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Source: *The Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Apr., 2001), pp. 298-310

Published by: [Academy of Management](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/259124>

Accessed: 06/01/2015 07:52

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NOTE

TOWARD A THEORY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL OWNERSHIP IN ORGANIZATIONS

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Building upon the observation that individuals feel ownership toward a variety of targets, we suggest that under certain conditions, organizational members can develop feelings of ownership toward the organization and various organizational factors. We define psychological ownership, identify its "roots" and the primary "routes" through which it develops, and propose certain organizational outcomes. We discuss the conceptual distinctiveness of psychological ownership from a set of related constructs and suggest some theoretical and managerial implications of our theory.

Management scholars, practitioners, and consultants, employing an array of concepts, have recently focused their attention on ownership as a psychological phenomenon. Pierce, Rubinfeld, and Morgan (1991), in a review of the employee ownership literature, theorize that formal ownership may produce positive attitudinal and behavioral effects through psychologically experienced ownership. Kubzansky and Druskat (1993) suggest that the psychological sense of ownership may be an integral part of the em-

ployee's relationship with the organization. Pratt and Dutton (2000) note that ownership, as an attitudinal state, becomes attached to issues that organizational members feel worthy of attentional investment. Brown (1989) suggests that psychological ownership is key to organization competitiveness.

Although researchers have recognized that psychological ownership may be an important organizational phenomenon, the current organizational literature on this topic is rather fragmented and underdeveloped. Insights into the construct can be gleaned, however, from related literature in sociology, philosophy, human development, and psychology. James' (1890) and Prelinger's (1959) work on the self and nonself region, Etzioni's (1991) work on the objective and subjective aspects of ownership, Heider's (1958) research on the development of attitudes of ownership toward objects within the self region, and various scholars' work on the "psychology of mine" (cf. Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Litwinski, 1947) provide insights into the psychological phenomenon of ownership. We draw from these writings and the organizational scholarship on commitment, identification, and internalization (cf. Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Pratt, 1998) to

Kurt T. Dirks and Tatiana Kostova contributed equally to this work. Major portions of this paper were written while Jon L. Pierce was visiting at the Department of Psychology and the School of Management Studies at The University of Waikato, in Hamilton, New Zealand. The time and support he received from both academic units and The University of Waikato are appreciated.

We acknowledge the contributions made to our thinking and understanding of psychological ownership by numerous scholars. We have been particularly influenced by the work of L. Furby, H. Dittmar, and F. W. Rudmin, and by our conversations with S. Albert and M. Pratt. We appreciate the constructive comments and guidance provided by former *AMR* consulting editor Chris Earley and the anonymous reviewers.

Finally, we dedicate this paper to the late Larry L. Cummings—mentor, colleague, and friend—for the contributions he made to our work on psychological ownership.

introduce a theory of psychological ownership in organizations.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this section we briefly review extant research on the psychology of ownership that suggests this state exists in the broader realm of the human condition. We then define psychological ownership and explore its "roots"—that is, the motives served for the individual by this state. Finally, we propose that psychological ownership can manifest itself in organizations as it does in other contexts.

Psychological Experiences of Ownership

There is a body of literature—philosophically, empirically, or clinically anchored—that suggests the psychology of possession is well rooted in people. According to Dittmar (1992), it is common for people to psychologically experience the connection between self and various targets of possession, such as homes, automobiles, and other people. Possessions come to play such a dominant role in the owner's identity that they become part of the extended self (Belk, 1988; Dittmar, 1992). Sartre, in his treatise on "being and nothingness," notes that "to have" (along with "to do" and "to be") is one of the three categories of human existence and that "the totality of my possessions reflects the totality of my being. . . . I am what I have. . . . What is mine is myself" (1969: 591–592). Likewise, James comments on the fine line between "me" and "mine": "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 wife and children, . . . his land, and yacht and bank account" (1890: 291).¹

Although ownership is generally experienced toward an object, it can also be felt toward non-physical entities, such as ideas, artistic creations, and other people. Isaacs (1933) observed feelings of ownership among children toward nursery rhymes and songs. Heider (1958) discussed the conflicts among scientists as to the parentage of ideas or inventions (Isaacs, 1933). Feelings of ownership have important psycho-

logical and behavioral effects. The growth of possessions produces a positive and uplifting effect (Formanek, 1991), whereas the loss of possessions leads to "shrinkage of our personality, a partial conversion of ourselves to nothingness" (James, 1890: 178). Emotions spark when we experience the invasion of what we feel is "ours."

