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# WHERE DO WE BELONG: AN EXPLORATION OF INDIVIDUALS' IDENTITY ISSUES WITHIN TEMPORARY ORGANIZATIONS

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Temporary organizations take on numerous forms and can be found within and across traditional organizational forms. With the rise of remote work, born-global organizations and collaborative work, temporary organizations are becoming more prevalent. They are playing critical roles in a host of situations and organizational leaders need to better understand the phenomena so as to be able to navigate and utilize them correctly. In this paper, a conceptual model intended to understand how temporary organizations partially embedded in multiple parent organizations are being faced with unique identity issues is proposed. The individuals involved with such boundary spanning temporary organizations have identity issues due to their multiple identities being at odds with each other. Using the theories of temporary organizational forms and the social identity, the given conceptual framework shows that the dilemmas related to multiple identities can be resolved by: buffering and ordering identities, self-selecting into temporary organizational forms, and acknowledging such multiple identities and allowing them to simultaneously be salient. Additionally, the consequences of a lack of resolution are explored, including reduced group cohesion, lower performance and the unethical behavior on the part of the pro-parent organization.

**Keywords:** identity, identity conflict, role conflict, temporary organizations, teams

JEL Classification: M19, M12, D23, L20

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## INTRODUCTION

While the temporary organization concept is not new (Bakker, 2010), the tendency seen in the extant literature has been to look at the various forms

i.e. projects, networks, consortia, film crews, task forces and even 'cheetah teams' as disparate entities (Kenis, Janowicz-Panjaitan & Cambré, 2009). Recent studies have begun to study these similar entities together, allowing us to look at the overarching themes applicable to the various sub-categories within temporary organizations (Bakker, Boros, Kenis & Oerlemans, 2013). Many businesses have found themselves increasingly organized in the

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form of smaller, temporary work systems rather than expansive, permanent organizational forms (March, 1995). In an increasingly pluralistic world, traditional organizational forms are no longer as common or as ideal as they used to be (Bres, Raufflet & Boghossian, 2018). A widespread increase in the use of new organizational design forms, such as temporary organizations, requires the reexamination of whether our research concepts and constructs are still applicable in the exact same way as they are in typical contexts (Grabher, 2002; Burke & Morley, 2016). If they do vary from their traditional application, the variations should be explored so as to better understand their applicability in temporary contexts given their increased utilization as an organizational form. Indeed, when individuals find themselves in unconventional organizational forms, there is the potential that their experience will differ from conventional organizations in both positive and negative ways. M. G. Pratt and P. O. Foreman (2000) recognize the fact that the identity is related to an individual's question of 'Who am I?' or 'Who are we?' When, however, individuals belong to multiple organizations and are unsure about which organizational identity is the most important to them, they wonder 'Where do we belong?' This paper seeks to conduct a greater in-depth exploration of the specific content of temporary organizations as they relate to the identity issues experienced by the members of the same. Thus, the research goals are to increase the understanding of how an identity conflict arises in certain temporary organizations and why the resolution of such an identity conflict is important for the achievement of the Partially Embedded Temporary Organization (PETO) goals. A conceptual framework is proposed herein with the aim to examine the identity conflict experienced by the individuals working for Partially Embedded Temporary Organizations (PETOs). While such resolution results in positive outcomes, a failure to resolve conflicting identities results in counterproductive outcomes, such as reduced group cohesion within a temporary organization, lower performance by group members, and the Unethical Behavior of the Pro-Parent organization (UPPB).

Thus, the seven research propositions to be confirmed through the conceptual framework can broadly be classified into the following two:

- The identity issues experienced in certain temporary organizations can be resolved in numerous ways, including self-selection, identity buffering and ordering, and the management of the identity salience (Propositions 1a, 1b, 2).
- A lack of the resolution of the identity issues experienced in certain temporary organizations will lead to negative outcomes, including reduced group cohesion, lower performance, and the unethical behavior of the pro-parent organization (Propositions 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d).

