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A revisited analysis of the Exit-Voice-Loyalty-Neglect model: contributions of a longitudinal and conceptually extended approach

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Abstract :
The purpose of this article is twofold: to evaluate and enrich the latest theoretical developments of the EVLN model and to identify resources mobilized by respondents who use its different options. The results of a longitudinal survey involving 38 temporary workers over the age of 45 confirms the relevance of distinctions between actual and planned exits, passive and active voices, passive and active loyalties and the conceptual extension of cynicism. Two new options emerge: imagined exit and brutal neglect. The dynamic study of how these options evolve (from the beginning of the relationship with an employer until the employee has settled in) brings to light several key trajectories that show the prominent development of destructive options (cynicism, neglect and exit) to the detriment of constructive options (voice and loyalty). A number of variables and mobilized resources (past satisfaction, few alternative job opportunities, professional ambitions, severe financial constraints) help us to understand the diversity of this global dynamic of destruction in an employee-employer relationship.

Keywords :
EVLN, Cynism, intérim, senior

INTRODUCTION

The study of employees' responses to adverse conditions in the workplace is one of the central themes in organizational behavior literature (Rusbult *& al*., 1988). The transition from a relational to a transactional approach in the relationship between employees and organizations (Cartwright and Holmes, 2006) has increased academic and managerial interest in this topic. Numerous studies highlight the many consequences of dissatisfaction in the workplace (Rusbult *& al.*, 1982; Good *& al.*, 1988; Netemeyer *& al.*, 1995; Dulac *& al.*, 2008). Research on coping with stress or conflict management offers procedural approaches (Folkman and Lazarus, 1988; Paulhan, 1992; Rubin *& al.,* 1994;

Paulhan and Bourgeois, 1995). Two options emerge: flight and conflict. In the first case, employees leave the organization physically (absenteeism, turnover) or mentally (cognitive reappraisal, relativization). In the second case, they oppose the source of their dissatisfaction explicitly (open conflict, strike) or in secret (theft, rumor).

With these theories in mind, Davis-Blake *& al.* (2003) note that the Exit-Voice-Loyalty-Neglect **(**EVLN) model constitutes a fruitful and integrative approach for any research that focuses, like our own, on the consequences of employee dissatisfaction in the workplace. Hirschman (1970) and others (Rusbult *& al.*, 1988; Hagedoorn *& al.*, 1999) show that employees in this situation can react in one of four ways[1]. They can leave (exit), speak up (voice), stay and endure the situation (loyalty) or distance themselves (neglect).

More recent studies offer a new conceptualization of this typology. Naus *& al.* (2007) introduce a category for cynicism. This refers to an employee's loss of confidence in the employing organization, a negative affect and a tendency to behave negatively towards the organization. Rusbult *& al.* (1988), then later Leck and Saunders (1992) and Withey and Cooper (1992), propose to develop the initial options by introducing two further distinctions. The first distinguishes between destructive and constructive behaviors; the second between passive and active behaviors. In the first case, employees choose either to maintain the relationship with the organization (voice and loyalty options) or terminate their employment (exit and neglect options). In the second instance, they either act upon the source of their dissatisfaction (exit and voice options) or refrain from doing so (neglect and loyalty options).

The richness of this debate should not mask the existence of some grey areas. Conceptually, the definition of the different options is not fixed. Withey and Cooper (1992) compare the active loyalty option to citizenship behaviors. Leck and Saunders (1992) suggest it would be better to relabel *loyalty* as *patience to distinguish between attitude and behavior.* Rusbult *& al.* (1988) extend the definition of exit to include an employee's desire to leave. Hirschman (1970) defines voice as the expression of dissatisfaction or even anger, yet Naus *& al.* (2007) redefine it as a citizenship behavior that improves the work environment. This combination of broader terminology and uncertainty about the exact meaning of terms tends to impoverish the EVLN model and may even make us question its relevance (Hagedoorn *& al.*, 1999). Methodologically, Naus *& al.* (2007) regret that most studies are based on a single collection of data whereas responses to dissatisfaction evolve with time. This methodology does not allow us to understand the dynamic process of individual responses to dissatisfaction in the workplace, even though multiple studies (Withey and Cooper, 1992; Turnley and Feldman, 1999) describe the issue as crucial in this field of research. Most studies to date imply that dissatisfied employees remain in one option and yet also confirm the existence of evolving trajectories.

In light of these limitations, the purpose of this research is to study the dynamics of adjustment to work dissatisfaction by corroborating the theoretical relevance of different conceptualizations of EVLN model

1. Though not identical, these options resemble those presented by Sainsaulieu (1996) in his typology of professional identities (retreat, fusion, affinities, negotiation): the exit and neglect options are in some ways similar to 'retreat', whereas loyalty is comparable to the 'affinities' model. The voice option evokes both the 'fusion' and 'negotiation' models.

options. This approach is both exploratory and confirmatory as it adheres to the revised perspective of the EVLN model, also referred to as EVLNC[2]. It integrates and tests the latest developments that have been added to the base model in recent years. It also aims to conceptually enrich these developments by exploring the typology of options and adopting a dynamic perspective. Our analysis is based on a sample of mature temporaries (45 years and over) who deal with entry into temporary work after suffering a dismissal.

2.We will refer to the revised model and the EVLNC model interchangeably to describe the EVLN model that includes recent theoretical developments.

THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE EVLN MODEL: A REVISITED THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE TO UNDERSTAND RESPONSES TO DISSATISFACTION IN THE WORKPLACE

Far from being conceptually fixed, the EVLN model has undergone many conceptual alterations, particularly to its initial options. It is viewed in an increasingly dynamic way. While research concerning resources has paved the way for further in-depth analysis, studies that analyze adaptation trajectories remain exploratory.

Conceptually debated options

The exit option was initially defined by Hirschman (1970) as a customer's response when dissatisfied with the performance of an organization selling him a product. It involves severing ties with the organization. Rusbult *& al.* (1988) broaden the definition of exit to include the desire to leave and thus the adoption of a particular behavior and attitude. For Naus *& al.* (2007), this psychological termination makes the use of typology easier when studying dissatisfaction at work. An employee cannot always behave as if he were leaving due to his perception of a difficult job market, so the extension of exit to include the thought of leaving and perhaps preparations to do so allow us to integrate more nuances of reality into the model.

There is also much debate about the voice option. More complex than exit (Hirschman, 1970), this option can be expressed in varying forms and degrees of intensity. Whereas Hirschman (1970) defines it as an active and constructive response, Hagedoorn *& al.* (1999) distinguish between cooperative and non-cooperative voices. In the former case, the employee tries to solve problems, makes suggestions and is open to compromise. Here, voice is a citizenship behavior. In the latter case, the employee wants to impose his own solution upon his employer, which results in poor communication (Rubin *& al.*, 1994).

Contrary to the first two options, loyalty was not clearly defined by Hirschman (1970). First referred to as a feeling of attachment to an organization, it is then described as an attitude that deters exit as a behavioral response to dissatisfaction. It is later defined in organizational

literature as a form of self-sacrifice. Faced with dissatisfaction, employees 'may simply refuse to exit and suffer in silence, confident that things will get better soon' (Hirschman, 1970, p.38). According to Rusbult *& al.* (1988), this behavior is at once passive and constructive: individuals accept the conditions imposed by the employer and optimistically wait for the situation to improve. Leck and Saunders (1992) define this response as 'patient'. Withey and Cooper (1989) differentiate between this passive form of loyalty and active loyalty, which is similar to citizenship behavior in the workplace (Organ, 1988). Employees act above and beyond what is required of them. They promote the organization and do not count all their working hours, despite their dissatisfaction.

The neglect option takes place in an emotional domain. The employee passively lets the relationship deteriorate or even dissolve in an organizational context of lateness, absenteeism, increased errors at work and even the misappropriation of company resources (Farrell, 1983; Rusbult *& al*., 1988; Naus *& al.*, 2007). The neglect option constitutes a passive, destructive behavior (Hagedoorn *& al.,* 1999).

The typology coined by Hirschman (1970) is the subject of much debate. The model originally included only two options: exit and voice. The added options of loyalty and neglect have less solid theoretical foundations. It is not easy to extend this model to the workplace, since it was conceived to describe a relationship with customers (Naus *& al.*, 2007). The work of Farrell (1983) and Rusbult *& al.* (1988) has helped to clarify these concepts by offering two expository frameworks: constructive/destructive and active/passive. This analytical tool helps to structure the debate, even though there is no consensus even on the dual categories proposed. The first, which opposes voice and loyalty (as constructive behaviors) to exit and neglect (as destructive behaviors), may seem simplistic. Withey and Cooper (1989) suggest including a destructive voice option, whereby the dissatisfied employee comes into conflict with the organization without attempting to reach an agreement. The second dimension, which perceives exit and voice as active behaviors but loyalty and neglect as passive behaviors, is also debated. Withey and Cooper (1989) distinguished an active loyalty option, which is similar to citizenship behavior.

A conceptual extension: the introduction of cynicism

Rusbult *& al.* (1988) call for research that conceptually extends the EVLN model. Naus *& al.* (2007) do so by introducing organizational cynicism as a passive-destructive response in the relationship. It is defined as 'a belief that the organization lacks integrity, negative affect toward the organization, and tendencies towards disparaging and critical behaviors toward the organization that are consistent with these beliefs and affect' (Dean *& al.*, 1998, p.345). Caused by the painful perception of the loss of a former stable job (Abraham, 2000; Pugh *& al.*, 2003), cynicism is the expression of a profound dissatisfaction that is exacerbated by the employee's inability to leave his current employment due to high exit costs.

Not all researchers agree with these interpretations. Bommer *& al.* (2005) note that 'cynics' retain links with their organization due to their professional ethos. The employee, who sees the organization as lacking integrity, becomes cynical either to restore the balance of the relationship (since in his view his contribution is too great) or to escape the source of his problems; cynicism is thus similar to voice. Naus *& al.* (2007) diverge from this view by instead comparing cynicism to exit since both responses share a number of common antecedents, such as high role conflict and lack of free expression. However, the strong work ethic associated with cynicism is not relevant to exit.

According to Naus *& al.* (2007) this conceptual extension of cynicism makes the EVLNC model a more useful tool to understand complex work situations, especially when exit is difficult. Though this revised model has yet to be empirically validated, it is congruent with numerous studies that describe demoralized employees as leveling varying degrees of criticism towards the organization (Dulac *& al.*, 2008).

The changing EVLN model: factors behind the different options

Studies that have developed the EVLN model have not made purely conceptual changes; researchers have attempted to identify the antecedents of different options and even suggested adaptation trajectories. The results regarding the former point have been contradictory yet significant, whereas research on the latter remains in its infancy.

Three explanatory factors emerge from organizational literature (Leck, Saunders, 1992; Rusbult *& al.*, 1988; Farrell and Rusbult, 1992): job satisfaction, exit costs and the quality of job alternatives.

