Reproduction of 'Typical' gender roles in temporary organizations—No surprise for whom? The case of cooperative behaviors and their acknowledgement☆

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ABSTRACT

Temporary organizations such as projects are known to differ in various respects from permanent ones and have been argued to be more gender-neutral. Inspired by gender research in permanent organizations, we show that (in)congruency between gender and project roles evokes similar mechanisms in both permanent and temporary systems. Using the example of cooperative behavior, operationalized as project citizenship behavior (PCB), we examine how temporary organizations reward such behaviour. A cross-sectional study was conducted, with 241 project managers and workers participating. The results of seven structural equation models reveal that though the enactment of PCB does not vary by gender, the relationship of PCB with its outcomes does: men and women were clearly rewarded differently depending on the gender congruency of their project roles.

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1. Introduction

Research into gender and organizations has shown up to now a persistence of gender inequality (e.g., Calás, Smircich, & Holvino, 2014). Studies for the most part have concentrated on permanent, or line, organizations. Might examining temporary organizations instead make a difference? Projects, the most prominent type of temporary organization (Turner & Müller, 2003), have unique features distinguishing them from permanent/line organizations, in particular temporality and certain termination; a team

structure; and a complex, nonrepetitive task (Bakker, 2010; Lundin & Söderholm, 1995; Söderlund, 2011). Projects are embedded in a context of organizational and social structures and relationships as well as in a historic sequence of events (Engwall, 2003; Sydow, Linkvist, & DeFillippi, 2004). Because of their flatter structures, more decentralized decision making, and higher employee autonomy, projects have been argued to be more gender-neutral than permanent organizations and to offer more employment and promotion opportunities to women (e.g., Ferguson, 1984; Fondas, 1996; Savage & Witz, 1992). Thus, for research referring to temporary organizations it would be of no surprise if the mechanisms of gender role creation and enactment were somewhat different compared to permanent organizations—not least because of distinctive mechanisms of human information processing in the face of temporality (Bakker, Boroş, Kenis, & Oerlemans, 2013). Yet still, gender oriented studies underline that men predominantly conduct and manage project-based work (e.g., Henderson, Stackman, & Koh, 2013; Legault & Chasserio, 2012; Ojiako et al., 2014). Moreover, Henderson and Stackman (2010) note that women work both as project managers and team members twice as much as men on smaller projects with lower

budgets. Against this background, for gender researchers a reproduction of typical gender roles and relations would be less surprising than a clear break with gender roles and hierarchical relations in temporary organizations. Thus, we are facing a tension between the research streams on temporary organizations on the one hand and gender-related research on the other. To explore this tension, it is necessary to focus more on informal processes and shape our view to the more subtle characteristics of temporary organizations. This will help to expose what is actually happening instead of what is supposed to happen (per prescriptive project management approaches). In particular, it is necessary to go beyond a differentiation between men and women (i.e., a reduction to the control and dummy variable 'sex'), but to take in a consideration of typical gender segregations in terms of gendered project roles and their effects.

To dig more deeply into these relationships and potentially find opportunities to diminish gender inequalities, we focus in our study on cooperative behaviors and their impacts on potentially gendered reward structures. Thereby we do not only compare men and women and their assumed gender-(in) congruent behaviors (e.g., Triana, 2011), but also men and women in gender (in) congruent project roles.

Temporary organizations and in particular projects rely on discrete cooperative behaviors of individuals (project citizenship behavior [PCB]). These behaviors are performed voluntarily, in that they are beyond the scope of a work contract, and are supposed to accomplish complex and nonrepetitive tasks. At the same time, these behaviors may be inevitable, because tasks blur organizational boundaries and in an interorganizational setting, legal agreements are not specific enough to clearly allocate all duties to individual organizations (Autry, Skinner, & Lamb, 2008; Braun, Ferreira, & Sydow, 2013; Braun, Müller-Seitz, & Sydow, 2012). The research tradition on such cooperative efforts of individuals tracks back to the 1980s when the construct of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) was introduced (Organ, 1988; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). Organ (1988) defines OCB as 'individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization'. Previous studies prove that OCB not only enhances the effectiveness of organizations (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006; Podsakoff, Ahearne, & MacKenzie, 1997), but also promotes social capital and the stability and quality of relationships, by, for instance, increasing liking and trust among co-workers (Bolino, Turnley, & Bloodgood, 2002). Corresponding studies on temporary organizations have shown that PCB may increase the effectiveness of this type of organization in analogous ways (Braun et al., 2013). OCB and PCB respectively enhance not only organizational and project outcomes, but also individual work and employment outcomes, for instance through performance evaluations and rewards (e.g., Allen & Rush, 2001; Kiker & Motowidlo, 1999; Podsakoff, Whiting, & Podsakoff, 2009).

