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Managing the interactions between multiple identities in inter-organisational collaborations: An identity work perspective.

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Abstract

Inter-organisational collaboration (IOC) research considers the achievement of a collaborative identity as a key enabler of a successful collaboration. As a result, little has been said about the interactions between collaborative and non-collaborative identities. We build on narrative identity work and positioning theory, to explore how collaboration partners engage in identity work positioning to manage the interactions of the multiple identities emerging through the process of collaboration as they try to accomplish collaborative work. We illustrate this process through a qualitative longitudinal study of an educational partnership in Greece. Our analysis shows how IOC partners manage the interactions between collaborative and non-collaborative identities by positioning themselves, and others, in narratives of collaboration as part of their daily identity work when responding to emerging collaborative needs. Our research extends our current understanding of identity work processes in IOCs by demonstrating the paradoxical nature of the collaboration, which requires relying on both collaborative and non-collaborative identities for the successful achievement of aims. We therefore suggest that identity tensions should not be resolved but rather managed, since they enable partners to respond creatively to contextual organisational changes and make sense of the collaboration as it happens.

Keywords: Collaborative identity, non-collaborative identities, identity interactions, identity work, narrative positioning, inter-organisational collaborations

Introduction

The achievement of a strong collaborative identity among inter-organisational collaboration (IOC) partners is seen as a key enabler for a successful collaboration (Hardy, Lawrence & Grant, 2005; Zhang & Huxham, 2009). As a result, the vast majority of IOC identity studies focus on how to develop and maintain an overall collaborative identity that emphasises the similarities or shared characteristics around which collaboration partners can come together (e.g. Drach-Zahavy, 2011; Koschmann, 2012; Sammarra & Biggiero, 2001). IOC work, however, challenges the notion of a clear collaborative identity at two levels. Firstly, the collaboration itself has to be reproduced and enacted symbolically in every interaction as it constantly shifts (Hibbert & Huxham, 2010). In this shifting context, partners struggle to construct and maintain a stable collaborative identity. Secondly, partners may be coming from different organisational or professional backgrounds, and they will have to manage a number of identities (e.g. personal, organisational and professional) when engaged in collaborative work. Therefore, partners need the flexibility to move between collaborative as well as non-collaborative identities.

Our research contributes to the IOC identity literature in three ways:

First, while the idea of multiple identities is generally accepted by IOC studies, as Horstmeier, Homan, Rosenauer & Voelpel (2016) suggested, studies look at one specific identification focus. Horton & Griffin (2017) also added that the emphasis remains on a single identity target. Not surprisingly, there have been recent calls for research addressing how multiple identities interact (Miscenko & van Day, 2016) especially in shifting contexts, such as IOCs (e.g. Ellis & Ybema, 2010; Kourti, 2017a; Maguire & Hardy, 2005). Our research responds to these calls by exploring collaborative and non-collaborative identities simultaneously, focusing on how these identities interact. In particular, this research explores

how partners manage the interactions between collaborative and non-collaborative identities in IOCs and the tensions that these interactions generate.

Second, we examine the tension between collaborative and non-collaborative identities in IOCs, offering a complementary view to previous studies that have focused mainly on the negative aspects this tension generates (e.g. Hardy et al., 2005; Zhang & Huxham, 2009). We argue that identity tensions need to be maintained rather than resolved, since it is through their management that partners can more effectively and creatively respond to the changing needs of the collaboration.

Third, we show in detail how the management of multiple identities in IOCs is undertaken through the process of identity work. That is, through the range of activities individuals engage in to create, present, and sustain personal identities congruent with the self-concept (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). We develop previous identity work studies in IOCs (Ellis & Ybema, 2010; Maguire & Hardy, 2005), highlighting the importance of the positions that partners take and assign to others (van Langehove & Harré, 1999) when describing their collaborative work. Moreover, we show that, as partners reposition themselves and others in their collaboration narratives, the way they perceive and act towards the collaboration changes as well.

We begin by providing an overview of studies that explore collaborative and non-collaborative identities in IOCs. Then, we build an identity work positioning framework for the exploration of identity interactions in IOCs.

Theoretical framework

Identity interactions in IOCs

IOC research has traditionally focused on understanding the stable aspects of collaborations, looking variously at how to manage the collaboration development more

effectively (e.g. Crosby & Bryson, 2005; Taket & White, 2000), what phases the collaboration goes through (e.g. Das & Teng, 1997; Kanter, 1994) or how to achieve a stable collaborative identity (e.g. Drach-Zahavy, 2011; Koschmann, 2012; Sammarra & Biggiero, 2001). When looking at identity, research in IOCs still draws mostly on organisational psychology studies that follow a social identity approach (Haslam, 2004; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), stressing the group members' efforts to develop and maintain a stable group identity (Barbier, Dardenne & Hansez, 2013; Escartín, Ullrich, Zapf, Schlüter & van Dick, 2013; Meeussen & van Dijk, 2016). As a result, little attention has been paid to non-collaborative identities and their interaction with an overall collaborative identity.

Not surprisingly, organisational identity researchers are increasingly calling for studies that go beyond examining one specific identification focus (Horstmeier et al., 2016) or "a single, clear identity target" (Horton & Griffin, 2017: 287) to cover the "gaps [that] remain in our understanding of how multiple identities interact" (Miscenko & van Day, 2016: 236). In IOC research, this translates into looking at how collaborative and non-collaborative identities interact in the constantly changing IOC context (e.g. Hardy, Lawrence & Phillips, 2006; Kourti, 2017b; Maguire & Hardy, 2005; Zhang & Huxham, 2009). Our study aims to fill this gap.

The processual perspective in organisations stresses the dynamic nature of organisational contexts (Hernes, 2014; Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas & van de Ven, 2013; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002), emphasising flow and change rather than stability and continuity (Chia, 1999; Yu, Garcia-Lorenzo & Kourti, 2017). Likewise, the processual perspective on identity (DeRue & Ashforth, 2010; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Shotter & Gergen, 1989) stresses its fluidity (Gioia, Schultz & Corley, 2000; Haslam & Reicher, 2006), defining identity as provisional, temporary, negotiated and contested through ongoing social interactions

(Alvesson, Ashcraft & Thomas, 2008; Horstmeier et al., 2016; Horton & Griffin, 2017; van Dick & Wagner, 2002).

In IOC contexts, a processual thinking suggests that IOCs are complex and idiosyncratic, temporary evolving forums (Hibbert, Hyxham & Ring, 2008) where independent actors with different values, interests (Koschmann, 2012), backgrounds (Maguire & Hardy, 2005), agendas, cultures and institutional dynamics (Gray, 2008) come together to find solutions that they could not have found when working alone. As such, IOCs are highly unstable and tenuous (Hibbert & Huxham, 2010), shaped by their daily required activities. The collaboration arrangement that becomes visible at any point in time is just one out of many possible outcomes (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). In this dynamic context, it is difficult for partners to develop -let alone maintain- a coherent collaborative identity. In contrast, they have available multiple identities and seek ways to manage the interactions between collaborative and non-collaborative identities, such as personal, organisational or professional identities (Ellis & Ybema, 2010; Kourti, 2017a; Maguire & Hardy, 2005). The focus is therefore turned to the exploration of how partners manage multiple identity interactions.

Furthermore, when acknowledged, the existence of multiple identities in IOCs is usually portrayed as a negative conflict between collaborative and non-collaborative identities that needs to be resolved (Drach-Zahavy, 2011) to "achiev[e] effective collaboration" (Hardy et al., 2005: 61), improve "the quality of trust" and achieve collaborative success (Sammarra & Biggiero, 2001; Zhang & Huxham, 2009: 188). However, the processual and temporary nature of IOCs requires partners to variously align to, readjust or resist the changing needs of the collaboration when engaged in collaborative work (Ellis & Ybema, 2010; Kourti, 2017b; Horstmeier et al., 2016). As such, partners foreground or push to the background different identities in response to contextual collaboration challenges

(Ashforth, Rogers & Corley, 2011; Horton & Grifin, 2017; van Dick, Wanger & Lemmer, 2004). We therefore offer a complementary view to extant research that views the interaction of collaborative and non-collaborative identities as interference and, therefore, problematic. We propose that the maintenance -rather than the resolution- of the tension between collaborative and non-collaborative identities enables partners to respond more creatively and flexibly to the collaboration needs.