While projects remain one of the most common types of temporary organizations (Lundin & Midler, 1998), there are numerous other variants used as well. For instance, one temporary setting at the individual level is when many organizations hire a pool of employees from a contractor to meet their short-term needs (Subramony, 2011). Another form is when smaller, entrepreneurial ventures find themselves to be a part of a temporary alliance (Hu, McNamara & Piaskowska, 2017). Certain industries have lent themselves to the creation and utilization of temporary organizations, such as film and theatre productions, which have varying production crews, airlines as the flight crews change on a flight-to-flight basis, and construction projects involving different firms (Grabher, 2002). Now, however, there are temporary organizations found across a spectrum of industries, including software development, defense, emergency response, biotechnology, and consulting (Bakker, 2010). Such increased attention paid to temporary organizations can be traced to the nature of today's fast-paced global economy (Ekstedt, 2009) and the increased focus on time and temporality in organization science (Ancona, Goodman, Lawrence & Tushman, 2001).

Thus, a multitude of possible temporary organization forms can be examined under the existing typology that proposes six ideal types (Chandna, 2017). Temporary organizations can thus reside within the existing firms, be collaborative amongst multiple

preexisting firms, or they could be a separate entity as well. Most commonly, of course, temporary organizational forms are partially embedded in other organizational entities. For instance, when two companies create a temporary system to collaboratively work on a project, the individuals are accountable to each other, as well as to their parent organizations. This temporary organization type, a partially embedded form fashioned from two or more parent companies coming together with the aim to create a temporary organization for their mutual benefit presents a unique and novel context.

The members of such partially embedded temporary organizations are thus the members of the parent organization, rather than merely independent actors, and they often find themselves in the position where they have multiple identities vying to be more prominent (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; De Bernardis & Giustiniano, 2015). This type of a temporary organization which is partially embedded in two or more parent firms is referred to as a PETO through the remainder of this paper.

The theory relating to organizational identification posits that individuals will have a feeling of oneness or belongingness to their work organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), and stronger organizational identification will enhance positive work-related behaviors (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996; Voss, Cable & Voss, 2006). However, due to the complexity of the workplace in the modern era, individuals find themselves torn between multiple identities and the pressure of one identity interferes with the performance of another (Van Sell, Brief & Schuler, 1981; Pratt & Corley, 2007). When individuals work for both the parent organization and a PETO, they will likely experience a certain amount of conflict. The approach adopted as the research process implies the exploration of the extant research studies, bring together the theory and develop a framework to describe why this conflict occurs, how it may be resolved, and the consequences of it not being resolved.

The subsequent sections are organized as follows: in the Literature Review, the extant theory is presented in order to show the research studies of temporary organizations, which is only followed by the

exploration of the identity theory. Then, the proposed framework is laid out along with the mechanisms of the identity issue resolution, outcomes where unresolved (decreased job performance, reduced group cohesion, the unethical behavior of the pro-parent organization), and the moderating role of the perception of PETO. Then, the Conclusion section is presented.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Temporary organizations

Temporary organizations are different from their permanent counterparts (Sydow, Lindkvist & DeFillippi, 2004). The definitions of temporary organizations tend to differ depending on the context, the subject matter, and the conceptual lens being applied to studying them, thus leading to a lack of consensus on a precise definition. However, its salient feature of time and temporariness are always highlighted. P. Kenis *et al* (2009) have defined them as 'a group of two or more non-temporary organizations collaborating toward the accomplishment of a joint task with the duration of the collaboration explicitly and ex ante fixed either by a specific date or by the attainment of a pre-defined task or condition.' R. M. Bakker (2010) states that temporary organizations are defined by the elements of time, the task, the team, and the context. Looking at these recent well-regarded works on temporary organizations in conjunction, this paper considers the members of temporary organizations to be either individuals or organizations.

The term 'temporary organization' is thus a hypernym for networks, collaborations, consolutions, groups, teams, virtual networks and the like, resulting in the six types of temporary organizations classified based upon (Chandna, 2017):

- their degree of embeddedness in the parent firm, and
- the type of their output, i.e. either an innovative or routine output.

Taking a closer look at the 'team' aspect of temporary organizations, they can be seen as referring to the interdependent sets of people working together within a temporary organization (Goodman & Goodman, 1976). It is the human dimension of temporary organizations and relates to the issues of skills, involved interdependencies and human resources (Lundin & Soderholm, 1995). Thus, a group of individuals involved in temporary organizations and their identity issues are the matter of concern, and rightly so, as the team is one of the most important elements of temporary organizations, usually regarded as second only to the time dimension or at times even on a par with it (Bakker, 2010).

