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SENSE OF SELF IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITALIZATION: ESSAYS ON DIGITAL
SELF-CONTINUITY CONCEPTUALIZATION AND EMPIRICAL
INVESTIGATIONS

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Business Administration

by
Wenxi Pu
August 2020

Accepted by:
Philip Roth, Committee Chair
Jason Bennett Thatcher, Committee Chair
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Janis Miller

ABSTRACT

Digital technologies have deeply weaved into the infrastructures of society and organizations, fundamentally transforming how individuals interact with each other and, consequently, transforming how individuals verify and express their sense of self. Rooted in this context, this dissertation explores two hitherto largely ignored areas in Information Systems (IS) research with two essays related to the theme of self and identity. The first essay investigates whether and how stigmatized self presented on social media (e.g., Facebook and LinkedIn) impacts a job applicant's hireability ratings. Nowadays, more and more companies use social media to screen job applicants before contacting them for interviews. This process, termed social media (SM) assessments, is convenient in many aspects, however, it is potentially discriminatory. What is even worse, recruiters might not be fully aware of the discrimination during SM assessments given the lack of structure. We need to understand the mechanisms through which stigmatized self presented on social media impact hireability in order to mitigate potential discrimination. This essay uses a veteran with PTSD, the effect of which on hireability has not been looked at yet, as the proxy for stigmatized self. With a pair of experiments using Facebook and LinkedIn profiles that vary the presence of PTSD disclosure and of individuating information, this essay found that PTSD can lead to stigmatization of the job applicant. The stigmatization led to lower hireability ratings. We also found support for the mediating mechanisms of trust, which has not been extensively investigated in the literature on personnel selection. This essay contributes to the literature by exploring PTSD's effect on hireability, investigating trust's role in the process, and unpacking

potential discrimination during SM assessments. The second essay theorizes how individuals, using digital technologies, verify their sense of self, and achieve self-continuity both actively and passively. IS researchers tend to focus on the active mechanisms, but these passive mechanisms through which individuals verify their sense of self are largely ignored. This essay contributes to the IS literature by juxtaposing the active and passive mechanisms through which individuals using digital technologies to achieve their sense of self-continuity (termed digital self-continuity).

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my mother. Her unconditional love and support made me brave enough to go down the path that I had chosen, but she couldn't see my graduation.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
TITLE PAGE	I
ABSTRACT	II
DEDICATION.....	IV
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	V
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	VI
LIST OF TABLES	IX
LIST OF FIGURES	X
CHAPTER	
I. CHAPTER ONE — INTRODUCTION.....	1
INTRODUCTION REFERENCES	7
II. CHAPTER TWO — POST-TTAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER AND HIRING: AM I TRAUMATIZED AND STIGMATIZED?.....	9
PTSD.....	13
SOCIAL MEDIA ASSESSMENTS	14
PTSD DISCLOSURE AND STIGMA.....	16
STIGMA AND TRUST.....	18
TRUST TO EXPECTED TASK PERFORMANCE AND EXPECTED OCB.....	21
TRUST AND COUNTERPRODUCTIVE WORK BEHAVIORS.....	22

INDIVIDUATING INFORMATION	23
PLATFORMS.....	25
METHOD	27
<i>Participants</i>	27
<i>Experimental Design</i>	28
<i>Experimental Procedure</i>	30
<i>Measurement</i>	31
RESULTS.....	38
<i>Measurement Analyses</i>	38
<i>Hypothesis Testing</i>	38
DISCUSSION.....	52
<i>Theoretical Contributions</i>	53
<i>Practical Implications</i>	54
<i>Limitations</i>	55
<i>Future Research</i>	56
CONCLUSION.....	59
REFERENCES.....	61
ESSAY 1 APPENDIX	72
III. CHAPTER THREE — CONTINUITY OF THE SELF FROM DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES: DIGITAL SELF-CONTINUITY, ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES.....	74
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND	79

<i>The Self and Self-concept</i>	79
<i>Identities</i>	82
<i>Self-continuity</i>	88
<i>Digitalization</i>	94
<i>Digital Self-continuity</i>	97
<i>Information Systems Research on Self and Identities</i>	100
<i>The Consequences of Digital Self-continuity</i>	112
<i>Constant Connectivity and Work-Life Interaction</i>	118
DISCUSSION.....	121
<i>Theoretical Contributions</i>	121
<i>Practical Contributions</i>	123
<i>Limitations</i>	124
<i>Future Directions</i>	124
CONCLUSION.....	125
REFERENCES.....	126

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
TABLE 1: CONDITIONS SUMMARY	29
TABLE 2: EXPLORATORY AND CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS RESULTS FOR UPPER-CLASS BUSINESS STUDENTS	33
TABLE 3: EXPLORATORY AND CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS RESULTS FOR WORKING PROFESSIONALS	35
TABLE 4: BIVARIATE CORRELATIONS FOR UPPER CLASS BUSINESS STUDENT SAMPLES	40
TABLE 5: BIVARIATE CORRELATIONS FOR WORKING PROFESSIONAL SAMPLES.....	41
TABLE 6: HYPOTHESIS SUMMARY	50

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
FIGURE 1: RESEARCH MODEL.....	27
FIGURE 2: STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL RESULTS FOR BUSINESS STUDENTS (FACEBOOK)	42
FIGURE 3: STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL RESULTS FOR BUSINESS STUDENTS (LINKEDIN).....	43
FIGURE 4: STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL RESULTS FOR WORKING PROFESSIONALS (FACEBOOK)	46
FIGURE 5: STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL RESULTS FOR WORKING PROFESSIONALS (LINKEDIN).....	46
FIGURE 6: STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL (TRUST DROPPED) RESULTS FOR WORKING PROFESSIONALS	48
FIGURE 7: STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL (TRUST DROPPED) RESULTS FOR WORKING PROFESSIONALS	49
FIGURE 8: STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL RESULTS FOR UPPER CLASS BUSINESS STUDENTS WHO PASSED THE PTSD MANIPULATION CHECK (FACEBOOK).....	72
FIGURE 9: STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL RESULTS FOR UPPER CLASS BUSINESS STUDENTS WHO PASSED THE PTSD MANIPULATION CHECK (LINKEDIN).	73
FIGURE 10: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	101

CHAPTER ONE — INTRODUCTION

This dissertation, a collection of two essays, seeks to establish a better understanding of how information communication technologies (ICT) transform the way individuals maintain the stability of the sense of self through enabling multiple social interactions simultaneously, intensifying the selective interaction with others, affording possible selves, normalizing extreme self-views, allowing boosted self-driven biased interpretation, and offering new ways to present the self. The dissertation, as a whole, theorizes these mechanisms and investigates their consequences. Specifically, the first essay empirically investigates self-logging on social media about posttraumatic stress disorder and looks at how it impacts one fundamental organizational process—hireability assessments (i.e., selection), and the second essay conceptualizes a concept termed digital self-continuity, defined as *the extent to which an individual perceives a self-reflexive sense of coherence and stability from information communication technologies*, and theorizes its contributing mechanisms and consequences.

ICT have deeply penetrated society and organizations. The deep penetration is reflected in profoundly altered ways of social interactions in societal and organizational contexts. For example, constant connectivity afforded by ICT enables people to perform multiple roles simultaneously (or with little transitioning time) that were previously bound by spaces. This connectivity creates a sense of “continual copresence” (Turkle, 2011: 161) of different roles and social contexts such that people can stay in one context (e.g., a family vacation) while communicating with others in different contexts (e.g., emailing colleagues during vacations).

The increasing use of ICT influences “identity development and patterns of relating” (Colbert, Yee, & George, 2016: 732) which are critical to social interactions that shape the development of our sense of who we are and identities (Burke & Stets, 2009; Swann & Buhrmester, 2012). The impacts of digitally transformed social interactions on self and identities have attracted much scholarly attention. ICT have been investigated as shaping identities, channeling or threatening individuals’ identity expression (Carter & Grover, 2015; Craig, Thatcher, & Grover, 2019). The use of ICT has also been proposed to be an integral part of the sense of self (Carter & Grover, 2015) through the concept of IT identity, which indicates that people extend their sense of self by incorporating IT to define who they are. Zhao (2005) proposed that in online communities, people create a digital self that “differs from the self formed offline” (Zhao, 2005: 387). This can result in people using different strategies in communicating their identities through ICT (Thatcher & Zhu, 2006; Thatcher, Wilson, & Brown, 2017).

To build on our current understanding of ICT, the self and identity, this dissertation explores ICT’s transformative effects on the self, which is viewed as an interactive system of thoughts, feelings, identities, and motives that “(1) is born of self-reflexivity and language, (2) people attribute to themselves, and (3) characterizes specific human beings” (Owens 2003, p. 206, as cited in Carter 2012, p. 60), and identities, which are viewed as tools we use to define who we are through social groups, social roles, personal characteristics, and materials (Vignoles, Schwartz, & Luyckx, 2011), by looking at how ICT help individuals to maintain a sense of self-continuity through conceptualizing a new concept, termed digital self-continuity, and investigating its

consequences. Self-continuity can be viewed as the innate sense of the self's endurance through time or "a sense of sameness" (Sani, 2008: 1), coherence (Bozinovski, 2000; Swann & Buhrmester, 2012), and stability (Swann & Buhrmester, 2012) of the self in the past, self in present, and self in the future.

The two essays in the dissertation look at two types of digital self-continuity based on the dichotomy of chronological self-continuity and retrospective self-continuity (Bluck & Liao, 2013):

"We embrace the notion that lives unfold over chronological time and that this is an essential basic element of our lived experience as humans. Chronological self-continuity relies on automatic mechanisms of autobiographical memory. These develop relatively early and help to create a perceivable record of the lived past for the human organism. Retrospective self-continuity is closer to the 'inner architecture' referred to by Calvino (1985). It encompasses the basic processes of chronological self-continuity but also builds upon them. In doing so, it involves effortful processes such as autobiographical remembering and reasoning, reminiscence and life review" (p. 8-9).

That is, we live through time and create the chronological self-continuity, based on which we create a higher-order retrospective self-continuity. This higher-order self-continuity can make people more adaptive to life management and self-regulation (Bluck

& Liao, 2013). These two types of self-continuity have been being transformed by digital technologies. For chronological self-continuity, digital technologies can store or record what happened, thus offering an extended chronological self-continuity. For retrospective self-continuity, individuals are enabled to achieve the sense of self-continuity through social interactions via ICT, which are fundamentally different from social interactions in the offline context. This allows individuals to build a different sense of self-continuity, for example, a continual co-presence of different identities (Turkle, 2011). This dissertation explores these two types of digitally transformed self-continuities.

Essay One looks at the digital self-continuity through the historical data about the self (i.e., chronological digital self-continuity afforded by digital technologies). Specifically, it investigates the impact of self-disclosure on social media about post-traumatic stress disorder on hireability. Job seekers have a richer media environment to present themselves to the organizations. For example, recruiters can review applicants' social media profiles before they decide whether to call the applicants for interviews (CareerBuilder, 2017; Roth, Bobko, Van Iddekinge, & Thatcher, 2016).

Social media platforms have become an increasingly popular source of data collection among recruiters when making hiring decisions. This phenomenon has been termed social media (SM) assessments. While SM assessments bring convenience and possible efficiency to hiring processes, they also introduce new types of information due to the changing nature of information technology. For example, an increasing population of veterans in the United States and worldwide suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which can now be more discoverable during SM assessments.

Unfortunately, there is comparatively little research on this phenomenon. Results from two experiments (based on samples of working professionals and upper-class business students) manipulating the presence of PTSD information on two social media platforms (Facebook versus LinkedIn) suggest that viewing non-job-related information (e.g., PTSD disclosure) can lead to stigmatization (in both samples). Stigmatization was negatively related to trust in the upper-class business student sample. Trust was positively related to expected task performance and expected organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) in both samples. This essay sheds light on the stigmatization and lower hiring evaluations of veterans suffering from PTSD may experience. It also sheds light on how technological changes have shaped organizational practices through the investigation of SM assessments, which have transformed selection processes and may negatively impact job applicants. The essay concludes with implications for future work on social media and stigmatized self-presentation's impact on the hiring process, particularly in light of social media's ease of availability to recruiters.

Essay Two looks at the retrospective self-continuity supported by digital communication technologies through conceptualizing the concept of digital self-continuity with a focus on how digital technologies facilitate the achievement of self-continuity through social interactions. The antecedents and consequences of achieving self-continuity through digital technologies are proposed as well. This essay theorizes how individuals, using digital technologies, verify their sense of self and achieve self-continuity both actively and passively. IS researchers tend to focus on the active mechanisms, but these passive mechanisms through which individuals verify their sense

of self are largely ignored. This essay contributes to the IS literature by juxtaposing the active and passive mechanisms through which individuals using digital technologies achieve their sense of self-continuity (termed digital self-continuity).

Overall, this dissertation elaborates on the concept of self-continuity into IS literature and facilitates the understanding of the impact of digital technologies on the self. Practically, this dissertation can help understand digital workforces and provide suggestions for individuals who are increasingly dependent on digital technologies to achieve a sense of self-continuity. Theoretically, the introduction of self-continuity and the conceptualization of the concept of digital self-continuity aims to stimulate new conversations among IS researchers and those in other domains about how our sense of self is transformed by our rising dependence on digital technologies. In the rest of the dissertation, I present the two essays.

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CHAPTER TWO — POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER AND HIRING: AM I TRAUMATIZED AND STIGMATIZED?

There are 18.2 million veterans in the United States (The U.S. Census Bureau, 2017), 66% of whom have health conditions or complications from their service (Stone & Stone, 2015) and roughly 20% of them suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Rudstam, Gower, & Cook, 2012). Further, evidence suggests that the percentage of service members with PTSD is severely underestimated (Atkinson, Guetz, & Wein, 2009; Rudstam et al., 2012) and PTSD is one of the “signature disabilities” (Rudstam et al., 2012, p. 88) of service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Unfortunately, there is little empirical study of how PTSD affects veterans in the staffing or organizational literatures.

While the numbers of veterans continue to grow, an increasing number of organizations screen job applicants based on information found on social media platforms (such as Facebook and LinkedIn), which we term Social Media (SM) assessments (Derous & De Fruyt, 2016; El Ouiridi, Pais, Segers, & El Ouiridi, 2016; Gibbs, MacDonald, & MacKay, 2015; Roth, Bobko, Van Iddekinge, & Thatcher, 2016; Van Iddekinge, Lanivich, Roth, & Junco, 2016). Estimates suggest that up to 70% of recruiters use social media to screen job applicants (CareerBuilder, 2017), with most gathering data from Facebook and LinkedIn (SHRM, 2016). Moreover, 54% of employers found content on social media that led them to decide not to hire a candidate for an open position (Hartwell & Campion, 2019).

While social media platforms represent a convenient (i.e., easily available) platform for gathering information on job applicants, SM assessments may also expose recruiters to what historically has been proscribed or private information in selection processes, such as mental health status. Companies can easily find out whether a job applicant is a veteran by his/her social media profile, through accessing Facebook veteran communities and LinkedIn veteran groups. Evidence suggests SM assessors are exposed to non-job-related information, such as political affiliation, sexual orientation, and health conditions and, have been shown to introduce bias into hiring decisions (Hartwell & Campion, 2019; Roth, Thatcher, Bobko, Matthews, Ellingson, & Goldberg, 2019; Zhang, Van Iddekinge, Roth, & Lanivich, 2017). The fact that such information might influence SM assessments is compounded by the typical lack of structure in social media screening (Van Iddekinge et al., 2016).

For veterans, understanding how such information can introduce bias is of particular importance, because they, especially those who have developed PTSD, often seek support from these online communities. A recent search showed extensive posts related to PTSD discussed on social media. Searching “#PTSD” or “PTSD” on popular social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter returned a large number of posts (25K in a recent 24-hour period combined based on Radian6, a social media monitoring platform). Similarly, simple Google searches with (1) “PTSD” and “Facebook”, (2) “PTSD” and “Twitter”, and (3) “PTSD” and “LinkedIn” as keywords combinations yield billions of records, suggesting great social interest/concern about veterans and PTSD.

Thus, social media assessments increase the possibility that a job applicant's veteran and PTSD status may be discovered by a recruiter in the hiring process.

The purpose of this essay is to address the issue of how the evaluations of job applicants by organizational representatives are influenced by the presence of PTSD postings on social media platforms during an SM assessment. This essay focuses on veterans because a large number of service members have returned, or are currently returning, from deployments in the Middle East and re-entering civilian labor markets (Schultz, 2017; Stone & Stone, 2015). Given recent growth in social media assessments (i.e., searching for applicant information on social media platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn), it is particularly important to discover whether learning about an applicant's mental health condition, such as PTSD, might adversely impact veterans seeking employment.

This essay contributes to the literature in several ways. First, it investigates how information, which may be stigmatizing, and found on social media may introduce bias into the hiring process. The current research focuses on how others/raters (i.e., decision makers) view individuals with a stigma, whereas most investigations focus on the impact of stigma on individuals as they cope with the stigma (Pachankis, 2007). Additionally, this essay contributes to the understanding of recruitment processes related to veterans (Stone & Stone, 2015) with PTSD in the context of SM assessments. By doing so, it sheds light on how information gleaned from social media can impact an important organizational process.

Second, this is one of relatively few PTSD studies conducted in the organizational literature (e.g., Atkinson et al, 2009 is the only one found through a search on JSTOR.org and PsycINFO. Unique to this paper is the use of econometric modeling techniques to show that the rate of soldiers having PTSD is severely underestimated and it is not related to how PTSD influences hiring). Put simply, the literature searches found *no* other empirical work in this area. That is, the literature is silent and the current study may be the first empirical investigation of how PTSD influences hiring decisions. Thus, this essay addresses an important gap in the literature on hiring and PTSD.

Third, this essay suggests that trust is likely a key variable in the selection process. In this case, this essay hypothesizes that it negatively influences individuals who are found to be diagnosed with PTSD during the hiring process. This essay suggests that information indicating an applicant is suffering from PTSD will lead to stigmatizing the applicant and trust will suffer as a result. In a more general sense, trust is thought to be a universally important variable in organizational decisions (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995), but has not been studied intensively in selection settings.

Fourth, this essay focuses on veterans with PTSD. As noted above, PTSD is a prevalent disorder experienced by veterans returning from deployments in the Middle East. Due to the nature of these conflicts, PTSD is pervasive among returning veterans (Stone & Stone, 2015). This study could highlight that SM assessments as a potential problem for veterans and start the process of examining possible remedies to improve the employment environment for veterans.

This essay unfolds by discussing PTSD and SM assessments. Then it moves on to develop our hypotheses and present our research model. The description of our research method follows. Then the data analyses and results are presented. Finally, a discussion of implications concludes this essay.

PTSD

A surprisingly large number of adults in the U.S. suffer from PTSD. Estimates suggest 7-8% of the U.S. adult population, approximately 24.6 million people, suffer from PTSD (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2019), and this applies to both males and females. People with PTSD suffer from re-experiencing traumatic events (including flashbacks and nightmares), feelings of emotional isolation and numbness, worries about losing important people or things in their life, irritability and outbursts, difficulty in sleeping, social avoidance, impulsive behaviors, easily being startled, and trouble concentrating (Make the Connection, 2019).

PTSD may be especially interesting to examine in the context of the hiring process because it likely represents a *concealable* disability/stigma since it is seldom obvious that an individual has PTSD just by looking at an application (Pachankis, 2007) or meeting the applicant in person. Thus, it is like other forms of mental illness (e.g., depression) or other disabilities that are not easily observable (e.g., epilepsy) and therefore not easily discoverable early (or perhaps at all) in the selection process (Pachankis, 2007). Hence, it is common for individuals to be vigilant in maintaining the concealed nature of their disability (Pachankis, 2007) and they may be particularly

disturbed if they learn they have lost control of this information based on SM assessments.

