as necessary prerequisite for all kind of knowledge.

2.3 Knowledge sharing
According to Tsoukas & Vladimirou (2001), in order for the organizational knowledge to develop it is not only important for individuals to continuously improve their knowledge, but also equally important is to disseminate it. Knowledge sharing is a continuous process; by creating favourable conditions the possibility for knowledge dissemination increases. Thus, in order to have a well-functioning knowledge sharing process, motivation and possibilities for sharing are important factors.

2.3.1 Motivation to share knowledge
Evangelou & Karacapilidis (2005) describe motivation and management as an important factor for competitive advantage. Motivation is also of utmost importance if the goal is vague in the organization. Verbal encouragement to participate in knowledge sharing activities are necessary, however not sufficient without motivation. The major reason why knowledge sharing processes fail is because of the lack of interest or motivation from the employees side to participate in such activities. Chou & Tsai (2004) point out that the individual must be aware of the need, the value and the benefits of knowledge in order to actively participate in knowledge sharing activities. Knowledge sharing has roots in cognition of the importance of such systems.

Ipe (2003) describes four motivational parameters considered important for knowledge sharing:

1. Knowledge as power - Evangelou & Karacapilidis (2005) hold out that the individual worker might feel that sharing knowledge might jeopardize his or her edge as an expert. Ipe (2003) argues that the view of knowledge as power might impede the knowledge sharing process. Retaining information might be used as a tool to control other coworkers, but also to protect the own position in the company.

2. Reciprocity - Ipe (2003) describes this dimension as the perceived willingness for reciprocal sharing of knowledge in the working environment. The individual perception that sharing of knowledge as an equal process in the organization is important. Reciprocity and the perception that the shared information makes a difference and helps others is considered a strong incentive for knowledge sharing.
3. **Relationship** - Evangelou & Karacapilidis (2005) point out that individuals often choose not to participate in knowledge sharing activities because of lack in security or confidentiality. According to the authors, this must be remedied through elaborate security protocols. Ipe (2003) holds out the importance of a trustful relationship with the recipient of the knowledge shared. Suspicion opposes the will to share. Trust is important and without it, nothing will suffice to motivate the individual to share his or her knowledge. Furthermore, employees are more likely to share their knowledge with people on higher status levels, like managers. Managers on the other hand are more prone to share knowledge among people at the same level in the company.

4. **Incentive system** - Hansen et al. (1999) emphasize the importance of a supporting incentive system in order to make people share knowledge within the organization. Ipe (2003) categorizes two different kinds of incentives for knowledge sharing: **tangible or intangible**. The former mentioned denotes monetary or other tangible kinds of rewards. The latter form of incentives is for instance the sense of involvement, heightened ability through contribution and empirical findings. Knowledge sharing is positively correlated with incentives, however intangible motivational factors might be necessary for this process to be efficacious. According to Evangelou & Karacapilidis (2005) most productive is an employee that is by what he or she is doing, is the most productive.

### 2.3.2 Possibility to share knowledge

Hansen et al. (1999) puts forward two ways of managing knowledge often utilized by the consulting industry: **codification or personalization**. A claim is made that each successful firm focuses on one of these paths. Emphasis is made that following both at the same time is unfeasible and a proposal is made for an 80-20 split, i.e. 80% of the more dominant strategy of the two and 20% of the other one.

#### 2.3.2.1 Codification

The codification strategy means that knowledge is codified, stored in databases or information systems where it can be accessed by other actors within the organization. Other tools for codification could be training, emails, meetings etc. The codification is described as extracting knowledge from the individual which makes it possible to access for other organizational members. This method is more feasible for firms with more standardized problems where reusing knowledge
keeps costs down. When a product or package based on knowledge is created, it can be utilized over and over again to generate revenue. Hansen et al. (1999) suggests that IT can be used to gather and distribute codified knowledge.

Evangelou & Karacapilidis (2005) argue that firms need a good absorption capacity and ability to show results of the knowledge sharing. A worker will be disinclined to share knowledge if he or she cannot see the results of this. Thus user-friendly and interactive channels are advantageous. Chou & Tsai (2004) also point out that information systems are important for the creation of new knowledge. Furthermore, involvement from the employees is important for the success of any information system. Huber (1991) mentions that the information flow needs to stay below a certain threshold value where it is still possible to process. Overflow of information makes it difficult for employees to use the system as interpretation becomes difficult. Based on the fact that people process information differently, even a uniform overflow will create discrepancies in interpretation.

2.3.2.2 Personalization

This strategy is characterized by utilization of personal contacts. Technology like computers are not used to store knowledge but to provide possibilities for actors in the company to contact each other. The solution to a problem is reached by communication between different organizational actors. This form of knowledge sharing is costly in time and in pecuniary resources. The process cannot be systematized and is thus hard to make more efficient. On the other hand firms applying this strategy can most often charge more for their services. For firms with a personalization strategy, more informal information channels are beneficial. These could be social relationship; build of trust, friendship and respect etc. IT has a different role here in comparison to the codification approach as it is primarily used for direct communication (Hansen et al. 1999).

In personalization, dialogue is an important tool. Ballantyne (2004) and Tsoukas & Vladimirou (2001) emphasize that it is not enough to have knowledge it must also be disseminated to the members of the organization. Thus it is important to create explicit rules and principles. Because of the dynamic nature and the constant flux of knowledge and information, these should just serve as guidelines to shape the collective understanding and facilitate the emergence of learning through practice. One must also have an organizational structure where the communicated knowledge is actually implemented at the individual level. Ballantyne (2004) continues by bringing up the dialogue as an important tool for knowledge sharing. In contrast to discussions, which are more concerned with the exchange of opinions, the dialogue aims to create a deeper understanding.
between the actors through a two-way communication. This strengthens also the relationship between individuals which is an important antecedent for organizational learning. Many ideas are brought forth through dialogue. However, this might be so ad-hoc or informal that the people involved do not pay attention to this co-creation of new knowledge.

2.4 Our knowledge sharing model

In our model we want to focus on what possibilities people in the academic world and in the consulting industry have to share knowledge and what motivation they are given to do so. Thus the model encompasses two main parts: Motivation and Possibility to share knowledge.

