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Unpacking the Mechanism by which Psychological Ownership Manifests at the Level of the Individual: A Dynamic Model of Identity and Self

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Unpacking the Mechanism by which Psychological Ownership Manifests at the Level of the Individual: A Dynamic Model of Identity and Self

Abstract. Increasing prominence of the psychological ownership (PO) construct in management studies raises questions about how PO manifests at the level of the individual. In this article, we unpack the mechanism by which individuals use PO to express aspects of their identity and explore how PO manifestations can display congruence as well as incongruence between layers of self. As a conceptual foundation, we develop a dynamic model of individual identity that differentiates between four layers of self, namely the "core self", "learned self", "lived self" and "perceived self". We then bring identity and PO literatures together to suggest a framework of PO manifestation and expression viewed through the lens of the four presented layers of self. In exploring our framework, we develop a number of propositions that lay the foundation for future empirical and conceptual work and discuss implications for theory and practice.

The concept of psychological ownership (PO) is attracting interest in management research and practice as it promises a deeper understanding of the psychological mechanism by which individuals develop close bonds with others and organizations (Pierce and Jussila 2011). Emerging applications of the PO construct in research studies, however, show little theoretical consensus on how, when, and why people may feel a "personal sense of possession/ownership" (Shu and Peck 2011; Bernhard and O'Driscoll 2011; Avey et al. 2009; Mayhew et al. 2007; Wagner, Parker, and Christiansen 2003; Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks 2001). While scholars have suggested three potentially interrelated routes through which PO for an object emerges in individuals (i.e., exercise of control, knowledge of an object, and investment of the self), these routes have not been systematically explored in research at the level of the individual (Pierce and Jussila 2011; Jussila and Tuominen 2010; Jussila et al. forthcoming). At the same time, and often seen as underpinning the above three routes of PO, a close relationship between PO and the self-concept of individuals has been widely suggested (Dittmar 1992; Pierce and Jussila 2011; Jussila et al. forthcoming), but research at the level of the individual is again missing, and current work in identity theory has not been systematically integrated in literature on PO. In particular, theoretical advances related to the working self-concept, the dynamic nature of identity development, and congruence/incongruence between layers of an individual's self-concept are emerging strongly in identity literature (Hitlin 2003; Christian et al. 2012; Lewis et al. 2000), but have not been explored and integrated by PO scholars—despite the fact that they may be a fruitful avenue to understand manifestations and expressions of PO at the level of the individual. Scholars have been calling for more theoretical grounding and a nuanced understanding of the process underlying the development of feelings of PO at the level of the individual, before PO can usefully be applied to management contexts, such as marketing studies (Jussila et al. forthcoming). In this paper, we aim to address this urgent need to systematically link

literature on PO and identity theory with a specific focus on the notions of the working self-concept, the dynamic nature of identity and congruence/incongruence between layers of self (Asatryan and Oh 2008; Garretson Folse, Mouard, and Raggio 2012). It is important to link PO and identity theory at the level of the individual so that a number of testable propositions can be derived (Lessard-Bonaventure and Chebat, forthcoming; Kamleitner and Feuchtle, forthcoming). More specifically, we adopt the perspective of the individual to provide a conceptual model of identity development that lends itself to systematically exploring manifestations of PO at various layers of self. Bridging identity and PO literatures thus allows us to propose a framework of PO manifestation from the perspective of the individual and to suggest a number of propositions on how PO may be expressed at various layers of the self.

Before taking the reader on this journey with us, however, we want to explain our motivation for, and approach to, this paper. Specifically, we would like to spell out why we feel it is critically important to unpack individual identity development and layers of self, before discussing PO manifestations at the level of identity. Readers will be aware that at the heart of the PO construct is a state in which individuals feel as though the target of ownership (material or nonmaterial in nature) or a piece of it is "theirs" (Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks 2001). To fully appreciate the meaning of this definition, it is useful to remind ourselves of such states in our day-to-day lives (i.e., times when we use language that describes the target of ownership as "mine"): "my children", "my partner", "my job", "my car", "my football club", etc. Interestingly, in these common examples individuals not only describe the target of ownership, but through the use of the word "mine" they describe *themselves* at the same time: "I'm the dad/mum of my children", "I'm the wife/husband of my partner", "I'm the person working for this company", "I'm someone who drives such a car", "I'm a fan of this football club". As such, it is an inherent part of the PO concept that individuals—when

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describing an object or person in ownership-like terms—inform others simultaneously about the target of ownership *and* themselves (i.e., their own identity).

Therefore, while PO scholars typically refer to descriptions of "this is mine" to define the *existence* of PO, we believe we need to complement such descriptions with explanations of "this is me" to understand the *development* of PO. In fact, psychologists have suggested that PO becomes manifested at the level of the individual when a focal person uses ownership targets as a way of self-representing aspects of their identity (Steele, Spencer, and Aronson 2002; Meeus et al. 2010; Roccas and Brewer 2002) or, in other words, as a way of "telling you who I am". While a close association between PO and the self-concept has been recognized early on in the psychological literature (Isaacs 1933; James 1890), management scholars have only made passing references to the study of the individual in this context (Belk 1988; Dittmar 1992; Furby 1978; Nesselroade, Beggan, and Allison 1999). Important questions that have remained unanswered to date refer to the process by which an ownership target becomes an inherent part of one's sense of self and identity: When and how does someone connect to others/objects/ideas in a way that impacts how they describe themselves? At what level of one's identity do individuals make such deep connections and start feeling possessive? Do feelings of PO reflect the "real" person, or an "idealized" image that individuals have of themselves? Can expressions of PO be congruent as well as incongruent with an individual's core identity? Are people using PO as a way to reflect conscious or unconscious elements of their identity? Do individuals express their own needs and expectations in feelings of PO or those of others and their environments?