There is also a dynamic, legally actionable tension involving PTSD. On one hand, “well over half of the HR respondents (61%) showed concern about the possibility of violence in the workplace posed by workers with PTSD” (Rudstam et al., 2012, p. 92; Dickstein, Vogt, Handa, & Litz, 2010; Stone & Stone, 2015). On the other hand, workers with PTSD are protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act and there are a number of legal protections for veterans (Stone & Stone, 2015). Thus, making hiring decisions on veterans with PTSD is a difficult problem for human resource managers and recruiters.

Social Media Assessments

There is remarkably little research on SM assessments (Berkelaar, 2017; Stone & Dulebohn, 2013), though there are some exceptions (e.g., Kluemper & Rosen, 2009; Van Iddekinge et al., 2016). This is surprising given the relatively large percentage of recruiters who report using SM assessments (i.e., 70% as per the CareerBuilder 2017 survey). Social media (SM) assessments are defined as “the review of online information from website platforms designed to connect individuals (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Pinterest) for use in employment decisions (e.g., selection, promotion, reassignment)” (Roth et al., 2016, p. 271). SM assessments are a unique type of “test” because the user profile is “constructed by the user or by members of their network,” (Kane et al., 2014, p. 279; see also Black & Johnson, 2012). Note this is different from many traditional selection tests in which the organization constructs the test and the test is

often based on a job analysis or constructed with a track record of predicting job performance (Roth et al., 2016). The second unique characteristic of SM assessments is that they are often unstructured or unstandardized (Roth et al., 2016; Van Iddekinge et al., 2016). The unstructured nature of SM assessments increases the likelihood of biases, discrimination, and inconsistency in evaluation (Black & Johnson, 2012; Brown & Vaughn, 2011; Van Iddekinge et al., 2016) partially due to the loss of privacy of SM users (Stone, Lukaszewski, Stone-Romero, & Johnson, 2013). Van Iddekinge et al. (2016) also documented that recruiter assessments of Facebook are unrelated to subsequent job performance (i.e., supervisory ratings). Together, the lack of job-relatedness and discovery of previously private information that can potentially lead to discrimination make SM assessments potentially problematic.

Further, SM information is often available despite privacy controls. In one sense, “Facebook has a tendency to readjust its privacy controls, and even with simplified options, these are difficult to use and often underutilized” (Luo & Smith, 2015, p.189). Thus, keeping up with current practices and effectively managing privacy controls may be more difficult than many individuals believe. In another sense, organizations can ask applicants to “friend” someone involved in the hiring process. Given the pressures involved, many job applicants acquiesce to this approach (Grasz, 2015, 2016), though such a practice could be viewed as a case of invasion of privacy (Black, Stone, & Johnson, 2015). Analysis of SM assessments also responds to a call for newer and innovative research strategies in discrimination (Colella, Hebl, & King, 2017) and of trust in particular (Klotz, da Motta Veiga, Buckley, & Gavin, 2013).

PTSD Disclosure and Stigma

This essay suggests that upon the discovery of PTSD symptoms, the reaction of many organizational decision makers may be to stigmatize such applicants. A stigma is a “deeply discrediting negative characteristic” (e.g., mentally ill; Goffman, 1963, p. 13; Stone & Stone, 2015, p. 70; see also Derous, Buijsrogge, Roulin, & Duyck, 2016). As implied by the phrase “deeply discrediting,” stigmas are powerful constructs (Dovidio, Major, & Crocker, 2000) that may influence recruiter’s evaluations of the job applicant. For example, PTSD, and mental health concerns, are considered strong stigmas “which can invoke unfounded assumptions of character flaws or a risk for workplace violence” (Rudstam et al., 2012: 89). Specifically, the acute stress and PTSD experienced by military veterans returning home were caused by stressors commonly experienced by all soldiers and marines (Greene-Shortridge, Britt, & Castro, 2007). These stressors include, “roadside bombs, length of deployment, handling human remains, killing an enemy, seeing dead or injured Americans, and being unable to stop a violent situation” (p. 157). Notably, over 90% of the veterans that returned from Iraq reported encountering these stressors. These experiences clearly can leave an unshakable mark on the psyche of those who lived through them. And, the perceptions held about those who experienced them are directly linked to the stigma experienced by those who have PTSD.

Specifically, Corrigan and Penn (1999) and Couture and Penn (2003) discuss that individuals with severe mental illness (such as PTSD) are viewed as incapacitated, irresponsible, and unable to care for themselves. Additionally, individuals with severe mental illness are viewed with fear and it is believed that they should be restricted from

society due to disruptiveness and potential peril (Jones et al., 1984). Specifically, the factor of peril, or the danger associated with a stigmatized person, both real and symbolic, governs these perceptions.

Research that has examined the amount of social distance desired from people who have different types of mental illness indicate that half of the study participants would be “very” or “somewhat likely” to distance themselves from someone who had a major depressive disorder (Link, Phelan, Bresnahan, Stueve, & Pescosolido, 1999). Further, veterans do not want to discuss their experiences of mental distress. Specifically, they reported significantly more discomfort when discussing possible mental illness issues than medical problems, particularly in the context of their unit (Britt, 2000).

As noted above, PTSD is a condition that can be described as a concealable stigma. That is, the fact that one is suffering with PTSD is not immediately obvious or observable public knowledge (Dickstein et al., 2010). In contrast with an observable stigma such as a physical disability (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputation, arthritis), recruiters/observers may not know that an individual suffers from PTSD. For example, individuals with PTSD may not place such information on an application or in a résumé. Further, a short screening interview may not result in any information indicating that a job applicant has PTSD. Previous research in the selection context indicates that it may be in the job candidates’ favor to withhold (i.e., not disclose) an invisible stigma (Clair, Beatty, & Maclean, 2005). Thus, the organization may not be able to discover such information using applications, cognitive tests, or situational judgment tests. However, as noted above, there is a great deal of information revealed on social media websites such

as Facebook. Note that such a *discovery* may serve as a de facto involuntarily disclosure and may not be part of a voluntary decision on the part of the job applicant. Rather, the organization, or agent of the organization, makes a *conscious* decision to look for information about the applicant in an SM assessment process—that has not been validated or correlated with acceptable measures of job performance (e.g., supervisory ratings; Van Iddekinge et al., 2016). Thus, decisions based on this information that adversely impact applicants might be viewed as professionally and ethically problematic. In sum, the discovery of PTSD during SM assessments will trigger stigmatizing feelings towards job applicants. Thus, this essay hypothesizes:

H1: PTSD disclosure is positively related to stigma.

Stigma and Trust

Trust can be defined as “the willingness to be vulnerable to another party when that party cannot be controlled or monitored” (Mayer & Gavin, 2005, p. 874). Trust is thought to be an essential organizational variable in almost all organizational decisions (Mayer & Gavin, 2005) and is a necessary component for effective job and organizational performance (Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007; Mayer & Gavin, 2005). Interestingly, most trust research focuses on interactions among job incumbents in work teams or dyadic interactions (Costa, Fulmer, & Anderson, 2018; De Cremer, van Dijke, Schminke, De Schutter, & Stouten, 2018; Methot, Lepine, Podsakoff, & Christian, 2016), perhaps because of the focus on trust developing over time (Jones & George, 1998; Williams, 2001). Only one empirical study that examined how individuals with past wrong-doing or past very poor performance might try to make up for such wrong-doing (Krylova,

Longacre, & Phillips, 2018) is found. However, this study based on vignettes was focused on techniques to repair trust after wrong-doing in applicants who had made substantial mistakes. This is a considerably different focus than the involuntary discovery of previously private information from individuals suffering from some disability (i.e., PTSD), that was/is largely beyond their control and not associated with some organizational mistake.

There can be several reasons why the discovery/disclosure of a stigma should reduce trust. As noted above, there is very little literature that directly relates the disclosure of PTSD/mental illness to the trust of an “other” person (e.g., rater). The somewhat limited relevant literature that is closest to our situation is reviewed. The trust literature suggests there are theoretical reasons why stigma disclosure will lead to less trust. The trust literature suggests that negative feelings (e.g., those related to stigma) are important to the (dis)establishment of trust. The emotion as information model suggests that decision makers examine their own emotions (positive or negative) as information to be factored into an evaluation of another individual (Williams, 2001). This is important because the discovery of a stigma in the selection process is likely to quickly arouse negative affect which will be viewed as negative information and lead to negative evaluations. This is not to say that cognition does not play a role. However, negative affect, especially in short term encounters, may lead directly to distrust (Jones & George, 1998).

The stigma literature provides reason to expect the same relationship (though the focus on who has trust is somewhat different). In one sense, the discrediting nature of

stigma makes its discovery/disclosure detrimental to the initial establishment of trust because the applicant now is perceived as having a stigma. As Clair et al. (2005) discuss, most people with invisible stigmas have not disclosed the stigma to the same degree in every dimension of their lives. Ragins (2008) argues that this phenomenon can lead to disclosure disconnects, or “differing degrees of disclosure in work and non-work domains” (p. 195). This essay suggests that the initial disclosure of PTSD will not be likely in a work setting. For example, a job applicant may not disclose that s/he has PTSD on a résumé in order to increase their chances of getting a job. The SM assessment might then serve to make a substantial impression on the rater of the applicant because evidence of the stigma went from low/no evidence to very substantial evidence of the PTSD and associated stigma. By doing so, the SM assessments may result in individuals losing control over the disclosure process, which unto itself, can have negative consequences. The involuntary disclosure may inspire strain in the relationship, damage it, or even terminate it during the process of hiring evaluations. That is, it may result in feelings of discomfort, threat, or even revulsion on the part of the rater (Ragins, 2008). In particular, the individuals suffering from disclosure may also experience shock, foolishness, or betrayal, and realize that their relationship with the rater may be damaged and “may not be as close as they imagined” (p. 198). In our case, the initial trust might not be established at all.

Research empirically exploring the relationship between stigma and trust in a health service provider context also supports the influence of stigma on trust. A study conducted by Verhaeghe and Bracke (2011) documents evidence that patients who expect

devaluation and discrimination (based on a stigma) and have more self-stigma experiences, have less trust in their service providers. Further, patients who have more self-stigma experiences also have less satisfaction with their experience as a patient. And, this relationship is partially mediated by trust. Thus, the literature suggests there is a link between stigma and trust. However, this same literature has focused on the trust of the stigmatized person rather than on the trust of a rater of the stigmatized person. Stigma has been linked to less trust by Burns (2006), whose study reveals that individuals with racial stigma receive less trust. Overall, this essay suggests that job applicants stigmatized because of PTSD will receive lower ratings of trust from the individual conducting the SM assessment. Thus, this essay hypothesizes:

H2: Perceived stigma is negatively related to trust.

Trust to Expected Task Performance and Expected OCB

This essay adopts expected task performance and expected organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) as the first two types of hireability ratings. Task performance involves accomplishing the formal tasks noted in a job description while OCB are contextual performance behaviors that go above and beyond task performance to help individuals and the organization (Brownlee & Motowidlo, 2011; Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994; Van Scotter, Motowidlo, & Cross, 2000). This essay uses OCB (Organ, 2018) to capture, describe, and measure the contextual part of job performance.

There are several reasons why trust should influence a variety of hireability ratings. Recall, that trust is believed to be a fundamental factor in decision making and to have a widespread effect on a variety of decisions (Mayer et al., 1995). In terms of

cognition, this essay suggests that lower levels of trust in the applicant during the hiring process would lead raters to believe that the applicant will not engender trust in future relationships post hiring and hinder cooperation with others in the organizational setting (Mayer et al., 1995; Schoorman, Mayer, & Davis, 2007). In terms of more specific cognitions, raters who have a low level of trust in the applicant tend to see him or her as an individual who has lower levels of honesty or integrity (Mayer et al., 1995). Integrity involves the belief that another individual has a moral system of beliefs and can be expected to act upon them. A higher level of perceived integrity would likely lead to higher levels of expected task performance and higher levels of expected OCB. Or in the case of stigmatized applicants, lower levels of trust might lead to lower evaluations. In terms of emotions, recall that the emotions as information model suggests that negative emotions are seen as indicative of a problem with the applicant (Williams, 2001). This essay suggests that negative emotion would lead to lower levels of expected task performance and lower levels of expected OCBs. Hence, this essay hypothesizes:

H3: Trust will be positively related to a) expected task performance and b) expected organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) performance.

Trust and Counterproductive Work Behaviors

This essay also suggests that trust is related to expected counterproductive work behaviors (CWB). Recall this essay hypothesized that PTSD discovery would influence perceived stigma, which would influence trust. This could be the start of a “dark chain” of reactions. That is, the “dark side” of affective responses (i.e., perceived stigma) will ultimately manifest itself in the “dark side” of performance expectations (i.e., CWB

rather than OCB). Interestingly, the existing literature is completely silent on the issue of negative expected outcomes in the context of SM assessments. Previous theories and investigations have only focused on positive outcomes such as callbacks for an interview or higher levels of expected performance (Gift & Gift, 2015; Roth, Goldberg, & Thatcher, 2017).

Theory and results in other areas provide additional support for our “dark” thinking. CWB, by their nature, are negative events. Negative events have been found to focus more attention and invoke more thoughtful processing than positive events (Baumeister et al., 2001). Negative future states arouse more attention and future-oriented worry (Baumeister et al., 2001). Overall, the negative nature of CWB, and the potential losses to an organization due to the bias against people with PTSD, indicate that there is a strong basis to hypothesize the impact of trust on CWBs. Trust reflects a positive attitude towards the applicants, therefore:

H4. Trust will be negatively related to expected CWB.

Individuating Information

This essay suggests that qualifications, viewed as individuating information, also influence hiring decisions (McCarthy, Van Iddekinge, & Campion, 2010). Past work indicates that grade point average, extracurricular activities, and work experience do influence recommendations of employability and likelihood of future interviews (Brown & Campion, 1994; Cole, Rubin, Feild, & Giles, 2007; Nemanick, & Clark, 2002; Thoms, McMasters, Roberts, & Dombkowski, 1999).

Individuating information is an essential part of hiring studies that focus on non-job related information (PTSD in this study) because individuating information is job-related information such as knowledge, skills, and abilities (Derous, Ryan, & Serlie, 2015; McCarthy et al., 2010). Individuating information provides an alternative source and type of information compared to perceptions based on stereotypes, ingroup/outgroup effects, or similarity effects. Individuating information also has been shown to strongly influence selection outcomes (e.g., Locksley et al. 1980). Meta-analyses of experimental studies suggest individuating information is about eight times more powerful than sex effects in hiring scenarios (Olian, Schwab, & Haberfeld, 1988). Further, field studies of hiring ratings in employment interviews that incorporate substantial individuating information demonstrate that ethnicity and sex effects become small to virtually non-existent demographic effects (e.g., McCarthy et al., 2010; McFarland et al., 2004). The importance of individuating information indicates its potential positive impact on the hireability related constructs. Thus, this essay hypothesizes:

H5: Individuating information will positively influence ratings of expected a) task performance and b) organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB).

H6: Individuating information will be negatively related to expected CWB.

Unlike gender and ethnicity effects, this essay proposes that a perceived stigma effect will remain because stigma engenders an intense effect (especially negative), and such feelings are unlikely to be completely overshadowed by simply providing more individuating information about the applicant. Stigma-or stereotype-based processing will coincide with processing involving individuating information to influence hiring-related

judgments simultaneously. For example, a rater may see that an applicant has PTSD on a social media platform. At the same time, the rater might also note that the applicant completed a professionally-relevant competition and donated blood. Since both PTSD and individuating information are available, the recruiter/rater processes both to arrive at an overall decision about hireability. Given the fact that trust is driven by stigma in our study, a rater's perception of trust of an applicant will continue to predict hireability ratings even after accounting for individuating information because of the intense negative effect. Thus, this essay hypothesizes:

H7: Trust will significantly influence ratings for expected a) task performance and b) OCB over and above the influence of individuating information on hireability ratings.

H8: Trust will significantly influence ratings for expected CWB over and above the influence of individuating information on hireability ratings.

Platforms

This study focuses on whether information presented on different SM platforms have different effects on decision makers' evaluation of job candidates. To do so, this essay develops arguments about symbolic expressions, social media platforms, and how individuals interpret information on these platforms.

Symbolic expressions are defined as “the communicative possibilities of a technical object for a specified user group” (Markus & Silver, 2008, p.623). “The concept of symbolic expressions is similar to the concept of information systems' “spirit” in two respects. First, both concepts refer to something other than designers' intentions or users'

perceptions. Second, both concepts point to properties of IT artifacts that can convey impressions that users, designers, and researchers may interpret as values and intents” (Markus & Silver, 2008, p.623). Symbolic expressions do not determine but do contribute, to users’ interpretation of the information found on the platform.

Symbolic expression suggests that posts found on social media platforms have meaning, independent of their specific detailed features such as color, the shape of the like button, etc. In the context of SM assessments, detailed features of the interface do not matter as much as the overall *goal* of the platform, be it hedonic, utilitarian, or both. The platform for the spirit or symbolic expressions provide a “text” or “context” within which information embedded in a post by a job applicant is interpreted. This broad context can result in different symbolic meanings ascribed by different viewers of the same social media posts.

Facebook and LinkedIn have a sharp contrast in terms of their symbolic expressions (Papacharissi, 2009; Van Dijck, 2013). “While Facebook is particularly focused on facilitating personal self-presentation, LinkedIn’s interface caters towards the need for professional self-promotion” (Van Dijck, 2013, p.199). That is, the “communicative possibilities” implied by Facebook and LinkedIn differ. Facebook is for social activities, and LinkedIn is for professional activities. Thus, when compared to Facebook, this essay argues that people view the profile presented on LinkedIn to be a more accurate representation of the person in an organizational, professional context. That is, given the same information (either PTSD or individuating information) on

Facebook or LinkedIn, the impact on the hiring evaluation will be stronger on LinkedIn.

Thus, this essay hypothesizes:

H9: Platform effects positively moderates the relationships between a) PTSD-disclosure and perceived stigma; b) Individuating information and expected performance; c) Individuating information and expected OCB; and d) Individuating information and expected CWB.

The model is presented in Figure 1 to summarize the hypotheses noted above.

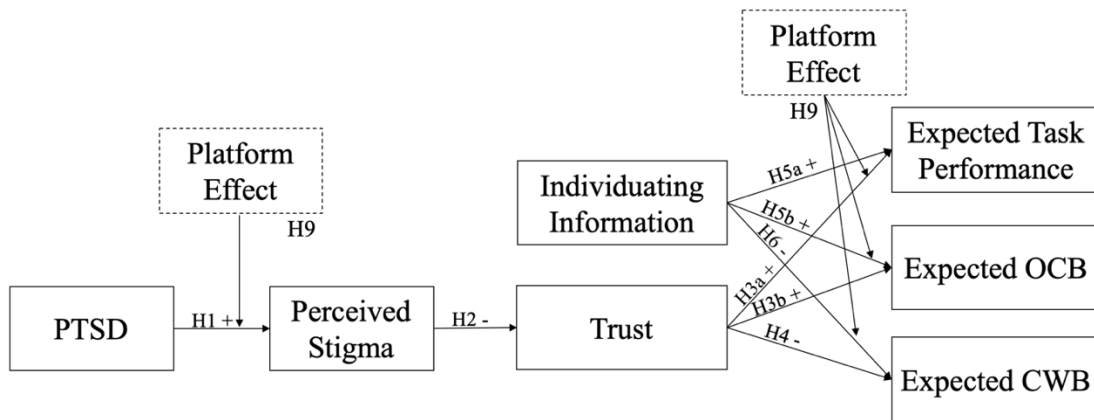


Figure 1: Research Model

Method

Participants

Experiments with two different samples were conducted. The first sample included upper-class business major undergraduate students ($N=398$). The undergraduate participants came from classes of upper-level business administration courses at two southern United States universities. These individuals were 54.3% male, 45.2% female,

and .5% declined to specify. In terms of ethnicity, 84.9% were White, 8.0% were Black, 3.0% were Asian, 2.8% were Hispanic, and 1.3% declined to specify. Of our undergraduate participants, 15.3% had hiring experience.

