Making Sense of Psychological Ownership: Construct confusion and unanswered questions

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Abstract

Since the turn of the century Psychological Ownership (PO), a concept in which individuals feel attached to certain workplace targets such as a job role or organisation has gained traction due to its perceived organisational benefits. However there are concerns regarding PO conceptualisation and subsequent measurement which would benefit from further scrutiny. In particular we suggest that PO is at a methodological junction which warrants different approaches to provide greater clarity regarding this complex, multifaceted concept. We call for a review of the posited motives to consider if the role of identity has been underestimated and if additional motives such as power and happiness should also be included. Researchers have neglected population samples such as individuals at the start of their career including the crucial period of PO development, therefore we would suggest opportunities to target broader groups of workers.

Introduction

In a competitive business landscape in which an organisation's talent is often seen as a potential differentiator, Psychological Ownership in which individuals feel an attachment to certain work place targets such as their job role or organisation has interested scholars due to its potential implications on workplace behaviour. Psychological ownership (PO) differs from other types of organisational ownership, such as partnerships or share ownership schemes, as there is no material level of ownership,

PO is a multidimensional construct in which individuals and groups have an emotional and cognitive attachment to a particular target which results in feeling psychologically tied to said target. This may be demonstrated by statements of attachment such as "I feel this job is part of me" and "I feel a sense of personal ownership for the organisation." (Pierce et al, 2001, 2003). Such attachment has aroused a growing interest from theorists as it is often associated with organisational benefits, for example job satisfaction: (Mayhew et al 2007; Bernhard and O'Driscoll 2011; Knapp et al 2014) ; organisational commitment: (Van Dyne et al 2004); organisational citizenship behaviour: (Van Dyne et al 2004 and Liu et al 2012) and organisational based self-esteem (Song et al 2014). However the interest in psychological ownership goes far beyond theorists in organisational studies with research undertaken in marketing and consumer behaviour (Reto et al 2019; Kirk et al 2017; Watkins et al 2016; Jussila et al 2015; Hulland et al 2015), technology (Kirk et al 2015), education (Wood 2003; Asatryan 2013), health (Weinstein et al 2017), identity (Hillenbrand et al 2015), philosophical studies (Bermudez 2018; Chadha 2018) territorial behaviour studies (Brown et al 2005; Brown 2009; Brown et al 2014), open innovation (Pirkkalainen 2018) family owned businesses (Bernhard et al 2011; Rantanen et al 2011, Henssen et al 2014) and Co-operatives (Jussila 2010).

Pierce et al (2001) posited that PO derives from a conceptual core of theories of possession and ownership suggesting that in the same way that individuals can develop feelings for their possessions, we may also develop feelings for intangible targets in the workplace. These feelings exist to satisfy certain human motives such as; efficacy and effectance, self-identity and having a place/home (Pierce et al, 2001) and, more contentiously motives of territoriality, accountability (Avey et el, 2009) and stimulation (Pierce and Jussila, 2011; Rantanen and Jussila,2011). It has also been positted that PO feelings can also be developed at group level still satisfying the motives mentioned above so that it becomes a shared mindset "This is Our organisation" (Pierce et al 2010; Rantanen et al 2011; Ng et al 2018)) although for the purpose of this article the authors will focus solely on individual PO.

This paper returns to the nucleus of PO and its conceptual core, theories of possession and ownership with the purpose of closely examining both sets of literature to provide further clarification of key constructs and highlighting areas for further discussion. If the PO construct is going to be beneficial to organisations and individuals in the future it is important to examine the current construct to ensure effective future measurement. This paper will highlight several areas in which further scrutiny feels warranted by utilising literature from both PO and theories of possession and ownership. Whilst it is unusual to discuss a body of research not directly linked to organisational research, a thorough review of this literature will help inform and support our understanding of the PO construction.

The paper starts with two methodological points. Historically, the PO construct has relied upon quantitative approaches to establish measurements of PO (Van Dyne et al., 2003) despite identified problems in its conceptualisation (REF). It is suggested, reflecting work on theories of possession and ownership, that the introduction of qualitative methods may offer a richer, detailed tapestry regarding this complex, partly affective concept. Additionally the existing studies have focused on particular sample groups such as knowledge workers and those with several years' work experience (Brown et al REF), as they are presumed to have greater opportunity to build attachments to work place targets as well as discretion and control over their job role. This ignores a significant element of the workforce and the potential benefits this may have for both the employer and employee.