In our research we study how partners manage the interactions between collaborative and non-collaborative identities in IOCs by looking at how the partners of an educational collaboration in Greece identify with the collaboration while at the same time resist its pull by bringing forward their own personal, organisational and professional identities. We also look at the tensions that the interactions between collaborative and non-collaborative identities generate. We do so using the concept of identity work.

Identity work in IOCs

We find the linguistic metaphor of identity work especially useful in capturing the dynamic aspects and constant struggles of identity construction in complex and dynamic contexts, such as IOCs. Identity work has been defined as the set of activities that individuals engage in, so as to produce, maintain and present personal identities that match the self-concept (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003).

The concept of identity work is useful to study the management of interactions between collaborative and non-collaborative identities in IOCs for three reasons. Firstly, it implies strong agentic activity and allows us to put at the centre of the attention identities-in-action, and explore changes and durability in identity development (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). In this way, we place at the centre of inquiry how IOC partners bring forward identities that are situationally suitable (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010; van

Dick et al., 2004). Secondly, identity work emphasises the dynamic interaction between the individual and the environment (Ellis & Ybema, 2010). Therefore, it enables the weaving of social and personal identities, joining internal self-reflection with an outward engagement (Watson, 2008) as it involves "people being engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness" (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003: 1165). Finally, because of the previous two reasons, identity work allows us to explore interactions between multiple identities. In fact, a number of studies have used identity work to look at how organisational members negotiate the tension between their unique personal identity and other salient social identities (Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep, 2006), to provide strategies for coping with multiple, conflicting and/or ambiguous identities (Ashforth et al., 2011) or to maintain and affirm identities that are under threat (Pratt & Foreman, 2000).

The narrative approach to identity work that we use in our research sees identity as held in repertoires of coexisting self-narratives, to be selectively used in response to the context and the purpose of particular interactions (Alvesson, 2010; Toyoki & Brown, 2014). We further this view by emphasising the significance of the perspective and the position the author takes in each narrative (Boje, 1995). When partners position themselves in narratives of collaborative work, they produce a particular self (Davies & Harré, 1990), infused with the voices of the 'other'. This makes the positioning of the self in the narrative a joint relational effort (van Langehove & Harré, 1999). However, partners make sense of themselves in relation to others (Ellis & Ybema, 2010), since who we are is closely related to who we think others are (Jenkins, 2008). Partners, therefore, position simultaneously themselves and others (Davies & Harré, 1990).

The positions that partners take and assign to others in their identity narratives relate to particular collaborative practices, through which collaboration partners 'do' and 'redo' the

collaboration (Drach-Zahavy, 2011). As such, as the narrators' position changes, their perception of collaboration along with the way they act changes too. This multi-voiced and dynamic nature of the self is an adaptive response to the fractured social world in which individuals traverse (Gioia et al., 2000), and explains its critical relevance in dynamic working contexts, such as IOCs.

The figure below presents a simple process of identity work positioning. It illustrates that, when partners interact with the collaborative context, they engage in identity work in order to reposition themselves and others according to the experienced context. These positions relate to a particular perception of what the collaboration is and to what collaborative practices are appropriate.

Figure 1: A simple process of managing multiple identities in IOCs through identity work positioning
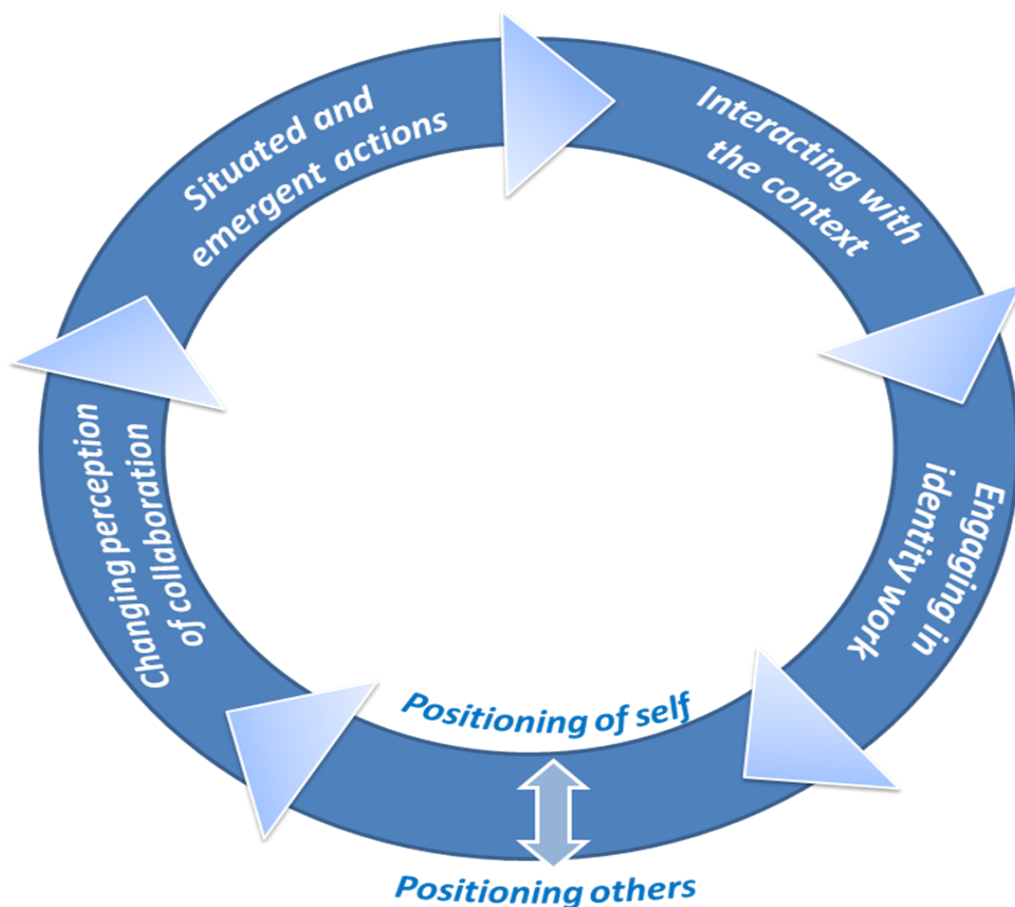
However, identity work positioning, as experienced in IOC contexts, is not always about seeking resolution through integrating multiple identities into a coherent narrative of self so as to move on. Sometimes, it is about continuing a process of identity work (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010) that does not necessarily achieve a secure sense of self but, in contrast, responds to the various changing needs of the collaboration. Indeed, identity work positioning seems particularly necessary when strains and tensions, that prompt feelings of confusion, contradiction and self-doubt leading to an examination of the self, are prevalent (Beyer & Hannah, 2002; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008). Thus, when IOC partners experience identity tensions, they engage in identity work seeking to identify, counter-identify and dis-identify with the collaboration (Maguire & Hardy, 2005: 11) or to construct an inclusive or exclusive self in relation to the collaboration (Ellis & Ybema, 2010). Yet, managing these tensions does not necessarily lead to a resolution through the achievement of a coherent identity (Ellis & Ybema, 2010). On the contrary, managing the tension between collaborative and non-collaborative identities in IOC contexts requires ongoing identity work in order to respond to the changing needs of the collaboration.

Exploring partners' identity work through narrative positioning allows us, therefore, to explore the explicit and implicit patterns of reasoning that become instrumental in supporting the actions partners undertake towards others in collaborations (Harré, Moghaddam, Pilkerton Cairnie, Rothbart & Sabat, 2009). In this way, the interactions between collaborative and non-collaborative identities can be analysed in a highly dynamic way, affording attention to how the emergence of a collaborative encounter is undertaken within situated and emergent collaborative actions, as well as in relation to interacting multiple identities.

