CHAPTER 15

DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOU BELONG?

Salient Identity Model (SIM) for Boundary Spanning VTs

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Organizations are becoming increasingly dependent on external sources of expertise (Badaracco, 1991) and at the same time are attempting to integrate customers and suppliers into value chains (Normann & Ramirez, 1994). As a result, organizations are turning to boundary spanning VTs (virtual teams) to act as a low cost method of connecting and coordinating with key constituents. Despite the fact that VTs save corporations time and money, and provide access to expertise from an expanded labor market, they present new challenges. One such challenge is the creation and maintenance of a shared identity. In this chapter, we draw on social identity theory and explore the challenges of developing and sustaining identity in virtual work environments. The research model posits that boundary spanning will lead to multiple identities among VT members. This relationship will be moderated by media type, with richer media increasing identification and learner media weakening identification. Multiple identities present the opportunity for social comparisons, in which one identity will emerge and be used as the salient identity. This shift in salience has significant implications for research and practice.

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INTRODUCTION

Organizations are becoming increasingly dependent on external sources of expertise (Badaracco, 1991) and at the same time are attempting to integrate customers and suppliers into value chains (Normann & Ramirez, 1994). As a result, organizations are turning to boundary spanning VTs as a low cost approach to connecting and coordinating with key constituents.

Innovative information and communication technologies such as electronic mail, groupware, and instant messaging are facilitating this transformation to new forms of intraorganizational structures such as VTs. VTs are composed of members that cross: spatial, temporal, and/or organizational boundaries, who can be amassed on an as-needed basis for the duration of a project (Duarte & Snyder, 1999). VTs members often use collaboration technology to facilitate communication and cooperation across distance, time, and/or organizational boundaries (Duarte & Snyder, 1999). In many cases, members rarely, if ever, meet face-to-face (Jarvenpaa, Knoll, & Leidner, 1998). Despite the fact that VTs save corporations time and money while providing access to expertise from an expanded labor market, they also present new challenges.

One such challenge is the creation and maintenance of a shared identity. A shared identity between the organization and employee provides the context within which discourse, coordination and learning are formed, and determines explicit and tacit rules of behavior, which lowers communication cost between employees (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Kogut & Zander, 1996). Past research has empirically confirmed this relationship and many other positive outcomes have been associated with organization identification such as increases in the amount of information exchanged, consensus in-group decisions, trust with coworkers and organizational citizenship behaviors (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994).

In collocated teams housed within organizations, norms and behaviors are reinforced by dress codes, shared language, organizational rituals, and routines (Wiesenfeld & Raghuram, 1998; Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, Garud, 2001), but in virtual work environments, employees are geographically dispersed and often lack these traditional organizational ties. As a result, the relationship between the organization and VT members may be characterized as more social and psychological, rather than tangible or concrete (Heydebrand, 1989; Wiesenfeld & Raghuram, 1998). Unfortunately, the geographic dispersion and dislocation associated with VTs can strain even these ties (Wiesenfeld & Raghuram, 1998). This creates a dilemma for managers of VTs. On one hand, organizational identity, or sense of community, may be required to sustain cohesiveness between VT members and their employers (Wiesenfeld & Raghuram,

1998). On the other hand, the very ICTs that enable VTs threaten the creation and maintenance of this shared organizational identity.

This challenge is further complicated in boundary spanning VTs where employees of one organization (the employer) actually have more interactions with employees of their clients than internal organization members. This interaction or socialization has a direct effect on employee identification with the employer (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). These social interactions could lead to social comparisons between organizations, and could result in a shift in identity that is salient to the employee at a given time. The more VT members begin to interact with employees from another firm, the more they are likely to begin to identify with that firm. In order words, the same employees that lack the traditional organization ties are constantly interacting with external employees placing their fragile identification with their employer in jeopardy. As a result, boundary spanning virtual workers could potentially shift their identification and loyalties from their employer to a client, impacting both employee commitment and turnover intentions.