The second sample included working professionals with hiring experience ($N=608^1$). The working professionals with hiring experience were recruited from Qualtrics, a research service platform that helps with distributing the study to a panel of working professionals with hiring experience. Among these working professionals, 56.3% were female, 14.4% were male, and 29.3% declined to specify their gender; 53.3% were White, 7.1% were Black, 4.8% were Hispanic, 4.2% were Asian, and 30.6% declined to specify an ethnicity.

Experimental Design

To test the research model, a pair of 2 x 2 between subjects experiments (see Table 1) was conducted. In both samples, the applicant's PTSD status (positive or negative) was manipulated and then crossed with providing high- versus no-individuating information. One experiment is conducted with a Facebook profile (hereafter referred to as Facebook experiment) and the other with a LinkedIn profile (hereafter referred to as LinkedIn experiment). This essay first introduces the materials used for the manipulations and then describe the procedure.

¹ Qualtrics routinely screens out respondents who did not pass attention checks and manipulation checks. We excluded respondents who didn't spend more than 5 seconds examining the social media pages.

Table 1: Conditions Summary

			PTSD Self-disclosure	
			Yes	No
Facebook	Individuating Information	High	A Facebook profile with PTSD self-disclosure and high individuating information.	A Facebook profile without PTSD self-disclosure and high individuating information.
		Low	A Facebook profile with PTSD self-disclosure and low individuating information.	A Facebook profile without PTSD self-disclosure and low individuating information.
LinkedIn	Individuating Information	High	A LinkedIn profile with PTSD self-disclosure and high individuating information.	A LinkedIn profile without PTSD self-disclosure and high individuating information.
		Low	A LinkedIn profile with PTSD self-disclosure and low individuating information.	A LinkedIn profile without PTSD self-disclosure and low individuating information.

PTSD. PTSD disclosure was manipulated using four co-occurring items on both Facebook and LinkedIn: (i) a symbol of a PTSD related organization in the “like” section of the Facebook “About” page or in the “interest” section of the LinkedIn profile page, (ii) a PTSD meet-up event picture in the Facebook “About” page “event” section and in the LinkedIn profile page “activity” section, (iii) a comment on a PTSD post indicating that the applicant has PTSD on the Facebook “timeline” page or the LinkedIn “post” page, and (iv) a comment in a self-created posting indicating that the applicant has PTSD.

Individuating information. This essay manipulated two levels of individuating information. In the high-individuating information condition, the Facebook and LinkedIn pages included four co-occurring items that indicated the applicant: (i) had donated blood, (ii) “liked” a blood connection homepage, (iii) won (with a team) a programming contest, and (iv) got an A in a network and programming class. This essay chose positive

information about the simulated person to see if the PTSD cues could influence ratings over and above information that would indicate hireability. In the no-individuating information condition, none of this information was included (but the rest of the webpage was unchanged).

Experimental Procedure

Facebook and LinkedIn social media profile pages were developed that addressed both internal and external validity concerns. To maintain external validity, I started with actual profile pages² of a real student at a medium-sized southern university and then made changes to reflect the manipulations and to protect the anonymity of the Facebook and LinkedIn account (e.g., changed the name, pictures, etc.). Note that this means the individual portrayed on the page was the same in all conditions: a college-age male enrolled as an upper class (e.g., junior or senior) student at a university who is a veteran. Similar to a typical Facebook account additional material was provided such as favorite sports teams, music preferences, restaurants, and entertainment sites. Similar to a typical LinkedIn account additional material was provided such as professional activities, companies, and formal events.

For Facebook, the timeline page and about page are presented. For LinkedIn, the profile page and the post page, which typically includes all activities a person has on LinkedIn (e.g., posts, comments, and likes), are presented. The choice was driven by the

² We obtained permission from the original person to use his Facebook and LinkedIn pages.

similar structures between the Facebook timeline page and LinkedIn post page as well as the Facebook about page and LinkedIn profile page.

The final step was the insertion of the PTSD and Individuating Information manipulations as discussed above. No particular way of viewing the profile pages is prescribed during the experiment because evidence suggests most social media website assessments are not structured (e.g., Van Iddekinge et al. 2016). I also crafted a resume, which was used consistently across different conditions to maintain realism in the hiring process.

In this experiment, subjects were first introduced to the study. After that, each participant was randomly assigned to one of the eight experimental conditions (the Facebook study which had 4 conditions, and the LinkedIn study which had the same 4 conditions, just on a different SM platform). Participants viewed the requirements for the position, then examined the resume that is constant for all conditions, examined the designated social media pages, and finally completed an online questionnaire where they indicated their reactions to the survey items and demographic questions (e.g., gender, ethnicity, hiring experience, among others).

Measurement

Perceived stigma in the workplace. This essay modified the *Concerns About Stigma in the Workplace* scale from Vogt and colleagues (2014). The scale has a good fit in this essay's context because it was developed to assess the stigma related beliefs about military personnel and veterans and the mock applicant has a military background. The participants are asked to respond with their level of agreement to the item statements,

such as (i) coworkers might feel uncomfortable around this applicant and (ii) a supervisor might treat this applicant unfairly. All 8 items are noted in Tables 2 and 3. The response scale was 1= Strongly Disagree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. Cronbach's alphas were .89 and .91 for the business student and working professional samples respectively.

Trust. The trust scale was adopted from Mayer and Gavin (2005). Thus, the respondents are asked to rate the level of willingness to be vulnerable to (i.e., trust) the job applicant through the following items³: (i) I would tell this applicant about mistakes I've made on the job, even if they could damage my reputation, (ii) I would share my opinion about sensitive issues with this applicant even if my opinion were unpopular, and (iii) If this applicant asked why a problem happened, I would speak freely even if I were partly to blame. The response scale was 1= Strongly Disagree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. Cronbach's alphas were .72 and .74.

³ This essay started with five trust items in addition to the above mentioned 3. The removed items were: (1) I would be willing to let this job applicant have substantial influence over my future in this company; (2) I would be comfortable giving this applicant a task or problem which was critical to me, even if I could not monitor his/her actions. However, the first two items highly cross-loaded on the expected task performance factor and were consequently dropped. Factor analyses with these items are available from the author.

Table 2: Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for Upper-class Business Students

Factors and Items	EFA (Factor Loading)					CFA
	1	2	3	4	5	
Factor 1: Perceived Stigma						
1) Co-workers might think this job applicant is not capable of doing his/her job	0.67	0.02	-0.20	0.02	0.26	0.68
2) People at work might not want to be around this job applicant.	0.79	-0.16	-0.01	-0.08	0.20	0.80
3) This applicant's career/job options might be limited.	0.61	-0.03	-0.22	0.03	0.19	0.60
4) Coworkers might feel uncomfortable around this applicant.	0.78	-0.19	-0.03	-0.03	0.11	0.78
5) A supervisor might give this applicant less desirable work.	0.70	0.06	-0.24	0.02	0.21	0.70
6) A supervisor might treat this applicant unfairly.	0.79	-0.03	-0.02	-0.04	0.05	0.73
7) People at work might think this applicant was faking his/her illness.	0.69	-0.06	0.00	-0.13	0.11	0.64
8) Co-workers might avoid talking to this applicant.	0.80	-0.08	-0.06	-0.04	0.14	0.80
Factor 2: Trust						
1) I would tell this applicant about mistakes I've made on the job, even if they could damage my reputation.	-0.04	0.84	0.06	0.01	0.02	0.70
2) I would share my opinion about sensitive issues with this applicant even if my opinion were unpopular.	-0.11	0.80	0.13	-0.01	0.00	0.70
3) If this applicant asked why a problem happened, I would speak freely even if I were partly to blame.	-0.16	0.67	0.29	0.05	-0.03	0.65
Factor 3: Expected Task Performance (<i>The job applicant can be expected to...</i>)						
1) Adequately complete assigned duties.	-0.16	0.15	0.88	0.09	-0.17	0.92
2) Perform tasks that are expected of him/her.	-0.14	0.15	0.87	0.13	-0.21	0.94
3) Meet formal performance requirements of a job.	-0.17	0.20	0.82	0.09	-0.10	0.77
Factor 4: Expected Organizational Citizenship (<i>The job applicant can be expected to...</i>)						
1) Help others who have heavy workloads.	-0.06	-0.04	0.12	0.88	-0.18	0.89
2) Go out of his/her way to help new employees.	-0.06	0.02	0.10	0.91	-0.14	0.92
3) Help others who have been absent.	-0.07	0.01	0.07	0.90	-0.14	0.88
4) Take a personal interest in other employees.	-0.01	0.06	0.02	0.85	-0.12	0.78

Table 2 continued

Expected Counterproductive Work Behavior (<i>How often do you expect the job applicant to:</i>)						
1) Make fun of someone at work	0.13	0.04	-0.06	-0.17	0.74	0.71
2) Say something hurtful to someone at work	0.22	0.01	-0.03	-0.11	0.83	0.83
3) Make an ethnic, religious, or racial remark at work	0.16	-0.06	-0.11	-0.06	0.76	0.72
4) Curse at someone at work	0.21	0.02	-0.04	-0.04	0.78	0.76
5) Play a mean prank on someone at work	0.13	-0.01	-0.11	-0.13	0.84	0.85
6) Act rudely toward someone at work	0.19	-0.04	-0.14	-0.11	0.85	0.88
7) Publicly embarrass someone at work	0.13	-0.01	-0.16	-0.13	0.85	0.88
Variance explained %	18.50	7.89	10.24	13.13	19.83	

Note. N= 398 (two sub-study samples Facebook and LinkedIn combined). EFA = Exploratory Factor Analysis. CFA = Confirmatory Factor Analysis. CFA indices of model fit: $\chi^2=671.798$; $df=265$; CFI=.949; RMSEA=.044 with 90% confidence interval (.037, .050).

Table 3: Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for Working Professionals

Factors and Items	EFA (Factor Loading)					CFA
Factor 1: Perceived Stigma						
1) Co-workers might think this job applicant is not capable of doing his/her job	0.68	-0.08	-0.28	-0.05	0.18	0.68
2) People at work might not want to be around this job applicant.	0.81	-0.06	-0.01	-0.07	0.23	0.84
3) This applicant's career/job options might be limited.	0.67	-0.09	-0.18	-0.01	0.08	0.62
4) Coworkers might feel uncomfortable around this applicant.	0.84	0.00	0.00	-0.08	0.16	0.84
5) A supervisor might give this applicant less desirable work.	0.74	0.06	-0.17	-0.01	0.18	0.71
6) A supervisor might treat this applicant unfairly.	0.79	-0.02	-0.05	-0.07	0.18	0.77
7) People at work might think this applicant was faking his/her illness.	0.70	0.04	-0.08	-0.04	0.25	0.71
8) Co-workers might avoid talking to this applicant.	0.82	-0.02	0.04	-0.03	0.22	0.82
Factor 2: Trust						
1) I would tell this applicant about mistakes I've made on the job, even if they could damage my reputation.	-0.02	0.82	0.08	0.11	0.06	0.70
2) I would share my opinion about sensitive issues with this applicant even if my opinion were unpopular.	0.01	0.81	0.17	0.14	0.02	0.81
3) If this applicant asked why a problem happened, I would speak freely even if I were partly to blame.	-0.07	0.74	0.13	0.07	-0.05	0.59
Factor 3: Expected Task Performance (<i>The job applicant can be expected to...</i>)						
1) Adequately complete assigned duties.	-0.17	0.14	0.90	0.17	-0.14	0.92
2) Perform tasks that are expected of him/her.	-0.16	0.16	0.88	0.19	-0.16	0.94
3) Meet formal performance requirements of a job.	-0.17	0.18	0.88	0.20	-0.11	0.91
Factor 4: Expected Organizational Citizenship (<i>The job applicant can be expected to...</i>)						
1) Help others who have heavy workloads.	-0.05	0.06	0.21	0.89	-0.06	0.90
2) Go out of his/her way to help new employees.	-0.06	0.11	0.15	0.91	-0.09	0.93
3) Help others who have been absent.	-0.08	0.07	0.16	0.90	-0.09	0.90
4) Take a personal interest in other employees.	-0.06	0.15	0.02	0.83	-0.05	0.76

Table 3 Continued

Factor 5: Expected Counterproductive Work Behavior (How often do you expect the job applicant to:)						
1) Make fun of someone at work	0.22	0.09	-0.06	-0.07	0.84	0.84
2) Say something hurtful to someone at work	0.23	-0.03	-0.09	-0.07	0.87	0.90
3) Make an ethnic, religious, or racial remark at work	0.21	-0.03	-0.12	-0.04	0.86	0.87
4) Curse at someone at work	0.21	0.00	-0.08	-0.06	0.84	0.85
5) Play a mean prank on someone at work	0.16	0.03	-0.03	-0.01	0.89	0.88
6) Act rudely toward someone at work	0.24	-0.05	-0.09	-0.09	0.88	0.91
7) Publicly embarrass someone at work	0.21	-0.01	-0.08	-0.06	0.89	0.91
Variance explained %	20.04	8.15	10.81	13.26	22.53	
<p>Note. N= 608 (two sub-study samples, Facebook and LinkedIn, combined). EFA = Exploratory Factor Analysis. CFA = Confirmatory Factor Analysis. CFA Indices of model fit: $\chi^2=671.798$; $df=265$, $N=608$; $CFI=.934$; $RMSEA=.050$ with 90% confidence interval (.046, .055).</p>						

Expected task performance. This essay used several of Williams and Anderson's (1991) in-role performance items. The participants are asked to rate candidate' levels of expected task performance based on the items that loaded highly on the task performance factor (for a similar approach see Shoss, Eisenberger, Restubog, & Zagenczyk, 2013). This essay chose three in-role performance behaviors with high loadings (e.g., above .80). This essay adapted the items to ask recruiters how well they would expect a job applicant to perform in these areas. For in-role/task performance, I used (i) adequately complete assigned duties, (ii) perform tasks that are expected of him/her, and (iii) meet formal performance requirements of a job. Cronbach's alphas were .90 and .95.

Expected OCB performance. This essay used a similar approach to choose OCB items. This essay also chose highly loading items. This essay used (i) help others who have heavy workloads, (ii) go out of his/her way to help new employees, and (iii) help others who had been absent and (iv) take a personal interest in other employees. The response scale was 1=strongly agree to 7=strongly disagree. To make larger numbers represent higher levels of OCB performance I recoded the scale before running analyses (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). Cronbach's alphas were .92 and .92.

Expected counterproductive work behaviors. This essay also measured anticipated levels of counterproductive work behaviors (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). This essay changed items in terms of tense to refer to expectations of future levels of such behaviors. This essay used the following items from the interpersonal deviance subscale (CWB): (i) make fun of someone at work, (ii) say something hurtful to someone at work, (iii) make an ethnic, religious, or racial remark at work, (iv) curse at someone at work, (v)

play a mean prank on someone at work, (vi) act rudely toward someone at work, (vii) publicly embarrass someone at work. This essay used an eight-point response scale anchored by frequency judgments from Bass, Cascio, and O'Connor (1974), in which raters are asked to tell us the expected frequency of the above items for future behaviors (8 = Always, 7 = Continually, 6 =Very often, 5 = Rather frequently, 4 = Sometimes, 3 = Now and then, 2 = Not often, 1 = Never). Cronbach's alphas were .93 and .96.

Results

Measurement Analyses

As a first step, this essay conducted both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses on both samples (see Tables 2 and 3). The analysis revealed that all items generally loaded as expected on their respective factors, which indicates a good convergent validity. The confirmatory factor analysis yielded acceptable fit indices (Kline, 2005): for the upper-class business undergraduate student sample $\chi^2=671.798$; $df=265$, $N=398$; $CFI=.949$; $RMSEA=.044$ with 90% confidence interval (.037, .050); and for the working professional sample, $\chi^2=671.798$; $df=265$, $N=608$; $CFI=.934$; $RMSEA=.050$ with 90% confidence interval (.046, .055). Thus, this essay concludes that the measurement model is confirmed. Tables 4 and 5 provide the bivariate correlations among the variables for both samples including Facebook and LinkedIn sub-samples.

Hypothesis Testing

I conducted Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using EQS6.3 and path analysis using SPSS 24 to test the hypotheses on all of four samples. The overall fit indices (based on Robust Method given the use of categorical variables in the model; see Rhemtulla,

Brosseau-Liard, & Savalei, 2012) were generally acceptable for all the structural equation models (see Figures 2-5). The fit indices of the structural model are (1) $\chi^2 = 459.743$, $df=314$; $N=205$; $CFI=.931$; $RMSEA=.048$ with 90% confidence interval (.038, .057) for the upper class undergraduate Facebook sub-study sample; (2) Indices of model fit: $\chi^2 = 513.710$, $df=314$; $N=193$; $CFI=.908$; $RMSEA=.058$ with 90% confidence interval (.048, .066) for the upper class undergraduate LinkedIn sub-study sample; (3) $\chi^2 = 587.073$, $df=314$; $N=277$; $CFI=.903$; $RMSEA=.056$ with 90% confidence interval (.049, .063) for working professional Facebook sub-study sample; and (4) $\chi^2 = 646.366$, $df=314$; $N=331$; $CFI=.913$; $RMSEA=.057$ with 90% confidence interval (.050, .063) for working professional LinkedIn sub-study sample.

This essay first presents results based on the upper-class business student Facebook and LinkedIn results. Then it presents the working professionals results for Facebook and LinkedIn to reduce cognitive load and because the results vary somewhat by sample.

Table 4: Bivariate Correlations for Upper Class Business Student Samples

	Mean	Std.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
PTSD	.45/.53	.50/.50	-	.04	.25**	-.01	-.14*	-.08	.09
Ind. Infor.	.50/.46	.50/.50	-.07	-	-.29**	.03	.29**	.07	-.17*
Per. Stigma	2.38/2.49	.79/.79	.26**	-.20**	-	-.25**	-.42**	-.16*	.36**
Trust	3.24/3.17	.90/.82	-.18**	.04	-.20**	-	.40**	.14*	-.07
Task	5.79/5.57	1.06/1.06	-.14*	.14*	-.26**	.34**	-	.37**	-.36**
OCB	5.04/5.06	1.32/1.22	-.08	-.09	-.13*	-.00	.10	-	-.39**
CWB	2.05/2.10	1.07/1.03	.02	-.17**	.46**	-.05	-.29**	-.23**	-

Note. ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$ (one tail t-test). Mean and Standard deviation of Facebook sub-study sample are presented before /, while those for LinkedIn sub-study sample presented after /. Correlations below the diagonal are for the Facebook sub-study sample, those above the diagonal are for the LinkedIn sub-study sample. PTSD = PTSD disclosure, Ind. Infor. = Individuating Information, Per. Stigma = Perceived Stigma, Task = Expected Task Performance, OCB = Expected OCB, CWB = Expected Counterproductive Work Behavior; Std. = Standard Deviation.

Table 5: Bivariate Correlations for Working Professional Samples

	Mean	Std.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
PTSD	.55/.47	.50/.50	-	.04	.33**	.11*	-.05	-.04	.26**
Ind. Infor.	.58/.55	.50/.50	-.00	-	-.11*	.13**	.24**	.01	.05
Per. Stigma	2.37/2.36	0.85/.86	.24**	-.05	-	-.10*	-.35**	-.13**	.49**
Trust	3.19/3.13	0.86/.94	.06	.12*	-.07	-	.36**	.25**	-.01
Task	5.77/5.72	1.08/1.18	-.06	.28**	-.30**	.31**	-	.34**	-.32**
OCB	5.26/5.28	1.14/1.18	-.05	.15**	-.20**	.27**	.41**	-	-.12*
CWB	1.74/1.78	1.09/1.17	.17**	.00	.44**	-.02	-.19**	-.23**	-

Note. ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$ (one tail t-test). Std. = Standard Deviation. Mean and Standard deviation of Facebook sub-study sample are presented before /, while those for LinkedIn sub-study sample presented after /. Correlations below the diagonal are for the Facebook sub-study sample, those above the diagonal are for the LinkedIn sub-study sample. PTSD = PTSD disclosure, Ind. Infor. = Individuating Information, Per. Stigma = Perceived Stigma, Task = Expected Task Performance, OCB = Expected OCB, CWB = Expected Counterproductive Work Behavior;

Business students. The first set of paths involved predicting perceived stigma and trust. The SEM results in Figures 2 and 3 (to ensure the robustness of the results, I also ran the same model using those who passed the manipulation check on the PTSD cues, see Appendix A) show that PTSD disclosure was significantly related to perceived stigma (.28, $p < .001$ and .26, $p < .001$ in the business student Facebook and LinkedIn experiments, respectively). Thus, H1 was supported. Results also show that stigma was negatively related trust (-.27, $p < .001$ and -.40 $p < .001$). Thus, H2 was supported in both experiments.