The first factor encourages constructive responses. If a dissatisfied employee was satisfied in former employment, he is more likely to act passively (loyalty) or actively (voice) to restore the balance of the relationship, optimistically thinking he will succeed (Rusbult *& al.*, 1988; Farrell and Rusbult, 1992; Hagedoorn *& al.*, 1999). The second factor is two-dimensional: it is economic (job-specific skills, unrecoverable costs) and psychological (personal commitment). Its complexity generates mixed results. Whithey and Cooper (1989) suggest that the economic aspect forces the employee to stay in his job whereas the psychological dimension affects his constructive (loyalty) and destructive (exit, neglect) responses. Thus only the voice option is not linked to exit costs. An employee with better career prospects is more likely to respond with voice to maintain an employment relationship that will benefit his professional development.

The existence of job alternatives increases an employee's autonomy and makes him more likely to decide to leave the organization when confronted with a problematic work situation (exit). Rusbult *& al.* (1988) argue that voice is more likely to be chosen by an employee when its cost is low and he believes he can easily find another job (Saunders *& al.*, 1992). On the other hand, the absence of convincing job alternatives would cause the employee to stay and wait for conditions to improve (loyalty) or get worse (neglect). Withey and Cooper (1989) dis-

cuss 'loyalty by entrapment'. The authors take the analysis further by suggesting we should consider the costs of different behaviors and locus of control to explain behavioral diversity, similarly to studies that develop the concept of organizational calculative commitment. Allen *& al.* (1993) point out that the longer employees remain in employment, the more difficult departure will be, since the advantages of staying exceed those found elsewhere in the job market. In the theory of comparative advantage proposed by Becker (1964), Commeiras (1994) highlights the relevance of costs and fixed, non-transferable advantages. Similarly, social exchange theory (Gouldner, 1960; Blau, 1964) shows that an employee stays in an organization longer if he perceives a balance between what the organization provides (salary, security, social status) and what he gives them (effort, experience, skills). Without this reciprocity, employees see themselves as victims of injustice and move to another organization (Kotter, 1973).

As well as the energy and time invested in managing dissatisfaction, the common factor in all four options, Withey and Cooper (1989) discuss other explanatory factors. Exit can be accompanied by a decline in income, and voice by a fear of reprisal, loss of reputation and other emotional costs. According to Withey and Cooper (1989) it is more difficult to identity predictors of the voice response. An employee wishing to respond with voice may change his mind if another person is likely to do so instead (as he too would benefit from this) or if he fears the organization will not listen to his complaints. The costs of passive reactions are more vague. The employee's fear of losing his reputation often goes hand in hand with a feeling of failure and the desire to investigate a more active option. Finally, individuals with an internal locus of control tend to choose active responses, whereas those with an external locus of control opt for passive responses.

Alongside these considerations on resources, some studies attempt to identify how behaviors of adaptation to dissatisfaction evolve based on the distinction between passive-active and destructive-constructive. Though this topic is not at the heart of the debate, several authors examine or test possible sequences. Withey and Cooper (1989) offer two such patterns. The first suggests that when dissatisfied, the employee is constructive in the voice response. If this yields no results, he moves towards acceptance (neglect or loyalty) or exit, depending on his chances of finding another job. In the second sequence, the employee starts with loyalty and then moves towards voice if his dissatisfaction has not been resolved. Hagedoorn *& al.* (1999) propose a circular model: the employee first escalates from one response to the next, moving from constructive voice to destructive voice, and then considers exit. Here the destructive voice shows the employee's wish to maintain his stand against his employer at the risk of provoking a serious argument. The choice of ending the relationship with the employer occurs only in extreme cases. The voice option can be cooperative if it takes the form of a lively debate. If this strategy fails, the employee first adopts a passive and destructive response (neglect) and then accepts the situation (patience, loyalty) before finally coming back to the constructive voice option. Though we cannot deny the heuristic value of these propositions, we should remember they are not based on solid empirical evidence.

Trajectories and mobilized resources: two ways of improving the EVLN model

The theoretical framework of the revised EVLN model provides a rich basis of analysis to help pursue our goals:

- To empirically test theoretical modifications which have en riched the diversity of EVLN model options (Hirschman, 1970).
- To build the conceptual discussion on a longitudinal treatment of responses to work dissatisfaction.

Despite the richness of debates on this subject, there are a number of limitations that we aim to address in this study. The first considers dynamics of adaptation. Although research on resources and trajectories suggest possible sequences, results rarely describe this factor as essential. As Naus *& al.* (2007) point out, the research to date suggests that dissatisfied employees are confined to, and stay in, one option, whereas there is in fact every indication that employees change their response according to available resources. The link between resources and trajectories remains more theoretical than empirical at present. Only longitudinal or experimental methodologies can allow researchers to provide an answer to these enquiries. The second limitation is that, to our knowledge, no empirical study has used the revised EVLN model whilst also integrating the conceptual extensions of cynicism and internal conceptual enrichments. These thus remain theoretical propositions whose empirical relevance to understanding the adaptation of dissatisfied employees has only been partly demonstrated.

METHODOLOGY

In order to corroborate and enrich the latest theoretical developments made to the EVLN model and identify the resources used by respondents who choose its different options, we have used a longitudinal design. This dynamic approach to options has allowed us to identify types of trajectories and explanations for these. To study these reactions to dissatisfaction at work, we chose to follow the progress of a sample of temporary workers aged 45 or over. Several reasons explain this choice.

First, the modifications made to the EVLN model (Hagedoorn *& al.*, 1999; Naus *& al.*, 2007) are based on precarious situations in the latter years of an employee's career. Turnley and Feldman (1999) emphasize the importance of non-standard employment to study the EVLN model. Second, research on job insecurity validates the existence of several options described by the EVLN model. Ashford *& al*. (2008) describe loyalty and voice amongst a group of temporaries: loyalty is a response used by mature temporary workers who are 'constrained'. According to Withey and Cooper (1989), temporaries are compliant with the employing organization (the agency): they accept the flexibility and are dedicated to their work within the user company (Garsten, 1999; Marler *& al.*, 2002). The voice response is chosen by highly skilled employees

who can negotiate the content of their work (Glaymann, 2005). This suggests the study of temporary work may help to enrich the EVLN model.

Sample and data collection

The transitory and intermittent nature of contracts means temporary work is precarious (Cingolani, 2005).[3] Temp agencies are nevertheless a viable option (Auer and Gazier, 2006) due to their networking power and their ability to offer not only temporary work, but also fixed-term and long-term contracts since they have been allowed to do so by the law of January 2005 (Gallouj, 2008).[4] As these employees are already mature, very few start temporary work with the intention of carrying on permanently.[5] Having been shut off from employment and training opportunities too early (Fournier, 2003) they struggle to find stable contracts within a flexible job market that they know little about and which discriminates against them (Pijoan and Briole, 2006).

Mature employees start temporary work with expectations vis-à-vis their temp agency and the world of temping more generally, following a double failure in the form of the loss of their former job and their inability to find work alone (Glaymann, 2007). Though the temp agency has nothing to do with the betrayal inflicted by a former employer, it must deal with the consequences of this shock since this past experience affects an employee's relationship with the new employer (Pugh *& al.,* 2003). A lack of professional alternatives (Morrison and Robinson, 1997) combined with the feeling of having received unfair treatment in former employment (Leana and Feldman, 1994) can lead mature temporaries to fear that the temp agency will not fulfill its implicit promise to help them find work. They thus risk adopting an attitude of mistrust or even suspicion (Robinson and Morrison, 2000) towards the agency.

The subsample of temporaries we interviewed is part of a larger sample of temporary employees that constitutes the target of our survey. The overall aim of the latter was to look at the situation of temporaries and identify circumstances and reasons related to this choice of work, as well as the conditions and effects of this work and lifestyle (Glaymann, 2005).

In order to gain access to temporaries, we contacted three large temporary work networks and one SME. We first obtained permission to carry out academic research with no expectations or commitments other than those of respecting the anonymity of the respondents and the confidentiality of the strategic data consulted. Our research was limited to the Île-de-France region since quantitatively this is the most significant area in France in terms of temporary workers. In total, despite a few contacts who did not wish to collaborate, we were able to work with 16 agencies: 6 in Paris and 10 in the suburbs. These operate in manufacturing (9 agencies), the service sector (6 agencies) and construction and public works (1 agency).

3.Since the average duration of a temporary contract is 9.8 days (Unedic, 2004), temporary employees might work one day or one month and subsequently find themselves unemployed, or in a fixed-term or long-term contract.

4.The French Social Cohesion Law (Borloo Law of January 2005) allows agencies to offer employees 'CDD' (contrats à durée déterminée, fixed-term contracts) and 'CDI' (contrats à durée indéterminée, long-term contracts).

5.According to Prisme (2009), 48,468 mature workers (50 years or over) worked as temporary employees in 2008. 51% of those interviewed that year by Prisme said they had approached a temp agency because it is a quick way of finding work. 63% said that temporary work could be a good solution for a few years. This confirms both that few mature workers work as temporary employees and that they rarely see is as a way of life (Glaymann, 2007).

Table 1. Characteristics of the sample

Gender	14 women / 28 men
Age	12 people aged between 45 and 50 22 people aged between 50 and 55 8 people over the age of 55
Skill level	21 unskilled or semi-skilled workers 10 employees 9 skilled or highly skilled technicians or workers 2 executives
Sector of activity	17 in manufacturing 8 in construction and public works 10 in logistics and trade 7 in service sector office jobs
Experience	From 3 months to 27 years

As shown in Table 1, our field research was extensive. We selected a theoretical sample (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) by varying both the personal and professional characteristics of interviewees. We aimed for a qualitative representation containing as many different cases as possible, particularly in terms of sector of activity, profession, skill level, age and experience in temporary work. The variables used for our theoretical sample (age, gender, skill level, sector of activity and experience in temporary work) were selected as they influence the behavior of temporaries, as proposed in literature (Van Breugel *& al.*, 2005). The minimum age of 45 was respected in accordance with research carried out by the *Observatoire du Travail Temporaire* (a research institute on *temporary* agency work).

The collection of data was carried out in three phases (P_1, P_2 and P_3) in order to achieve a longitudinal perspective of responses and ranges from entry into temporary work to a more or less prolonged settling-in phase. In the 42 cases examined in this analysis, temporary work followed a stable job and a break from employment that varied in duration. Loss of employment was in all these cases difficult and unexpected. Events such as individual dismissal, the redundancy process or forced resignation were recounted with pain and sometimes anger (even when much time had passed). Our interpretation of each story was confirmed by an agency employee familiar with the temporary worker. The initial sample of 42 mature temporaries is divided into two categories.

The first category includes 31 employees with less than one year's experience in temporary employment. We attempted to follow their progress three times through the following methods: first a brief questionnaire describing a particular situation, then an interview involving a much more detailed and retrospective series of data, and thirdly another interview that took place within two years of the first. Two thirds of the respondents agreed to the second interview (20 cases). Within this sub-group, 11 interviews took place in person and 9 were telephone

interviews. In 7 cases, agency employees described the professional progress of respondents who took part in the first interview. In these cases we insisted on finding out whether temporary assignments were imposed upon, or chosen by, the employee. Despite the mediator role of the agency, we were not able to obtain information on the progress of 4 workers.
The second category includes 11 experienced (over one year in temporary work) or very experienced (up to 27 years) temporaries, who describe two phases of temporary employment: entry and settling-in. In cases where it was possible to obtain a medium or long description in the first interview following the questionnaire, a third interview would have been superfluous and would not have added useful information. We thus analyzed the trajectories of the 38 remaining cases.