Although there is some research explaining the impact that work conditions have on organizational identification for virtual workers (Scott & Timmerman, 1999; Wiesenfeld & Raghuram, 1998; Wiesenfeld et al., 2001), research explaining the effects of boundary spanning work on employee's organizational identity is needed (Bartel, 2001). Neither of these streams of research has examined the central issue in this chapter. From an academic perspective we seek to understand mechanisms underlying the salience of various identities (with employer, team, client, and profession) among VT members. This is an important question because organizations can no longer rely solely on internal knowledge and are now becoming increasingly dependent on external sources of expertise, for example, consultants (Badaracco, 1991). In the past, organizations acted more as isolated units separated even from customers and suppliers. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are now allowing firms to become integrated value chains characterized by co-production of both tangible (manufactured) and intangible (knowledge) products (Norman & Ramirez, 1994). The purpose of this chapter is to explore these differential antecedents and provide managers with a framework to manage the identity of VT members, and thus, increase commitment and reduce the likelihood of turnover.

Our goal in this chapter is to examine the dynamics of multiple identifications and it's relevance in boundary spanning VT contexts. We do this using the example of virtual workers, in particular, consultants that move from client site to client site, interacting mostly with the clients' employees, and may not see colleagues at their employer's organization for long periods of time. This arrangement may affect work identity because the

day-to-day contact with other organizational members is missing. In fact, these workers interact more frequently with clients than with members of their own organizations, and may, in time, start identifying with the client. In this chapter we present the Salient Identity Model (SIM) for boundary spanning VTs (see Figure 15.1). This research model posits that boundary spanning will lead to multiple identities among VT members. This relationship will be moderated by media type, with richer media increasing identification and learner media weakening identification. Multiple identities present the opportunity for social comparisons, in which one identity will emerge and be used as the salient identity at any given time.

We begin with an examination of social identity theory, and then explore the challenges of developing and sustaining identity in virtual work environments. We propose several specific propositions that explain the identification process for VT members. In particular we suggest that team members will develop multiple identities and engage in social comparisons which could shift their salience identity in certain situations. Finally, we offer implications for research and practice.

BACKGROUND LITERATURE

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory posits that individuals will try to belong to groups that they believe compare favorably with and are distinct from other groups as a way to enhance their own self-esteem (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Three key cognitive processes drive social identity theory: self-categorization, social comparison. and social identification (Ellemers, de Gilden, & Haslam, 2004). Self categorization theory, an extension of social identity theory, details the relationship between the self-concept and group behavior. Self-categorization is the cognitive dimension of social identity and specifies the causes and consequences of social categorization of self and others (Abrams & Hogg, 2001). Self-categorization is the process by which individuals classify themselves and others as in-group and out-group members by emphasizing the similarities they have with in-group members and stressing the differences they have with out-group members (Elsbach, 1999).

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Social comparisons are then used to maximize intergroup distinctiveness that focuses primary on the positive aspects of one's ingroup. Because our social identity defines who we are in comparisons to others, individuals are motivated to focus on attributes that are seen as favorable to their in-group (Abrams & Hogg, 2001). As a result the in-group obtains