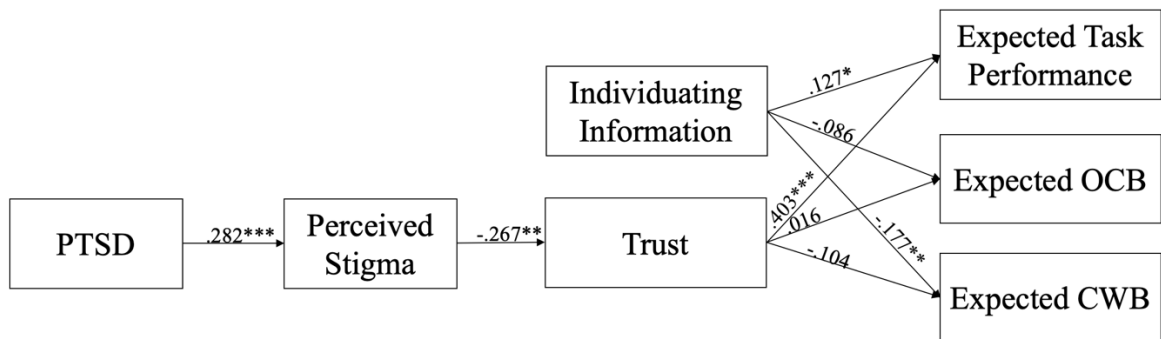


Figure 2: Structural Equation Model results for Business Students (Facebook)

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$. Indices of model fit: $\chi^2 = 459.743$, $df = 314$; $N = 205$; CFI=.931; RMSEA=.048 with 90% confidence interval (.038, .057).

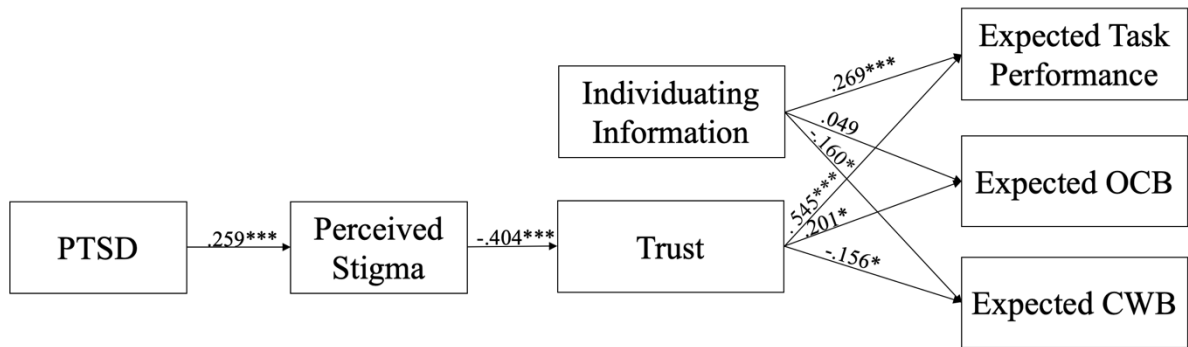


Figure 3: Structural Equation Model results for Business Students (LinkedIn)

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$. Indices of model fit: $\chi^2 = 513.710$, $df = 314$; $N = 193$; CFI = .908; RMSEA = .058 with 90% confidence interval (.048, .066).

Hypotheses 3 and 4 suggested that trust would be positively related to expected task performance and OCB, and negatively related to expected CWB. The proposed relationship between trust and expected task performance was confirmed in both experiments (.40, $p < .001$ and .55, $p < .001$). Thus, H3a is supported. The relationship between trust and expected OCB was only significant in the LinkedIn experiment (.02, $p > .05$ and .20, $p < .05$). Thus, H3b is not supported in the Facebook experiment but is supported in the LinkedIn experiment. Similarly, the relationship between trust and expected CWB was only significant in the LinkedIn experiment (-.10, $p > .05$ and -.16, $p < .05$). Thus, H4 is not supported in the Facebook experiment but is supported in the LinkedIn experiment.

The third set of hypotheses were about predicting expected task performance, OCB and CWB from individuating information. The results show that individuating information is significantly related to expected task performance (.13, $p < .05$ and .27, $p < .001$) and expected CWB (-.18, $p < .01$ and -.16, $p < .05$) in both experiments. The

relationship between individuating information and expected OCB is not confirmed in either of the experiments ($-.09, p > .05$ and $.05, p > .05$). Thus, H5a and H6 were supported but not H5b.

H7 and H8 posited that trust would predict expected task performance, expected OCB, and expected CWB even after entering individuating information in the regression equation. Trust has significant relationships with expected task performance ($.40, p < .001$ and $.55, p < .001$) even when individuating information is present in both experiments. Thus, H7a is confirmed. Trust has significant influence on expected OCB ($.20, p < .05$) and expected CWB ($-.16, p < .05$) when individuating information is present in the structural model in the LinkedIn experiment but were not significant in the Facebook experiment. Thus, H7b and H8 were partially confirmed. Overall, these results demonstrate the importance of looking at trust in the context of SM assessments or even in the broader recruitment literature.

In H9, this essay theorized the moderating effects of social media platforms on the relationships between PTSD disclosure and perceived stigma, between individuating information and expected task performance, OCB, as well as CWB. I tested the moderation using the general linear model in SPSS. However, I didn't find any significant moderation effects.⁴ I, thus, did not include these paths in Figures 2 and 3 to parsimoniously summarize results.

⁴ However, the p -value for the interaction effect between individuating information and the platform (variable) on the expected task performance is smaller than $.2$.

In sum, most of the direct hypothesized paths were supported by the data for both Facebook and LinkedIn SM assessments for the business students. That is, PTSD influences stigma that influences trust that influences expected task performance and expected OCB. The lack of support for some paths is also interesting. Trust did not predict expected CWB in either experiment. Thus, the influence of PTSD, through stigma and trust, did not extend to expected CWBs. Individuating information predicted expected OCB in both experiments. Moderation hypotheses were not generally supported.

Working professionals. Results for the working professionals are noted in Figures 4 and 5. This essay chose to discuss them in a separate section as the results differ somewhat from those above. The first set of paths involved predicting perceived stigma and trust. The SEM results show that PTSD disclosure was significantly related to perceived stigma (.27, $p < .001$ and .36, $p < .001$, in the Facebook and LinkedIn experiments, respectively), thus H1 was supported in both Facebook and LinkedIn experiments. This essay hypothesized that perceived stigma would be negatively related to trust. This hypothesis was not confirmed by the results (-.09, $p > .05$ and -.08, $p > .05$) in either of the experiments. Thus, H2 was not supported for working professionals.⁵

⁵ We combined the subjects from the two working professional experiments and ran the structural model. We found that the path between stigma and trust became significant, see Appendix B.

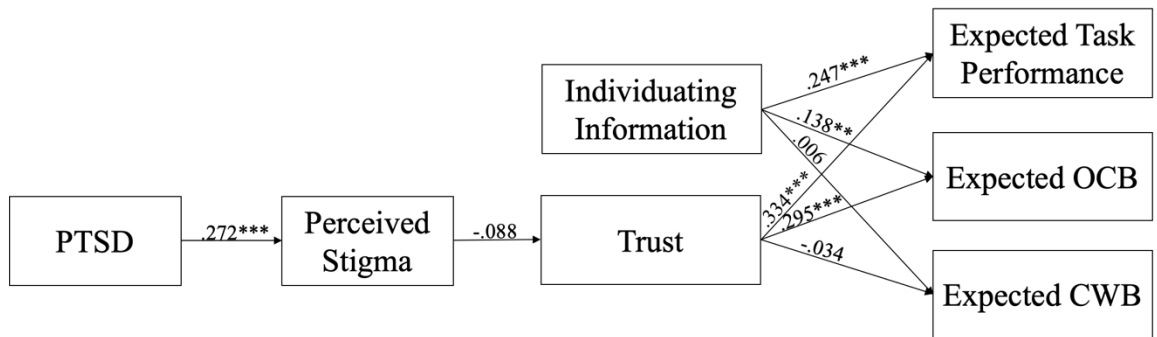


Figure 4: Structural Equation Model results for Working Professionals (Facebook)

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$. Indices of model fit: $\chi^2 = 587.073$, $df = 314$; $N = 277$; CFI = .903; RMSEA = .056 with 90% confidence interval (.049, .063).

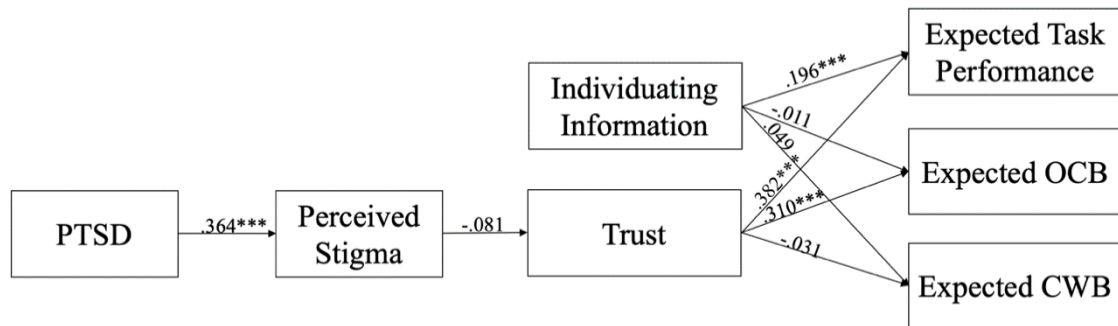


Figure 5: Structural Equation Model results for Working Professionals (LinkedIn).

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$. Indices of model fit: $\chi^2 = 646.366$, $df = 314$; $N = 331$; CFI = .913; RMSEA = .057 with 90% confidence interval (.050, .063).

The second set of hypotheses suggested that trust would be positively related to expected task performance (.33, $p < .001$ and .38, $p < .001$) and OCB (.30, $p < .001$ and .31, $p < .001$), and negatively related to CWB (-.03, $p > .05$ and -.03, $p > .05$). Thus, H3a and H3b were supported. But, support is not found for H4 in either of the experiments.

The third set of hypotheses involved predicting expected task performance, OCB and CWB from individuating information. The results show that individuating information is positively related to expected task performance (.25, $p < .001$ and .20, $p < .001$), supporting H5a. The relationship between individuating information and expected OCB (.14, $p < .01$ and -.01, $p > .05$) is only confirmed in the Facebook experiment. Thus, H5b is partially supported in the working professional sample. The relationship between individuating information and expected CWB (-.01, $p > .05$ and -.05, $p > .05$) is not supported in either of the experiments. Thus, H6 is not supported.

H7 and H8 posited that trust would predict expected task performance, expected OCB, and expected CWB even after entering individuating information in the regression equation. Trust has significant relationships with expected task performance (.33, $p < .001$ and .38, $p < .001$) and expected OCB (.30, $p < .001$ and .31, $p < .001$) even when individuating information is present in both experiments. Thus, H7a and H7b are confirmed. This essay did not find any significant relationship between trust and expected CWB (-.03, $p > .05$ and -.03, $p > .05$) with individuating information in the model. So, H8 is not confirmed.

In H9, this essay theorizes the moderating effects of social media platforms on the relationships between PTSD disclosure and perceived stigma, between individuating information and expected task performance, OCB, as well as CWB. I tested the moderation using the general linear model in SPSS as well. However, I did not find any significant moderation effects, suggesting that these relationships were similar in strength across platforms (similar in the upper-class business student sample).

Overall, this set of results suggests that trust does not play as central a role in the working professional sample as this essay theorized. Thus, I dropped trust from the model and reran the structural model for the working professional sample. The results are reported in Figures 6 and 7. After dropping trust, the fit indices improved. You can also see that stigma is significantly related to expected task performance, expected OCB, and expected CWB (-.27, $p < .001$, -.20, $p < .01$ and .47, $p < .001$; -.33, $p < .001$, -.15, $p < .05$, and .53, $p < .001$). These results indicate that SM assessments can result in stigmatization of people (i.e., veterans) with PTSD.

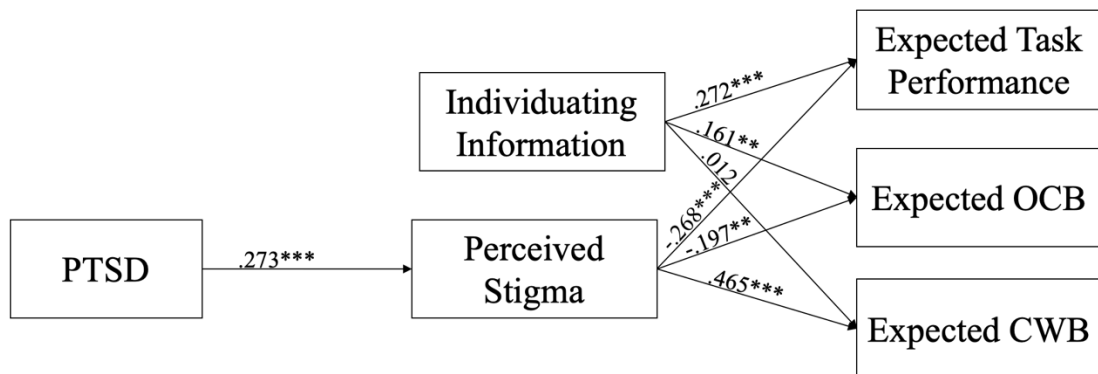


Figure 6: Structural Equation Model (Trust dropped) results for Working Professionals

(Facebook) *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$. Indices of model fit: $\chi^2=524.360$, $df=243$; $N=277$; $CFI=.921$; $RMSEA=.056$ with 90% confidence interval (.050, .063).

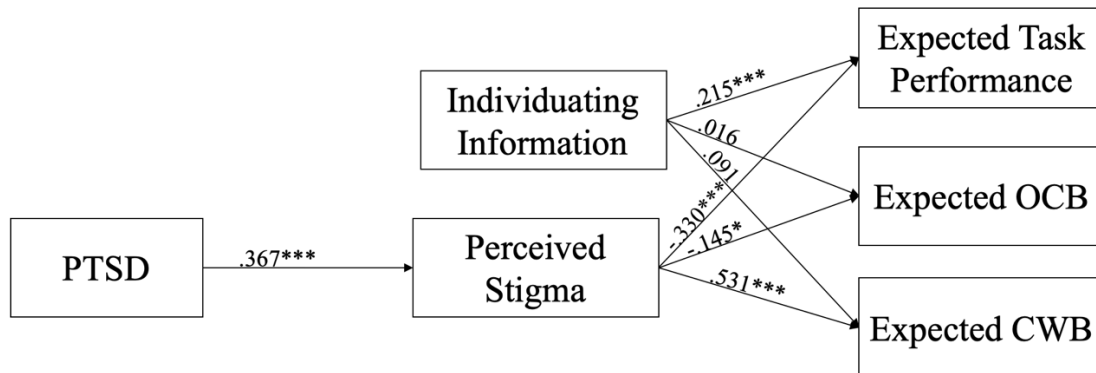


Figure 7: Structural Equation Model (Trust dropped) results for Working Professionals (LinkedIn)

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$. Indices of model fit: $\chi^2 = 510.103$, $df = 243$; $N = 331$; CFI = .922; RMSEA = .057 with 90% confidence interval (.050, .064).

In sum, many of the direct hypothesized paths were supported by the working professional data for both Facebook and LinkedIn SM assessments. One significant difference in this set of results is that trust does not play an important role in the structural model, as indicated by the insignificant path between perceived stigma and trust as well as the insignificant mediation effect of trust. After dropping trust from the model, most of the paths in the model became significant. Overall, the upper-class business student samples and the working professional samples suggest a mixed signal about the importance of trust but a clear and strong signal about the stigmatizing effect of PTSD on expected levels of task performance and OCB performance (but not expected CWB performance) in the context of SM assessment. All the hypothesis testing results are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Hypothesis Summary

Hypotheses	Supported?			
	Study 1		Study 2	
	Facebook (n=205)	LinkedIn (n=193)	Facebook (n=277)	LinkedIn (n=331)
H1: PTSD self-disclosure is positively related to Perceived Stigma	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
H2: Perceived Stigma is negatively related to Trust.	Yes	Yes	No	No
H3a: Trust will be positively related to expected task performance.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
H3b: Trust will be positively related to expected organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) performance.	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
H4: Trust will be negatively related to expected CWB.	No	Yes	No	No
H5a: Individuating information will positively influence ratings of expected task performance.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
H5b: Individuating information will positively influence ratings of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB).	No	No	Yes	No
H6: Individuating information will be negatively related to expected CWB.	Yes	Yes	No	No
H7a: The trust variable will significantly influence ratings for expected task performance over and above the influence of individuating information on hireability ratings.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
H7b: The trust variable will significantly influence ratings for expected OCB over and above the influence of individuating information on hireability ratings.	No	No	Yes	Yes
H8: The trust variable will significantly influence ratings for expected CWB over and above the influence of individuating information on hireability ratings.	No	Yes	No	No
H9a: Platform Effects positively moderates the relationships between PTSD self-disclosure and perceived stigma.	No	No	No	No
H9b: Platform Effects positively moderates the relationships between Individuating information and expected performance;	No	No	No	No
H9c: Platform Effects positively moderates the relationships between Individuating information and expected OCB;	No	No	No	No
H9d: Platform Effects positively moderates the relationships between Individuating information and expected CWB.	No	No	No	No

Post hoc tests of other effects. What's more, to test if trust plays an important role in the model, I ran Lagrange Multiplier (LM) tests in EQS to see if any direct paths are suggested from PTSD and perceived stigma to expected task performance, expected OCB, and expected CWB directly. No direct paths from PTSD and perceived stigma to these hireability constructs are suggested. The results indicate that trust plays an important role in the mechanisms through which PTSD influences hireability constructs. Specifically, in the upper-class business student Facebook experiment, the LM test suggested a path from expected CWB to perceived stigma ($\chi^2=40.421$, $p < .001$) be added. This path is not theoretically grounded (Bentler, 2006) and is, thus, dismissed. The following paths are also dismissed for the same reason:

- expected CWB to perceived stigma ($\chi^2=19.633$, $p < .001$) (upper-class business students, Facebook)
- expected CWB to trust ($\chi^2= 54.221$, $p < .001$) (upper-class business students, LinkedIn)
- expected task performance to perceived stigma ($\chi^2= 6.408$, $p < .05$) (working professionals, LinkedIn)
- expected CWB to trust ($\chi^2= 81.748$, $p < .001$) (working professional, LinkedIn)
- expected task performance to perceived stigma ($\chi^2= 12.689$, $p < .001$) (working professional, LinkedIn)

Lastly, the path from individuating information to perceived stigma is suggested in the upper-class business student LinkedIn experiment ($\chi^2= 10.974$, $p < .05$) and the

working professional LinkedIn experiment ($\chi^2= 4.822, p < .05$). Even though this path was not theorized in this essay, it is theoretically sound and, thus, noted here.