In the motivation part we focus on four parameters: Knowledge as power, Reciprocity, Relationship and Incentive system. It is important for the motivation to share knowledge that the individual and organization can see the benefits of sharing. The chosen parameters contribute to the perception of an open environment for knowledge sharing. The possibility part will comprise two parameters: Codification and Personalization. Both of these ways to manage knowledge might exist in the company. However, the company should according to theory (Hansen et al. 1999) pertain predominately to one of these two. Depending on what strategy the company chooses, different information channels or different ways of using existing ones might be more appropriate to support this system. The two parts are highly interlinked. In order to share knowledge motivational factors are important; however not enough if there is a lack of possibilities and information channels through which to disseminate the knowledge. Similarly, to have an information system without the motivation to share is equally ineffective. Thus, in our model knowledge sharing occurs in the union between the motivation and possibility part (Figure 1). The first three motivational factors contributes mostly to the perception of knowledge sharing for the individual. The last one, together with the possibilities to share knowledge, create the foundation and channels through which to disseminate knowledge from the individual to the organization and its members.
3. Methodology

3.1 Choice of method

According to Bryman & Bell (2003:9-10) most often within qualitative research the theory comes into sight out of the gathering and the analysis of data. A qualitative method in the form of semi-structured interviews, is employed to gain a deeper and more detailed understanding. We believe that the abstract phenomenon of knowledge sharing is better captured by interviews rather than by the use of for instance a questionnaire. Questions are posed from a question form and the respondents can answer these freely. The advantages according to Bryman & Bell (2003:343) are that answers are not forced out of the respondent and allows for additional questions. However, the disadvantages are that this process is time consuming regarding administration. It also requires more time and effort from the respondents. By meeting the respondents in person we have a chance to create a dialogue which creates depth. This empirical data consists of eight interviews in total. The respondents are informed about the general outline prior to the interview session but not informed about which models or theories the questions are based on.

3.2 The interviews

The starting point for our study is the process of knowledge sharing. We attempt to capture this process by applying our theoretical framework. The respondents were chosen to get an overview of academia and the consulting industry. First, we interviewed four senior consultants from four of the largest consulting firms in Sweden. We proceeded by interviewing four professors from the Department of Business Studies at Uppsala University. We chose the Department of Business Studies because it is an interdisciplinary subject where different aspects of the society are treated. This was an attempt to match the numerous areas of expertise harboured in the consulting industry.
In order to facilitate the comparative work between academia and the consulting industry, we fashioned similar questions to both professors and senior consultants (Appendices 1&2). We chose to interview senior consultants and professors because of their working experience. Our assumption was that we could get a more overall picture when interviewing senior consultants because they possess more knowledge in comparison to colleagues with less experience in the company. In an attempt to find people with relatively equal experience in the academic world, we turned to professors. We believe that the variation regarding the professorial role is small within this department. However, in order to add up to the number of senior consultant respondents we interviewed four professors.

### Table 1. The respondent groups participating in this study of knowledge sharing and differences between academia and the consulting industry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent group</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 Senior consultants</td>
<td>Creating a generic picture of the consultancy industry. Interviews with the four largest consulting firms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Professors</td>
<td>Creating a generic picture of academia or more exactly the Department of Business Studies at Uppsala University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.3 Operationalization

Our model encompasses motivational factors and possibilities to share knowledge. The questions are created not to be leading. We also tried not to include complex terms and concepts in the interview guide. Explanations were given, when the respondents not fully understood a question. We started out with “General questions” to gain some knowledge of what the respondents think about knowledge and whether the company was perceived to work with knowledge sharing.¹

Regarding the motivation to share knowledge, we wanted to examine the perception in the company on the different parameters of our model. In order to find out whether knowledge can be used as a tool to gain career advantages, we asked about the perceived importance of sharing knowledge.² For the reciprocity factor we wanted to find out whether the results of knowledge sharing could easily be seen by the respondent.³ We also tried to find out about the relationship aspect through these questions by asking how open the climate is in the company or department.⁴ Finally, we addressed the incentive system parameter where we asked whether there exists such a system, what the nature of it is and if the respondent can see any possible improvements.⁵

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¹ Appendix 1&2, Q1-2.
² Appendix 1&2, Q3.
³ Appendix 1&2, Q4.
⁴ Appendix 1&2, Q3-5.
⁵ Appendix 1&2, Q6.
Our last category treats the possibilities for knowledge sharing. Here we wanted to find out what kind of channels that exist for knowledge sharing in the consulting firm or academic department, respectively. We tried to examine the structures for a codification or personalization strategy in the firm or department. We therefore asked about the formal and informal channels for knowledge sharing in the organization. We also wanted to find out which of the two strategies the firm or department mainly adheres to. Furthermore we wanted to hear the respondents’ views on the applicability of formal and informal channels respectively. The last important factor was communication. We were interested to see if the organizations utilize dialogue or more of a one-way communication strategy.

3.4 Trustworthiness and authenticity

Bryman & Bell (2003) discuss that some researchers question the applicability of the reliability and validity concepts for qualitative researches. Trustworthiness and authenticity are seen as more relevant. Trustworthiness consists of four parameters: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility denotes the fact that the researcher has correctly understood and depicted the examined social reality. We aim to accomplish this through recording the interviews and later transcribe them. Through recording the interviews we eliminated the distracting element of taking notes during the interview sessions (Bell, 2005). It also provided the opportunity to listen repeatedly to them and thus lessens the chance of misconceptions (Bell, 2005).

Transferability on the other hand handles the issue of transferring findings from a small sample, often used in qualitative research, to general implications. As stated we do not aim to make general statements from our small sample of consultants and professors from one department. We can though, aim to provide indications of what impact these findings would have in other milieus.

Dependability denotes an auditing approach for qualitative research. We believe that the dependability of the paper will be enhanced through the auditing nature of the thesis seminars. Before interviewing the respondents the questions were audited by our peers. This gave us the opportunity to adjust some questions in order to capture necessary information for our study. Our
peers acted as auditors with different backgrounds, preconceptions and knowledge. This heightened the trustworthiness of our findings through being tested by others.

Finally, confirmability has to do with the objectivity of the research. We believe we created and posed the questions as neutral as possible. Furthermore, the interviewees were not, prior to the interview session, informed about the theoretical framework the study was based on. This procedure was an attempt to eliminate discussions and preparations among the respondents, their colleagues and environment. These measures aid to provide us with an objective setting. However, we are well aware that total objectivity is desirable, but difficult to reach.

The trustworthiness of the interviews could be harmed when recording them. Bryman & Bell (2003) mention that the recording can make the respondent pressured and uncomfortable. In order to lessen this effect the respondents are upon first contact informed that the session will be recorded and given the opportunity to decide whether they want to participate or not. The fact that we interviewed senior employees in both academia and the consulting industry might lessen the effect since they can be expected to be familiar with this procedure. Another factor to take into consideration is that the respondent might answer what he or she believes is expected, either from the interviewer or the organization. This might be more predominant when the respondent has little experience about the subject treated during the interview session. We believe that this effect is small in our study based on the fact that we treat a central concept for all of the respondents. By not providing the respondents with the questions prior to the session could also help to eliminate this effect. By choosing to interview four senior consultants within the four largest consulting firms and four professors from the same department, we believe we can rather well represent different point of views.