In summary, both past research and social practice indicate that (1) the feeling of ownership is part of the human condition; (2) people develop feelings of ownership toward a variety of objects, both material and immaterial in nature; and (3) feelings of ownership have important behavioral, emotional, and psychological consequences.

Psychological Ownership Defined

Etzioni observes that ownership is a "dual creation, part attitude, part object, part in the mind, part 'real'" (1991: 466). As a state of the mind, psychological ownership (Pierce et al., 1991) is that state in which individuals feel² as though the target of ownership (material or immaterial in nature) or a piece of it is "theirs" (i.e., "It is MINE!"). The core of psychological ownership is the feeling of possessiveness and of being psychologically tied to an object. One's possessions are felt as extensions of the self (Belk, 1988; Dittmar, 1992; Furby, 1978a,b)—"what is mine becomes (in my feelings) part of ME" (Isaacs, 1933: 225)—and, thus, the state of psychological ownership emerges. When property is grounded psychologically, it becomes, for the individual, "mine," as the individual finds himself or herself present in it (Kline & France, 1899), and it within the individual. Thus, the target becomes part of the psychological owner's identity.

The Roots of Psychological Ownership

The search for the roots of psychological ownership begins when we address the question "Why does psychological ownership exist?" or,

¹ We note the dated and sexist language in this and other quotations appearing in this paper. We have included them for their overall conceptual contribution to the theme of our work.

² The word "feel" as employed here is a complex state for the individual. It represents a condition in which one is aware through intellectual perception; it reflects thoughts, beliefs, and awareness, coupled with an emotional or affective sensation. Feelings of ownership are said to be pleasure producing per se (Beggan, 1992; Furby, 1978a,b; Nuttin, 1987; Porteous, 1976).

more specifically, "What is the motivation or function served for the individual by this state?" In response to this question, some explain the existence of this state as originating in an individual's genetic structure; others focus on nurturance.

Many scholars believe that people have an innate need to possess (Burk, 1900; Darling, 1937; Kline & France, 1899; Porteous, 1976; Weil, 1952). As McDougall states, "The impulse to collect various objects is displayed by almost all human beings, and seems to be due to a true instinct" (1923: 75). Yet Beaglehole (1932) argues that there is very little, if any, evidence supporting the notion of an innate ownership instinct. Others, mainly human development scholars (Furby, 1978b; Lewis & Brook, 1974; Seligman, 1975), suggest that ownership and its psychological state are learned in the early development process. Objects that can be controlled come to be viewed by the child as part of the self, and those that cannot fall in the nonself domain (Furby, 1978b; Lewis & Brook, 1974; Seligman, 1975).

Although no comprehensive taxonomy or empirical evidence currently exists that resolves the "roots" question, we concur with Dittmar (1992) that both genetic factors and experiences are important, and we propose that psychological ownership emerges because it satisfies certain human motives, some of them genetic and others social in nature. A number of such motives have been identified in the literature. Possessions "shape our consciousness, our self-awareness, and our perception of the world" (Dittmar, 1992: 65). Control over space per se and personalization of space as an assertion of identity are two satisfactions derived from ownership (Porteous, 1976). Possessions also provide the individual with "a place," symbolically captured by the concept of "home" (Dreyfus, 1991; Heidegger, 1967; Steiner, 1978; Weil, 1952). Drawing on this work, we suggest that the roots of psychological ownership can be found in three main motives: (1) efficacy and effectance, (2) self-identity, and (3) "having a place."