PETOs incorporate the boundary-spanning dimension for their purpose as they are the temporary organizations that are partially embedded in two or more parent organizations and essentially work beyond their organizational boundaries and result in a temporary organization that is still a part of the multiple parent organizations that helped create it. Yet, they retain a separate social entity. The members of these temporary organizations will thus face unique challenges in reconciling their identity conflicts, as they will simultaneously belong to both their parent organization and the partially embedded temporary organization (PETO), which accounts for quite a novel context to explore.

### Organizational identification

In the years following its initial introduction to the organizational behavior literature, identification has become more and more fine-grained and has deepened our knowledge of different aspects of it (Pratt, 1998). Organizational identification has especially helped explain many types of employee behavior and has also helped understand organizational outcomes, such as performance and green innovation (Van Knippenberg, 2000; Song & Yu, 2018). The feeling of being one with a group or the perception of belongingness to some 'human aggregate' is the defining feature of social identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

People define themselves in terms of their relationships with their organizations, which has thus

led to the extension of the social identification concept to the workplace (Elsbach, 1999). The individuals who are part of organizations to some degree define themselves in terms of what the organization represents and there is a perception of unity with a specific organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Erkutlu & Chafra, 2015). Considering the fact that to a great extent our lives are spent in our being committed to our work, it is not unusual that our sense of identity is closely intertwined with our work organizations and professions (Burke, 1996; De Bernardis & Giustiniano, 2015). Organizational identification is one of the most important rationales standing behind the explanation of how individuals feel about their organization, and it is the one important way that individuals may derive their sense of self (Pratt, 2000). Organizations themselves are desirous of increasing their employees' organizational identification so that individuals may be driven to achieve those goals and objectives, still embracing their values (Barker, 1998; Zollo, Laudano, Boccardi & Ciappei, 2019). While the organization wants the individual to identify with it, there are multiple and simultaneous identities valid for every individual, which however are not always compatible with one another (Tompkins & Cheney, 1983).

### The identity conflict in temporary organizations

Temporary organizations provide a fertile ground for the identity conflict to take root. The individuals belonging to a PETO begin to experience social identification with their cohort as a mere act of being assigned to a group is enough to generate in-group favoritism and in-group cohesion (Tajfel, 1982; Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Sapic, 2017). The psychological group concept (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987) posits that, quite separately from actual interactions or relationships, individuals still feel connected to the groups where they share the same social identification. This is true even in online settings, where the members sharing the same digital platform experience a sense of a virtual community (Chandna & Salimath, 2020).

While their identity within the PETO is developing and becoming stronger, individuals may experience



the identity or role conflict due to their membership in their parent organization as well as in the PETO. Identities may clash and conflict even with an individual's personal identity (Cheek & Briggs, 1982). For the purposes of this paper, however, only two organizational identities, namely the PETO identity and the parent organization identity, are explored. As members of social structures, individuals engage themselves in numerous interactions with a large number of other individuals, groups, and social structures, and thus have multiple forms of self and contain a multiplicity of identities (Ross, 2007; Brenner, Serpe & Stryker, 2014).

To understand how multiple identities are manifested in an organizational setting and how they are drawn upon by individuals, the nested identity, cross-cutting identity and the identity salience concepts are briefly explored. When speaking about the organizational identity, there is actually a hierarchy of the identities that comes into play in the form of higher-order identities, which essentially refer to divisions or organizations, within the framework of which there are lower-order identities, such as jobs, teams and so on (Albert, Ashforth, Barker, Dukerich, Elsbach, Glynn, Harquail, Kramer & Parks, 1998). While the nested identity concept is well-established in the literature, when and how these multiple identities are expressed is understood to a smaller extent (Meisenbach & Kramer, 2014). Within the parent organization, there is a tendency to more strongly identify and perceive more in common with the subgroups one belongs to, which is primarily so due to the similarity to the subgroups (Kramer, 1991). In the case of PETO and the parent organization duality of identities, it is the parent organization that the individual has more in common with, which leads to the identity conflict different from those experienced by the actors within a single permanent organization. Additionally, these identities are brought to the forefront by being involved in a social group that is 'cross-cutting' in nature (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). Employees find themselves in a dilemma, as they must choose between prioritizing one identity over another, which leads to a potential identity conflict (Scott & Macaulay, 2020).