According to Bryman & Bell (2003), the term authenticity treats the political impact of the research. There are different dimensions treating whether the research correctly captures and depicts the variations in opinions that might exist in the examined milieu. Authenticity also has an ontological and education dimension. Regarding the before mentioned the research should help the actors to better understand each other, while the latter should help them to better understand the social milieu in which they are working. It also treats whether the research performed will encourage members to change their way of working or provide them with the means to do so.
Given the small timeframe we have for this investigation we are well aware of the risk of bias in our empirical data. We find however that four interviews with senior consultants should give us a good enough view of how knowledge sharing is perceived in the largest consulting firms. Furthermore, four professors from the same department should provide us with good information about this process in academia. We do not aim to compare the top and bottom level of the consulting firms and academia respectively. However, we think that these actors correspond roughly to the same levels of their respective organizations which will provide us with comparable information from our respondents. Since we are not questioning the working procedures in any way we believe we can avoid the defensive stance often seen in managers when they sense that the efficiency and effectiveness of the firm is put under investigation.

4. Empirical Data

The respondents participating in this study were four professor from the Department of Business Studies of Uppsala University and four senior consultants from four of the largest consulting firms in Sweden (Table 2). The respondents are given reference names in the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Work place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Department of Business Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Department of Business Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Department of Business Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Department of Business Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Senior Manager</td>
<td>Accenture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>Senior Consultant</td>
<td>Cap Gemini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Senior Consultant</td>
<td>Deloitte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4</td>
<td>Senior Consultant</td>
<td>KPMG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1 Academia

4.1.1 General questions

Most of the professor respondents have slightly different views on knowledge. Their views are often quite elaborate. Respondent P1 and P3 define knowledge as the ability to perform something well. Respondent P1 adds that there is a practical side. You may think you know many things without ever putting it into practice. Thus, it is important to manifest knowledge in action. Activity serves as the foundation for knowledge. When you develop something new through changing the old, you can talk about knowledge development. In an organization, knowledge can be created by some and transferred between some, but not by everyone. Through combining different knowledge you can become more competitive. Respondents P2 means that it can only be counted as
knowledge when it enters the human consciousness. The actual words and information found in e.g. books, becomes knowledge first when you hear or read about it. Respondent P4 mentions a split into three parts. There is a sorting knowledge, denoting the sorting of knowledge into different compartments. The next level is to understand the sorted knowledge. This includes finding the models needed to make sense of the new problem. The next level is causality. It is not enough to only see what you have and what you can do with it. The next step is to see what effect this process has. The causality is what you need to understand and work with when performing research in academia. They work with understanding complex relations and how to explain them.

All professor respondents agree that academia works with knowledge sharing. Respondent P1 means that there are two different kinds of knowledge sharing. There is one where one party codifies knowledge and hands it out. The other is that both actors have important knowledge. For instance, if two actors are developing a new product they must see to each others needs to be able to solve the problem. In this case both actors will have gained new knowledge from the process. Respondent P2 says that gathering and sharing knowledge is what universities are all about. Respondent P3 and P4 emphasize lecturing as a way to share. You teach others about the knowledge you have sorted. You sit down and discuss how to push the problem forward. This is how it works in academia. You perform research and put it into teachings. However, there is much less knowledge sharing among colleagues. You are supposed to keep to your niche. Recently people in academia have become more specialized. Respondent P3 further talks about teaching as an important tool for academic workers to disseminate knowledge, since no one else uses this forum. He says that companies could put more effort into keeping in contact with academia, since it is the root of much knowledge. Many students feel that the industry is asking for specialists and thus complain that the education given to them is too general. However, companies are often not interested in specialists, since that is taken care of internally. More contact and show of interest from the trade and industry would be beneficial.

4.1.2 Motivational factors
The overall opinion regarding knowledge sharing is to share everything. Respondent P2 and P4 say that you should disseminate as much as possible. Researchers resemble owner-managers, you want your ideas to come out, to be scrutinized and to be accepted. If you like your job you want to share it as well. Respondent P1 and P4 say that some people might try to protect their ideas and fear they will be stolen. However, in social science there is a fairly open climate. There are territories of course and someone might not be greeted with open arms. You might worry about whether some
other research group can pre-empt you if you let go of certain knowledge. Considering that very few articles get published there is some competition regarding this. Respondent P2 also finds work to go out with a high rate. This is not disadvantageous but the problems requiring long thought-processes might suffer a bit. Respondent P3 brings up that there might be a fear of confronting reality. Researchers can become afraid that their work is meaningless and to avoid this issue you are reluctant to search for contact with the industry. He believes that few groups within the department would work as consultants for a consulting company, should they be given the opportunity. Respondent P1 points to the fact that research has shown that if you share more, you will also gain more. If you send out knowledge you will not automatically lose your position. If you do not share, less people are dependent on you and it is easier for the organization to rid itself of such an actor. It is hard to see that someone could gain an advantage by withholding information, when you are constantly subjected to flows of information. Respondent P3 says that all the knowledge kept in academia should sooner or later benefit the general population, but nothing says that all knowledge needs to be shared this instant. Much knowledge in academia is useless for many people in the industry. It is very important to distribute relevant knowledge to the right groups and not flood them in unnecessary information.

Three of the respondents (P1, P2, P4) on the one hand say that they have little contact with the consulting industry in their daily work. Most of them have not participated in any consulting assignments. Respondent P4 holds out that as a member of academia you are given little opportunity to participate in traditional consulting activities. Sometimes you meet consultants when you are lecturing at companies. You can provide new ideas and views but you are normally not working with them. Often you might be asked to provide consultants with information as a researcher. Respondent P3, on the other hand, states he has worked as a consultant on a regular basis. The major part of the job has been handled through a smaller consulting company, sprung from the academic institution and its research. You work during certain periods. Some people might work more than what would be recommended, with their academic assignments in mind. The core part of the company is made up by professors and associate professors. The climate has changed over the last decades. It is harder to combine the academic work with other activities now. There is more pressure to deliver today.

Regarding incentive systems the respondents say that there are no formal rewards for sharing knowledge. To share knowledge is a part of your job. On the other hand, if you are prudent and perform well you will reach higher levels. It turns into an implicit incentive system. Respondent P4
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says that you are evaluated on whether you have interacted with the society or not. You can see where you have given lectures and how many publications have your name on them. It is difficult to say how the system could be improved. Respondent P1 points to the fact that universities abroad use pecuniary compensations to researchers; based on in which journal your article is published. However, to have a working incentive system, it must be perceived as fair and just to everyone in the organization. This might be difficult to achieve because how do you compare a teachers salary and activities with a pure researchers? The respondent, however, means that incentives to encourage more focus on research might be beneficial. Respondent P2 says that many people tend to focus on research instead of teaching, with the competitive side regarding publications. He finds that the most important thing is to provide the society with well-educated students. This “product” is harder to measure and is not rewarded in Sweden.

4.1.3 Possibility factors
All respondents tell us about seminars as the prime formal structure for knowledge sharing. Respondent P2 and P4 also add education, conferences, publications, presentations and books. Respondent P1 says that you on the seminars treat joint questions, find out what other people are doing and discuss published papers. It is important to always be present to take part of new problems, questions and progress. All groups have their own set of meetings. Researchers might gather around a problem, have workshops where they sit down and discuss the matter and then you go home to read more articles about the subject. After that, you return and continue the process. Respondent P2 mentions that if you want some contact with the trade and industry you need to search for it yourself. There are some national interfaces for this.

