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A theoretical and methodological proposal for M-Self: an identity-activation and cross-role transfer protocol for life transitions

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ABSTRACT

Life transitions can compress the working self into a single salient identity, muting resources from other roles. The Identity Activation and Cross-Role Transfer protocol (M-Self) is a brief, modular protocol that maps roles to traits and emotions, translates traits into Universal Behaviours (UBs), and rehearses small, situated cross-role transfers; an optional light-touch heart rate variability (HRV) and electroencephalography (EEG) layer provides formative state feedback. Pragmatic implementations in four cohorts: maternity return-to-work (11,527 mothers reached; 2024 mixed-audience survey n = 715), women nearing release from prison (N = 12), young-women mentorship (analytic N = 500; programme enrolment = 555), and an eating-disorder programme (N = 85), show within-person pre-post signals of higher self-efficacy and transfer frequency and lower perceived stress. Making identity complexity visible and transfer feasible may convert transitions into developmental opportunities. Evidence is exploratory, non-randomized, and largely self-reported; randomized and longitudinal studies are needed.

Keywords: identity activation; self-complexity; transilience; Universal Behaviours (UBs); psychophysiology

1. Introduction

During life transitions, such as maternity return-to-work, illness, incarceration, migration, and retirement, identity threat can compress the working self around a single salient label, constraining access to resources housed in alternative self-aspects and reducing flexibility and coping (Markus & Wurf, 1987; Markus & Nurius, 1986). This narrowing has been documented in stereotype-related threat contexts and adjacent identity stressors (e.g., Steele, 1997; Schmader et al., 2008) and is consistent with classic accounts of the working self and context-dependent access to self-aspects (Markus & Wurf, 1987; Markus & Nurius, 1986).

Self-complexity theory suggests that differentiated role-aspects buffer stress and support adaptation (Linville, 1987), while identity-based motivation and values affirmation can reopen the working self under threat (Oyserman, 2015; Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Critcher & Dunning, 2015). The Identity Activation and Cross-Role Transfer protocol (M-Self) addresses these mechanisms by treating identity as dynamic, multi-role, and context-sensitive, and by activating an intentional transfer of resources between roles through a trainable skill called transilience (Zezza & Vitullo, 2014). This rationale is compatible with work-family enrichment theory, where resources generated in one domain can enhance performance and affect in another (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). We next summarize the theoretical foundations and then detail how the protocol operationalizes these mechanisms.

2. Theoretical background

This review integrates four strands that jointly motivate M-Self and yield testable predictions: (i) the multi-role self and self-complexity, where context cues assemble a working self and differentiation buffers strain; (ii) identity threat, which narrows access to agentic self-aspects, with identity-based motivation and values affirmation reopening them; (iii) narrative re-authoring and flexible recategorization, which translate broadening into new appraisals; and (iv) brief formative biosignals that can scaffold awareness of pacing and regulation. These strands specify the protocol's levers: visualise roles, select traits, translate them into Universal Behaviours, plan situated transfers, and consolidate reflection (Markus & Wurf, 1987; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Linville, 1987; McConnell, 2011; Steele, 1997; Schmader et al., 2008; Oyserman, 2015; Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Critcher & Dunning, 2015).

2.1 Key constructs and predictions

Accounts of the working self and self-complexity describe a multi-role architecture where context cues activate role-linked traits, scripts, and memories while competing aspects are transiently inhibited; during transitions, some resources become less accessible, which motivates deliberate widening (Markus & Wurf, 1987; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Linville, 1987; McConnell, 2011). From this literature we derive five predictions tied to concrete levers:

1. When identity threat is salient, access to alternative self-aspects narrows, reducing behavioural flexibility and coping. Lever: cue alternative, agentic aspects before planning transfer (Steele, 1997; Schmader et al., 2008).
2. Higher differentiation across roles buffers stress and supports adaptation by enlarging the pool of accessible traits and scripts. Lever: Role Map to make self-complexity visible (Linville, 1987; McConnell, 2011).
3. Cross-domain enrichment: resources generated in one domain can enhance functioning in another, providing a bridge for intentional transfer. Lever: translate traits into role-agnostic UBs (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012).
4. Brief identity-based motivation and values affirmation can reopen access to agentic self-aspects under threat and increase regulatory bandwidth. Lever: short prompts that surface values and identity (Oyserman, 2015; Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Critcher & Dunning, 2015).
5. Deliberate, situated transfer of traits across roles should increase self-efficacy, reduce perceived stress, and raise the frequency of cross-role enactments, especially shortly after reframing. Lever: UBs planning with if-then scripts and 1–5 checks.