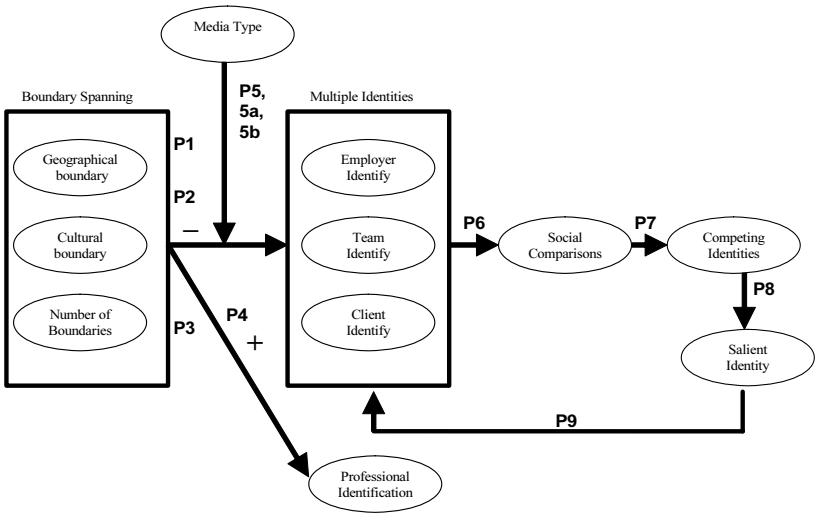

Figure 15.1. Salient Identity Model for VTs

a "positive distinctiveness" when compared to other out-groups (Abrams & Hogg, 1990). While social identity speaks toward how individuals determine who they are, identification highlights how individuals perceived themselves in light of others. When individuals perceive that their own personal identity overlaps with that of a group identity, identification is said to have occurred. Social identification describes the process that leads to identification with a social group.

Identification is important because the more individuals conceive of themselves as members of a group; the more their attitudes and behaviors become governed by this group membership (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, 1987). These social comparisons also allow individuals to cognitively segment others in the context of that social environment (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). This in turn leads to clarity in structural relations among groups and promotes assimilation that prescribes appropriate attitudes, feelings and behaviors (Knippenberg, van Dreu, & Homan, 2002). Self-categorization and social comparison are in effect "mutually dependent processes" where the center of comparisons is directed by the identity claimed (Bartel, 2001). In particular, social comparisons can force individuals to recalibrate the strength of their organizational identification based on the work context and the reference group (Hogg & Terry, 2000). These comparisons can also change the value members attach to their work organization (Hogg & Terry, 2000).

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Organizational Identification

Based on the previous work done in social identification, management researchers applied the concept to employees within an organization to explain the cognitive connection that some employees felt toward their organization (Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail, 1994; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Kramer, 1991; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Organization identification is a specific form of social identification and reflects the "oneness" an individual feels toward an organization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 104) and the "cognitive connection" that occurs when an individual's self-concept contains the same attributes as her or his perception of the organization (Dutton et al., 1994). In particular, organizational identification is said to occur when one's beliefs about the organization's defining qualities become "self-referential" or "self-defining" (Bartel, 2001; Pratt, 1998).

Individuals strongly identify with an organization when their self-concept has similar characteristics that define the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). When an employee is strongly identified with their organization, they will take the organization's perspective and act in the best interest of the organization *(*Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton et al., 1994; Ouchi, 1980). However, identification is not static; instead, it is fluid and dynamic and increases and decreases in strength as a result of new experiences over time (Bartel, 2001).

MULTIPLICITY OF IDENTITIES IN BOUNDARY-SPANNING VTS

The concept of multiple identities derives from the notion that an individual's identity may be composed of several "disparate and loosely coupled identities" (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 22), such as race, gender, or nationality (Dutton et al., 1994). Likewise, multiple organizational identities can come from different work groups such as teams, departments, or corporate division as a result any given employee will have multiple identities (Foreman & Whetten, 2002; Scott, 1997). Each of these identities influences an individual's self-concept (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Stryker & Serpe, 1982).

Differences in organizational identification between virtual and non-virtual workers have been noted (Wiesenfeld, Batis M., Raghuram, Garud, & Garud, 1999). Several of the differences are related to technology while others are related to geographical and culturally distance. Geographic distance, as found in boundary spanning VTs, is expected to have several effects on the identification process. Geographically separated workers may not be able to participate in teams or company rituals and ceremonies that help to foster and strengthen identification in a traditional work

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environment (Wiesenfeld, Batia M., Raghuram, Garud, & Garud, 1999). As a result, employees that work away from an organization may experience a lack of visibility in organizational membership hindering the identification process (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 2001). The lack of visibility may also contribute to another predicator of identification, perceived organization attractiveness. The attractiveness of any entity or the degree to which identification enhances members' self-esteem, self consistency, and self-distinctiveness, is a strong predictor of identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Another challenge facing boundary spanning VTs is the fact that they may not be located in the same time zone as their employer, other team members, or client. The differences in time zones could potentially force team members to communicate at odd hours. This, in turn, could lead to relatively short episodes of engagement with reduced communication, hindering the identification process.