Most respondents say that they use both a codification and personalization approach to share knowledge. Respondent P4 says that approximately half is handed down through writings and the other half through oral communication. Everyone has access to the electronic libraries, but you choose which information you look at, depending on your working role. It is not often that you need to do something from scratch. The answer is out there, it is just a question of how much time to put on information search and what you can do faster yourself. It is also the question of how far back in the references you feel you have to go to understand the background of the problem. Respondents P1 talks about the teacher-student relationship which is a classical example of codification. He puts forth that this is a simplified image of this relationship. If you hold a seminar with prepared and interested students you can create a debate. The teacher tries to steer the discussion, but is dependent on all participants. The actual codification is thus only a small part
and everyone, including the professor, leaves the classroom with new knowledge. One can further debate whether this is assessed through examination of the students. However, examination is about the foundation and basic understanding which can be further debated.

The consensus whether people socialize outside of work is that it is up to the individual. Respondent P4 says that since researchers resemble owner-managers, you choose how busy you are. Respondent P1 says that many become friends during their time as PhD students. The socialization outside of work lessens as you grow older and spend more time with your family. You have a relationship as colleagues, but it does not mean that you are best friends per se. Many researchers are friends, especially people from different institutions, both on national and international level. You do not compete for the same resources and can create social relationships solely based on joint interests.

All respondents find the informal channels important for knowledge disseminate. Respondent P1 and P3 talk about the importance of the active environment in the corridors of the department. You might meet up in the corridor or on the way to the lunch room and talk for a while. This might be the most important tool for knowledge sharing. You find out which people are interested in you and your work. You can be very spontaneous. Respondent P4 says that these channels create clarity in your thought process. You talk and test ideas. You can through this process see what works and what does not. You can then go back and revise or add to your ideas. This is very different from when you write articles, where it has to be perfect from the start. Respondent P2 and P3 point to the fact that more codification could inhibit the development of knowledge in this department. The informal structures work well. There are of course people you spend more time with, though. Respondent P2 mentions the start up of an alumni and a business economic association, where the university can interact with people in the industry and also from other universities. It is a formalization of informal channels.

Regarding the communication the respondents provide slightly differing views. Respondent P1 thinks there is much dialogue, since the Swedish academia is not that hierarchical. There are some parts that are more hierarchical, which is bad since decisions are sometimes not based on consensus. What is more important is that everyone can see what lead up to a certain decision. Everyone is an owner-manager which means that you cannot only spend time on communication. You need to produce something as well, which is made from your individual thoughts. There is also the risk of over-communication. Sometimes you meet too often, use too many resources and
do not come up with enough decisions. Sometimes there is too much communication, sometimes too little and sometimes it is a very good balance. Respondent P2 says that the communication between institutions or faculties is sparse. Despite the fact that your areas of expertise are adjacent in theory, it has been hard to build bridges between different groups in the university. He thinks that cross-boundary cooperation would be beneficial. Research and education should be discussed between departments. Respondent P3 brings up that, in his case, even the teacher-student relationship is associated mostly with one-way communication. Respondents P4 emphasizes that there are more discussions going on in academia. You do not have a lot of dialogues where people are debating amongst each other. Often groups are highly specialized and the only dialogue you see is within these groups. One might argue that a more open structure for criticism would be beneficial. They might need more time for reflection.

4.2 The consulting industry

4.2.1 General questions

The view on knowledge differs slightly for most of the respondents. Respondent S2 finds knowledge to be the raw material, in the form of information. Respondent S3 points to the fact that knowledge is a combination between what is learnt from books and what is gained from practical experience. Respondent S1 emphasizes that if knowledge is not associated with an individual it is some other form of asset. This is in contrast with respondents S4, who means that knowledge is nothing, unless it is shared. You gain knowledge through sharing. You need to share what you know, what you do and how you do it. As long as you do not share, the knowledge you hold is nothing special.

All the senior consultant respondents agree that their firms work with knowledge sharing. It is seen as the core activity of the companies. Respondent S1 says that you continuously learn from the knowledge disseminate among colleagues, from the contact with customers and through projects. Respondent S4 emphasizes the importance of circulation of people between projects. If you work with different colleagues in different projects you gain and share more knowledge. There is a basic level of knowledge on how to be a consultant and then you specialize in some area. Within the organization there is also a safety in knowing that knowledge for each project is out there, even if it is not your own personal area of expertise.
4.2.2 Motivational factors
The consensus among the consultant respondents is that it is advantageous to share all knowledge among colleagues. Furthermore, they claim that it is one of the most important activities in their respective firms. Respondent S1 says that theoretically one could withhold information in order to distinguish oneself. However, this is not feasible in practice. The consulting business is so much about sharing and if you fail to comply you will not reach the higher echelons of the company. He points out that his company has different dimensions on which you evaluate the employees. Knowledge sharing is a central part of this system and if you do not share you will not get a good grading. He further brings up that sometimes sharing might be impractical, since some knowledge is created through experience. You can try to share as much as possible but you cannot copy someone else’s knowledge completely. To reach higher positions you should try to specialize into some field. If you do exactly what is expected and you are as good as anyone else, then you will only get an average grading. The work is about distinguishing oneself from the crowd but this is not achieved through withholding information, rather by sharing as much as possible. Respondents S4 adds to this by saying that if you have the knowledge you will develop it by sharing it. You will always come off as the most knowledgeable. It would be hard to have a knowledge advantage. No one can take your experience from you, but you will not economically benefit from it unless you share it with your colleagues. The sharing might provide different angles and new knowledge in the end.

Respondent S3 brings up that sharing all information might have disadvantages as well. If you are flooded in information you might miss out on the important parts since you do not have the time or energy to search for it. It is a trade-off between quantity and quality of the shared information. If all information from the lower level workers to the CEO level is shared, it will be perceived as too much. Respondents S2 points to the fact that the firm chooses not to share everything since some information is more sensitive. Also, the turnover of employees is very high, which leads to a risk of information leakage. Even if you want to share everything it is not feasible to do so in practice. Respondents S1 also mention that you need to distinguish between internal and external sharing. Since the revenue is based on the project in which knowledge is disseminated and delivered, you cannot share everything with customers and competitors. Laziness is also a factor in the knowledge sharing process. Sometimes you do not have the energy to put information into the database, based on individual information discrimination. In other words, you perceive that the information will never be used again. Respondent S4 says that it depends on the complexity level of the problem. Sometimes specialists are called in too quickly. Instead of having a general knowledge sharing and
time to reflect on what the actual problem is, you leap the risk tending to the wrong issue. It takes time to make certain what the problem is. Sometimes specialists from customer companies search up specialists in the consulting industry to juggle ideas between each other. It is important to share knowledge, but also who you share knowledge with and how you use it.

