



# **The Minnesota Perspective on Psychological Ownership:**

## **Theory and Empiricism**

# Psychological Ownership

*“‘**Mine**’ a small word ... It is deceptive in its power and importance ... It controls our behavior, but we rarely notice, as we move about the world restricting ourselves to narrow walkways and to those places for which we have the keys” (slightly modified from Rudmin, 1994, p. 55)*

- **Topical Outline:**

- Acknowledgments and Expressions of Appreciated Influence

- My ‘Ownership’ Journey:

- From Ownership as something **‘real’** to Ownership as a **‘psychological phenomenon’**

- Overview of a Theory of Psychological Ownership

- Current Empirical Evidence

- Emergence of the Collective Psychological Construct

- Research Questions for Tomorrow

# Acknowledgments and Expressions of Appreciated Influence

- **Helga Dittmar** ‘*The Social Psychology of Material Possessions: To Have is to Be*’ (1992); and articles 1989, 1991, 1992
- **Lita Furby** – A series of published articles: 1976, 1978, 1980, 1991
- **Floyd W. Rudmin** ‘*To Have Possessions: A Handbook on Ownership and Property (Special Issue Journal of Social Behavior and Personality, 1991)*’; and articles 1990, 1994, 1999, 1987 (Rudmin & Berry)
- **My University of Minnesota Colleagues** –Larry Cummings, Tatiana Kostova, Kurt Dirks, and Linn Van Dyne
- **Significant Other Co-authors:** Iiro Jussila, Michael O’Driscoll, Graham Brown, Craig Crossley, and He Peng
- **Many, Many Others** –With Regrets, too Numerous to Mention

# My Ownership Journey: From Legal to Psychological

*Ownership is a “dual creation, part attitude, part object, part in the ‘mind,’ and part ‘real’” (Etzioni, 1991, p. 66)*

— Primary Research Stream – Late 1970s, early 1980s:

Job Design, Work Scheduling, Organization-based Self-esteem

— Mid 1980s,

Invitation -Monitor the Psychological Climate of an Employee Ownership arrangement

-- Widespread Beliefs at least in North America

Employee Owned, Employee Managed Cooperatives in the US date back to the late 1700s; Legislation creating ESOPs appears during the mid-1970s

\* “by making [an employee] a shareholder in the business employing him ... it stimulates his zeal and careful working ....” (*Catherine Webb, 1912*)

\* “When a worker is given a piece of the action, [she] he will be motivated to work harder, gripe less ....” (*U.S. News and World, 1982*)

\* worker alienation can be arrested through employee ownership of organizations (*Derrick & Phipps, 1969; Vanek, 1975*).

## Review of the Employee Ownership Literature

In 'Employee Ownership: A Conceptual Model of Process and Effects' *Academy of Management Review* (1991, Pierce, Rubinfeld, & Morgan).

- We Observed and Noted:
  - inconsistent effects
  - employee ownership is “complex and multidimensional in nature,” ... “operating as both a formal (legal) arrangement and as a psychological state”
  - operationalization a formal ownership system must lead to the emergence of **‘psychological ownership,’ ....**
- AMR Reviewer’s A serendipitous act #1
- My Transition from Ownership as something, in part, **‘REAL’** to something, in part, ‘in the **MIND.**’
- My journey:
  - Sparked by the chance occurrence of a friend’s request,
  - Fanned and fueled by a serendipitous comment from an AMR reviewer

# A Theory of Psychological Ownership: The Core Elements

*“a man’s Self is the sum total of all that he can call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his cloths and his house, his wife and children ... his reputation and works, ... If they was and prosper, he feels triumphant; if they dwindle and die he feels cast down ... not necessarily in the same degree for each ..., but in much the same way for all” (James, 1890, p. 291-293)*

**Psychological Ownership Conceptually Defined:** “that state where an individual feels as though the target of ownership (or a piece of that target) is theirs (i.e., it is MINE!).” (p. 299)

## **The Core of Psychological Ownership:**

- feeling of possessiveness,
- being psychologically tied to an object,
- the object becomes part of the extended self (Belk, 1988; Furby, 1978a).

‘there is a fine line between that which is **me** and that which is considered **mine**’ (James, 1890)

## **Type of State:**

- Cognitive / Affective / Motivational

## **Question Posed and Answered:**

- What do I feel is mine, and a part of me?