Methodology

Research context

Identity interactions were explored in KEDDY Aitoloakarnanias Educational Collaboration (KAEC), where KEDDY stands for Centre for differential assessment, diagnosis and support of disabled children. KAEC was established in Messologi (Western Greece) in 2000 in order to help children with disabilities in the local area by offering free diagnoses and educational plans to support their studies. Following the government's protocol, the collaboration has four partners: KEDDY Aitoloakarnanias (KEDDY employees, namely, social workers, psychologists and teachers), local parent council (parents of disabled children), local public schools (head teachers and teachers) and local government services (employees from ACDCPE -Aitoloakarnanias central departmental council of primary education-; mainstream and special educational consultants).

Data Collection

The research was conducted with a case study approach which allowed a detailed inquiry into social processes, identities and activities which were examined in relation to the context in which they unfolded (Schwandt & Gates, 2017). Following other IOC studies that explored multiple identities with a qualitative approach (e.g. Ellis & Ybema, 2010; Hardy et al., 2006; Maguire & Hardy, 2005), we collected qualitative data to understand partners' social interactions and identities, to uncover the meaning that partners gave to them as well as to understand the context in which identities interacted (Howard-Grenville, Metzger & Meyer, 2013).

In particular, KAEC's weekly informal interactions and 13 formal partners' meetings were observed at four stages during a 16 month period. The longitudinal nature of the research allowed us to explore identity interactions at different points in time along with

changes observed in the collaboration (Hirschi, Jaensch & Herrmann, 2017; Meeussen & van Dijk, 2016). During KAEC's observation field notes and digital recordings were collected. The first notes were fairly broad but they became eventually more restricted, focusing specifically on identity tensions (Howard-Grenville et al., 2013).

Face to face, in-depth interviews were collected as well in order to learn more about the participants' interpretations and understanding of the collaborative process (Bruns, 2013), and the way they perceived themselves while collaborating at different points in time (Howard-Grenville et al., 2013). The interview questions were organised in the following themes: collaborative protocol (e.g. questions regarding individual roles and responsibilities; collaborative rules, structures and processes), emergent partners' interactions (e.g. questions regarding formal and informal interactions of the partners; the significance of individual and collaborative actions, and the meaning attributed to these actions; partners previous and present collaborative interactions), achievement of collaborative aims (e.g. questions regarding designed and emergent ways to achieve aims; facilitators and barriers in the support process; disagreements and agreements in the support process), and sense of belonging (e.g. questions on their understanding of the collaboration and partners' role in it; connection to organisation; importance of collaborative, personal, professional and personal aspects for their role and life). However, the interview questions were used as a guideline and not as a standardised format that indicates what should be asked, in what words and in what sequence (Schwandt & Gates, 2017). Moreover, the questions were adjusting to fit each partner-category. In total, 43 interviews were collected from 22 male and 21 female participants across all partner-categories. KEDDY employees and parents of disabled children were interviewed in KEDDY. School teachers and head teachers were interviewed in their schools, while the interviews with the government representatives were conducted in ACDCPE. The

length of the interviews ranged from 18 to 80 minutes, with a medium duration of 55 minutes.

Finally, a total of 85 informal and formal documents (e.g. partners' reports, blogs, newspaper comments, memos, government and collaboration documents, logs, emails, minutes from meetings etc.) were also collected. These indicated how different partners experienced and interpreted collaborative processes and changes. Out of these, 48 were deemed appropriate and were included for textual analysis (Maguire & Hardy, 2013).

The table below summarises all the data collected.

Table 1: Data collected at the four stages of the research

	Partners' Meetings Observed	*Interviews Collected*	*Documents Gathered*
Before field visit	-	-	7
1st Stage	2	5	13
2nd Stage	5	13	9
3rd Stage	6	16	10
4th Stage	-	9	9
Total	13	43	48

Data analysis

The records from the interviews and meetings were transcribed verbatim and, along with the field notes and the documents collected, were incorporated for analysis in the Atlas.ti software. A preliminary analysis indicated that the official process for the educational support of a disabled child that partners should follow (support process) is divided into four stages. We have called these stages Referral (First stage: referring a child to KEDDY), Diagnosis (Second stage: diagnosing a child's disability and producing an educational support plan),

Negotiation (Third stage: presenting the diagnosis and educational plan to parents, and agreeing their disclosure to the school) and Intervention (Fourth stage: making interventions for the child's educational support). All the texts were then divided into these stages.

Firstly, a thematic analysis was conducted. Thematic analysis allowed us to identify and analyse patterns of meaning across our qualitative dataset (Bruns, 2013). It also enabled us to obtain a general knowledge about KAEC, a collective definition of the collaborative identity among KAEC members and the implementation of the support process in the four stages. It also exposed emergent interactions which affected the way partners understood the collaboration and themselves as partners. This led us to interrogate the data a second time to find the different ways partners identified themselves within the changing context of the collaboration.

For the second analysis, we followed the organisational identity research that theorises identities as texts construed through language, discourses and narratives (Brockmeier & Harré, 2001; Kourti, 2016). We focused particularly on personal narratives, where partners described the context of the collaboration and positioned themselves within particular collaborative events and in relation to other significant IOC actors (Riessman, 2015). The personal stories illustrated the narrators' ability to produce and recreate identities through identity work (Kourti, 2016; McAdams & McLean, 2013). These personal stories were approached with a performative lens (Goffman, 1981), looking both at what was told (the events that the language described) and at the telling process (the positions of characters, listeners, self etc.) (Riessman, 2015). In total, 22 personal stories were identified: 7 from the Referral stage, 4 from the Diagnosis stage, 3 from the Negotiation stage and 8 from the Intervention stage.

Once each personal collaborative story was identified, we interrogated the data a third time, looking to make explicit the process of identity work. In order to do so, we used the

poetic structural analysis, which allowed us to identify the narratives structure (Gee, 1991). In particular, each text was firstly organised in stanzas, a particular 'take' on a character, action and event that involved a shift of events and participants from the preceding stanza (Gee, 1991). Stanzas were then organised into scenes (Riessman, 2008) that described the action that took place in a different setting, and the different ways narrators positioned themselves in these settings. Finally, the scenes fell into parts, larger units that built the story as a whole. Each narrative was framed by a main image that provided a unifying theme. Turning points were also identified. These were moments where partners indicated a fundamental shift in the expected course of the collaboration and identity positioning. This analysis allowed us to identify the different positions that partners assigned to themselves and others, and their affect on collaborative work.

Findings

The analysis of the 22 personal stories illustrated that KAEC partners identified with the collaboration and, at the same time, they brought forward personal, organisational and professional identities as a response to the changing needs of the collaboration. We followed the model that we developed in our theoretical framework (see figure 1) to explore KAEC partners' narrative identity work and the positions they assigned to themselves and others in their collaboration narratives. IOC members made sense of themselves recursively in relation to others by drawing distinctions or by assuming relatedness in order to manage the multiple identity tensions generated by their involvement in the collaboration. We illustrate this process throughout the four support stages in the collaborative work- Referral, Diagnosis, Negotiation and Intervention.

1) Managing identity interactions in the Referral Stage

According to the IOC protocol, the common aim of the partners in the Referral stage is to refer a disabled child to KEDDY. Particularly, when a school teacher identifies a disabled child, the head teacher requests the educational consultant to examine the child. If the consultant agrees that the child is disabled, he requests the special educational consultant to propose some activities to help the child. If these activities are not effective, the special consultant refers the child to KEDDY. However, as IOCs are highly unstable and tenuous (Hibbert & Huxham, 2010) partners are not always able to follow the prescribed course of action. The table below outlines how KAEC partners managed multiple identities in dealing with the unstable nature of what the collaboration means in the Referral stage.