The major part of the senior consultant respondents does not have any connection to academia in their daily work. Normally you only have a personal social contact with the university and that grows fainter over the years. Respondent S1 says that there is a connection to academia through joint research. An example is if you are handling a certain study that has some significance for a university. Respondent S3 says that you might have some contact when recruiting people to the organization. There are, however, people designated to keep up the contact with academia. Respondent S2 says that they sometimes look at essays and use some links from them in their research. Academia and the consulting industry is very different in the sense that as a student you are not supposed to copy and paste information, while for the latter it is a normal way of doing business. The consulting industry has information systems and databases in order not to have to invent the wheel in every new project. You can tell customers that you already have done something similar. You have to alter the service slightly to match every situation, but it would be a waste not to reuse the information gathered and stored in the organization. Respondent S4, however, states that his firm has constant contact with academia. They cooperate in projects with professors, and in the past they have sometimes even funded research projects. He emphasizes the importance of keeping contact with academia in order to follow the recent development and research.

Regarding incentive systems for knowledge sharing the respondents are in accord that there are no tangible rewards for knowledge sharing. Respondent S1 means that the incentive to share is your work. There are demands on you as an individual. The organization is formalized, if you cannot disseminate information, it will be unbeficial to you. It is up to you how much to share with colleagues, but the main driving force might be to see how far you can reach within the organization. The consulting industry is very dynamic, flexible and creates a good platform for future employment, should you choose to work elsewhere. Respondent S2 says that some people have the responsibility to see to that the information is disseminated upwards in the organization, but there are no actual incentives to share. Respondent S3 also brings up the intangible incentives of knowledge sharing. You become a contributor through sharing and it benefits you as you get more information about different projects and contacts with colleagues. His firm has a more
tangible incentive in the form of recognitions in the monthly news letter if you have contributed with valuable information etc. Through sharing you will learn more yourself, which becomes an incentive on its own. Respondent S4 says that if someone should find out that you did not document a finished project you are in trouble. The incentive for knowledge sharing becomes a question about keeping your job. It calls for more administration, but you have to do it.

4.2.3 Possibility factors
For all the respondents’ firms there exists some sort of database and forum to share knowledge among actors in the organization. Respondents S1 talks about their well known information system “Knowledge Exchange”. It is a forum to which all employees of the firm, all over the world, have access. You can follow all the projects going on in the organization at any given time. The system is highly sophisticated and you can search for information from active or finished projects, studies etc. There is an institute that conducts surveys with companies all over the world. Through this you can build trustworthiness for future customers and projects. There is a lot of reliable information, serving as a foundation when you are handling your customer contacts. Depending on your position in the organization you can have relevant information sent to you. An example is an article that treats your particular area of interest. The article passes through reviewers along the way so you never have to question the reliability of the information sent to you. You rely much on the information system. It serves as the first actor to turn to for information. Respondent S2 mentions their system “CAIN” which resembles a normal search engine on internet. Information after a finished project is supposed to be put up and you are evaluated on this. This is something more important for new employees. The president of the organization is not putting down all his information in the database. There are also different safety levels in the system. Respondent S3 talks about their “Knowledge exchange” as a global system. A new employee gets trained in how to use the system. You search for information when you start a new project, to see if someone has done something similar before or if there are any courses you need to take. You have a forum where you can put information during a project, which can be accessed wherever you are. However, to deposit information in the database is voluntarily. You are always supposed to deposit information after a finished project, but you discriminate which information to put up. Everyone in the organization has access to the information. Respondent S4 mentions that there are specific structures to document each finished project. There is a global database with different safety levels.

All the consultants say that their firms make use of meetings, local and global education. Respondents S1 and S2 point out that seminars and lectures are formal channels to share
knowledge internally. You also meet more often with people in your project group. You have regular meetings and talk about what is going on in the project. Respondent S1 mentions that the education in the organization is highly formalized. There are certain criteria on what you are supposed to know and master before you can reach the next level in the firm. They also use a lot of online courses. Respondent S2 mentions that the interaction is important to catch some of the informal sharing of knowledge. If you are simply uploading the information in the database you lose this dimension. You can follow the project easier and what hardships are met along the way. Respondent S3 talks about this as one level. You can also meet with the whole consulting group and the manager to see what is going on in the whole office. If someone has been on a conference or a course and has something new to share, a meeting is held as well. Informal meetings like over breakfast and lunch are very common as well. You might be out of the office most of the time, so when you are at the office these interactions might be valuable to share information. Meetings are more or less mandatory, but you have to prioritize your work sometimes. Respondent S4 says that some people are responsible to mediate the latest news. This is often done through seminars. Sometimes customers find out that you have interesting new knowledge for them and sometimes the firm is looking for knowledge exchange with their customers. It is process driven by both sides. You often create teams with experts in the particular issue you are working with. You can even invite people from offices abroad to take part of their experience and expertise.

Respondent S1 and S2 think that people socialize outside of work as well. You travel a lot with colleagues when you are working on projects. This makes you spend a lot of time together and create a lot of informal dialogues. Respondent S3 mentions that it is dependent on the family situation. Younger consultants spend more time together outside of work. You spend time with people from different areas of expertise which might lead to an exchange of experiences and knowledge. Respondent S4 thinks that few people see each other outside of work since you spend so much time together during projects.

All of the senior consultant respondents think that it important to have both formal and informal channels for knowledge sharing. Through the informal interaction you get to know more about colleagues’ personalities. You spend time together because you want to and thus create deeper bonds and understandings. Respondent S3 also mentions the importance of formal structures to profit from the knowledge sharing process. On the other hand, you might not dare to ask the same questions at a formal meeting as you do over the lunch table. Respondent S4 sees informal
meetings as preparations for formal meetings. You cannot have two separate formats, the informal becomes formal and vice versa.

Most of the respondents say that the organization makes use of both one-way and two-way communication. Respondent S1 points out that there are more one-way when referring to information going from the top to the bottom. When you look at projects you can see much more of a dialogue between actors. This is something which respondent S2 agrees with. The communication is very important according to respondent S1. The company is not selling goods, licenses etc. They sell services based on the competencies of certain group of individuals. Thus, it is important to keep a dialogue in order to heighten the knowledge. Respondents S3 says that he cannot see any hierarchy and that there are open dialogues going in all direction. Respondent S2 also points out that much communication might be referring to the database, which is there in order to assist you in each future project. Respondent S4 stresses the importance of continuous communication. Counselling is more about dialogue, while the accounting side has a more hierarchical structure with more discussions.