Table 2. The different stages of data collection from temporaries

Phase 1 (P1):	- A self-administered questionnaire is sent to 400 temporary workers (125 are returned, 45 by mature workers).
Phase 2 (P1 + 2 to 6 months):	- 42 face-to-face interviews of 1 to 1.5 hours with mature workers who had completed the questionnaire. - Of these 42 interviewees, 31 had been temporary workers for less than one year (from 3 to 12 months) and 11 had been temporary workers for 1 to 27 years.
Phase 3 (P2 + 6 to 24 months):	11 face-to-face interviews (45 minutes) 9 telephone interviews (45 minutes) 7 interviews with agency managers regarding the professional progress of temporary workers (1 hour) 4 temporary workers whose professional path remains unknown

Our data collection for those 11 employees with more than one year's experience in temporary employment was limited to the questionnaire and one interview in Phase 2. Therefore, a possible discrepancy between the information reported and real behaviors cannot be ignored (Golden, 1992). Furthermore, this section of our data is based above all on elements that make sense to interviewees. Nisbett and Wilson (1977) nevertheless emphasize that the risk of bias is limited where significant life events are concerned, especially if these are formative or recent.
The high number of questionnaires sent out may seem excessive (400

were sent, 125 returned) but was necessary in order to acquire a global understanding of temporary work. Although this initial phase was specific and limited (in terms of the information collected) it allowed us to document the employment status of temporaries, who would be interviewed between 2 and 6 months later. It was also a way of obtaining their explicit consent to be interviewed at a later date (they were asked towards the end of the questionnaire).

The semi-structured interviews (see the Interview Guide in the Annex) lasted on average one hour and took place either in agencies or in neutral locations—e.g. a pub—between the summer of 1999 and the winter of 2002, a period rather favorable to the incorporation of temporaries into the job market. Phase 2 interviews covered several topics: 1) the description of the interviewee's career prior to temporary work, 2) entry into temporary work and reasons behind this choice, 3) how this new situation was dealt with, 4) hopes and expectations. The second interview in Phase 3 was shorter and covered the last two points.

Data analysis

The analysis of the first interviews was carried out by progressively examining different accounts through a constant comparative approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1990), a suitable method for developing descriptions rich in social phenomena and for fostering the emergence of new explanatory perspectives. Our analysis is structured in three key stages. Firstly, each author separately analyzed the content of half the interviews based on the five categories included in the EVLNC model. When it became apparent that this typology would not suffice for a precise identification of situations, we extended the EVLNC typology to include modifications proposed in the literature. We therefore used an analytical grid composed of eight categories rather than five, by adding planned exit, destructive voice and active loyalty. Despite this conceptual extension, some situations did not fit in any of the categories. Two new categories were therefore added: 'imagined exit' and 'brutal neglect'. The first describes the act of thinking about leaving without taking action to make this a reality. The second refers to the desire—whether conscious or otherwise—to aggravate the situation through deviant behaviors. These unplanned additions show that the theoretical framework can be used in a flexible way (Ashforth *& al.*, 2008) and that researchers aiming to validate a theoretical framework can be open to the possibility of creating new categories. By combining these corroborating and exploratory lines of thinking, we elaborated an interpretation grid featuring 10 categories (Table 3).

Table 3. Content analysis categories

Categories	Definitions	Examples
Actual exit	Actually leaves the organization.	*'Tomorrow I'm leaving. I've signed a long-term contract. My time in temporary work is over.'*
Planned exit	Actively looks for a job.	*'I've decided to stop temporary work. I've contacted two companies where I've worked temporarily. I speak about it openly so that as many people as possible know I'm looking.'*
Imagined exit	Thinks about leaving without taking action to make this a reality.	*'It's true that I would like to find a permanent job. I think about it regularly. But it's difficult.'*
Constructive voice	Talks with superiors to find a common solution to any issues that arise.	*'I had a problem with one temporary contract. I phoned the agency to tell them I didn't want to continue the assignment. They told me it wasn't convenient for them, so we agreed that I would continue working there until the end of the week.'*
Destructive voice	Talks with superiors but does not take into account their opinion and tries to impose his own.	*'I told my recruitment manager that if he made me work one more day on that assignment, I wouldn't use the agency again.'*
Passive loyalty	Believes in a better future but does not really try to change the situation.	*'I'm sure the situation will improve. I'm going through a difficult period but it will get better.'*
Active loyalty	Demonstrates commitment to the company through citizenship behaviors.	*'I accepted the assignment at Aulnay even though I live in Créteil and I have to commute 1.5 hours for an assignment that's not that great.'*

Passive neglect	Lets the situation deteriorate through negative behaviors.	*'I haven't been getting to work on time lately. With these temporary contracts, there isn't much enthusiasm towards the work.'*
Brutal neglect	Lets the situation deteriorate through deviant behaviors.	*'I have been drinking a bit too much recently.'*
Cynicism	Thinks the organization lacks integrity and demonstrates negative feelings towards it.	*'I don't think agencies are there to help us. They just want to make money, that's all.'*

The following temporary worker, a 46-year-old secretary, was thus placed in the planned exit category: *'My aim right now is to find a long-term contract. I've contacted several former colleagues to see if there is any work available that I might be interested in. I'm about to turn 47 so I don't intend to do temporary work until I retire. I have nothing against temporary work, I really don't. But I think I'd like to feel settled now. Temporary work allowed me to start working again, to learn to use a lot of software, but I can't see myself permanently staying in temporary work.'*

Following this first stage, two researchers classified all our empirical material according to the extended interpretation grid. A score of 0.9 in Cohen's coefficient of agreement (Cohen, 1960) confirmed the reliability of the classification. Further discussion resolved the few disagreements that had arisen. Finally, in addition to this, a colleague with knowledge in this field classified the *verbatim* accounts of 15 interviews (10 longitudinal and 5 life stories) with a very satisfactory result of 0.8 in Cohen's Kappa.

Following this overall analysis of our research material, we examined each case separately to understand professional dynamics and resources in play. Though inductive, our analysis was based on the studies used in our theoretical framework. Patterns with certain characteristics emerged and were questioned as new evidence was found. Each case was analyzed as unique. The comparison of interview data revealed a set of sequences upon which we based our analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Recurring patterns meant we were able to consolidate the interpretative grid through a combination of imagination and rigor. Clues revealed during our analysis of interviews as well as certain elements of the literature served as a basis to interpret how the events described are linked together.

Lastly, to limit the risk of global reconstruction (Miles and Huberman, 1984), we presented some regular partial results to several colleagues specialized in the field. To make sure our understanding of the responses was reliable, we also compared our views extensively with those of the scientific community, temporary work professionals and unionists during the interviews. This open approach allowed us to achieve what Kvale (1994) describes as 'dialogue intersubjectivity', a robust way of analyzing data that involve complex phenomena.

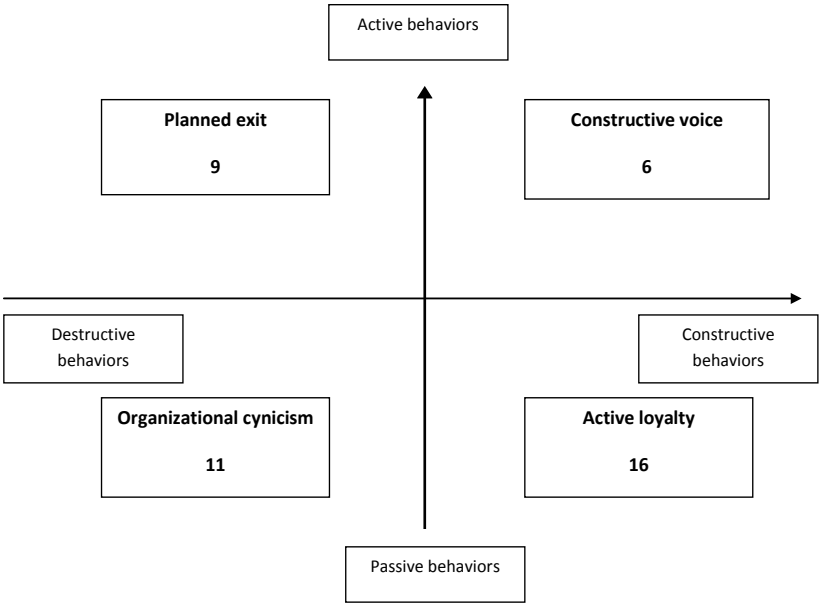
RESULTS

We will distinguish between how employees deal with two phases of temporary work: entry and settling-in.

Dealing with entry into temporary work

Four responses appear here: active loyalty, cynicism, planned exit and constructive voice in descending order of relevance in a number of cases.

Figure 1. Responses of 42 mature workers at their entry into temporary work



The most frequent behavior towards the temp agency and their client is active loyalty. The 16 temporaries who chose this response want to be 'good temporary workers' and do their best to meet the expectations of their agency. Their behavior reveals citizenship commitments towards the agency; they accept assignments that are geographically remote, low-skilled, underpaid or even intermittent: '*I started temporary work because I'm 53 years old and after losing my former job, when I sent my CV out there was always a problem with my age. (…) I hope temporary work will be a way of finding contracts as maybe companies won't look at my age so much and I'll be able to find work. I reckon this is my last chance. (…) They are there for us and always kind. They listen to us. So it's worth making an effort to accept contracts even when they're not great.'* (Car workshop manager, 53 years old, 6 months' experience in temporary work). Agency managers value this flexibility: *'When we give them a contract, it all goes smoothly. We have many more problems with young people.'* (Manager of temp agency in Paris). The relationship with the user company is seen as an extension

of the relationship with the agency. The satisfaction expected from the user company is therefore the direct result of an employee's satisfaction with the temp agency.

Active loyalty results at first from employees' belief that they cannot find work independently. These mature workers are hugely skeptical about their own employability and thus very quickly turn to a temp agency that they trust (often due to their past experience of the agency's services). These employees were rather mobile during the first 5 years of their career and encountered temp agencies they describe as 'professional' at a young age. More recently, the positive reputation of temporary work has reinforced this trust. Several mature workers note that several of their close friends or relatives already worked for the agency when they were employed. They describe the agency as protective, willing to listen and in close contact with companies, whereas job centers or personal networks are seen as inefficient. This perceived goodwill helps mature temporaries move on from their difficult past experience with a former employer.

Eleven new temporaries react with cynicism. They are distrustful of companies and their commitment is limited to the work itself: *'I'm looking for a long-term contract but I can't imagine spending 15 years with the same company. I'm done with loyalty. (…) It's the same thing for company culture … With temporary work, the contract is clear, the deadlines are clear. We don't need to mourn the company.'* (Buyer, 47 years old, two years in temporary work). They develop an eye-for-an-eye principle: *'I was foolish enough to believe all that rubbish about teamwork, solidarity between company employees. I believed in it, but when things get tough, we don't count any more, the only thing that matters to them is saving their own job. Now, I think in this way too.'* (Technician, 56 years old, 14 months' experience in temporary work).