2.2 Self as multi-role, context-sensitive system

Roles activate associative networks comprising traits, emotions, scripts, and memories, which construct a context-dependent working self, while competing self-aspects undergo transient inhibition (Markus & Wurf, 1987; Markus & Nurius, 1986). Greater differentiation across roles correlates with enhanced stress buffering and adaptive functioning (Linville, 1987). Extending beyond the classical concept of self-complexity, the multiple self-aspects framework conceptualizes the self as a structured network, wherein role cues dynamically assemble a situationally appropriate working self. Systematic elucidation and intentional expansion of this networked self-structure constitute a plausible mechanism to facilitate adaptation during developmental and situational transitions (Markus & Wurf, 1987; McConnell, 2011). Multiple important group memberships can support resilience

and self-esteem, further aligning with the idea that a broader set of accessible self-aspects buffers strain (Jetten et al., 2015).

2.3 Identity threat and reopening the working self

Under threat, the working self narrows and regulatory resources are taxed, a pattern documented in stereotype-related contexts and adjacent identity stressors (Steele, 1997; Schmader et al., 2008). Brief reflection on personally important values and identity-affirmation exercises can reopen access and increase regulatory bandwidth in high-stakes contexts (Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Critcher & Dunning, 2015). Identity threat does not only emerge in academic test settings. Diagnostic labels and role-reduced scripts in health care, incarceration, or caregiving can narrow the working self in analogous ways, constraining action options. This makes transitions a natural laboratory for identity broadening and transfer.

2.4 From social to intra-personal recategorization

Principles of flexible recategorisation that reduce intergroup bias can be applied within the self: reframing a narrow role label through other lived identities broadens options for action and improves appraisals via iterative reprocessing supported by prefrontal–limbic coupling (Van Bavel & Cunningham, 2010; Cunningham & Zelazo, 2007). Brief narrative re-authoring may mediate these shifts: when people link a constrained role to alternative identities, agency and redemption themes rise while threat appraisals recede (McAdams & McLean, 2013; Adler et al., 2015). Cross-domain enrichment further suggests that resources are not captive to a single role but can be mobilised elsewhere, motivating the translation of traits into role-agnostic UBs and the rehearsal of their enactment in target roles (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012).

2.5 Optional psychophysiology as formative feedback

Formative heart rate variability (HRV) and portable electroencephalography (EEG) snapshots can scaffold awareness of regulation and attention during reflection, aligning with valuation and control-based accounts of self-processing and neurovisceral integration (Cunningham & Zelazo, 2007; D'Argembeau, 2013; Thayer & Lane, 2009; Sakaki et al., 2016).

2.6 From theory to practical solution: the M-Self protocol and intentional transfer through transilience

To counter narrowing, an intentional transfer of resources between roles is required: activate alternative self-aspects, select role-agnostic micro-behaviours that carry traits, and rehearse their use in the target role. M-Self turns this process into a trainable skill called "transilience".

Operationally, the protocol implements: role mapping; per-role selection from a fixed set of 36 traits to build a trait-by-role matrix; translation of selected traits into UBs; situated transfer rehearsal with if-then scripts; guided reflection. An optional light-touch HRV/EEG layer provides strictly formative state feedback. The aim is to widen the working self in context and restore effective action during transitions.

Table 1 summarizes the links between the theoretical constructs, M-Self components, and candidate outcomes.

3. Protocol description

3.1 Delivery modes and format

The protocol can be delivered digitally or offline, individually or in small groups. We adopt a digital-first preference because it ensures consistent prompts, automatic logging, and scalability. Offline delivery mirrors the same steps with paper worksheets that are digitized after the session. Typical formats are one 90-minute session, or two 45-minute sessions one week apart. Recommended group size is 4–12 participants.

Table 2 links identity threat and resource narrowing to the three M-Self intervention modules.