5. Analysis
5.1 General questions
Most of the respondents in the study seem to have a similar approach towards knowledge. Knowledge is seen as an ability to perform. Some of the respondents emphasize the importance of manifesting knowledge through activity. Knowledge is not worth much before it is actually used to create new products or knowledge. There is interplay between what can be learnt from codified knowledge and what is created through interaction with other actors. Respondent P4 provides us with a model of his own, regarding creation of knowledge. New knowledge is first sorted into different compartments, you then search for the models you need to understand this new information and finally, most importantly, try to understand the causality. It is not only important to gain and use new knowledge, but also to foresee the effects of it. Respondent S1 is the only respondent that brings up knowledge as something inherently individual. This is in contrast with our theory. The other respondents point more to the fact that knowledge is worthless before it is shared among people.

Both the professors and the senior consultants mean that their respective sphere works with knowledge sharing. However, for the consultants the sharing is perceived as a core activity. You continuously have to push forward to learn more from information shared between colleagues or
gained through customer contacts. You work with different people in different projects adding to the width and depth of your understanding. The view on knowledge sharing seems to be different in academia. The environment seems to be more relaxed, despite the fact that knowledge sharing is viewed as something highly important. Knowledge is codified and handed out or exchanged through interactions. There is not much sharing of knowledge between colleagues in academia, because you are supposed to keep to your own niche. Much knowledge sharing occurs through teachings. The research performed is codified, handed down and discussed in the lecture hall. Respondent P3 brings up that the industry could keep better contact with academia, as this would benefit both spheres. Academia would understand more what the industry is looking for and how the knowledge could best be used, while the industry will have a deeper understanding of where the knowledge came from and new directions, regarding research.

5.2 Motivational factors

From the interviews all the respondents say that all knowledge should be shared among colleagues. Most of the respondents also say that they believe it is hard to withhold information in order gain a competitive advantage within their respective sphere. On the other hand, academia is specialized, which results in knowledge being kept individual to a certain extent. This might not be because you want to gain an advantage and climb up the career ladder, but rather the lack of easily accessible information channels. In the consulting industry there are more formal structures to facilitate this. Knowledge sharing constitutes one factor on which you are evaluated. If you get a bad grading it will be difficult to reach the higher levels of the organization. The organizations are, in the interviews, depicted to encourage you to be open and share knowledge. Competitive advantage should be gained through specializing and not withholding information. We question the openness to share in the consulting industry. The consensus and first answer from all consultant respondents was that you should share your knowledge since you will always have an edge. However, many of them then list reasons why you should not share. It becomes a question of looking at knowledge as a source of power. Sharing all might lead to information overload, some information is more important than other, safety precautions, laziness and complexity level of the problem are different reasons given. This is also a question brought up in our model regarding the relationship factor. Security protocols are needed in order to make people comfortable to share information. Furthermore, which seems to be the most important part of it, trust appears to be of utmost importance regarding knowledge sharing.
The senior consultant respondents talk about the impossibility of having knowledge advantage, however in order to distinguish yourself from the crowd they also mention that this is exactly what you need to do, in the form of specialization. We believe that consulting firms attempt to attain knowledge sharing, which intuitively is the correct response. However, we think that the knowledge sharing only occurs within your particular group of specialists and that details are omitted, maybe necessarily, for the rest of the crowd. In order to provide different views and suggestions on how to improve certain knowledge, you need some basic understanding of the problems and issues. This might only exist in the expert group. It might be too idealistic to say that the one who shares important information will be regarded as the most knowledgeable, since this alone will not benefit the person’s professional life. It will be hard to just send out knowledge without getting, at least nearly, the equal amount back. This is mentioned as need for reciprocity in our theory section.

This might be different in academia since knowledge is created and tested much more than utilized in projects. It might be more difficult to put a price tag on knowledge; while in the consulting industry it is easier to see what benefits you can gain from your knowledge. Research and teachings are closely related. What is found in academia is not only shared among colleagues, but also goes out to students. There might be a lower level of competition in comparison with the consulting industry, despite the need to produce results in the contemporary academia. As a professor you work with your particular set of research questions, either individually or with your group. There are no candidates that constantly hunger for you position. Also, when you choose to quit or retire there might be much easier to replace you, because of the informal environment of academia. You do not have to be copied, but your follower can work with the research questions that interest him or her, within the predecessor’s area of expertise. The professor respondents also point out that knowledge need to be shared to be tested.

The consensus from the respondents’ answers shows that there are few interactions between academia and the consulting industry. The way the respondents mention interaction occurs with the other sphere is, interestingly enough, different for professors and senior consultants. The professor respondents bring forth that most interaction is through teachings in the consulting industry and offers, regarding consulting assignments, from the same. The senior consultants mention the major connection to academia is through joint research. The personal contact with academia fades after graduation. On the other hand, one professor respondent says that he has been working as a consultant on a regular basis. We can also see that this is in accordance with the
theory where it previously was easier to combine academic work with consulting assignments. However, less time can be spared for the consultant role in contemporary academia. Fewer people work in both spheres and when you do, your work in one of these leaps the risk of suffering from less commitment. The consultants, however, seem to agree that it is important for the industry to keep in contact with academia to keep up with research. One senior consultant (S2) highlights a difference between academia and the consulting industry, even regarding the lower levels, when he says that the latter is more about reusing the already present information. As a student you are meant to learn new things and you cannot plagiarize anyone else. Some of the senior consultant respondents say that you have some contact with academia when you are looking to recruit. We can also see the vicious circle of the two spheres growing apart. On the one hand the consulting industry does not spend much time following the development in academia. On the other hand, respondent (P3) mentions that the academic worker can be afraid of the real world and might think that his or her work is meaningless. Academia creates new knowledge, but nothing says how important or useful the new knowledge is before it is actually put to the test. What is theoretically considered perfect might face problems upon implementation.

Both professors and senior consultants say that there are no tangible incentives for sharing knowledge. However, they also hold out that to share knowledge will bring you benefits in the form of possible promotions. To share is a part of your job. Both sides work with sharing of knowledge. However, for a consultant it might directly disfavour his working position. If someone finds out that you did not put down information about a project, reprimands will ensue. This also stems from the fact that the consultants work is more framed by formal structures. There are certain sharing activities that need to be performed, with less room for spontaneity. Professors are also evaluated based on what they share. However, the factors on which they are assessed are not as formalised as in the consulting industry. You are supposed to provide the society with well-educated students, but this is hard to measure in comparison to whether a project has been documented or not, in the consulting industry. The guidelines for education are more general compared to the rules consultants have to conform to. The easiest measurable thing for people in academia is the research part where you can keep count of publications. Right now it is more a part of work, rather than something that brings you rewards. Something that can be found from the interviews is that there is also an element of compulsion in real practice. Involvement, contribution and learning through experience are things required and not voluntary in the consulting industry. Whether the individual is more motivated to share when forced to some extent; remains to be investigated.
5.3 Possibility factors

As mentioned in our theory section, there are two different ways of managing knowledge: codification or personalization. The consulting firms within this study show codification as a dominant strategy. The databases are a way of communicating and meaningful because they make it possible for all members of the organization to take part of all knowledge. One might not say the same thing about academia. The consulting industry reuses their knowledge in order to generate revenue.