Their relationship with the temp agency is complex. They are suspicious as they expect the agency to act unethically, yet they recognize its expertise and the efficiency of its staff. They ignore the employment relationship specific to temporary work and instead focus on situations they have witnessed: *'In the company I used to work for, I saw how temporaries were treated. It was all about the needs of the company and the agency, never about the temporary's problems. Often temp workers were used as "gap fillers". I don't see why it would be any different for me.'* (Secretary, 51 years old, 2 years in temporary work). Nevertheless, they see the temp agency as useful for career change: *'I thought I'd be able to manage on my own, but I must admit that the agency has helped me find work again. (…) And it's good to have varied experiences and gain an overview of sectors and job positions that might eventually be of interest to me. It's going to help me redefine what I want to do.'* (Assistant Manager, 49 years old, 3 years in temporary work).

This cynicism is a consequence of the shock felt at the end of the relationship with a former employer. The perception of a violent break-up caused by the former employer makes it more difficult to trust the new employer, in this case the temp agency. The employee clings to the memory of a betrayal experienced elsewhere and systematically distrusts all companies, even though the temp agency has nothing to do with this past dissatisfaction. Previously well settled in their job and not very mobile (0 to 3 instances),

they acquired status through their work performance and training. Their dismissal was therefore perceived as all the more unfair since it was unexpected. This is compounded by the employee's failure to find work independently, which calls into question his ability to decide what course his career will take. Several employees who had previously worked in large companies suffered a second shock when their redundancy plan proved ineffective, especially since they had expected significant compensation from their former employer. Due to its inherent instability and its rather devalued image, entry into temporary work is experienced as a step down in the social hierarchy. Some feel they were credulous towards companies in the past and do not want to repeat this mistake. This lack of convincing job alternatives makes them mistrustful of the agency, by which they feel trapped.

We came across the planned exit response 9 times. Employees do not know exactly when this departure will take place. Temporary work is seen as a phase within an ongoing search for employment. Various methods are used to make this planned exit a reality: employees register in different agencies, go to the job centre, send unsolicited applications and anticipate low exit costs: *'Temporary work is just a phase. I don't intend to keep doing it. I'm doing everything I can to stop temporary work. For instance, I look on the job centre's website, I read the newspaper. I ask my friends if they have any contacts. I also go and ask for work regularly in building companies.'* (Builder, 54 years old, one year's experience in temporary work). Unlike the two previous cases (active loyalty and cynicism) this temporary does not focus on the temp agency, but instead relies on user companies and other intermediaries to find a solution. His attitude towards the temp agency is one of cautiousness.

In this case, temporary work is a 'default' solution and its status is disliked. This kind of employee is pragmatic: his skill, social capital and rather successful past mobility give him a sense of optimism about the quality of job alternatives. This distancing from the agency is a result of frequent loss of employment in the past (4 of these employees went through redundancies in the previous 8 years). They experienced the uncertainty of job seeking and conclude that it is better to employ a number of methods, including quick recourse to temporary work following dismissal.

Voice is encountered 6 times as a 'constructive' response. Optimistic about their future, these mature temporaries enjoy a personal, balanced, utilitarian and often lasting relationship with the temp agency. These workers question the agency's choice of proposed contracts. They are demanding in terms of work content yet remain flexible and rarely refuse an assignment. This ability to negotiate is linked to their rather uncommon high level of skill, of which agencies are fully aware. Temporary employment has advantages for these workers: keen to retain their freedom yet disinclined to remain unemployed, they opt for temporary work to limit the costs of job seeking. Their preference for mobility once again reminds us that loyalty towards one company is not a viable option: *'I like changing jobs. I like to see and learn new things. Temporary work is good in that respect. Also, as I'm known in my field I'm often given contracts and I talk to M. (the agency manager) to see if they suit me. I earn better money through temporary work due to its insecurity, even though I'm doing the same thing as the permanent staff. And when things go badly they are dismissed just as quickly as we are, so I don't*

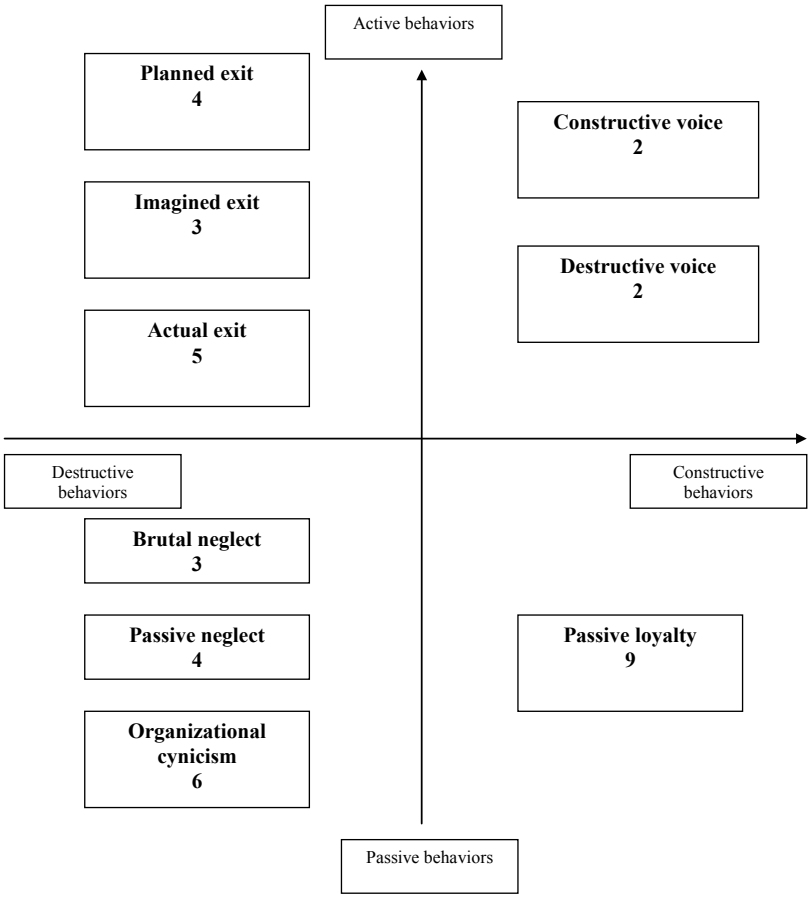
see the point of a long-term contract.' (Form Setter, 53 years old, 3 years in temporary work). They have dealt with dishonest employers at the start of their career: unpaid hours, discrimination and harassment. These events have conditioned their relationships with organizations and have made the promise of an in-house career seem illusory, or even manipulative. These temporaries know how to take advantage of the disconnection between their employment relationship (with the agency) and their work relationship (with the user company and its employees) to enhance their reputation and attempt to find a stable situation.

When employees settle into temporary work, a discrepancy between their expectations and the reality of this work relationship provokes major changes in their responses.

Dealing with the settling-in phase of temporary work

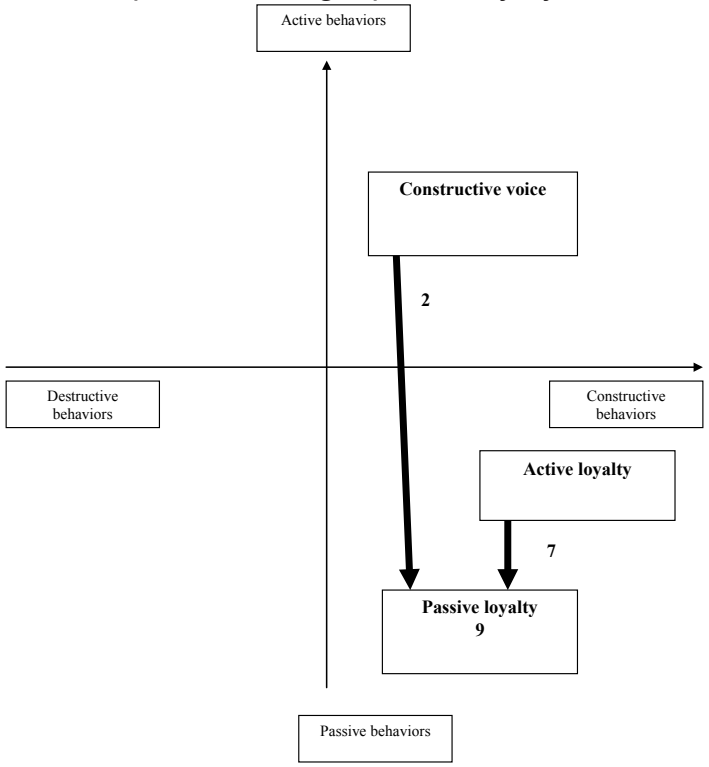
The analysis of 38 cases shows the use of 9 options: passive loyalty, cynicism, actual, planned and imagined exits, destructive and constructive voices, brutal and passive neglect. The development of responses leads to new combinations between options as well as twelve sequences.

Figure 2. Responses of 38 mature workers settled in temporary work



Only 9 temporaries opt for the loyalty option at this stage; 7 of these were amongst the group of 16 we put in this category at their entry into temporary work. The nature of their loyalty changes from active to passive. These employees at first showed their active involvement and commitment towards the temp agency, but later become much more indifferent and adopt a passive attitude. Convinced they have proved their worth, they optimistically hope to find a stable job. This attitude is encouraged by two factors.

Figure 3. Sequences leading to passive loyalty

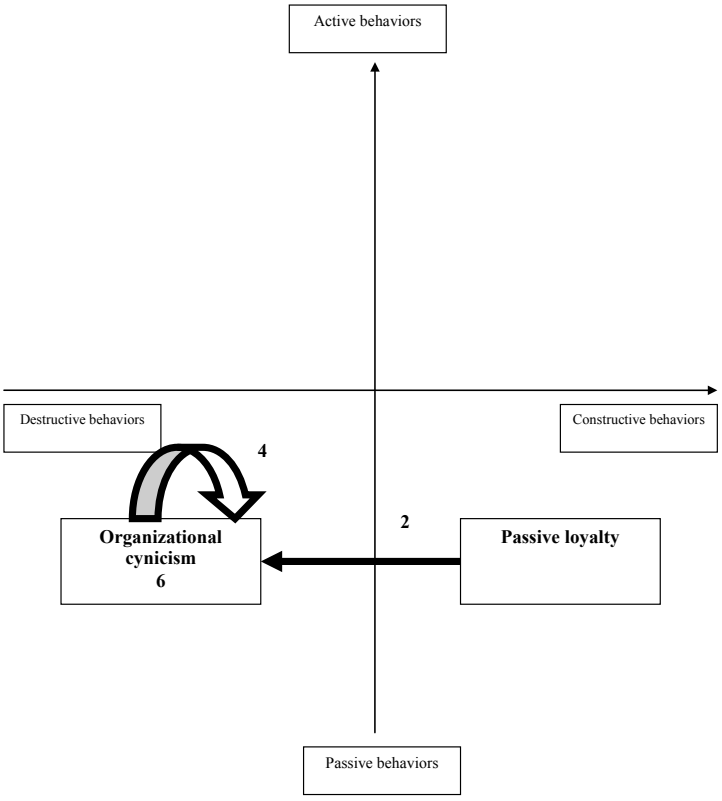


The first factor is the absence of significant financial hurdles, due to the income of a spouse or the alternation of temporary work wages with unemployment benefits. The second is the employees' modest career ambitions. They reaffirm the view that agency staff are committed to finding them assignments and even those who obtain few of these hope to find stable employment, as Juliette indicates: *'I'm not demanding. I can't afford to be. I hope to find another permanent job and I'm happy to make some compromises in terms of salary and commuting time. I'm in no great hurry. My husband is a civil servant, so I've got some kind of security. I can still stay in temporary work for quite a while. Right now things are going well and I know A. (the agency manager) does everything she can for us. I feel confident.'* (Cable Installer, 59 years old, 2 years in temporary work). These two advantages counterbalance lack of career perspectives beyond temporary work and high departure costs.