Table 1. Theory to protocol mapping

Construct	Operational lever in M-Self	Example item or prompt	Outcome anchor
Self as a multi-role, context-sensitive system	Role Map	List active roles; rate energy and stress from 1 to 5.	Role count; differentiation proxy
Accessible aspects of the working self	Trait selection	Pick the traits you express in Role A.	Self-concept clarity items
Intentional transfer through transilience	Universal Behaviours selection	Select the role-agnostic micro-behaviours you use when you are trait X in role Y.	Transilience Index: 1–5 Likert scale of propensity
Situated enactment and recategorisation	If-then rehearsal	If the meeting starts late, then ask one clarifying question.	Transfer frequency; success rated 1–5
Regulation support	Light HRV and EEG feedback	60–120-second windowed feedback for pacing	Within-person change in stress or affect

Table 2. Identity threat and the M-Self intervention

Stage	Identity threat	Narrowing of accessible resources	Need for intentional transfer
Example	Life transition, such as becoming a mother	Reduction of the self to traits associated with the stereotype of motherhood	Return to other roles, such as work, with the potential for role enrichment through the discovery and sharing of resources across roles
Intervention	Module 1: Role Mapping increases awareness of self-complexity through positive visualisation.	Module 2: Per-role trait and Universal Behaviour selection provides access to richer self-aspects.	Module 3: Universal Behaviour transfer rehearsal practises transilience to build self-efficacy and intrapersonal recategorisation.

3.2 Module 1: Role mapping

Participants list their active roles in a free-text field without predefined labels or ordering, helping prevent stereotyping (for example Parent, Team Lead, Friend), and then classify each role as either work or non-work.

Next, participants view their Role Map, a visual representation of self-complexity that counters the idea that roles compete for a fixed space and instead conveys an expansion of the overall self-space. An open prompt invites reflection: "How does seeing your life represented this way make you feel?" A single 1–5 item follows: "Right now, this view makes me feel...", with options ranging from 1 = very vulnerable to 5 = very strong. Figure 1 shows an example Role Map.

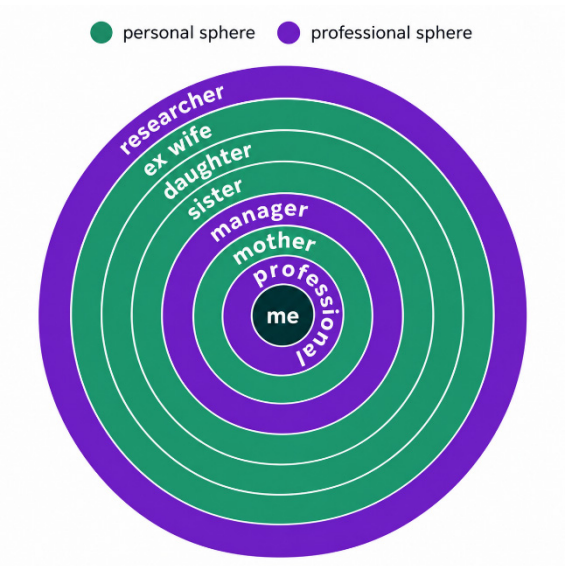


Figure 1. Role Map. Example visual representation of self-complexity. Each concentric circle represents an active role. Green indicates the personal sphere, purple indicates the professional sphere, and the center represents the self

3.3 Module 2: Per-role trait selection and translation to Universal Behaviours (UBs)

Step 2a - Trait selection. For each active role, participants select, from a fixed set of 36 traits, those that best describe how they express that role. The resulting trait-by-role matrix identifies resources used across multiple roles

(Super Traits) and resources used in only one role (Unique Traits). Figure 2 shows an example trait-by-role matrix.

Step 2b - Universal Behaviours (UBs). For each trait that they have selected, participants choose from a predefined list the UBs through which they express it in the roles where it is present. UBs are brief, observable actions that are independent of role and can convey the trait to a target role. Examples:

• Trait "unconventional" →UB "Seeing and breaking down problems from unusual viewpoints". • Trait "mature" →UB "Giving a 30-second recap of options before deciding." • Trait "affectionate" →UB "Allowing others the time and space to express themselves".

UBs are phrased to be visible, brief, and portable across contexts.