Discussion

Many individuals in the United States suffer from PTSD. This essay set out to see how disclosure of this disability might influence organizational decisions such as hiring. This essay reasoned that this problem would become increasingly acute due to the possible disclosure of information on social media and the growing tendency of organizations to assess the social media of job applicants. This problem is of particular interest because of the increasing number of younger individuals who are likely social media users. The results support the idea that PTSD disclosure can influence stigma in the minds of decision makers which in turn influences expected levels of task and OCB performance. However, effects on counter productive work performance were only observed in the upper-class business student sample for the LinkedIn sub-study and moderation effects were generally not significant.

Veterans and other individuals concerned with veterans may find the results interesting in a practical sense. The results are some of the first analyses relating to hireability that show PTSD results in stigma among both students and organizational decision makers. Further, this stigma can reduce hiring recommendations that capture constructs related to expected task and OCB performance. Thus, the results document a potentially important barrier that veterans face as they seek employment in the private sector. Put simply, they may find it harder to obtain employment as a result of PTSD that is related to serving their country.

Veterans may wish to consider if information indicating stigma should appear on their social media pages (e.g., Facebook). For example, veterans, especially those who are looking for jobs, might want to find support in a private, password protected, anonymized forums about their PTSD symptoms. While there is no shame in seeking help for PTSD, the findings in this essay encourage individuals, including veterans and their supporters, to proceed with caution when seeking to raise awareness of a potentially stigmatized condition, as it may impact their ability to secure employment (more practical implications below).

Theoretical Contributions

This study makes several theoretical contributions. First, this essay introduces/highlights the role of stigma in hiring settings. This variable has received little attention in the selection and recruitment literature in applied psychology and management. Stigma, in turn, lowers ratings of trust (in one sample), which consequently has a significant impact on hireability ratings such as expected task performance, and OCB. I hope that documenting and understanding how such processes happen might stimulate work to mitigate such effects (more below). This essay also suggests that a focus on stigma may help explain reactions to other stigmatized groups in selection, performance appraisal, and promotion. That is, stigma may help understand reactions toward individuals with an observable disfigurement or other disability.

Second, this essay changes the focus/target of a great deal of the stigma literature. Most studies of stigma tend to focus on how individuals with a stigma (e.g., depression) cope with this problem. Instead, the focus of this essay is on how stigma, in the minds of

others, in this case hiring decision makers, influences the *outcomes* that veterans with PTSD might expect in the application process. In this case, the results appear to be the first results to document the influence of PTSD stigma on the hiring process. As such, this essay hopes to stimulate future thought on stigma in the minds of others and how the stigma effects a variety of organizational decisions (e.g., hiring, performance appraisal, and promotion).

Third, this essay offers a theoretical driven cross-platform comparison in the SM assessment domain. No support for the platform effects is found in the current study. This suggests that the platform is not the central issue in understanding PTSD effects in SM assessments. Rather, the data suggest that the issue involves the information embedded within a post(s), not the broader context of the platform. In a sense, this is highly encouraging because it appears the results are consistent with “platform generalization.” Future work might focus on other selection “tests”, such as interviews, to see if these effects generalize across different forms of assessment as well.

Practical Implications

Given the results and the negative effect involved in the current popularity of SM assessments, there are several implications of these findings. One suggestion is that organizations train raters/recruiters and operational managers to avoid making hiring decisions on such job-irrelevant information (some might consider it discriminatory). The results suggest there is a need to be aware of the type of information (PTSD in this essay) that can lead to potential bias and induce conscious or unconscious, stigmatization. The scope of such training could be expanded to other types of personnel decisions such as

performance appraisals or promotions, though no research directly examining such decisions. Organizations may need to consider developing social media policies, in order to procedurally guard against the influence of information relating to applicant stigma. For example, organizations might dissuade individuals from looking at social media websites at all in the selection process or provide training programs for the recruiting committee on how to systematically conduct SM assessments (Evuleocha & Ugbah, 2018).

State legislatures might wish to consider how to regulate the use of stigma information on social media platforms in the recruiting process as it may negatively impact veterans and other protected populations. Although a handful of local employment laws preclude making employment decisions based on stigmatizing information (such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act), however, recruiters can still be unconsciously biased during SM assessments by such information. New regulations specifically targeting this SM assessment information should be created in order to limit introducing systematic bias against veterans and other populations into selection processes.

Limitations

All studies have limitations, and this essay is no exception. First, the experimental manipulations were based on realistic social media pages from an actual person, though cues of PTSD were added (with permission). Albeit hypothetical, these Facebook and LinkedIn pages contained a great deal of realistic information. This essay's efforts to maintain ecological validity may have resulted in slightly weaker experimental effects

than would have been found in studies with other predictors, such as application blanks or interviews, where individuating information and PTSD cues might be more salient due to fewer total stimuli.

Second, even though this essay did its best to reduce the number of possible confounds when looking at platform effects, it is challenging to control the natural confounds of different platforms fully. Such as personal photos and non-professional “likes” on Facebook and professional photos and activities on LinkedIn. They might convey different domains of the job applicant’s life. Also, as symbolic expressions of different platforms are constructed historically (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994; Markus & Silver, 2008), these elements are embedded in the very nature of the platforms.

Third, the studies were conducted as experiments, such that individuals knew they were being observed and that they were not making real decisions. It is possible that impression management or socially desirability-related behaviors may have masked the extent to which PTSD disclosure might influence actual employment decisions, again potentially attenuating the magnitude of the effects this essay observed.

Future Research

This essay is among the first few empirical studies to understand SM assessments and a stigmatized population, veterans with PTSD. The literature searches found very few articles that relate to veteran’s experiences in employee selection. Similarly, I found virtually no studies on other aspects of veterans in the workplace (Stone & Stone, 2015). Thus, there is a great deal of research needed for this population of individuals in applied and management settings from recruiting through virtually every aspect of veteran

careers and how they influence organizations. In terms of stigmatizing information in general, I suggest several lines of research.

First, more research is needed on stigmatizing information via self-disclosure in actual employment settings. This essay suggests that future studies should further leverage field experiments to understand discrimination and stigmatization in SM assessments. Future studies might also continue to examine the moderation effects of the SM platforms, given that statistical power might be a plausible reason for not finding the moderation effects (Aguinis, Beaty, Boik, & Pierce, 2005). Future research can build on the platform's effects theorized in this essay. As noted above (see footnote 4), I find some limited traces of potential platform moderation effects. Future research should empirically investigate platform effects. It would also be interesting to study the impact of the discrepancy between the information presented on a platform and its symbolic expressions on hireability or other meaningful outcomes. For example, would the discrepancy between an intensely personal post or picture on LinkedIn and its utilitarian spirit or symbolic expression evoke a negative response? Would the discrepancy foster perceptions of empathy? Would this vary with veteran or other deep diversity cues? This study provides a rationale for such future studies.

Second, future studies might broaden the stigma information involved. This essay examined PTSD disclosure by veterans, but there are a variety of possible stigmas relevant in the context of SM assessments such as other psychological disabilities, sexual orientation, religion, and political affiliation, among others. This essay did not attempt to capture reactions to other stigmas. More extreme groups might engender more intense

reactions, such that there is a stronger relationship with hiring decisions. I also recommend international tests of the model to learn the potential cultural effects on the theoretical model.

Additionally, there is a need for future research that examines how other new forms of technology impact selection and assessment in organizations. For example, what effect does the ability of artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms that can detect mental health (Coppersmith, Dredze, Harman, Hollingshead, & Mitchell, 2015) have on hireability assessments? That is, employers might have access to mental health illness information through applying AI to process social media posts. Even though this essay has examined bias resulting from using social media to screen job candidates, particularly veterans, future research should examine whether such assessments applied to existing employees result in discrimination against people with mental illness or other forms of deep diversity (i.e., diversity that we might not be consciously aware of or not easily observable).

The results encourage more investigations on the mechanisms through which PTSD influence expected CWBs of veterans. In the upper-class business student sub-studies, PTSD is not significantly correlated with expected CWBs (see Table 4). However, significant correlations are found in the working professional sample (see Table 5). This inconsistency between the upper-class business student sample and the working professional sample indicates that different populations might evaluate PTSD differently (either mediated or not). Future research should dig deeper to gain a better

understanding of the potential discrimination effects caused by PTSD and find solutions to counteract such discrimination.

Future research should also consider how to mitigate the negative impact of stigma related information on social media platforms from both organizational and veteran perspectives. For example, what kind of policies should an organization have to ensure fair SM assessments? How can individuals frame the potentially damaging posts that reveal the concealed stigma in order to decrease discrimination? Especially, how can veterans express their PTSD status on SM so that they won't be stigmatized in the context of SM assessments? We should also investigate whether specific organizational policy or governmental legislation can mitigate negative impacts.

Conclusion

Within a social media context, this essay found that reactions to the applicant veterans' PTSD social media disclosures influenced raters' evaluation of applicants' expected levels of performance. Perceived stigma influenced hiring-related constructs, such as trust, expected task performance, and OCB. Interestingly, these effects were observed even in the presence of job-related individuating information. Overall, the results suggest that being exposed to information regarding PTSD on social media impacted the outcome of SM assessments. As such, organizational decision makers may wish to consider the role of stigmatization effects in the hiring process in terms of training and understanding hiring-related decisions in the context of SM assessments. Specifically, this essay found that veterans with PTSD disclosure on SM platforms such as Facebook and/or LinkedIn are stigmatized compared to those who do not have PTSD

disclosure. Thus, this essay represents an early study that may assist researchers and practitioners to create a more equitable environment for veterans and others with PTSD.

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Essay 1 Appendix

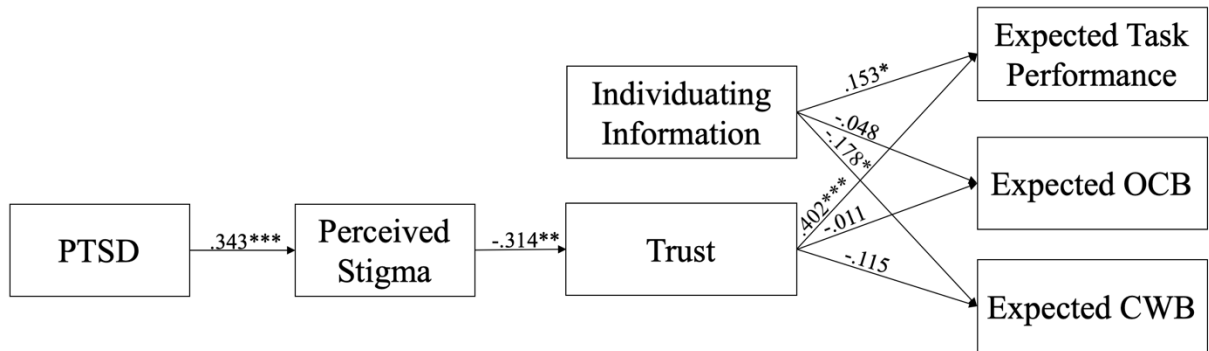


Figure 8: Structural Equation Model results for upper-class business students who passed the PTSD manipulation check (Facebook).

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$. Indices of model fit: $\chi^2 = 446.728$, $df = 314$; $N = 177$; CFI = .927; RMSEA = .049 with 90% confidence interval (.038, .059).

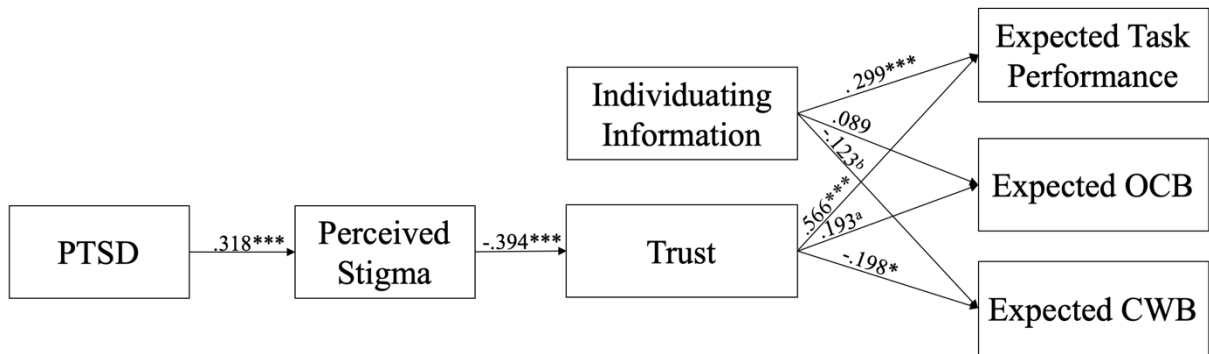


Figure 9: Structural Equation Model results for upper-class business students who passed the PTSD manipulation check (LinkedIn).

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < .05$. Indices of model fit: $\chi^2 = 502.090$, $df = 314$; $N = 168$; CFI = .890; RMSEA = .060 with 90% confidence interval (.050, .069). ^{a, b} These two paths are only mildly insignificant ($p < 0.06$).

CHAPTER THREE — CONTINUITY OF THE SELF FROM DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES: DIGITAL SELF-CONTINUITY, ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES

Information Communication Technologies (ICT) have become ubiquitous, and have shaped how people interact with others and, consequently, define themselves (Carter & Grover, 2015). For example, parents may text colleagues while having dinner with their kids and employees can talk over the phone to their family while emailing colleagues in the office. While sending affectionate text messages to their children, managers may also be sending professional emails to their employees. Individuals employ ICT to engage with different life domains simultaneously or to seamlessly transition across them (Cameron & Webster, 2013; Harris & Cecez-kecmanovic, 2016; Reinsch & Turner, 2019; Reinsch, Turner, & Tinsley, 2008) to fulfill multiple social roles, which sometimes are conflicting.

By enabling multiple roles, ICT has changed how individuals form and enact identity. It has long been assumed in identity theories (Burke & Stets, 2009) that our different role identities—if activated at the same time—interact to produce only one behavioral output. For example, one might run into a work colleague and discuss work-related matters (activating a work role identity) or push one's child on a swing while at the park (enacting a parent role identity). Enacting competing identities simultaneously requires individuals to compromise to fulfill competing expectations. This is because each individual has a limited capacity to enact different role identities, especially when these role identities have conflicting demands. However, with the assistance of ICT, which can allow segmentation of and enable multiple, even conflicting social interactions

(e.g., multicomunication, see Reinsch et al. 2008), individuals can have multiple behavior outputs that fit the expectations of multiple social roles, without seriously compromising role expectations. For example, one can chat with family through text messaging and communicate with colleagues through email simultaneously. Additionally, individuals can also, through ICT, selectively interact with people who will more likely verify their sense of self (i.e., confirm they meet the expectations of specific social roles or other identities).

Not only can using ICT actively verify the sense of self, but individuals also have more opportunities to passively solicit feedback that confirms their sense of self through ICT. For example, when posting on social media, users tend to have an “imagined audience” in mind (boyd, 2007; Marwick & boyd, 2011) in order to achieve a sense of self-verification. Perhaps due to reduced social cues, people may unconsciously “fill in” social cues from that imaginary audience, that were not conveyed in the computer mediated communications (CMC), to reinforce their current or desired sense of self. For example, we might visualize (not necessarily accurately) another’s facial expression based on reading a text message. This “filling in” of cues, is essential to hyperpersonal computer mediated communication (Antheunis, Schouten, & Walther, 2019; Walther, 1996), which indicates that, over time, people might develop more intimate relationships online, sometimes more intimate than those in a face-to-face context.

People may give undue attention to feedback on social media from anonymous or unknown strangers. For example, cyberbullying victims sometimes cite harsh comments from random strangers, on websites such as last.fm or reddit, as reasons for attempting

suicide (Aboujaoude, Savage, Starcevic, & Salame, 2015; Lowry, Zhang, Moody, Chatterjee, Wang, & Wu, 2019). If we understand how ICT positively or negatively reinforce a sense of self, we can identify ways such biased interpretation can be managed and made less consequential.

In this essay, I consider how ICT has transformed the way people maintain their sense of self to create a stable basis for understanding the world they inhabit—and who they are, in relation to it (termed digital self-continuity in the following discussions). Understanding the interplay between identity and ICT is a growing and important topic for Information Systems (IS) research because such understanding significantly enriches our theories about how the application of ICT influences society, organizations, and individuals. For example, ICT has been investigated as shaping identities, channeling or threatening individuals' identity expression, or even becoming part of one's sense of self and thereby influencing technology use (Carter & Grover, 2015; Craig et al., 2019). This essay extends this literature by exploring how ICT transforms the way individuals reinforce the sense of self by systematically looking at how individuals actively and passively verify their sense of self using ICT and investigating the consequences of this digital self-continuity in the context of a work-life interface, as work and personal life are two significant domains that ICT are bridging. This essay asks the following research questions in this paper: *What is digital self-continuity? What are the mechanisms that drive digital self-continuity and its consequences?*

This essay contributes to the literature in the following ways. First, this essay conceptualizes the concept termed digital self-continuity. This construct captures the

embeddedness of digital technologies in social and organizational contexts (Grover & Lyytinen, 2015) and sheds light on the transformative impacts of the constant connectivity on our self and identities. To understand digital self-continuity, this essay theorizes how individuals' interactions with ICT create a sense of self-continuity that is different from that achieved without ICT. This paper directs attention to how individuals achieve digital self-continuity even under the flux of flexibility and context juggling afforded by these technologies. This essay further theorizes that when people achieve digital self-continuity, they have different ways to interrelate (e.g., segment, integrate, etc.) their different identities and consequently have different perceptions about their work-life balance. In doing so, this essay seeks to extend the understanding of the role digital self-continuity plays in achieving work-life balance.

Second, this essay articulates how people use ICT to simultaneously fulfill multiple social roles; thereby challenging a fundamental assumption of many identity theorists, that one person can only have one behavioral output of identity at one point of time. This is important because it suggests that ICT may simultaneously cause work interruptions that disengage people from family roles (Chen & Karahanna, 2018) and activate work and family roles seamlessly, through enabling multiple behavioral outputs. Thus, this essay reveals how ICT enables mechanisms for people to enact multiple, sometimes conflicting identities to positively affect work-life balance. By looking at how ICT can facilitate seamless integration of work and life, this essay advances understanding of the positive effects of constant connectivity afforded by ICT. In so doing it balances the overly negative view of ICT that permeates work-life literature

(Butts, Becker, & Boswell, 2015; Chen & Karahanna, 2018; Ilies, Kossek, & Ladge, 2017; König & De La Guardia, 2014; Russo, 2012). Typically, the constant connectivity enabled by ICT is viewed negatively and as an interruption.

To clarify two levels of effect have been theorized for the use of ICT. The first-level effect is viewed positively as one of efficiency, productivity, responsiveness, and flexibility, among others (Sproull & Kiesler 1991, as cited in Middleton and Cukier 2006). The second-level is viewed negatively as technostress or interruptions. These second-level effects may be unintended (Middleton & Cukier, 2006) and merit further investigation.

Third, this essay systematically examines passive mechanisms for self-verification through ICT and juxtaposes these mechanisms against the active ones. The co-existence of effortful strivings and the largely unconscious passive information processing tendencies (Kahneman, 2011; Swann & Buhrmester, 2012) have not been incorporated into the investigations of self and identity in the context of ICT, because existing IS literature on self and identity mainly focuses on active processes. This study puts these two sets of mechanisms together to enrich our understanding of the interactions between ICT and self (and identities).

Answering the research questions also has practical contributions. For practice, understanding how people achieve digital self-continuity will help organizations to understand the nature of digital workforces. Specifically, this essay demonstrates how perceived work-life balance is influenced by how we maintain digital self-continuity. Thus, this essay can inform how organizations develop work-family policies on ICT use

(Ilies et al., 2017; Kossek, Baltes, & Matthews, 2011) that are effective in the context of digital societies. More fundamentally, this study extends understanding of how ICT transforms an individuals' sense of self. Thus, this work has implications for individuals to take cautious next steps to contemplate the relationships between their sense of self and ICT and, consequently use ICT effectively to maintain self-continuity.