Theories of possession and ownership also provide us with further possible motives for PO not currently included in the PO literature. In Furby's studies (1978a; 1978b) "Rights of use/control and power" are frequently mentioned terms made by respondents when defining possessions yet the element of power is omitted from the analysis. Subsequently, Pierce et al (2001) only cite control when conceptualising of PO. Similarly, the notion of happiness is a factor in that arises from the possession and ownership literature (REF) but is not picked up in the factors thought to develop and support PO. The inclusion of such factors may help us to understand how the PO concept is created and sustained. Lastly, has the influence of our identities been underestimated when considering the manifestation of PO? Whilst it is accepted as one of the three main motives for PO, we would suggest that it may be a key factor contributing to the appearance of PO. Having the opportunity to debate these possible omissions leads on to an evaluation of whether an individual's PO has the potential to wax and wane over time (Furby, Belk and Rocha).

This article aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the PO construct with the intention of encouraging further debate amongst scholars. Whilst PO has many potential benefits for both organisations and individuals reducing perceived limitations and removing any construct confusion will help us understand this contribution and improve its impact. The remainder of this review will review the key areas mentioned which we believe warrant further inspection in more detail.

Psychological Ownership Measurement

Ownership was first explored in the late 1960's by Holmes (1967) under the guise of ownership at work and then studied again at the start of the 1990's mainly from an employee ownership stance (Pierce and Candace, 1990, Pierce, Rubenfeld and Morgan, 1991). It wasn't until the early 2000's that the topic gained traction in its current form.

Organisational Studies have principally used the survey method for PO research, primarily using a seven item measure designed by Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) emphasising these feelings of possession in general statements such as "This is MY organisation". Dawkins et al (2017) suggests a number of methodological concerns regarding measurement in particular the lack of clarity concerning item selection and the way in which questions relate to the three PO motives. As statements are unspecific the association with the efficacy-effectance motive in particular is unclear, although we also believe that the connection to sense of place/home also needs further refinement. Furthermore, whilst the Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) measure is the favoured choice of other theorists, factor loading concerns has resulted in partial replication becoming common (Mayhew et al, 2010; Bernhard and O'Driscoll, 2011; Peng & Pierce, 2014; Brown et al, 2014a; Brown et al, 2014b).

Avey et al (2009) have produced a sixteen item measure reflecting the five items which they believe make up promotive and preventative orientated PO (belonging, self efficacy, self-identity, accountability and territoriality) and is based on both inductive and deductive processes to generate items. The first four items form promotion PO scales, whilst territoriality is used to measure preventative PO. Concerns have been raised suggesting that promotive and preventative PO are two different dimensions (Alok 2014) and if territoriality is a motive or an outcome of PO (Brown et al 2005; Olckers 2013; Dawkins et al 2013). However this survey has been validated (Avey et al 2012,) and in comparison to the Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) survey, clearly shows connections between items and PO motives.

Olckers and Schapp (2013b) build on Avey et al (2009) survey developing a thirty item scale using promotion and prevention orientated PO to create the South African Psychological Ownership Questionnaire. They included two further dimensions (autonomy and responsibility), however self efficacy was withdrawn at scale development stage due to the sample group differing interpretation of the term. In addition self-identity and sense of belonging loaded onto one factor. In China four items from the Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) scale was adapted into Chinese by Chi and Han (2008).

Given the concerns regarding the Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) measure and the failure of other alternatives to capture the attention of scholars we would suggest further work needs to be undertaken to substantiate measures before further work considering antecedents is undertaken. If we review the research regarding theories of Possessions and Ownership there is a far more methodological diversity including interviews (Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012); Ferraro et al (2011); Karanika and Hogg (2011); Furby (1978a) and (1978b), photo elicited interviews (Tian and Belk (2005), case studies (Bardhi et al (2012); Ahuvia (2005), experiments (Ye and Gawronski (2016); Truong et al (2016) surveys and experiments (Walasek et al (2015), interviews and observation (Masset and Decrop (2016) and surveys, photographs and focus groups (Wallendorf and Arnould (1988). Whilst possessions are tangible item which lend themselves to a broader range of methods, there are a small number of PO studies away from the Management field that also do not rely solely on quantitative surveys.

