THE SELF AT WORK
Fundamental Theory and Research

Edited by D. Lance Ferris, Russell E. Johnson, and Constantine Sedikides
"Just as the self is foundational to our personal understanding of how we connect to the world, so The Self at Work will become foundational to our scholarly understanding of what it means to "be" in the workplace."

Blake Ashforth, Hancock Smith Arizona Heritage Chair and Professor of Management, Arizona State University, USA

"The editors have assembled a dynamic volume that will be the definitive resource for understanding the human self in the workplace. Packed with information and rich with diverse perspectives, this book covers many vital aspects of workplace behavior, including work performance, decision-making, unethical behaviors, stress, improvement, personal evaluation, identification, self-complexity, leader relationships, leadership, stress, workplace aggression, organizational culture, alcohol and drug abuse, and impression management. Anyone interested in the psychological dynamics of organizations and work will find this book an invaluable addition to his or her library."

Ray F. Baumeister, Travis Ryan Eppes Endowed Scholar and Professor of Psychology, Florida State University, USA; author of New York Times bestseller Willpower

"The Self at Work presents a broad and inclusive view of self research and self theory as applied to the workplace. Topics from self-esteem and self-efficacy to narcissism and even cultural models of the self are included. The theory and research brought together in this volume have the potential to give a new decade of research." W. Keith Campbell, Professor of Psychology, University of Georgia, USA

"The Self at Work is an impressive and timely volume on an important topic. Understanding identity processes in work contexts has emerged as a cutting-edge area of study across a number of perspectives (e.g., employees, supervisors, organizations). This volume brings together the writings of eminent scholars who have studied various aspects of the self at work. It is sure to be a valuable resource for anyone interested in state-of-the-art research on essential topics in this field."

Dorothy V. Days, Professor of Psychology and Academic Director of the Kraus Leadership Institute, Claremont McKenna College, USA

SIOP Organizational Frontiers Series

The Organizational Frontiers Series is sponsored by the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP). Launched in 1983 to make scientific contributions accessible to the field, the series publishes books addressing emerging theoretical developments, fundamental and translational research, and theory-driven practice in the field of Industrial-Organizational Psychology and related organizational science disciplines including organizational behavior, human resource management, and labor and industrial relations.

Books in this series aim to inform readers of significant advances in research, challenge the research and practice community to develop and adopt new ideas, and promote the use of scientific knowledge in the solution of public policy issues and increased organizational effectiveness.

The Series originated in the hope that it would facilitate continuous learning and spur research curiosity about organizational phenomena on the part of both scientists and practitioners.

The Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology is an international professional association with an annual membership of more than 8,000 industrial-organizational (I-O) psychologists who study and apply scientific principles to the workplace. I-O psychologists serve at trusted partners to business, offering strategically focused and scientifically rigorous solutions to a number of workplace issues. SIOP's mission is to enhance human well-being and performance in organizational and work settings by promoting the science, practice, and teaching of I-O psychology. For more information about SIOP, please visit www.siop.org.
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THE SELF AT WORK

The Self at Work brings researchers in industrial and organizational psychology and organizational behavior together with researchers in social and personality psychology to explore how the self impacts the workplace. Covering topics such as self-efficacy, self-esteem, self-control, power, and identification, each chapter examines how research on the self informs and further understanding of organizational topics such as employee engagement, feedback-seeking, and leadership. With their combined expertise, the chapter authors consider how research on the self has influenced managerial research and practice (and vice versa), limitations of applying social psychology research in the organizational realm, and future directions for organizational research on the self. This book is a valuable resource for researchers, graduate students, and professionals who are interested in how research on the self can inform industrial/organizational psychology.

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First and foremost we would like to acknowledge the incredible efforts of the chapter authors, without whose input this book would literally not be possible. We are particularly grateful for their willingness to, in many cases, take a leap of faith: owing to the nature of the book, many chapters were written by colleagues who had never previously worked together. Separated by discipline yet united by their interest in the topic, we hope that the authors have learned as much working together as we have learned in reading their chapters.

Behind the scenes, a number of people also played key roles in helping this book come together. Ms. Wang encouraged Bais and Lance to consider submitting a prospectus on the topic, and conversations with Doug Brown helped inspire the idea of bringing together researchers from social psychology and industrial-organizational organizational behavior to collaborate on chapters. Rich Klimoski was instrumental in shepherding us through the early stages of submitting and revising our prospectus, and the great feedback on our prospectus from the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology Organizational Psycho Series Editorial Board helped improve the final product. Finally, on the publisher side, our collaborators at Routledge—Christina Chantemes, Jolie Tschach, and Lauren Vesty—kept us on track and on time, and we're key to putting together the volume.