Proposition 1: Greater the geographical distance between the VT member and the entity (employer, team, or client), lower the identification with the entity.

Boundaries spanning VTs are fundamentally different than face-to-face teams. Face-to-face teams that are collocated and cross functional boundaries still share a common corporate culture. Nevertheless, the vast majority of literature on identification development is based on face-to-face teams that share a common culture. One of the major issues facing boundary spanning VTs relates to the context in which they are embedded. VTs are composed of individuals from different geographic locations. These individuals bring unique sets of cultural assumptions to the team.

In collocated teams, individuals face the same environmental challenges such as similar holidays and the same technology resources. Collocated teams often have prior formal and informal interactions. Global boundaries spanning VTs, teams composed of individuals located in different countries, are dispersed across the world with individual members existing in different culture environments. For example, the context of someone working in a Christian-based society where Christmas is a widely celebrated holiday may experience different breaks (e.g., Christmas) in productivity than individuals living in a non-Christian society. Members of VTs must be able to transcend culture boundaries. These differences can be both formal and informal, ranging from determining how individuals interact among each other to potential governmental regulations, such as what defines a workday. These differences can easily disrupt the identification process. Members of global boundary spanning VTs are

often not native speakers of their teammates' language. Members often choose to communicate through a common or third language like English even when no member is sufficiently proficient. This, coupled with the above problems, can lead to miscommunication between members, and may slow down the group development process.

Proposition 2: Greater the cultural distance between the VT member and the entity (employer, team, or client), lower the identification with the entity.

In general, the more boundaries that a VT member crosses, the less likely they will identify with the any one entity. In other words, if an employee moves frequently from client to client, they may never stay with one client long enough to experience long-term identification with them. They end up serving many teams and many clients. In general, we propose that these individuals are likely to experience a generalized sense of loss, and a lack of identity in their work environment.

In the light of these weakened identifications and feelings of isolation, VT members may attempt to fill the vacuum by identifying with their profession.

Proposition 3: Greater the number of entities (employer, team, and client) that VT member spans, lower the aggregate sense of identification with these entities.

Proposition 4: Greater the number of entities (employer, team, and client) that VT member spans, higher the identification with the profession.

Moderating Effect of Media Use

Developmental differences between face-to-face teams and computer-mediated teams have been well documented (Burke & Chidambaram, 1995; Chidambaram, 1996; Walther, 1995; Walther & Burgoon, 1992) and so have their effects on decision making (Robert & Dennis, 2005). VT members normally communicate through electronic text-based forms of communication (Rice & Gattiker, 2001). This reliance on electronic communication as the primary source of communication poses two problems: infrequent communication and the lack of rich communication. VT members may not communicate as frequently as face-to-face team members, or with members of their organization. As a result, it takes longer for members of a VT to transmit relationship information. This slower communi-

cation tends to decelerate the relationship development process (Walther, 1995). These factors impact the identification process because individuals lack the ability to begin the classification of in-groups and out-groups members needed to begin the identification process (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

The ability to see members face-to-face speeds up the categorization needed to begin the identification process and increases the likelihood that identification will take place. Rich communication increases opportunity for members to find interpersonal commonality between them, increasing their opportunity to create socioemotional understanding, which, in turn, enhances the salience of shared common team identity. Thus, a lack of physical contact between the employer, team members, and client organizations can hinder the identification process (Wiesenfeld et al., 2001).