To shed light on questions like these, scholars have called for a much deeper investigation into individual senses of self and identity as an underlying mechanism that explains manifestations of PO at the level of the individual (Pierce and Jussila 2011; Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks 2001, 2003; Jussila et al. forthcoming). In this paper, we aim to address such calls

and answer some of the above questions by presenting a dynamic model of identity development at the level of the individual. In doing so, we provide a much needed theoretical foundation for different layers of self before going on to explore manifestations of PO as well as congruence/incongruence between aspects of the self. We thus make two contributions in this paper: first, based on latest advances in identity theory, we develop a novel model of identity development with proposed layers of self. Secondly, we then explore PO manifestations and expressions at these layers with a focus on congruence of identity expression and the dynamic nature of identity development. To achieve these two interlinked goals, we depart in Part I of this paper from a tradition in management studies that typically puts the organization at the center of interest and as the unit of analysis. Instead, we adopt the perspective of the individual and their development, and explore layers of self and congruence/incongruence in expression of these layers as the critical, and often missing, piece of the puzzle that determines the potential for, the existence of, and the nature and depths of feelings of belonging and possession (Dutton, Roberts, and Bednar 2010; Johnson et al. 2012; Kroger and Marcia 2011). Building on the theoretical foundations of Part I we proceed in Part II to explore a framework of PO manifestation at the various layers of self, suggesting a number of propositions for future work, before outlining theoretical and practical implications in Part III of this paper.

PART I: IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AT THE LEVEL OF THE INDIVIDUAL

In Part I of this study we build on advances in identity theory to provide a novel model of identity development that looks at identity development in a dynamic way, unpacks layers of self and degrees of congruence within an individual's sense of identity. This is necessary to be able to establish testable propositions linking PO and identity in Part II of this study.

As an individual's level of awareness of, and congruence between, aspects of self are subject to developmental processes and change throughout life (Lewis, Amini, and Lannon 2000), it is useful to remind ourselves of the working self-concept at the start of this part. The working self-concept is the lens through which different aspects of identity become salient at any moment in time and describes where our conscious lies. Often, an individual's sense of identity is reflected in personal narratives, in which the individual is the author of an autobiography that makes sense of past, current, and potential future situations and experiences of the self (Campbell and Moyers 2011). In fact, an individual, through their sense of consciousness, is able to both look outwards to the world and also listen to an inner voice—and through this process review past experiences, sense current conditions, and guide future action (Ahn and Bailenson 2014; Belk 2014; Lewis, Amini, and Lannon 2000; Horowitz 1988). As Markus and Wurf (1987) explain, self-representations that are subject to conscious reflection are called self-conceptions and differ in their level of actual achievement: "Some selves are not actual, but are possible for the person; other selves are hoped-for ideals" (Markus and Wurf 1987, p. 302). Scholars have described three dominant classes of self-conceptions: the "actual self", the "ideal self" and the "ought self" (Gardner et al. 2005; Bargh, McKenna, and Fitzsimons 2002; Ryff 1991; Markus and Wurf 1987; Higgins 1987). The "actual self" is who we really are at any given moment in time. The lens of an "ideal self" can provide individuals with aspirational drivers—what they would desire to be in an ideal world, the attributes that individuals would like to possess if they reached their potential. The lens of an "ought self" often encompasses an individual's interpretation of what they think they ought to do in the eyes of others, and what they have learned to do through the process of socialization.

An individual's drive to fulfil conceptions of their "ideal self" and "ought self" is often developed through a process of learning and outside influences, in which an individual

acquires strategies and behavioral patterns that can be both congruent or incongruent with the actual self, and more or less helpful for the individual and those around them. The interplay between an individual's expression of personal identity, while functioning in the context of a social environment, provides fertile grounds for the development of more or less functional, adapted, and congruent identities.

Indeed, it is well established in psychology literature that an individual's self-concept consists of personal identity, i.e., related to what we label a sense of a unique self, as well as social identity, derived by group membership (Allport 1955; Berzonsky 2011; Deaux 1993). Personal identity, or sense of core self, is the inner foundation of an individual's experience and sense-making in the world (Hitlin 2003). It is often defined by descriptions of someone's characteristics, preferences, likes, dislikes, and other personal attributes, i.e., relatively permanent, distinctive and reliable descriptions of their own unique person and personality (Vignoles, Schwartz, and Luyckx 2011).

In complementing personal identity, social identity theories (Dutton and Dukerich 1991; Tajfel and Turner 1985) are based on the premise that people also perceive themselves as members of groups: "Who am I in relation to, and in connection with, others?" Social identities are often embodied in, and symbolized by, group membership of ethnic communities and nationalities, professional groups/jobs/careers, family connections, circles of friends and hobbies (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Brewer 1991). It has been suggested that any cognition that lifts a person's social identity will also lift that person's personal identity (Tajfel and Turner 1985). As a result, individuals like to be associated with groups that have positive images as this association will lift a person's social identity and then lead to an enhanced personal identity and self-concept.

Building on advances in identity theory we develop a multi-layered model of identity formation that explores the interplay between personal and social identity and unpacks a number of layers of self within both these areas that allow for dynamic exploration of identity development, examination of congruence, and study of "actual", "ought", and "ideal" drivers. We use the notion of layers to describe the process by which an individual may move from personal identity to social identity. The presentation of the self through a number of layers moves us beyond current literature and allows us to explore congruence and incongruence at various layers of the self in a systematic way, while also building on latest advances of how identities manifest and develop.

A Dynamic Model of Identity Development

Building on personal and social identity theories, it is commonly understood that a sense of self is formed as a developmental process in the interaction between the individual and social influences (Bergh, Akrami, and Ekehammar 2012; Christian et al. 2012). At the heart of personal identity we thus position the notion of a "core self", symbolizing the innermost aspects of an individual's personal identity, often only unconsciously known even to that person, containing at its heart the range of talents, characteristics, preferences, curiosities, traits, peculiarities, and potential of that individual (Hoyle et al. 1999). The "core self" may also reflect person-specific motivations and emotions and, as such, may provide the guiding principles and explanations for behaviors and actions in other layers of our model (Stets 2005).

As previously explained, and in line with eminent work in identity literature, we adopt the metaphor of the working self-concept (Onorato and Turner 2004; Hinkley and Andersen 1996; Markus and Wurf 1987). In the working self-concept, some self-conceptions are more salient to one's identity while others are more peripheral at any given moment, and all

elements are dynamic and capable of change through mediating intrapersonal and interpersonal processes (Lewis, Amini, and Lannon 2000; Markus and Wurf 1987). For example, while the "core self" and other aspects of our identity are likely to contain some stable elements in most normal adults, they are also working concepts at any moment in time and contain all the potential that an individual possesses, continually active and shifting, and constructed by one's experiences (Markus and Wurf 1987; Nuttin, Lorion, and Dumas 1984).