Two employees previously in the constructive voice category moved to this group. This change in response can be explained by a lack of prospects in

the job market made clear by the scarcity of temporary work contracts. At this stage, these workers are less able to negotiate with the agency. They protest less to maintain a good relationship since this guarantees they will be given a minimum number of contracts, even though these are less attractive, as Fadi describes: *'As you get older, you are given fewer contacts. Those I knew on construction sites are all retiring. I'm not as well known and there is less demand for my work. I need the agency more than before to find work, so I'm less fussy.'* (Laborer, 52 years old, 30 months' experience in temporary work). The temporary is less able than before to manage his 'big mouth' reputation earned because of the nature of his work. Though these temporaries have become loyal, they are not active. Aware that they have already proved their professional worth, they do not experience their situation in the same way as temporary workers who respond with loyalty from the outset.

Figure 4: Sequences leading to cynicism



There are only 6 cases of cynicism. As well as the 4 individuals already in this category who are still struggling to overcome the painful 'break-up' with their former employer, 2 other employees move to this category from active loyalty. This shift was prompted by successive negative experiences of temporary work. Despite their desire to please the agency, they endured difficult jobs, exclusion from work groups and unpleasant tasks. These accumulated difficulties led to doubts about their return

to stable work and the agency's goodwill. User companies are strongly accused of disrespect towards these temporaries. The agencies are seen as complicit since they made the employees complete these temporary contracts despite withdrawal requests. The increasingly low number of work contracts and difficult access to training courses also contribute to this shift in response. These workers start wondering whether the agency's initial promises have been fulfilled and start to see the choice of temporary work as a failure: *'At first I felt confident, but now I wonder if I made the right choice. Whatever they say, the aim of a temp agency is to make money by assigning us to companies, and what's the most important thing there: temporaries who can easily be replaced—especially at my age and with my level of skill—or clients? It's been 15 months and it's obvious that we count for nothing. They shift us from one company to the next without worrying about how we feel about it. Eventually it's made me mistrustful.'* (Logistician, 48 years old, 15 months' experience in temporary work).

Figure 5a: Sequences leading to planned exit

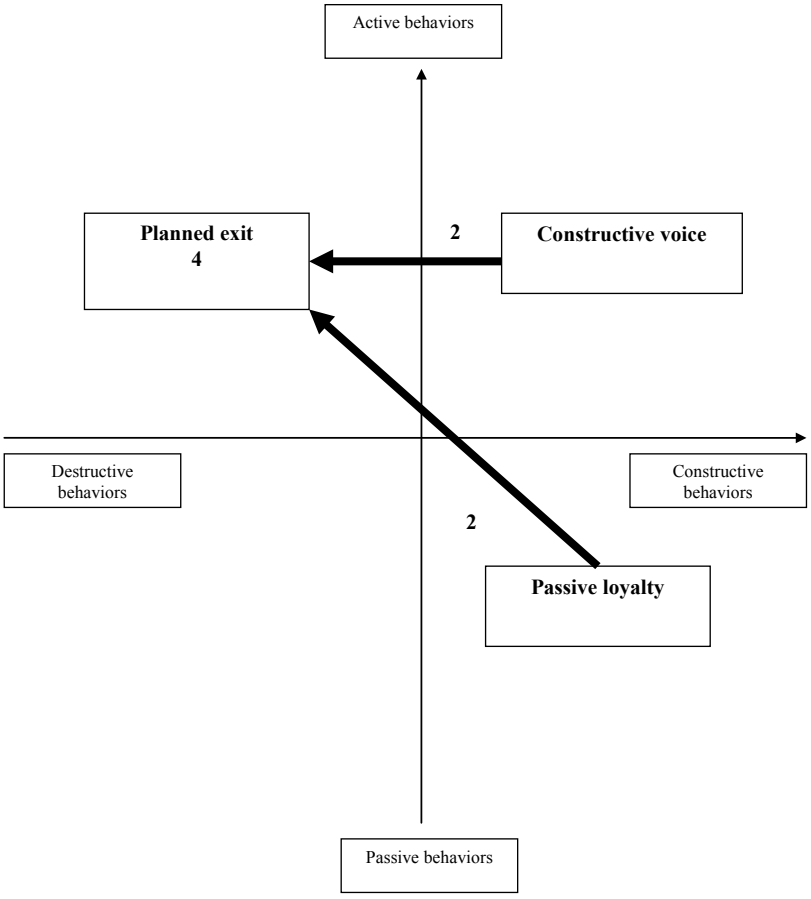


Figure 5b: Sequences leading to imagined exit

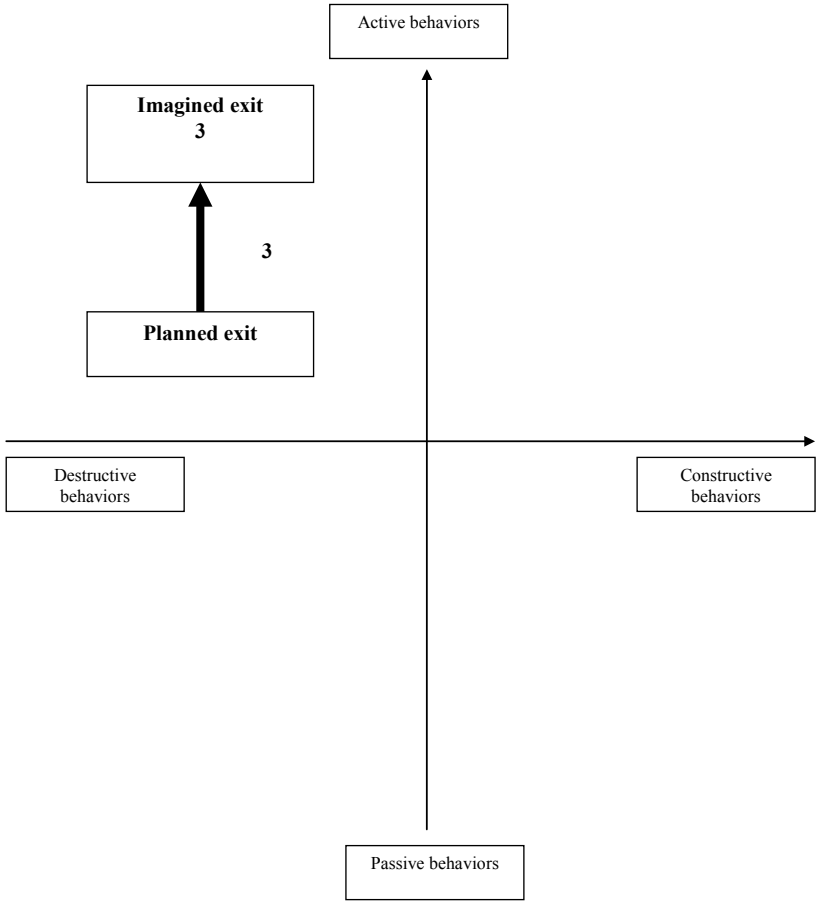
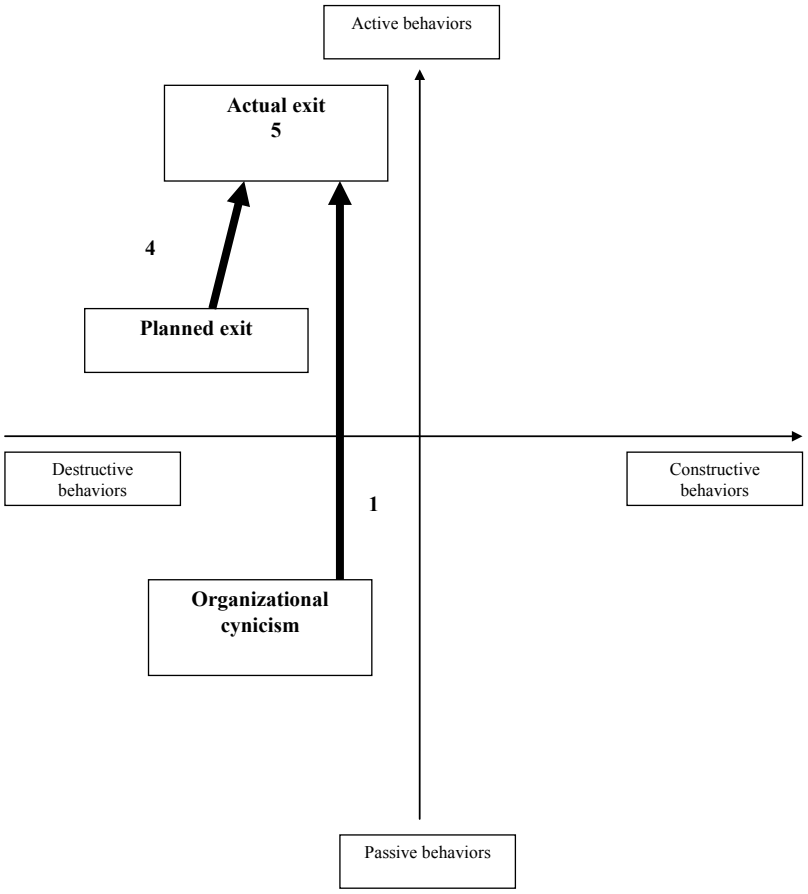


Figure 5c: Sequences leading to actual exit



The exit response, which includes 12 cases, was reached through divergent paths. Five individuals are in the actual exit category. Four of these were already considering exit when they started temporary work. Raphaël tells us: *'For me, temporary work was just a stopgap measure and I didn't want it to last. As soon as I registered with the agency I was simultaneously looking for jobs. Thanks to a former colleague I got a temporary assignment in a garden design office and I was right for the job.'* (Safety Manager, 54 years old, 12 months' experience in temporary work). The fifth employee's initial cynicism quickly led him to find seasonal work. In terms of skill level, this group does not differ from the other individuals who opted for exit. Rather, what distinguishes them is the ability to create and act upon opportunities by using their social networks. Sandra stresses the importance of making this kind of effort, particularly in the client companies: *'I wanted a stable job. I was hoping temporary work would help me find one. So during my very first assignment I spoke to the company to which they sent me to ask about the possibility of a long-term contract. I asked to see the HR manager. It worked: otherwise I wouldn't have been able to stay there.'* (Executive