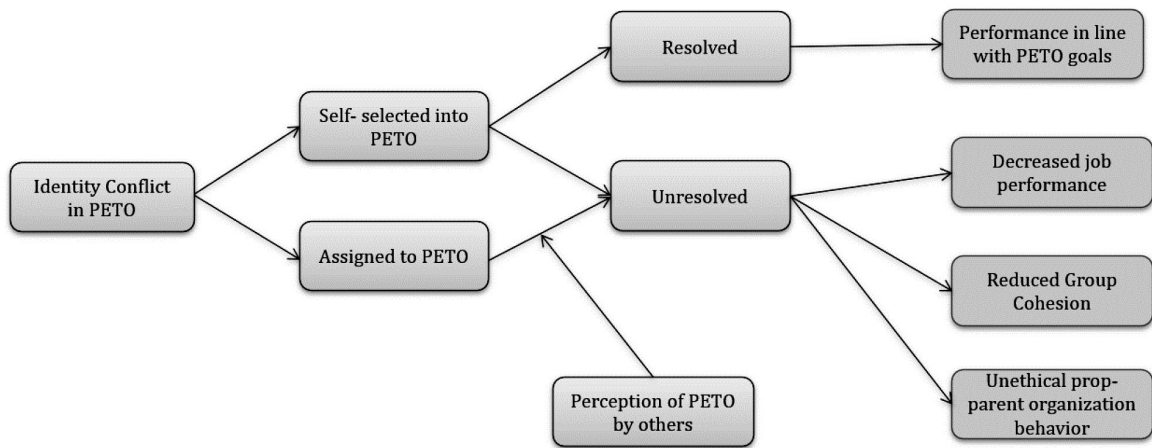
A multitude of the identities that individuals experience may vary in their salience, a certain identity being more salient at one point and a different identity having the potential to supersede the remaining identities at another (Akerlof & Kranton, 2005). Identity salience is analogous to a lens through which individuals perceive their world (Turner *et al*, 1987; Maitner, Mackie, Claypool & Crisp, 2010). In the case of the individuals belonging to a PETO, they would have two identities often vying for salience - the one pertaining to being a member of the temporary organization and the other pertaining to being an employee of the parent organization.

Thus, there are many concepts in the extant literature that help shed light on the multifaceted identity-related issues arising out of organizational membership, concurrently being a part of other social relationships and entities (Meisenbach & Kramer, 2014).

## PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

The identity conflict for individuals in a PETO can be seen between the duality of the identities pertaining to the parent organization and the temporary organization. A conflict is the 'perceived incompatibility between one goal, value, or need and another goal, value or need' (Reichers, 1985, 509). Thus, the conflict between identities that is faced by individuals in the context of boundary-spanning organizations is no different, because the individuals who are the members of PETOs perceive an incompatibility between their parent organizations' goals, values and needs and those of PETOs' (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). This incompatibility may not actually exist - it is sufficient that the individual perceives it to exist.

Figure 1 depicts the proposed framework, illustrating how the identity conflict could be either resolved or unresolved, and the outcomes of both situations followed by the development of propositions.



**Figure 1** The illustration of the PETO identity conflict conceptual framework

Source: Author

### Resolving the identity conflict

B. E. Ashforth and S. A. Mael (1989) state that integrating identities to completely resolve all role conflict is not always a viable option as it may cognitively be taxing and/or comprise the utility of the identities in their particular settings. It is possible for the assigned individuals, however, to resolve this identity conflict by ordering and buffering the identities (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). Ordering is where individuals order their identities and then select the most important identity from their own point of view and define themselves in terms of that identity. Buffering is used to rationalize the conflict and buffer it by concentrating on the identity that is more appealing due to organizational demands.

In the case of individuals in a PETO, those who have self-selected into the PETO would find this conflict easier to resolve (Stryker & Burke, 2000). For these individuals, the element of choice is present, and they would be more cognizant of the changes entailed in making this choice. Individuals in PETOs are, first and foremost, still members of their parent organizations. Speaking from the point of view of the PETO, their identity is therefore the one nested within

the framework of their greater organizational identity (Mueller & Lawler, 1999; Lawler, Thye & Yoon, 2021). In this case, the parent organization is a higher-order identity and will encompass the PETO identity as a lower-order identity (Kramer, 1991).