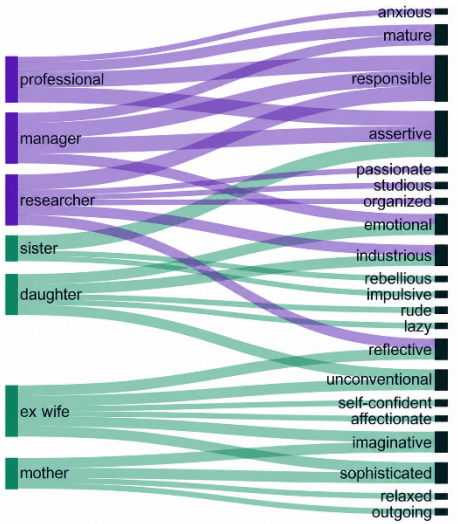


Figure 2. Trait-by-role matrix. Example alluvial map linking active roles on the left to selected traits on the right. Green connections indicate personal roles, and purple connections indicate professional roles

3.4 Module 3: Transilience exercises and guided reflection

Participants choose one target role and plan a single UB transfer using an if-then script. Example: "If I were affectionate in my role as a colleague I would make my colleagues feel more heard by allowing them the time and space to express themselves." A 1–5 confidence check is recorded ("How likely is it that you will do it in the next 7 days?") to flag propensity and guide micro-adjustments.

A short metacognitive debrief consolidates learning: what helped, what blocked, what to try next. In groups, peers provide one observation and one suggestion per person. An optional 1–5 check on perceived stress or affect can be repeated to track within-person change.

3.5 Intermediate outputs

The app visualizes the Role Map and the trait-by-role matrix. Descriptive indices can be displayed in-app as feedback, for example a simple self-complexity indicator and a summary of discovered strengths and underused resources. These are descriptive, not inferential.

Table 3 summarizes the inputs, prompts, scale use, and outputs for each M-Self module.

Table 3. M-Self modules inputs and outputs

Module	User input	Example prompt	Use of 1–5 scale	Output
Role mapping	List of active roles	Which roles are active for you now?	Energy and stress checks	Role Map
Trait selection	Select from 36 traits for each role	Which traits describe how you express role X?	None	Trait-by-role matrix
Traits to Universal Behaviours	Choose Universal Behaviours linked to traits in a role	Translate playful in your Friend role into one of these Universal Behaviours.	None	Selected observable Universal Behaviours
Transfer rehearsal	If-then plan for a target role	If I use this trait in this role, then I will perform a specific behaviour so that it has the intended impact.	Confidence 1–5	Transfer plan
Reflection	Brief debrief and peer note	What helped, and what blocked you?	Optional stress or affect rating 1–5	Insights and next step

3.6 Optional psychophysiological support

The optional HRV and EEG phase is strictly formative and within-person. A minimal 6–9-minute sequence establishes a short resting reference, then records a brief reflection and a one-minute role-transfer micro-simulation, followed by a short recovery. Acquisition is seated and still, with normal breathing. Devices: chest-strap electrocardiography (ECG) is preferred for R-R accuracy; finger photoplethysmography (PPG) is acceptable when ECG is not available; portable EEG uses 4–8 channels. Basic parameters: sampling at 250 Hz or higher and 60–120-second windows. Indices: HRV root mean square of successive differences (RMSSD) and percentage of successive normal-to-normal intervals differing by more than 50 ms (pNN50), with optional high-frequency (HF) power; EEG alpha power and a frontoparietal theta-coherence summary. Outputs are phase-to-baseline deltas with simple traffic-light cues; no raw signals are stored and no diagnostic claims are made (Thayer & Lane, 2009).

3.7 Delivery blueprints and fidelity

Two formats are feasible: micro-sprint (2–3 sessions) or 4–6-week programmes combining group sessions and in-app prompts. Fidelity is supported by checklists, rubrics, and light supervision.

4. Applied signals from pilots (illustrative)

4.1 Methods (brief, shared across cohorts)

Pragmatic pilots were delivered digitally first, with paper delivery when needed. Outcomes are self-reported and exploratory. Where baseline data are missing, results are post-only descriptives and no change scores are computed. Administrative key performance indicators (KPIs) document feasibility and reach. Psychological outcomes index perceived skills, self-efficacy, stress or affect, and transfer readiness.