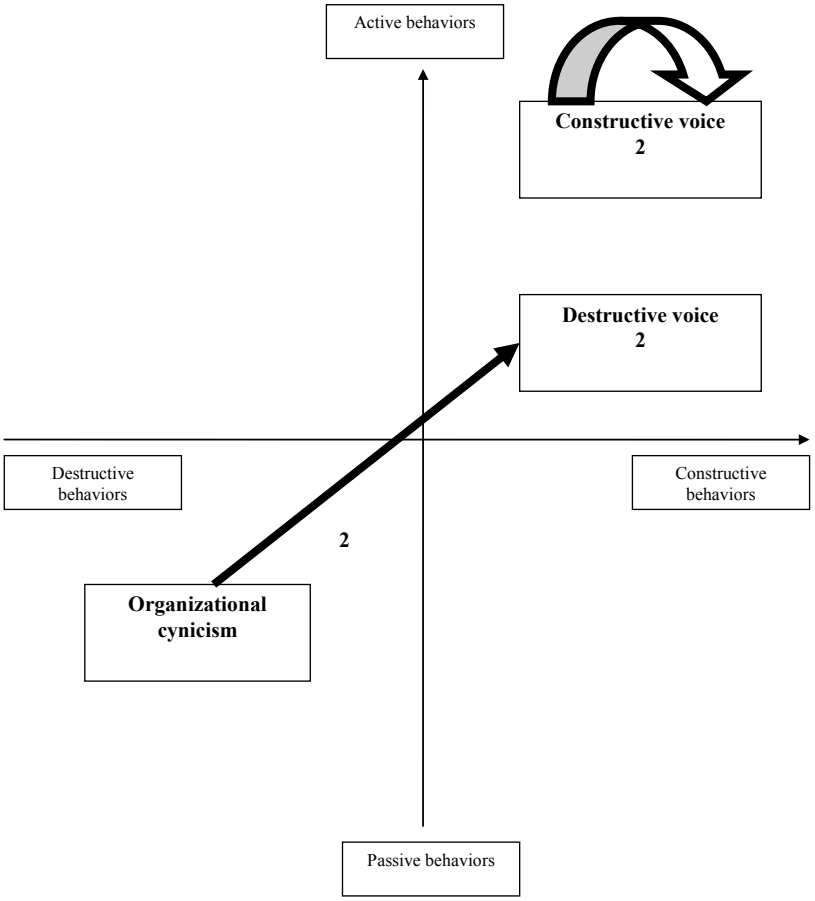
Secretary, 53 years old, 10 months in temporary work).

The second group was categorized in planned exit and includes employees previously in active loyalty (2) and constructive voice (2). They feel temporary work no longer has much to offer them (this is the case for active loyalty). They are increasingly dissatisfied at work. Anticipating high exit costs and restricted professional options, they prefer to exit temporary work as soon as possible to improve their chances of finding preferable work conditions (this is the case for constructive voice). Béatrice describes this: *'If the agency could guarantee a minimum number of hours per year, I would definitely continue. But the problem with temporary work is that it's precarious. (…) Once we finish an assignment, we don't know when the next one might start, and as we get older this uncertainty increases … So now I'm looking for a stable job even if this means earning less and doing something less interesting.'* (Secretary, 52 years old, 3 years' experience in temporary work). The same applies to this former voicer: *'Now I'm trying to slow down and take it easy. I mean physically I'm not what I used to be … When you have a long-term contract there's a hierarchy, but you become more flexible as you get older. And the bosses are happy: he manages on his own and doesn't bother anyone. They also know what kind of person they're dealing with.* [And in return, will you have more security?] *Yes, I'll have a bit more security, because when you get to a certain age you need to settle down, you know! In 10 years I'll be retired.'* (Electrical Engineer, 52 years old, 27 years' experience in temporary work).[6] All these employees expect to find convincing job alternatives.

Unlike the above responses, imagined exit could be described as a form of escapism through the imagination. Exit is contemplated but employees do not make any concrete plans or contacts to make it occur. Their initial wish to leave (planned exit) has given way to a fantasized departure. Perhaps this attitude conceals their fear of a harsh confrontation with reality, as Louis suggests: *'It is true that temporary work was not my first choice and I hope to stop this kind of work soon. I'd like to find a stable job. I should really be looking for something but it's not easy. I'm afraid of going through what happened to me before when I was dismissed and had to send over 50 letters just to get one interview.'* (Driver, 55 years old, 2 years' experience in temporary work).

6.Though this employee has chosen to stay in temporary work for such a long period of time, two aspects of his long-term story share a strong similarity with the rest of the sample. Like the others, he 'accidentally' ended up in temporary work rather than initially choosing this kind of employment. The comments we quote here show that despite his long-standing view that temporary work is 'globally positive', he wishes to stop this kind of work and find something more stable. In addition, his career path shows that he was not a temporary worker at all times throughout those 27 years; he also experienced unemployment and carried out undeclared work.

Figure 6: Sequences leading to constructive and destructive voice



Only 2 mature workers remained in the constructive voice category throughout the phases of entry and settling-in. These employees feel able to negotiate with the agency 'in the long run'. One of them calls himself a 'temporary work professional'. Time has confirmed that this was the right choice. They believe their salary is higher than it would be if they had a permanent job. As Marcel tells us: *'I earn either the same or more than permanent workers, even though we have the same level of skill and they have been there for over 10 years.'* (Bricklayer and Form Worker, 54 years old, 12 years' experience in temporary work). Their ability to negotiate has increased and yet the relationship does not deteriorate because each party needs the other and is aware of this interdependence.

Several agency managers note that these employees are committed to their work and provide invaluable information about the companies to which they are assigned. They are highly ethical at work: they like their profession and are proud of their achievements. They are care-

ful, conscientious and often critical towards their colleagues (notably younger workers in stable employment) who rush a job. Although they may moan and argue, they also pride themselves in producing flawless work. Their feedback sometimes even leads an agency manager to break off relations with a client company. Some provide the work themselves; for instance, in building work the temporary is part of a team that works on different construction sites (Jounin, 2008). These temporary workers enjoy the advantages of flexible work (they experience different companies and build their portfolio of skills) without having to manage the administrative and commercial aspect of work that self-employed workers are usually burdened with. Paul expresses this: *'I like change but I don't like looking for jobs. I love my work and I'm good at it. But going out there and selling myself is different, it's something I don't really enjoy. I've found a good solution with temporary work: they give me a contract, we negotiate the conditions and then I do the work.'* (Technician, 54 years old, 5 years' experience in temporary work).

As well as these 2 workers, another 2 employees who responded with cynicism at their entry shift to voice after becoming aware of their professional value. The shock of a past dismissal and the experience of different situations have improved their confidence. The exceptionally high amount of work they receive (almost 12/12 months)[7] shows their value is recognized. Having become more daring in negotiations, these employees now have a balanced relationship with the agency. The voice response is destructive here. The employees refuse work contracts when they disagree with the agency director and do not hesitate to interrupt an assignment that is going badly (although in most cases they only threaten to do so) despite their awareness this will put the agency in a difficult situation with the client. This applies to Yohan: *'Since the last time you saw me, I've regained my confidence. I've forgotten about my former job. I've made a new start. The agency has given me almost full-time work, and the three employers for whom I've worked have been extremely pleased. So now I want to choose the work contracts a bit more, I don't want to do just anything. I still haven't found a permanent job as I wished, but I feel capable of finding one in time. I have time.'* (Electrical Engineer, 47 years old, 2 years' experience in temporary work).

7.In 2006, according to the FPETT (Fonds Professionnel pour l'Emploi dans le Travail Temporaire, The Professional Fund for Employment of Temporary Work, 2007) 19% of temporary workers were employed for 1-3 months, 23% were employed for 4-6 months, 14% for 7-8 months, 22% for 9-11 months and 22% for over 12 months.

Figure 7a: Sequences leading to brutal neglect

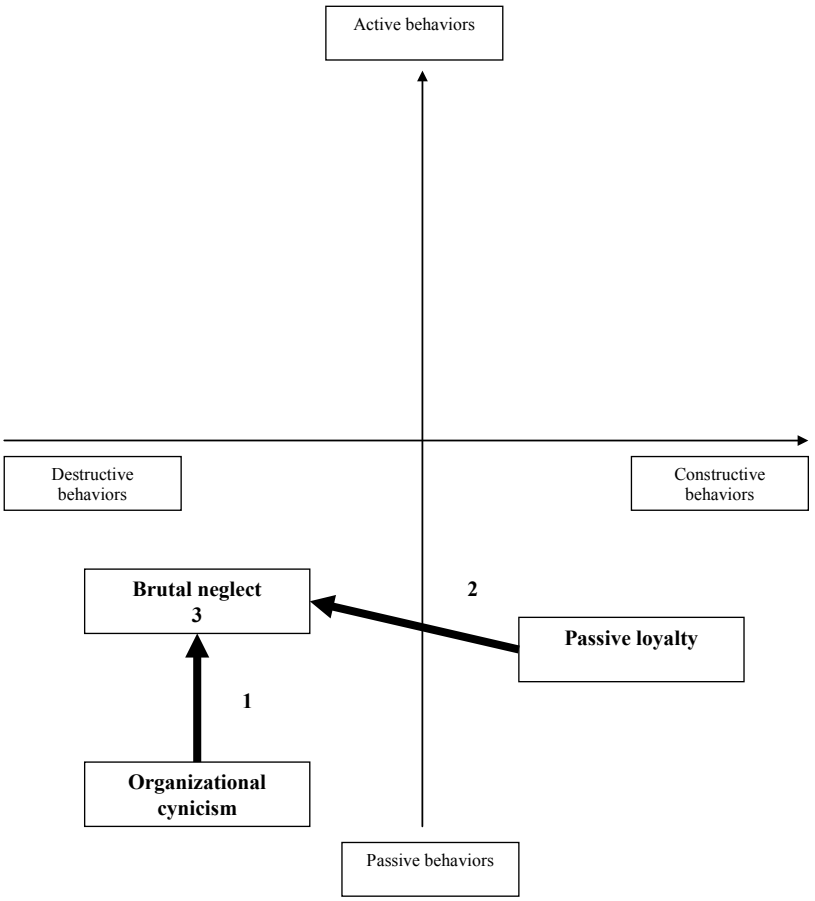
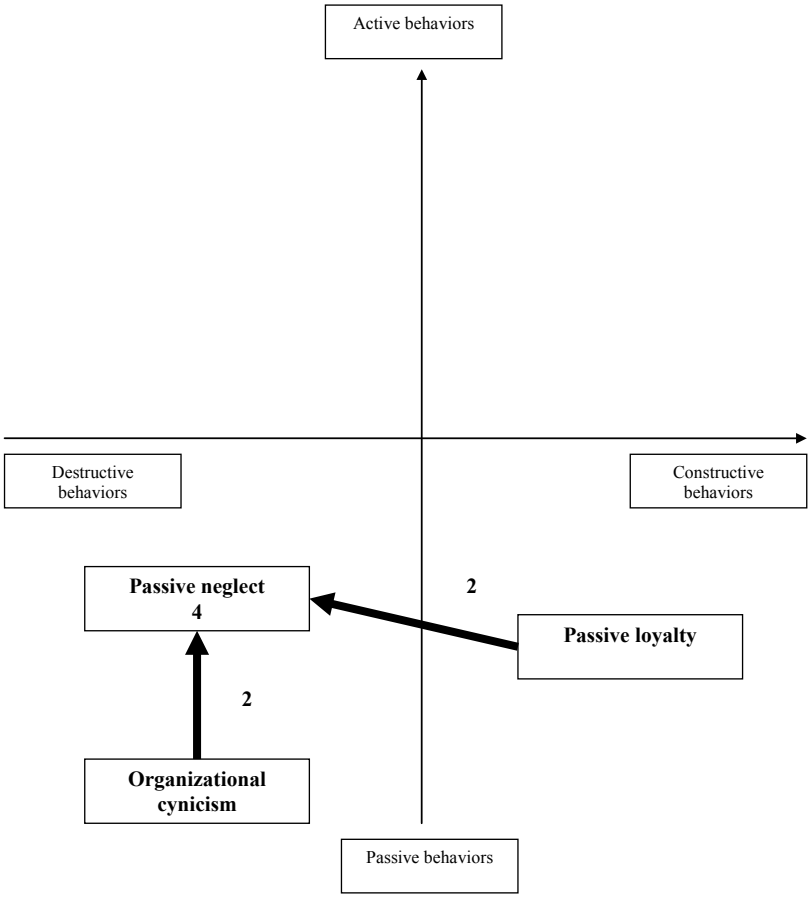