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SERIES EDITOR’S FOREWORD

This volume is remarkable because it assembles a vast amount of research and insight regarding what we know (and don’t know) about the nature of the “self” concept. Moreover, it does so in a way that makes it easy for the reader to really see how the “self as work,” “work as self.” And as it turns out, the self is indeed implicated in helping to understand much of workplace behavior. As developed in the chapters of this book we learn, for example, how the nature of the self might explain why employees come to join and identify with their company, when and where they respond to leaders, or why they are or are not engaged at work.

The nature of the self is also portrayed as the foundation for a better understanding of many of the problems facing the workplace. These include such things as when and how an organization might provide feedback in a way that will make a positive impact on learning, behavior or performance, and when and where the nature of the self can produce inaccurate relationships or even help us “better” explain and mitigate against worker resistance alone. With regard to the latter, as the theme that this Foreword is being written, the United States is experiencing what is being termed an “opioid overdose epidemic.” This is thought to be exacerbated by a feeling of anxiety on the part of so many individuals discussed about the prospect of becoming re-employed. As you will learn from this volume, the sense of self can be a powerful force for preventing success in the workplace but it also plays a major role in understanding one’s efforts to live up to the workplace-related aspirations of most Americans.

Luna Prins, Ron Johnson and Constantine Sokoloff are extremely qualified as editors. In fact, any one of them could have personally written a book on any important topic covered in this volume. But instead they have brought their years of research and teaching experience relative to self-theory to bear in staying true to a very fine volume. They have also done us a great service...
THE SELF AT WORK
An Overview

D. Lance Ferris, Russell E. Johnson, and Constantine Sedikides

Issues pertaining to the self are ubiquitous at work. Consider the case of Maggie, a senior manager at a large accounting firm who is hoping to be promoted to partner. Although the promotion comes with a pay raise, Maggie especially desires the position because of the boost it would give her self-esteem and because of the greater power and autonomy that being a partner affords. For these reasons, Maggie is motivated to present an overly favorable impression of herself to the partners by seeking positive feedback about her accomplishments and by displaying visible signs of being engaged at work (e.g., working late and coming in on weekends, holding meetings with clients at the office, etc.). Consider the case of Edith, who is a member of a close-knit team working in a software company. The culture and leadership in this company stress benevolence and universalism, which causes employees to see themselves as interdependently with one another. Edith’s work can sometimes be quite demanding, which leaves her feeling mentally depleted and prone to making mistakes. When mistakes occur, they hinder the performance of the team members, leaving Edith feeling guilt and shame. To escape negative feelings about herself and her abilities, Edith smokes marijuana in the evening. As these two examples illustrate, what people think and feel about themselves impact how they perform their jobs and interact with work colleagues. The thoughts and feelings that people have about themselves are also shaped by their jobs and institutions, and the broader work environment. The self and work are indeed intertwined, thus concerning the behavioral and organizational psychologists have an understanding of theory and research pertaining to the self.
The self: A Brief Historical Overview


The self is a construct that is often analyzed and discussed in the context of social psychology, personality psychology, and cognitive psychology. It is a complex concept that is shaped by a variety of factors, including biological, psychological, and social influences.

In social psychology, the self is often defined as the collection of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that an individual has about themselves. The self is often seen as a guide for behavior, as it influences decisions and actions. In personality psychology, the self is often seen as a central aspect of personality, with a significant impact on how individuals interact with the world around them.

In cognitive psychology, the self is often defined as the system of mental representations that an individual has about themselves and their environment. The self is often seen as a cognitive construct that plays a role in decision-making, problem-solving, and other cognitive processes.

The concept of the self has been studied extensively, and there are many theories and models that attempt to explain how it develops and operates. Some of the most influential theories include the self-discrepancy theory, the self-regulation theory, and the self-verification theory.

In summary, the self is a complex and multifaceted concept that is central to our understanding of human behavior and cognition. It is a construct that is shaped by a variety of factors, and it plays a significant role in how we interact with the world around us.
The Self at Work

So far, we have primarily drawn upon the literature in social and personality psychology (what we refer to as “social psychology”) to discuss the self. Yet as the respective view makes plain, the self is intricately involved in many (if not most) aspects of one’s lives, including their work lives, where the self is particularly influential by shaping how employees perceive and understand their environment, job tasks, colleagues, and interpersonal interactions. Employees are continuously evaluating their own work and abilities (and are in turn evaluated by others), regulating their behaviors that contribute to and influence their environment, and interacting with other employees inhabiting different social roles.