4.2 Results (by cohort)

4.2.1 Return to work after maternity

Methods. Multi-company programmes since 2016; annual user survey in 2024 (n = 715, mixed audience including parents).

Descriptives. KPI reach: 11,527 mothers served to date. In 2024, 71% of mothers reported less stress on return. The source does not report a separate denominator for this 71% estimate. Separately, the 2024 mixed-audience user survey included n = 715 respondents. Outcomes are exploratory and post-only for most measures.

Psychological signals (2024 survey). 83% reported that they could transfer personal-life skills to work; 75% reported improved relational skills; 79% reported improved change-management skills; 60% reported higher motivation; and 64–65% reported better work-life balance and well-being.

4.2.2 Women nearing release from prison (Rebibbia)

Methods. In-person training day, pre-release female inmates, N = 12, identity mapping and transilience prompts. Duration about 4 hours.

Descriptives. N = 12; participants were of mixed ages and ethnicities, and about half were native Italian speakers.

Psychological signals. The mean number of identity roles identified was M = 7.3 (SD = 2.1). Qualitative examples of planned transfers included emotion regulation to professional contexts, conflict communication to parenting, and routine organization to post-release planning. Outcomes were exploratory and post-only.

4.2.3 Youth mentorship (Municipality of Milan)

Methods. City programme for young women. Measures were administered before and after mentorship.

Descriptives. Programme enrolment was 555 mentees aged 16–30 years; the analytic sample was N = 500. A total of 267 mentors registered.

Psychological signals. Internal project reporting indicated that 86% reported increased cross-domain self-efficacy; 100% reported discovering previously unrecognised talents; and confidence increased by 33% from pre to post. Outcomes were exploratory.

4.2.4 Eating-disorder cohort (ED)

Methods. Clinical-adjacent digital programme.

Convenience sample N = 85 (80 women, 3 men, and 2 participants who did not disclose gender); 42 participants were under 25 years, 35 were aged 25–35 years, and 8 were over 35 years.

Psychological signals. Latent-potential differences on the 0–100 Lifeed index (personal-use score minus work-use score) were Empathy, +49 points; Collaboration, +36 points; Communication, +31 points; Self-control, +27 points; Listening, +19 points; and Self-awareness, +22 points. Willingness to attempt transfers was M = 3.7 on a 1–5 scale. Outcomes were exploratory and post-only.

Table 4 summarizes administrative KPIs across the four cohorts; these indicators document feasibility and scale and are distinct from psychological outcomes.

Table 5 summarizes the exploratory psychological outcomes and their measurement basis across cohorts.

5. Methodological implications and common measurement

Here we formalize how to operationalize and report the Transilience framework in pilots. The goal is to offer a low-burden, role-grounded metric that is sensitive to short time windows and within-person change. First, we define a propensity index tied to concrete UBs planned for transfer across roles, scored at the person-week level and scalable for dashboards. Second, we anchor this index to brief, validated constructs that are theoretically adjacent to transilience, privileging feasibility and repeatability in real settings. Third, we specify expected correlation patterns and known-groups sensitivities to guide interpretation without overstating validity in the absence of enactment data. Finally, we provide a minimal reporting template to ensure comparability across cohorts and weeks, and to separate intention-based findings from subsequent behavioural evidence.

Table 4. Administrative key performance indicators by cohort

Cohort	N served or sampled	Delivery	Reach or enrolment	Completion or adherence	Notes
Return to work after maternity	11,527 mothers reached; 2024 mixed-audience survey N = 715	Digital-first, multi-company	Reach to date: 11,527	Not reported	Completion or adherence was not reported. The 71% outcome estimate has no separately reported denominator; the 2024 mixed-audience survey informs the other outcomes.
Women nearing release (Rebibbia)	N = 12	In-person workshop	Single pre-release cohort	Workshop completed	Four-hour training day.
Youth mentorship (Milan)	Programme cohort: 555 mentees; analytic N = 500	Mixed digital and in-person	Enrolment: 555 mentees	Exact completion count not reported	267 mentors registered; city initiative, January–July 2023.
Eating-disorder cohort	N = 85	Digital-first	Partner programme delivered	Not tracked	Clinical-adjacent context.