Efficacy and effectance. The motive underlying possession is, in large part, to be in control (Isaacs, 1933). Ownership and the rights that come with it allow individuals to explore and alter their environment, thus satisfying their innate need to be efficacious (Beggan, 1991; Furby, 1978a,b, 1980; White, 1959). Being the cause

through one's control or actions results in feelings of efficacy and pleasure and also creates extrinsic satisfaction as certain desirable outcomes are acquired. The desire to experience causal efficacy in altering the environment leads to attempts to take possession and to the emergence of ownership feelings.

Self-identity. Possessions also serve as symbolic expressions of the self since they are closely connected with self-identity and individuality (Dittmar, 1992; Mead, 1934; Porteous, 1976). It is through our interaction with possessions, coupled with a reflection upon their meaning, that "our sense of identity, our self-definitions, are established, maintained, reproduced and transformed" (Dittmar, 1992: 86). Thus, we suggest that people use ownership for the purpose of defining themselves, expressing their self-identity to others, and ensuring the continuity of the self across time.

Having a place. Ownership and the associated psychological state can also be explained in part by the individual's motive to possess a certain territory or space—to have a "home" in which to dwell (Ardrey, 1966; Darling, 1937, 1939; Duncan, 1981; Porteous, 1976). As Weil states, to have a place is an important "need of the human soul" (1952: 41). Similarly, Duncan (1981) speaks of home as a psychological phenomenon, and according to Heidegger, "When we inhabit something, it is no longer an object for us, but becomes part of us" (quoted in Dreyfus, 1991: 45). It is because of this motive and the possibility to satisfy it through ownership that people devote significant energy and resources to targets that can potentially become their home.

To summarize, feelings of ownership allow individuals to fulfill three basic human motives. These motives, therefore, are the reason for psychological ownership. Each motive facilitates the development of psychological ownership, rather than directly causes this state to occur. Based on this, we propose that psychological ownership manifests itself in organizations much as it does in other contexts because, as suggested in organizational behavior research, the motives for efficacy and effectance, self-identity, and having a place can be satisfied in organizations. Furthermore, there is empirical evidence that individuals express feelings of ownership toward their work (Beaglehole, 1932), their organization (Dirks, Cummings, & Pierce, 1996), the products they create (Das, 1993), their

jobs (Peters & Austin, 1985), the practices employed by their organizations (Kostova, 1998), and specific issues in their organizations (Pratt & Dutton, in press).

THE "ROUTES" TO PSYCHOLOGICAL OWNERSHIP

In the previous section we addressed the issue of *why* the state of psychological ownership exists. In this section we examine *how* organizational members come to feel ownership. Specifically, we identify three major routes (i.e., paths or mechanisms) through which psychological ownership emerges. Although we examine the three routes separately, we note that they are potentially interrelated.

Controlling the Target

Control of an object appears to be a key characteristic of the phenomenon of ownership. In their work on the semantics of ownership, Rudmin and Berry (1987) found that ownership basically means the ability to use and to control the use of objects. Furthermore, as research has shown, control exercised over an object eventually gives rise to feelings of ownership toward that object (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Dixon & Street, 1957; Sartre, 1969; Tuan, 1980, 1984; White, 1959). Much like parts of the body, objects that can be controlled become regarded as part of the self (McClelland, 1951), and the greater the amount of control, the more the object is experienced as part of the self (Ellwood, 1927; Furby, 1978a; Prelinger, 1959). In contrast, objects that cannot be controlled or that are controlled by others are not perceived as part of the self (Lewis & Brook, 1974; Seligman, 1975).

Organizations provide members with numerous opportunities to exercise varying degrees of control over a number of factors, each of which is a potential target of psychological ownership. Job design is such a factor (e.g., Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Jobs that provide greater autonomy imply higher levels of control and, thus, increase the likelihood that feelings of ownership toward the job will emerge. In contrast, some organizational factors decrease the possibility for individuals to exert control and, hence, may impede the development of psychological ownership. Centralization and formalization, for

example, tend to minimize the amount of control the average individual can hold. In such systems, individuals learn that nothing is "theirs," because power is placed in the structure and people have limited control over the organization or any part of it. Thus, we propose the following.

Proposition 1: There is a positive and causal relationship between the amount of control an employee has over a particular organizational factor and the degree of ownership the employee feels toward that factor.