In line with this idea, some of the more explicit organizational applications of research on the self include organization-based self-esteem (Powell, Glassner, Cummings, & Dunham, 1987), workplace contingencies of self-worth (Ferris, Liska, Brown, & Martorana, 2013), self-control depletion and its effects on deviant and unethical organizational behavior (Cooper, Lencz, & Scott, 2015; Troatmann, Rea, Cheng, Higley, & Zweig, 2015; Marcus & Schalley, 2004), organizational and relational identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Lord & Brown, 2004), work-related identity formation and change (Barkar, 1999; Swann, Johnsson, & Boush, 2009), and CEO narcissism (Cammann & Homburg, 2007; Gripsztes, Hamer, Newman, Gaddy, & Fraley, 2015; Srivastava & Campbell, 2017). In some ways it is surprising that a book on the self at work has not been published previously, given the pervasive impact the self has on work and organizational phenomena. Indeed, we would argue that most of the topics that interest scholars of industrial-organizational or organizational behavior (what we refer to as IO/OB) stand to be influenced by the self.

Consider, for example, the topics of other volumes within SIOP’s Organizational Frontiers series. Many of these volumes broadly address ratings and evaluations, either of the self or others, in training and performance contexts (Ashkanasy, Bersin, & Martorana, 2015; Erez & Nite, 2017; Hightower, Dull, & Sala, 2014; Kolodziej & Sala, 2015). Here, the extensive cognitive processes associated with the self have become implicated, particularly because numerous studies have shown that the self holds a privileged status in memory and evaluation (Srivastava, Gurtman, & Cai, 2015; Srivastava, Green, Saunders, Skowronska, & Zeng, 2014). For example, people retrieve memories associated with the self more quickly than unselected memories (Ross & Sicoly, 1979), they are more likely to remember something that did not happen (called “false alarms”) when it is consistent with their self-views (Bransford & Fraden, 1981), and they are more likely to remember their successes than failures (Glimcher, 1949). Similarly, they judge themselves more positively than others do, taking credit for successes and denying responsibility for failures (Ferris, & Srivastava, this volume). The self is thus part and parcel of research involving ratings and evaluations.

Other Organizational Frontiers volumes broadly deal with groups, be they teams (Eby & Allen, 2012; Sala, Grace, & Burke, 2005), demographic sections (Zippley & Colaba, 2005; Pankhurst, Trenor, Jr, Wall, & Kanzler, 2006), or political contexts (Ferris & Treadway, 2012). Being in a group undoubtedly influences the interpersonal functions of the self, and decades of research have been devoted to the study of the self in groups. This research...
includes identification with groups (see Kruppendiek & Yagg, 2001), how certain emotions uniquely emerge from group situations (Bolton & Flynn, 2013; Curby & Robins, 2004), and how the self reacts to inclusion and exclusion from groups in personal and emotional ways, with people engaging in risky or even physical behavior to gain inclusion (Lavry, Tichá, & Rozenberger, 1994; Thau, Drerup-Rosin, Pines, Mitchell, & Pijlstra, 2013). In particular, self-related cognitions and perceptions are prompted by various forms of interpersonal misattunement (e.g., instability, uniformity, activation, etc.), which give rise to behaviors that protect the self and create psychological separations from the perpetrator (Bussinier, Smers, & Boden, 1996; Fertig, Pro, & Lamm, 2011; Johnson & Lamm, 2010; Rosen, Kumpfer, Gabriel-Rosen, & Johnson, 2016). Given that groups are aggregates of individual selves, the self is an integral concept in understanding groups and emergent properties and processes in groups.

Self other Organizational Frontiers volume broadly addresses self-regulation, motivation, affect, and self-improvement (Ellingson & Nave, 2007; Hoffman & Tanc, 2011; Kasser, Chen, & Prucnal, 2008; Lamm, Klesment, & Wink, 2002). Naturally, such work implicates the executive function of the self. Prior research has highlighted the self's relevance for self-regulation and motivation, including how different types of motivation and emotional reactions affect when the self's basic needs for autonomy, competence, and belongingness are satisfied or thwarted (Deci & Ryan, 1996; Vallier, 1997) as well as how on self-enhancement and self-power (Baumeister, Briner, & Ciminera, 2004). Emotional reactions at work, in particular, are driven by the self-relevance of organizational features and events (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). The self's role is also implicated in in limited ability to engage in self-control before uncontrollable impulses (Baumeister, Vohs, & Tice, 2004). Emotional reactions at work, in particular, are driven by the self-relevance of organizational features and events (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996).