Note. Key performance indicators document feasibility and scale; they are distinct from psychological outcomes

Table 5. Exploratory psychological outcomes by cohort

Cohort	Outcome	Measure type	*Paired* N	Overall N	Baseline value	Post value or result	Change	Effect size	Notes
Return to work	Transfer of personal skills to work	Post-only percentage	-	715	-	83%	-	-	2024 mixed-audience survey; exploratory
Return to work	Relational skills improved	Post-only percentage	-	715	-	75%	-	-	Exploratory
Return to work	Change-management skills improved	Post-only percentage	-	715	-	79%	-	-	Exploratory
Return to work	Motivation higher	Post-only percentage	-	715	-	60%	-	-	Exploratory
Return to work	Work-life balance or well-being	Post-only percentage	-	715	-	64–65%	-	-	Exploratory

Cohort	Outcome	Measure type	*Paired* N	Overall N	Baseline value	Post value or result	Change	Effect size	Notes
Rebibbia	Identity roles identified	Post-only *M* (*SD*)	-	12	-	7.3 (2.1)	-	-	Qualitative transfer plans also collected
Mentorship	Cross-domain self-efficacy increased	Pre-post percentage	-	500	-	86% reported an increase	-	-	Internal report; exploratory
Mentorship	Discovery of talents	Pre-post percentage	-	500	-	100%	-	-	Internal report; exploratory
Mentorship	Confidence	Pre-post change	-	500	-	-	+33%	-	Self-reported trait shift
Eating-disorder cohort	Latent potential: Empathy	Post-only delta	-	85	-	-	+49	-	Personal use greater than work use

Cohort	Outcome	Measure type	*Paired* N	Overall N	Baseline value	Post value or result	Change	Effect size	Notes
Eating-disorder cohort	Collaboration	Post-only delta	-	85	-	-	+36	-	
Eating-disorder cohort	Communication	Post-only delta	-	85	-	-	+31	-	
Eating-disorder cohort	Self-control	Post-only delta	-	85	-	-	+27	-	
Eating-disorder cohort	Listening	Post-only delta	-	85	-	-	+19	-	
Eating-disorder cohort	Self-awareness	Post-only delta	-	85	-	-	+22	-	
Eating-disorder cohort	Willingness to transfer	Post-only mean (1–5)	-	85	-	3.7	-	-	Source category percentages total 140.8%; verification required.

5.1 Operational definition of the Transilience Index (propensity)

Construct. Propensity to perform intentional cross-role transfers in the near term.

Item format. For each planned UB, participants answer a single 1–5 item: "In the next 7 days, how likely are you to enact this behaviour in the target role?" (1 = not at all, 5 = very likely).

Scoring. Average across planned UBs within a week to obtain TI-Propensity (1–5). Optionally rescale to 0–100: TI-Propensity% = 25 × (mean – 1).

Reporting unit. Person-week mean, with distribution across weeks.

Rationale. In pragmatic pilots, intention tied to concrete UBs is a low-burden proxy; when enactment data become available, TI-Propensity can be complemented with behavioural counts.

5.2 Convergent anchors and suggested instruments

We recommend brief validated anchors, prioritizing within-person change and feasibility in pilots:

- Self-concept clarity. Use short self-concept clarity (SCC) items or a single-item proxy for clarity of "who I am" across roles. Track pre-post change where available.
- Role complexity and overlap. Indicators derived from the Role Map: number of active roles; Overlap Index from shared traits across roles; descriptive Unique Trait Index (UTI) and Super Trait Index (STI - most shared traits) where available. These summarize breadth and cross-role reuse.
- Given enrichment theory, higher role overlap and trait reuse should relate positively to perceived gains at work from non-work resources (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).
- Self-efficacy. General and role-specific short scales, plus the 1–5 UB-specific confidence item already in the protocol to index enactment readiness.
- Affect/stress (brief). Single 1–5 perceived stress item time-locked to practice; optional short affect items. Optional HRV deltas are formative only.

5.3 Planned correlations and interpretation

- Primary convergence. TI-Propensity should correlate positively with role-specific and general self-efficacy, and with role overlap/trait reuse indices; small-to-moderate positive associations are also expected with self-concept clarity.
- Known-groups sensitivity. In cohorts where trait resources are underused at work (e.g., ED cohort), higher TI-Propensity should co-occur with larger latent potential and higher willingness-to-transfer (e.g., M = 3.7 on a 1–5 scale).
- Exploratory links. Administrative KPIs are analysed separately; they do not validate TI-Propensity but help interpret feasibility and exposure.