These include Wood's (2003) study of the psychological ownership felt by students undertaking group work in which feelings of PO were measured via a survey with both numerical evaluations and open ended questions thus allowing feelings of PO to be demonstrated without prompting "I enjoyed using one of my own products and watching it sell" (2003, p247). Kirk et al (2017) used a variety of methods which included laboratory experiments followed by a survey to assess individuals PO territorial responses to certain tangible and intangible objects. Cocieru et al (2019) recent research on a football club's supporters is rare because of the use of interviews, however this was because the authors wished to assess the feelings of supporters towards their club. Therefore whilst there is less diversity in PO research measurement than in the aforementioned ownership and possession research, these different methodologies should not be ignored.

Moreover given the reliance on the survey method with the resultant PO measurement ambiguity we suggest that PO is at a methodological junction that would benefit from utilising alternative methods when developing and substantiating current claims. By exploring lived experiences concerning the intricacies of PO, we have the opportunity to examine more closely the undoubted complexities of the concept. Whilst qualitative studies may not be generalizable, the rich detail provided would undoubtedly benefit scholars and we would therefore suggest the case study method and/or interviews as an initial starting point gaining that much needed detailed tapestry of individual's feelings.

PO Sampling

The following section relates to our belief that current PO sampling is too narrow. This is in particular reference to the individual's length of service and the attention focussed on knowledge workers.

The literature regarding theories of possession and ownership provide an overview into how feelings for our possessions develop and change over our lifetime (Belk, Furby etc), however PO sampling has commonly focussed on full time knowledge workers with several years' work experience within an organisation (for example: Pierce et al (2003); Pierce et al (2004); Van Dyne (2004); Avey et al (2009); Bernhard and O'Driscoll (2011); Avey ey al (2012); Brown et al (2014); Wang et al (2018)). This narrowness in sampling has resulted in gaps in the PO landscape especially concerning key periods such as initial PO manifestation along with ignoring a significant proportion of organisational populations. Sampling decisions may be partly explained due to the posited routes to PO: controlling the target, intimate knowledge of the target and investing self in target (Pierce et al 2001) which suggest some level of autonomy and longevity within the role/organisation which we will now consider in more detail.

Two of the aforementioned routes to PO "intimate knowledge of the target" and "investing self in target" (Pierce et al 2001) suggest individuals need a time period in the workplace to form attachments, although the timings regarding manifestation have not been provided. However if we consider our relationship with possessions, we are aware of examples of instant attraction (be it a new cuddly toy for a child or a car for an adult) which results in an immediate feeling of mine! We therefore posit that whilst the aforementioned routes are helpful in building our understanding of PO, because it is a complex, multifaceted construct our attachment to organisational targets are more intricate and nuanced than current discussion of PO routes suggests. Whilst Pierce et al (2003) did highlight PO complexity in early research and called for further work regarding factors leading to PO emergence, research since has negated to consider these intricacies in any detail although Brown et al, (2014) did consider the routes to PO alongside job complexity.

Nevertheless if we consider this notion of complexity it feels plausible that some of us may have strong immediate attachments to certain organisational targets for a variety of different reasons. One explanation may be that prior building blocks from other facets of our life (such as being part of a university society or playing branded video games) facilitates feelings towards certain work place targets. For example if you undertake a marketing degree and move into a marketing role, have you already "invested self in target" via your studies which may result in the development of early feelings of PO for the job role. Or does buying products from an organisation or having family and friends work at a company facilitate "intimate knowledge of the organisation?" Therefore if an individual has "prior" related attachments to certain organisations is it possible to speed up feelings of PO for organisational targets thus providing a bridge to these new attachments?

It would be naive to suggest that this alone might facilitate feelings of attachment and scholars from theories of possessions and ownerships provide other potential factors. The Mere effect (Beggan 1992; Heider 1958) suggests that people are more likely to favour objects which they own and crucially their research found no time element influenced results. Other research from Greenwald (2002) and Ye and Gawronski (2016) suggest that strong mental associations between the self-node and the object node can form if congruous. Therefore ownership by choice is a key element when enhancing self-object congruity with chosen items. This builds on previous research regarding the action based model of dissonance (Harman-Jones 1999) and research by Brehm (1956) which suggests that behavioural commitment reduces dissonance. Consequently the act of choosing an object (the action) strengthens our preference for it and we are more likely to invest our self in said target. Subsequently if an individual believes that they actively made a choice in choosing a particular workplace target then this may also facilitate the development of PO towards organisational targets.