Table 2: Identity work positioning in the Referral Stage

Identity work positioning in the Referral Stage			Exemplar quotes
Collaborative identity	**Positioning of self**	Supportive partners Resistant partners Accomplices	*"I was trying to be supportive. I spoke to KEDDY and the special consultant who explained to me how to write a report for a disabled child. So, I did write the report."* (Konstantina, 1:8) *"No, I didn't follow the recommendations of the special education consultant. Why should I? When I was hired, I wasn't told I will be teaching disabled children." (Nick, 2:45)* *"We have to think differently, to coordinate our efforts in order to make the collaboration work even in 'unorthodox' ways." (Anna, 4:2)*
	Positioning others	Busy partners Considerate partners Accomplices	"*Two weeks later I was very surprised to hear that [the special consultant] hadn't been to the school yet.... He told me that he was still very busy and was planning to go to Marina's school at the end of the term."* *(Rob, 6: 47)* *"It was clear that the KEDDY manager wanted to help the child. He sent the social worker to assist with the examination of the child." (Alex, 5:58)* *"The teacher tried to follow the special education consultant's recommendations even if this contradicted the protocol. She was clearly willing to work with us." (Martin,*

			7:3)
Non-collaborative identities	**Positioning of self**	Rebels against the system Creative colleagues Knowledgeable individuals	*"I couldn't convince the teacher to write the report for the child, as the protocol suggests. I had to go around it and ask KEDDY to accept my diagnosis of the child." (Dimitris, 3:27)* *"We should have referred the child to KEDDY straightaway. However, the mother insisted not to. So, we looked for alternative ways to support the child at the school." (Konstantina, 1:19)* *"I was working with KEDDY for years. I knew the processes but most importantly I knew what was the right thing to do as a father." (Nick, 2:73)*
	Positioning others	Adjustable colleagues Individuals attached to the protocol Dissatisfied experts	*"I don't understand why it was so difficult for the teacher to adjust her teaching practice. The head teacher had already made so many changes in the school curriculum and infrastructure." (Martin, 7:58)* *"Still he had to follow the protocol and examine her, but waiting one month was too much!... However, he didn't understand my arguments. His answer was that, even if he skipped some of the cases he had, there were other cases that had priority over Marina's case." (Rob, 6:63)* *"The head teacher was very disappointed with the lack of support from KEDDY. He had to contact the ACDCPE to complain about KEDDY's lack of commitment to the collaboration." (Anna, 4:43)*

Rob's story is an example of the ongoing identity work positioning outlined above.

Rob is a government educational consultant who tells the story of working with a special educational consultant to refer Marina, a disabled child, to KEDDY. In the first part of his story, Rob positions himself as a *supportive KAEC partner* who examines Marina and concludes that she was in need of urgent support. Following the collaborative protocol, he referred her to his *busy partner,* Andy, asking him to produce an immediate diagnosis for Marina.

"I sent my report to Andy and called him four days later. I presented the case to him and asked

him to speed up the process and go to Marina's school as soon as possible... Two weeks later I

> *was very surprised to hear that [he] hadn't been to the school yet.... He told me that he was still*
>
> *very busy and was planning to go to Marina's school at the end of the term."*
>
> Rob started realising that the collaborative protocol brings delays.
>
> *"I knew he wouldn't be able to support Marina and would eventually ask for KEDDY's help. Still*
>
> *he had to follow the protocol and examine Marina but waiting for one month was too much!...*
>
> *However, he didn't understand my arguments. His answer was that, even if he skipped some of*
>
> *the cases he had, there were other cases that had priority over Marina's case. Priority in terms of*
>
> *sequence not of urgency!"*
>
> In the last part of his narrative, it becomes clear to Rob that he and Andy had a different understanding of the collaborative protocol and support process. Rob repositions himself in relation to the collaboration and Andy by becoming a *rebel against the system* while positioning Andy as someone who is too *attached to the collaborative protocol.* This allows him to move away from his collaborative identity and protocol, and go over a partner who, on this occasion, obstructs the collaborative process. In fact, Rob contacts the KEDDY manager, who agrees to accept Marina's referral to KEDDY without Andy's diagnosis.

Rob's story exemplifies how the partners at the Referral stage managed multiple identity interactions by engaging in identity work positioning as illustrated in Figure 1. For example, as Rob experiences the constantly changing collaborative context (Hibbert et al, 2008), his collaborative identity as a supportive KAEC partner shifts. In order to achieve the collaborative aims, he brings forward his non-collaborative identity as a rebel against the system. At the same time, Rob's positioning of Andy shifts (van Langehove & Harré, 1999) from a busy partner, to someone too attached to the collaborative protocol.

Rob's story also illustrates that not only the partners' identities are reproduced in the dynamic IOC context (Maguire & Hardy, 2005) but, simultaneously, the collaboration itself is also reproduced (Hibbert & Huxham, 2010). In fact, as the partners engage in identity work positioning, their description of what the collaboration is changes as well, justifying concrete

collaborative actions. For example, firstly, Rob describes the *collaboration as supporting each other* and contacts the special consultant presenting the child's diagnosis and expecting him to prioritise the case. However, as he faces someone who is too attached to the collaborative protocol and refuses to appreciate the urgency of Marina's case, his position as a supportive partner is challenged and the way he views the collaboration changes too. By adjusting his perception of the collaboration as *the need to be flexible*, Rob is able to justify why he discards the protocol and an obstructing partner. This repositioning enables Rob to work together with other -unusual- KAEC partners in order to refer Marina to KEDDY immediately.

Rob's story is a good example of how KEDDY partners adjust to the changing nature of the collaboration by bringing forward identities that are temporary and situationally suitable (Horstmeier et al., 2016). In their effort to achieve a key collaboration aim -referring a child to KEDDY - collaborative identities and non-collaborative identities are brought forward to manage the identity tension between being a partner who is both *loyal* and *flexible* to the collaborative protocol. This identity tension needs to be maintained rather than fully resolved since being a loyal partner means doing whatever possible, including breaking the protocol, to support disabled children efficiently.

2) Managing identity interactions in the Diagnosis Stage

The main aim of the partners in the Diagnosis stage is to produce a diagnosis and individualised educational plan for a disabled child. To wit, the KEDDY team (psychologist, social worker and teacher), firstly, examines the child and produces a common diagnosis, Then, the team takes into consideration the reports produced by the school teacher and educational consultants, and produces an educational plan to be implemented at the child's

school. However, as table 3 shows, every case brings to light different obstacles (Drach-Zahavy, 2011) and challenges established identities.

Table 3: Identity work positioning in the Diagnosis Stage

Identity work positioning in the Diagnosis Stage			Exemplar quotes
Collaborative identity	**Positioning of self**	Sharing partners Internals	*"Our differences were many, but I was willing to share my experience as long as they would share the report with me." (Giota, 2:7)* *"It seemed that the parents thought of KEDDY employees as members of the collaboration and the school teacher as an outsider. I was lucky to belong to KEDDY. They treated me as one of them." (Giota, 2:37)*
	Positioning others	Sharing partners Externals Co-operators	*"It isn't easy to share resources with partners who work in different organisations. Nevertheless, he was really nice and he gave me the teacher's report without asking any questions." (Marios, 4:59)* *"We can't all be part of the same team. Some of us belong to the collaboration, some of us simply come and go." (Mona, 3:17)* *"It was so easy to work together. The KEDDY teacher was a KAEC partner for 6 years and the school teacher for 5 years. They knew all the collaborative processes, formal and informal." (Mona, 3:62)*
Non-collaborative identities	**Positioning of self**	Newcomers Specialists Team members	*"It is so difficult when they see you as a newcomer. They expect you to fail. At first, they look at you suspiciously, they don't trust you. It takes time to become a part of the team." (Mona, 3:33)* *"There are three main specialisations in KEDDY; social workers, psychologists and teachers. Each of us is an expert in one of these areas. Mine is social work." (Marios, 4:3)* *"Why is it wrong to work in teams? Why is it wrong to prefer to work closer to people who know you well? Isn't more productive to share with a small team?" (Mona, 3:31)*
	Positioning others	Helpful colleagues Non-Specialists	*"The KAEC manager was very helpful. He sent me a summary of the cases I had to deal with and offered to come with me on the school visits." (Giota, 2:51)* *"They didn't know, they simply didn't know. Why they couldn't admit that they had no idea about the school curriculum? No one expected them to know it." (Marios, 4:17)*

Maria's story is one out of the 4 stories in the Diagnosis stage that illustrates how the partners manage the interactions between collaborative and non-collaborative identities in this stage.