## **Levels of Manifestation:**

- Individual-level of analysis:

Mine – personal feelings of exclusive ownership

Ours – personal feelings of shared ownership

- Group-level of analysis:

Collective Psychological Ownership – a socially constructed collectively held mind-set; inclusive of personal feelings of ownership ('ours' – a dual possessive pronoun)

## **Targets of Ownership:**

- Objects that are both 'material' and 'non-material' in nature.
- Empirically Derived Classification Typology (Pierce & Jussila, 2011)
  1. Personal Attributes (e.g., personal skills)
  2. Mental Processes (e.g., thoughts, ideas)
  3. Objects Material in Nature (e.g., hammer)
  4. People / Relationships (e.g., partner, teammate)
  5. Space (e.g., office)
  6. Responsibilities (e.g., job)
  7. Work Outcomes (e.g., that which gets created, produced)
  8. Actions / Processes (e.g., helping, speaking up)
  9. Social System (e.g., work team, organization)
- Target Attributes: Visible, Attractive, ...



# Genesis: Diverse Perspectives

- Genetics

- “The impulse to collect and hoard various objects is displayed ... by almost all human beings, and seems to be due to a true instinct ...” (McDougall, 1908)

- Socialization Practices

- Parental Instructions (Litwinski, 1942)

‘Go and look for **your** bucket, it is time to go home.’

‘Not Yours, Don’t Touch’!!!!

- Socio-biological

- Biology and Social Experiences both shape people’s relations with objects (Dittmar, 1992)

## Motives for (Roots) and Satisfied by Psychological Ownership:

\*The reasons for, and not the cause of, the existence of psychological ownership

- **Effectance (competence) Motivation** (White, 1959)
- **Self-identity** self-understanding; expression of self to others; maintenance of the continuity of self-identity (Mead, 1934)
- **Home** a place in which to dwell; 'being in the world' anchoring oneself in time and (Duncan, 1981; Heidegger, 1967; Polanyi, 1962; Weil, 1952)
- **Stimulation** (Darling, 1937; Duncan, 1981; Kamptner, 1989; Porteous, 1976)

## **‘Routes to’ Ownership Feelings**

- **Control** exercised and experienced over the target of ownership (Sartre, 1943; Furby, 1978; Prelinger, 1959; Tunan, 1984)

- **Intimate Knowing** of the target of ownership

Things that are lived with over an extended period of time, psychologically become experienced as ‘mine’ (James, 1890)

After working the garden for a long and uninterrupted period of time, the “gardener comes to be rooted [because of familiarity] in the garden” (Weil, 1952, p.33-35)

- **Investment of the Self** into the target of ownership

That which flows from the self tends to give rise to ‘the sense of it being mine and a part of me’ (Locke, 1690; Sartre, 1943; Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981)

# The Empirical Evidence

## Consequences:

Note: Positive and Negative Effects have been Hypothesized

e.g., 'Support for' and Resistance to' Organizational Change (Dirks, Cummings, & Pierce, 1996)

## Contingencies (types of change):

Support: Personally Initialed, Additive, Evolutionary

Resistance: Imposed, Subtractive, Radical

## Work-related Attitudes:

Job Satisfaction (Yang et al., 2010)

Organizational Commitment (Avey et al., 2008)

Alienation (Pierce & Van Dyne, 1993)

Relationship Intentions: turnover, continuance (Li, 2008)

Psychological Withdrawal (Li, 2008)

Organization-based Self-esteem (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004)

Experienced Responsibility (Brown et al., 2013)

Target Valuation (Peck & Shu, 2009)

...



## Motivation:

Internal (Brown et al., 2013)

## Work-related Behaviors:

In-role Performance (Kostova, 1996)

Entrepreneurial Behavior (Sieger et al., 2013)

Firm Performance (Sieger et al., 2013)

Org. Citizenship Behaviors (O'Driscoll et al., 2006)

Counterproductive Org. Behaviors (Peng & Pierce, 2013)

Territorial Behaviors (Brown & Crossley, 2008)

Information / Knowledge-sharing / hoarding (Han et al., 2008)

Escalation of Commitment (Guha, 2009)

## **Antecedents (Direct):**

Experienced Target Control over the Ownership Target  
(e.g., Pierce et al., 2004)

Intimate Knowing of the Ownership Target  
(e.g., Brown, Pierce, & Crossley, 2013)

Investment of the Self into the Target of Ownership  
(e.g., Brown et al., 2013)

## **Antecedents (Indirect):**

### Employee Organizational Ownership

Formal Employee Organizational Ownership (Van Dyne & Pierce, 1993)

- a. Equity Shares (also Dunford, Schleicher & Zhu, 2009)
- b. Influence (Pierce, 1995)
- c. Information (also Chi & Han, 2008; Dunford et al., 2009)

Profit Sharing (Chi & Han, 2008)

### Sources of Work Environment Structure

Job Design Autonomy (e.g., Pierce, O'Driscoll, & Coghlan, 2004)

Job Complexity (e.g., Brown, Pierce, & Crossley, 2013)

Non-Routine Technology (e.g., Pierce et al., 2004)