Ferraro et al (2010) work concerning our relationship with possessions suggests that there may be further elements to this relationship and considers not only how meaningful the relationship is with the object (possession-self link), but additionally how important the item is to our self-worth (self-worth match). If our job role or the organisation is important to our self-worth, we are more likely to become self invested as it is important to us. For example someone who is passionate about sport, may gain a self-worth match when working for a sports club and so is willing to invest more of themselves. Therefore it may be posited that those individuals who believe that they have chosen a particular job or organisation and who consider an organisational target links to their self- worth may develop feelings of PO earlier than other individuals.

Thus we would posit that "prior" attachments may speed up feelings of PO for organisational targets if the individual believes that these targets link to their self-worth. Conversely, some individuals may not invest as much of themselves into organisational targets as their self-worth is tied to other targets such as family or hobbies and/or the organisational target may not be as attractive to them. In these instances feelings of PO manifestation and development may be slower or may not occur at all.

Therefore, whilst self-identity has been posited as a motive for feelings of PO, have we underestimated the importance of identity when we consider the routes to PO? Does identity play a key mediating role in PO manifestation because how we see ourselves links directly to how we may view organisational targets? Hillenbrand et al (2015) considers how PO manifests itself in the individual using identity to form the basis of a theoretical proposition. They posit that when we make a statement regarding a target we are also simultaneously making a statement about ourselves thus including something about how we perceive our own identity. Using personal and social identity theories they intimate four, dynamic layers of the working self-concept which are linked to individual PO manifestation. Two layers sit within our personal identity; core self and learned self that underpin two further layers which sit within our social identity; lived self and perceived self. They hypothesise that PO manifestation can occur in all four levels of self and occurs if a target allows an individual to act or live in a congruent manner. So if an individual believes they are altruistic, PO manifestation may occur when working for an organisation which shares their values for example working for a charity. The organisation may be congruent with their core and learnt self allowing a person to maintain their true self who is able to "live" their working life being "perceived" by others as giving back. However using this example, if PO manifestation only occurs at the perceived self levels and an individual works for a charity because they want to look altruistic then the construct may be unstable if this is not also part of their core self. Hillenbrand et al (2015) bring identity to the forefront of PO, however further studies need to be undertaken to assess this hypothesis. Moreover there is no particular guidance of how the posited PO routes might be linked to identity. Recent organisational scholars have made little reference to this paper nor to the role that identity might play in the manifestation of PO. Therefore we would suggest that further work needs to be undertaken to build on the work of Hillenbrand et al (2015) to ascertain how our identity might relate to the current PO routes alongside further research.

PO research has focussed mainly on the establishment/middle career phases of individuals (Cron 1984; Cron and Slocum 1986; Greenhaus et al 2010; Griffin et al 2014; Johnson and LaFrance 2016; Super 1975, 1980) often with a mean/average age of samples in their thirties (including Pierce et al (2004), average age of respondents 35.6; Van Dyne and Pierce (2004), average age 34; Bernhard and O'Driscoll (2011) mean age 39; Avey ey al (2012) mean age 41; Alok (2014) average age31.76; Brown et al (2014) average age in study one 36.7 years and in study two, age 32; Wang et al (2018), average age in study one 33.77). As scholars have mainly considered antecedents of PO the intention of prior studies has not been to consider how PO alters over time and the factors that might induce a change in those feelings. However this does mean that the academic community has very limited understanding of how PO develops and perhaps more importantly no clear understanding of PO manifestation. Given the large numbers of young people employed in our workplaces who have the opportunity to develop PO at a time point when their professional identities are still developing and malleable, this gap in the psychological ownership literature seems to be a pertinent place to investigate further. During the organisational entry or initiation phase considered to be the first two years of employment, (Cron 1984; Cron and Slocum 1986; Greenhaus et al 2010; Dalton et al 1977; Greenhaus and Parasuraman1986) individuals are managing the demands of transitioning from education into working life assessing their future "possible selves" (Markus and Nurius, 1986). By researching individuals at the start of their career we have the opportunity for longitudinal studies which would provide us with a greater understanding of the way in which PO might appear then wax and wane during an individual's career.

This age group is of particular interest due to the changing nature of their relationship with possessions compared to previous generations. This group have had a greater exposure to brands via online channels which may influence the attractiveness of some workplace targets.