Maria is a KEDDY psychologist and the story she narrates is about her disagreement with a KEDDY teacher regarding a child's diagnosis. In the first part of her narrative, Maria explains her first meeting with her colleagues, her anxiety and her positive impression about her colleagues. She positions KEDDY employees as *social and helpful colleagues* and herself as a *friendly newcomer*.

"Everyone was nice…I was very nervous and I think they could see that. But, when I saw how nice they were to me, I relaxed and showed my friendly face. (Psychologists and social workers) explained to me the main rules of the collaboration and their role in KEDDY. They also offered me their help..."

In the second part of the narrative, Maria disagrees with a KEDDY teacher, Kate, on a child's diagnosis. She repositions herself in order to convince the audience that she, as a *specialist* in psychology, has produced the right diagnosis. At the same time, Kate becomes a teacher, *non-specialist* in psychology, highlighting the professional separation between teachers and psychologists in KEDDY.

"I was a KEDDY employee for only two months. I had a case with Kate and we disagreed on the diagnosis…. When I later examined the child using the proper psycho-metric tools, I concluded that my initial evaluation was correct. Kate's diagnosis however was different... She thinks that because she works in KEDDY for four years, she knows it all. But she can't know more than those who have been studying disabled people for years… Teachers have experience because they have worked in schools. So they are good at the production of the educational plans."

Despite acknowledging the division between teachers and psychologists, at the end of her narrative, Maria explains that sharing is the key to achieve the collaboration aims. In doing so, she pushes her professional identity to the background, foregrounding her pertinence to the KEDDY. At the end, she positions herself and others as *sharing partners*.

"There is competition between teachers and psychologists but the collaboration will achieve its

> *aims only if partners actually collaborate… I don't see myself just as one of KEDDY's*
>
> *psychologists. We are here to support children that need us."*

Maria's narrative exemplifies how partners engage in ongoing identity work positioning, constructing an inclusive or exclusive self in relation to the collaboration (Ellis & Ybema, 2010). In fact, through the interaction between collaborative and non-collaborative identities, partners can make sense of disagreements and uncertain conditions, achieving their goals in the Diagnosis stage. For example, Maria positions herself as a newcomer, a specialist psychologist and a partner while the others are positioned as helpful partners, non-specialist individuals and sharing partners. The positions that the partners are given by Maria in this stage illustrate the main identity tension Maria goes through; between being a *sharing partner* who shares her experience and knowledge and *an expert partner* who demonstrates and uses her individual expertise. However, Maria does not experience this tension between collaborative and non-collaborative identities as a conflict. For Maria, being a KAEC partner is related to being a sharing partner and working together while dividing tasks according to personal specialisation in order to make sure that all partners engage in the most effective way with the collaboration.

Maria's narrative also illustrates how the positions that partners take in their narratives are significant (Alvesson, 2010) and are used to justify the way they perceive the collaboration and their work with others. For instance, in the narratives, the collaboration is firstly described as *working as one unit* where partners work together to familiarise with the collaborative protocol. Then, the collaboration is described as *team oriented* where partners distance themselves from the work unit of the partners but come closer to their professional sub-team. Finally, the collaboration is presented as *sharing expertise* where different partner-specialists exchange their knowledge and specialisation. It is this journey through identities

and collaborative perceptions that allows partners to successfully produce diagnoses and educational plans in the Diagnosis stage.

3) Managing identity interactions in the Negotiation Stage

In the Negotiation stage, the partners should disclose a child's diagnosis and educational plan to the school. Namely, the KEDDY team needs the parents' agreement to be able to send the diagnosis to the child's school and implement the suggested educational plan. KEDDY therefore presents its report (diagnosis and educational plan) to the child's parents and negotiates with them its disclosure to the school. However, the partners come across different obstacles as they try to negotiate reports with the parents, and they constantly have to reconsider the way they perceive themselves in relation to others and the collaboration. Table 4 summarises the different positions that partners take in the Negotiation stage.

Table 4: Identity work positioning in the Negotiation Stage

<table>
<tr>
<th colspan="3">Identity work positioning in the Negotiation Stage</th>
<th>Exemplar quotes</th>
</tr>
<tr>
<td rowspan="2">Collaborative identity</td>
<td rowspan="2">Positioning of self</td>
<td>Disappointed partners

Thoughtful partners

Allies</td>
<td><i>"It took me some time to realise that the teacher was actually saying that my child had a problem, that he was sick, that he wasn't normal. I feel ashamed of myself now, but I was disappointed and angry at my son."</i> (George, 1:7)
<i>"I couldn't think of the time I had to put in in order to help the child. I only thought of the child and what was best for her."</i> (Vangelis, 3:19)
<i>"I was working in ACDCPE for 12 years. However, when I had to deal with KEDDY employees, I always treated them as partners working together for a common aim."</i> (Vangelis, 3:22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positioning others</td>
<td>Unfriendly partners

Allies</td>
<td><i>"Not of all us can be friendly. The important thing is to understand that we deal with children with disabilities and some frustrated parents. We can be unfriendly but we must also be professional."</i> (Vangelis, 3:3)</td>
</tr>
</table>

			"We finally managed to leave our differences on the side and acknowledge that there was nothing to fight for. We all wanted to secure the best education plan for my daughter but we were looking at different ways to do so." (Amalia, 2:73)
Non-collaborative identities	**Positioning of self**	Frustrated individuals Members in need of understanding	*"I was really annoyed at him. He had the psychologist and teacher's diagnosis on his desk and couldn't spend half an hour to add his comments." (Amalia, 2:35)* *"He made me feel a bit uncomfortable and I avoided asking too many questions… I expected to be treated with more understanding." (George,1:23)*
	Positioning others	Inconsiderate individuals Accountable others	*"The government representative wouldn't care. Despite me saying that I was willing to ask for KEDDY's help and work together with the school teacher, he insisted that my daughter should attend a special school." (Amalia, 2:61)* *"I thought it was his fault because he wasn't trying hard. Maybe the teacher wasn't doing her job and it was her fault too." (George, 1:8)*

George's narrative below illustrates the interactions between collaborative and non-collaborative identities and their management through identity work positioning in the Negotiation stage.

George is the parent of a child with dyslexia. His story presents how he engaged with the collaboration to help his disabled son. In the first part of his narrative, George presents his negative reaction when he learns of his son's disability. He positions himself as a *frustrated father* who tries to cope with an unpleasant situation. This position is used to justify why initially he resists the diagnosis. It also enables him to blame the others who are positioned as *accountable for his son's disability*.

"*It took me some time to realise that the teacher was actually saying that my child had a problem, that he was sick, that he wasn't normal. I feel ashamed of myself now, but I was disappointed and angry with my son. I thought it was his fault because he wasn't trying hard. Maybe the teacher wasn't doing her job and it was her fault too...*"

Next, George describes his efforts to understand his son's disability and find ways to support him. However, when George meets with the KEDDY social worker, he encounters an *unfriendly partner*, who does not seem to acknowledge that George is a *parent in need of understanding*.

"He (social worker) wasn't as friendly as the psychologist and the teacher. He made me feel a bit uncomfortable and I avoided asking too many questions… I expected to be treated with more understanding. After all, it was obvious that I cared about my son."

Although the social worker is doing what is expected of him as a KAEC partner, his inconsiderate behaviour towards George's needs does not correspond to George's expectations. George engages in identity work to reposition himself against someone who does not understand him. He therefore becomes a *partner, disappointed* by the *inconsiderate others.*

"He (social worker) told me that I wasn't spending enough time with my son because of my work and that I wasn't helping enough with his studies… I was doing my best to support my child. How could he say that Mike's home environment wasn't appropriate? How could he claim that it was my fault? I was so disappointed and sad."