According to the identity salience theories, the PETO identity being a more concrete identity will have greater situational relevance and prominence and, therefore, will be more salient (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). This allows the individual to have two options to resolve the PETO-parent organization identity conflict:

- they can focus on this hierarchy within a dyad of identities and defer to a more salient identity in the preponderance of situations, which will be the PETO identity (Monin & Durand, 2003; Thoits, 2012), and
- they can sequentially deal with these two identities (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

In this case, they would first comply with the PETO identity requirements as it is partially embedded in the parent organization and has goals that ultimately serve the parent organization. Thus, the individual

would first focus on the lower-order identity and comply with the higher-order identity's requirements (Bartels, Pruyn, De Jong & Joustra, 2007).

The interaction, task interdependence, goal congruity and commitment to the same results will help enhance the strength of the lower order, the PETO identity (Sherman, Hamilton & Lewis, 1999). Additionally, assimilation is considered to be default in social judgments (Mussweiler, 2003). Thus, if individuals in the PETO notice many similarities between the PETO and the parent organization, the perceived conflict between the two social groups will be reduced and the assimilation with the PETO would follow (Spears & Manstead, 1990).

The final aspect related to multiple identities that may help resolve an identity role conflict is to acknowledge the fact that there are multiple identities working (De Bernardis & Giustiniano, 2015) and to allow them to be simultaneously salient as 'bringing multiple identities to bear on a situation may facilitate rich and circumspect actions' (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001, 45) in certain situations. This is relatively more difficult than allowing a single identity to be salient at a time due to a cognitive challenge (Marks & MacDermaid, 1996). Under certain conditions, however, this simultaneity may be possible (Higgins, 1996; Thoits & Virshup, 1997; Ashforth & Johnson, 2001):

- where identities are correlated, they become cognitively more accessible;
- where the context relevance is high, multiple identities may easily be cued;
- where the multiple identities are quite frequently simultaneously or sequentially invoked, cognitive association is formed between the two and simultaneity becomes easier due to the increased frequency of invoking multiple identities; and
- where the individual is cognitively more complex, the individual will be able to engage him/herself in simultaneity.

This leads to the first set of propositions:

**Proposition 1a:** An identity conflict is more rapidly resolved for the individuals who have exercised a choice to enter a PETO.

**Proposition 1b:** An identity conflict remains unresolved for the individuals who have been assigned to a PETO.

## Identity conflict outcomes

The individuals who resolve the identity conflict will find themselves able to perform at the optimal performance level as if there were no identity conflict and, thus, they will work in line with the PETO's values, norms, and rules to achieve its goals. In some cases, however, the identity conflict will not be resolved thereby leading to reduced group cohesion, lower performance, and unethical pro-parent-organization practices. This difficulty in resolving the identity conflict may worsen by the presence of 'interference' in the form of the negative perception of the PETO by others within the parent organization, leading to further feelings of dissonance.

The desired outcomes from forming a PETO greatly vary from the need for creative ideas, a new product design, the resolution of common industry problems or even the resolution of meta-issues (Bres *et al*, 2018). Failure to resolve the identity conflict that springs out of the PETO-parent organization's dual identities, however, could lead to disruptive outcomes, such as reduced group cohesion within the temporary organization, lower performance by the members, and the unethical behavior of the pro-parent-organization, as discussed hereinafter. That is,

**Proposition 2:** Where the identity conflict is resolved, individual performances are in line with the PETO's goals

**Decreased job performance:** Organized groups become more lucrative and viable when their members behave in a manner that helps the group work more efficiently (Tyler & Blader, 2000; Davis, Fodor, Pfahl & Stoner, 2014) and it is this core principle lying at the heart of organizational identification which, amongst other behaviors of interest, explains enhanced work performance by individuals. Organizational identification is present when there is congruence between an individual's goals and the organization's goals. Being a form of psychological

attachment, this identification manifests itself in the form of organizational commitment (Reichers, 1985). If another organization is introduced into this relationship whereby individuals are no longer able to align their goals with their 'organization' clearly, then under such circumstances the individuals are likely to be predisposed towards their primary organization first and foremost (Reichers, 1985), which in this case is the parent organization. In such a scenario, the individual's commitment to PETO will suffer. This could be accompanied by a drop in the performance levels (Meyer, Allen & Smith, 1993; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnytsky, 2002). Thus, the disconnection that occurs when individuals feel reduced commitment due to their inability in identifying with PETO would result in a decline in job performance i.e.