Figure 7b: Sequences leading to passive neglect



Absent at the entry phase, the neglect options are now significant in number (7 cases). Four cases had previously responded with active loyalty and three with cynicism. These trajectories show employees' desperation due to a lack of temporary assignments or convincing, stable opportunities, as an agency director remarks: *'There are some mature workers for whom we can't find any work even when they're willing to accept anything and that's heartbreaking.'* (Director of Service Sector Agency). These employees no longer feel capable of fighting to remain in employment, whether temporary or otherwise.

The behavior of 2 workers (one previously in the active loyalty category and another in cynicism) can be classified as brutal neglect as they radically break the rules. Several agency managers mention these desperate temporaries who damage the relationship through behavioral or emotional indiscipline (inebriation at the agency, insults towards agency staff).

On the other hand, 2 temporaries who had responded with active loyalty and 2 others with cynicism when they joined temporary work now

move to passive neglect. They are increasingly absent or late, whereas they had previously been careful to avoid such behaviors. Others do not leave temporary work entirely but lessen the importance of work and invest in other aspects of their lives: *'At the age of 58, it's clear the agency can't find anything for me any more. Just one year ago I was occasionally given an assignment, which was sometimes interesting. Now I haven't had anything for 8 months. I'm getting used to it. At the end of the day, it doesn't really matter—my daughter needs me to look after her baby so I help her out. I also look after an elderly neighbor.'* (Mechanic, 58 years old, 4 years' experience in temporary work). Others alternate temporary work and undeclared work: *'Even though the agency tells me that my age is a real handicap, I'm still competent at the age of 60. I don't get angry at the agency, I can manage. Lots of people need a good handyman. I do odd jobs here and there.'* (Carpenter, 60 years old, 3 years' experience in temporary work).

The analysis of employment dynamics in a situation where the temporary has settled in casts the conception of mature workers' norm behavior into a new light. Reactions become more diverse and sequences change, yet two clear patterns emerge.

The first development shows that employees wish to stop temporary work, whether actively (actual and planned exits) or passively (brutal and passive neglect, cynicism). Whereas at the entry phase the majority of cases (22 out of 42) chose constructive options (voice and loyalty), destructive options (the three forms of exit, two forms of neglect and cynicism) are now more common (25 cases out of 38). The high number of neglect responses (7 cases) and the increase in exit cases (from 9 to 12) confirm this destructive tendency. A second, less clear-cut development sees the behavior of mature workers become increasingly radical: passive options were previously chosen in 27 cases out of 42, compared to 22 cases out of 38 at this later stage.

An examination of the resources linked to these choices shows that a positive view of past mobility constitutes a crucial basis for constructive reactions (loyalty and voice) but that these are not sustained in the long run. With time, mature employees increasingly doubt their ability to decide what path their career will take and have less faith in the goodwill and efficiency of the agency. This deterioration is reflected by a 50% decrease in the number of individuals who opt for active loyalty. Many employees cannot bear a repeat of the past contract terminations they experienced as violent shocks, especially on a psychological level. This brings into question their strategic capabilities. Their willingness to work decreases as their professional assets are repeatedly rejected. This assumption of a passive role also occurs in the imagined exit option, where employees escape a professional reality they cannot bear to confront.

Table 4: Trajectories of mature workers' responses once settled in temporary work

Response at entry (42 cases)	Changes in response	Response after settling-in (38 cases)
Active loyalty (16)	Active loyalty → Passive loyalty (7) Active loyalty → Cynicism (2) Active loyalty → Planned exit (2) Active loyalty → Brutal neglect (2) Active loyalty → Passive neglect (1) Active loyalty → ? (1)	Passive loyalty (9)
Cynicism (11)	Cynicism → Cynicism (4) Cynicism → Actual exit (1) Cynicism → Destructive voice (2) Cynicism → Brutal neglect (1) Cynicism → Passive neglect (2) Cynicism → ? (1)	Cynicism (6)
Planned exit (9)	Planned exit → Actual exit (4) Planned exit → Imagined exit (3) Planned exit → ? (2)	Actual exit (5) Planned exit (4) Imagined exit (3)
Constructive voice (6)	Constructive voice → Constructive voice (2) Constructive voice → Passive loyalty (2) Constructive voice → Planned exit (2)	Constructive voice (2) Destructive voice (2)
Neglect (0)	Active loyalty → Brutal neglect (2) Active loyalty → Passive neglect (2) Cynicism → Brutal neglect (1) Cynicism → Passive neglect (2)	Brutal neglect (3) Passive neglect (4)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Contributions of the research

The purpose of this article is twofold: to evaluate and enrich the latest theoretical developments of the EVLN model and to identify resources mobilized by respondents who use its different options. We focus on mature workers who started temporary work following a dismissal as their situation is theoretically relevant to our research aims, as demonstrated in the literature on job insecurity (Davis-Blake *& al.*, 2003; Van Breugel *& al.*, 2005; Cingolani, 2005; Connelly and Gallagher, 2006). This research both confirms the relevance of several recently posited theoretical distinctions and proposes new ones. We identify several variables and resources fundamental to the dynamics of adaptation to work dissatisfaction.

A fundamental contribution of this research is that it empirically validates the conceptual developments made to the EVLN model. The study shows that it is crucial to distinguish between actual versus planned exits (Rusbult *& al.*, 1988), constructive versus destructive voice (Hagedoorn *& al.*, 1999) and passive versus active loyalty (Leck and Saunders, 1992). Active loyalty can be described as a behavior whereas passive loyalty resembles an attitude like patience. The conceptual extension of cynicism as a passive-destructive response to dissatisfaction at work proposed by Naus *& al.* (2007) has also been validated. These results increase the explanatory value of the EVLNC model (previously referred to as EVLN), even though Naus *& al.* (2007) remind us it was created to explain the responses of consumers rather than employees. These developments—and in particular the evaluation of less confrontational options such as planned exit—give a more accurate understanding of employees' responses to temporary work. We believe these conceptual contributions make the EVLNC model more realistic. Indeed, a dissatisfied customer understandably stops using a service or expresses his discontent with the service provided, yet the ways in which an employee can express dissatisfaction are much more limited. By drawing attention to more diverse and what some might consider less radical behaviors such as planned exit or cynicism, this study offers an adaptable analytical framework to understand the behaviors caused by dissatisfaction at work.

Though the above validations were a central aspect of this research, our open approach to data also allowed us to create two new, complimentary options: imagined exit and brutal neglect.

Defined as 'thinking about leaving without taking action to make this a reality', imagined exit builds on the conceptual revision of the exit option. Whereas with actual or planned exit responses, the mature employee acts upon his wish to leave or actively prepares to do so, imagined exit refers to a fantasized departure. It is used as a coping strategy to escape reality (Paulhan, 1992; Paulhan and Bourgeois, 1995). This development adds nuance to the meaning of exit. Unlike the clearly destructive and active exit described by Hirschman (1970), planned exit is destructive but less active. Imagined exit is also destructive but becomes passive. Employees deal with dissatisfaction by taking refuge in an option that gives them a more positive self-image without forcing them to actually leave.

Brutal neglect is defined as 'letting the situation deteriorate through deviant behaviors' and helps to better understand the neglect option, until now seen as a passive and destructive behavior (Farrell, 1983; Rusbult *& al.*, 1988). This new option remains destructive but it is active. Whereas the original neglect option involves small and repeated acts of misconduct (lateness, absences, lack of commitment), brutal neglect entails unacceptable conduct (inebriation, assault) that inevitably leads to employment termination.

The introduction of imagined exit and brutal neglect helps to give a more detailed description of options until now thought of as exclusively active (exit) or passive (neglect). At the same time, these conceptual enrichments make us question whether a dissatisfied employee can

stay put in these options. It seems doubtful that imagined exit could be a viable option in the long term. Whereas other forms of exit lead a dissatisfied individual to find a solution to his discontent, in this option he stays in a situation whilst thinking about changing it. The choice of imagined exit puts the individual in a problematic situation yet offers no solution. The inefficiency of this option in the long run leads us to think that it is merely a phase that will lead either to a more radical option (planned or actual exit) or a more consensual option (active or passive loyalty). Whether or not a dissatisfied employee remains in the brutal neglect option depends largely on his work environment. How long can the employee's superior tolerate such evident misconduct without attempting to put an end to the contractual relationship? In view of this, it would seem that brutal neglect constitutes a violation of the rules that cannot last.

A third contribution of this study is that it proposes a dynamic understanding of the EVLNC model. This is encouraged by a large number of authors (Rusbult *& al*., 1988; Naus *& al.*, 2007) and indicates that the response of a dissatisfied employee is rarely limited to a single option. The longitudinal nature of our data collection allows us to distinguish developments in organizational behaviors and the resources that help explain these. An overall examination of behaviors shows a proportionate number of destructive options (cynicism, neglect and exit) and constructive ones (voice and loyalty) at the entry phase, whereas when employees have settled in destructive options predominate.

When mature workers enter temporary work they seem optimistic about what the temp agency can contribute to their future, which leads them to engage in citizenship behaviors (Organ, 1988) such as accepting functional or geographic mobility. This active loyalty becomes more passive when employees settle in. At this later stage, loyalty resembles patience in that it has become a response of adaptation to dissatisfaction, whereas the active form of loyalty is closer to a behavior displayed in response to dissatisfaction. As regards the voice option, it is constructive when an employee enters temporary work, at which point he negotiates and makes compromises. As time passes, he becomes more radical and less willing to enhance his employability. The interruption of temporary contracts therefore becomes more frequent.