Despite his disappointment, George's priority is to help his son and he sees that he shares the same aim with the social worker. He therefore repositions himself as an *ally*, ready to follow the social worker's recommendations while the social worker becomes an *ally*, who also tries to help his son.

"I tried to defend myself saying that, although I was trying, maybe it wasn't enough. I made clear that I was happy to follow the social worker's suggestions in order to improve the home environment. He was a bit unfriendly but I could see that he wanted to help."

George's narrative exemplifies the challenges the collaboration partners face when negotiating with the children's parents and the actions required to support the children. Parents are also partners of the collaboration and they face their own particular challenges and identity tensions, especially when, for example, their personal identities as parents are put into question. For example, George initially positions himself as a frustrated father, then as a parent in need of understanding and as a disappointed partner, and finally finishes his narrative shifting again his identity position to indicate that he is an ally who would collaborate with KEDDY to help his child. At the same time, the other partners become accountable for disabilities, unfriendly, inconsiderate as well as allies. These multiple shifts in

identity positions relate to the main identity tension between being a *distant and a close partner*, since it is through both keeping a distance from and coming together with others that KAEC partners can find innovative ways to engage with the collaboration while maintaining the continuity of the collaborative process.

Furthermore, the positions that partners take in their identity narratives relate to particular collaborative actions, through which partners 'do' and 'redo' the collaboration (Drach-Zahavy, 2011). For instance, partners use different images of collaboration in these narratives as a justification of particular actions and focus of attention. When collaboration is portrayed as a process of *assigning responsibilities,* partners can talk about who should be doing what and how. If collaboration is about *keeping a distance*, partners can defend best practices, request support or offer help; or if it is about *coming together,* then the focus can be on overcoming resistance, finding alternative actions or changing roles. It is through these different portrayals of what the collaboration is or should be about that partners are able to align to, readjust or resist the changing needs of the collaboration when they engage in collaborative work (Ellis & Ybema, 2010; Horstmeier et al., 2016).

4) Managing identity interactions in the Intervention Stage

At the final stage of the support process, the Intervention stage, partners secure the funding for the implementation of the educational plan and oversee its implementation at the child's school. Particularly challenging in this process is when KEDDY discloses the report at the child's school. An ACDCPE representative needs to approve the funding for the educational support of the child (i.e. establishment of special school units, appointment of specialised staff, school equipment etc.). Then, the head teacher needs to work with KEDDY to implement KEDDY's educational plan while the parents need to work with the teachers to support the child at home. The process of bringing independent actors with different values

(Koschmann, 2012) and backgrounds (Maguire & Hardy, 2005) to work together in the Implementation stage can threaten the partners' identities requiring constant identity work positioning to balance helping the children with maintaining a secure sense of self as the table below suggests.

Table 5: Identity work positioning in the Intervention Stage

Identity work positioning in the Intervention Stage			Exemplar quotes
Collaborative identity	**Positioning of self**	Inexperienced partners Helpful partners Associates	*"I admit I didn't have experience implementing the curriculum for a dyspraxic child. I wasn't the only teacher without experience in teaching disabled children." (Katerina, 3:62)* *" KEDDY partners were very helpful and had satisfactorily answered all of my questions. How could I say no (to teach the child)? -- I just couldn't!" (Christina, 1:32)* *"Some partners are more helpful than others. I had to choose in this particular case what kind of partner I wanted to be. It was clear that the government representative wanted to help the child. I therefore wanted to help him back." (Angeliki, 4:22)*
	Positioning others	Experienced partners Helpful partners Reliable partners	*"I was lucky to have so experienced partners involved in my case. It was the only way to secure the funding for the school equipment." (Dora, 5:29)* *"It didn't surprise me that she was very helpful. Her child has a disability so she is very aware of how important her help could be." (Grigoris, 8:11)* *"You can always rely on the KEDDY Manager, and therefore in KEDDY. Even if some of the partners forget KAEC's mission, the KEDDY manager will always do his best to fulfil it." (Thanos, 6:5)*
Non-collaborative identities	**Positioning of self**	Beginners Victims	*"One year in KAEC and I still felt like I had started working yesterday. Every case, every child, every disability is different. It is hard to say that you are experienced enough to work alone." (Charis, 2:41)* *"In this particular case, the other teachers treated me really bad. They just couldn't understand how I agreed to take in my class a disabled child, when she had to attend a special school. They made my life difficult at first, but I was lucky to have a supportive head*

		Suspicious colleagues	teacher." (Katerina, 3:11)
Positioning others		Suspicious colleagues	"I don't blame them. Usually, when parents come to KEDDY, they don't know what to expect, for example, how the collaboration works, what information we will disclose to the school or how discreet we can be. It is understandable for the parents to be sceptical." (Charis, 2:52)
		Dishonest individuals	"What if the funding (for the appointment of the specialist teacher) isn't approved? They weren't honest with me. How can we work together if we don't trust each other?" (Christina, 1:34)

Christina's story is one out of the 8 personal stories that illustrates how the partners foreground collaborative and non-collaborative identities in order to justify different collaborative actions while implementing particular educational plans in the Intervention stage.

Christina is a *primary school teacher* who had just joined the school when the story she narrates took place. In her narrative, she discusses the obstacles she had to overcome in order to be able to teach a disabled child. In the first part of her story, Christina refers to Jenifer, a disabled child, and explains that she is cautious and does not initially discuss her case with her *suspicious colleagues* because she is a *beginner* with no experience.

"A year ago, during my first year as a teacher, I had a child, Jenifer, who seemed to face some learning difficulties. From day one, I realised that Jenifer had a disability. However, I was new, inexperienced and I thought my judgement was wrong. I hesitated to discuss her case with my colleagues because I didn't have experience and didn't want them to think that I was trying too hard to make a good impression."

Later, Christina decides to speak to her head teacher who directs her to KEDDY. When she meets KEDDY partners, Christina positions herself as an *inexperienced partner* who seeks help from the *experienced partners*. However, she also positions herself in a similar way she positions KEDDY employees, as a *helpful partner*. In this way, she is able to justify her decision to implement KEDDY's educational plan.

"*KEDDY's teacher was very informative and didn't seem to get annoyed by my questions. KEDDY's psychologist was friendly and gave me the answers I needed… I had to support the child with extra-curricular activities. A KEDDY employee told me that I could organise my teaching activities with the help of a specialist teacher that will be appointed… KEDDY partners were very helpful and had satisfactorily answered all of my questions. How could I say no (to teach the child)? -- I just couldn't!*"

However, when Christina discusses the case with her school colleagues, they explain that appointing a specialist teacher may take longer than what the protocol indicates and the government may not even approve the appointment at all. Then, Christina goes back to KEDDY and speaks with the partners who admit that her school colleagues are right. Identity work allows Christina to reposition herself as a *victim* who has to protect herself from other KEDDY partners, who are now portrayed as *dishonest and untrustworthy*.

"*What if the funding (for the appointment of the specialist teacher) isn't approved? They weren't honest with me. How can we work together if we don't trust each other?*"

As a result, Christina decides to go against the protocol and refuses to teach the disabled child. Her refusal sets in immediate motion the process for the appointment of the specialist teacher. As such, KAEC becomes the *reliable partner* with whom Christina can work together. She therefore positions herself as an *associate of the collaboration* and implements KEDDY's educational plan.

Christina's story exemplifies how partners do not offer a coherent narrative of self (Beyer & Hannah, 2002) but, instead, they engage in ongoing identity work (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010) that allows them to implement children's educational plans in the Intervention stage. Namely, partners may be new and inexperienced members, victims of collaborative work or helpful associates while the others may be suspicious, dishonest and untrustworthy, yet helpful and reliable partners. The main identity tension expressed in this stage is the tension between *trusting and dishonest* partners. Foregrounding this identity tension enables partners to justify their engagement or disengagement with the collaboration

protocol bringing together collaborative and non-collaborative identities at the same time without having to achieve a coherent identity (Ellis & Ybema, 2010). We therefore see that both collaborative and non-collaborative identities are important for the success of the collaboration.