Certain organisations with very desirable products or image may result in individuals having already built mental relationships with said organisation. Organisations within areas such as sport, clothing or technology can be very prevalent in a young individual's life which results in said individual already feeling as if they have an intimate knowledge of the organisation or have invested themselves in the organisation. For example individuals who wear certain sports brands/watch the organisation's video's/admire the celebrity stars of the brand may already feel that the organisation reflects part of their identity. Moreover Molesworth et al (2016) posit that the traditional ownership model is changing due to our consumption of digital objects. Sites such as Facebook, Instagram and ITunes mean that we no longer own items yet still having feelings of attachment via our creations (pictures, news, timelines etc). Those born at the start of the century may have a very different view of ownership as they are more likely to share ownership (Facebook, Itunes) and rent/subscribe rather than buy (Netflix). These changing forms of ownership may therefore have implications for the development of PO in individuals and we would posit that studies regarding those individuals at the start of their career may be highly beneficial in our understanding of PO manifestation

Two of the three PO routes (intimate knowledge of target and investing self in target) may also be the reason why scholars have concentrated their research efforts on skilled workers including knowledge workers (Peng and Pierce (2015) and Wang et al (20018), supervisors and employees of an accounting firm (Mayhew et al (2007), business owners, senior managers and partners (Avey et al (2012), managers and technical staff (Alok (2013), Mustafa et al (2016) middle managers and university lecturers Adil and Kamal (2018)).

Whilst there have been limited research using broader samples of workers (Brown et al 2014 who state 51% of the sample were manager level positions which implies that 49% were not), overall there has been no concerted effort to broaden samples to all workers. Given that the possession and ownership literature implies that everyone is likely to have some degree of feelings towards their possessions, does it not also follow that this may be true regarding the potential for the majority of people to feel PO?

Investing self in target considers the relationship between ownership and the self and is well established in theories of possession and ownership. Within PO, Pierce et al (2001) suggest that investing in our creations is closely linked to the self which allows individuals to feel ownership for the items that they have created. Within a job role this might include implementing a new process, a new innovation or simply adding your name to a piece of work. Nevertheless there are many manual roles which also allow individuals to invest self in the target such as gardeners, car mechanics or chefs and we would suggest that scholars should not become too focussed on a particular group of workers. Automated jobs such as those within call centres provide fewer opportunities to invest self, however can we say for certain that these workers have no feelings of ownership for the job role or organisation? Prince (2003) undertook one of the few studies to focus on a different sample group and discovered that blue collar workers were likely to form an attachment to their organisation if they believed there was a prospect of future role enhancement. Therefore research using participants in manual roles or part time work would be a benefit to ascertain if all workers have an opportunity to gain feelings of ownership or if it most frequently occurs with knowledge workers.

PO Motives

As mentioned previously, Pierce et al (2001) suggests that PO exists to satisfy certain human motives or roots and posited three key motives:

Efficacy and Effectance - Pierce et al (2001) posit that to feel in control of what we own, individuals will explore their environment thus satisfying the need of efficacious. By having the opportunity to explore and control ones environment, Pierce et al (2003) suggest it produces intrinsic pleasure and extrinsic satisfaction for individuals.

Furby's (1978a) study of possessions in humans suggested that an often mentioned characteristic of ownership and a key reasons why individuals are motivated by ownership and possessions is the instrumental function that possessions provide defined as "makes possible some activity or convenience for owner" (p58), This instrumental convenience provides a means to an end although possibly with different motivational outcomes e.g. a bicycle may result in an adult feeling healthier, it may be a way to spend time with friends for a child or may be a means of getting to school for a teenager. Therefore several people may own a similar possession, but the desired outcome for each individual may often be different. Furby (1978a) suggests that this is a form of effectance motivation allows us to control and affect our possessions in a manner which is important to us. She suggests that this feeling of control that owning an object can provide is especially important for adolescents.

Self-identity is the second motive for PO (Pierce et al 2001) and there are clear links to the literature of possession and ownership. McClelland (1951); Prelinger (1959); Furby (1978a) and Belk (1988) suggest that often when an emotional connection is made with a target it becomes part of our identity or extended self.

The idea that possessions and our self-identities are closely linked is not a new supposition with James in 1890 (p291-292) providing a belief regarding the entwining of possessions and self-identity.