Within the consulting firms in this study, we could see that the storing of knowledge in databases constitutes a large part of their work. All the respondents’ respective firms have some sort of electronic forum where you can share and search for information on active or finished projects. These systems appear to be more or less sophisticated depending on firm. Respondents S1 talks about the information system as the foundation and trademark of the whole company, while respondent S2 mentions the system more as a normal search engine. To put down information is prioritized and viewed as beneficial for the organization. It is a way of managing knowledge and, as mentioned before, you do not have to reinvent the wheel again. They want easy and quick access to information. The codification strategy of handling knowledge provides them with quick access, but is also necessary because these firms reuse their knowledge. The entire industry is based on reusing knowledge. As a consultant you get more trustworthiness with all the information of previous successful projects. The stored knowledge can be used to easier portray which kind of service the customer can expect to receive, when hiring the consulting firm. In academia there is not the same need to store knowledge as within the consulting industry. From the professor respondents there seems to be less formal structures in academia for knowledge sharing. Instead of specific databases there are more global electronic libraries from which you draw your codified knowledge. The theory states the need of a well functioning information system for knowledge creation. The system used in academia might, however, be sufficient for this purpose.

The consulting industry seems to make use of more formal structures in the form of meetings, internal education, seminars, conferences etc. to a greater degree than academia. There seems to be a constant need and pressure to keep up to date. This need for keeping up with the most recent research, however, the pressure level is lower. This goes hand in hand with the perceived nature of the two spheres, the consulting industry as primarily users of existing knowledge and academia as the creators, which might call for a more lax environment.
In accordance with the theory, respondent S3 mentions that the information flow can grow too big. Not only does the overflow of information make it impossible to interpret, some information might not even be read. This can result in a loss of valuable knowledge. The consultant relied a great deal on their databases for knowledge sharing, whilst professors relied more on the informal meetings. From the senior consultant respondents there seems to be little interaction outside of office hours in the consulting industry. This could be interpreted as the actors spending enough time together already, or the fact that you do not have much free time during a project. The respondents from both academia and the consulting industry seem to agree that the younger employees seem to socialize more. As you grow older you spend more time with your family. In the consulting industry the informal meetings seem to be used primarily to strengthen the personal bond, which is important for a functioning teamwork. The professor respondents emphasize the importance of the informal meetings for knowledge sharing. You create deeper bonds, but also have the chance to discuss research that interests you both. It is important to be present and part of the group in order to keep up with the most recent findings. You work with your particular area of interest, meet up, talk and then you can return to your chambers to revise or continue your work. The most important interactions might take place over the lunch or breakfast table.

Both academia and the consulting industry seem to have the same approach towards communication. Within the different groups there is much two-way communication in the form of dialogues, which according to theory is important for building strong relationships among actors. Top to bottom level of the organization is more associated with one-way communication. The CEO and manager levels of the consulting firm communicate more through discussions compared to dialogues. For the professors the fact that the informal channels are perceived as the most important might indicate accordance with the theory that much new knowledge is created through informal interactions. However, the actors might not take much notice of this. The professor respondents mention teaching as one mode of communication. One respondent (P1) talks about the view on teaching as one-way communication, as obsolete. Seminars with students should be used to create dialogues where knowledge is passed on to others and also used to create new understandings. In neither of the two spheres investigated there seem to be a good communication between groups. This is something that academia could benefit from. As one of the professor respondents (P2) puts it, there is little interdisciplinary interaction.
6. Conclusions & Implications

6.1 General questions
At first glance knowledge sharing might strike as something intuitively simple. However, this part of knowledge management is as elusive and complex as the nature of knowledge itself. The phenomenon known as knowledge has become more central and important for both researchers and consultants. The problem is how to define and measure something as abstract as knowledge, now that it has become so vital to understand. Furthermore, one must understand and appreciate the hardships that come with sharing something you cannot even define or formalize. There seems to be a basic perception that knowledge is associated with the ability to perform in one way or the other. However, to further attempt to explain the term knowledge might result in as many variations as there are respondents in any study.

In this study we found the view on knowledge sharing to be different between the two examined spheres. The consultant deals with a more hectic working environment, both physically and mentally. We believe that the more relaxed ambiance of academia stems from the fact that the consulting industry, to a much larger extent, has profitability as a driving force. There appears to be more of a demand in the consulting industry to link activity with profit. Professors and academic workers can decide more what they really want to research. They have more time and fewer people to answer to. We further believe this is a result of that academia works more with knowledge creation through research, while the consulting industry utilize the already created knowledge in their projects. To add to this, the level of stress is lower in academia, with less competition for positions. In the long run, instead of being thrown between projects, there seems to be more consistency. Research, over a longer period of time, follows a given direction.

6.2 Motivational factors
In the interviews conducted, all the respondents talk about the importance of an open climate, where you can share everything. In academia there seems to be less of a demand on sharing among colleagues. This goes hand in hand with the view of academia as a knowledge creating unit, where knowledge is handed out primarily to students and other researchers. The new knowledge is made official, but you do not force-feed anyone with the information. In the consulting industry, sharing seems to be perceived as more vital. However, despite the outspoken strive for openness, there appears to be many ways to justify why you should not share knowledge. We wonder to what extent withholding of information occurs in the consulting industry since there is a large pool of
knowledgeable, hungry consultants to draw from, should you not excel in the firm. You should be open but at the same time you should also specialize into some field. When you are a specialist, only a certain portion of people sharing your expertise might fully gain from your knowledge dissemination. The fact that there is a large turnover of employees in consulting firms, brought up by one of the senior consultant respondents, will also lead to the unfeasibility with an open knowledge sharing climate throughout the whole organization. You might unconsciously choose to, if not withhold then, keep the information to yourself longer than you have to. Knowledge might be thought of and used to gain power to a larger extent than what you are inclined to admit, because the truth is that there needs to be some factors on which to base promotions.

Furthermore, as the professor respondents point out, the reason for knowledge sharing in academia is primarily to test it. We believe that this way of working belongs to academia. It must be of importance for knowledge creation to put the research through a trial and error process. This is something you rarely see in the consulting industry. Knowledge is not shared to be tested, but rather to be used by other people. The knowledge shared in the consulting industry is normally, as previously stated, already tested tools ready to be used.

There are no pecuniary incentive systems in either of the two spheres examined in this study. Both academia and the consulting industry see knowledge sharing as a part of your job, rather than something that should bring you rewards. According to theorists you need the informal incentives in order to perform a good job. The best incentive is to feel that you excel at what you are doing. However, regarding the consulting industry one might question whether the threat of reprimands if you do not share information, provides this amenability to disseminate knowledge. You can bring the horse to the waterhole, but you cannot make it drink without the will, is a proverb that suits the situation. This would be in accordance with the theory that intangible incentives are the most effective. One can also say that promotions, as implicit as the respondents want to set it out to be, are associated with increased pecuniary rewards as well.