This research breaks further ground by suggesting diversity within the exit and neglect options. As indicated in the work of Rusbult *& al.* (1988) it appears that exit encompasses both a behavior (the choice to leave the organization) and an attitude (the thought of leaving the organization). This distinction is clear is our own results. Several temporaries talk about quitting temporary work (or the agency). We must nevertheless distinguish between preparatory acts aiming to make departure a reality and exit as an abstract experience, a coping strategy to escape reality. Here the mature worker responds to dissatisfaction by boosting his self-image.

Absent during the entry phase, the neglect option has become twofold. In the first, 'passive' form, an employee undermines his relationship with the temp agency through mild misconduct. The second, 'brutal' form refers to the employee's intention of destroying the relationship

more radically. This violation causes great damage to the employee-agency relationship and leads to its dissolution. Finally, this study validates the explanatory power of cynicism (Naus *& al.*, 2007) by enriching the EVLN model.

The trajectories can partly be explained by the resources in play. Unlike what our initial theoretical framework suggested, past satisfaction influences the choice of loyalty even within the new temporary work context (Farrell and Rusbult, 1992). The relationship with the new employer must be examined within a wide time frame. Employees feel trustful when they have been satisfied with a temp agency at the start of their career and recent information has confirmed the latter's good reputation. One of the antecedents of active loyalty is a lack of convincing job alternatives. The explanation of passive loyalty is enriched by two further factors: lack of professional ambition and financial constraints. These two elements are related to exit costs and reveal the loss of strategic impetus of employees who are no longer willing, unlike some former voicers, to play an active part in their professional development.

The voice response here can be explained by the existence of convincing job alternatives (Rusbult *& al.*, 1988), discontent with the situation (Rusbult *& al.*, 1988; Withey and Cooper, 1989) and high exit costs (Withey and Cooper, 1989). These mature workers know they are in a strong position to assert their demands without having to fear excessive reprisal or pressure. Several individuals thus change their response to voice once they understand their value to the agency. In such cases, workers oppose their employer with less hesitation. Lastly, this research reveals employees' preference for mobility that leads them to be very demanding in order to maintain their employability.

The heterogeneity of the exit option (actual, planned or imagined) generates a variety of antecedents. In accordance with the literature on this matter (Leck and Saunders, 1992; Rusbult *& al.*, 1988) our study confirms the link between the two first forms of exit and low satisfaction at work, perceived convincing job alternatives and low exit costs. By contrast, this last factor is not present in imagined exit. Rather, the employee anticipates high exit costs and so avoids the risk of another professional failure.

Cynicism is initially the result of strong disappointment caused by the loss of a permanent job. This shock continues to affect the mature worker during his search for employment as he reassesses his professional worth, and then during the entry and settling-in phases of temporary work. Though he dislikes this type of work, he cannot quit due to a lack of job alternatives. These results confirm the notion offered by Naus *& al.* (2007) that cynicism acts as a tool to re-balance a relationship perceived by the employee as unfair. On the other hand, our results differ from those of Bommer *& al.* (2005) in that we found no evidence of professional ethics in this group, unlike in the voice group. We believe this is due to the incompatibility between this group's desire for revenge and ethical behavior. All forms of neglect are linked to the absence of convincing job alternatives (Saunders *& al.*, 1992; Rusbult *& al.*, 1988) and dissatisfaction with the situation at work (Farrell and Rusbult, 1992; Hagedoorn *& al.*, 1999). This study verifies the existence of despera-

tion in these cases that weakens the employee's strategic ability. As an agency director who evokes this kind of worker put it, 'they're at the end of their tether'.

This interpretation of results on antecedents furthers our understanding of employees' responses to dissatisfaction by further developing the EVLNC model. Moreover, this research offers a broader perspective by suggesting that adaptation to loss of employment should be reanalysed in light of how much control an employee has over his own mobility. Without questioning the validity of the explanatory factors identified in the literature, we observe that constructive behaviors (loyalty and voice) arise when an employee has experienced mobility during his career whereas destructive behaviors (cynicism, exit and neglect) reflect a difficult past in terms of finding work.

The scope of our work is not confined to the EVLNC model's field of research. Several contributions are made to the research area of non-standard jobs and in particular temporary work.

The use of the EVLNC model allows us to follow the suggestion of Ashford *& al.* (2008) to show the diversity of responses to job insecurity. The response of mature temporaries goes beyond the submission/adherence dilemma (Rogers, 2000). A longitudinal approach provides a better understanding of the dynamics involved in an employee's response to insecure work beyond the novelty of the first few months. Our research shows that the consequences of losing a stable job will taint an employee's relationship with his new employer. This study builds on the validity of past research on the development of employees' responses in a new employment relationship within this traumatic context. Although reactions to the loss of a former job are varied, the new employment relationship suffers from a past emotional debt linked to this termination (Pugh *& al.*, 2003). The same signs of deterioration (more intense observation of a partner's behavior, uncertainty about whether promises will be fulfilled) are imported into the relationship (Zhao *& al.*, 2007). Two factors reinforce these temporaries' negative view of employers: the first is the insecure nature of temporary work, which involves multiple encounters with employers that expect a lot yet give little recognition (Henson, 1996; Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2002). The second is that the age of these employees means that the stability of the Fordist era is ingrained in their professional socialization. Worse still for the temp agency, it seems that the chances that previously stigmatized employees will perceive a new psychological shock depend on a complex and unclear process of 'sense making' (Robinson and Morrison, 2000).

Research areas and limitations

This study has a number of limitations that can serve as fruitful avenues for future research. Methodologically, the geographical area and limits of the research mean our findings cannot be generalized. The proposed patterns would need to be tested on a larger and more diverse sample. A more segmented approach could allow the analysis of other stigmatized groups, such as visible minorities. The study of a more highly skilled, less precarious group would also allow for a num-

ber of beneficial developments. For instance, our research could be reproduced with a group of young temporary workers, or highly qualified young people.

Further exploration of this area would lead to a better understanding of how age can potentially influence an employee's choice of EVLNC model options. Our analysis provides information on the behavior of employees over the age of 45 but excludes younger workers. The theoretical importance of this issue is shown in our research, which reveals the structuring effects a difficult professional experience can have on an employee's response to dissatisfaction. Comparison with young people with no past work experience would lead to a better understanding of the effects of professional trajectory.

More broadly, this topic of age and professional development raises the question of whether employees influence each other's responses. To date, researchers have not considered the possibility that an employee's dissatisfaction may be reinforced or mitigated by his colleagues' situation. Several interviews carried out during our research suggest that this would be a promising area for future research. It seems that both constructive options (voice and loyalty) and destructive options (exit and neglect) are more likely to be chosen within a group of colleagues who share the same tendencies.

In this same light, a first interesting step could be the integration of contextual factors into the analysis grid, such as the status of dissatisfied workers as well as the status(es) of their colleagues. The influence of status heterogeneity upon an employee's choice of EVLNC model options could thus be measured. Another potentially fruitful addition would be to deepen our understanding of employees' choice of options by exploring their perception of the organization's management. A possible area of investigation could be how the manager's leadership style (transactional/transformational) affects the type of option chosen by a dissatisfied employee.

Conceptually, it would be interesting to integrate personality variables. As this study suggests, an employee's past—and in particular loss of a former job and a change of status—significantly affects his reaction to a new job. Two concepts are important here: locus of control and self-esteem. As demonstrated in past studies on stress and role tensions, these factors determine whether an individual is able to adapt to a situation he perceives as difficult. More recent studies on positive psychology explore psychological capital (characterized by the four concepts of self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resiliency) and its crucial role in a worker's ability to manage his employability. It would be useful to link the characteristics of psychological capital with EVLNC model options (Luthans *& al.*, 2008) within a longitudinal perspective (Avey *& al.*, 2008).

Managerial implications

Several managerial implications can be derived from this study. Firstly, as suggested by Pugh *& al.* (2003) a dynamic understanding of the EVLNC model leads us to consider the professional past of an employee as a key element of recruitment. During this recruitment phase,

the company must attempt to discern how an employee feels towards their former employer.

The purpose of this is not to discard applicants who have had a difficult relationship with a past employer; rather, employers who identify a risk of rapid deterioration in the relationship with a new worker should provide reassurance. This can be achieved though measures such as socialization procedures, annual performance reviews and an employee-orientated management style. In cases where employees have suffered successive loss of employment in the past, this research suggests factors an employer may act upon to change the employee's perception. Crucial elements include the type of work an employee is given as well as his perception of the organization's level of investment in his employability. It is essential to bear these factors in mind and more generally act in accordance with the values discussed to ensure an employee does not develop negative expectations of how the organization will behave. However, if discrepancies arise between what is said and what happens in practice, it will be necessary to clarify these differences.

More specifically, this research suggests mature workers should be managed differently to other employees. Both the user company and the temp agency must bear in mind the period of socialization specific to this group, including their primary socialization: the post-war boom years in which a gentleman's agreement was the rule in practice, or it was at least expected and always held in high esteem. Their lack of recent mobility and the incompatibility of their skills with the job market can create an exacerbated fear of further contract terminations and trauma. Managerial decisions must be made clear to this group if negative attitudes towards the organization are to be prevented. This research highlights the fragility of these mature workers, especially the older ones: unlike what previous studies suggest, they are not necessarily able to hold a constructive dialogue with the employer when a disagreement arises. Their responses are often passive and soon become destructive. The manager must play a central role to prevent this deterioration. For any temp agency it is essential to be perceived in a positive light by workers. The ability to build a personal relationship with each employee creates a powerful shield against the deterioration of the relationship.

Conversely, when an employer is planning to end a worker's employment, he must consider the consequences that a traumatic contract termination can have on the employee's future career. If such experiences become common they can eventually have demoralizing effects on local employment beyond the individual reactions of employees. Furthermore, a more utilitarian consideration for entrepreneurs is that their image and reputation may be tarnished both in-house (vis-à-vis employees) and externally (vis-à-vis job seekers).

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ANNEX: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Aspects of personal and professional progress

- Family setting
- Training
- Original career plans
- First professional placement
- Professions and statuses
- Career progression: successive jobs and mobility
- Future aspirations

Experience of temporary employment

- First steps: when, why, where, how?
- Next step: duration and diversity of experiences
- Until when?
- Effects of social life: budgets, projects, self-image, others' views
- Evaluation: positive and negative aspects

Relationship with temping and the temp agency

- Rights and benefits
- Attachment to the temp agency, to one's 'own' agency
- Relationships with the various agency employees
- Relationships with other temporaries (concept of 'colleague'?)
- Temporary work agency unions?

Relationship with the user company

- Which job?
- Relationship with the managers of the user company
- Relationship with other employees
- Relationship with the user company unions

Relationship with work and employment

- Expectations in terms of work
- Degree of satisfaction regarding work, salary, relationship with others, self-fulfillment, social inclusion
- Expectations from employment: position(s), promotions, pur chasing power, stable temporary work, until when?
- Feelings of insecurity/security, instability/stability …?
- Have age and progress changed your point of view regarding work / temporary work?
- Has temporary work changed your view of work, employment, organizations?