

Self as a pattern: An exploratory study within the Pattern Theory of Self framework

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Traditional research on the self primarily focuses on the distinction between minimal and narrative aspects of the self, yet little is known about the broader, dynamic interactions between self aspects proposed by the Pattern Theory of Self (PTS). In this exploratory study, we employed a mental imagery paradigm designed to operationalize the PTS-derived self aspects, alongside benchmark conditions for minimal and narrative self. Participants rated emotional valence (negative, neutral, positive), temporal orientation (past, present, future), subjective perspective (first- and third-person perspective) following imagery tasks emphasizing either experiential (“feel”) or reflective (“think”) condition. Repeated measures ANOVA revealed lower (i.e., neutral) valence ratings for the minimal dimension compared to intersubjective and narrative dimensions (i.e., positive), while network analysis on valence uncovered two principal clusters, with situated- and narrative-self dimensions emerging as central hubs. Temporal orientation analyses showed that embodied and minimal self was anchored to the present, whereas affective, cognitive, extended, situated, and narrative dimensions reflected a past orientation. Subjective perspective ratings indicated a predominant first-person perspective across all dimensions except the narrative self, which balanced first- and third-person viewpoints. These results provide the first descriptive empirical mapping of self identity within the PTS framework, revealing how emotional, temporal, and perspectival profiles differentiate across the self pattern, and supporting mental imagery as a method for capturing the multidimensional nature of human self.

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