Finally, a recent Organizational Frontiers volume addressed empathy, or the "psychological and social processes associated with observed phenomena with respect to emotional and social organizations" (Joo, 2012, p. 2). To say, we can think of no more relevant topic for the self than a topic around people who are copying of their genes. Certain, empathy often occur during unique opportunities to look in the reflected glory of family members, or to be shared by their failures, we also affect our affect in this respect... This book is organized into three sections. The first section, Fundamental Concepts and Theories, covers theory and research building blocks in the literature on the self. This section is organized to present fundamental concepts and their associated literature. These topics are fundamental in the sense that they represent major concepts and theories that are frequently referenced in research articles (even when the self may not be the specific focus of the article). Topics in this section are organized into three chapters that can be read in any order. Each chapter is essentially divided into two major sections, one on the self as a whole, and the second on the self as a specific concept. The self chapters cover two of the most commonly...
tially self-concepts in the IO/CB and social/personality literatures. First, Kets de Vries, Ahlstrom, and Halper (Chapter 2) clarify the meaning and function of self-efficacy in the opening chapter. They also draw attention to critical theoretical insights and challenges in the self-efficacy literature (e.g., the causal relation between self-efficacy and behavior) and discuss the rationale of aiming for future research. In the next chapter, Reina and De Ruyter (Chapter 3) tackle research on interpersonal and subjective evaluations of one's worth and value, namely self-esteem. The authors' coverage spans numerous perspectives (e.g., trait vs. state and explicit vs. implicit self-esteem), covering issues (e.g., self-esteem is a predictor or outcome of performance) in extreme self-esteem beneficial or harmful, and function(s) of self-esteem (e.g., to generate affective states as well as a source of meaning).

The attention of the next two chapters shifts to conceptualizations of the self and how people defend against threats to the self. Schnipke, Riggio, and Spreitzer (Chapter 4) examine how employees come to define themselves as part of work groups based on the defining characteristics they share with other co-workers. As reviewed in their chapter, these social identification processes have key implications for the goals and values that employees hold, the types of workplace relationships they develop with others, how employees respond to organizational change efforts, and what is expected of group leaders. Tjosvold and Sondak (Chapter 5) explore the basic motive of self-enhancement, which involves the desire for other people to view the self in a favorable light. This motive can lead employees to take credit for successes and attribute failures to external causes, to withhold positive feedback from others, or to make downward social comparisons, especially for defining characteristics of the self.

The two chapters that follow cover topics that pertain to aspects of self-regulation, which refer to the process of exercising self-control over cognition, affect, and behavior in order to achieve one's goals. Johnson, MacMillan, and Liu (Chapter 6) review theory and research on self-control, and how it appears to operate in a limited capacity. After engaging in demanding activities that require high amounts of self-control (e.g., suppressing self-anxiety, multi-tasking), employees may become emotionally drained, and, as a result, show poorer job performance and exhibit less cooperative and more defensive interpersonal behavior. Dutton et al. (Chapter 7) summarize the social/personality and IO/CB research on self-Determination Theory, which stresses the importance of pursuing goals that enable individuals to satisfy basic psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence. Pursuing such goals requires the self-control of the part of employees, because self-regulatory activities are internally motivating and they foster greater well-being.

The book two chapters in this section review self-directed emotions and some of power. Schaubroeck, Flynn, and Tracy (Chapter 8) discuss the role of social emotions—guilt and shame—that arise from evaluating the self from the perspective of others. These authors highlight the need to distinguish between direct emotions at work between guilt and shame triggers unique types of behavior (e.g., retribution and hostile behavior, respectively). Moreover, how individuals think and behave towards others at work not only depends on their emotional states but also on the extent to which they have control over valued resources, as made clear in Schaefer, Lee, Galinsky, and Schmukle's review of social power (Chapter 9). The authors provide detailed coverage of the topic, ranging from methodological issues to power dynamics over time and spatial considerations at different levels (e.g., individual, interpersonal, and organizational).

After presenting these fundamental concepts and theories associated with the self, the second section of the book, titled Organizational Theory, covers topics that build on one or more of the concepts and theories from the first section. This section illustrates how research on topics such as self-enhancement, attachment, and capturing the self have taken fundamental concepts of the self into account to shape the self as a relational entity. Wayment, Gelfand, Yoon, and Chin (Chapter 10) discuss how culture shapes the self, particularly the relative importance of different kinds of cultures. In particular, can have marked effects on how individuals achieve self-enhancement or how they react to displays of self-enhancement. Similarly, Day and Cornell (Chapter 11) discuss the various ways in which individuals are constrained to act to construct positive impressions of themselves to others. Such tactics typically are motivated by a desire for self-enhancement and involve striving towards a desired identity. Finally, Mohr, Hargrave, and Wang (Chapter 12) discuss how negative self-evaluation and social cognitions of others can lead to behaviors such as social and desirability—behaviors that are rooted in escape self-awareness. The third section of the book, Applications to Organizational Levels, draws from the prior two sections' gaining of IO/CB and social/personality co-novices and further explores the potential IO/CB and social/personality co-novices and further explores the potential applications of the theories and models to the sub-disciplines of the sub-disciplines of the self and the self-concept.
In closing, our hope is that by highlighting the diverse research associations that exist between the self and performance, social psychologists can better understand how individuals function in organizational contexts. The research reviewed here provides a valuable starting point for future studies in this area.

References