Through a process of education and socialization, we propose the existence of a "learned self" as the next layer out from the "core self", still within the conceptualization of personal identity, which often manifests itself in a set of conscious and unconscious roles and rules (Schlenker 1985; McGuire 1984). Rules often comprise the learning of norms and values of society and family systems, and become apparent in what individuals understand as "right" and "wrong" behaviors, or generally speaking as "normal." The "learned self" relates strongly, but is not limited to, what Higgins (1999; 1987) refers to as "ought" drivers—what we think we should do and what we have learned we ought to do.

As a further development of layers, we then propose that the "learned self" underpins a "lived self," which represents a range of activated cognitions, emotions and day-to-day behaviors (Bagozzi 1992; Neff 2003; Deci and Ryan 2000; Swann, Chang-Schneider, and Larsen McClarty 2007). Lived behaviors can be in line or out of line with who we believe we are (our "core self"), and can also be congruent or incongruent with the rules and roles that we have learned (the "learned self"). Some of the experiences and expressions of the "lived self" are of a more private nature while others are publicly displayed.

The "lived self", or parts thereof, is thus reflected in the "perceived self", i.e., how we are seen by others (Tice and Wallace 2003; Shah 2003; Kenny and DePaulo 1993), which, together with the "lived self" sits at the boundary between the personal identity and the

creation and expression of a social identity. While one's "core self" may be a good starting point for self-reflection and listening within the own person, the "perceived self" may be a natural starting point for a process of looking outwards, or to look from the outside in. All four layers of self are displayed in Figure 1 below.

Place Figure 1 about here

It is important to note that Figure 1 expresses the self as a number of layers that range from typically less visible and accessible (the "core self" and the "learned self") to more easily accessible and observable (the "lived self" and "perceived self"). Our conceptualization of the self allows for both conscious and unconscious elements and can include functional and dysfunctional elements at all layers (Carver, Lawrence, and Scheier 1999; Tangney et al. 1998; Higgins 1999; Higgins et al. 1994). Naturally, individuals will differ in terms of their own awareness and experience of their identity, and elements of one's identity can shift and develop on a past, present and future timeline (Higgins 1999; Markus and Wurf 1987). For different individuals, and at different stages of life, there will also be variation in terms of the level of alignment and congruence between layers of self as well as variation between the multiple identities a person possesses and portrays in different contexts, for example through taking PO over certain material and nonmaterial targets (Orellana-Damacela, Tindale, and Suarez-Balcazar 2000; Higgins 1987).

Congruence between Layers of Self

As previously stated, fluctuations are to be expected in levels of awareness of one's own identity throughout different phases of life (Lewis, Amini, and Lannon 2000; Markus and Wurf 1987), and, likewise, fluctuations in associated levels of congruence between layers of

self also tend to occur, which will have implications for PO manifestations and expressions at these various layers. Previous research suggests consistently, however, that greater levels of self-awareness and alignment between layers of self are associated with a greater likelihood of a functional pattern of behavior and relationships, while dysfunctional patterns of behavior are often based on misalignment, lack of awareness, or denial of the "core self" (Cheng, Govorun, and Chartrand 2012; Morris et al. 2010; Richards, Campenni, and Muse-Burke 2010). While previous work has looked at alignment, issues of congruence or lack thereof have not been investigated systematically at the level of different layers of the self, which we explore in this paper. The seminal work by Higgins (1987) on self-discrepancy theory lays the foundations of current knowledge regarding how contradictory representations of the self can result in emotional discomfort and emotional vulnerability (Bandura and Locke 2003; Higgins et al. 2001). In fact, self-discrepancy theory itself builds on a long tradition of psychological research into human need for congruence of emotion and cognition; most widely known are cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger 1962, 1957) and balance theory (Heider 1946; Cartwright and Harary 1956; Hummon and Doreian 2003). While Higgins (1987) predicts specific emotions and psychological dysfunctions that result from cognitive imbalances, it is a common theme across these psychological theories that on the whole, functional behaviors and outcomes will typically result from alignment between different senses of self (Masten and Wright 2010; Obradovic et al. 2009; Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker 2000). Functional patterns of behavior are typically understood as psychologically healthy emotions and behaviors that allow individuals to function well personally and socially, ideally allowing individuals to express their real characteristics, emotions, motivations, and traits; while dysfunctional patterns of behavior tend to reflect a lack of congruence between an individual's "core self" and the roles they play in life, the behaviors they exhibit, and the perceptions they create (Bender and Lösel 1997; Thoits 1995; Farrington 1995; Robins

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1978). Dysfunctional patterns of behavior at various levels of self can be manifested in a number of ways, for example, by taking PO over dangerous and damaging targets that hold negative consequences for the self and others (Diener and Seligman 2009; Peterson et al. 2009). Dysfunctional patterns include defense mechanisms, such as the creation of false/pretentious selves, and escape-related or numbing behavior, expressed, for example, in over-achievement, addiction, control-need, perfectionism, obesity, living in debt, relying on medications, and antisocial behavior (Brown 2006, 2008, 2012; Karger et al. 2007). While individuals exhibiting escape-related and numbing behavior may, on the surface, still live seemingly well adjusted and successful lives, these behavioral patterns can imply heavy costs at individual, organizational and societal levels, and can be a stepping stone toward mental health problems (Fredrickson and Cohn 2008; Kahneman 2011; Luthans and Jensen 2002; Obradovic et al. 2009; Brown 2006, 2008, 2012). The notion of congruence, or lack thereof, is critical when we turn to applying the concept of PO to individual identity in Part II of this paper. One can easily imagine situations in which individuals take ownership over material and nonmaterial targets that may be more or less congruent with various layers of self. In fact, PO can be taken to enhance congruence but can also be taken as a way to compensate for incongruence. To understand the potential impact of congruent and incongruent ways of expressing one's sense of self through PO, it is important to understand the foundations of functional senses of identity and self, which we will briefly review next before turning to Part II.

