



...He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
 My apple trees will never get across
 And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
 He only says, 'Good fences make good neighbors'.
 Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
 If I could put a notion in his head:
 'Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it
 Where there are cows?
 But here there are no cows.
 Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
 What I was walling in or walling out,
 And to whom I was like to give offence.
 Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
 That wants it down.'...

(excerpt from *The Mending Wall* by Robert Frost)


Project Team Identity: Isolating Windows of Opportunity for Promoting Project Temporal Success

(Do Good Fences Really Make Good Developers?)

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Knowledge & Project Management Symposium
 Tulsa, OK
 October 3-4, 2007



Business Administration	Motivation	PE Model	Project Identity	Research Model	Conclusion
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A lot of software projects fail, but we software developers are not such dummies that our sheer incompetence can account for them all.


Tom DeMarco, Controlling Software Projects: Management, Measurement & Estimation (p. 4)


The job of the average manager requires a shift in focus every few minutes. The job of the average software developer requires that the developer not shift focus more often than every few hours.



Steve C. McConnell, Software Project Survival Guide (p. 45)


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<p>Hence, the man-month as a unit for measuring the size of a job is a dangerous and deceptive myth. It implies that men and months are interchangeable. Men and months are interchangeable only when a task can be partitioned among many workers <i>with no communication among them.</i></p> <p>Frederick P. Brooks, The Mythical Man-Month (p. 16)</p>									
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ISD (information systems development) environments can be susceptible to failure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hard to define deliverables - fluid project specifications - shifting task and project deadlines - workplace demands which compete with project expectations - competing project demands - a need to interweave independent development activities within interdependent project goals - intense resource constraints • The Widget Effect: viewing software developers as interchangeable "resources" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shifting / adjusting resources without reconsidering impact on project scope • Critical issue in software development work is meeting temporal demands 									
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<p>Punctuated Equilibrium (PE) model applied to group development (Gersick, 1988, 1989)</p>  <p>• Key findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 primary windows of opportunity for change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1 behavior set in motion by the initial group meeting • Phase 2 behavior set in motion by a shock at the group's midpoint - Ability to successfully navigate the temporal midpoint is necessary (but not sufficient) for successful task completion 									
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<p>Limitations of applying a PE model to understanding software development (SD) project work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distance from overall project goals - Independent tasks / independent deliverables - Vague / malleable deadlines - Uncertainty regarding "what's next?" 				
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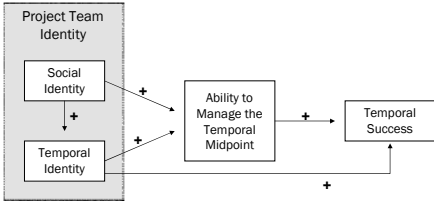
				
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<p>2 types of identity hinted at in PE research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social Identity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1981, p. 255) - Temporal Identity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding for and allegiance to the final project deadline 				
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<p>Achieving identity: rites of passage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 stages (Turner, 1974) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Separation 2. Liminality (betwixt and between) 3. Aggregation <p>Rites of passage in a PE perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initial group meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfreezing/freezing opportunity for social identity - Midpoint transition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfreezing/freezing opportunity for temporal identity 				
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So what?

- Different perspective on SD project work
 - Focus on behavioral which can complement the technical
- Challenges the narrow view of developers as "widgets"
- Stresses the importance of project identity in promoting temporal success
- Offers a perspective regarding how identity arises and identifies windows of opportunity for management intervention

What's next

- Peer review of the model / theory
- Develop a research methodology and test

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Areas for consideration...

- Temporal success as a function of managing stakeholder expectations?
 - Actual time vs. perceived time...
- Task vs. Milestone vs. Project temporal success
- Group vs. individual level analysis
- "Ability to manage the temporal midpoint" assumes a temporal midpoint transition exists
 - Are there cases where it won't exist in an ISD context?

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