Similarly to the other three support stages, repositioning themselves and others in their collaboration narratives, partners also change the way they portray the collaboration and act as partners in the Intervention stage (Gioia et al., 2000). The process of collaborating is represented as having to be *cautious* to justify the need to carefully examine when to act and with whom to share information and concerns. Collaboration is also portrayed as a *supportive space* to account for the need to seek help and information from experienced partners or a *trusting space* to express the need for partners to understand each other, work together and rely on others. When the collaboration is portrayed as a space to *seek protection and trust*, partners can justify actions that deal with uncertainties, irregularities and dishonesty. Thus, through foregrounding different facets of the collaboration in line with identity work positioning, partners are able to align different identities to the complex and idiosyncratic nature of IOCs in a coherent way (Hibbert et al., 2008). The narratives presented above illustrate clearly how the collaboration arrangement that becomes visible at any point in time is just one out of many possible outcomes (Huxham & Vangen, 2005).

Discussion

We have seen in our research how KEDDY partners use narrative identity work positioning to manage the multiple identities (e.g. collaborative, personal, organisational and professional) that are present when they engage in collaborative work (Horton & Grifin, 2017). Particularly, we have seen how collaborative and non-collaborative identities were constantly in play in their narratives (Horstmeier et al., 2016), and how those identities were being brought forward or pushed into the background in pursuit of the main collaboration aim

of helping disabled children. Indeed, it is through narrative identity work that KEDDY partners manage these multiple identity shifts in a way that align flexibly their and others identities (Davies & Harré, 1990), when responding to the changing needs of the collaboration. For instance, when Maria deals with the tension of having to be a sharing partner that shares her knowledge or a specialist partner that brings in her professional expertise to help a child in the Diagnosis stage of the collaboration, she first foregrounds her organisational identity, positioning herself as a friendly newcomer while colleagues are social and helpful partners and the collaboration is a sharing space. It follows, therefore, that the best way to support the child is to share knowledge and support each other. However, later in the narrative, when disagreements appear on the production of a child's diagnosis, her professional expert identity comes to the foreground and the other becomes 'downgraded' to a non-expert, making it easy for her to justify using her own psychological expertise to push her own collaborative agenda. Thus, narrative identity positioning offered partners a way to manage discursively the various identity tensions they experienced while engaged in collaborative work.

The analysis of the stories also illustrated that in every identity interaction, the collaboration itself was constantly reproduced and symbolically enacted (Hibbert & Huxham, 2010), since the way the partners described the collaboration and acted in it changed along with the way they positioned themselves and others in the collaboration narratives. We have also seen in the narratives that the interactions between collaborative and non-collaborative identities were not experienced as negative by the KAEC partners (Drach-Zahavy, 2011). Quite the opposite, KEDDY partners used both collaborative and non-collaborative identities to respond to the contextual needs of the collaboration (Ashforth et al., 2011; Horton & Grifin, 2017; van Dick et al., 2004), overcoming obstacles, disagreements and conflicts while reflecting on what being part of the collaboration meant as the collaboration unfolded.

The table below summarises the main findings from applying the theoretical framework that we developed in the four support stages in KAEC.

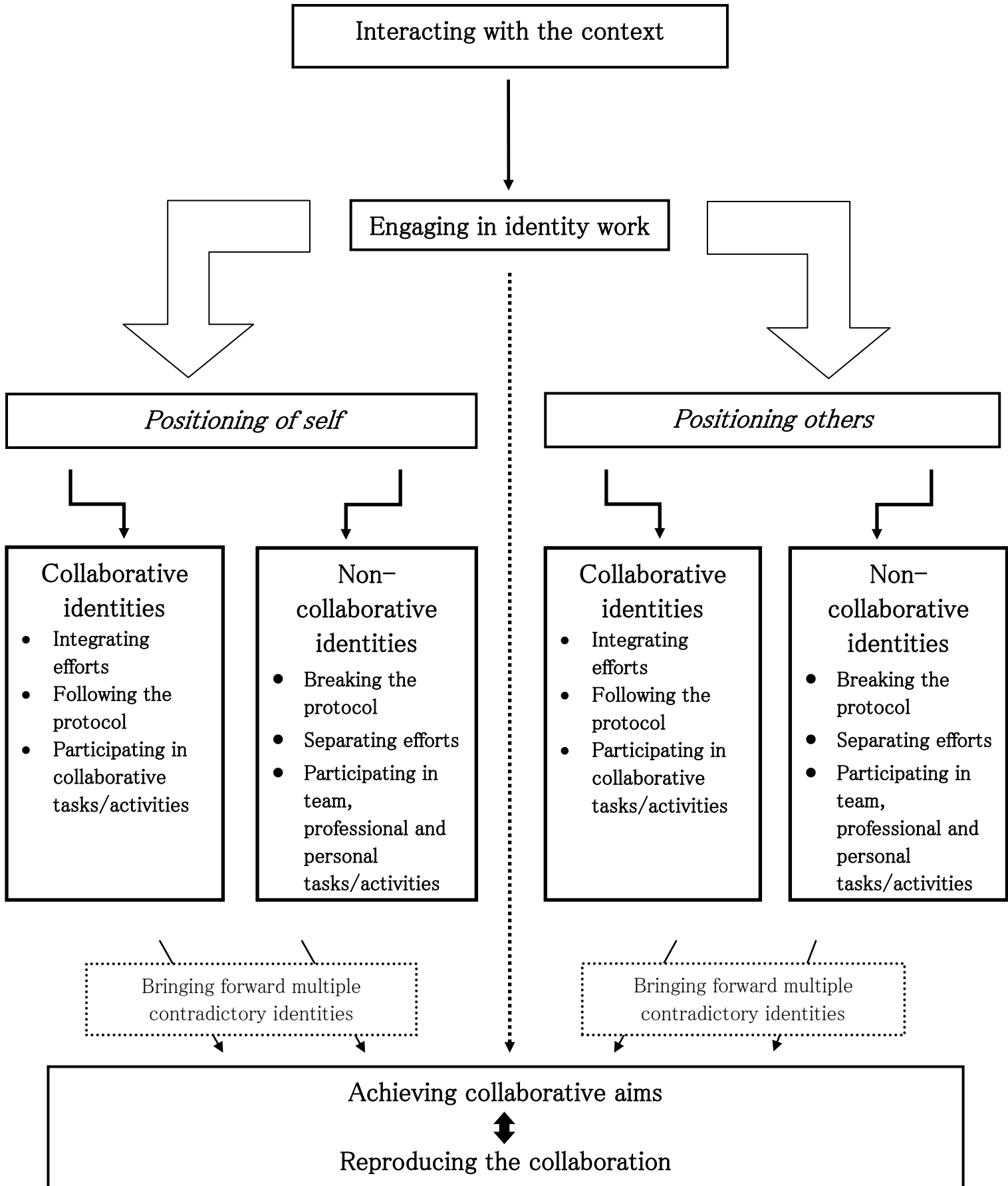**Table 6: Application of identity work positioning framework in KAEC**

	Referral	Diagnosis	Negotiation	Intervention
Main identity tension	Loyal versus Flexible partners	Sharing versus Expert partners	Distant versus Close partners	Trusting versus Dishonest partners
Changing perception of the collaboration	Collaboration as the need to be flexible and to support each other	Collaboration as sharing expertise, working together and in teams	Collaboration as assigning responsibilities, keeping a distance and coming together	Collaboration as being cautious, seeking protection, trusting and supporting each other
Situated and emergent actions	- Following rules, responsibilities, structures - Working together as one unit - Engaging in collaborative activities and tasks - Overriding rules, responsibilities, structures - Working individually or in teams - Engaging in individual, professional or organisational activities and tasks			

Our research responds to the call for studies that focus on multiple identities simultaneously (Atewologun, Kutzer, Doldor, Anderson & Sealy, 2017; Horstmeier et al., 2016; Horton & Griffin, 2017). It also complements existing research that looks at the interaction of collaborative and non-collaborative identities, by considering the interaction not as a negative conflict that needs to be resolved (Hardy et al., 2005; Zhang & Huxham, 2009), but as a tension that offers flexibility to the partners and needs to be maintained. Finally, our research expands current understanding of identity work for the exploration of collaborative and non-collaborative identities in partnerships (Ellis & Ybema, 2010; Maguire & Hardy, 2005) by emphasising the role of 'positioning' in narratives of collaboration.