Foundations of Functional Senses of Identity and Self

In a scenario that is most likely to produce functional behavior, an individual's self-concept can develop through a process by which the layers of core, learned, lived and perceived self are explored in a safe social environment. In essence, the "core self" can flourish and grow under nurturing and supportive conditions and the individual can cultivate authentic and

congruent outer layers that reflect their genuine core identity, and, likewise, take PO over

material and nonmaterial targets that are in congruence with their core identity. The

development functional patterns is built on congruent layers of identity, a sense of worthiness

(i.e., to be worthy of love and belonging) and upon opportunities to be curious about the

world while also being allowed to express vulnerability (Brown 2006, 2008, 2012), i.e., not

having to hide basic emotions, be they happiness, fear, anger, or sadness in the process of

exploration and growth (Ekman 1999; Ekman and Friesen 1971; Pollak et al. 2000). This is

critical, as in developing the learned, lived and perceived selves, individuals often produce

defence mechanisms to protect themselves (i.e., their "core self"), particularly if they need to

function in a dysfunctional world around them. Individuals who learn to hide their "core self"

(i.e., to protect it from harmful outer influences), may adopt learned dysfunctional behaviors

of perfection, blame, and pretense that lead to many problems of today's society, or what

Brown (2010) calls the most "in-debt, obese, addicted and medicated" generation in history.

There has been comparatively little empirical work outside of clinical work focusing on

negative self-conceptions and incongruent selves of individuals and implications thereof.

This is surprising, as a number of sources, such as the World Health Organization, have

pointed to a rising epidemic of people unable to cope with the conditions of their lives (World

Health Organization 2011). As such, we believe it is important to synthesize knowledge on

foundations of functional senses of identity and self in this paper, as it critically relates to the

nature, intent, and consequence of PO manifestations at the level of the individual. The value

of outlining these processes in this paper to relationship marketers resides in exploring types

of relationships that are likely to result in functional identities, and to spell out conditions

under which functional and dysfunctional relationships are likely to operate.

In Figure 2, we summarize the relational foundation of functional identities—namely sharing

and witnessing experiences (allowing for vulnerability) and acceptance by self and others—

that facilitate the important interplay between notions of personal and social identity. Courage to share experiences that may make one vulnerable is necessary for individuals to show their "core self". However, individuals will only show vulnerabilities if they have learned that they will be accepted for it. Acceptance means the individual can expect to get a favorable reception and support, even if there are tensions or discrepancy between personal identity and social identity. Tensions between acceptance of personal and social identities in organizations and society have, for example, been widely discussed in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) social movements (Gardberg and Newburry 2013).

Place Figure 2 about here

At its heart, Figure 2 also embraces the concept of social learning and reciprocity. For the development of a functional identity, it is important to have had opportunity to observe others' vulnerabilities and journeys in relation to the core, learned, lived and perceived selves in a non-judgmental and accepting environment (Bandura 1977; Van Lange 2000). Such observations typically occur through social relationships and are aided by an individual's social support system. Social support from various sources during an individual's life journey is illustrated at the base of Figure 2. Resilience and growth at the level of the individual is likely to depend on the availability, quality, and consistency of physical, intellectual, social, and psychological resources that the individual can call upon (Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub 1989; Fredrickson and Cohn 2008; Kahneman, 2011; Luthans and Jensen 2002; Obradovic et al. 2009). In order to access resources, it is important that individuals invite such resources and support into their lives, which again depends on their ability to be accepting of others and accepted by others. One way in which such resources can be built into one's life is through

PO of targets such as relationships and objects that are congruent with one's own layers of self and congruent with one's own needs, desires and aspirations. Based on our exploration of identity development, layers of self, and congruence so far in this paper, we progress to the next part of our exploration, in which we turn our attention to the concept of PO and how PO can manifest itself at of the various layers of individual identity in both a congruent and incongruent manner.

PART II: MANIFESTATIONS OF PO AT THE LEVEL OF INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY

In Part I, we provided a review of advances in identity theory and presented a novel model of identity development with four layers of self—spanning personal and social identities. We presented literature that suggests congruence between layers of self is important and explored the conditions under which functional selves can develop, as a basis to explore the type of relationships and identities in which PO can be manifested and expressed. Our aim in Part II is to bring together literatures on identity and PO, to explore a framework of PO manifestation and expression at the level of individual identity, and to suggest a number of propositions for future studies.

It is well understood in psychology and management research that individuals use both material possessions (such as money and objects) and nonmaterial possessions (such as relationships, reputations, and ideas) to define and display their own identities, particularly their social identity and social status (Blader and Tyler 2009; Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981; Fischer and Boer 2011). Importantly, individuals can have legal ownership and/or feel PO over their possessions. While legal systems govern the legal ownership rights of the individual, the critical question concerning PO rests with the

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individual in terms of "What do I feel is mine?" (Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks 2001, 2003).

Explanations of how feelings of PO develop at the level of the individual are therefore

inherently more variable and depend on the sense-making and self-concept of the individual,

what we described earlier in this paper as related to personal interpretations of "this is me".

Fundamentally, definition and display of one's identity through PO of material/nonmaterial

possessions rely on the dynamic nature of identity and can have various degrees of

congruence with a person's core identity. In bringing together identity and PO literatures in

the next section, we suggest a number of propositions for unpacking the mechanism by which

PO manifests at the level of the individual, namely through representation and expression of

PO at different layers of self.

Propositions to PO Manifestation at Layers of Self

It will be remembered that PO literature refers to the academic study of identity as a closely

linked and important motivational condition of PO manifestation and expression (Pierce,

Kostova, and Dirks. 2003; Jussila et al. forthcoming). Current literature, however, neglects to

systematically link advances in identity theory with PO research, and fails to advance insights

into testable propositions at the level of the individual. It is our aim in this paper to address

this lacuna by providing a conceptual framework of PO manifestation at the level of the

individual as foundation for a series of propositions linking PO and identity development. In

Figure 3 below, we suggest ways in which PO can manifest itself at the four layers of self

(Jussila et al. forthcoming; Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks 2001; Vandewalle, Van Dyne, and

Kostova 1995), and in exploring our framework we unpack in a number of propositions the

mechanism by which this can be achieved.