As early as 1690, Locke suggested that as well as owning ourselves, we own our labour and what we produce from our labour. Today however, whilst some individuals in certain roles e.g. artists and farmers may be able to clearly see the fruits of their labour; for many it is a harder distinction to make. Often our output or ideas becomes the ownership of the organisation and whilst some may ensure that ideas contributed are clearly denoted as "my" idea, often the source of ownership within the workplace is harder to define.

Belk (1988) concurred suggesting that possessions can be more than material goods and could conceivably be the results of our hard work or our ideas.

As alluded to by Hillenbrand et al (2015) possessions may symbolise something about the self, be it a gold medal won at a school sports day or the title on your door which reads "Managing Director". Possessions can be both functional as well as denote status, social power and accomplishments and some can eventually signify who we are and thus these symbols change from being "mine" to part of "me" (Belk 1988, Ferraro, Edson Escalas and Bettman 2011).

Galvin et al (2015) who considered narcissistic organisational identification suggest that in the same way that a material object can become part of the owner's identity, so to can an intangible object such as an organisation. Possessions often reflect who we are and how we wish to be seen by others and this interactive process helps us emotionally connect and maintain a sense of how we are. We hear phrases such as "They are a company man" which suggests that the individual and the organisational identity has become somehow linked. Whilst this connection can occur with a number of organisational based targets such as an individual's job and their work tools, is it possible that PO targets are also linked to social identity in addition to our personal identity? Pierce and Jussila (2010) suggest that collective PO is socially constructed and posit that social identity (a possible additional motive for collective PO) may be significant in the emergence of group PO, however is it also true that any workplace target is partly socially constructed? As mentioned previously, Hillenbrand et al (2015) suggested that within their four layers of PO manifestation, two layers are linked to social identity (lived and perceived layers) proposing that PO manifestation may allow individuals to be seen or live out certain behaviours or emotions via said target. We may take a particular job role or work for a particular organisation due to how we wish to be seen by others or how we wish to live out our working life.

Sense of place or belonging is the final motive/root suggested by Pierce et al, (2001) and provides both physical and psychic health (Porteous 1976). This isn't only a tangible item such as a house, but something that provides psychological security (Brown, Perkins and Brown 2003). There is very little possession or ownership research which refers to a sense of place or belonging in the possession literature, although (Belk 1988 p.153) refers to the home as "a symbolic body for the family." Thus the origins of this motive derive from philosophers and the ethological concepts of territoriality. Simone Weil (1952) suggests that having a place is a "need of the human soul" (p41), whilst Porteous (1976) proposes that if we control our territory or the space around us, it satisfies three key areas; identity, security and stimulation. Individuals control their spaces in a similar way to animals by personalising and defending our territories.

In addition there has been comparatively little research regarding sense of belonging/home within organizational studies. Whilst it has generally been of interest to scholars for generations, relatively fewer works approach this topic from an organizational stance and most have considered work and belonging from a negative stance (Hershcovis et al. 2017; Newheiser et al. 2017). Porteous (1976) suggests that our home is at the core of these feelings of identity and whilst our office may become important to us, because other people such as cleaners and workmen can gain regular access, the feelings of "other homes" are never as intense. However Avey et al (2009) has suggested that belonging to a department, group or the organisation may mean that the socio-emotional feelings of having a place may be fulfilled.

Whereas it feels intuitively that a sense of belonging is important to individuals within the workplace, there does not seem to be the same level of theoretical underpinning to link this to psychological ownership,

Whilst the above three roots/motives have been most widely considered, Avey et al (2009) have posited that both accountability and territoriality are further PO motives. They used Higgen's (1997) regulatory focus theory as a basis for their proposals, suggesting that self efficacy, belongingness, self-identity along with accountability, are examples of promotion orientated feelings whereas territoriality would be considered to be a preventative focus. They posited that individuals with promotive PO would be more likely to share information, and hold themselves and others accountable, whereas a preventative PO viewpoint would result in territorial behaviour such as withholding information and ideas or showing defensive behaviour.

Avey et al (2009) suggest that accountability is a PO motive because of our motivation to ensure we take control for what happens to targets which we believe are an extension of ourselves. In addition because of our need to possess a space or place, Avey et al (2009) suggest that territoriality may sometimes be a factor in those people with a strong level of PO. This may be low level behaviour such as placing a jacket over the back of a chair to more extreme behaviour where individuals withhold information or trying to claim a shared resource as their own (Brown 2009).