Participative Decision Making (e.g., Pierce et al., 2004; Chi & Han, 2008)

Self-management (freedom, independence; Liu, Wang, Lee, & Hui, 2009)

## Work and Organizational Experiences:

### Organizational Justice

Procedural Justice (Chi & Han, 2008)

Distributive Justice (Chi & Han, 2008)

### Leadership:

Task-oriented Leadership (Li, 2008)

Transformational Leadership (Bernhard & O'Driscoll, 2011)

### Ownership Imagery and Object Touching (Peck & Shu, 2009)

## **Correlates**

Organizational Identification

Organizational Internalization

Job Involvement

Individual Differences

Locus of Control

Individualism



# Collective Psychological Ownership:

## Our Most Recent Work

*“**Ours**’ ... arising out of a shared event, when collectively experienced and recognized by a group of people who experience themselves as ‘us; It is ‘deceptive in its power and importance,’ capable of binding people together and controlling their behavior in pursuit of a common cause (e.g., marking, claiming, and defending a territory)” (Pierce & Jussila, 2010, p. 827).*

# Key Elements: Theory of Collective Psychological Ownership

## I. Genesis of the Idea Underpinning CPO

- JOB Reviewer's Comment – A serendipitous act #2

Psychological ownership within the job design context: Revision of the Job Characteristics Model' (Pierce, Jussila, & Cummings, 2010, JOB)

- Sociological and anthropological observations of street gangs having feelings of ownership for a street corner (Altman, 1975; Thrasher, 1927; Yablonsky, 1962)
- Furby's (1980) acknowledgment of a psychology of collective possession
- Weick and Roberts (1993), note that under certain conditions groups can develop a 'mind set of its own' (i.e., a collective cognition)

## **2. CPO Conceptually Defined**

*“collective psychological ownership is the collectively held sense (feeling) that this target of ownership (or a piece of that target) is collectively ‘ours’” (Pierce & Jussila, 2010, p. 812)*

## **3. A Socially Constructed State (cognitive/affective)**

As Such:

It is inter-subjective in nature

It transcends Individual Cognition/Affect

It is part of a group's ‘extended sense of ‘us’”

## 4. Emergent Process

CPO builds upon and extends theorizing on individual-level psychological ownership

### a. Motives (i.e., reasons for and not the cause)

Effectance motivation (White, 1959; Furby 1978)

Self-identity (Dittmar, 1992, Mead, 1932)

Home (Having a Place in which to Dwell; Dreyfus, 1991; Heidegger, 1967; Polanyi, 1972)

and

Need for Social Identity – being propelled to see one's self and to be seen by others as a part of a particular group of people

Social-identity is “that part of the individual's self-concept which derives from knowledge of his[her] membership of a social group ...” (Tajfel, 1981 p. 255)

(Emergence cont.)

**b. 'Routes to' and Emergence of CPO**

Recognition that there has been 'joint travel' down one or more of the paths that creates the sense of ownership

Collective recognition of:

a. shared control over the target of ownership

b. shared intimate knowing of the target

and/or

c. shared investment of the different group member's selves into the target of ownership

## Thus:

1. As objects become grounded, they become for the individual 'mine' as s/he finds themselves present in them, and they become a part of the extended self (Belk, 1988; Dittmar, 1992).
2. The individual recognizes that they are not alone in being psychologically tied to the object (i.e., at the individual-level there is a shift from 'mine' to 'ours').
3. Through interactive dynamics there is a recognition of an 'us' and a transition from a '**not us and ours**' to '**us and ours**,' and the object becomes a part of the group's 'extended sense of us'

Interactive Dynamics -i.e., over time and through group processes involving shared experiences, thoughts, emotions, and conversations around those experiences there emerges a sense of 'us' and 'ours' [a single and shared mind-set around the target of ownership.]



## **4. Developmental Boundary Conditions**

Individualism / Collectivism

Interdependence (task, goal, feedback, and outcome)

Sense of Community (cohesion, 'we-ness')

## 5. Outcomes

### Positive and Negative Effects

Individual Level (same as with individual-level psychological ownership)

### Group-level

Territorial Behaviors (e.g., marking, defending) (+)

Group Potency (+)

Group Learning (+)

Social Loafing (-)

Performance Effectiveness (+)

...