Place Figure 3 about here

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Building on our dynamic model of identity development (first presented in Figure 1, and repeated in Figure 3), our first set of propositions suggests that PO can manifest itself at all four layers of self, illustrated in Figure 3 through the boxes on the left side (labelled propositions 1a, 1b, 1c and 1d), linking layers of self with related PO manifestations. PO manifestation at the perceived layer ("perceived self") allows individuals to be seen by others in a certain way by owning a material/nonmaterial target (e.g., to be seen as affluent for owning a nice house or to be seen as bright for owning good ideas). PO manifestation at the lived layer ("lived self") allows individuals to live out certain behaviors, emotions and cognitions by owning a material/nonmaterial target (e.g., to live a comfortable lifestyle by owning a nice house or experience intellectual stimulation when contributing one's own ideas to a debate). PO manifestation at the learned layer ("learned self") allows individuals to function according to a set of conscious/unconscious rules and roles by owning a material/nonmaterial target (e.g., to play the role of a provider by owning a nice house, or to play the role of a successful member of society by contributing important insights to a debate). PO manifestation at the core layer ("core self"), allows individuals to express their innermost personal identity by owning a material/nonmaterial target (e.g., to be able to express creativity or care for family by owning a house or to be able to share core beliefs by expressing one's own ideas). We hence propose the following set of propositions:

Proposition 1: PO can manifest itself at all layers of self.

Proposition 1a: PO manifestation at the perceived layer ("perceived self") allows individuals to be seen by others in a certain way by owning a material/nonmaterial target.

Proposition 1b: PO manifestation at the lived layer ("lived self") allows individuals to live out certain behaviors, emotions, and cognitions by owning a material/nonmaterial target.

Proposition 1c: PO manifestation at the learned layer ("learned self") allows individuals to function according to a set of conscious/unconscious rules and roles by owning a material/nonmaterial target.

Proposition 1d: PO manifestation at the core layer ("core self"), allows individuals to express their innermost personal identity by owning a material/nonmaterial target.

In addition to PO manifestations at the four layers of self, we furthermore suggest that these PO manifestations can be an expression of a more or less congruent way of living aspects of one's identity.

In the second set of box in Figure 3 (labelled Propositions 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d), we outline a set of questions that can be used to understand the level of congruence or incongruence between different layers of identity when looking at PO expressions in a particular situation. Our proposed questions explore the identity-related benefits that individuals gain by owning a certain target in the form of "Does owning this target allow me to…". The reader will remember that conscious reflections of one's identity in the form of self-conceptions typically occur in the working self-concept (Lewis, Amini, and Lannon 2000; Markus and Wurf 1987). A key mechanism by which PO may become consciously known to the individual, and by which such questions can be reflected upon and answered, is therefore through the working self-concept.

In terms of congruence/incongruence between different layers of identity, the questions provided explore situations when PO is taken at all four layers of self. At the level of the "core self", congruence would be achieved if an individual—through their working self-concept—can answer the following question in the affirmative: "Does owning this target allow me to be who I really am?" Following the same logic, PO may be seen to manifest at the level of the "learned self" in a congruent manner through answering the following

questions in the affirmative: "Does owning this target allow me to play roles that are the real me?" PO may manifest at the level of the "lived self" through an affirmative answer to the question ''Does owning this target allow me to live as the real me?" and finally PO may manifest at the level of perceived self through an affirmative answer to the question "Does owning this target allow me to be seen for who I really am?"

We suggest that PO is manifested and expressed in a functional manner if an individual can answer these four questions in the affirmative—regardless of the nature of a specific ownership target: if owning a particular car, for example, allows someone to be seen as, live as, play the role of, and be who they really are, then there would be congruence between identity expression and PO manifestation, and as such would represent a functional expression of identity, as could equally be achieved by owning a certain belief, friendship, or hobby. Indeed, answering any of these deep questions in the affirmative is likely to result in congruence across one's layers of self. If, however, answers to these questions expose that PO over material/nonmaterial targets does not synchronize with one's "core self" and one's other layers of self, this would suggest a lack of congruence between the existence and expression of identity and PO. For example, there may be occasions where societal norms incentivize individuals to make choices between the existence and expression of their "core self" and feelings of PO in different layers. We earlier mentioned expressions of LGBTI orientation and individuals may choose not to disclose their personal circumstances due to potential implications that this may have when taking on roles of responsibility in certain firms or societies (Almeida et al. 2009; Meyer 2003; Mays and Cochran 2001). While there are trends in many societies today that encourage individuals to live open and identity-congruent lives, there still also exist pressures in most societies, be they of a different nature in different societies, by which the social or family environment may result in individuals feeling pressure not to express their identities in a congruent way (Lefranc, Pistolesi, and

Trannoy 2008; Banks, Eberhardt, and Ross 2006; Wilkinson 1996). We thus propose the following set of propositions next:

Proposition 2*: PO manifestations at various layers of self can be congruent or incongruent expressions of one's core identity.*

Proposition 2a*: Congruence at the level of the "perceived self" can be achieved if owning a target allows an individual to be seen for who they really are.*

Proposition 2b*: Congruence at the level of the "lived self" can be achieved if owning a target allows an individual to live in accordance with who they really are.*

Proposition 2c*: Congruence at the level of the "learned self" can be achieved if owning a target allows an individual to play the roles that reinforce who they really are.*

Proposition 2d*: Congruence at the level of the "core self" can be achieved if owning a target allows an individual to be who they really are.*

Finally, we turn our attention to looking at identity through the lens of "ought" and "ideal" drivers that we outlined in the beginning of this paper. While previous work has examined the notion of "ought" and "ideal" selves, they have not been systematically explored at different layers of self, which allows for an important further exploration of the specific nature of PO manifestation (Higgins 1987) as illustrated in the third set of boxes on the right side of Figure 3 (labelled propositions 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d). As before, the nature and meaning of "ought" and "ideal" drivers can usefully be illustrated by formulating a set of questions. Our questions frame PO manifestation through identity in a way that allows us to explore the nature of PO in terms of "ought" and "ideal" self-conceptions drivers: "Does owning this target allow me to be seen as I ought to be seen/want to be seen?", "Does owning this target allow me to live as I ought to live/want to live", etc. Readers will remember that "ought" drivers embody the