Coming to Intimately Know the Target

Association with an object is so central to ownership that ownership is frequently framed in terms of association (Beggan & Brown, 1994). In fact, there is a causal relationship between the two, in that an individual's association with an object gives rise to feelings of ownership (e.g., Sartre, 1969). As James (1890) suggests, individuals develop feelings of ownership toward objects through a living relationship with them. Beaglehole (1932) also argues that through intimate knowledge of an object, person, or place, a fusion of the self with the object takes place. Weil illustrates this with an example of a gardener, who, "after a certain time, feels that the garden belongs to him" (1952: 33). Thus, people can feel that something is theirs by virtue of being associated and familiar with it. Through association we acquire information about the object and come to know it intimately (Beggan & Brown, 1994; Rudmin & Berry, 1987). The more information and the better the knowledge an individual has about an object, the deeper the relationship between the self and the object and, hence, the stronger the feeling of ownership toward it.

Organizations provide their members with a number of opportunities for getting to know potential targets of ownership, such as work, job, team, and project, by various processes of association. For example, when employees are given information about potential organizational targets of ownership (e.g., the mission of the organization, its goals, and its performance), they feel that they know the organization better and, as a result, may develop psychological ownership toward it. Information, however, may

not be sufficient to create a sense of ownership. The intensity of association (e.g., the number of interactions of the individual with the target) will also influence the outcome. A longer association with a target (e.g., long tenure) will likely lead to perceptions of knowing the target better, and, as a result, to a sense of ownership. Intimate knowledge can also be promoted by making information more accessible and less costly to acquire.

Proposition 2: There is a positive and causal relationship between the extent to which an employee intimately knows a particular organizational factor and the degree of ownership the employee feels toward that factor.

Investing the Self into the Target

The work of Locke (1690), Sartre (1969), and Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981), among others, provides us with insight into the relationship between work and psychological ownership. Locke (1690) argues that we own our labor and, therefore, that we often feel we own that which we create, shape, or produce. Similarly, Marx (1976) reasons that through our labor we invest our psychic energy into the products that we create; as a result, these products become representations of the self, much like our words, thoughts, and emotions. Hence, individuals own the objects they have created in much the same way they own themselves (Durkheim, 1957). The investment of an individual's energy, time, effort, and attention into objects causes the self to become one with the object and to develop feelings of ownership toward that object (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981).

Organizations provide a wealth of opportunities for their members to invest themselves into different facets, such as job, products, customers, projects, work teams, or assignments, and, therefore, to feel ownership toward those targets. Workers, for example, may feel ownership toward their machines, their work, and the products of their labor (Beaglehole, 1932). The investment of the self comes in many forms, including investment of one's time; ideas; skills; and physical, psychological, and intellectual energies. As a result, the individual may begin to feel that the target of ownership flows from the self. The more individuals invest themselves into a tar-

get, the stronger their psychological ownership for that target will be.

Different activities in organizations imply different levels of self-investment. For example, more complex jobs and nonroutine technologies allow individuals to exercise higher discretion, making it more likely that they will invest more of their own ideas, unique knowledge, and personal style. The most obvious and powerful means by which individuals invest themselves into objects is by creating them. Creation involves investing time, energy, and even one's values and identity. Academics, for example, invest all of these into their research and, hence, may feel strong ownership toward the outcome of their scholarly pursuits. Similarly, engineers may feel ownership toward the products they design, entrepreneurs toward the organizations they found, and politicians toward the bills they draft. Thus, we propose the following.

Proposition 3: There is a positive and causal relationship between the extent to which an individual employee invests himself or herself into the potential target of ownership and the degree of ownership the employee feels toward that target.

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL OWNERSHIP

In this section we propose several effects of psychological ownership on organizations. First, we discuss some positive effects, including expected rights and presumed responsibilities. We then focus on the effects of psychological ownership on organizational change, borrowing from the recent work of Dirks et al. (1996). We extend their idea of resistance to change and suggest other negative consequences of psychological ownership. Because of space limitations, we examine only a limited subset of all possible organizational effects.

