
Social identity and Contingent work

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Overview

- ◆ Introduction
- ◆ A social identity perspective on contingent work
- ◆ Trouble in paradise: why research on contingent work is troublesome
- ◆ How social identity explains apparently inconsistent results

- ◆ What we know little about
- ◆ How to proceed

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A Dutch commercial



- ◆ <http://nl.youtube.com/watch?v=gjg6IP7hmNk>

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Fact and Fiction

- ◆ Literature tends to have a negative perspective towards contingent work
- ◆ Frequently (but not always) less positive attitudes and behaviors in comparison to permanent employees
- ◆ Common explanation: Reference to psychological contract (social exchange): unwritten set of mutual expectations between employer and employee

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Fact and Fiction

- ◆ Temporary employees: transactional contract
- ◆ Permanent employees: relational contract

- ◆ An exception: McDonald & Makin (2000)
 - **No** differences in perceptions of psychological contract
 - **Higher** affective commitment for temps!
 - **Higher** job satisfaction for temps!
- ◆ Identity explanation: reference to socio-structural characteristics

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A social identity perspective

Social identification:

People strive to maintain a positive social identity

- self image depends on group membership
- Motivation: (positive) distinctivity

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A social identity perspective

If social identity is threatened
(e.g., by low group status)

Strategy

- Individual mobility
- Social competition
- Social creativity

A social identity perspective

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Strategy

- Individual mobility
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Precondition

- Permeability
- Stability
- Legitimacy

Trouble in researchers' paradise



◆ Contract type is not the only difference between contingent and permanent workers

Trouble in researchers' paradise



Characteristics

- Age
- Type of work
- # and level of responsibilities
- Tenure
- Number of working hours
- Experience level
- Etc.

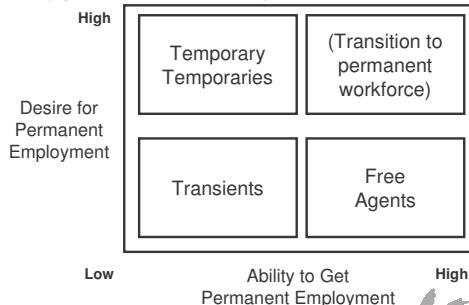
Temps are/have

- Relatively young
- low level
- low level
- low
- low
- low (high variance)

Contingent workers: Low status?

- ◆ No investment by organization
- ◆ Lower salary for identical work
- ◆ First to be dismissed
 - Irrespective of performance (justice, trust)
 - At economic downturn (no influence)
- ◆ Collective action is
 - difficult (workers not organized in unions)
 - Easily punished with contract termination
- ◆ Employer doesn't need to keep promises (no contra-power: high level of uncertainty, low levels of justice, trust)
- ◆ Potential threat to permanent employees
- ◆ Etc.

Trouble in researchers' paradise: Types of Contingent Workers



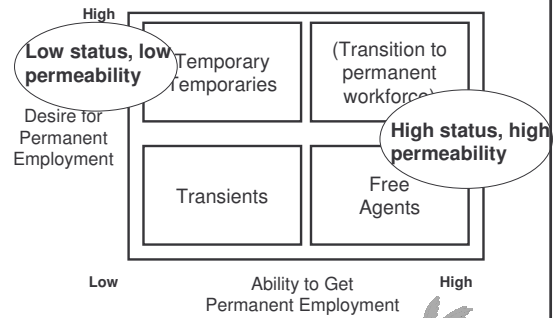
◆ From McShane & Von Glinow, 3rd ed.

Permeability of group boundaries

- ◆ Chances to get a permanent position,
- ◆ Chances at the labor market, and
- ◆ Temporary work as a choice
 - May lead to high self-esteem
 - May lead to high individual status
 - May lead to low commitment to current group



Types of Contingent Workers



◆ From McShane & Von Glinow, 3rd ed.



Permeability of group boundaries

YOUR FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT

◆ future or no future?



Expect more from life. Get more from work.

C. J. Walmsley



Permeability of group boundaries

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Proposition:

contingent workers who see an opportunity to get a permanent/better position, identify less strongly with their current group (e.g. fellow temporary employees), and more strongly with the organization



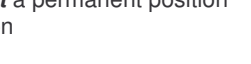
Permeability of group boundaries

Marler et al. (2002)

Boundaryless vs. traditional contingent employees:

- More alternative job opportunities
- (higher education, high status jobs, more dual earners)
- Less task performance, contextual performance

Employees that **do not want** a permanent position in their current organization



Contradictory results?

Kossek et al. (1997).