Proposition 3a: Where the identity conflict remains unresolved, individuals exhibit decreased job performance in PETO.

**Reduced Group Cohesion:** One of the core tenets of organizational identification is that in-group favoritism is exhibited by members while there is a relatively unfavorable attitude towards out-group members (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Perceptions of dissimilarity may have an impact on positive organizational outcomes, such as organizational citizenship behaviors (Chou, Chang & Han, 2014). Thus, where the parent organization's identity is far stronger, it would lead individuals to regard it as the in-group members, whereas regarding PETO members, it would lead them to regard it as out-group members. This would be accompanied by a tendency to show favoritism towards in-group members (Allen, Schetzle, Mallin & Pullins, 2014). Individuals may begin to process information regarding the in-group and the out-group in such a manner so as to focus on dissimilarities between the parent organization and PETO, leading them to regard the out-group as being in conflict with the in-group (Blanton, 2001). This misalignment might lead to a reduction in group cohesion, which is a critical factor influencing performance, which usually leads to positive behaviors within the group setting, although negative outcomes are also possible if cohesion is unusually

high (Davis *et al*, 2014; Nikolic, 2018). Largely positive outcomes from group cohesion, however, make it a desirable outcome, the one to be strived for. Under the circumstances implying the PETO members being seen as belonging to the out-group, there will be a propensity for group cohesion to decline within PETO due to inferred group differences. Thus,

Proposition 3b: Where the identity conflict remains unresolved, PETO group cohesion is reduced.

### Unethical pro-parent organization behavior

Where an individual is unable to establish the salience of his/her lower-order identity over that of his/her higher-order identity, and where the strength of such a higher-order identity does remain far stronger, such a salient parent organizational identity may encourage individuals to pursue organizational goals ahead of what they view as PETO's narrow, lower-order goals and follow the parent organization's values and norms over PETO's (Kramer, 1991). In a traditional organization, the strengthening of a higher-order organizational identity is important. While working in PETO, however, it is this very higher-order organizational identity that poses unique problems, because it acts as an 'unhealthy attachment' in this context. It is under these circumstances that the onset of unethical behavior in favor of the parent organization may be seen. E. E. Umphress, J. B. Bingham and M. S. Mitchell (2010) have advanced the concept of pro-organizational unethical behavior, which is essentially the unethical behavior engaged in by an employee of his/her own volition, but the intended beneficiary of this behavior is not the individual who engages him-/herself in it. It is rather the organization they work for. According to this definition of unethical pro-organization behavior (UPB), behavior needs to be both unethical and pro-organizational. Given the fact that there are two organizations involved in this conceptual framework, PETO and the parent organization, it is, however, the parent organization that an individual identifies with more strongly as the in-group, and thus the behavior in question will be unethical pro-parent organization behavior (Dou, Chen, Lu, Li &



Wang, 2019). Individuals may seek to benefit their parent organization at the cost of PETO and they may also resort to the behaviors that are considered as unethical, but not personally beneficial; they would rather be such that they may benefit the parent organization, or they may be perceived as being in the best interest of the parent organization. Thus,

Proposition 3c: Where the identity conflict remains unresolved, individuals exhibit unethical pro-parent organization behavior.