The paper unfolds as follows. The next section lays out a theoretical foundation for digital self-continuity by reviewing the literature on self, identity, and self-continuity. Then, IS literature is synthesized with self-verification theory and behavioral economics theories to discuss six mechanisms that contribute to the sense of digital self-continuity. Then, potential consequences of digital self-continuity are derived through an identity status model. Next, it is justified how work-life balance can be shaped by these consequences of digital self-continuity. Lastly, the paper is concluded by discussing theoretical contributions, practical implications, and future directions.

Theoretical Background

The Self and Self-concept

William James introduced the term self, laying out the foundation for the social scientists to empirically study phenomena related to self. A man's self can be defined, with "widest possible sense, the sum total of all that he CAN call his" (James, 1890, p.292). The definition of self has evolved over time. It has been defined as "an interactive system of thoughts, feelings, identities, and motives that (1) is born of self-reflexivity and language, (2) people attribute to themselves, and (3) characterizes specific human beings" (Owens, 2003, p.206, see also Carter, 2012). That is, "self and its directly relevant

processes (e.g., self-evaluation, self-regulation, and self-construction) may be conceptualized fruitfully as a coherent organization of mental-emotional representations, interacting within a system of constraints that characterize a person or a type distinctively” (Morf & Mischel, 2012, p.22). As proposed in Leary and Tangney (2012), it is useful to view self as “the set of psychological mechanisms or processes that allows organisms to think consciously about themselves” (Leary and Tangney 2012, p. 6; see also Morf and Mischel 2012). The view of self as a dynamic self-reflexive system that is motivated to seek self-confirmation is, thus, converging (Leary & Tangney, 2012; Morf & Mischel, 2012; Swann & Buhrmester, 2012). Therefore, throughout this essay, the self is viewed as such a system.

Cooley (1964)⁶ proposed the “looking glass self,” which indicates that others’ view of an individual can influence how s/he presents and develops the sense of self. This reflects the metaphor of people using others as a mirror to see themselves. There are three components of the looking glass self: “(1) The imagination of our appearance to the other person; (2) The imagination of his [or her] judgment of that appearance, and (3) Some sort of self-feeling such as pride or mortification” (Cooley, 1964, p.184). That is, our view of who we are is dependent upon how others see us. For example, a professor can gain a sense of self in the professor role by inferring students’ evaluation through their reactions to the delivery of course materials.

⁶ The book originally published in the year of 1902.

Looking glass self also indicates that people do not just “obediently” accept others’ social appraisals (e.g., judgments) of them; people’s views of themselves concurrently influence how they judge others’ appraisals of them (Wallace & Tice, 2012). George Herbert Mead (1934), based on Cooley’s theorization, believed that people develop understandings about themselves through interactions with other people. This suggests that, while different social groups may respond differently to a specific behavior, individual members have agency and can actively select the significant sources that shape *positive, and even negative*, social appraisals (Franks & Gecas, 1992; Swann & Buhrmester, 2012). That is, while the self results from social experiences and while societies in which social interactions take place do influence individuals’ sense of self, each individual has some agency over how others’ views affect how they think of themselves (i.e., their self-concept).

The self-concept represents an evolving, integrated, totality of meanings or beliefs one holds about oneself (Carter & Grover, 2015; Oyserman, Elmore, & Smith, 2012). The self-concept reflects the things that come to mind when individuals think about who they are. Identities can be viewed as components of self-concept (Oyserman et al., 2012); whereby, at a given moment the self-concept consists of all “active”, “online”, or salient identities. Thus, while an individual has one self-concept, different parts of it might be active at different times.

Individuals can think about themselves from an individualistic or collective perspective (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Oyserman et al., 2012) depending on the context and their characteristics (e.g., espoused cultural values). From the individualistic

perspective, a person focuses on his or her unique characteristics, such as being considerate, song-loving, etc. When individuals think about themselves from the collective perspective, they tend to focus on their social relationships and how these help to define who they are. For example, one can think oneself as a good son or daughter, a good student, or a good professor. In this case, individuals incorporate the beliefs and actions of others into the self. Typically, individuals think about themselves (i.e., who they are) using identities. Identities are discussed next.

Identities

James (1890) distinguished between the Self and selves, with the latter including the material self, the social self, the spiritual self, and the pure ego, as components of the former. James' selves are analogous to identities in recent literature (Burke & Stets, 2009). From a contemporary perspective, the self refers to the broader self-reflective system and contains many different identities. Identities are the personal traits and characteristics, roles, and social groups, and material objects that define who one is (Vignoles et al., 2011). That is, we have many different ways to answer the question "who am I?" (Stets & Burke, 2000). Therefore, the self comprises many identities representing "the confluence of the person's self-chosen or ascribed commitments, personal characteristics, and beliefs about herself; roles and positions in relation to significant others; and her membership in social groups and categories (including both her status within the group and the group's status within the larger context); as well as her identification with treasured material possessions and her sense of where she belongs in geographical space" (Vignoles et al., 2011, p.4). These identities can be viewed as sets of

cultural and normative meanings that individuals internalize with regard to their own behaviors (Burke & Stets, 2009). The meanings contained in identities are contextual and regulative. For example, if as a teacher, a person believes that teachers should be kind to students, these beliefs will regulate that individual's behaviors toward students.

There are four major types of identities—person, role (or relational), social (or collective), and material (Vignoles et al., 2011). Person identity refers to the set of self-definitions one uses to answer the question of “who are you” as a distinct person (Burke & Stets, 2009; Carter, 2012; Vignoles et al., 2011). Person identity can include personal values, goals, beliefs, and unique characteristics. Role identity refers to individuals' self-meanings related to social roles (Burke & Stets, 2009; Carter & Grover, 2015; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Vignoles et al., 2011) such as a parent, teacher, son or daughter, student, etc. Typically, a role (or relational) identity is created through one's relationship with others such as parent-child and teacher-student pairs (McCall & Simmons, 1966; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Vignoles et al., 2011). Social or collective identity⁷ is how one defines the self through membership in social categories or groups (Tajfal 1981; Tajfal and Turner 1986, as cited in Carter 2012). Material identities are people's definition of who they are in relation to material objects, which can be viewed as part of the self or extension of the self (Belk, 1988, 2014). For example, people may view the use of information technologies as integral to being who they are (Carter & Grover, 2015).

⁷ The tendency of an individual to define his or her self through unique personal characteristics versus social groups or roles is termed self-construal (Cross, Hardin, & Gercek-Swing, 2011; Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Identities contain information about the self that help people to navigate social contexts and interactions. Individuals initiate social interactions through identity negotiation (McCall & Simmons, 1966), during which a person identifies their own salient identity for the situation and for the interacting agent(s). Following this process, interacting behaviors and patterns are governed by the negotiated identities. Identity negotiation can be either conscious or subconscious. For example, when a professor runs into someone on the street, s/he consciously or subconsciously assesses who the encounter is with (e.g., a former student) and what the encounter entails. After each participant's role identity is established, the professor and former student may talk about, for example, how wonderful the professor's class was or what the student is doing currently. The negotiation process between or among strangers tends to be more conscious and takes longer than that between people who already know each other. This indicates that people draw on meanings contained in different identities, depending on the context, as benchmarks for acceptable behaviors or actions. Further, which identity is salient or relevant in a given context depends on the situation (Burke & Stets, 2009; Carter, 2012; Stryker & Burke, 2000). For example, social identities related to an employing organization can be activated by entering the building of the corresponding company. Role identities can be triggered by the presence of counter-roles (e.g., a parent identity can be activated by the presence or mention of a person's children).

As individuals tend to incorporate others into the self-concept and how one thinks about what it means to have a certain identity they are also influenced by the available anchors (Oyserman et al., 2012). For example, when a college football team wins the

national championship game, students from the university tend to feel good about themselves as a part of it. In this case, the student identity incorporates the football team's championship. The student identity might be different when the football team loses. Or the student identity might be even stronger when the team loses a game. For a second example, when thinking about oneself as a football player, if one is primed to think about super five-star players, one might feel he is not a good football player. Of course, more of the meanings are not created anew. They are existing meanings that are available to the individuals for assessment. The accessibility of these meanings can depend on metacognitive experience (i.e., it is easier to access some meanings than to access other meanings). Similarly, identities that come to be active more often are more likely to be activated in a certain situation. All these dynamic processes make the self-concept different from situation to situation. This makes it challenging for individuals to be able to always verify the active self-concept.

Given, at any moment, only certain identities are activated, these activated identities are significant components of the "working" self-concept. This working self-concept can be viewed as a temporally shifting frame that incorporates meanings from some identities among all possible identities. The working self-concept is a subset of the "whole" self-concept because it is highly unlikely that all of a person's identities are active at the same time, in a single situation (Markus & Wurf, 1987). But still, individuals are motivated to behave according to their current self-concept to maintain a sense of coherence and continuity, which can be misperceptions sometimes.

Different identities can have different importance to the self (Markus & Wurf, 1987). Self-determination theory (SDT) also argues that each person has multiple identities, which are, to different degrees, assimilated or integrated to the self (Ryan & Deci, 2012). SDT discusses the variations in the assimilation of identities to the self: identities can vary from being forced onto us by social context, assimilated partially, and integrated into the self (Niemic & Ryan, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2012). Identities that are intrinsically motivated are more likely to be fully integrated into the self while extrinsically motivated ones are more likely to be partially assimilated. Also, identity assimilation depends on social pressures. In this situation, the identities adopted can be socially forced onto the self. The variation will have an impact on the extent to which they fulfill the psychological needs. Socially forced identities are not satisfying the three fundamental psychological needs. The fully integrated identities are most satisfying in terms of these needs. Thus, verifying active identities that are highly integrated to the self is the priority at any given moment. Actually, identities that are highly integrated to the self are more likely to be active. So, if the highly integrated identity is verified, not being able to verify the less integrated identities might not hurt one's sense of coherence and continuity badly.

To demarcate the scope of this essay, I focus on the interrelations among role identities as possible consequences of digital self-continuity. I justify this choice in the following paragraphs.

Identity theory focuses on the meanings that are “used to designate positions—the relatively stable, morphological components of social structure that are termed roles”

(Stets & Burke, 2000: 225). That is, the core of identity theory is about categorizing oneself as an occupant of certain roles and behaving accordingly (Burke & Stets, 2009; Stets & Burke, 2000; Stryker & Burke, 2000). Aligning with identity theory, this essay focuses on role identities for the following reasons. First, “in group-based identities, only the actor's perceptions and actions are directly involved; in role-based identities, other individuals in the group who occupy counter-roles are directly involved in the role performance” (Stets & Burke, 2000, p.225). That is, role identities become active through interactions with other people (with counter-roles) while social identities’ activation does not require interactions with other people. Thus, in the context of ICT, it is believed that focusing on role identities is more appropriate because role identities are activated during interactions with others through ICT. These interactions are the fundamental processes in which people develop digital self-continuity. Second, role identities are more fine-grained than social identities for the purpose of this essay. Within a social group such as a company (one social identity), there can be many different roles (many role identities) and a single person can assume many roles in a social group. Also, roles are relatively clearly defined and people can transition among roles fairly easily (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000). Therefore, focusing on role identities will clarify the digital self-continuity’s impact on how people interrelate their different identities. Lastly, focusing on role identities is consistent with the context of this essay—work-life interaction—as role theory and role boundary theory are prevalent theoretical foundations in the related literature (Kossek et al., 2011). This essay acknowledges that it is hard to disentangle social, role, and person identities (Stets & Burke, 2000). Person identities might penetrate

role identities and social identities. This entanglement makes it advantageous to only focus on role identities to demarcate the boundaries of this essay. It is believed that this essay can help with understanding digital self-continuity's impact on how people perceive the interrelationships among their different identities when taking social and person identities into consideration.

To summarize, based on the above review on the identity and the self literature, this essay focuses on role identity to understand the consequences of how technology has transformed the sense of self and this essay concluded that the self, as a dynamic system, uses identities as tools to navigate different social contexts to interact with different people. Disparate identities are differently integrated to the self and have different levels of commitment. They are activated at different social contexts. In the next section, I introduce the literature on self-continuity to set up the foundation to motivate the necessity of the new construct, digital self-continuity, in both IS literature and work-life interaction literature.

Self-continuity

Individuals are motivated to maintain a coherent and stable sense of self by continually verifying the identities at play in their working self-concept. To make it clear upfront, working self-concept, a sense of coherent and stable self, can be illusionary as it is created out of verified dynamic working self-concepts (Oyserman et al., 2012). In this section, I synthesize related literature to elaborate this thought through elaborating on the concept of self-continuity.

Self-continuity can be viewed as the innate sense of the self's endurance through time or "a sense of sameness" (Sani, 2008: 1), coherence (Bozinovski, 2000; Swann & Buhrmester, 2012), and stability of the self in the past, self in present, and self in the future. It is an inherent feature of human self so that we might not even pay attention to this feature until queried (Giddens, 1991). There are two broad competing theories underlying the phenomenon of self-continuity—ego theory and bundle theory—as discussed in Sani (2008).

Ego theory proposes there is a continuous ego to explain the continuous existence of a person (Parfit, 2016). Ego theory also indicates there is a somewhat metaphysical, inner essence, "a single and cohesive ego that owns all our thoughts, feelings, and perceptions, and therefore holds each of us together" (Sani, 2008: 1). This view is close to viewing that we have a persistent soul that is independent from our perceptions. It is this essence or soul that gives us the sense of self-continuity in the stream of consciousness (Baars, 1997). Our perceptions can be in a state of flux but the soul stays stable (Descartes 1641/1993, as cited in Sani 2008). This metaphysical nature of ego theory has been fundamentally challenged by recent development in psychology and neurophysiology (Parfit, 2016).

In contrast, bundle theory does not assume that there is central, undivided, and coherent core for us to have the sense of self-continuity (Dennett, 1991; Hume, 2000)⁸. Instead "it refers to an ownerless series of different mental states and actions that are

⁸ Hume's original work was published in the year of 1739.

connected by various types of causal relationships” (Sani, 2008, p.2). David Hume’s (2000) reflection reveals that the human mind is “a bundle or collection of different perceptions which succeed one another with an inconceivable rapidity and are in perpetual flux and movement” (p. 165, as cited in Sani 2008). It is the coherent causal interrelationships among these perceptions that deliver the continuous and stable sense of self (Parfit, 2016; Sani, 2008). This is consistent with the current view on self as a dynamic system of mental processes that distinguishes an individual or a type (Morf & Mischel, 2012). In order to not fall into the metaphysical understanding of the self-continuity and stay consistent with the current perspective on the self, this essay adopts the bundle theorists’ view of self-continuity.

There are two types of self-continuity—chronological self-continuity and retrospective self-continuity (Bluck & Liao, 2013). We, as human beings, believe that we experience our lives chronologically, which is a critical feature of human experience. Autobiographical memory mechanisms, which can “bundle” our different perceptions into a coherently experienced life story are essential in facilitating human beings to build this sense of chronological self-continuity. Everything we go through in our lives leaves a trace, or a record, in our memory. While retrospective self-continuity “encompasses the basic processes of chronological self-continuity it also builds upon them. In doing so, it involves effortful processes such as autobiographical remembering and reasoning, reminiscence and life review” (Bluck & Liao, 2013, p.9). That is, we live through time and create the chronological self-continuity, based on which we create a higher-order

retrospective self-continuity. This higher-order retrospective self-continuity can make people more adaptive in life management and self-regulation (Bluck & Liao, 2013).

Self-continuity, without which one cannot establish stable identities, is an important human feature. For example, the concept of future self-continuity, defined as the extent to which individuals perceive the current self as the same as future self (Ersner-hershfield, 2011), has been gaining traction recently as it can impact decisions about actions that can benefit or hurt the future self but do not have immediate gratification, for example, saving (Ersner-hershfield, Wimmer, & Knutson, 2009), exercise (Rutchick, Slepian, Reyes, Pleskus, & Hershfield, 2018), procrastination (Blouin-Hudon & Pychyl, 2015), self-directed change behaviors in gamblers (Kim, Wohl, Salmon, & Santesso, 2017), and protecting information privacy (Buck, 2017). Self-continuity “enables us to conceive of ourselves as significant and valuable entities whose lives are interconnected to people, cultural institutions, and ideals that transcend our individual existence. This minimizes the existential threat of passing time and the end of life” (Sani, 2008, p.5). Self-continuity can also be used to cope with job loss (Sadeh & Karniol, 2012).

William James (1890) recognized that we may have different selves (*largely equivalent to identities used in today's literature*) every day given our experiences and thoughts are different (Sani, 2008). We have a sense that all these selves (*identities*) pertain to the same and continuous self, a sense of “unbrokenness in the stream of selves” (p. 318), as noted by William James. This indicates that people use their identities to reinforce the highly desired sense of self-continuity (Carter, Compeau, Kennedy,

Schmalz, & Ian Lawrence, 2017). That is, identity markers (Burris & Rempel, 2008) are used to “preserve” self-continuity. The sense of self-continuity can be based on person, social, or role identities. Current discussion on self-continuity is largely focused on person identity based self-continuity. That is, self-continuity scholars tend to look at the stability of individualistic characteristics that define who one is. There are a few notable exceptions, for example, Smeekes and Verkuyten (2013) proposed that individuals can develop the sense of self-continuity based on social identities or group membership. Thus, this type of self-continuity is termed collective self-continuity.

People use three strategies to seek self-confirmatory feedback to achieve the sense of self-continuity, coherence, and stability. In order to achieve this goal of confirming what one already believes about him or herself, the following three strategies can be adopted (Swann and Buhrmester 2012; see also Carter 2012)

- (1) **Selective Interaction:** choosing to interact with those who share one’s views of oneself, and avoiding those that do not.
- (2) **Identity Cues Displaying:** displaying cues about who one is, using, for example, clothes, catchphrase, choice of IT, among others.
- (3) **Interpersonal Prompts:** Creating “allies” that help with confirming the sense of self.

Along with these three strategies, human beings can maintain the sense of self-coherence through three types of biased information processing processes (Swann & Buhrmester, 2012) including:

- (1) **Selective attention:** people tend to pay attention to those self-confirming information cues while ignoring those non-self-confirmatory ones (i.e., people are most attentive to self-confirming information cues).
- (2) **Selective encoding and retrieval:** people selectively remember and recall information cues, and
- (3) **Selective interpretation:** people might have favorable interpretations of the confirmatory information cues and invalidate the non-confirmatory information cues.

Based on the SDT discussed above, this essay argues that the stability of the identities that are fully integrated to the self can contribute more to the sense of self-continuity than those that are partially assimilated into or even socially forced onto the self. What is more, improvements to the self are deemed less disruptive to the sense of self-continuity (Molouki & Bartels, 2017). Thus, the sense of self-continuity can be preserved by continuing verifying active identities in the working self-concept. Thus, self-continuity can be defined as the perceived stability of one's self-concept or one's perceptions about being able to "always" verify one's self-concept at any moment (i.e., the sum of active identities at that moment).

To summarize, self-continuity is an effortful achievement (with identities as tools) that will have important influences on human adaptation and behavior regulation. This study investigates how digital technologies transform our sense of self-continuity and the consequences. Specifically, this study investigates how digital self-continuity influences the ways we frame our different identities and our sense of work-life balance. In the

following, I will first lay out the theoretical background of digitalization and then define digital self-continuity. Then, I will move on to talk about the active and passive mechanisms that digital technologies afford to help with maintaining digital self-continuity.