Our contributions are captured by the model below which illustrates a simple process of multiple identity management in IOCs, offering both theoretical and practical implications for the way we understand multiple identities and collaborative work in IOCs.

Figure 2: Process model of Multiple Identity Management in IOCs

```
                    ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                    │  Interacting with the context │
                    └──────────────────────────────┘
                                  │
                                  ▼
                    ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                    │  Engaging in identity work    │
                    └──────────────────────────────┘
```

Positioning of self	*Positioning others*

Collaborative identities
- Integrating efforts
- Following the protocol
- Participating in collaborative tasks/activities

Non-collaborative identities
- Breaking the protocol
- Separating efforts
- Participating in team, professional and personal tasks/activities

Collaborative identities
- Integrating efforts
- Following the protocol
- Participating in collaborative tasks/activities

Non-collaborative identities
- Breaking the protocol
- Separating efforts
- Participating in team, professional and personal tasks/activities

Bringing forward multiple contradictory identities

Bringing forward multiple contradictory identities

Achieving collaborative aims

⬍

Reproducing the collaboration

Theoretical implications

The majority of IOC research highlights the achievement of a strong collaborative identity among IOC partners as one of the key enablers of a successful collaboration (Drach-Zahavy, 2011; Hardy et al., 2005; Koschmann, 2012; Sammarra & Biggiero, 2001; Zhang & Huxham, 2009). Our research, however, has empirically illustrated that, in practice, non-collaborative identities, such as personal, organisational and professional identities, can also assist partners in achieving collaborative aims. While we agree with current IOC literature, which recommends the development and relevance of a collaborative identity to support better collaborations, we stress that non-collaborative identities also can be very instrumental in supporting collaboration goals and should therefore be part of any identity exploration in IOCs. Our study also adds to a growing body of research which perceives identity as a multi-foci construct (Olkonnen & Lipponen, 2006) and separates identity processes according to their focus (e.g. Bartels, Pruyn, De Jong & Joustra, 2007; van Dick, Wagner & Stellmacher, 2004; van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, & Christ, 2005; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). We argue that it is not enough to explore if partners identify but also what they identify with. The model of Multiple Identity Management in IOCs suggests that the narrative positions that partners take are related, yet distinct, and are each influenced by different contextual and interactional needs which act as triggers to foreground or put backwards different organisational, professional, collaborative and/or personal identities.

Furthermore, our model captures the complex nature of and tensions embedded in collaborative contexts. Recent IOC research suggests that collaborations that have the potential to achieve collaborative advantage are inherently paradoxical in nature (Vangen, 2017). This paradoxical nature arises because gaining advantage requires the simultaneous protection and integration of partners' uniquely different resources, experiences, and expertise in what is usually a complex and dynamic organising context. Related studies

increasingly point to inherent paradoxes and associated governance, leadership, and management tensions (e.g. Huxham & Vangen 2005; Provan & Kenis, 2008; Saz-Carranza & Ospina, 2010) emphasising the existence of contradictory, interrelated, mutually exclusive elements in any collaboration (Vangen, 2017). Our study adds to the emergent body of research on collaboration and paradox by exploring the paradoxical nature of identity work in IOCs, more particularly, the persistent tension between collaborative and non-collaborative identities and the need to maintain a delicate balance between these opposing but equally important identities. It also adds to our understanding of paradox not as "persistent contradiction between interdependent elements" (Schad, Lewis, Raisch & Smith, 2016: 6) but rather as a lens entailing how multiple, seemingly contradictory forces coexist and what the implications are for managing these simultaneously.

Practical implications

Our analysis shows that there are no easy or fixed routes to collaboration success but rather constantly challenged, taken-for-granted assumptions about what effective collaboration is. Our analysis illustrates how in collaboration narratives, the collaboration itself is constantly questioned, transformed and rewritten through the process of identity work. Collaboration becomes a site "of continuously changing human action (where) human agency is always and at every moment confronted with specific conditions and choices" (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002: 577). Even if partners enter the collaboration having an idealised view of what collaborating implies, in practice, when they collaborate in situ, many of these views are challenged. As a practical implication, we can see how developing an agreed upon IOC protocol can offer some continuity to the collaboration. Yet, any IOC manager needs to be aware that on certain occasions, only by diverging from that agreed protocol can partners develop innovative responses to the changing needs of the collaboration.

IOC research highlights interdependence and shared characteristics as different parties come together, plan, decide, generate a shared meaning and understanding, commit to a set of common rules, structures and goals, and act jointly for the achievement of common aims (Gray, 2008; Hibbert et al., 2008; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Olson, Balmer & Mejicano, 2012). However, as our model of Multiple Identity Management in IOCs illustrates, in order to achieve the aims of the collaboration, partners may choose paradoxically to work independently from the collaboration. Thus, in practice, constant collaboratively-focused work might become an unnecessary burden. In this respect, our study suggests to IOC managers that collaborating is not only about acting collaboratively. Collaborative work incorporates both integrating and separating efforts, both following and breaking a collaboration protocol that may be difficult to achieve, and both fighting hard to maintain the collaboration goals while seeking to flexibly respond to the ambiguity and complexity that characterises collaborations.

Finally, with our model, we have empirically illustrated the positive impact that the interaction between collaborative and non-collaborative identities may have for collaborative work. We therefore agree with the organisational studies which suggest that the promotion of different members' identification foci is an important managerial task (Cappelli, 2009; Ellemers, 2001; Horstmeier, Homan, Rosenauer & Voelpel, 2016). In this respect, we propose that IOC managers should not only encourage partners' participation in collaborative tasks but also in activities that promote teamwork, professional development and personal interdependence.

Limitations and further research

Our research was conducted with an IOC in a very dynamic environment, since each child's case that KAEC deals with is different. As such, even if there is a particular

collaborative protocol available, partners have to work against and around it in order to ensure that they treat each individual case effectively. Further examination in different types of IOCs is required in order to establish the interactions between collaborative and non-collaborative identities.

As an exploratory study, the identity interactions of KEDDY partners were explored using a qualitative research design. Although the data was triangulated through the collection of interviews, field notes, documents and observations, a larger study would strengthen the validity of our research. For example, following other studies that explore multiple identities (e.g. Drach-Zahavy, 2011; Horstmeier et al., 2016; Horton & Griffin, 2017), as a next step, we could increase the number of the participants (through e.g. surveys or field experiments) to explore identity interactions by approaching identity tensions from different vantage points (Schwandt & Gates, 2017). Further research should also be conducted to examine whether particular identity types impact in different ways on partners' perceptions of the collaboration or whether there are specific conditions under which these effects become apparent.

Finally, our analysis highlights the importance of exploring both collaborative and non-collaborative identities at the same time. However, our study is only one out of a few that look at multiple identities in IOCs (Ellis & Ybema, 2010; Kourti, 2017a, 2017b; Maguire & Hardy, 2005). We suggest that this line of research is essential in order to advance identity theory in IOCs and better understand the effects of multiple identities in dynamic IOC contexts.

Conclusion

Our research has explored how IOC partners manage the interactions between collaborative and non-collaborative identities through identity work positioning. The research shows that the tensions that these identity interactions generate can enable partners to achieve

the collaboration aims better while at the same time shape the collaborative process. These results complement IOC studies that focus mainly on the development and maintenance of a common collaborative identity for collaboration success and open up opportunities for future research on the implications of multiple identities management in IOCs.

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