Expected Rights and Presumed Responsibilities

Ownership, in its actual and perceived state, is associated with certain rights. As Pierce et al. (1991) suggest, ownership is frequently defined and experienced in terms of a "bundle" of rights. Most frequently associated with ownership are

the right to information about the target of ownership and the right to have a voice in decisions that impact the target (Kubzansky & Druskat, 1993; Pierce et al., 1991). For example, employees who feel like owners of the organization believe that they have the right to influence the direction taken by the organization and that they have a "deeper responsibility" than those who do not feel ownership (Rodgers & Freundlich, 1998).

Feelings of ownership are also accompanied by a felt responsibility and a sense of burden sharing for the organization (Druskat & Kubzansky, 1995; Kubzansky & Druskat, 1993). For "every right of ownership which . . . an owner may feel . . . there is a commensurate or balancing responsibility" (Mackin, 1996: 2). As Rodgers (1998) argues, a strong ownership culture in employee-owned organizations exists when the right to participate in decision making is balanced with an active and responsible voice and the right to information is balanced with a responsibility to become informed. Feelings of responsibility include a responsibility to invest time and energy to advance the cause of the organization—to be protective, caring, and nurturing. When an employee's sense of self is closely linked to the organization, as in the case of psychological ownership, a desire to maintain, protect, or enhance that identity results in an enhanced sense of responsibility for work outputs (Dipboye, 1977; Korman, 1970).

Related to the broad notion of responsibility are several other organizational effects that may be the outgrowth of psychological ownership, including stewardship, citizenship behaviors, personal sacrifice, and the assumption of risk on behalf of the target. All of these can be thought of as responsibilities—to protect, to care and make sacrifices for, and to nurture and develop the target of ownership. Empirical evidence has been found for some of these effects (e.g., organizational citizenship behaviors [OCB]; VandeWalle, Van Dyne, & Kostova, 1995).

Proposition 4: Employees' psychological ownership toward organizations or organizational factors is positively related to expected rights and presumed responsibilities and leads to a number of particular behaviors associated with such rights and responsibilities

(e.g., information seeking, stewardship, OCB).

Organizational Change

In their psychological theory of change, Dirks et al. (1996) argue that psychological ownership provides insight into why and the conditions under which individuals both promote and resist change. The authors use a categorization of change in their theory: self-initiated versus imposed, evolutionary versus revolutionary, and additive versus subtractive. They propose that psychological ownership will lead to positive or negative orientations toward change, contingent upon the type of change involved. Individuals will likely promote change of a target toward which they feel ownership when the change is self-initiated (because it reinforces the individual's need for control and efficacy), evolutionary (because it tends to promote the individual's sense of self-continuity), and additive (because it contributes to the individual's need for control, self-enhancement, and feelings of personal efficacy). However, they will resist change when the change is imposed (because it is seen as threatening an individual's sense of control), revolutionary (because it is a threat to self-continuity), and subtractive (because it takes away or diminishes the core of that to which the individual has attached himself or herself) in nature. Thus, we offer the following.

Proposition 5: When change is self-initiated, evolutionary, and additive, employees' psychological ownership toward organizations or organizational factors results in promotion of change; when change is imposed, revolutionary, and subtractive, employees' psychological ownership results in resistance to change.

Pathological Effects

Psychological ownership may lead to other organizationally dysfunctional behaviors as well.³ For example, much like an overly posses-

³ In our discussion of the negative and dysfunctional effects of psychological ownership, we focus on effects on the organization and the person who is experiencing psychological ownership. However, as suggested by a reviewer, there

sive child, an employee may resist sharing the target of ownership (e.g., tools, computers, work-space) with coworkers, or may want to retain exclusive control over the target. Such behaviors, in turn, are likely to impede teamwork and cooperation. Similarly, managers may resist interventions that empower their subordinates because they feel a high degree of ownership toward the management of the work unit. This may inhibit the implementation of employee involvement programs, such as quality circles or self-managed work teams, that require managers to delegate authority and to share information and control.