motivation to live up to a set of expectations that are driven from outside the self, often in terms of societal and family norms. "Ideal" drivers, on the other hand, embody the motivation to live up to an idealized self, often in terms of an individual's aspirations and dreams—however likely or unlikely these are. Since "ought" and "ideal" drivers are typically, at least at some level, socially constructed, we suggest they may surface particularly from the level of the "learned self" outwards—and only conditionally at the level of the "core self"—which represents the full range of an individual's true characteristics and potential. A person's belief that they ought to or want to be certain things can, again, easily lead to incongruence between layers. For example, holding a senior role in a big corporation may give an individual PO and satisfaction at the level of the "perceived self" (in terms of being seen as influential). It may also be in line with how the individual thinks they ought to be seen and in line with the roles they think they ought to play. It is easy to imagine, however, how PO over a demanding job target could be at odds with how this individual may actually want to live, or who they believe they really are. Indeed, PO manifestations that occur mainly at the level of the "perceived self" are in danger of being shallow connections, operating in the layer of a publicly portrayed self, and may be more transactional in nature, and thus fragile and susceptible. The introduction of "ought" and "ideal" drivers allows for an exploration of the reasons behind congruence/incongruence within and between layers of the self. Importantly, it is our thesis that while "ought" and "ideal" drivers often provide opportunity for tensions within and between different layers of self, this is not inevitably the case, and tensions between different roles and identities in one's life can be dealt with by an individual in a constructive and appropriate manner, but are more likely to be resolved when conscious attention is paid toward them (Silvia and Duval 2001; Govern and Marsch 2001; Rothbaum, Weisz, and Snyder 1982; Wicklund and Duval 1971). Our third set of propositions thus reads as follows:

Proposition 3: *PO manifestations at various layers of self can express "ought" and "ideal" drivers of individuals.*

Proposition 3a: *PO manifestation at the perceived layer ("perceived self") can allow individuals to be seen by others in a way in which they "ought " or "want" to be seen.*

Proposition 3b: *PO manifestation at the lived layer ("lived self") can allow individuals to live out certain behaviors, emotions and cognitions in a way in which they "ought" or "want" to live.*

Proposition 3c: *PO manifestation at the learned layer ("learned self") can allow individuals to function according to a set of conscious/unconscious rules and roles that reinforce the way in which they "ought" or "want" to function.*

Proposition 3d: *PO manifestation at the core layer ("core self") can allow individuals to express their innermost personal identity in a way in which they feel they "ought" or "want" to.*

After outlining our three sets of propositions linking PO manifestations to identity expressions at the level of individual layers of self, we proceed now to discuss theoretical and practical implications from our study.

PART III: THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

In Part II we explored a number of propositions resulting from linking PO literature to advances in identity theory. We derived our propositions through providing a framework of PO manifestation and expression viewed through the lens of four layers of self. Our

propositions lay the foundations for future empirical and conceptual work and in Part III we now aim to suggest a number of implications for theory and practice.

Theoretical Implications

A key contribution of this research is the presentation of a novel and dynamic model of identity development in Part I of this study that allows for exploring aspects of individual identity at four layers of self: core, learned, lived, and perceived self. Our first theoretical implication therefore relates to the fact that we deviate from common practice in management literature that typically adopts an organizational lens to study phenomena (Jones, Felps, and Bigley 2007; Mitchell, Agle, and Wood 1997; Money et al. 2012; Cronin, Brady, and Hult 2000; Goodman et al. 1995; Mittal and Kamakura 2001). Instead we adopt the perspective of the individual, by exploring the dynamic nature of identity development from the perspective of the individual—and lay the ground for scholars to systematically explore identity-relevant phenomena at the level of the individual, i.e., at the level of four layers of self that span between personal and social identities. This paper thus provides a much-needed counterbalance to current organization-centric literature and lays the foundation for a nuanced exploration of constructs such as PO, their manifestation and expression, at the level of the individual (Ortiz, Reynolds, and Franke 2013; Harrison et al. 2012; Fu, Bolander and Jones 2009).

Our next theoretical implication relates to Part II of this study in which we aim to bridge the current gap between literature on PO and advances in identity theory. We focus specifically on the notions of the working self-concept, the dynamic nature of identity and congruence/incongruence between layers of self, and how these notions relate to PO manifestations and expressions at the level of the individual (Asatryan and Oh 2008; Garretson Folse, Mouard, and Raggio 2012). We feel it is important to link PO and identity

theory systematically at the level of the individual so that a number of testable propositions can be derived. While an obvious implication is to invite scholars to test our propositions in future studies, we believe there are also potential implications for future theory development: our framework can not only be used to further explore the nature of the relationship between identity and PO manifestation at the level of the individual (as suggested in our propositions), but can also help to integrate the three interrelated routes through which PO has been suggested to emerge in individuals (i.e., control, knowledge, and investment) with identity literature in a theoretically grounded manner (Pierce and Jussila 2011; Jussila and Tuominen 2010). For example, whether and how PO manifests itself at the four layers of self, and whether this happens in a congruent or incongruent manner may depend significantly on the awareness that individuals have about the level of control, knowledge, and investment that they take, want to take, or ought to take over a PO target. As a next theoretical development, we thus envisage an explicit integration of the three routes of PO into our framework of PO manifestation and expression at the level of the individual.

A further theoretical implication of our framework of PO manifestation through identity-related mechanisms is that it allows scholars to unpack potential PO manifestations in a dynamic way. To signal the dynamic nature of identity development, we draw on advances in psychology and thereby bring fresh insights to the study of PO and the field of marketing. We believe there is motive and scope for theoretical exploration of the conditions and specifications of PO manifestations and change at the level of the individual, i.e., how PO manifestations at the level of identity depend on circumstances of individuals, how they change over the lifetime of individuals, how they change over lifecycles of products and organizations, and what the implications and boundary conditions may be in the context of organizations and society.

A final theoretical implication relates to exploring the positive and negative consequences of varying degrees of congruence between PO manifestation and expression of an individual's core identity. As such, we provide a response to the critics of marketing, who may see PO as tool for the manipulation of customers and communities. Rather we aim to provide insights into, and understanding of, the mechanism by which PO can be used to encourage functional and discourage dysfunctional behavior. We highlight that even if dysfunctional patterns of behavior are learned early on in life, it is through a process of discovering the interactions between the different layers of self in a way in which the negative and positive, as well as the consistent and inconsistent, emotions, cognitions, and behaviors are understood and accepted, that a true sense of self-awareness can develop (Lewis, Amini, and Lannon 2000). For that, it is important that an individual engages in conscious efforts with the learned rules and roles in their life and with the functional and dysfunctional aspects of their behavior. If this is done in a safe environment in which there is acceptance, the "core self" can start to be lived throughout the different layers. In the context of marketing theory, this can provide important insights into how functional and dysfunctional patterns of consumerism may materialize or be encouraged through utilization of the PO construct. It would also, from a normative as well as a descriptive perspective, be useful to explore further any implications that congruence and incongruence at the level of PO and identity may have, and to work towards conceptual frameworks and models for healthy and sustainable living and consumption conditions for individuals, organizations, and society. Individuals and society may, together, take PO over aspirational targets such as working toward creating innovative solutions to the world's problems such as diseases, poverty, and sustainable consumption (Bartkus 1997; Spangenberg, Fuad-Luke, and Blincoe 2010). However there is currently a lack of theoretical frameworks that allow us to understand how individuals and organizations can build shared

identities and a sense of PO over socially desirable targets (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981; Fischer and Boer 2011; Grant 2012).