Compared to teams that communicate face-to-face, members of teams that communicate through electronic medium experience significantly less organization, team, and occupational identification (Scott & Fontenot, 1999). However, this does not imply that identification cannot occur, only that it will be weaker and slower. Research comparing virtual workers with nonvirtual worker has shown that higher level of electronic communication is associated with higher levels of organizational identification for employees who worked mostly away from the office, while higher level of phone communication is correlated with an increase in organizational identification for employees who work mostly in the office (Wiesenfeld, Batia M., Raghuram, Sumita, Garud, Raghu, 1999). Scott & Timmerman (1999) found that workers who tele-work moderately (21%-50%) were more identified with their work team, organization, and occupation than those who tele-work a larger portion of their work-week and communicated mostly by advanced phone technologies.

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Proposition 5: Media type will moderate the relationship between geographical distance, cultural distance, and boundary spanning on employer, team, and client identities, with richer media increasing identification and learner media weakening identification.

Social Comparison by in Boundary Spanning VT Members

Although there has been much research on multiple identities, much of it has focused primarily on two relationships. One, employee identification with their work group versus other organizational work groups; and two, identification between employees and their work group versus

their identification with the organization as a whole (Reade, 2001). As Foreman and Whetten (2002) highlighted, only recently have scholars begun to examine how individuals reconcile "contradictions" and "conflicts" that emerge from competing identities.

Employees involved in boundary spanning work are constantly exposed to many different work contexts and interact with employees from other organizations. This invites social comparisons between one's own organization and clients (and teams). Social comparisons involve a process of competition for positive identity (Abrams & Hogg, 2001) in which in-group members attempt to maintain a positive distinctiveness and positive social identity to out-group members (Abrams & Hogg, 2001; Turner, 1985). This is accomplished by focusing on areas where the in-group is perceived to be superior to the out-group, leaving a favorable impression of one's own group. During this process individuals mentally maximize inter-group uniqueness in such a way that reflects positively on one's in-group (Elsbach, 1999).

These employees are intimately involved with clients on a day-to-day basis and must create boundaries to distance themselves to prevent from becoming too emotionally attached (Bartel, 2001) and it is precisely this intimacy and separateness according to Bartel (2001), that creates "fertile ground" for social comparisons.

Foreman and Whetten (2002) identify four common practices in identity comparison: attractiveness of the perceived identity, identity congruence, shared identity, and identity gap. Although Foreman and Whetten (2000) were referring to intraorganization identification we believe these concepts can be extended to interorganization identification. The greater the level of perceived congruence (with one's personal identity) derived from the identity comparison process the greater the level of employee identification (Foreman & Whetten, 2002). If the employee perceives their client's identity to more attractive and more inline with their own identity they may begin to shift their salience to their client identity. This, coupled with the lack of traditional ties with their own organization, could lead to a shift in identification from employer to the client.

As a result, individuals in boundary spanning VTs are constantly torn between identifying with their own organization versus identifying with the clients that they support. Organizational identification can be problematic in the face of other competing identities (Foreman & Whetten, 2002). To reconcile which identity should be used in a given situation boundary spanning, VT members will engage in social comparisons among the identities.

Proposition 6: VT members will develop competing identities relating to their employer, team, and client, which will

lead them to engage in social comparisons among these identities, resulting in role conflict.

Identity Salience in VT Members

In order to tackle role conflict, social comparison by VT members leads to selection of one type of identity (Salient Identity) that the employee operates from in a given situation. In the following section, we will discuss the dynamics of how different identities can acquire salience under different circumstances.

Salient Identity is defined as "a readiness to act out an identity" (Stryker & Serpe, 1994, p. 17). Individuals can have multiple identities but they act out one of those identities in a given situation. It is not necessary for individuals to be directly aware of which identity is salience to act on them (Stryker & Serpe, 1994). Salience is context dependent; one identity can be salient in one environment and not salient in another (Turner, 1985). Salience has been described as a product of accessibility and fit (Oakes, 1987).