5.4 Minimal reporting template

Report, per cohort and time window:

1. TI-Propensity mean (1–5) and SD, plus % above threshold (e.g., ≥4).
2. Correlations with self-efficacy, self-concept clarity, role overlap/UTI/STI when available.
3. Statement that all findings are pilot/exploratory and intention-based unless enactment data are present.

6. Discussion and future directions

6.1 Main contributions

M-Self offers a compact, modular protocol that builds awareness of identity complexity and turns cross-role transfer into the trainable skill of transilience. The paper contributes (i) a theory-to-practice bridge linking self-complexity and identity-based motivation to concrete steps; (ii) an operational pipeline that includes role mapping, per-role trait selection, translation into Universal Behaviours (UBs), transfer rehearsal, and guided reflection; (iii) a light measurement framework with a low-burden Transilience Index (propensity) and anchors for future validation; and (iv) preliminary signals across heterogeneous cohorts that illustrate feasibility in real settings.

6.2 Potential mechanisms

Two mechanisms are hypothesised. First, narrative re-authoring reframes constrained role labels by linking them to alternative lived identities, which can reduce threat appraisals and widen access to existing resources. Consistent with narrative-identity research, adaptive re-authoring that emphasises agency and redemptive meaning predicts gains in well-being and functioning, supporting the plausibility of this pathway (Adler et al., 2015). Second, UBs act as carriers of traits across contexts, widening the working self at decision points and increasing perceived self-efficacy. A light psychophysiology layer can scaffold awareness of regulation states but is formative only.

6.3 Practical implications

The protocol is brief, scalable, and suitable for digital or offline delivery. It can support clinical encounters that risk identity reduction, rehabilitation and re-entry planning, migration support, and retirement transitions. In organisational and educational settings, it provides a structured way to identify underused resources, rehearse micro-behaviours, and monitor short-term change with low respondent burden. Implementation can start with a micro-sprint and progress to short programmes that include peer feedback.

6.4 Equity and cultural adaptation

M-Self is designed to be adaptable across cultural and linguistic contexts. Roles and traits are elicited in open text to avoid stereotyping and to respect local identity scripts. UBs are phrased as short, observable actions that can be tailored to literacy levels and situational norms. Delivery can be digital-first or paper-based where devices or data plans are limited. For equity, programmes should: i) localise trait lists and examples with community input, ii) offer language-appropriate prompts and accessible visuals, iii) use trauma-informed facilitation in sensitive populations, and iv) monitor differential effects by gender, age, migration status, and socioeconomic factors. These adaptations improve inclusion without altering the core mechanism of cross-role transfer.

6.5 Current limitations

Evidence is pilot and exploratory, with heterogeneous cohorts and pragmatic designs. Several outcomes are post-only and rely on self-report. Fidelity varies across implementations. There are no active controls in the current datasets, and observer ratings are limited. Psychophysiology snapshots are optional and not

designed for diagnostic inference. Generalisability is therefore constrained, and causal claims are not warranted.

6.6 Future research agenda

Priorities include:

1. pre-registered, within-person trials and short randomised micro-experiments;
2. formal tests of mediation by UBs and narrative re-authoring;
3. validation of the Transilience Index (propensity) with test-retest, sensitivity to change, and convergent validity against self-efficacy, self-concept clarity, and role overlap;
4. triangulation of self-report with observer ratings and simple behavioural traces;
5. equity studies with cultural tailoring and subgroup analyses;
6. light implementation-science evaluations of fidelity, adoption, and cost;
7. cautious use of biosignal snapshots as formative correlates of pacing and regulation rather than outcomes.

Conflict of interest

Riccarda Zezza is the founder and has a formal role in Lifeed, the company that supports the digital delivery of the protocol described. To reduce bias, datasets used for this article were pseudonymised before analysis, administrative KPIs were separated from psychological outcomes, and results are presented in aggregate. The company had no role in the independent interpretation of findings or in the decision to submit the manuscript. No other conflicts are declared.

Funding and role of the sponsor

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