Practical Implications

As a first practical implication we believe our framework of PO manifestation and expression at the level of individual identity can be a fruitful avenue for practitioners to explore the impact that organizational activities and initiatives may be having (or not having) at the level of individuals (e.g., as consumer groups), i.e., how they influence actual, identity-relevant emotions and behaviors of these groups. Understanding emotions and changing behaviors of consumers and groups in societies has, for example, been a keen interest not only among mainstream marketers, but also in fields such as social marketing and societal marketing. What scholars in hese fields have in common is that they typically aim to understand when, how, and why individuals feel connected to firms or social/societal causes to an extent that it makes a material impact on people's emotions and behaviors (Hillenbrand, Money, and Ghobadian 2013). Our framework may help to shed light on why certain firm activities and PO targets are more or less relevant and interesting for individuals. For example, we believe that one of the reasons for the "attitude–behavior" gap in regard to many pro-social behaviors (such as sustainable consumption, healthy eating, safe driving) is that many campaigns leverage "ought" and "ideal" drivers and these are more likely to result in incongruence and ultimately unsustainable patterns (Godin, Conner, and Sheeran 2005; Padel and Foster 2005; Carrigan and Attalla 2001; Boulstridge and Carrigan 2000). Building on our framework in this paper, we suggest that approaching organizational and societal issues in a way that encourages individuals to take PO of these issues from the "core self" outwards in a congruent way offers much promise for creating functional and sustainable organizations and societies, and we call for scholars to investigate these issues further.

Secondly, we believe it would be of foremost interest from a practitioner perspective to explore how PO manifestations at various layers of self may allow consumers to experience the fulfillment (even if only temporary) of an underlying identity need. For example, riders of Harley-Davidson motorbikes often accessorize their lives richly with brand emblems and sometimes go as far as "wearing the brand on their bodies." While not many mainstream businesses would dream of their customers tattooing their brand onto themselves, Harley-Davidson clearly taps into profound identity mechanisms with its followers, who are proud to express their need for belonging to the Harley-Davidson family very publicly in their "perceived self" and "lived self" (i.e., wearing the brand and riding the bike). Whether identity needs are being fulfilled in a functional manner through association with a brand for the individual involved, and the implications thereof, depends on the person and their unique articulation of their relationship to the PO target, based on their wider life circumstances and stage of identity development, awareness, and expression, i.e., level of congruence between layers of self (Bagozzi et al. 2012). For example, Harley-Davidson emblems may allow riders to be seen how they want to be seen at the layer of the "perceived self", while the experience of riding their motorbikes and joining riding clubs may allow riders to live how they want to live at the layer of the "lived self", and can also allow riders to be who they want to be at the layer of the "core self" (and may not be able to be in other parts of their lives): wild, adventurous, free, etc. As such, association with brands and organizations can offer useful outlets for individuals to express important personal needs such as stimulation or achievement (Schwartz 1992). Jussila and Tuominen (2010) identify a number of human needs, such as the need for having a place and the need for stimulation that will motivate individuals to engage in feelings of PO, both of which are likely to be at play in some form in the Harley-Davidson example. Exploring PO manifestations and expressions at the four layers of self with stakeholders in different settings and situations would bring to life the

various aspects of our suggested framework and allow its usefulness for understanding

identity-based links between individuals, their PO targets, and organizations to be explored.

Finally, a pressing concern from a practitioner perspective that lends itself to practical

exploration is the potential for incongruence between layers—for example between the "core

self" and the "perceived self". Marketers have sometimes been accused of trying to exploit

vulnerable consumers when leveraging peer pressure to achieve sales targets (Román and

Ruiz 2005; Wallace, Eagleson, and Waldersee 2000; Menon and Dubé 2000) or when playing

with individuals' unfulfilled dreams through pretentious advertising strategies (Lee-Wingate,

Moon, and Bose 2014; Garretson Folse, Mouard and Raggio 2012). It is not uncommon for

people to fall for attractive advertising messages, trying to buy happiness (i.e., the perfect

holiday, the perfect date), or respect and admiration from others (i.e., through the signals that

owning the right car/clothes may send)—in essence, wanting to be perceived as better or

different from their core, learned or lived selves (Guèvremont and Grohmann 2012; Pervan

and Martin 2012). In these cases, individuals and organizations may be out of touch with

reality—taking and granting PO for suppositious targets—manifested as unreal, potentially

misleading or damaging expressions of PO in individual–organization relationships (Ross,

Cathcart, and Lyon 2011; Odou and de Pechpeyrou 2011). Excessive consumerism and

overconsumption have been suggested to be detrimental to individual well-being and they can

signal that purchase decisions become a driver to build a sense of identity from the outside in

(Lawrence and Nohria 2002; Nohria, Broysberg and Lee 2008; Lo and Harvey 2012; Dittmar

and Kapur 2011). Similarly, an individual may express perfectionist or addictive tendencies

to numb feelings that they are not playing roles, living and being perceived in a way that is

consistent with who they really are, i.e., their "core self" (Brown 2012, 2008, 2006), which

can have implications and costs for organizations and society in the long term (McCrone et

al. 2008; Maslach and Leiter 2008; Hoel, Sparks, and Cooper 2001). It is likely that

marketers (consciously or unconsciously, and at least some of the time) tap into dysfunctional identity needs of individuals, fostering unhelpful patterns of behavior or in worst cases, even addictions, with damaging implications for the individual and the business in the long term (Freeman, Wicks, and Parmar 2004). However, if organizations were to engage with stakeholders to allow for PO to be expressed in a balanced and congruent way across layers of self, that may allow individuals to overcome obsessive and addictive tendencies and as such help to create more functional organizations and society (Flight, Rountree, and Beatty 2012). PO manifestations can also be used in a positive sense if the "core self" of individuals can be aligned to take PO over behaviors that allow for healthy and mindful consumption. Indeed, as described by Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks (2001, 2003) and Pierce and Jussila (2011), the PO construct is a very personally specified expression of connection to organizations, enabled through processes such as intense knowledge and control or investment of self in the target. In positive cases, feelings of such deep connection/ownership can be experienced as enabling and enriching for all participating parties, i.e., will allow individuals to fulfil their desires, experience good lives and be part of exciting futures, while it can also allow organizations to prosper and be successful.