- Resentment of Temps vs. permanent employees
 - (INGROUP favoritism: temps are better, work harder for less money, etc.)
- Contingency factor: Few chances to get permanent contract



Contradictory results?

- ◆ McDonald & Makin (2000)
 - **No** differences in perceptions of psychological contract
 - **Higher** affective commitment for temps!
 - **Higher** job satisfaction for temps!
- ◆ Contingency factor: Anticipatory socialization; Employees who would like a permanent position in their current organization



Contradictory results?

- ◆ Von Hippel (2006)
 - Bias against temporary workers
 - Lower allocation of bonuses by permanent employees
 - Lower allocation of bonuses by temporary employees!
 - OUTGROUP favoritism
 - Lower status
 - Preference for permanent work
 - Again Anticipatory socialization?: Employees who would like a permanent position in their current organization

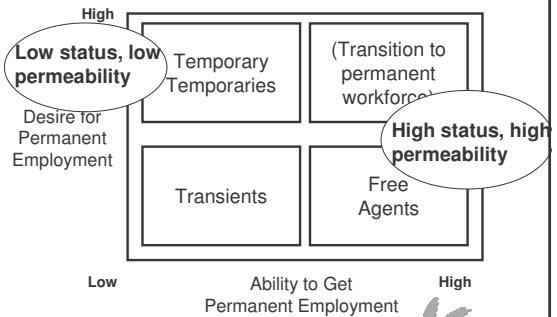


Contradictory results?

- ◆ Not if... permeability is accepted as a contingency factor
 - Combination of Permeability desire/No opportunities ≠ Permeability desire/Perceived opportunities ≠ No permeability desire/No opportunities ≠ No permeability desire/Perceived opportunities
- ◆ (At least) two problems remain
 - Status and permeability may be correlated
 - Objective permeability ≠ perceived permeability



Status and permeability



My own research

Mail sorting center
Aeroground service
Hotel
Snack factory

Results

- ◆ Effects of Status and permeability
 - On attitudes
 - Organizational commitment
 - Unit commitment
 - Job satisfaction
 - Trust / Evaluation of treatment by organization
 - Equity / justice
 - Self-esteem
 - (Mutual) stereotyping of temporary and permanent employees
 - On behavior
 - Exit/turnover
 - Voice
 - Neglect
 - Extra-role behavior (OCB)
 - Communication



Contract type as a moderator

- ◆ Relationships between attitudes and behavior differ
- ◆ Psychological process may be different
- ◆ e.g.
 - relationship between commitment and OCB is stronger for temporary employees (de Gilder, 2005; van Dyne & Ang, 1998)
 - Relationship between commitment and performance is stronger for temporary employees (Ellingson et al., 1998)
 - Relationship between procedural justice and OCB is stronger for permanent employees (de Gilder, 2005; in line with McLean Parks & Kidder, 1994)



In conclusion

- ◆ Much research seems inconclusive
- ◆ Caused by (many) contingency variables
- ◆ Identity perspective may be useful to explain differences in
 - attitudes
 - Positive / Negative behaviors

Contract type may be a moderator: the psychology of work may be different for temps

What we know little about

- ◆ Status, permeability have antecedents
 - Previous experiences
 - How realistic is permeability
 - How has temp been treated
 - By employers
 - By agency
 - How do needs change over time, as a consequence of, e.g. Marital status, temporary absence from labor market, getting a mortgage, etc.

What we know little about (2)

- ◆ Status, permeability and identity have antecedents
 - Acquisition of 'social capital'
 - New skills
 - Education
 - Experience
 - Social skills
 - Network ties
 - New friends
 - Employers
 - Temp agency
 - ◆ social capital may increase self-esteem and (perceived) status and permeability

How to proceed? I propose to

- ◆ Use Social identity perspective to explain attitudes and behavior of temporary employees
- ◆ Study Dynamics of temporary workers
 - Do preferences change over time?
 - Do experiences affect long-term attitudes?
- ◆ Measure Contingency variables
 - Dimensions of the (psychological) contract
 - (time frame, focus on economic concerns, tangibility, etc. McLean Parks et al., 1998)

What is needed? Only(...)

- ◆ A longitudinal study:
 - (changes in) Job attitudes, (perceptions of) socio-structural variables
 - Labor market transitions
 - (acquisition of) Social capital
 - New skills
 - Education
 - Experience
 - Social skills
 - Network ties
 - New friends
 - Employers
 - Temp agency



Why it is needed: enables us to

- ◆ Understand the long term outcomes of the changing labor market
- ◆ Advise temp agencies how to be a preferred employer without profit losse
- ◆ Advise temporary employees about career planning

◆ And to be able to attend conferences...

in clean hotels



The end