Brown et al (2005) in an earlier piece had suggested that territoriality is a behavioural outcome and Alok's (2014) research concluded that promotion and preventative PO are different and could not be considered part of a multidimensional construct. Nevertheless, Avey et al (2012) used the same promotion PO scale in a further study exploring ethical leadership and concluded that the measures are substantiated. Olckers (2013) suggests that Avey et al (2009) has focussed on the cognitive elements of territoriality rather than behavioural aspect and consequently should not be discounted

Stimulation (activation or arousal) was briefly mentioned by Pierce et al., 2003 research in reference to Porteous (1976) although less emphasis was originally attached to its potential role as a key motive. Nevertheless (Pierce and Jussila 2011; Rantanen and Jussila 2011; Jussila et al. 2012; Jussila et al. 2015a) have included stimulation as a fourth motive during the intervening period although it has not been widely discussed by other scholars, perhaps due to the conceptual nature of the papers.

There are questions that arise from the research on possessions and ownership including the omission of both happiness and power in Furby's analysis. The "happiness, enjoyment and comfort of the owner" (Furby 1978a) category rated highly with most age groups as their motivation for owning possessions and particularly the age groups of young adults upwards. Dolan (2015) suggests that happiness is reflected in both pleasure and purpose and this seems relevant when we consider our possessions. We have some possessions which we use solely because they give us great pleasure such as a beautiful picture, but there are also other possessions that make us happy because they engage us in a purposeful activity such as cooking, exercising or studying. When Furby's participants were asked about their most important possessions and why they were so important, the most frequently occurring category for all age groups was "makes possible some activity or convenience for owner." Therefore we suggest that this "instrumental convenience" of possessions provides participants a purposeful opportunity. It seems possible that a motives for PO not currently considered could be that work can make us happy. Work combines both pleasure and purpose and whilst happiness is a challenging concept to measure if we link back to theories of possession and ownership there is a clear link.

Secondly, the exclusion of power in the discussion of results by Furby "Owner has rights to use, decide use, and/or control and power over object" is interesting as only the term control is used throughout the findings. McClelland (1951) was one of the early theorists who considered the breadth of feelings of ownership for targets and is often cited due to his suggestions regarding the impact of control. However rereading his work he initially says "Several people have suggested that the perception of power or control determines whether or not something is perceived as part of the self" (p538 1951). McClelland (1951) does not name the "several people" and the outcome of these conversations, but does continue his discussion only using the term control. Belk (1988) when discussing McClelland's (1951) work suggests that targets are part of self when they are under an individuals' power and control, but again does not expand.

It is challenging to find an adequate definition of the differences between control and power which may be one reason why "power" has been omitted. One comparison found by Mulgan (1991 cited in McMahon 2002) suggests that power is a property which can be possessed, stored away and then harnessed, whilst control is a system of "influences, commands and feedback" (2002 p2). King and Lawley (2016) briefly discuss power as a possession when considering power and politics in organisations and suggest it is something that is used to further the interests of a group or individual.

In many instances researchers have used the words interchangeably although there is a great deal more research regarding power from those with a sociological or political perspective (before its inclusion in the management literature) and control from a psychological, engineering or technological viewpoint (again then being taken forward by scholars interested in the management field). This may go some way to explaining the use of control rather than power in possession theory. It is a thought provoking omission however and further research may be warranted to conclude if these terms can be used interchangeably when considering our relationship with workplace targets.

Future Directions

To conclude, this paper sought to review the research regarding psychological ownership and its conceptual core of a sense of possession and establish areas of inconsistency and future directions.

By providing a synthesis of the links between the two constructs, further consideration should be made in several areas. The conceptualisation of PO is still unclear in certain areas especially concerning PO motives and regarding the role of happiness as a possible PO route. We know that many of our possessions bring us happiness and Furby's (1978a) research suggested this was particularly true for adults. Work for many brings a sense of purpose and pleasure (at times) which are considered key elements of happiness (Dolan 2015), yet this is not considered a PO motive

Future authors may also wish to consider the role of power within PO possibly combined with some of the leadership theories and how PO may develop, wain or grow during a working lifetime.

PO would benefit from some qualitative studies for greater depth of understanding and to verify some of the current measures and questions used. There is also an opportunity to survey a wider range of workers including those in unskilled or manual roles to assess the importance of autonomy and job design.

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