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, we believe that PO is a concept that holds much promise in enabling individuals and organizations to build stronger relationships, to understand congruence, and lack thereof in the way individuals live their lives, and also tackle some societal problems. It is also a concept that can be misused to take advantage of the unbalanced identity needs of individuals and society. What has been missing in the literature so far is a deep understanding of the mechanism by which PO manifests itself at the level of the individual and in relationships. This paper has gone some way to addressing this gap by exploring the manifestation of PO through an individual identity lens. To achieve this, the paper presented a novel and dynamic

model of identity development containing "layers of self" and then explored in three sets of propositions how this approach could help unpack the mechanism by which feelings of PO develop. Based on our outlined theoretical and practical implications, we invite future researchers and practitioners to explore the PO construct through an identity lens, harnessing, if they wish, the models and ideas presented in this paper. We see this as a promising route by which marketers, management scholars and practitioners may not only employ PO for the benefit of organizations, but may consider exploring and tackling wider societal challenges.

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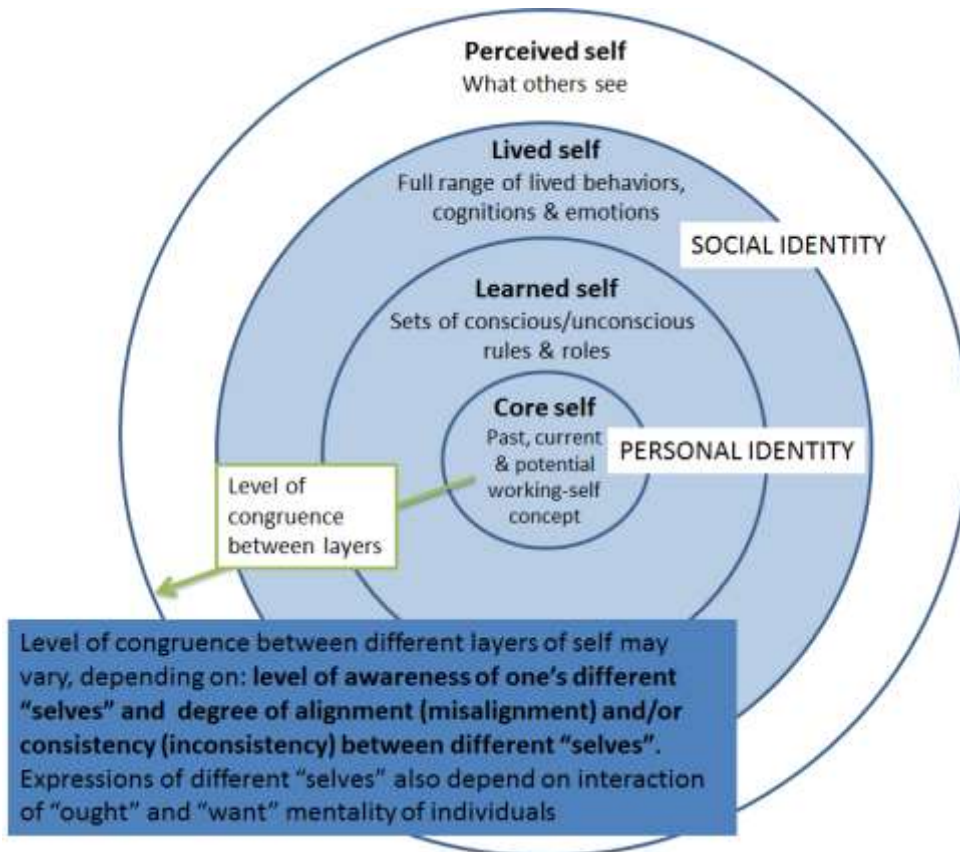
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Figure 1:
Dynamic Model of Identity Development through Layers of Self

Perceived self
What others see

Lived self
Full range of lived behaviors,
cognitions & emotions

SOCIAL IDENTITY

Learned self
Sets of conscious/unconscious
rules & roles

Core self
Past, current
& potential
working-self
concept

PERSONAL IDENTITY

Level of
congruence
between layers

Level of congruence between different layers of self may
vary, depending on: level of awareness of one's different
"selves" and degree of alignment (misalignment) and/or
consistency (inconsistency) between different "selves".
Expressions of different "selves" also depend on interaction
of "ought" and "want" mentality of individuals

Figure 2:
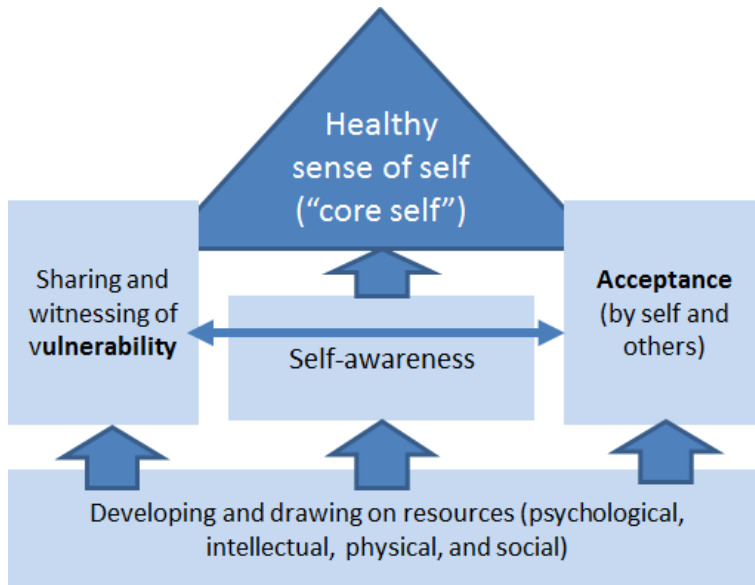**Foundations of Functional Senses of Identity and Self**

Figure 3:

Framework of PO Manifestation at the Level of the Individual