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Accessibility is described by Oakes (1987, p. 128) as the "readiness of a social categorization to become activated." One's current goals and circumstances are the two major determinates of accessibility (Oakes, 1987). In particular, this would include an individual's current task orientation and the possibility that events will occur in a given situation that could invoke an identity (Stets & Burke, 2000). Fit has both a comparative and normative feature. A comparative fit is said to occur when individual believes that within-group differences are smaller than between group differences (Turner, 1987). A normative fit is said to occur when individual believes they have matched the appropriate identity with the given situation (Stets & Burke, 2000).

When an employee has strong organization identification with their employer, other identities in the self-concept recede and the salient organizational membership becomes central and is frequently used as a basis for self-definition (Dutton et. al., 1994; Kramer, 1991). Salience fully mediates the relationship between identification and behavior (Bliuc, McGarty, & Reynolds, 2003). As a result, the identity that is used as salient can potentially have significant impact on employee behavior because these individuals will choose to support and take on the norms and behaviors associated with that salient identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

It is quite possible for an employee from organization X who identifies strongly with their employer to develop identification with another organization Y and still maintain their identification with their employee

organization X (Li, Xin, & Pillutla, 2002). This, however, can be problematic, because behavior that is accepted in one organization may be abnormal or harmful for another organization (Li et al., 2002). This dual identification could lead to role conflict and stress (Li et al., 2002). To compensate for this VT member will assume one identity as the "salient identity" to act out for a given situation.

Proposition 7: As the result of the social comparisons among competing identities, one salient identity will emerge and be used as a basis for self-definition for a particular situation.

Situated and Deep Structural Identification in VT Members

Why is it that in certain circumstance dual identification is harmful and in other situations it may be beneficial? The answer may be related to the salience of the identification as well as type of identification. One useful classification of identification is provided by Rousseau (1998), who proposed that individuals have two levels of identification: situated and deep structural identification (Rousseau, 1998). The former is formulated thru situational cues that indicate a shared success. Here, the team members may not have a strong identification with their team or client. The second level of identification is based on thoughtful elaboration and may occur once the first level has been achieved. It results from the interaction overtime between the employee and their team members and client organization (Rousseau, 1998).

Employees can view themselves and others as individual pieces of an organization with no significant common bonds or as members of a subgroup with common or competing interest with other subgroups (Gaettner, Dovidio, & Bachman, 1996; Rousseau, 1998). Situational identity is created when individuals are placed into a situation and exposed to cues that denote membership. This identity occurs most frequently in environments where cues indicate common interest and where performance outcomes are shared, mutually dependent, and not dispensed among individuals (Rousseau, 1998). An example of such a cue would be a project deadline for the VT. This deadline could trigger members of a team to begin to identify with the team; however, once the situational cues are removed this type of identification erodes (Rousseau, 1998). These situational cues have a greater effect when group members believe that the group is competing against another group (Rousseau, 1998). Studies have shown that creating this bond, even in temporary groups, is rather simple (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). The byproducts of situational

identity are greater focus on team performance, mutual respect for the team and its member, and a willingness of team members to expand the boundaries of their participation regardless of their original role or function (Rousseau, 1998).

We believe that for employees who work in boundary spanning VTs who spend much of their career bouncing from project to project, situated identity is very important. In particular, for these employees, situational identify can become an individual's salience identity throughout the life of a given project. Situated identification exits for as long as individuals perceive that there is a benefit in working together. Situated identification often begins with the acceptance of an assignment and ends once the team's project is completed.

Deep structural identification may occur once situated identification has been achieved and is the result of interactions between individuals and their organization. These interactions over time can lead individuals to develop deep structural relationships. Deep structural identification is resilient across various situations and roles while situated identification requires the constant present of cues to sustain the identification (Rousseau, 1998).

In the case of VT members, they can begin projects identifying strongly with their employer and develop a situated identification with the team. This situated identity can lead to social comparisons between their employee and client organizations, which could in turn begin to shift the salience of their deeper identification from their employer to their client. Hence, not only can employees have dual identification with both their employee and client they can also identify with each at one or two levels. As a result, dual (or multiple identification) is much more complex than originally thought. This is important because as previously stated each of these identifications may be associated with a set of distinct norms, interest, beliefs, attitudes, and values some congruence with each other and some distinct.