Deviant behaviors that violate organizational norms and threaten the well-being of the organization or its members (Robinson & Bennett, 1995) are another possible outcome of psychological ownership. Employees who are separated against their will (e.g., laid off or terminated) from that toward which they feel a strong sense of ownership may engage in destructive acts (e.g., sabotage) to prevent others from gaining control, coming to know, or immersing themselves into the target of ownership. Feelings of ownership may also cause personal functioning maladies. When organization members witness the radical alteration of targets toward which they feel strong ownership, they may experience loss, frustration, and stress (Bartunek, 1993; James, 1890). In extreme cases this may lead to sickness and giving up the will to live (Cram & Paton, 1993).

We do not suggest, however, that psychological ownership will necessarily lead to dysfunctional effects. Instead, we propose that it may lead to such effects only if certain conditions are in place. While the full exploration of such moderating conditions is beyond the scope of this paper, we envision that they will be related to certain personality characteristics (e.g., high need for personal control), as well as the combination of the particular motives and routes that have led to the feelings of ownership. Consider, for example, the attitudes held by an employee who feels ownership for the organization arrived at through involvement in the organiza-

tion's participative management system. We suggest that these attitudes will be more negative (dysfunctional) when the primary motive for experiencing ownership has been efficacy and effectance and the route to ownership has been control than when the primary motive has been identity and the primary route has been intimate knowing (association).

Proposition 6: Under certain conditions (e.g., high need for personal control, psychological ownership arrived at through control versus knowing), psychological ownership can produce dysfunctional effects, such as failing to delegate authority and share information; impeding the implementation of participative management, teamwork, and cooperation; engaging in sabotage or other deviant behaviors; and feeling frustration, stress, and alienation, as well as physical and psychological health effects.

DISCUSSION

"Mine" is a small word. . . . It is deceptive in its power and importance. . . . It controls our behavior, but we rarely notice, as we move about our world restricting ourselves to narrow walkways and to those places for which we have keys (Rudmin, 1994: 55).

In this paper we have suggested that this powerful concept, "mine," is extremely important in organizations, as it is in other realms of human life. To capture this concept, we introduced the psychological ownership construct and presented elements of a theory of psychological ownership in organizations. In summary, we proposed that organizational members may experience feelings of ownership for the organization or various organizational factors, because this state is rooted in motives that are operative and can be satisfied in the organizational context. Focusing on the routes to psychological ownership, we proposed that this state arises from certain processes of association of the individual with the target. Through these processes individuals become psychologically tied to the target, and the target becomes part of their extended self. Each of these processes can manifest itself within the organizational context. Finally, we examined some of the conse-

might be negative effects on the target of ownership as well. For example, the feelings of ownership that a mentor develops toward his or her protégé may lead the protégé to feelings of frustration, anxiety, and stress due to a perceived loss of freedom—of being overly controlled and manipulated.

quences of psychological ownership in organizations, including some pathological effects.

In this section we address three issues we feel are critical for the establishment of the construct of psychological ownership in the organizational literature: (1) conceptual distinctiveness of psychological ownership from other organizational behavior constructs, (2) limitations of the theory presented here and directions for future research, and (3) managerial implications.

Conceptual Distinctiveness of Psychological Ownership

A number of constructs in organizational behavior theory portray the psychological relationship that individuals develop with organizations. The introduction of the concept of psychological ownership naturally raises the question about its conceptual distinctiveness. Three constructs—organizational commitment (feelings and/or beliefs concerning the reason an individual wants to maintain his or her membership in a particular organization; Meyer & Allen, 1991), organizational identification (the social classification or categorization of the self in terms of what one believes are distinctive and admired attributes of the organization; Mael & Tetrick, 1992), and internalization (the adoption of the values and goals of the organization; Mael & Ashforth, 1992)—are of particular interest as we consider psychological ownership.