Digitalization

As discussed above, individuals might face the challenge to verify all active identities in a given moment. Digital technologies can facilitate individuals to achieve a sense of self-continuity. Digital technologies have long been intertwined with the infrastructures of societies and organizations, fundamentally changing social and organizational life. Digitalization is defined as the process in which digital technologies transform many domains of social and organizational life so that the society and organization are restructured around digital communication and media infrastructures (Brennen & Kreiss, 2016). Digitalization implies that these changes occur not only in the material aspects but also in the social aspects of life (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016; Hylving, Henfridsson, & Selander, 2012; Tilson, Lyytinen, & Sørensen, 2010). It is important to distinguish *digitalization* from *digitization* (Ross, 2017). Digitization is converting analog data into bits (1s and 0s). For example, digitizing describes the conversion of music from analog to digital, while Apple's iTunes is an example of digitalized processes and relationships between the platform, music creators, and consumers (i.e., digitalization). The term "digital" used in this paper is closely related to digitalization instead of digitization. In this way, the term "digital" reflects the embedded

(Grover & Lyytinen, 2015; Kohli & Grover, 2008) nature of digital technologies in the organizational context.

In organizations, the digitalization occurs when digitizing leads to a reconfiguration of the organizational task and structures as well as the underlying sociotechnical relationships between products and users (Karimi & Walter, 2015; Yoo, 2010a). Digitalization indicates that the deep penetration of digital technologies offers new affordances for the organization. Zammuto and colleagues (2007) suggest that the mere existence of digital technologies does not guarantee benefits or profits for companies. In their words, “the affordances for organizing depend not only on the functionality characterizing the information technology behind digitalization, but also on the expertise, organizational processes and procedures, controls, boundary-spanning approaches, and other social capacities” (Zammuto et al., 2007, p.752). This indicates that the smooth interplay between social structure and digital technologies, which generates new sociostructural and cultural systems (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984) in organizations, is a necessary condition for companies to truly harness the benefits of digitalization. Because of the digitalization of organizations and society, more and more individuals are working at home.

Digital technologies have been discussed by IS researchers as mirroring reality but recent discussions on digitalization suggest that digital technologies are shaping reality (i.e., ontological reversal; see Baskerville et al. forthcoming). For example, without digital technologies, individuals are mostly performing one identity at a time or in one situation. Digital technologies merge different situations and can allow people to

perform multiple identities at the same time. For another example, it is found that the way an individual is presented as an online avatars influences how they behave in offline contexts (Rosenberg, Baughman, & Bailenson, 2013; Yee, Bailenson, & Ducheneaut, 2009), with individuals represented by taller avatars behaving more aggressively during negotiations (Yee et al., 2009). Thus, digital technologies can shape the reality of how individuals verify their working self-concept.

Digital technologies thus create new affordances for individuals to verify their sense of self. Affordances are relational properties between an object and an actor, such that the actor can act on the object to achieve the properties (Gibson, 1979; Norman, 1999). Thus, in the context of self and identity, digitalization refers to digitally transformed ways or processes for individuals to maintain their working self-concept (e.g., verifying critical active identities at a given moment).

Humans “alter” the environment to create affordances that make life easier. Similarly, from an identity perspective, we create opportunity structures for us to verify our sense of self. This connection between the theory of affordances and self-verification theory indicates that individuals tend to leverage digital technologies’ new affordances to make it easier to reinforce their working self-concept. Individuals alter their social environment using digital technologies (i.e., digitalization) to create new affordances to support their self-verification. As suggested by self-verification theory, individuals can both actively and passively (biasedly) maintain the sense of self-continuity. However, current IS literature tends to focus more on the active side while paying much less attention to the passive or biased side of using digital technologies to self-verify. In the

next section, I define the concept of digital self-continuity and then I move to discuss the affordances (or mechanisms) offered by digital technologies for individuals to maintain digital self-continuity.

Digital Self-continuity

Digital technologies afford a new spatiotemporal zone—“there and now”, besides “here and now” as well as “there and then” (Zhao, 2006). That is, individuals can reach out to others that are not in close distance. Social interactions are more and more mediated by digital technologies, so that individuals can be “present” in multiple social situations simultaneously, create virtual identities, trim social circles, and potentially biasedly verify the working self-concept. The “rapid cycling [across different social contexts where people play different roles]⁹ stabilizes into a sense of continual copresence” (Turkle, 2011, p.161). Along with the unfolding of this paper, I argue that the continual copresence afforded by ICT is fundamentally different from the self-continuity formed without them. This essay terms this new sense of self-continuity as digital self-continuity, which is a critical new concept that can be used to understand the impacts of constant connectivity. Digital self-continuity describes a sense of stability and coherence one has about the self achieved through ICT. It captures a new sense of self-continuity in which “people feel ‘whole’ not because they are one [across time] but because the relationships among aspects of self are fluid and undefensive and [...] can move easily among our many aspects of self” (Turkle, 2011, p.194). Thus, I contend that

⁹ Added based on original text.

digital self-continuity is more based on collective identities while self-continuity is more based on person identities.

Digital self-continuity aims to capture the continuum of the extent to which individuals maintain and achieve their sense of self-continuity through digital technologies. Drawing from the literature on self and self-continuity, this essay defines the concept of digital self-continuity as *the extent to which an individual perceives a self-reflexive sense of coherence and stability from digital communication technologies*.

Digital self-continuity is relatively stable as individuals are motivated to maintain the sense of self-continuity and have developed specific strategies, either conscious or unconscious, to do so. This allows the concept to be measured at a given point of time as a mental state, instead of individual traits. This sense of digital self-continuity is maintained by individuals' continually verifying the identities in the working self-concept. Thus, it is possible that at a certain point of time, this sense of digital self-continuity is broken because of possible failure to verify certain important active identities in the working self-concept. Failure to verify identities that are not very important will pose less threat to the sense of digital self-continuity. Individuals are immersed in the digitally embedded environment with multiple digital technologies available (Yoo, 2010b), such as smartphones, laptops, smartwatches, and tablets, among others. Individuals almost use all handy digital technologies seamlessly. Thus, instead of conceptualizing digital self-continuity as a specific ICT-related state, I theorize it as an individual level construct that captures the perceptions of one's digital surroundings. Thus, this digital self-continuity is about one's perceptions of whether the digital

environment facilitates the development of the sense of self-continuity. However, it is possible that an individual heavily relies on one specific type of digital technology (such as smartphone). In this case, digital self-continuity can be applied to such specific digital technology.

Based on self-verification theory (Swann & Buhrmester, 2012), individuals maintain their sense of self coherence and continuity through two sets of strategies—active strategies including displaying identity cues, selective interaction, and interpersonal prompts, and passive strategies including selective attention, selective encoding and retrieval, and selective interpretation. That is, individuals make effortful attempts to achieve self-verification through digital technologies (e.g, mobile phone, Facebook) over time, sometimes biasedly, the digital self-continuity will form. How these strategies are manifested through digital technologies are discussed in the following sections. Consequently, this sense of self-continuity will influence how we frame our role identities.

Digital technologies can have effects on two levels (Sproull & Kiesler's 1991, as cited in Middleton and Cukier 2006). "First-level effects are 'efficiency effects', and are expected to be beneficial. Second-level effects emerge over time and are felt at the system level, often producing unintended consequences and changes in social and organizational relationships" (Middleton & Cukier, 2006, p.256). Thus, digital self-continuity can be viewed as a second level effect of digital communication technologies. Digital self-continuity emerges over time as individuals maintain the sense of stable and

coherent self through digital communication technologies by transitioning efficiently and effectively through different social roles and contexts.

In the following section, I review current IS literature on self and identity to give a holistic picture of our understanding of digital technologies, self, and identity. Then, based on self-verification theory and behavioral economics literature, I will discuss six mechanisms (three active and three passive) through which individuals verify their self-concept to maintain the sense of digital self-continuity.

Information Systems Research on Self and Identities

In this section, I will talk about how IS researchers have been investigating phenomena related to self and identity and conclude that biased or passive side of self-verification mechanisms are largely ignored, and then I will discuss the six mechanisms focused on in this study (three active and three passive).

The interaction between the self, identities, and ICT's has been drawing an increasing amount of attention in our field (Carter & Grover, 2015). ICT has been investigated as shaping or threatening identities, channeling individuals' identity expression, being influenced by sense of self and identities, and even becoming part of one's sense of self (Carter & Grover, 2015; Craig et al., 2019). One common characteristic of current IS studies that look at the phenomena of self and identities is the assumption that individuals are actively involved in the interaction between ICT and their identities or sense of self. However, it is possible that individuals are not actively aware of the mutual influences between their identities and ICT because of the fundamental nature of human cognition (Kahneman, 2011). This essay focuses on how ICT use

passively and actively influences our sense of self based on current literature and self-verification theory. This essay focuses on three active, and three passive mechanisms through which IT supports the verification of active self-concept. All six of these mechanisms are derived from self-verification theories but I do not claim that these six mechanisms are exhaustive. In the following, I will develop and elaborate the following theoretical framework (see Figure 10).

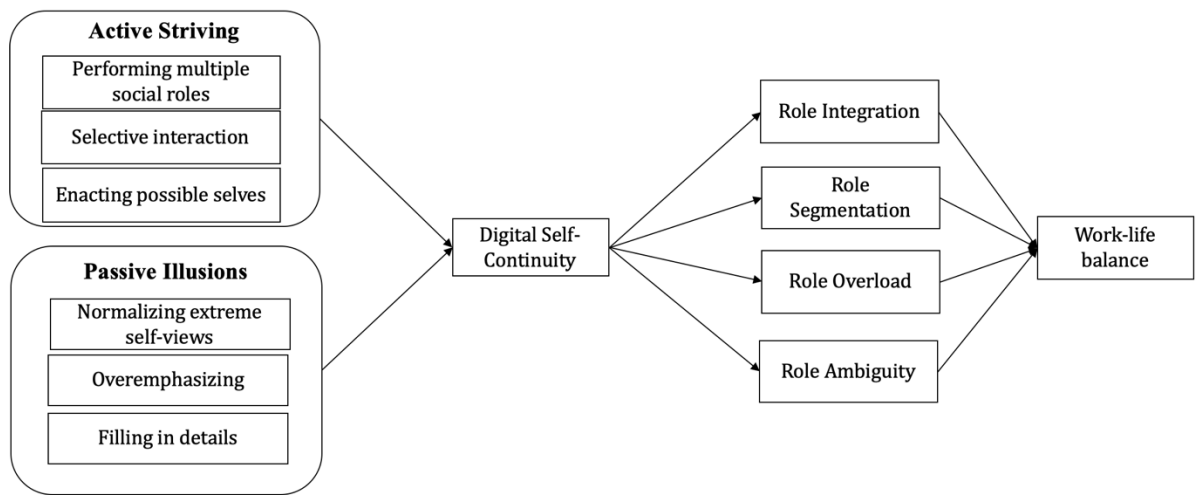


Figure 10: Theoretical Framework

Performing multiple social roles. The first mechanism is enacting multiple social roles. This mechanism is derived from displaying the identity cues in SVT. Digital technologies offer constant connectivity so that an individual can perform identities in different social domains at the same time. For example, project managers can sometimes choose to quickly fix issues from the system development project while they are on vacation. They can communicate work details while they are at home. The list can go on and on. This indicates that they can display multiple identity cues for different identities

simultaneously without necessarily comprising any identity's performance, unlike in the offline context, where one cannot be a sassy friend and a well-behaved son at the same time. Thus, the displaying identity cues mechanism is magnified by digital technologies to allow individuals to perform multiple social roles at the same time.

In order to understand performing multiple social roles, I apply the literature on multicomunication to elaborate on this mechanism. One of the fundamental assumptions that current identity theorists have is that each individual can only produce one behavioral output at a time. Even when having multiple identities active, one has to compromise all identity standards. This assumption is challenged by digitalization. As digital technologies become more and more infrastructural, individuals can reach into different domains of communication and express different identities simultaneously. This multiple identity expression is enabled by digital technologies. This phenomena are typically termed as multicomunication (Cameron & Webster, 2013; Harris & Cecez-kecmanovic, 2016; Reinsch & Turner, 2019; Reinsch et al., 2008). During multicomunication individuals can meet the many social expectations (sometimes even conflicting ones) simultaneously.

Performing multiple social roles is a form a multicomunication contextualized in the theoretical field of self and identity. When interacting with different people, we can, but not necessarily, have different role identities activated. Only when multiple role identities are activated, will it be critical for the coherence self-concept. For example, as a lecturer, one's self-concept will not be challenged if whether they interact with one student or many students. But when they interact with their student through email and

simultaneously talk to their child, the coherence self-concept will be maintained through verifying both the lecturer and parent identity. Without the use of ICT (e.g., email) the identity coherence might be disrupted. This essay aims to understand the mechanisms supported by digital technologies that will boost digital self-continuity.

Human beings are social in nature and fundamentally driven by the need for relatedness—maintaining social connections (Ryan & Deci, 2012). We have different social domains: family, work, school, among others. Digital technologies afford us the ability to juggle across these domains to play different social roles simultaneously (Cameron & Webster, 2013; Harris & Cecez-kecmanovic, 2016; Reinsch & Turner, 2019; Reinsch et al., 2008) to interact with others. Each interaction is an opportunity to reinforce the relevant identities that we want others to see. Within the self, we have many identities. Verifying each of them can increase the sense of self-esteem (Burke & Stets, 2009). Verifying multiples identities at once can further boost the sense of self-esteem. This stronger sense of self-esteem is facilitated by digital technologies' capacities to link multiple domains of an individual's life, which allow individuals to maintain stability and coherence of multiple identities. Performing multiple social roles can increase the chance of verifying many social roles, thus, a higher sense of self-reflexive coherence and stability can be attributed to digital technologies. Thus, performing multiple identities is positively related to digital self-continuity.

Proposition 1: Performing multiple social roles is positively related to digital self-continuity.

Intensified selective interaction. The next mechanism that I focus on is selective interaction. People tend to interact with people who confirm their self-views. This can be applied to both an online and offline context. However, in the online context, there is almost no boundary of social connections. One can reach different people from almost anywhere. That is, digital technologies are channeling abundant social connections or social resources to one's palm. This enables people to have more intense selective interactions since there are more choices.

Because of this amplified selective interaction, an echo chamber effect is created. People tend to communicate with people who will likely confirm their self-views in online communities or through other communication technologies, such as mobile phones (e.g., texting or calling more people who agree with the self-views). People can be more selective without feeling isolated because of the digital technologies' capacity to connect them with many other individuals. In this case, one's connections over digital technologies (such as social media, mobile phones, among others) are becoming more and more like goods on the shelf (Turkle, 2011). Thus, the **selective interaction** will be more intense as the online connections might not be valued as much as those in the offline context (Turkle, 2011).

Digital technologies allow us to have constant connections to an almost limitless number of people. Different people have different ideologies and values, and some are more likely to agree with us and others less likely so. Before we try to reach out to people to verify our active identities, we tend to have estimations of each possible contacts' reactions. We tend to select people who would confirm the identities in the working self-

concept. Such selection is intensified by digital technologies. We have many more choices about whom to reach out to. Consequently, we might have more chances to verify the active identities in the working self-concept. For example, two *Twilight* fans created an anonymous online community named *Letters to Twilight* (<http://letterstoTwilight.com/>) to express their Twihard (common name for *Twilight* fans) identity. Often, these communities allow members to share news, fan-written stories, and other forms of user-generated content. In the offline context, these fans cannot find people who would react positively to their Twihard identity because they are “too old” for *Twilight* since it is designed for teenage girls. Online communities help these fans to find others who verify their Twihard identity. Thus, whenever this identity is active, these fans will turn to the online community for verification instead of turning to people who would not react positively to their “secret” identity.

In this case, digital technologies channel social contacts who are in favor of the active identities to the individual without the constraint of geographical locations. At the given moment, digital technologies allow individuals to have the active identities in the working self-concept verified. Thus, a self-reflexive sense of coherence from digital technologies is enhanced:

Proposition 2: Selective interaction through digital technologies is positively related to digital self-continuity.

Enacting possible selves. The third mechanism is enacting possible selves. We do not only live with our current selves we also envision the possible selves that we want to become (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Possible selves include both future selves that an

individual strives to become and past selves that can be relevant in certain situations (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Most of the working self-concepts are current selves but there are possible selves. Enacting the possible selves determines how one feels or evaluates themselves when their current self-concept is challenged (Markus & Nurius, 1986). For example, if Clemson University quarterback Trevor Lawrence has an activated self-concept of “national championship team quarterback”, and is then defeated in the championship game, his resulting behavior (if defeated) will be different than if the “championship quarterback” self-concept had not been active. We also live with the potential selves that we want to become. These possible selves are imaginal, semantic representations (cognitive structures) that bridge the present with the future by signifying the link between what individuals can do now and what they will be like in the future (Markus & Nurius, 1986). This mechanism is customized from the interpersonal prompts mechanism in SVT. In the context of digitalization, individuals can find their digital self as allies to confirm their sense of self-continuity.

In most cases, these possible selves are not readily acted out in the offline context. Digital technologies can help with envisioning such possible selves, thus, making the bridges between now and the future more vivid (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Digital technologies, such as social media and video games, can offer us a chance to become the person that we want to be. Social media platforms offer opportunities for individuals to strategically present themselves by only posting the positive moments of their daily life. In the game Second Life, game players can make choices that their offline self cannot make, such as becoming a superhero in the online game. These digitally enabled possible

selves can potentially help with filling in the holes in one's self so that they can complement the self. This is based on the assumption that an idealized superhero self can change how we perceive our selves in the offline context and can change our offline behaviors (Rosenberg et al., 2013; Yee et al., 2009). This indicates that possible selves enabled by digital technologies can have a potential contribution to our perception of the coherence and stability of our working self-concept:

Proposition 3: Enacting possible selves through digital technologies is positively related to digital self-continuity.

Potential biased mechanisms afforded by digital technologies can also exist but IS scholars have paid little attention to these mechanisms. This study focuses on three of these mechanisms based on SVT. To make it clear upfront, the focus on the three mechanisms of this study does not indicate that no other such mechanisms exist.

Normalizing extreme self-views. The first mechanism is termed normalizing extreme self-views. Because of digital technologies, individuals are not confined by geographical limits and are thus able to easily learn about events happening on the other side of the world (Zhao, 2006). For example, news about wildfires happening in Australia spread across the internet. News about terrorist attacks around the world are only one search away. There is seemingly non-stop news regarding mass shooting accidents. All these extreme events can potentially desensitize individuals' responsiveness to them.

Similarly, when it comes to developing self-views, it is less challenging for individuals to find supportive evidence on the Internet. No matter how "weird" a self-view is, it is almost always possible to find people who support such a view over the

Internet. For example, adults who are fans of Twilight cannot support the Twilight fan identity in the offline context since their social connections believe that they are too old to like Twilight. Two of such adults started an online community to anonymously express their Twilight fan identity. This identity was then reinforced by many people and thus became normalized.

These online events or supportive opinions provide anchors for individuals to judge their previously extreme self-views as less so. This effect is termed the anchoring effect (Kahneman, 2011). What's more, when individuals make judgments, they tend to apply the availability heuristic (Kahneman, 2011). When extreme ideologies are readily available, individuals tend not to think such ideologies are extreme. Digital technologies readily bring these extreme ideologies to individuals who are motivated to show the regularity of such ideologies.

Individuals behave differently in an offline environment. For example, when interacting with other people, individuals have to negotiate their identities (McCall & Simmons, 1966; Swann & Buhrmester, 2012) (i.e., who is who). Compromises have to be made for smooth social interaction. With extreme ideologies and values, individuals might not be well-received among people they encounter in the offline context. They have to tone extreme views down to fit into the offline group.

However, in the online context, negotiations can be more flexible. One can always find information or other people to confirm their sense of self. Thus, an extreme sense of self can be confirmed in the context of digitalization more easily. For example, people with white supremacist views can leverage social media, online communities, and

other digital technologies to reach people with similar views. Social groups, created using digital technologies, can be used to normalize such extreme self-views. The capacity enabled by digital technologies to always find individuals to support one's extreme self-views helps individuals to verify the active identities in the working self-concept. Therefore, the effect of normalizing extreme self-views can support individuals to maintain a stable self-concept over time. Thus, the result is a higher sense of self-reflexive stability and coherence from digital technologies:

Proposition 4: Normalizing extreme self-views through digital technologies is positively related to digital self-continuity.