Yet, as Bergeron, Shipp, Rosen, and Furst (2013) warn, the relation of OCB and individual career outcomes is not necessarily positive, but is determined by systemic features, such as performance evaluation based on organizational outcomes (which typically privileges task performance). What is more, hitherto research has rarely accounted for gender issues in the relationship of citizenship behaviors and their outcomes.

Hence, inspired by Kark and Waismel-Manor (2005), who ask what gender has got to do with organizational citizenship behavior, we examine the specific gendered employment outcomes of citizenship behavior in temporary organizations. Scholars have only rarely examined the gendered enactment of OCB (Kidder, 2002; Kidder & Mac Lean Parks, 2001; Kmec & Gorman, 2010) or OCB's gendered impact on performance evaluations (Allen & Rush, 2001; Heilman & Chen, 2005), salary, and promotion (Allen, 2006).

In sum, examinations of the gendered enactment and outcomes of citizenship behavior as postulated by Kark and Waismel-Manor (2005) remain rare, and we are not aware of studies focusing on citizenship behavior in temporary organizations such as projects.

Against this background, we ask about the gendered outcomes of PCB and in particular how they impact workplace (in) equality and diversity. More precisely, we examine the employment consequences of project citizenship behavior for men and women in both gender-congruent and gender-incongruent project roles (i.e., men in a project manager role entailing supervision duties and budget control; women in an administrative role lacking supervision duties and budget control; and vice versa). We derive hypotheses and utilize a quantitative survey design to test them.

The paper is structured as follows: first, we elaborate the theoretical background and derive hypotheses from research on OCB in temporary organizations (or PCB) and gender research on citizenship behaviors. Second, we outline our quantitative methodology, providing information about sample, data collection, measures, and methods of analysis. Third, we present the findings of our analyses. Fourth, we discuss our results against the backdrop of the previously introduced theoretical concepts of PCB and the research on gender issues. We point to theoretical implications, empirical limitations, and directions for future research.

2. Theoretical background

Projects are popular with managers since they are often more flexible than line organizations and have more predictable costs. They occur in various industries, including traditional ones such as construction or pharmaceuticals, creative industries such as theatre, film making, or advertising, and service industries such as consulting and IT services (Sydow et al., 2004). Projects differ from permanent organizations in terms of *time* (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995). Examining temporality is crucial to understanding this organizational form. Even though it seems that limited duration is often perceived as necessarily implying short duration, this does not need to be the case (Bakker, 2010). While a formal kick-off event often marks the starting point of a project, a deadline usually marks its end (Bakker, 2010). Nonetheless, there are cases in which termination is postponed or even abandoned completely (Müller-Seitz & Sydow, 2011); thus, the border between temporary and permanent can become fuzzy. This is also due to historicity of temporary organizations, i.e., the shade of past projects affects present and future organizing, thereby embedding the single occurrence into permanent structure (Engwall, 2003). What is more, the nature of temporality can lead to distinctive mechanisms of information processing that are quite different from permanent organizations. In particular, the time-limitation evokes more heuristic information processing as opposed to systematic information processing (Bakker et al., 2013). That means, in the face of temporality, individuals tend to grasp the information at hand (e.g., proven schemes, rules of thumb) instead working systematically (i.e., follow processes, analytical procedures etc.).

Second, projects rely on *teams*, or interdependent sets of collaborating people (Goodman & Goodman, 1976). Generally, project teams that are often characterized by high levels of interdisciplinarity, cut through organizational hierarchies and cross organizational boundaries (Bakker, 2010). Research on organizational behavior and project management literatures address, for example, how to motivate, communicate, and build commitment in team environments (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995).

Third, projects are defined by specific *tasks*. The task is usually the reason why a project exists (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995), and it dominates the becoming as well as the being of this organizational form. Generally, projects appear to be more important to their members than permanent organizations appear to be to their staff