The moderating role of perception of PETO: The other coworkers who solely belong to the parent organization may not perceive PETO in a favorable light due to the legitimacy issues or perhaps for other reasons (Hornsey, Spears, Cremers & Hogg, 2003). Where individuals feel social isolation due to being a part of the group which has a lower social status or due to discrimination by the parent group members as the PETO members are regarded as being in the out-group (Fischer, Greitemeyer, Omay & Frey, 2007), the individuals in the PETO will find their performance hindered and they will experience other dysfunctional work outcomes (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Steele, 1997). Thus, how other parent organization's members perceive PETO interferes with the identity of the PETO members as well. Identity interference has been associated with numerous negative psychological outcomes (Settles, 2004), poorer job performance (Netemeyer, Boles & McMurrian, 1996), higher perceived stress (Settles, Sellers & Dams Jr, 2002) or overtaxed cognitive resources (Fried, Ben-David, Tieg, Avital & Yeverechyahu, 1998) included. Thus,

Proposition 3d: The negative outcomes of unresolved identity conflicts are moderated by the perception of non-PETO members such that where other organizational members have a negative perception of PETO, such negative outcomes will be stronger.

## CONCLUSION

In the case of the temporary organizations partially embedded in one parent organization or a larger

number of parent organizations, it is inevitable that individuals would experience a certain identity conflict as there are two organizations - the one being the parent organization, and the other being a temporary organization - tugging on the individual. If their goals, values, norms, and rules are identical, no issue at all will arise. As there are multiple (at least two) parent organizations involved, however, it is to be expected that the goals, while related, will probably not be identical to the parent organization's goals. In fact, it is possible that they will be contrasting goals (e.g. within its own boundaries, the parent organization pursues exploitation goals, but it has decided to be involved with PETO so as to pursue exploration goals). It is this dissonance between these goals, values, norms, and rules that causes the identity conflict and is the reason why individuals find themselves wondering where they belong.

By proposing this conceptual model, the issues arising due to the unresolved identity conflict are explored and their potential problematic outcomes are highlighted. This framework shows how those employees who self-select into PETOs will resolve their identity issues and work in line with what is expected of them. As our framework shows, however, assigning employees without their express interest may lead to multiple identity issues. Thus, performance, group cohesion, and ethical behavior are all diminished. Furthermore, the negative perception of their colleagues at work may further exert a negative influence on the identity issues.

The work-related outcome the most relevant to any employee study is job performance and understanding potential pitfalls in the way of attaining the high levels of job performance and helps managers avoid them in order to create an atmosphere conducive to productivity. With the rising use of temporary organizations, it is necessary to be attentive to their potential problems, not so as to be deterred in their use, but to be cautious. For instance, if an interorganizational virtual enterprise network comprised of individuals from different parent firms produce unimpressive productivity outcomes instead of dissolving a potentially useful relationship, managers should investigate if the individuals are

suffering from any identity conflict. If so, help resolve it by highlighting the salience of the lower order identity i.e. the PETO identity.

One of the predominant reasons for engaging in interorganizational enterprises such as PETOs is to derive the benefits of collaborative work from varied individuals or sources. The identity conflict mitigates this very important benefit of collaborative work by causing reduced group cohesion. This is noteworthy because if the primary motivation behind the formation of PETO was to avail of the benefits of group collaboration, then being unable to avail of this would seriously impair the potential gains from the PETO. However, this should not deter organizations from engaging in such relationships. They rather need to be more attentive to the issues of the identity conflict in such scenarios and act rapidly to resolve it instead. While these are the more practical contributions made by this paper that could help managers, the theoretical implications of this paper are discussed below.

Organizational identification and the identity conflict have been studied in multiple settings and in varied contexts for various types of employees. However, how actors of such PETOs experience organizational identity issues and resolve the same has not extensively been explored in the extant literature. Together with the increased ubiquity of temporary organizations, this is an important area of study. Identification issues within a temporary setting are exacerbated due to the temporal element and studying this important dimension of time may contribute to our understanding of its role in more traditional organization forms as well.

An additional contribution made by this paper reflects in the fact that the concept of unethical pro-organizational behavior is adapted so as to be applicable to temporary organizations. Where unethical behaviors benefit the parent organization to the detriment of PETO and its members, and not for the benefit of an individual him-/herself, the individual will have engaged in unethical pro-parent organization behavior (UPPB). This adaptation brings up some interesting possibilities for future

research as this topic could be studied in more detail using networks and projects, which are the PETOs commonly used in the business arena.

In conclusion, it is important to remember the fact that the identity does not remain stable over time, nor must it necessarily do so for any sort of long-term benefits. It is transient and situation-specific (Mayhew, 2007) and as PETO comes to an end as inevitably it must, the individual can revert back to the stage where the parent organizational identity was their most important identity.

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