### 6.3 Possibility factor

In the consulting firms in this study we see a predominant codification strategy, which seems to work well for them. Consulting projects will sooner or later have similar elements, which make the storage of information from previous services useful. We believe that one of the main reasons why storing knowledge is more vital within the consulting industry is because of the legitimacy issue. The clients of the consulting industry require and pay for methods that work, methods that have
been tested and used. This is understandable due to the amount of money paid for the consultants’ services. Furthermore, academia encompasses researchers all over the world, working at different sites. Academic researchers can make good use of the vast amount of articles written. This is a system open to everybody. Consulting firms are more of closed systems with less transparency, which has to do with the need to be profitable. The knowledge and information they need to provide customers with, to best solve their problems, need to be kept more of a secret and cannot be found in general electronic libraries online.

We believe that within the consulting industry there is little room and need for creativity. It seems to be a highly standardized environment where projects are carried out “by the book”. They have specific ways of solving their problems. Professors often have their own niche that makes it hard for others to engage.

Regarding structures for knowledge sharing there seems to be more use for formal structures in the consulting industry, while the professors in academia highlight the importance of informal channels. As stated earlier, this might be a natural result from the fact that a more lax environment is needed for knowledge creation, while to become a profitable consulting firm, you always need to push forward. Otherwise, the informal meetings are more used to create bonds and relationships, which in turn will provide a good foundation for cooperation.

In our study, communication appears to be primarily two-way on the same level and one-way on different levels of the organization. This appears to be the same for both the consulting industry and academia. It might stem from the nature of communication that it is more conducive to have a dialogue with your equals, while there might be more one-way communication with the higher echelons of the organization.

To conclude, the purpose of this study is to find and analyze the differences in knowledge sharing between academia and the consulting industry, with focus on motivational factors and possibilities to share knowledge. We can see differences both in motivation and possibilities between these two spheres. Some theorists voice a concern that academia and the consulting industry are growing apart. The question is whether the split is something needed to be stopped or just a natural response to the more specialized and service related market we see today. The two spheres are working with knowledge, but their approaches differ, which shows in the knowledge sharing process. These differences might stem from the fact that academia works more with knowledge
creation, while the consulting industry focus more on utilizing existing knowledge. These two spheres might be so inherently different in the way work is conducted, that the limited interaction that already exists today, is sufficient. Maybe it is a fact that academia and the consulting industry is not involuntarily drifting away from each other, but that this is a natural development since the two spheres belong different parts of our society.

6.4 Suggestions for future research
Both spheres in this study seem quite pleased about the situation they now find themselves in. There are however always room for improvements. Academia seems to make good use of the informal meetings for knowledge sharing, which can in turn lead to knowledge creation. It might, however, be beneficial to make more use of the cross boundary cooperation. More interaction between people with different areas of expertise can lead to new ideas. This might not be more complicated than joint lunch breaks or other activities that creates opportunities for people to meet and informal channels to be set up.

The consulting firms in this study all predominantly utilize a codification strategy regarding their information channels. A fundamental part of these organizations are their databases. Thus, it would be interesting for future research to investigate the structures in a consulting firm with a predominant personalization strategy. Another related question is whether firms like that even exist. Can the firms, claiming to work with personalized services, function without formal structures like a database? It might further be interesting to see whether intangible incentives for knowledge sharing in the consulting industry are enough. Consultants say that knowledge sharing is a part of their job, and that this is sufficient. A study could examine whether consultants would be motivated if we take offers about promotions and higher salaries, out of the equation. It might further be interesting to examine whether there are any differences in knowledge management between academia and the industry regarding natural science organizations because research is being performed in both of these spheres.
References


Interviews

- Senior Manager, Accenture, 2008-04-16, Personal interview, company premises, 45min.
- Senior Consultant, Cap Gemini, 2008-04-18, Personal interview, company premises, 35min.
- Senior Consultant, Deloitte, 2008-05-07, Personal interview, company premises, 40min.
- Professor, Department of Business Studies, Uppsala University, 2008-05-07, Personal interview, university premises, 55min.
- Professor, Department of Business Studies, Uppsala University, 2008-05-13, Personal interview, university premises, 40min.
- Professor, Department of Business Studies, Uppsala University, 2008-05-14, Personal interview, university premises, 50min.
- Senior Consultant, KPMG, 2008-05-13, Personal interview, company premises, 40min.
- Professor, Department of Business Studies, Uppsala University, 2007-04-16, Personal interview, university premises, 45min.
APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONS FOR PROFESSORS

General Questions

Q1. What is knowledge to YOU?
Q2. Would you say that the academic world works with knowledge sharing?

“Motivation to share knowledge”

Q3. Do you see any advantages and disadvantages with sharing ALL knowledge?
   - Do people around you share as much knowledge as you want them to?
   - Can you find openness, territorial/ego thinking in the academic world?
Q4. Can you see the result of knowledge sharing activities you participated in?
Q5. Do you have any connection to the consulting industry in your daily work?
Q6. Are there any kinds of incentives in the academic world for knowledge sharing?
   - Is it tangible or intangible rewards?
   - Do you think that the incentive system could be improved?

“Possibility to share knowledge”

Q7. Are there any formal channels for knowledge sharing?
   - Meetings, tours, courses or similar activities?
Q8. How is the information system used?
   - Disseminate written down information?
   - Communication between actors?
Q9. Who has access to these channels?
Q10. According to you, do many people in the academic world socialize outside of work? Is this positive?
Q11. Do you see any advantages with formal or informal ways to share knowledge?
Q12. What is the communication like in the academic world?
   - One-way or two-way? (Dialogue or discussion)
   - What impact does it have on the knowledge sharing process?
APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR CONSULTANTS

General Questions

Q1. What is knowledge to YOU?
Q2. Would you say that the company works with knowledge sharing?

“Motivation to share knowledge”

Q3. Do you see any advantages and disadvantages with sharing ALL knowledge?  
   - Do people around you share as much knowledge as you want them to?  
   - Can you find openness, territorial/ego thinking in the academic world?
Q4. Can you see the result of knowledge sharing activities you participated in?
Q5. Do you have any connection to academia in your daily work?
Q6. Are there any kinds of incentives in the academic world for knowledge sharing?  
   - Is it tangible or intangible rewards?  
   - Do you think that the incentive system could be improved?

“Possibility to share knowledge”

Q7. Are there any formal channels for knowledge sharing?  
   - Meetings, tours, courses or similar activities?
Q8. How is the information system used?  
   - Disseminate written down information?  
   - Communication between actors?
Q9. Who has access to these channels?
Q10. According to you, do many people in the academic world socialize outside of work? Is this positive?
Q11. Do you see any advantages with formal or informal ways to share knowledge?
Q12. What is the communication like in the academic world?  
   - One-way or two-way? (Dialogue or discussion)  
   - What impact does it have on the knowledge sharing process?