As constructs that describe different types of psychological relationships with organizations, commitment, identification, and internalization may coexist with psychological ownership, especially when the ownership target is the whole organization or a central component of the organization. Furthermore, although commitment, identification, and internalization are neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for psychological ownership, they are likely to have a reciprocal relationship with this state. Psychological ownership, however, is distinct from these other constructs in a number of ways (e.g., conceptual core, motive served, type of state), as summarized in Table 1.⁴

⁴ For our purposes here, we focus primarily on the distinctions, rather than the similarities and links, between psychological ownership and the other constructs. Clearly, however, there are similarities among the concepts that should not be dismissed. For instance, theory indicates that identi-

For example, the feeling of possession that one has for an organization is different in meaning from the desire to stay employed in a particular organization (organizational commitment), the use of characteristics of the organization to define oneself (organizational identification), and the adoption of the values of an organization (internalization). All these states share reference to the self and self-identity, but they differ in their theoretical anchoring. Identification is anchored in social identity theory and commitment is in part anchored in reasons for social membership, while psychological ownership is primarily grounded in psychological theories of possession.

Psychological ownership answers the question "What do I feel is mine?" whereas commitment answers the question "Should I maintain my membership in this organization and why—because I ought to, I need to, and/or because I want to?" Organizational identification addresses the question "Who am I?" and internalization "What do I believe?" Furthermore, psychological ownership serves a unique set of motives, develops through a set of unique processes, reflects a specific type of psychological state, and has unique outcomes. For instance, none of the other states leads to the same set of presumed rights and responsibilities as psychological ownership.

In summary, we propose that psychological ownership is conceptually distinct from organizational commitment, identification, and internalization, for it describes a unique aspect of the human experience in organizations. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that psychological ownership may predict (1) certain effects unaccounted for in the existing theoretical models of the other constructs and (2) criterion variance currently unaccounted for by each of the other constructs.

Directions for Future Research

At this stage we note the need for additional theory construction and empirical inquiry. A particularly important question concerns the

fication and psychological ownership both produce positive (e.g., OCB) and negative (e.g., deviance) effects. As a reviewer pointed out, although the observed effects may overlap, the processes by which they are proposed to occur are different.

TABLE 1
Comparison of Psychological Ownership with Commitment, Identification, and Internalization^a

Dimensions of Distinctiveness	Psychological Ownership	Commitment	Identification	Internalization
1. Conceptual core	Possessiveness	Desire to remain affiliated	Use of element of organization's identity to define oneself	Shared goals or values
2. Questions answered for individual	What do I feel is mine?	Should I maintain membership?	Who am I?	What do I believe?
3. Motivational bases ^b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Efficacy/efficacy ● Self-identity ● Need for place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Security ● Belongingness ● Beliefs and values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attraction ● Affiliation ● Self-enhancement ● Holism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Need to be right ● Beliefs and values
4. Development	Active imposition of self on organization	Decision to maintain membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Categorization of self with organization ● Affiliation ● Emulation 	Adoption of organization's goals or values
5. Type of state	Affective/cognitive	Affective	Cognitive/perceptual	Cognitive/objective
6. Select consequences ^c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rights and responsibilities ● Promotion of/resistance to change ● Frustration, stress ● Refusal to share ● Worker integration ● Alienation ● Stewardship and OCB ● Right to information ● Right to voice ● Burden sharing ● Active and responsible voice ● Becoming informed ● Protecting ● Caring for and nurturing ● Growing/enhancing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● OCB ● Intent to leave ● Attendance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support for organization and participation in activities ● Intent to remain ● Frustration/stress ● Alienation ● Anomie 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● OCB ● Intent to leave ● In-role behaviors
a. Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Right to information ● Right to voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● None
b. Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Active and responsible voice ● Becoming informed ● Protecting ● Caring for and nurturing ● Growing/enhancing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maintain the status of the admired attribute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Goal and value protection

^a Readers should note that there are multiple theoretical perspectives on identification, internalization, and commitment. We have attempted to choose one of the major theoretical perspectives to create this table.

^b We took the bases for identification and internalization from Pratt (1998) and Aronson (1992), respectively.