Overemphasizing. The second passive mechanism this essay examines is termed overemphasizing. This is derived from the selective attention mechanism in self-verification theory. In this selective attention mechanism, individuals selectively pay more attention to self-confirming information while giving less attention to the information that conflicts with the self. With the diversified ideologies populating and spawning over digital technologies, individuals can encounter all kinds of information and/or misinformation. However, individuals might pay disproportionately more attention to information that confirms their sense of self.

We might think a self-confirming comment from a random stranger over the Internet is as important as those from our close friends. For example, if a dad accidentally dropped his phone on his 6-month old baby, after soothing his baby, he would probably go to the Internet and see if there are any big consequences of what just happened. He wants to maintain a good parent identity and doesn't want this accident to have any

negative impact on his baby. He skims over many comments and fixates on one comment by a total stranger saying that “I did it several times, but my daughter is a happy and smart 8-year-old girl now”. This single comment makes the accident less damaging to his good parent identity.

We tend to give undue importance to comments that confirm our active self-concept. This mechanism is also supported by confirmation bias. Individuals are motivated to verify their active identities. This motivation drives people to seek information cues over the Internet to confirm their identities. The self-confirming feedback can be both positive and negative (Swann & Buhrmester, 2012). For example, if one believes that they do not have leadership abilities, they will try to seek feedback indicating that they cannot be a good leader. Also, in the cyberbullying context, victims might give negative self-reinforcing comments from a random stranger unnecessary attention and emphasis. The consequences can be as severe as suicide. However extreme this mechanism is, it helps individuals to maintain a stable sense of self, be it negative or positive. Thus, digital technologies can potentially give a biased sense of self-reflexive stability and coherence to individuals by allowing them to selectively pay attention to self-confirming feedback while ignoring, or downplaying feedback that is neutral or self-disconfirming:

Proposition 5: Overemphasizing feedbacks over digital technologies is positively related to digital self-continuity.

Filling in the details. One characteristic of communications mediated digital technologies is reduced social cues. We might not be able to see direct social feedbacks

when we communicate with others over digital technologies, for example, responses can be delayed, we cannot see facial expressions or body language through text messages or email. This leaves us to fill in the details that we might be expecting.

For example, the exclamation sign can be interpreted in many ways. It can show excitement or anger. So, if I believe the one who sends me a message with two exclamation signs at the end is angry, I will probably imagine my friend's face as angry. This interpretation is derived from the selective interpretation mechanism in self-verification theory. What is more, this mechanism for filling in the missing details is also supported by the false consensus bias. That is, we tend to overestimate the extent to which others agree with us, and digital technologies intensify such biases because of the reduced social cues.

The reduced social cues over digital technologies give individuals the opportunities to fill in details that are in favor of reinforcing their active identities in the working self-concept. For example, whenever we go through comments of a stranger from online platforms, we may tend to imagine their facial expressions. Especially when the sentiment in the texts is vivid, we can easily imagine an angry or happy face. However, it is tricky when the sentiment is not very clear. It will be left to us to "selectively interpret" the message. We tend to fill in details that we believe are factual. This unilaterally filling in the details makes it much easier to find support for our sought-after feedback to verify our active identities in the working self-concept. Therefore, it is more likely for individuals to interpret the (lack of) social cues in the way they want to over digital technologies. Consequently, this can result in a more stable sense of self:

Proposition 6: Filling in the details over digital technologies is positively related to digital self-continuity.

The relationships among these six mechanisms. These six mechanisms are “convoluted”. For example, we can fill in social cues to self verify multiple identities, to assist with normalizing extreme self-views, and/or to selectively interact with those whom we interpret to share our extreme self-views. These different mechanisms can, but not necessarily, happen simultaneously. This is consistent with how the six mechanisms in self-verification theory relate to one another.

All these digitally afforded or enhanced mechanisms, both active and passive, can potentially create an illusory opportunity structure that may allow people to more easily confirm their existing sense of self. All these mechanisms can potentially lead to a stronger sense of self-continuity, termed as digital self-continuity. Thus, because of these mechanisms, individuals can have a stronger sense of self-continuity.

The Consequences of Digital Self-continuity

When people achieve their sense of self-continuity through digital communication technologies (i.e., having high digital self-continuity), they can have different ways to frame their different identities. In order to reflect and identify related consequences of identity framing, the identity status model (Kroger, Martinussen, & Marcia, 2010; Marcia, 1966) is adopted for deriving the consequent constructs since this model describes the status of self-continuity in general (i.e., how stable the definition a sense of self is for a person, adolescents in specific) through the interrelationships of different

identities. That is, the ego identity is used similarly to the term self-concept (Oyserman et al., 2012) in the current essay. As evidence by James Marcia's words:

“Individual [when facing imminent transitions over to adult] is required to synthesize [...] identifications in such a way that he can both establish a reciprocal relationship with his society and maintain a feeling of *continuity* within himself” (Marcia, 1966, p.551).

The identities, as discussed, are similar to those used in this study and other papers. Also, even though this model is developed for understanding adolescents' “ego identity” (again, similar to the term self-concept used in this paper) development, it has implications for understanding the relationships among different identities for organizational members. The common theme (continuity) between self-continuity and identity status model makes the latter a good starting point to identify the potential consequences of digital self-continuity. Thus, this model is a good framework to derive the status of the “self” and the relationships among different identities (identifications).

Identity Status Model (Marcia, 1966; Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer, & Orlofsky, 1993) was developed based on Erikson's (1968) discussion on how adolescents develop towards a stabilized sense of self-view. It describes how multiple identities are synthesized to achieve a single sense of self (Kroger et al., 2010). Marcia (1966) proposed the use of two dimensions to categorize four types of ego identity (i.e., similar

to the term self-concept used in this study): exploration and commitment. The exploration dimension is about whether individuals have tried different identities (Kroger et al., 2010). While the commitment dimension is about whether an individual decides to settle on a specific identity or identities (e.g., becoming an academician, a father, among others). Based on these two dimensions, four types of ego identity statuses are developed: Achievement, Moratorium, Foreclosure, and Diffusion (Kroger et al., 2010, p.683).

Achievement describes the group of individuals who “have arrived commitments via an exploratory process” (Kroger & Marcia, 2011, p.34). On the contrary, foreclosure status indicates that the group of individuals is “taking on commitments from significant others, with little or no exploration” (Kroger & Marcia, 2011, p.34). Thus, the identity achievement group “constructs” their own stable self-view while the foreclosure group takes their self-view from significant others (Kroger & Marcia, 2011; Kroger et al., 2010; Marcia, 1966). The moratorium group has difficulties in reaching commitments after a period of exploration while the diffusion group does not reach commitments without any period of exploration (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). The difference between the two groups is a sense of “concern and direction” (Kroger & Marcia, 2011, p.34).

These four statuses can be used to describe how different identities are “organized” together. In the achievement status, all identities can be viewed as closely integrated with one another. In the foreclosure status, different identities are not “integrated” as the identities are taken from others. In the moratorium group, different identities are not clearly defined as the individuals are not committed to any identities. In the diffusion group, different identities are “smeared” together with no future directions.

Therefore, constructs related to relationships among identities are derived from these four statuses. These constructs also have a theoretical base in the work-life literature.

As I justified above, this essay takes the advantages of only focusing on role identities and derive relevant constructs in the following. The constructs are identified based on the identity status model and related literature. Achievement status indicates that an individual has an integrated self-view. This signals that different identities are coherently integrated. Thus, role integration is identified in the work-life interaction literature. We tend to contextualize specific social roles (Reyt & Wiesenfeld, 2015). For example, we assume a work role in the office and family role at home. Role integration reflects the ease of “switching” roles (e.g., from work to life and vice versa) (Ashforth et al., 2000; Reyt & Wiesenfeld, 2015). That is, role integration indicates a level of harmonious co-existence of different role identities.

Moratorium is the stage where individuals explored but failed to conclude with a stable self-view. This means that the individuals have a relatively better understanding of different identities (comparing to those who didn't explore) but these different aspects are not coherently integrated. This reflects a certain level of role segmentation may involve clear-cut boundaries among different roles. This concept has been viewed as the opposite of role integration (Ashforth et al., 2000; Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2006), but low on integration does not necessarily mean high role segmentation. Thus, it is meaningful to have a separate construct to capture the level of segmentation. Therefore, role segmentation is selected as an important construct to represent the moratorium group.

The concepts of role integration and role segmentation are discussed in the role boundary framework (Ashforth et al., 2000) in the work-life interaction literature. In their framework, Ashforth and colleagues (2000) indicate that individuals create boundaries for each of the roles they are occupying. To describe the relationship between a pair of roles, Ashforth and colleagues (2000) theorize a continuum with segmentation and integration at the two ends. That is, a pair of roles can either be segmented to or integrated with each other. A segmented pair of roles has different characteristics (core and peripheral) while an integrated pair of roles has similar features (Ashforth et al., 2000). They also argue that it is difficult to have segmented pairs of roles activated at the same time.

Foreclosure status suggests that an individual commits to specific identities without a process of active exploration. For example, maybe one is “forced” to take on a civil servant or a doctor role by his or her parent. This type of commitment falls on the “external regulation” (versus intrinsic regulation) side of the continuum of self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2012). Without a sense of intrinsic motivation, individuals are less likely to be fully engaged in corresponding roles and more likely to feel burnout (Ryan & Deci, 2012). For example, academic researchers without an intense interest in doing research might be more likely to drop out of this profession. This level external regulation is related to an important organizational behavior construct—role overload, which reflects “an individual’s lack of the personal resources needed to fulfill commitments, obligations, or requirements” (Peterson et al., 1995, p.430). That is,

committing to specific roles without exploration can be reflected by an increased likelihood of feeling overwhelmed by the responsibilities associated with these roles.

The diffusion group has no exploration and no definite commitment. Thus, this group does not develop a stable self-view. This group, compared to the moratorium group, does not have a clear future direction. This is characterized by role ambiguity, defined as “uncertainty about what actions to take to fulfill a role” (Peterson et al., 1995, p.430) or roles. Because of the lack of exploration, the diffusion group cannot have a clear understanding of different identities. Thus, role ambiguity is an important construct to represent this group.

The self-continuity developed over digital technologies (i.e., digital self-continuity) tend to focus more on social relationships rather than personal characteristics. This sense of digital self-continuity is created out of individuals’ juggling different social roles and verifying these active social roles almost simultaneously. Due to this fundamental nature of digital self-continuity, it will make different social roles more likely to be bound together or co-exist harmoniously even when they are active at the same time. This makes it less likely for individuals to feel overwhelmed by any single social role and at the same time less likely to have a clear-cut commitment to any single social role. Thus,

Proposition 7a: Digital self-continuity is positively related to role integration.

Proposition 7b: Digital self-continuity is negatively related to role segmentation.

Proposition 7c: Digital self-continuity is negatively related to role overload.

Proposition 7d: Digital self-continuity is positively related to role ambiguity.

Constant Connectivity and Work-Life Interaction

The research area of work-life interaction is an increasingly important one. Its fundamental assumption is that human resources (Bhave and Lefter 2018; such as energy and time) are inherently limited (Kossek et al., 2011), and thus can be depleted and need to be replenished (Bhave & Lefter, 2018; Capitano & Greenhaus, 2018; DiRenzo, Greenhaus, & Weer, 2011). Constant connectivity afforded by digital communication technologies has fundamentally transformed the landscape of work-life interaction (Kossek et al., 2011; Wessels et al., 2019). Employees, especially those who use mobile phones and laptops as major tools for work, almost constantly make transitions among different work and life roles. A thorough literature review on work-related technology (Chen & Karahanna, 2018) and workplace IT interruption (Addas & Pinsonneault, 2015, 2018) reveal three critical gaps in the current literature on the impact of digital communication technologies on work-life outcomes. First, our understanding of the rapid role transition enabled by digital communication technologies and how this impacts work-life balance are not clear (see Chen and Karahanna 2018). Digital communication technologies have been described to be blurring boundaries for different social roles (e.g., work and life roles), making the transition effortless. We do not know if this rapid transition shapes how we develop our sense of self, which might influence our sense of work-life balance. There seems to be no construct that can capture the constant continual co-existence of different social roles enabled by digital communication technologies. Digital self-continuity can serve as one of such constructs.

Second, our understanding focuses more on the negative aspects. Even though work-life interaction literature has long noticed the positive effects of work-life interaction through work-life enrichment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Kossek et al., 2011) besides the negative side: work-life conflict. The studies on the impact of digital communication technologies have largely focused on the negative consequences and mechanisms through which these negative consequences happen (see Chen and Karahanna 2018 for work technology use in a non-work domain). The mechanisms through which digital communication technologies can generate positive effects in the work-life interference domain are especially unclear (Gözü, Anandarajan, & Simmers, 2015). This essay looks at how digital technologies support the sense of self-continuity and consequently positively influence perceptions about work-life balance.

What is more, the literature on the impact of constant connection on work-life interaction trends has not fully leveraged the literature on self and identity. This set of literature tends to depend on one type of identity—role identity—as indicated in the heavy dependence on role theory (Katz & Kahn 1978, as cited in Kossek et al. 2011) and role boundary theory (Ashforth et al., 2000). However, this set of literature does not seem to consider the process of rapid transitions among different roles enabled by digital communication technologies might have transformed how we perceive ourselves and how we frame our different role identities.

To sum, we still do not have a clear understanding of the rapid role transition (e.g., performing multiple social roles simultaneously or momentarily, as discussed above) among different roles and social context, have not paid enough attention to the

positive side of the constant connectivity afforded by digital communication technologies, and do not fully leverage the literature on self and identity. The digital self-continuity is proposed to enrich our understanding by capturing an emerged positive state enabled by actively and passively reinforcing our sense of self through ICT.

As we can see based on the aforementioned justification, digital self-continuity is a timely construct that has comprehensive research implications. In this study, I contextualize the research model of digital self-continuity in the work-life interaction domain, but I am not suggesting that digital self-continuity can only be used in this area. There are tremendous new research opportunities related to this new concept, as will be discussed in the future directions section. Work and life roles are two major domains, between which individuals in the digital world constantly juggle back and forth, in our lives. Digital self-continuity influences work-life balance perceptions through the four consequent constructs as they are more contextualized to the work-life interaction domain (while digital self-continuity is a broader concept).

When our different social roles are integrated, it indicates that our work-life roles are also integrated. Highly intertwined work and life roles make us feel that we can handle our work and life roles simultaneously. This creates a feeling of a balanced work-life. It is to the contrary when we feel that our social roles are segmented. If individuals feel that they cannot handle different social roles effectively, they are less likely to be able to deal with both work and life roles smoothly. If one does not have a clear distinction between different social roles, one might be more likely to transition through work and life seamlessly. There, I propose:

Proposition 8a: Role integration is positively related to work-life balance.

Proposition 8b: Role segmentation is negatively related to work-life balance.

Proposition 8c: Role overload is negatively related to work-life balance.

Proposition 8d: Role ambiguity is positively related to work-life balance.

Discussion

This essay synthesized the literature on self and identity in the IS field, self-continuity, digitalization, self-verification theory, and identity status model to theorize that digital technologies enable a stronger and unique sense of self-continuity (i.e., digital self-continuity) through six mechanisms (three active and three passive). Consequently, digital self-continuity shapes how we frame our role identities and perceptions about work-life balance. In this section, I will discuss the essay's theoretical contributions, practical contributions, limitations, and related future research directions.

Theoretical Contributions

This essay has significant theoretical contributions. First, we proposed to update an existing prevalent assumption among identity theorists and work-life interface researchers. The fact that we can simultaneously fulfill social roles through ICT use challenges a fundamental assumption of many identity theorists: one person can only have one behavioral output at one point in time. For example, this premise also underlies arguments about work-family conflict. It is typically argued, for example, that work interruptions induced by ICT force individuals to disengage from family roles and transition into work roles (Chen & Karahanna, 2018). However, the possibilities afforded by ICT to engage the work roles and family roles seamlessly (i.e., producing multiple

behavioral outputs simultaneously) are largely unattended. This study reveals such mechanisms of people enacting multiple (sometimes even conflicting) selves and the positive effects on work-life balance.

Second, by looking at how ICT can facilitate seamless integration of work and life, this study advances understanding of the positive effects of constant connectivity afforded by ICT, thereby adding balance to the overly negative view of ICT that permeates the work-life literature (Butts et al., 2015; Chen & Karahanna, 2018; Ilies et al., 2017; König & De La Guardia, 2014; Russo, 2012). Typically, constant connectivity enabled by ICT is viewed as interruptive and negative as ICT' second level effects (compared to first level efficiency effects, such as productivity, responsiveness, flexibility, among others) that emerge over time (Sroull & Kiesler 1991, as cited in Middleton and Cukier 2006). These second level effects may be unintended (Middleton & Cukier, 2006). Technostress and IT interruptions are two examples of such second level effects. The positive aspects of second level system effect seem to be underexplored.

Third, this study systematically examines the passive mechanisms for self-verification through ICT and juxtaposes these mechanisms against the active ones. The co-existence of effortful strivings and the largely unconscious biased information processing tendencies indicate that dual processing (Kahneman, 2011; Swann & Buhrmester, 2012) is relevant to be combined with investigations of self and identity in the context of ICT, while existing IS literature on self and identity mainly focuses on active processes.

Fourth, this study conceptualizes the concept termed digital self-continuity (DSC). This construct captures the embeddedness of digital technologies in the social and organizational contexts (Grover & Lyytinen, 2015) and sheds light on the transformative impacts of the constant connectivity on our self and identities. To understand DSC, we theorize about how, with ICT, individuals will have a sense of self-continuity that is different from the sense of self-continuity achieved without ICT, we thus term this sense of self-continuity as digital self-continuity. This paper directs attention to how individuals achieve digital self-continuity even under the flux of flexibility and context juggling afforded by these technologies. We further theorize that when people achieve a sense of self-continuity through ICT, they have different ways to frame their different identities and consequently have different perceptions about their work-life balance. In doing so, we seek to extend the understanding of digital self continuity's impact on work-life balance.

Practical Contributions

Answering the research questions also has practical contributions. For practice, this endeavor to understand how people achieve digital self-continuity will help organizations to understand the nature of digital workforces. Specifically, this study demonstrates how perceived work-life balance is influenced by how we maintain a sense of self-continuity through ICT. Thus, this study can inform how organizations develop work-family policies on ICT use (Ilies et al., 2017; Kossek et al., 2011) that are effective in the context of a digital society. More fundamentally, this study pushes forward the understanding of how ICT transform our sense of self, thus, this essay has implications

for individuals to take cautious next steps to contemplate the relationships between human and ICT.

Limitations

This essay is constrained by its assumptions. I assumed that individuals have one self, within which multiple identities reside. These identities are activated in different situations across different temporal periods. The active identities form the fundamental components of the working self-concept, which is part of the complete self-concept as not all identities or self-presentations are active at any given moment.

Future Directions

Better understanding of the six mechanisms. Future research should devote a good amount of attention to deepen the understanding of the six mechanisms discussed in this essay, especially these passive ones. For example, with a better understanding on the normalizing extreme self-views mechanism, we can create counter strategies to break the echo chamber through which extreme ideologies (such as white supremacist values, political extremism, cyberbullying normalization, among others) are reinforced. With a better understanding of the overemphasizing mechanism, we can create IT artifacts that can reduce the tendency to overemphasize. We should also set up research programs to better understand the relationships among these mechanisms. In sum, a better understanding of these mechanisms can drive a better design of IT artifacts to ensure the normal development of humans' sense of self and identities.

Enrich the understanding of digital self-continuity. Empirical work is encouraged to investigate the unique features of digital self-continuity. We should

understand the dynamics of digital self-continuity. We should develop measurements to operationalize digital self-continuity and look at more of its consequences.

Conclusion

This essay looks at how digital technologies transform our sense of self and identity by looking at how individuals use digital technologies to actively and passively reinforce their working self-concept to create a stronger sense of self-continuity. A theoretical framework is developed for future research to build upon. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed. Future research directions are proposed.

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