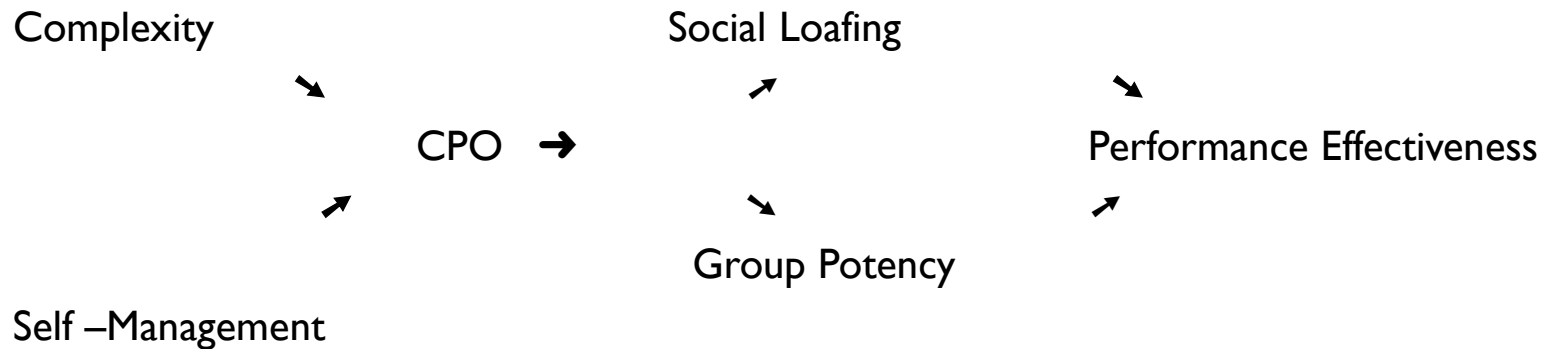


# Where are We Today: Current Focus (Pierce, Jussila, & Li)

\* Instrument Development and Construct Validation

## Model Tested

### Team Work:



\* **Next:** Sample for the conduct of a Substantive Look at the emergence and effects of CPO

# Individual-level Psychological Ownership:

## Research Questions of Importance and Interest

### Measurement

Instructions: Think about the home, boat, or cabin that you own or co-own with someone, and the experiences and feelings associated with the statement 'this is my (our) house!' The following questions deal with the '*sense of ownership*' that you feel for the organization that you work for. Indicate the degree to which you personally agree or disagree with the following statements:

1. I feel a very high degree of personal ownership for this organization.
2. This is my organization.

...

Question: Are we currently capturing the richness of the construct, in terms of the depth of the belief and the emotional ownership experience?

# Roots and the Triggering Process

The roots of psychological ownership (e.g., self-identity, home) have been cast as the reasons 'why' the state of psychological ownership exists, instead of being seen as the 'cause.'

**Question:** Since we don't develop feelings of ownership for every object that we come into contact with, what is it that triggers / activates the motives that serve as the 'roots' of psychological ownership?

Where does the trigger lie, within the:

- individual (e.g., a motive in disequilibrium)?
- target (e.g., its attractiveness, perceived as open and malleable)?

## Developmental Time

Hume (1739/1962) suggested that 'long' not 'short' possession gives rise to deep-seated affect for different objects.

Peck and Shu (2009) appear to have created a sense of ownership within the matter of minutes through their laboratory manipulation.

Question: How much time is needed in order for a sense of ownership that is 'deep-seated' and not ephemeral to manifest itself?

## **Route Traveled and the Developmental Process**

Routes: control, intimate knowing, and/or investment of the self

**Question:** Does the 'route' traveled make a difference in terms of the depth and life of the ownership experience?

## Possession as an Act (event) vs. the Joining of Me and Mine

James (1890) indicated that there is a fine and almost indistinguishable line between 'me' and that which is considered 'mine.'

Question: Where is the line which differentiates 'mine' as in mere possession, and 'mine' as a part of the extended self (i.e., what, where, and when is there a distinction between possessiveness and the experience of possession as part of the self?)

Question: Are there attitudinal, motivational, and behavioral differences associated with experiencing something part of me, or as just 'mine.'

## **Boundary Conditions and the Transition from Positive to Negative Effects**

Dirks, Cummings, and Pierce (1996) have suggested that organization-based psychological ownership, for example, can result in both a resistance to and the promotion of organizational change

We have witnessed a relationship between psychological ownership and both 'information sharing' and 'information hoarding' (Han et al., 2008; Peng & Pierce 2013)

**Question:** What other ownership effects present these two faces, and what are the boundary conditions that affect the transition from positive to negative effects?



## **The Withering and Demise of Ownership Feelings**

There are those instances when it appears as though feelings of ownership do not last forever.

**Question:** What are the events and what is the process that is associated with the withering (demise) of ownership feelings?



## **Genuine and False Psychological Ownership**

Some people seem to have a strong need for control or dominance over others. In the process, they may falsely express a sense of ownership over certain targets simply to keep others from using, laying a similar claim, or taking possession.

**Question:** How will we know when the claims are genuine (false), and who are those who can make the false expressions?



**Thank you**