^c To save space we list only select consequences. A more detailed listing of consequences can be found in Wan-Huggins, Riordan, and Griffith (1998) and Mael and Ashforth (1992), for identification; Mathieu and Zajac (1990), for commitment; and O'Reilly and Chatman (1986), for internalization.

boundary conditions with regard to the potential targets of psychological ownership: What can and cannot be owned psychologically? Based on our theory, we could suggest that the ownership target must be visible and attractive to the individual so as to capture the individual's interest and attention. The target also must possess certain characteristics so that the motives for efficacy and effectance, self-identity, and/or need for a place could be fulfilled. For example, to serve the efficacy and effectance motive, the target must be malleable; to serve the self-identity motive, it must be attractive, socially esteemed, and self-revealing. Also, the target must be open (available, receptive, hospitable) if the individual is going to find a home within it. Those targets fulfilling multiple motives and/or fulfilling the motives to a greater degree have the potential for a deeper level of ownership, since they allow a closer connection with the self. In addition, targets must possess attributes that facilitate an individual's controlling, coming to intimately know, and/or investing the self into them. Together, the roots of and the routes to psychological ownership result in targets being experienced as extensions of the self.⁵ Thus, it could be suggested that these target characteristics (i.e., targets can satisfy the motives and can also facilitate the routes) provide the necessary and sufficient conditions for psychological ownership and should lead to this state, even if only at a minimal level. In future work researchers should examine whether or not there are boundary conditions that would lead to targets possessing these attributes without their becoming psychologically owned.

Related to the boundary conditions of our theory is also the question of the cross-cultural differences in psychological ownership. It is reasonable to suggest that there will be such differences, because the individual-organization relationship varies as a function of the employee's culture (Earley & Erez, 1997; Erez & Earley, 1993; Hofstede, 1980), as does the nature of possessions, the meaning of work, and work's centrality to people's lives (MOW, 1987). Also

important for the further development of our theory is the question about the nature of the relationship among the different roots and among the different routes to psychological ownership. For example, it would be interesting to examine whether the roots (routes) are complementary or additive and whether the identity and place motives may be particularly important by facilitating a closer connection to the self.

Finally, theoretical work needs to address the relationship between legal and psychological ownership. Although possibly related, they differ in significant ways. For example, legal ownership is recognized foremost by society, and, hence, the rights that come with it are specified and protected by the legal system. In contrast, psychological ownership is recognized foremost by the individual who holds these feelings. Consequently, it is the individual who manifests the "felt rights and responsibilities" associated with psychological ownership. Similar to Isaacs (1933), Furby (1980), and Etzioni (1991), among others, we believe that psychological ownership can exist in the absence of legal ownership, and vice versa. This raises the question "Under what conditions are these situations possible?" For example, an individual may not feel ownership toward a legally owned object if the object is not associated with his or her self-identity and is not associated with one of the three ownership motives, even though purchased with hard-earned cash, known, and controlled.

Managerial Implications

We believe that the theory of psychological ownership presented here may have important implications for managers. However, we note that further elaboration and empirical testing of the model should precede its adoption for practice.

The first question of significant practical importance is whether it is good or bad to have employees who feel ownership toward their organizations or various organizational facets. We suggested earlier that organizations may benefit from this state, because it leads to felt responsibility toward the target and to protective, stewardship, and other altruistic behaviors toward it. However, dysfunctional consequences are possible as well. There may be times when feelings of ownership will not be to the organization's benefit. Managers then may find that it is in the

⁵ Each of the roots (i.e., motives for psychological ownership) can be seen as serving the self concept, with efficacy and effectance serving self-efficacy, self-identity serving self-consistency and enhancement, and having a place serving self-identity as well as self-consistency and continuity (Erez & Earley, 1993; Gecas, 1982; Markus & Wurf, 1987).

organization's interests to intervene and prevent excessive ownership from emerging.

The second question is whether it is possible to facilitate the development of psychological ownership in organizations and how this might be done. Although the manipulation of the "roots" of ownership is not within managerial control, managers could develop the attributes of the potential targets of ownership by making them visible, attractive, malleable, and accessible, which should increase the potential for psychological ownership. Managers could also work on the "routes" to psychological ownership. For example, they could organize the work in such a way that there would be increased opportunities for employees to exercise control over different targets, to create intimate knowledge of the targets, to be in frequent and close association with the targets, and to be able to make significant investments of themselves into the targets.

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