The above discussion suggests that once a salient identity is reached it is not fixed or permanent and still remains context dependent. The salient identity applies only to a given situation and even then it can be changed in the future. When an employee feels that the current salient identity is no longer appropriate for the current situation they will return to their multiple identities and begin the selection process all over again.

Proposition 8: A boundary spanning VT member's salient identity is not fixed and can shift to and from the employer, team, or client depending on the factors described above.

THREE SCENARIOS OF MULTIPLE IDENTIFICATION IN VT MEMBERS

Following the above discussion, we can envision three main identification scenarios that can exist. The first is when the team member has a deep identification with their employer and are situational identified with the team and their client (Figure 15.2). In this identification scenario the employer's identification is the most salient identity in the employee self-concept. As a result, team members are loyal to their employer and committed to fulfilling the goals of their employer. There will be little role stress or conflict and once the project is completed these employees are likely to continue working for their employer.

The second scenario occurs when a team member is strongly identified with both the organization and the client (Figure 15.2) if the roles are congruent, there may not be any role stress or conflict. In this case the individual is more likely to perform best. However, if through social comparisons a team member finds the perceived image of their client to be more attractive than their employer there is a risk that they may leave their employer.

In the third scenario, team members are strongly identified with the client and become situational identified with the team and client (Figure 15.2). This occurs after an employee has socially compared the perceived image, congruence between organizations and found the client identity to be distinctive, prestigious and self-defining. As a result, the team members engages work tasks as an agent of the client and the acts on behalf of the client over that of their employer. In this scenario there will be little role stress or conflict, perhaps guilt and once the project is completed an employee is most susceptible to leaving their employer and joining the client.

Scenario 1	**Employer**	**Team**	**Client**
Situational Identification		**X**	**X**
Deep Structure Identification	**X**		
Scenario 2	**Employer**	**Team**	**Client**
Situational Identification		**X**	
Deep Structure Identification	**X**		**X**
Scenario 3	**Employer**	**Team**	**Client**
Situational Identification	**X**	**X**	
Deep Structure Identification			**X**

Figure 15.2, Three Scenarios of Multiple Identifications in VT Members

CONCLUSION

New innovative information and communication technologies enable new forms of intra-organizational structures such as VTs. These new intra-organizational structures present new challenges. One such challenge is the creation and maintenance of a shared identity. This task is further complicated with boundary spanning VTs where members of one organization actually have greater interaction with employees from their client organization than internal organization members. In this chapter, we have attempted to explain how this could lead to a shift in salience of identity for virtual workers.

This chapter seeks to contribute by identifying a much understudied area—multiple identities in VT members. Although, there is a plethora of research on organization identification, very little has been done in understanding how multiple identifications impact the performance and commitment of VT members to various stakeholders. Also, its impact on the future relations between VT members and their employer needs more attention. Scholars as well as practitioners need to better understand how these inconsistencies and conflicts between identities can affect team performance and how to manage these inconsistencies.

Some possible human resource strategies that managers could consider include requiring VT members to physically come in for a periodic check-in day. Another example is some form of electronic "coffee break" where dispersed organizational members electronically convene for an informal chat. These types of measures could help employees stay connected at least to some extent and would reinforce organizational identity. Use of richer media such as video conferencing could also help enhance organization identity.

Future studies could examine what effect, if any, does working on multiple projects with multiple clients at the same time with little employer contact have on organization identification? Are the impacts amplified or reduced when more than one client is involved? Is there a link between VT's membership and likelihood of turnover in general and does the size of VT matter? Are there any characteristics about IT workers in general that would make them more or less likely to identify with either their employer or client? More research is needed to understand the cultural influences on identification. For example, some cultures may promote the idea of lifetime employment where many employees would not consider leaving for another company, while other cultures produce employees who consider themselves as free agents. We have presented an early step in this direction. Clearly, much more research on understanding the effects of various boundaries on identification in VTs is needed.

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